

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (18:19): I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people. I pay my respects to Elders past and present. With this week being Reconciliation Week, I offer a hand of friendship and support on the journey towards reconciliation. It is very humbling and a great honour to be here in Australia's oldest Parliament, and it is lovely to be joined by family and friends to acknowledge this moment. I am truly thankful to the people of New South Wales for electing me to represent them in this place. I am enormously proud to be here as a member of the Australian Labor Party and to have had the great honour of leading Labor's upper House ticket at the election along with a number of other Labor men and women.

One of the most remarkable things about Australia is that a first-generation Australian like me has the same opportunity to be in this place as someone whose family has been in the country for generations. My family are Irish. Both sides are from Tralee in County Kerry, in the south west of Ireland. I am grateful to have had a strong connection to my Irish family over my life, particularly through my Nan, Agnes Keogh, an amazing and inspirational woman who I know is very proud to see me here.

My parents were the same age and from the same town, but they did not meet until they were both in Australia. They both left Ireland in the early 1970s, a couple of years apart, taking up the opportunity offered by the Australian Government to come to Australia for only 10 pounds to work and travel. My dad, John Patrick Joseph [Joe] Moriarty, came to Australia at the age of 17. There was not much opportunity at home in Ireland at the time and he came out here in search of work and adventure. He left behind his loving parents, Timothy and Elizabeth—from whom my middle name comes—and his brothers, James and David, all of whom are now unfortunately deceased. He arrived in Australia and worked, travelled and loved it so much he began to call Australia home.

My mum, Carolyn Keogh, came for a two-year working holiday adventure at the age of 20, a couple of years after my dad. She too was looking for adventure, so she decided to fly to the other side of world for a couple of years having never before left home. Both my parents fell in love with Australia very quickly, and after a couple of years also with each other. They have always remained proudly connected to their Irish heritage, but they made the decision to settle here and to take advantage of the opportunities Australia offered as they created our family.

Our lifetime connection to Ireland included my parents being foundation members of the Irish Club in Canberra and being very much connected to and involved with the Irish community in Queanbeyan and Canberra. That involvement included years of Irish dancing. I gave up early, but my sister became a champion dancer. My dad would make us listen to Irish music on long road trips. It would drive me mad as a kid because I wanted to listen to pop music. I now love it and appreciate its significance.

After moving to Queanbeyan for work, my parents settled there and that is where we built our lives. As a family man, my dad worked very hard to provide a good life for our family. He worked in various jobs in the construction industry in the late 1970s and the 1980s. He did building work and some demolition work over a number of years, the latter proving extremely unsafe due to dangerous exposure to dust. My dad was very smart, a people person and a natural leader. In the mid 1980s he became a successful small businessperson running a scaffolding business and employing a number of people. I remember as a child him going out to work early in the morning to do physical labour all day. At night he would often sit at the dining room table for hours doing paperwork and preparing tenders for future work for him and his team.

To make up for when business was slow, my mum ran a family day-care service from our home so she could also be at home with us before and after school. It was an idyllic childhood. My bother, Justin, and my sister, Samantha, and I grew up in a close-knit, safe neighbourhood, went to a great local catholic school—St Gregory's in Queanbeyan—and would spend our summer holidays every year swimming and fishing on the New South Wales South Coast.

In the late 1980s, my dad started to show signs of ill health. He was in his late thirties and no-one really knew what was wrong. Over the next couple of years his health progressively deteriorated. It was eventually realised that his exposure to dust and the work he had done years earlier would cause him to suffer terrible illness. Dust-related diseases are truly awful. At that time dust-related diseases were not as well understood as they are now. Unfortunately for my dad and our family, the unsafe work he had done years earlier eventually killed him. He died in 1995, two weeks after his forty-third birthday. It was a truly awful, horrific way to die. To be so young and increasingly unable to breathe as his body shut down all because of unsafe work is criminal. No-one anywhere around the world, let alone in Australia, should be in an unhealthy and unsafe situation because of work. It is a basic human right that people are entitled to safe workplaces; it is a basic expectation that we have as a society. This is something that I will fight for every day.

