

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: (Inaugural Speech): I rise today to give my first speech in this place in response to the committee report into reparations for the stolen generations in New South Wales. Let me start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this Parliament sits, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and future, and acknowledge the ongoing custodianship by Aboriginal people of the land, waterways and coastline that we call New South Wales.

I acknowledge the committee and in particular my Greens colleague and friend Jan Barham for her work as chair in establishing the inquiry and securing cross-party support for recommendations that reparations be made to stolen generation survivors and their families and communities. In her chair's foreword Ms Barham notes that:

While the word "reparation" means making amends for a wrong that has been done, it is clear that no amount of financial or non-financial reparations can ever fully restore what people have lost as a result of past forcible removal policies and practices.

I hope the Government supports the recommendations in this report. I look forward to being part of the ongoing effort of this Parliament to work with Aboriginal people towards reconciliation, to address the injustices suffered and to celebrate and learn from Aboriginal culture and knowledge as we strive for justice across our society and to protect the environment that sustains us all.

This is not how I wanted to come into Parliament. Dr John Kaye was a force in this place and within The Greens. He was an intellectual heavyweight and a tireless campaigner for justice, the environment and working people in New South Wales. I had hoped to be making this speech alongside John as my colleague in this place but that was not to be. John's passing is a reminder that the work of social change is bigger than any one of us, of any one party, of any term of Parliament. I am proud to continue the work of a generation of activists and campaigners. I am here because of their advocacy over many years for the protection of the environment, the pursuit of social justice and peace, and genuine grassroots and participatory democracy. We really do stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.

Undoubtedly the collective challenge confronting our generation is climate change. This is the number one priority for me and for The Greens and it must also be for this Parliament. As we are doing when it comes to the stolen generation, this Parliament has an important role to acknowledge past mistakes. We have a responsibility to do what we can to make amends and to seek to do better but we must do more than just manage old mistakes and past hurts. We must also recognise new mistakes before we make them. Today that means recognising climate change for the imminent threat it poses to everything and everyone we love and committing to ending our actions that exacerbate that threat.

In fact, there are already communities around the world suffering from the impacts and we are the last generation who can avert runaway climate change. Our responsibility is clear. I am committed to ensuring future generations—my son's generation—are not asked to bear the burden of our irresponsibility, our apathy or self-interest. I would not be here today or as passionate and hopeful about the possibility for this Parliament to play a role in social change if it was not for my experiences in the coal seam gas [CSG] campaign and in particular my time spent as an adviser to Jeremy Buckingham.

I am in no doubt that had it not been for his election in 2011 the trajectory of the environmentally destructive coal seam gas industry in New South Wales would have been very different. That is not to diminish the unprecedented community campaign that has built up in opposition to CSG, but Jeremy has given that campaign a passionate, articulate and tenacious political face. He and his office have contributed significantly to ensuring this issue is front and centre of the national debate. In doing so he has been a critical part of the transformation of politics in New South Wales. The election of Tamara Smith in Ballina is evidence, and that is just the start.

The campaign has protected the beautiful Northern Rivers, Sydney's drinking water catchment, the winegrowing region of the Hunter Valley, the magnificent Shoalhaven River, and the

Gloucester Valley and the river systems that flow through it into Port Stephens and the Manning area. I do not doubt the campaign will also see off Santos in the Pilliga and across the Western Division of New South Wales. I was involved in the earliest days of the Lock the Gate Alliance and was part of developing the initial strategy for that organisation in New South Wales. The movement has been one of Australia's most effective for social change—an extraordinary combination of empowered communities acting in concert, led by unlikely local heroes who have made a deliberate decision, often in the face of powerful vested interests and complicit and bullying governments, to serve our common good.

It has been a wonderful journey and a marker to me of how politics and social movements, when combined, can drive change. This movement is made up of farmers and environmentalists, traditional owners, nuns, activists, football players, teachers, mums and dads and kids, who have come together and built an alliance that transcends difference and celebrates the places and people we love. It has proven that social change is always found in the collective and with deep roots in our communities—groups like Gasfield Free Northern Rivers, Groundswell Gloucester, the Knitting Nannas Against Gas, the Hunter Valley Protection Alliance, Southern Highlands Coal Action Group, Keerong Gas Coop, Sydney Residents Against Gas, Caroon Coal Action Group, Bylong Valley Protection Alliance; there are many, many others. They deserve the thanks of future generations. I am proud to have been part of that campaign and to have as some of my best friends in life and in politics the activists and campaigners who have made it happen, and in particular Jeremy Buckingham, Max Phillips, Jack Gough, Adam Guise and Louise Callaway. I like how David Suzuki puts it when he says:

If you don't have air for three minutes you die. If you have to breathe contaminated air you're sick, so could you agree that the absolute highest priority we have is clear air? If we can't start at the basics, then I'm not interested.

