



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday 8 September 2010.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.10 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): As I first walked through the doors into this historic Chamber in late June, past the watchful and slightly intimidating eye of Sir Henry Parkes, I was—as I imagine all of my colleagues past and present have been—struck by the responsibilities and honour of this role. I hope and expect that feeling will never diminish as long as I remain a member in this place. At the outset it is important to record that none of us comes here without the support of the people of our electorates, and today I warmly thank the people of Penrith for the support they have given me. I have learned much from so many local people in recent months and look forward to continuing to learn into the future.

I have an undiluted passion for Penrith and its people. I will always strive to listen to and hear their concerns, their views and their perspectives on the issues with which we grapple in this place every day, and to bring those views to this Chamber to ensure that they are well and strongly represented here. My commitment to the people of Penrith is essentially identical to the commitment that they make to their own families and in their own jobs, that is, to work hard and to work with strength and integrity in everything I do.

I am also standing in this place today because of the support of the New South Wales Liberal Party and the support of its members and staff, both in Penrith and further afield. It is fair to say that it has been some time since a Liberal member took their place in this Chamber representing Penrith, but to those who never lost the faith—thank you. To the members and the supporters of the Liberal Party in Penrith who have helped to make my election possible, I express my sincere appreciation. To Barry O'Farrell, the leader of the Liberal team, the Leader of the Opposition, and a familiar face in Penrith and the lower mountains, I thank you for your drive, your determination and your leadership. I thank you and the team of colleagues here who worked so hard to harness those winds of electoral change that were blowing so hard in western Sydney in my campaign.

It seems to me that in 2010 the electorate of Penrith, from Cranebrook to Kingswood, to Emu Plains and Glenbrook, represents far more than a simple geographic or demographic description might reveal. Penrith, in my view, is the essence of modern western Sydney, at once dynamic and diverse, but also a close community with great respect for our history, traditions and indigenous heritage. We are a proud regional city bounded by key suburbs and the smaller villages of the lower mountains, and united by the bonding ties of the magnificent Nepean River. In one corner of my electorate the traditions of market gardening continue in what was once the food bowl of Sydney. In another corner the magnificence of the world-renowned Blue Mountains National Park begins its rise from the banks of the Nepean. In long-established suburbs traditional family homes now sit side-by-side with villas and townhouses and, simultaneously, new chapters of the development story are written every day.

We have all watched Sydney grow massively in recent years, and Penrith along with it. For my part, I think some in Penrith have been relatively mute in communicating beyond our borders what is needed to make this State and this city of Sydney, and our growing western Sydney region and its cities such as Penrith, function optimally. That is a change I intend to make. Penrith and western Sydney will no longer be taken for granted. I most certainly promise that the strong voice of Penrith will be heard loud and clear in this Chamber on many issues. The people of Penrith rightly expect their elected representatives—and indeed the Government—to advocate on their behalf and to be

responsive to their growing needs and demands. Meeting and exceeding those expectations is my goal.

We are the essence of burgeoning western Sydney because we are a region of great opportunity and potential. Business in Penrith optimistically sees that significant potential in our community and has enormous drive and enthusiasm to build on that with plans that befit a growing regional city. We also exemplify modern western Sydney because right now, on the one hand, we are facing the great coincident challenges of development and, on the other hand, the preservation of important open space and natural environment. We confront challenges of infrastructure neglect and, further, a complete absence of infrastructure planning let alone delivery for growth. We face the challenge of increasing numbers of young families choosing to live in our part of the world because of the lifestyle and the opportunities, and at the same time a community service environment where support levels cannot always keep up with the needs of the most vulnerable people, including the disadvantaged young and the elderly, those who may be homeless or suffer mental illness, and many people with disabilities.

In these not insignificant challenges lie many of the strengths of the future of Penrith and of western Sydney, but it will take a government which understands that the term "service delivery" comes with an obligation to actually deliver, a government which understands that with growth and development comes a responsibility to work with business, the job creator in this State, and with the people, to ensure that infrastructure is provided in those areas which need it now—not decades hence when the planning and construction obstacles have become insurmountable. In short, we need a government that will reclaim first position in Australia for the State of New South Wales.

In my view that requires a significant cultural change in the politics of New South Wales, a cultural change that the Liberal Party can and will deliver. That cultural change will bring about a government that in fact meets the quite simple and reasonable expectations of the people of Penrith—that they will be served by a government that works as hard as they do, that meets high standards of integrity and honesty, and that has a vision for the future of this State that extends beyond its own political existence.

I am a product of Penrith, of Penrith schools, first St Dominic's at Kingswood—and I am not the only Dom's boy in this place, I might add—and also McCarthy Catholic College at Emu Plains; a product of Penrith's numerous sporting clubs, in my case the Penrith Rams; of Penrith businesses, where I had my first jobs; and a product of my Penrith mates and friends. I love the commitment and engagement of the people of Penrith in their community, whether it is in sport or the hundreds of other groups and organisations. It is a natural part of our life and gives our city and region great vitality, which plays out in parks and ovals, in halls and at volunteer committee meetings across town every day of the week.

