



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Thursday 26 May 2011.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [7.16 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): As I rise in this honourable place to make my inaugural speech I officially acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and pay my respects to elders past and present. To those of this Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales I offer my congratulations; to all those elected to this House and to the other place, especially those elected for the first time, and to my Central Coast colleagues Chris Spence, the member for the Entrance, and Darren Webber, the member for Wyong, and my northern colleagues Garry Edwards, the member for Swansea; Andrew Cornwell, the member for Charlestown; Robyn Parker, the member for Maitland; and Tim Owen, the member for Newcastle. The Hunter is very much part of my heritage.

I look forward to the challenges ahead, expecting at times that we will not agree. But a difference of opinion is what makes democracy work, more so when the right to a different opinion is respected. Tradition tells me, and rightfully so, to mention my predecessor Marie Andrews, the member for Peats and subsequently the member for Gosford, from 1995 to 2011—a much-respected member of the community and one who showed commitment to her constituents. I wish her the best in her retirement. I also acknowledge a past member for Gosford in the gallery this evening, Malcolm Brooks, previously a fellow city councillor, shire president, mayor, mentor and, at times, an opinionated opponent, but also very much a friend. It should be noted that Malcolm's inaugural speech in 1973 concluded at approximately 3.00 a.m. No doubt that is why I get only 15 minutes. All members have sung the praises of their electorates and have waxed lyrical about how they represent the best place in New South Wales. Far be it from me to break with that trend. Thus, let them stand corrected.

Gosford has a diverse collection of beautiful beaches, the picturesque Brisbane Water and breathtaking bushland. It encompasses city lifestyle, urban living, rural farming, manufacturing, light industry and great tourism destinations. It stretches from Mooney Mooney to Mangrove, Kulnura to Kariong, Spencer to Springfield, Point Clare to Point Frederick, and Peats Ridge to Patonga, Gosford to the mighty Woy Woy Peninsula. Our area's history goes back to the earliest settlement in the 1820s. In fact, prior to that, in 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip and a small party of officers and marines undertook a number of exploratory voyages to Brisbane Water. Folklore says that on one such trip a canoe of natives—who were either Darkinjung or Guringi people—jumped from their vessel and swam in the most unusual fashion, looping their arms out of the water in a forward motion. These were the first white men to see the Australian crawl.

Early industries included shipbuilding. From 1829 to 1953 more than 500 vessels, including ketches, schooners, ferries and tugboats were built on the shores of Brisbane Water. Timber cutting of ironbark and red cedar, and citrus orchards were also early industries. Only with the coming of the railway in 1899 did growth increase. From the early 1900s, Sydneysiders started making the Central Coast a holiday destination. In the post-war period, around the 1950s there was a significant growth in housing as young families and, in particular, retirees made Gosford their home. The 1960s and 1970s saw an even greater influx of retirees settling in what had been the family's holiday retreat.

However, it was not only Sydneysiders who came. Others came to the Woy Woy peninsula to retire. They included people such as Leo and Florence Milligan. Their son—a regular visitor, a poet, a comedian, a novelist, an actor, an environmentalist and star of the Goons—was one Terence Alan Patrick Sean Milligan. Of course, he was better known as "Spike". He put Woy Woy on the world map. He was to endear Woy Woy to the world with classic lines such as, "Don't blame me, me mum lives at Woy Woy," and "Woy Woy, the world's only above-ground cemetery." We have a sense of humour in Woy Woy. However, members should note—including in particular the Government Whip—that you can take the Wagga out of Wagga Wagga but you cannot take the Woy out of Woy Woy.

Whether it is named Peats or Gosford, my electorate has been a diehard Labor seat since its inception. Therefore, I am proud to have been given the privilege by the people of my community to represent them. The community's vote of confidence in the Liberal Party and in me to represent them is no more reflected than in the historic winning of every booth in the electorate. My community's expectations of me are therefore high in tackling the infrastructure backlog that is the result of long neglect by the former Government. I am Newcastle born. I moved to Gosford at an early age as a publican's son, raised to believe that hard work will bring its just reward and that nothing comes without effort. I was educated at Gosford Public School and Gosford High School. My teenage years were spent pursuing my love of rugby league and my involvement in the Young Lions movement, Leos. Casual work outside school hours at the local supermarket culminated in a traineeship when I finished school and ultimately a retail management career. For 10 years I managed supermarkets across the State from Maitland to Swansea, Mayfield, Taree, Raymond Terrace, Dubbo and Orange.