My environmentalism, like the rest of my progressive politics, is grounded in first principles. At the end of the day protecting the natural environment that sustains us must come first. Not much happens on a dead planet. But as The Greens, we are proposing to do more than just arrest climate change and protect the natural environment. We are also demanding this happen as we reduce inequality, as we create inclusive and resilient communities—communities that have access to quality education and the best health care; communities that celebrate and respect differences of race, gender, sexual preference, religion and no religion. As we debate the upcoming Federal plebiscite, we should all reflect on the importance of celebrating diversity.

I reject the notion that we must decide between the environment and community or the environment and the economy. Protection of the environment and a commitment to the common good are inextricably and logically linked. Let us go back to first principles. Surely no-one in this House can object to preserving our clean air and clean water and protecting the stability of the climate that makes our earth home. I will not pretend that I am going to be able to come into this place and convince all honourable members that this is our most critical job and should be our highest priority. But it is and I will. If I do not succeed in convincing you here, I am going to spend every day working in the community until they force you to take this seriously or until there are enough people in this place who do.

I grew up in central Queensland, first surrounded by the cane fields of Childers and Bundaberg and later around the industrial town of Gladstone and on a small pawpaw and mango farm at nearby Targinnie. We always went camping as a family. What seemed back then very long car rides, whilst listening to country music or doing our times tables in the backseat, took us to campsites on the Blackdown Tablelands, Fraser Island and the gem fields west of Emerald. It did not occur to me at that time that this experience of nature, putting up a tent together, bushwalks, swimming in waterholes or at the beach and digging for gemstones in the rocky dirt was not something that every family did for their holidays.

I was into my sport as a young bloke. Karate, swimming, soccer, running and triathlons were my thing. It is fair to say I am still and always was a competitive person. I love the feeling of leaving everything on the field, in the pool or on the road. I could and would push myself until I had nothing left to give. I later put aside university in Brisbane and tried my hand as a professional triathlete but

after realising my body just was not up to 40 hours of training a week, I found myself working just enough to enjoy summers surfing on the Gold Coast and winters skiing the snowfields for a couple of years. But, as it does at some point, reality hit.

I saw an ad on TV for Army officer training and found myself on a plane to Canberra a month later to start at Duntroon at the start of 2000. I graduated to the army's Intelligence Corps in the middle of 2001 and soon found myself as a junior lieutenant in the Pilbara in the north of Western Australia where I lived for over four years. In hindsight, it was probably not a great plan for the Army to send an ex-surf bum to one of the most amazing coastal environments in the world, but I arrived in Exmouth having driven halfway around the country, stopping only to surf at Bells Beach, Margaret River and Geraldton and calling in to see the epic Indian Ocean waves at Red Bluff and Gnaraloo.

My environmental awareness was expanded in the Pilbara. I learned to dive on Ningaloo Reef and travelled hundreds of thousands of kilometres, for work and for play, through some of the most stunning natural landscapes. I visited the Karijinis and spent weekends amongst the beaches and boulders covered in petroglyphs on the amazing Burrup Peninsula near Dampier. I saw firsthand the juxtaposition of the mining industry operating in this fragile landscape. Massive clearing of mangrove forests had already occurred for salt mining and to make way for roads and rail to service port facilities.

The expansion of iron ore mining and export butted up hard against this landscape as dredging spoiled the waters and the priceless rock art was bulldozed to make way for gas plant expansion. Meanwhile, my family's farm in Queensland was being compulsorily acquired by the State government to make way for the shale oil industry. At one stage my dad found himself speaking on behalf of the farmers, some of whom had been put up in hotels in Gladstone because they were getting sick from the dioxins in the fumes from the shale processing facility. At one stage mum and dad protested on board a Greenpeace ship in Gladstone harbour.

The shale oil never happened, but the pipelines feeding the massive liquefied natural gas [LNG] plants on Curtis Island today have taken some of this land and this once productive region now sits idle except for the parade of the white utes of the resources industry. The same economic boom and bust that has visited most resource towns has now come to Gladstone and the story of the failure of national industry policy in overcapitalising on LNG export will be a legacy visited upon regional Queensland for decades to come.

I did not come from politics and I did not really think too much of mum and dad's activism at the time, but I can now see how all of these experiences have led me to this point. But the actual catalyst for joining The Greens came a few years later when as an analyst at the Joint Operations Intelligence Centre at Potts Point I came to view Australia's involvement in the Iraq war as a strategic failure. From my position, I saw skirmishes in southern Iraq and the intelligence reporting from the region misused, in my opinion, to justify political decisions, not to achieve a stable or peaceful outcome. In my mind the problems were political and I was not prepared to give any more of my time to serving a government I did not agree with. As a thinking person, an analyst, for me the only party in Australia that had a vision for a peaceful world, a sustainable world, and a fair world was The Greens. I resigned from the Army and I joined the party.

