



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday 30 May 2007.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [7.56 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Today I speak as the newly elected Liberal member for Hawkesbury. The Hawkesbury has been fortunate to have some outstanding representatives in its history. To Kevin Rozzoli, one of the most respected Speakers of this House, a member who worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Hawkesbury, thank you. Your friendship and advice has been invaluable to me over the past six months, and I will work hard to emulate your record of service, your integrity and your loyalty to the Liberal Party.

The electorate of Hawkesbury is adorned with hardworking traditional rural families combined with an abundance of younger aspirational families, many of whom moved to the electorate through the rapid growth of the Rouse Hill development. It is one of the rare places where one can walk through quiet, leafy, treelined rural streets and yet be a mere 35 minutes to the thriving metropolis of Sydney. I have lived and worked in the Hawkesbury electorate my entire life and my family have a very long association with this area dating back almost 200 years. Indeed, my ancestor and one of my original family descendents to this country, Robert Allen, arrived in Australia in 1796 and was given a land grant on Castle Hill Road, Castle Hill, in 1814. Robert Allen was sentenced to transportation as a political prisoner from Ireland and disembarked from the *Marquis Cornwallis* in Sydney Cove in 1796.

Since that time the family has flourished and made a considerable contribution to this State and its people and today are spread widely across the electorate of Hawkesbury and indeed Australia. In 1791 another family descendent, Charles Whalan, arrived on these shores from England. Both these men were sentenced to transportation for menial crimes but laid the foundations for our family today. I pay tribute to those early descendents, who arrived in this country as convicts, who endured unbelievable hardship barely imaginable to people of today. These brave early pioneers of Australia worked and toiled, sometimes bloodied from the discipline of a cat o' nine tails and leg irons, but nonetheless continued to carve out a niche in their newly adopted country. Through hard work and perseverance both these men were rewarded with land grants.

Charles Whalan would in time become a close personal friend and adviser to Governor Macquarie. Copies of original letters between the Governor and my ancestors are held in possession of my family to this day. In 1967 the suburb of Whalan in the northwest of Sydney was named in honour of this family. Robert Allen's land was passed on through his sons to his grandsons. One of those children, Ambrose Allen, moved the family to the Dural area, where many of the family still reside today. Their original stone house, built by the family from stone quarried on the property in 1853, was moved by horse and cart by Reg Allen in 1921 to the very spot where it proudly sits today on Old Northern Road at Round Corner. The very thought that someone would commit to such a feat of moving a house stone by stone is testament not only to the physical but indeed to the enduring strength of this remarkable family.

Tonight there are many proud sons and daughters of these two great men present in the gallery who commenced our families' early existence in Australia. I pay tribute to their support and love over many years, none the least being Barry and Maria Allen, family members and prominent residents in the Hawkesbury area. I was fortunate to grow up in a loving family environment with strong Christian values. My wonderful parents, Allen and Margaret, instilled in me the importance of never judging anyone because of their race or colour but instead treating everyone as an equal and

acknowledging and helping those less fortunate. My father, Allen Williams, was the former heavyweight boxing champion of Australia and the South Pacific during the fifties. He grew up in the Depression, breaking in horses and working farmland in the Dural area from the tender age of 12.

My father met my mother, Margaret, who was the daughter of English parents from Cornwall, in Merrylands in the forties. Together they were a formidable team, travelling both this country and abroad and achieving much success through my father's career in the boxing ring. In a career spanning 14 years, his record of only six losses was exemplary. When dad finished fighting he returned to his early love of horses and moved down the road from Dural to the Rouse Hill area, where the family lives today. My parents always encouraged me to work hard and pursue my dreams but to also keep my feet firmly on the ground. As a family we were a great team and both worked and played together; whether that was pursuing our great love of thoroughbred race horses or just working hard on the farm, we were always together. Even when my sister, Janine, and I grew up and left home we never moved far from our parents, whom we both loved and adored and now sadly miss. It would be remiss of me not to mention the role my sister, Janine, played in nursing both my parents in their greatest hour of need. For this I will always owe her a great debt of gratitude. Thanks, Janine.

Our family were involved in every aspect of the thoroughbred racing industry ¾ from owning, breeding, breaking in and training thoroughbred racehorses. My father and I, who both held Australian Jockey Club training licences, trained horses together for more than 30 years, wining races from Rosehill Gardens to Gulgong. It was a wonderful time with many highs and lows and it gave me a great insight into the struggle of people within the industry right across New South Wales. It has been my misfortune over this period of time to see a once great racing industry lose thousands of participants. Trainers, jockeys, strappers and especially owners have walked away from this industry in droves because of poor administration, due in no small part to a total ignorance of the racing industry by the ministry for Racing and Gaming in this State.