Playing rugby league and selling baked beans was punctuated by one of the highlights of my life—my marriage to Mary in 1980.

After 10 years in a nomadic retail existence and with a young and constantly growing family we returned home to Gosford to family, friends and what has now been 20-plus years in a variety of small businesses. I have gone from corner shop owner, takeaway cook, coffee shop extra cleaning tables to underwater ceramic technician—that is dishwasher to the uneducated—to florist. Yes, I am 120-kilogram former front row forward who can do a flower arrangement. Does anyone have a problem with that? Our return to Gosford meant we had to buy a home. Acquiring a home with a big backyard for four kids and another one on the way at an affordable price came with the knowledge that the backyard was in a flood fringe area. The maximum water level was two metre below floor level and 20 metres from the house—at least that is what the council officers said. Less than a year later we discovered after two days of rain that we had bought a house in a floodway with a flood level one metre above the floor and, naturally, right through the house. Council, we have a problem!

For the flood-affected neighbours, more than a little community activism courtesy of the Narara Creek Restoration Committee—thank you Peter Shields—the Narara Valley Residents' Association—thank you Henning Christensen—support from some of the councillors of the day, including Robert Bell, Ray Griffiths and Kim Margin, the then local member, Tony Doyle, and former Federal member, Frank Walker, resulted in the voluntary acquisition and relocation of more than 25 properties. That experience ignited a desire in me to get involved in local government and community issues. I proudly say that I was elected to the Gosford City Council in 1991. I can also proudly say that I have served 20 years as a councillor, including six as mayor. I acknowledge this evening the presence in the gallery of Councillor Laurie Maher and Councillor Craig Doyle, the mayor and deputy mayor of the City of Gosford. I also acknowledge the presence of my council colleagues councillors Chris Burke and Jeff Strickson.

My foray into local government has come at a financial cost to my family. I took on a full-time job with token pay and a mountain of responsibility. I believe local communities should be thankful for our many hardworking, dedicated and professional councillors. Indeed, many members, both past and present and of all political persuasions, have travelled that road. I owe much to my time in local government. It was an apprenticeship like no other. And now, 20 years on, I can still say that every day on council was a learning experience. It is the level of government closest to the people, but it is often the whipping post for the levels above. Many members would attest to that. My saviours from the breadline have been my wife and in later years my children and my extended family. Their dedication to our small family business has been outstanding. The Gnostic Corner at Woy Woy is not only successful but it also contributes to and enriches many in our local community. My family's commitment has been huge in enabling me to fulfil my civic duties over the years.

I spoke earlier of the infrastructure backlog in my community, but we should also acknowledge the wins we have had. We have had local surf club redevelopment with eight new clubs in 10 years. That is the envy of the New South Wales Surf Life Saving movement. Caroline Bay Regional Arts Centre is a showpiece that allows us to enjoy shows such as the touring Archibald Exhibition. The Peninsula Leisure Centre is a \$25 million state-of-the-art aquatic facility. Of course, we have the best regional sporting stadium in Australia—the Bluetongue Central Coast Stadium at Graham Park, Gosford, which is the home of the mighty Mariners. They have been in the grand final three times, but have been three times the bridesmaid. Please God, let next year be our year! God willing—that is "God" spelled "NRL"—the stadium will soon be the home of the mighty Central Coast Bears.

It would represent a union made in rugby league heaven of vibrant regional rugby league tragics, a breeding ground for rugby league for decades and a club steeped in history founded in 1908, the North Sydney Bears. That team is home to legends such as Harold Horder and Ken Irvine. That union is being facilitated by legends Greg Florimo and our own David Fairleigh. All of these projects were initiated at the local government level and most were advanced under local guidance alone and often with an indifferent mix of State and Federal support. As the State member for Gosford indifference will not be in my charter. I will fight to meet the community's needs, including a new performing arts centre, the upgrading of the Woy Woy road and rail crossing, and the re-establishment of the rehabilitation centre at the Woy Woy Hospital after heartless removal by the previous Government.
[Extension of time agreed to.]

