



# Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Thursday 26 May 2011.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) [11.54 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Madam Speaker, colleagues and friends, I rise to speak today, conscious of the responsibility I bear by being elected as the member for Vaucluse to this great Parliament. I am equal to the task. Like my Liberal and Nationals parliamentary colleagues I am determined to honour the trust placed in me by my local community and in our new Parliament by the New South Wales people. The portrait of William Charles Wentworth is not in the Chamber to stare down at me. It usually hangs on the far wall. Painted around 1850, it is being refurbished—rather like the New South Wales Government. A happy coincidence one might say.

Despite W. C. Wentworth's watchful eye being absent from the Chamber, he looms large in the colonial history of New South Wales and Sydney's Eastern Suburbs in particular. He was chief founder of colonial self-government and a protagonist for the introduction of civil liberties, such as trial by jury and free speech. He formed Australia's first university, the University of Sydney, and with Blaxland and Lawson made the first European crossing of the Blue Mountains. W. C. Wentworth left a formidable legacy and he personifies the enterprise, energy and independent thinking that we value in Vaucluse. As best we know, the seat of Vaucluse took its name from W. C. Wentworth's large ancestral property, Vaucluse House, which once covered the suburbs of Vaucluse, Rose Bay and Watsons Bay. Vaucluse House was named after Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, in South Eastern France, where Petrarch, the fourteenth century Italian poet, sought refuge from the civil disorder in nearby Avignon.

W. C. Wentworth's life was full of controversy and charm. The Australian-born statesman was often at odds with leading colonial families called 'the exclusives'. No doubt he, like Petrarch, sought refuge at Vaucluse. To this day, W. C. Wentworth's body is entombed in a family burial vault in Chapel Road, Vaucluse, above a high rock ledge that was once part of the Vaucluse House property. It is not surprising that W. C. Wentworth had his final resting place there. It is said that he loved to sit on the ledge and look out over Sydney Harbour. More than 130 years on, the splendour that he saw remains just as alluring today. It is why, ladies and gentlemen, Vaucluse is such a special electorate in our State and no-one of course can argue with that—not even my parliamentary colleagues who are rightly jealous of their own electorates.

Our electorate is unique and diverse. It is full of natural beauty, it is rich in character and history—and all in 15 square kilometres—from the international tourist destination of Bondi Beach to the tiny, secluded harbourside beach at Camp Cove that is only reached by foot; from the foreboding South Head cliffs facing the Pacific Ocean to the soft white sand and gentle harbourside swells at Nielsen Park; from the beautiful 1834 Lindesay residence in Darling Point, home to many colourful historical characters, to nearby contemporary homes designed by internationally acclaimed architects. We cherish our role in New South Wales and Australia's history and the diversity and beauty of our natural and built environment. We value the terrain with the exquisite harbour glimpses that W. C. Wentworth so enjoyed—except when we have to climb up heartbreak hill when we run in the City to Surf.

I will stand with our local community in defence of those precious things so that future generations may also enjoy them. That is why I helped found my local residents' group, the Darling Point Society, more than 10 years ago. The challenge will always be to preserve the character of our area whilst allowing progress that improves the quality of our lives and reflects our diversity. It is a challenge we must embrace. The challenge is made easier by our Government's commitment to give planning powers back to the local community. Projects of spurious State significance will no longer be fast tracked away from the communities they most affect. To the south-east of the electorate lies Bondi Beach, a world-class international tourist destination that attracts more than two million people a year. The infrastructure at Bondi Beach must be renewed to reflect its iconic status. Bondi Pavilion at the centre of the beach is in need of maintenance and North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club is struggling to meet growing needs within its clubhouse.

Something less well known about Bondi Beach is that its northern end is home to unique marine life. There are giant pink boulders, with their holes burrowed out by black sea urchins. Around those boulders are baby Port Jackson sharks, scorpion fish, sea stars, giant cuttlefish changing shape and colour, and electric-blue sea spiders. It is a miracle that this rich marine life coexists with the intense recreational use of the beach. As we renew our infrastructure at Bondi Beach we must protect this natural environment because its value extends well beyond our local community. Our home is on a peninsula. Travelling in and out of the electorate on the three age-old arterial roads is challenging. It is not as challenging as the M5, admittedly—my colleagues would say—but challenging nevertheless, with traffic congestion snaking its way east and west.