Country racing, once the heart and soul of the racing industry, has continued to decline. Participation in country areas is at an alltime low, with local employment and businesses in country towns being the biggest losers. Many politicians and bureaucrats think Tommy Smith, Malcolm Johnston and Kingston Town were all born under the winning post at Royal Randwick. Of course, the opposite is true: they all came from the bush. To ignore country racing is to ignore the one essential ingredient that the racing industry depends on most of all: the horses. When compared with other States in Australia, the New South Wales racing industry is well below par.

Growing up in the Hawkesbury area I covered much of the countryside on horseback, witnessing little change to the area until the early nineties. When change came it came suddenly through massive development. Sadly, some of it was neither pleasing nor sustainable. The long drawnout battle to have Windsor Road upgraded is just one example of how residents were being denied adequate infrastructure to service such a huge development. That and the continued battle for better public transport in some ways laid the foundations for my entry into politics. One overwhelming theme that can be heard in every suburb of Sydney is that residents are fed up to the back teeth with overdevelopment.

The Sydney metropolitan area has moved a mere 45 kilometres inland in 200 years, but some minority and unelected green decision makers would have us believe that to develop one more inch of land or cut down one more tree would increase the temperature of the world and we will all burn in a fiery hell. Urban consolidation is socially and fundamentally flawed. Its insistence that we must build higher densities to sustain future housing requirements around existing transport nodes, while these services are already unable to cope with current population levels, is absurd, to say the least. While it is fair to say there will always be a market for this type of development, families with children should always be given the opportunity to purchase homes with a backyard, not forced into apartment blocks.

Ironically, in the rural areas of Hawkesbury, families live on 20, 30, 50 and 100acre blocks of land but are unable to even subdivide a small portion to give their children a home. Instead, they watch as their children leave the area they grew up in and move long distances away from their loved ones. Rural populations thereby dwindle, with the combined effect felt throughout the entire community, impacting heavily on local schools and businesses. In these rural areas of the Hawkesbury there is an opportunity for further fiveacre development. This type of small acreage development is nothing new but has proven extremely popular on the outskirts of Sydney. In areas such as Annangrove and Kenthurst, natural vegetation has increased enormously over the past 20 years as people now choose to live in rural bushland settings, unlike years gone by when these areas were significantly market gardens.

Fiveacre development is not only sought after but is also sustainable, given most residents provide their own onsite sewerage management systems, water supplies and solar power. These people are arguably the true environmentalists in respect of sustainable living. I have long argued for changes to current urban design. Our choice of housing mix should aim to include larger blocks of land as an option, especially around the periphery of urban zones, which complement sensitive areas and encourage vegetation. This will hopefully become reality within the next stage of development in the north Kellyville release area. However, the imposition of huge infrastructure levies on development is already having a detrimental effect on the availability of future blocks of land, further impacting on an already struggling New South Wales economy.

I have always believed leaders must lead by example. As someone who has shunned the use of petrol for the past 25 years, preferring alternatives such as liquefied petroleum gas, I have now taken the next step and purchased an electric hybrid vehicle. In the near future I hope to draw on the technology available to us in this country and obtain a totally electricpowered car. If our State Government were serious about reducing pollution it could start by insisting that all government cars are at the very least electric hybrids, which would save needless amounts of carbon emissions being pumped into our environment daily.

It is also sad that we have leaders in this State who cannot make a simple decision on ways to save water. As someone who has lived on tank water my entire life, I am bemused as to why there has not been a greater emphasis placed on implementing water tanks in schools, businesses and government buildings or, indeed, anywhere with a roof for catchment. As someone who has a small dam on my property providing all my necessary water, it is comforting that my own council of Baulkham Hills shire has followed suit in this regard. Our council has minimized its dependence on

Sydney water by 50 per cent in the last year in terms of irrigation for parks, simply by utilising water tanks and implementing dams into our reserves and playing fields. The question, therefore, is why cannot our State Government do the same, instead of wasting billions of dollars on an unpopular, unnecessary and unwanted desalination plant? [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In 1985 I was fortunate to begin employment with Glenorie Bus Company at Dural. That company was owned and operated by the Todd family, who were, in my opinion, leaders in providing public transport in this country. In 1987 the company implemented twoway radios to all buses, along with electronic ticket machines. The twoway radios enabled bustobus communication for the first time and provided valuable information back to the company about traffic congestion, overcrowding or lost children. The company far exceeded any public transport operation in this country by continually embracing the latest technology improvements, such as global positioning systems and electronic destination. In 2000, operating up to 70 buses a day for the provision of services to the Olympic Games, the company showcased to the world just how efficient the private bus industry was.