My mum, Carol, is a superstar. After my dad died she had three teenagers to support and plenty of bills to pay. We were very lucky to have a lot of support from neighbours, friends and our wider network, the local Irish community, which helped enormously at that time. I will never forget the generosity that people showed my family and the support we were given to get through that time. Our community coming together really helped my family and I am eternally grateful to each and every person who helped us. A sense of community is very important to me because that is how I grew up and became the person I am today.

In order to manage over the longer term, Mum worked various jobs, including home care and disability support work, and she went to TAFE to get qualifications in that field. She eventually landed at CatholicCare in Canberra, where she has spent the past 20-plus years caring for people in permanent residential care who have acquired brain injuries. She is such a generous and caring person that even though she is now generally retired, she still goes to the residential care home every week to volunteer her time with the residents.

The work my mum did was low paid, caring but physical work. She always worked on weekends, especially Sundays, so she could earn much-needed penalty rates to assist the family budget. She did not like taking away from family time on weekends, but the penalty rates made all the difference for paying bills and putting food on the table. Mum worked as a casual for many years. The insecurity was always a concern, but it was a particular concern when she was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer, along with some other health-related issues. She had to take time off work to recover, which she thankfully did. As a casual, there was no pay for the period she was off work recovering. Managing illness is tough, but bills keep coming. We were able to get through it, but temporarily living off savings and credit in that kind of situation is not something everyone can recover from.

Be it safety or secure work, I know what it means to people to work in unsafe environments and to experience income insecurity. My mum and dad's experiences shaped my worldview and they are but two examples of why we need basic rights at work—something I continue to pursue now. My family got through tough times with support, but I understand how easy it can be for people—especially people who are low-paid or vulnerable—to slip through the cracks. An incident or tragedy in your life can have an emotional and financial echo for years. For people who are living week to week with not much to fall back on, one unexpected misfortune or even a series of little things not going their way can throw them off course in a way that is hard to recover from.

That is why you cannot be too quick to judge those who are not as well off as others, and why we always need a strong safety net for people when they need it financially or emotionally. I believe that government should have policies and structures that enable people to achieve their own success. People have ambitions for themselves and their families and we should create all the opportunity we can to enable people to work hard and achieve. But I absolutely know how easy it can be, despite your best efforts, to fall behind and there is a role for government to, wherever possible, protect people from that.

Following that difficult time, I took a couple of years after school to work before starting university; I had to. I worked in various jobs, from childcare to office administration to hospitality—working in a couple of restaurants and a registered club. Working in hospitality was a lot of fun, but it

was also an eye-opener to see the exploitation of vulnerable people. I worked in some good places but I also experienced some tough times and was ripped off. Witnessing unfair situations in the industry led me to join my union, the Liquor and Hospitality Division of United Voice. I was soon offered a job at the union and I took the opportunity to stand up for the people in the industry that I had worked in. It was never my intention to stay long, but after six years an opportunity arose to lead the union and to advocate for the rights of our members at another level.

It has been a great honour to be an advocate for working people. I am proud to have been a part of a movement that, by its very nature, brings people together to fight for better lives. Yes, we fight for wage increases and better workplace conditions, but it is more than that. Being part of a movement that wants to empower people to lift themselves up is powerful and rewarding. It is a very special responsibility and privilege to work in the service of others and it is one that I take seriously. Compulsory superannuation—the great Labor policy created by Paul Keating to enable people to pool their resources together to invest for their retirements in a way they cannot do on their own—is a great example of how our movement can change people's lives for the better. I am proud to have been a part of an industry super fund set up for club workers. I was involved for over a decade and I am proud to have chaired the fund in recent years. I thank the team at Club Plus Super and industry super generally for the work they do in the interests of members.

