



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday 12 October 2005.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [7.58 p.m.] (Inaugural speech): I would like to similarly begin by congratulating Steven Chaytor, the honourable member for Macquarie Fields, and Carmel Tebbutt, the honourable member for Marrickville, who were elected on the day I was elected. Having been elected on the same day, I believe we will always share a special bond. As a young legal student I read carefully about the development of democratic institutions in the early colony of New South Wales and I studied the social and legal history and traditions of this House, which, like many similar Chambers in the world, is the inheritor of over 700 years of history and tradition.

It is with a sense of awe and great pride that I address the House now for the first time. I do not for one moment fail to appreciate that the people of Maroubra have bestowed upon me what I consider to be the greatest privilege citizens can bestow upon another in a democracy—the opportunity to be their representative in a legislature. I thank the families of Maroubra, my fellow locals, for electing me on 17 September. I have lived every day of my life in the Maroubra electorate. I will not let them down.

There have been only three former members for Maroubra—and two of them have been Premiers—Robert James Heffron from the establishment of the seat in 1950 until 1968, William Henry Haig from 1968 until 1983, and Robert John Carr from 1983 until his departure earlier this year. Each of those men represented the people of the electoral district with distinction and set a high standard for me to maintain. They laid down also the tradition that the electorate is represented for long periods by members of the Australian Labor Party—18 years in Mr Heffron's case, 15 years in Mr Haig's case and 22 years in Mr Carr's case. It is a tradition I will be proud to continue.

At this point I would particularly like to thank my immediate predecessor, former Premier the Hon. Bob Carr. Along with Neville Wran, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, huge characters in the Labor movement and on the Australian political landscape, Bob Carr is one of the people who inspired me to join the Labor Party and seek political office. Mr Carr was always there to provide advice and encouragement when required, but for an aspiring young politician he provided something far more valuable than counsel: more than any other person I have met in political life, he presented me with a clear and flawless example, a model of how to conduct oneself as a capable, diligent and, above all, dignified member of this Parliament.

Bob Carr is an icon of the Labor Party and a monumental character in the political history of New South Wales and Australia. For a time in the 1990s, the Carr Government was the sole Labor ship afloat. In dark times it was our beacon, and Labor's return to dominance at State and Territory level today is due in no small part to Bob Carr's capabilities. I thank Mr Carr for all that he has provided to me and for the fact that the seat of Maroubra, which I inherit from him, is in tremendous shape.

I am keen to place on record my enormous gratitude to the many people who assisted and supported me in the Maroubra by-election on 17 September this year. From a glance at the gallery, all of them are here tonight. Firstly I wish to thank the President of the Randwick Labor Club, Ken Murray, who was my campaign director. Ken has been the campaign director for many elections in Maroubra over decades. No stone is left unturned, and no opportunity is ignored to impart the Labor message. I thank Ken for his efforts and look forward to joining him in the trenches in 2007, as we will no doubt once again talk him out of a premature retirement.

The real strength of any political organisation is, of course, the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes. The branch members and supporters of the Labor Party in Maroubra are no exception. They are numerous and extraordinary. These are the people who, inspired by conviction and loyalty, are there for every campaign, eager to contribute and make a difference. And make a difference they do! They are too numerous to thank individually. They are the real strength of the Labor Party. I thank them all. At election times, and in between, they do not conduct themselves as if Maroubra is a safe Labor seat. Nor shall I.

I would like to thank three such people who have been my right-hand men over many years: Graham Waters, Chris Ryan, and the late Dennis O'Leary. I would also like to thank the many members of the Parliament who assisted me in the campaign and thereafter. I thank the following honourable Ministers and members: the Premier, Ministers Carmel Tebbutt, Joe Tripodi, Frank Sartor, David Campbell and John Hatzistergos, the Hon. Eddie Obeid, and my neighbour, the member for Heffron, Kristina Keneally. I also thank Mark Arbib, the General Secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party, for his continued support.