Other projects include the West Gosford intersection, a 14-year debacle, the delivery of the Gosford Challenge and the central business district revitalisation, ensuring economic growth and job creation and, hopefully, the purification of the iconic memorial to Labor Party bad manners, Iguana Joes. My goal in this place, beyond those of honouring the election commitments in my campaign, are simply to use my experience gained in local government, the knowledge gained of my community's needs and to seek cross-government cooperation. To achieve those goals I am prepared to think outside the box and, above all, to apply commonsense, the lack of which has too frequently been replaced by mountains of red tape and regulation. This new member of Parliament will base decisions on one standing principle if nothing else—commonsense!

In thanking those I need to, if I were to name all those who have helped me to this spot today I would have to break the record of Mr Brooks and take you into the wee small hours of the morning. I apologise for this abridged version and crave the understanding of all those who helped me. I thank my campaign team led by Richard Keogh, assisted by Bob Mudge and Malcolm Brooks. To team members, many of whom are here—Bev Ferrier, Mark Porter, Suzie Woods, Sharon Martin, Jeff Strickson, Deanna Bocking, Jenny Philips, Bob and Annette Strong and Steve Russell—thank you all for your faith and your undying support. To Rod Bosman for his guidance and his patience and to those volunteers in their hundreds who believed in me and manned the pre-polls, assisted

at the railway stations, assisted with doorknocking and, of course, on 26 March when they presented the voters with a sea of blue that led to an historic victory for the Liberal Party: I promise not to let them down and to give my all in honour of their efforts and the voters trust.

I thank Mike Gallacher from that other place for his guidance and support; I am humbly in his debt. To my colleague in this place, the Minister for Resources and Energy, the member for Terrigal, Chris Hartcher, I thank him for his assistance. Who would have thought: in 1849, 162 years ago, the *SS Parland* arrived in Australia with German migrants. Our ancestors arrived on that boat and Mr Hartcher and I discovered this and, amid concerns of any possible onboard liaisons, he became worried about the fact he was putting on weight. I, in turn, worried about the fact that I was losing my hair! Thankfully, after extensive DNA testing, the only shared trait was our political belief. Thank heavens for small mercies.

To our leader, Barry O'Farrell, whom I remind that all winning campaigns must start at the cake stall at Kariong on election morning, to Jillian Skinner, Gladys Berejiklian and Mike Baird whose frequent visits were greatly appreciated and were key in the factor of victory in the seat of Gosford, and to Mark, Chris and Lisa-Maree from head office, thank you all for your support. Thank you to my close friends who have been able to distinguish the person from the politician. To the Byers, Smiths, Hickeys, Vickerys, Bennetts and particularly the Scaysbrooks who have travelled for eight hours to listen to a friend for 15 minutes, thank you all.

My last but most important thanks go to my family. To Marie Louise Holstein, my mother and number one supporter, the embodiment of the statement that there is no love like that of a mother's: Mum, I cannot thank you enough! To my wife, Mary: If in my 53 years on this earth I made but one good decision, it was 30 years ago when I asked Mary Elizabeth Ryan to be my wife. I have no false expectation on where her then positive response now rates in her lifetime of decisions. I know I am not the easiest person to live with but, Mary, you have been my rock! To my children: to number one Ranga, Gabrielle, and her husband, Graham; my grandchildren who have been exceptionally well behaved this evening, Dominique, Julian, Lillian and Phoebe; to my lovely out-there daughter, Emily, and her partner, Richard; to my number one son, Jacob, proof that the fruit does not fall far from the tree; and my beautiful daughter, Bridgette, and her partner, Rob; to my son Caleb, absent this evening but who no doubt will light up Greece like the true Ranga he is—my family members are my reason for being and they fill me with pride in all that they do.

I end my first but by no means my last speech with a dedication to my late father, Henry Holstein, who taught me to be true to myself, to stand up for what I believe in, to be respectful, hard-working and loyal. I know he would have been proud to be here tonight, and in some way I know he is here. I hope that those attributes and values that I bring to this place in serving the people of Gosford and New South Wales will honour my father and my family name. I thank you, Namaste.