



Inaugural Speeches

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Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde) [6.56 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I stand before you, Mr Speaker, and my parliamentary colleagues to deliver what I hope to be the first of many addresses in this Chamber for the people of Ryde. A number of people have played a part in my life, in the path I have followed and in who I am, which has brought me to this place tonight. I acknowledge the two most important and inspiring people I have known: my mother, Josephine Dominello, who is here tonight, and my father, Frank Anthony Dominello, who is here with me, right now, in spirit. Eternal is my gratitude to them for all the love, support, sacrifices and opportunities these two humble people have given me.

In addition to my wonderful parents, I acknowledge my beautiful sisters, Maria Olivieri and Catherine Gillies; my supportive brothers-in-law, Joseph Olivieri and Andrew Gillies; my handsome nephews, Michael, Jayden, Liam, Jack; and my gorgeous niece, Charlotte Francesca. The other very important people in my life whom I acknowledge are my uncle Joseph Dominello, Aunty Sue, Aunty Pauline Abate and Uncle Andrew, my many cousins and cousins-in-law, and my five godchildren. I have numerous friends here tonight whom I thank, including Rafael Uy, Andrew Ticehurst and Dr Renata Abraszko, all of whom I consider to be part of my family. I also record in history my gratitude to another family member, Paul Etherington, who has sacrificed so much to enable me to pursue this new path.

Political mentors such as Michael Baume and Peter Graham have always been there for me. A special thank you goes to Caroline Beinke for her energy and professionalism, and the extraordinary efforts of the entire campaign team that assisted me in the recent election. The enthusiasm of the Young Liberals in the campaign was rejuvenating. I acknowledge the hard work that my predecessor, John Watkins, dedicated to the people of Ryde, as did his predecessor, the prodigiously talented Michael Photios.

I thank each and every one of my Liberal parliamentary colleagues who worked so very hard during the recent campaign and made me feel so sincerely welcomed into this parliamentary family. I am honestly grateful for all the support and generosity that I have been given by this great team of people. In particular, I pay high tribute to the member for Willoughby, Gladys Berejiklian, and the member for Lane Cove, Anthony Roberts, both of whom honourably dragged me into this House, and of course to the Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell, who provides me with constant guidance, support and vision, all of which are hallmarks of a truly great leader. Finally I thank the people of Ryde and the many family and friends of all political persuasions who have entrusted me with their stories, prayers and encouragement that brings me to the point at which I stand today.

My longstanding connection with Ryde goes back to the 1930s when my paternal grandparents, Vittorio and Immaculatta Dominello, settled and raised their family in North Ryde. They established a market garden in the area and then went on to establish a local fruit shop in Eastwood. The connection with the area also exists on my mother's side, when in the 1940s, my maternal grandparents, Cosimo and Theresa Iemma, settled and spent a lot of time working and raising their family in the Top Ryde area. Most of my family and I went to schools and churches within the electorate. I served as a councillor on Ryde council for nine years. While doorknocking in the recent campaign, I was comforted by the sea of friendly faces that reminded me of this deep-seated bond

that I have with Ryde and its people. In this my inaugural speech, it is important for me to outline the values that I bring to this House. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, spoke for me when he said:

Let all bear in mind that a society is judged not so much by the standards attained by its more affluent and privileged members as by the quality of life which it is able to assure for its weakest members.

As a member of this House and as a representative for the people of Ryde, this means that I have an obligation to ensure that our Government provides for those in most need: our children, our aged, our sick and our poor. In this, I have enormous respect for our teachers, our nurses, and our carers. I want to record my gratitude for the invaluable work they do for our community day after day. I will support these people in every way I can.

I especially want to look after those that are vulnerable through misfortune, not those who are vulnerable through lack of effort. I want to look after the battler. The desire to recognise the most vulnerable is an important value that has driven me throughout my life and my work, and that has ultimately shaped my decision that led me to this House.

I would like to share a story with you from my student days about a battler. When I was in year 12, I helped teach English to some students from year 7. I recall a boy, Anthony, who migrated from Lebanon and spoke only broken English. Anthony looked like a normal kid. He looked happy and did his best to assimilate by learning English and playing with other children in the playground. One day he told me that his uncle had arranged for him to come to Australia for him to have a chance at a better life. Anthony's mother was very sick. His father passed away in the war.