Finally, with respect to my campaign I thank the many members of Young Labor and my campaign office staff, led by Sam Dastyari, Josh McIntosh and Rolly Smallacombe, who descended on Maroubra in great numbers during the campaign. The energy of youth! They are a great asset to the Labor Party. I have the immense privilege of being the local member in a truly wonderful seat. In geographical terms the seat is a wonderland. It extends from the south of Coogee Beach all the way to La Perouse. Along the way the coastline is blessed by unrivalled beaches, including the world-famous Maroubra Beach. There is beautiful windswept coastal heathland, some of it remnant, and green open spaces, including four premier golf courses.

On that topic, a most significant issue in relation to open space within the electorate is the Malabar headland. It is an amazing site with a unique history but an uncertain future. It is owned by the Commonwealth. Listed on the Register of the National Estate, it is Labor's position that it should be handed over to the people of New South Wales and Australia to become a national park and public open space. It is an issue far too important with which to play politics. I invite and urge every member of this House to visit that site. It is an area every bit as interesting and unique as North Head. Those who see it will understand.

I commit myself to pursuing the handing over and conversion of this land as vigorously as I can. Ideally I would like to work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Government to achieve those objectives, but if they cannot be achieved co-operatively they must be pursued by all other legal means. The stakes are too high to fail in this endeavour. I look forward to working with the Federal member for Kingsford Smith, Peter Garrett, on this and many other issues that are important to our respective electorates.

My electoral district is also blessed with many wonderful institutions, including one of the best health care precincts in Australia: the Prince of Wales Hospital, the Royal Hospital for Women and the Sydney Children's Hospital. The University of New South Wales also partly resides in the electorate. It is a matter of historical record that the first member for Maroubra, the Hon. Robert Heffron, as Premier and local member, played a major role in the establishment of that university, the second to be established in New South Wales, on the site of the old Kensington racecourse. The

university consequently plays neighbour to another great institution in our area: the internationally recognised Royal Randwick Racecourse.

The story of the local area is also replete with episodes of significant history. At this juncture I wish to acknowledge the Dharawal Aboriginal people, who are the traditional owners of the land on which the seat of Maroubra and surrounds are now founded. Their ancient history in our locality is still there to see if one cares to look, and I am proud to say that the seat is still enriched by a significant Aboriginal presence, particularly at La Perouse. They are, pardon the pun, a colourful, vibrant and interesting community, full of character.

The local Aboriginal people have always been particularly gifted in athletic and sporting pursuits and that community has produced many sportspeople of note. The famous Ella brothers, who represented Australia in rugby union, are but one example. I very much look forward to working closely with the people of this community and enjoying their company in the coming years. I really enjoy having a laugh with them. And bridges can only be built from the bottom up.

The southern part of the electorate is also the foreshore to a significant part of Botany Bay—significant not only in terms of its Aboriginal heritage but also because of its role in European settlement. Captain Cook's diary records that he walked along the highest sand ridge in the area. Members of the expedition of the famous French navigator La Perouse camped on the beach at present-day Frenchmans Bay, which is aptly named. A member of the expedition, a French priest, Father Receveur, died whilst camped in that bay. The first European to be buried on Australian soil, his grave at La Perouse is marked by a monument revered each year by the French Government and French community in Sydney.

History and institutions aside, as I have already alluded to, it is the people, the community of the electorate, who are the most remarkable. Bounded by water on, let's say, two and a half sides of the electorate, it is an area where everyone knows everyone else. There are no six degrees of separation in Maroubra. Maybe two. It is a small country town in the heart of Sydney. The word "community" might as well have been conceived for this area. There is a significant RSL presence, there are many registered clubs and hotels that provide terrific community support, there are surf clubs, sporting and social clubs of all persuasions, and there are charitable and volunteer organisations of every kind. The Randwick Netball Association, one of the largest netball associations in the State, also calls Maroubra home. Significantly, it is an area that has produced an abundance of representative sportspeople over the decades. It is a part of the heartland of Randwick rugby and of next year's National Rugby League premiers, the South Sydney Rabbitohs. The honourable member for Heffron agrees with me entirely.

Every new member of this House has an ambition to contribute to the betterment of public life in certain policy areas. I would briefly like to place on the record my interest and position on certain relevant issues. The environment is an area which greatly concerns me. Whilst time does not permit a general discourse on the subject, I nominate global warming as the most pressing environmental threat of our times. Global warming is a reality. Whilst the man on the street knows this, our Federal Government refuses to recognise that reality. It is therefore up to the States and Territories to take the lead. Failure to do so will be catastrophic. Education and training are other areas in which I should like to take an interest. The fact that I am standing here now is a testament to the educational opportunities provided to me whilst growing up.