Ferries are an important and popular transport choice for local residents. So we welcomed the Government's recent announcement to seek registrations of interest from the private sector to run our ferries. It is long overdue. I look forward to seeing new and expanded routes that can improve services for local commuters and encourage greater use of ferries. Our local community is diverse and enterprising. Over 50 per cent of our residents are born overseas, compared with 30 per cent nationally. Close to 40 per cent are professionals, double the national average. They include business leaders, philanthropists and entrepreneurs. We are

proud also to have the largest Jewish community in New South Wales. My heartfelt thanks go to the community's leadership—in particular Yair Miller, who joins us today, and Vie Alhadeff from the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies—for the early friendship and guidance they generously extended to me.

While Vacluse is often stereotyped by its affluence, what is not often understood is that some of our residents are less fortunate, socially isolated and need assistance with housing. We strongly benefit from the many vibrant local organisations that stand ready to help. Their vital work is often made possible through the generous financial and hands-on support of local residents. This social compact we have shows the enterprise and energy of our diverse community, a community that punches above its weight. I was born in the eastern suburbs of Sydney and educated, like my mother and sister before me, by the Brigidine nuns. My world expanded beyond this Catholic community through my mother's encouragement of my musical talent, so-called, and my debating flair. An infectious love of knowledge and respect for heritage on my father's part led to my inquiring mind. With these influences my confidence grew. I learnt about uncertainty and diversity. As the first one in my family to attend university and then graduate to work in a top law firm in Sydney, I understood early on about hard work, focus and risk taking.

Throughout my youth my mother and my Catholic faith instilled in me a belief that is as strong now as it was then that there is no higher calling than serving the community. This led me to contribute to the community wherever I was. In my late twenties I went with my husband overseas to study, to work and to see the world. Before starting my MBA in New York, I served as a volunteer in the Manhattan Borough President's office, helping small businesses to grow. I listened to people, I understood their needs and I worked hard to help them get ahead. From these experiences, I stand before you as an optimist. I believe in self-responsibility, choice and competition. I believe that solutions are usually found within communities rather than in the lofty corridors of government. I believe in equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. Innovation that comes from opportunity grows the economy which, in turn, creates jobs and supports our families.

The dividends of economic growth fund quality services: transport, hospitals and reliable infrastructure. This is a Liberal vision. It is a vision that will make New South Wales the number one State and the seat of Vacluse a better place to live and work. Labor has a different approach: tax, spend and regulate. As Ronald Reagan said, "Tax anything that moves, regulate it if it keeps moving and subsidise it if it stops moving". Because of Labor's approach New South Wales' potential has remained only that—potential. However, our Government understands New South Wales' potential and we have already begun the tough work of rebuilding New South Wales. Living in New York for six years I saw the best and worst close at hand—great ideas and bad public policy. I knew then that I could best contribute to the community by using my business, finance and legal skills. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

For more than a decade since returning to the eastern suburbs I have used those skills to help the community in areas that are key to New South Wales' future: education and research; business policy; and youth development. I bring those skills to my new role as a member of Parliament. I am honoured also to have the trust and confidence of the Premier and his ministry to assist them as the parliamentary secretary to our tertiary and vocational education sectors. As a first generation university graduate, a former deputy chancellor and a medical research institute director, I am passionate about education and the advancement of knowledge. Knowledge empowers us, it minimises our differences, it maximises our prospects of understanding one another and it is not diminished by age or use.

Our tertiary and training sectors need to be better supported. A key part of the equality of opportunity I firmly believe in is making them more accessible and flexible for students. We must also encourage the sectors to work closely together, not only because education and training helps each of us reach our potential but because we can grow the New South Wales economy and build our export markets. Research must be better supported. After all, imagination based on knowledge can be the key to our discovery of a better future, safer lives for our children and cures for disease. New South Wales should also leverage its funding to support research and business partnerships and to simplify planning processes so that businesses, research institutes and universities can be located together to exchange ideas and capital.