It is incredibly frustrating to keep having the same old fights over and over again about basic conditions for low-paid workers, but I am particularly proud to have fought for club workers to keep the penalty rates they have earned and deserve. Many of these workers do not earn a lot to begin with. For a long time, it has been socially accepted in Australia that if you are prepared to work unsocial hours and do shift work for low pay, it is only fair that you receive a little extra money for doing so. Penalty rates are a real example of basic fairness in relation to work and community standards. We have a social contract in Australia that says you work hard and you get a fair day's pay. Unfortunately, we are operating in a time when basic standards and basic fairness are being eroded, but I have fought and will continue to relentlessly fight to protect the basics, including safety and fair pay.

I am a supporter of the hospitality industry and the jobs that it provides. I want to see more jobs created in the hospitality and tourism industries. I want business to succeed and thrive because of workers, not in spite of them. For our industrial relations system to work, we need to create a balance between the needs of business, workers and the community. For the system to be fair, it needs to include businesses valuing their employees and regarding them as an asset and a reason for success. People should be valued for their contribution and have some security for themselves in return for that contribution.

During my time at the union, I am very proud to have played a part in working on behalf of our members and with the club industry to create secure permanent and permanent part-time jobs. I acknowledge that clubs do a lot of good work in the community and are community-minded organisations. I am proud that my union pushed the industry to value the work of club workers by creating career paths and permanent work across the industry in New South Wales. It reshaped employment in the industry for many years and it was a great success for the mostly women employed. Working together, we helped workers secure jobs with sick leave and annual leave, relatively secure rosters so they could plan their lives, and decent pay with penalty rates for working shifts at unsocial hours. This had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of club workers for many years. There are a number of club workers here today and I acknowledge their support here and always. I particularly acknowledge my union colleagues here today.

I joined the Labor Party after Labor's election loss in 1996. It was the first election I was able to vote in and I was very upset about Labor losing. As a result, I decided to get involved and do something about the things that I cared about. I joined the wonderful folk at the Queanbeyan ALP branch and got involved from there. It was one of the best decisions I ever made, and I say to young people now: If you are unhappy with the way things are, join the Labor Party. Join any party. Get involved in politics. It really does provide an opportunity to change the world—although, join the Labor Party.

I have been an active member of the Labor Party for well over 20 years and I am so proud to have worked alongside some of the most amazing and dedicated branch members and officials over that time. Our branch members and volunteers are the heart and soul of our party. They are passionate about our movement and their local communities and the kind of State and country we live in. I am proud to have been a party officer at a State and Federal level for many years and to have been part of the growth and development of our party whilst also being a trustee of its core values, especially in the toughest of times. I am grateful for the support of Labor Party members and officials for trusting me with being a representative of Labor values in this place.

The issue that really got me activated in actual politics was the republic campaign and referendum in the late 1990s. I believe passionately in an Australian republic and that Australia should have its own head of state. I believe in it because I embrace and love Australia as it is now: a wonderful, diverse country, full of opportunity and promise, that is well able to show its maturity and independence in the world. I believe that it is an important part of Australia's future and I hope to see it happen in my lifetime.

Through our roles in this place we all have a responsibility to use our positions to make life better for people and to bring people together. There is a role for government to set an agenda for the future and to enable and empower people to prosper—to feel hopeful and secure about the future, not hopeless or worried. Our job as public representatives is to understand the needs of the people we represent now and into the future. We need to hear from them about what their needs and wants are and, where possible, deliver for them. But on occasion we also have to be prepared to make tough decisions and show leadership on tough issues. That means being honest and open and bringing the community into our decision-making process.

Australians are ambitious for themselves and their families. They want to work hard, be successful, help their families and ensure that they are secure into the future. We have seen at the last election that people are not caught up in class warfare. I will be a strong advocate for the people I am here to represent, but to do that you have to bring people together, not pit them against each other. People want us to make policy decisions that encourage and empower success while at the same time create protections that ensure nobody falls behind. I spent the first 23 years of my life living in regional New South Wales. After living and working in Sydney for many years I made the decision to move back to regional New South Wales.