The future I see for The Greens is one of a party of government. I will be working to grow our influence in this Parliament and in the community. For the sake of the climate, we have no time to lose. Where The Greens have won lower House seats and represented their community as councillors and mayors the voting public has shown that they like what they see. We have just seen The Greens vote treble in last Saturday's council election in my local area of the Shoalhaven, rise from 33 per cent to 40 per cent in Byron Bay, break through on councils from Albury to Kyogle, and show strong results in Western Sydney in Campbelltown, Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains.

We have clear areas of strong support at the State, Federal and local levels in the inner west and the on North Coast, and we have shown we can challenge both Labor and Coalition members of Parliament. The Northern Beaches, mid North Coast, eastern suburbs and South Coast will be the next areas where The Greens will challenge. The Greens are a grassroots party and my approach as

a member of Parliament will be to spend my political capital in the interests and service of the community. As the party's treasury and finance spokesperson, I will continue to hold the Government to account for its failed privatisation agenda.

I look forward to building the credibility of The Greens in the economic space and to redirecting the public conversation away from growth and surpluses. We should measure economic success in terms of health and education outcomes, the health and capacity of our natural systems, and the reduction of waste and consumption. I will continue to argue that the economy exists for the community, not the community for the economy. To that end, we must recognise that the greatest threat to economic stability is a failure to address climate change and that cost must be reflected in all decisions of government.

I am particularly pleased to take on the marine and fisheries portfolio for the party. It is an area of personal passion for me. Over the past 12 months I have worked with fantastic campaigners across the country, including the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Australian Marine Conservation Society, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Sea Shepherd and No Shark Cull. Make no mistake, our oceans are under extreme threat from climate change, pollution and overfishing. We can give our ocean and magnificent marine creatures the best chance possible to survive these threats by protecting and expanding our important marine park network, including creating a new marine park right here in Sydney.

I will also be taking on the portfolio of gaming and racing. New South Wales is home to half of the 200,000 poker machines in Australia and we have the highest financial loss per person per year in this country. We know the social and economic consequences, including broken families, economic stress and domestic violence and we know the greatest impact is in communities of social disadvantage. Yet the Government is addicted to the revenue and beholden to the clubs and pubs. I will be a strong voice in the Parliament and the public for gambling reform.

This has been a big year for me personally. Melissa and I married in March and we welcomed our beautiful son, Banjo, into the world just four months ago. I am thrilled to be able to give this speech today in front of them both. As hard as the preselection was for me, it was nothing compared to what Melissa has done as a first-time mum who continues to run her own small business. She is an inspiration to me and I cannot thank her enough for her love and support. I am also very proud to have my parents, Joan and Mick Field, my sister Cassie and her two daughters, Alira and Lenore, in the gallery. Alira is asleep. I know my brother Ben and his family wish they could be here. Politics has kept me away from home for a while now and I thank them for making the long trip to the big smoke.

I come into this place with the strong support of the membership of The Greens in New South Wales. I am proud to belong to a party that supports an open and democratic process where every member is given a say in who represents our platform in the Parliament and in the community. My commitment to them is that I will work hard and continue to engage with you all on this important project we share. I am proud and thankful to have had the support of so many wonderful campaigners, both members and non-members. Today I would like to acknowledge: Drew Hutton, the founding president of Lock the Gate; Julie Lyford, former mayor of Gloucester and extraordinary advocate for protecting that wonderful valley from coal and gas; Dr Norman Thompson, former director of The Greens Democracy4Sale project; James Whelan, co-founder of the Change Agency and environmental activist from Newcastle; Clara Williams-Roldan, our candidate in the Federal election in Warringah; and our almost successful Lismore candidate at the 2015 State election, Adam Guise. Thank you for your powerful endorsements of my candidacy; it was an honour to have your support.

I thank a number of people who have given me advice over many years: Desley Banks, Carol and John Vernon, Michael MacDougal, Becky and Tom Jagtenberg, Pam Ditton, Cathy Griffin, Pip Rey, Mike Hall, Mandy Mullen, Pru Warn, Dawn Walker, Andrea Vickers, Rhianna Blackthorne, Justine Suthers, Susie Russell, Howard Jones, Catherine Moore, Claire Charles, Bev Smiles, Tim Duddy, Jocelyn Howden, Cate Faehrmann, Sandra Heilpern and Ian Cohen. There are many more who supported me and I look forward to campaigning with them in the future. I cannot thank Graeme Williams and Bec Talbot enough for their advocacy and friendship over many years.

I acknowledge a generation of current and former members of Parliament and candidates for The Greens whose advocacy and activism is the bedrock on which we Greens in this place can do our work. I am looking forward to working with all my Greens colleagues in this place, our wonderful councillors, particularly those that are new, and activists across the party and the wider community. It is an important and essential project that we share. We must be successful if we are to have a future on this planet and a caring and just society. We are all in this together.