I vividly remember the day when a tennis ball rolled into the seniors' part of the school, with Anthony apologetically following. One of my classmates picked up the ball, and Anthony, in his broken English, pleaded to have it back. My classmate taunted Anthony for being a foreigner and then threw the ball out of the school grounds. Anthony was absolutely shattered. I felt so sorry for him because I knew that he was already going through enough pain and struggle in his young life. At the time, I was too far away to help him, but I confronted my classmate about what he did and his lack of compassion. Anthony was a battler in every sense of the word, battling to learn English, battling to make new friends in Australia and battling to deal with the loss of his father. He did not need petty bullies to make life even harder for him. This incident left an indelible mark on my life and highlighted the importance of standing up for those less fortunate and the battlers in our society.

I related to Anthony's plight of trying to assimilate. Until I was three years old, my parents taught me to speak both English and Italian. But after the age of three, I started to play with the neighbourhood children, and in my need to be accepted and not be seen to be different, I was stubborn. When my parents tried to teach me Italian, I refused to learn. In the course of growing up I recognised that being different and being an individual is what makes the world an interesting and vibrant place. This individuality is something I try to hold onto, and that is why you may occasionally see me wearing, distinctive coloured socks.

Ryde is a very vibrant place. Almost 40 per cent of the people of Ryde were born overseas. Among others, we are fortunate to have a rich tapestry of cultures: Armenians, Chinese, English, Italians,

Indians, Koreans and Lebanese, all living within our beautiful electorate. Last Thursday at the Australian citizenship ceremony for Ryde residents there were 83 new citizens from 25 different countries, from Armenia to Zimbabwe. As the new member for Ryde I will lead by example and do everything I can to embrace and celebrate all our cultures within Ryde, as well as promote the beauty that our diversity brings. Ryde is a real microcosm of metropolitan Sydney. This is why she is regarded as the pulse of metropolitan New South Wales. Ryde has the three major public transport arteries coursing through her: buses on Epping, Lane Cove and Victoria roads, ferries on Parramatta River, and trains on the Northern Line.

Ryde houses the Macquarie Business Park, which will soon be the second largest central business district in New South Wales. Ryde also has within her growing domain magnetic shopping centres at Macquarie, Top Ryde and Eastwood as well as an array of businesses, from the corner shops to the global giants. Ryde also houses important places of education, such as Macquarie University, two TAFE colleges and 18 primary and secondary schools. Ryde must be catered for because she is so pivotal to the people of Ryde and to the many other people in New South Wales who will increasingly gravitate to her and rely on her each day for employment, education, industry and commerce.

However, infuriatingly over the past 13 years, the people of Ryde have laboured under asphyxiating traffic conditions, traffic which is now clotting the feeder roads. They have laboured under appalling mismanagement of rail services that has resulted in the trains on the northern line running late 75 per cent of the time. And they have laboured under absurd levels of public waste. In recent times, this has meant nearly \$100 million of public moneys have been lost on the failed Tcard project, and tens of millions of dollars of public moneys have been lost on transport projects that will never see the light of day under Labor. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The inability to manage major infrastructure works can also be found in the fiasco of the Cross City Tunnel, the folly of the Lane Cove Tunnel, and the Parramatta to Chatswood, now the Epping to Chatswood rail link, which will come at twice the cost and for half the distance. This blatant delinquency and waste of public moneys resonated in the recent by-election results, where the people of Ryde decided that it was time to start the change.

Some of my visions for Ryde include the absolute need for long-term public transport infrastructure plans. This will emancipate Ryde from the traffic prison that is one of the tragic legacies of this Labor Government. But we need people in government who can make sure that public transport is reliable and runs on time, and we need people who have the ability to manage important projects, people who will ensure that the projects do not run at twice the estimated cost for half the return. Significant infrastructure works will also bring much-needed stimulus and leadership into our economy.

In order to grow our economy, in concert with significant public works, we need to remove the shackles from business incentive. Payroll tax, for example, is absolutely regressive in nature. How can government encourage economic growth by taxing businesses for employing people? It is socially abhorrent. Government should tax profit, not the means or the will to achieve it. We should seriously consider reducing payroll tax, with a view to ultimately abolishing it. This will send a strong message that New South Wales is serious about creating growth. We should also balance economic

growth with rigorous consumer protection laws so as to limit the extent of big business exploitation on the individual and on competition. This is consistent with my drive to look after the battler.