Like millions of people in New South Wales, I have chosen to make a life outside of the CBD. I understand regional New South Wales and the wonderful lifestyle and opportunities it provides, but I also understand the challenges and lack of investment and services. I will be a strong voice for the people of rural and regional New South Wales in this place and I will advocate to ensure that they get their fair share. We need jobs in the bush. Unemployment rates are higher than the State average in every section of regional New South Wales. Youth unemployment sits way above State unemployment rates across the regions and it is simply not good enough to leave young people without opportunity.

We need a strong economic plan for rural and regional New South Wales. People should be able to work where they live. There continues to be a lack of investment. The time to act is now. We need more significant investment in the infrastructure and technology that will better enable people to run businesses with real scale outside of Sydney. Embracing technology and new ideas and rolling out the infrastructure that assists more efficient freight and people movement around the regions is essential. Our cities and towns need to be more livable across the State. Sitting on long-term issues in overpopulated suburbs or underpopulated regions will not create the State we need into the future.

Education is the great opportunity equaliser and every child should have access to a first-class education. We need a strong vocational education system that creates opportunities for people to develop skills and qualifications that they can build on and take with them for life. We should invest in our people everywhere through education and skills and always be training and preparing people for the jobs of the future. People deserve a first-class healthcare system. Every single one of us matters and we should ensure that every single one of us has access to the best care and advice needed to manage our health, wherever we live.

We all have a responsibility to raise the level of debate in the community. It is important to robustly debate and contest ideas but ultimately we need to work together in the interests of the people of New South Wales. I want to be part of making our State one where people have every opportunity to build the lives they want for themselves and their families. I want us to live in a community where we all look out for each other and everyone has the chance to live the lives they want to live—everyone should feel as though they are valued and have a place in our community—a State where our regions are respected and invested in and where we invest in our people to make them feel secure about the future.

No-one gets here by themselves. I would not be here without the support of many, many people. I want to start with my family: my mum; my dad; my brother, Justin; my sister, Samantha; my grandmother, Agnes; and my extended family in Ireland. Thank you for your love and support. Thank you again to the women and men of the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party and all of the party members and officials who supported me along the way. Our party machine certainly has a large reputation but I have always found the team at the ALP and the party officers and officials I have worked with over many years to care passionately about Labor values. I thank the officers I have worked with, including my friend our amazing general secretary, Kaila Murnain. Thank you to Pat Garcia, Mark Lennon, Michael Lee, Matt Thistlethwaite, Karl Bitar, Mark Arbib, Bernie Riordan, Eric Roozendaal and Sam Dastyari.

Thank you to the mighty trade union movement in New South Wales. Thank you again to my own union, the Liquor and Hospitality Division of United Voice. Thank you, John Hawker and the committee of management, our team and our members, for your support over many years. Thank you to my friend Mark Morey, Secretary of Unions NSW; Graeme Kelly and the USU; Gerard Hayes and the HSU; Bernie Smith and the SDA; Richard Olsen and Tony Sheldon and the TWU; Shane Murphy and the CEPU; Martin Cartwright and the NUW; Justin Page and the ETU; Alex Claassens, Bob Nanva and the RTBU; Theo and the Plumbers Union; and my long-time friend Daniel Walton and the AWU.

Thank you to my amazing friend Sophie Cotsis. I am so proud to call you a friend and I am so glad you are here after your experience last year. I thank my dear friend Susan Weston and her family: Dean, Bridgette and Katia. Thank you to Daniel Weizman, Siobhan Barry, Tanya Gadiel, Paudie and Cathy Murphy, my neighbours Peter and Valarie, Steve Whan and Cherie Whan, Bryce Wilson, Walt Secord, Peter Punch, Nick Lucchinelli, Paul McLeay, Richard Angel, Paul Howes, Sharon Murnin, David Holder, Jessica Malnersic, Dave Dobson, Jay Suvaal and Alex Costello. Thank you to all my Labor colleagues in this place for welcoming me here. I have worked with all of you in different capacities over many years and now I look forward to working with you in this place towards a Labor government in four years. I again thank the people of New South Wales. Public service is a privilege and an honour and now it is time to get on with the work.