My choice to become a participant and move beyond observer status in the political arena came when I joined the Liberal Party over 10 years ago. I am as passionate about politics as I am about Penrith. You could ask a few people about that, but probably no better referees than my parents Garry and Lesley and my brother John. It is wonderful to see them here today. To my family I owe so much. Let me just say here and now that my parents' commitment to public service exemplified in their defence careers and community activity, my family's love for our nation and our history, did not just rub off on me—it is in my DNA. Their commitment to public service is also mine,

demonstrated now in a different profession. I am so proud to be the son of Garry and Lesley Ayres, and so very proud that I can acknowledge and thank them and my brother here today. To Marise, your grace and poise continually amaze me, your strength and courage inspire me and without your love none of this would be possible.

I joined the Liberal Party because the fundamental Liberal values of individual freedom, support for free enterprise, commitment to small government and a just and humane society are my own values. I think we should remind ourselves from time to time of some of the often forgotten basics of Liberal philosophy. They are tried and true, "well tested in the marketplace" some might say, and a good foundation for solid government.

Let me start with individual freedom and our judgements of others, and most particularly not judging people on their race, creed, religion, age, gender or sexuality. We are all New South Welshmen, we are all Australians, and we are all human beings created by the God to which we pray. The diversity of this nation is woven into the fabric of our past, our present and our future. I believe that utilising that diversity, not fighting it, is the way forward. I have great respect for the fundamental significance of individual freedom and for a just and humane society, and in a nation such as Australia, where we have a proud history of men and women fighting for those rights and freedoms, it seems worse than counterintuitive to me to approach life in any other way.

The backbone of my electorate is the assembled force of small and medium businesses, their owners and workers. We are not a government town. In Penrith, jobs and futures are overwhelmingly created by business men and women who have a commitment to free enterprise, to making their own way in life and reaping both the rewards and challenges that come with their endeavours. They make their desire for a strong, competitive New South Wales economy where they can run their businesses and compete in the marketplace clear to me in our discussions. Some operate as sole traders in the villages of the lower mountains, others in light industry and small workshops, and many in the large retail and commercial centres of Penrith. Wherever and whatever their trade, they need consistent rules and regulations, they need a strong business environment and a government that genuinely has an interest in their wellbeing and future—perfectly reasonable requirements of a government, I would suggest. I also acknowledge the role of local business organisations that advocate for Penrith and for their business members in their work. I want to help harness their vision for the future of Penrith and help carry it forward wherever I am able.

If business is the backbone of Penrith, its heart can be found amongst those who work with and care for people in need in our community and who in their contribution make our society more humane. I think particularly of carers for children and adults with disabilities, and for the elderly and chronically ill. In what is an often exhausting and thankless role, hundreds of women and men support and look after mostly family members in a very personal and intense way. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The load carried by carers is significant, the reward most certainly not financial, but the value of their contribution to the community is immeasurable. New South Wales will hopefully see substantial political change in the next year. I am working for it, the people of Penrith are hoping for it, and the people of this State deserve it. It is overdue, it is necessary and it will see a generational change in politics in our State. I do not mean by age, but I do mean by attitude and calibre and mission. We must have a new generation of politicians. As a State we must absolutely challenge ourselves to be better than we have allowed ourselves to be in recent years. I want to challenge

people to think about the sort of State and country in which they want to live, and to work with them to make sure that change happens.

In thinking about the future and the vision for New South Wales and Australia I have another change in mind, and that is a fundamental and also long-overdue change, a constitutional change. I firmly believe that as a modern, mature nation Australia should be a republic; that we should be selecting our own head of state from amongst Australians, and that any Australian should be able to aspire to be our head of state. In a modern nation, where success is not dictated by birth or wealth, where we pride ourselves on our down to earth and egalitarian society how is it still the case that our head of state is drawn from the British royal family? How is it that not one of the schoolchildren from Penrith, from Cranebrook or Lapstone who come to visit this Parliament can aspire to be our head of state? It is time for that to change.

In this place I represent a community that owes much to the foresight of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, whose bicentenary we are celebrating this year. Governor Macquarie opened up the west of Sydney with key land grants, watched over the laborious and backbreaking development of a path through the Blue Mountains, and recognised the enormous potential of this region. As a keen student of history I believe it is important to acknowledge that vision and the possibilities it created for our State from the beginnings of our small colony to today.

The people of the electorate of Penrith, from the mountains to the plain, are immensely proud of their community. They are self-made, they are strong, they are great contributors to community and they are fiercely loyal. And there is more to come. This is a community, a regional city, that has not yet achieved its enormous potential. We, like Macquarie, have a vision for western Sydney and our place in it. And I have the honour and the opportunity to represent the people of Penrith at this very exciting time. I look forward to the challenge. I am passionate about what is possible. I look forward to Penrith continuing to cement its position in the future of New South Wales.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): It being almost 4.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to Government business.