Through my roles in business and in policy here and overseas I have often seen how bad Labor has been for our economy. Business needs to be freed up from red tape to do what it does best—to take risks and to drive economic growth through investment. Our laws in New South Wales have led companies to shift their investments to other States. It shows in our near-to-the-bottom ranking for economic performance amongst all the States and Territories in Australia. This is shameful because New South Wales is blessed with abundant financial, human and intellectual capital. Our Government will simplify our laws and processes. On the first day of Parliament I watched the reform of our director liability laws. A director of a community centre, small business or school will no longer be automatically liable for what has happened in the organisation if he or she has not done anything wrong. This is commonsense, I hear you say. But it has taken a change of government to make it happen.

We must also work hard to restore business confidence in dealing with government. Business has been burnt through the former Labor Government not honouring its obligations. Business is crying out for accountability, transparency and openness from government, and we must deliver that. Please indulge me while I pay tribute to some people. My journey here was very much assisted by their valuable support. To the former members for Vacluse Rosemary Foot, AO, and Peter Debnam, I pay tribute to

their work for our local community and to the good governance of this State. To Rosemary Foot, in particular, the first woman to serve in a leadership position in the New South Wales Liberal Party as former Premier Nick Greiner's deputy, you have shown an unflinching commitment to the party and to me and I thank you.

To my campaign manager, Chris McDiven, AM, the first female Federal President of the Liberal Party: As my first mentor into politics you shared the decade of my journey here. I value your generous spirit, your sense of perspective and your good humour. To Jessie Bartos, my loyal local mentor: I will always value your advice and your praise—when it comes—is always worth the wait! To the Hon. Robert Webster and the Hon. Nick Greiner, AC: Thank you for your strategic advice and practical support. To David Gonski, AC: Your integrity, your lack of hubris and your distinguished accomplishments continue to inspire me. Thank you for your early and constant support of my dreams. And to Charles Curran, AC, and Mrs Eva Curran, Kevin McCann, AM, Warwick Negus and Bruce Morgan: Thank you. To my dear friend and mentor Emeritus Professor Mark Wainwright, AM: Your strong and gentle leadership, your thoughtfulness and your common decency have indelibly informed my life.

To my parliamentary colleagues and mentors—the Hon. Greg Pearce, MLC, the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, the Hon. Mike Baird, the Hon. Jillian Skinner and the Hon. Robyn Parker: Thank you for your encouragement in so many ways. Without the support and endorsement of the Liberal Party, my Liberal colleagues and the Vacluse Conference I would not be here. Although we say that Vacluse is a safer seat, we did not take it for granted; our campaign team and conference worked hard during the election and we exceeded expectations on every front. Many of you sit in the gallery today. We shared a solid victory of which we can be proud, and I thank you. To Nicole Banks: Your leap of faith in me, your calm approach and your unstinting loyalty have meant so much has been accomplished.

To enter politics you need the strong support of your family. My family has allowed me the greatest luxury of all: being able to focus on my calling to this Chamber. It is because of my dearest husband, Alex, my handsome son, Nicholas, and my gorgeous daughter, Georgina, that I stand here today and I can tell them in the gallery how they sustain my spirit and intellect and how they are the joy of my life. Thank you to my dear mother and father, Marie and Warwick, who worked so hard to provide me with the opportunities that led me here today, and to mum who taught me the meaning of resilience and that everything "finds its own level" in time. To my three siblings and, in particular, to Graham, my youngest brother who is here today, I thank them for their enduring commitment to our small but very close-knit family.

To my parents-in-law, Miki and Dragana, who are here today: Thank you for your love and support over more than 20 years. To Annita: Thank you for your warm and trusting care of our precious children and home which makes everything else possible. And finally, but not least, to all my parliamentary colleagues and to the large Liberal-Nationals Coalition class of 2011: I am honoured to be part of such a diverse and talented group of people. We come to this place with community expectations on our shoulders that perhaps no new class of parliamentarians has carried in recent times. But we have the enthusiasm, idealism and determination to make sure that the people of New South Wales view this Parliament with pride and not with contempt. When the portrait of W. C. Wentworth is returned to this Chamber I know he will be able to look down on us and acknowledge that we have restored faith in our great democracy and our great State. Thank you.