I want to realign social values that focus on getting people to take responsibility for their actions. Graffiti is a simple and graphic example of how realignment of social values can have an important impact on our society. Ryde council has spent over \$170,000 this year on cleaning up graffiti. Recently a major Sydney newspaper reported that last year councils and State Government agencies spent an estimated \$200 million on cleaning graffiti and related malicious damage incidents.

Yet the most recent attempt at managing graffiti laws provides a relatively minor deterrence, being a maximum fine of \$2,200 or six months imprisonment. Under the Young Offenders Act, the likelihood is that young offenders will be let off with a warning. A solution would be to amend the Young Offenders Act to make graffiti an offence not covered by the Act. Magistrates could then order the young vandal to clean up the graffiti. Indeed, regardless of the age of the vandal, the courts should, unless there are compelling personal circumstances, impose a community service order requiring the vandal to clean up the graffiti they were responsible for, together with other graffiti in the area, to a maximum number of community service hours that is reflective of the actual public cost of the vandalism.

Let me make this clear: I do not want to see people imprisoned for graffiti offences. I want to help people by getting them to clean up their mess and learning from their mistakes. Another possible alternative is to have parental responsibility orders, whereby the parents are ordered to remove the graffiti or pay for the cost of the removal and/or a fine—a substantial fine that acts as a proper deterrent, rather than a maximum \$2,200 slap on the wrist. If we introduce laws then let them at least be effective and a real deterrent.

This is not just about graffiti; it is about wanting to spend the \$200 million of public moneys a year on helping those in genuine need, like the child battling with leukaemia or someone suffering from dementia. We need to place a higher value, a higher premium, on public moneys so that we stop the waste on ill-conceived projects. We need to remove the culture of graffiti and senseless vandalism that absorbs so much public money.

We need to become more efficient in the administration of government so that public moneys can be used on our most needy. We need vigilant management of precious government resources because, without this, vital front-line services such as those provided by our teachers, our nurses and our carers will suffer. If we cannot or do not properly look after our most vulnerable then we have failed as a society. I also have a vision for our environment. Recently I was invited by Ermington Public School to address its young students in relation to an eco-garden they established. I told the students that it was the first time I had addressed an audience whose hearts were so pure. When I look around the Chamber tonight it is also refreshing to see so many pure hearts around me. These children were so excited and justifiably proud about their eco-garden. One day they will be custodians of the national parks and rivers that cradle our beautiful Ryde. I want to make sure that our natural environment is not only preserved but also enhanced so that we can pass it on to the enlightened stewardship of those to come.

This Chamber should be a place where robust debate occurs and ideas are generated. All members of this House have powerful obligations to those watching us to inspire the people we serve. Often

there are young students who come to observe this Chamber during question time. Within these students are future Premiers, Ministers and members of Parliament. How we behave will influence their young minds and the type of leaders we create for our future. Robust debate needs courageous debate. It is time to debate whether we should have community-initiated referendums. It is time to debate whether we should have a mechanism whereby on sitting days community leaders can address the Parliament on both the problems they face and their suggested solutions. By spending 15 minutes each sitting day just prior to question time and listening to community leaders we would add value and currency to our Parliament and the decisions we make.

I am a Liberal who has entered this Parliament in a time of inspiring opportunity, in a time where a man with African heritage is President-elect of the United States of America, in a time when the Liberal Party selected a Vietnamese boat woman to be the party's candidate for the seat of Cabramatta, and in a time where the people of Ryde ignited the engine for change. I am proud to be a Liberal and to represent the people of Ryde because I want a government that will promote a strong economy through sound economic management. I understand that without a strong economy none of my ideals can be achieved. I am proud to be a Liberal and to represent the people of Ryde because I want a progressive government that helps the battler by promoting equal opportunity over equal outcomes. I am proud to be a Liberal and to represent the people of Ryde because I want a government that will look after our young, our old, our sick and our poor.

I come into this Parliament with much anticipation, much hope and much vision. I come into this Parliament as part of a dynamic Liberal Party team that is enthusiastic, hardworking, representative of our community and ready to govern and serve the people of New South Wales. I am proud of my Coalition colleagues who stand with me in this Chamber. I come into this Parliament at a time when the good people of Ryde have started the change for the better.