In 22 years of employment with this company, Glenorie Bus Company never cancelled a single service. Compare this, if you will, with statistics in last Sunday's newspapers of 155 trips being cancelled by governmentoperated buses in one week alone, which is just deplorable. The three basic requirements to the success of any form of public transport is providing safe, clean and, above all else, reliable services. New South Wales taxpayers deserve nothing less. I would like to extend my thanks tonight to the Todd family, who continue to be great friends and supporters. To Laurie, Keith and Keith Jnr, I will always be grateful for the wonderful opportunity you provided me with. You encouraged me, never questioned my judgment or commitment, and always supported innovative ideas. I am honoured to have been a part of this company's overwhelming success.

There are many people I need to acknowledge tonight who have been mentors, advisers and supporters to me over a long period of time. I would like to start by thanking the former Mayor of Baulkham Hills Shire, John Griffiths, and his wife, Elaine, for everything they have done for me. I would like to thank people such as John Trlin, Greg and Diane Burnett, Simon Hillel and John Higman, my council colleagues Mike Thomas and Larry Bolitho, good people such as David, Marissa and the entire Clarke family, and people such as Nic Campbell and Alex Hawke. They have given me wonderful support. I would also like to thank Rick Forbes, Joe Saliba and Eric Cooper for everything they have done.

In particular, I would like to thank the Hawkesbury State Electorate Conference, especially Sam Russo, Grahame Utley, Paul Osborne, Andrew Wind and Justin Taunton. People such as Buddy and Noeleen Ziedan, Phil and Frank Barba and Dennis Merchant also provided incredible support, along with David and Joanne Baynie, Tony Dagher and Guy and Julie McHugh. Matt Connor and Mark Lewis worked tirelessly throughout the last campaign, along with an abundance of enthusiastic Young Liberals that the Liberal Party and I could certainly not do without. I would also like to say a very special thanks to all the Liberal branches and their Hawkesbury members, who have provided such great support over a long period of time, without whom we never could have managed such a great local result at the last State election.

Most importantly, I need to thank my own family. My wife of 25 years, Wendy, who has been by my side since we were 15 years of age, has been, and always will be, the love of my life and by far my greatest asset. To my children Ryan and Kylie, you continue to make me prouder by the day. Special mention must be made of my son Ryan's achievement last week of being awarded Apprentice of the Year. Well done, mate. I could never have hoped to have a more loving and supportive family and wonderful children. But please, kids, will you tidy up your rooms! Your mother's going nuts! I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the love and support of motherinlaw and fatherinlaw, Doreen and Norm Mitchell, who are always there when you need them most.

A former President of the United States of America was once asked about the friends he had gathered after a long career in politics. His reply was that if you want a friend in politics, get a dog! Fortunately, there are many people here tonight whom I can honestly call friends—people who stick by you in good times and bad, people who ask nothing but always have much to offer. To those people, I thank you greatly. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Liberal Party of Australia, to which I owe a great deal, and I appreciate its continued support and confidence. To the ultra-extreme Christian fanatical religious right—whoever you are, wherever you are—you have achieved an enormous amount of profile at my expense over the past year, and I certainly hope you take the opportunity of introducing yourself to me sometime in the future!

The people of New South Wales are sick and tired of being overregulated and overtaxed, and are particularly sick of excessive waste by government. We, their leaders, must work harder on behalf of the people we represent and reward the hard work and selfreliance of our people, which will in turn be reinvested in our own State of New South Wales. At the same time we should always show support and compassion to those who need it most.

New South Wales is the greatest State in this wonderful country. It is the gateway to Australia, but it is sadly being bypassed on the road to prosperity because leaders and decisionmakers in this State are comfortable settling for second best. In a country that has people with the highest intelligence, the greatest sportsmen and sportswomen on the globe, the most innovative entrepreneurs, and resources other countries can only dream of, we have State governments that are squandering opportunities and taking our current prosperity for granted. We must embrace the challenges ahead of us in this State, learn from the mistakes of the past, never being fearful, but relentless in pursuing and achieving our goals, whilst always looking to the future as we build a better New South Wales for the many generations to come. Thank you.