I come from a typical suburban middle-class Australian family. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of my parents, I received a wonderful education from the Marist Brothers at Marcellin College, Randwick, a regional Catholic school. After I left school I worked for 13 years as a customs officer with the Australian Customs Service. I studied law at night, I paid my way through tertiary studies, and I succeeded. I was one of the fortunate ones who were given the opportunity. That opportunity is now being denied to thousands of young people in Australia because, sadly, we have a Federal Government that has been spectacularly successful at creating an American-style university system where increasingly only the well-off or the hopelessly in debt will be able to afford to complete a tertiary education.

Increasingly, student places are being sold to foreign students to subsidise underfunded universities. This, combined with the skills shortage in the country, is a sad indictment of failed policy at the Federal level. For over a decade the Federal Government has failed young Australians looking to become educated and skilled. Once again it is up to the State governments—the State Labor governments—to look after young Australians. Even though my seat is very much a metropolitan one, I have a great affinity with the people of rural and regional New South Wales. My forebears, having immigrated from Ireland, all came from the land: on my mother's side, from the Burragorang Valley before it was flooded to make way for Warragamba Dam, and on my father's side, dairy farmers scattered along the coast of the State, but principally in Kempsey.

In addition, as a councillor on Randwick City Council I have greatly benefited from a sister-city relationship between the City of Randwick and the Shire of Warren, in Western New South Wales, which, because of its wonderful racecourse, describes itself as "the Randwick of the west". The people of Warren are typical of people generally in regional Australia that I know: salt of the earth. Their Mayor, Rex Wilson, is one of nature's gentlemen. I value his friendship and that of his family. I look forward to joining with my Country Labor colleagues in supporting the interests of country people. As I stand here tonight I have never been more proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party, the party that has for over a century fought with spectacular success to improve life for ordinary working people.

We are at a seminal moment in the history of Australian industrial relations, where an ideologically-bent Prime Minister is about to undo a century of careful evolution and is about to wreck an industrial relations system that has delivered balance, fairness and stability to the nation for a hundred years: a Prime Minister who is bent on taking us down the path where it becomes more difficult for ordinary people to succeed. He has done it to the university system and he is doing it slowly to the health system. Now he wants to do it to the industrial relations system. Throw a few scraps to the employees of the nation, call them minimum conditions and safety nets, and then let it rip, do your best, may the strongest survive! Australia was not founded on that concept and I am proud to be a part of this Government, the lemma Labor Government, that only yesterday reiterated its commitment to fighting the Prime Minister's plan with all means at its disposal. The Prime Minister will learn that with the working people of Australia on our side this fight is far from over.

All members of this House know that to be truly successful in public life one needs a loving and supporting family. I am truly blessed in that regard. I would like to place on the record the enormous contribution my family has made to all my endeavours in life. Their support has been absolute. To my little sister, Maree, my brothers Paul and Peter, to Lucinda Daley, Emma Stradling and little Finn

Daley, likewise. I thank my wonderful fiancée, Christina Ithier, who will become my wife on 3 December this year, and our children Alison and Jake. Like others in public life I am frequently working until late at night. I always return to a warm and friendly family environment—a typical Aussie home with kids and dogs under your feet. God willing, there will be more to come—kids that is—not dogs.

I would like to dedicate my speech today to four people. Firstly, to my uncle, the late Brother Benedict (Bernard) Carlon, a Franciscan friar, my friend with a gentle heart. Also, to my grandfather, the late James Raywood (Ray) Daley, who was a dairy farmer from Kempsey and for many years the President of the North Coast Dairy Farmers' Association. But most particularly I would like to honour my mother and father, Mary and John Daley, to whom I owe everything. I thank honourable members for doing me the honour of listening to my first speech. I am honoured to join them in this place.

Mr SPEAKER: The Chair notes the presence in the public gallery of the large contingent of members of the family and friends of the honourable member for Maroubra.