



Full Day Hansard Transcript (Legislative Assembly, 15 June 2011, Corrected Copy)

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday, 15 June 2011.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [6.03 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I am conscious of the advice given to me by one old hand who said that the only value of an inaugural speech was to give future members of Parliament something to quote from during a condolence motion after you had died. As a new member of this place, I am pleased to say that I am yet to develop such cynicism. I am in this Parliament, of course, as the member for Hornsby. Whatever opportunities public service may bring, it will always remain my first priority to do all that I can to serve the community that has provided the enormous honour of electing me as their member of Parliament. To the people of Hornsby I say thank you for your trust, I will not let you down. My task is all the more special as I have been elected to serve the community I have lived in for my entire life. It is a community and a part of Sydney that is very special to me.

Members of Parliament often boast of the famous people who come from their electorates. Hornsby's most famous son is Ginger Meggs. The creator of the *Ginger Meggs* cartoon series, Jimmy Bancks, was the son of Hornsby's first Railway Station Master. Jimmy Bancks's life with his mates growing up in Hornsby was the inspiration for the adventures. The backdrops to the stories are the real fishponds, shops and railway lines of Hornsby. The Ginger Meggs character was based on Jimmy Bancks's best friend, Charlie Sommerville. Charlie Sommerville grew up to be a prominent local businessman and later the mayor of Hornsby. Ginger Meggs's experiences are shared by many of us who grew up in the area. My own childhood had much of the fun and friendships celebrated in those stories.

Hornsby is renowned for its pristine bushland, vast national parks and, of course, magnificent waterways. It is one of the most picturesque areas of Sydney and is the northern gateway to our State's capital. But Hornsby is far more than just a place of natural beauty. What makes Hornsby special is its sense of community and the generous, hardworking and caring people who have made it their home. It is not surprising that people from all over the world have chosen to live in Hornsby. The diversity that is found today in our suburbs has greatly enriched our community. We very much reflect modern Australia's diverse and aspirational society. One of the great opportunities I have as the local member is to work with and for all sections of our community.

In the few short months since my election I have been inspired by the work of so many volunteers. Thousands of residents across our electorate volunteer in our Rotary clubs, Lions clubs, churches, chambers of commerce, Neighbourhood Watch groups, sporting clubs, emergency services, Rural Fire Service and charitable organisations. We owe the countless volunteers who contribute to our local way of life a tremendous debt of gratitude. They are the backbone of our community and I pledge to support them in their good work. The proudest thing that I have done since I have been elected to Parliament has been to attend local Anzac Day services. I remain humbled by the proud veterans that I met. They saw me as their local member. I saw them as the men and women who gave me the opportunities I have and gave us all the freedoms we enjoy.

My greatest commitment to Hornsby is to fight for the services and infrastructure that our community needs—the widening of New Line Road, sewerage services for our communities of Galston and Cowan, better public transport and commuter car parking and the construction of the missing link between the F3 and M2. This is not the occasion for political rancour but I would be unfaithful to those who elected me if I did not say something about the state of one of the most important services in Hornsby, our hospital. There is little that is more important to the wellbeing of the people of our State than access to quality health care when they need it. Yet in Hornsby the previous Government failed to meet that obligation.

The skilled and dedicated doctors, nurses and staff of Hornsby hospital have been let down by the appalling state of the physical infrastructure in which they are expected to work. It is no longer acceptable that they are forced to put out buckets and towels to collect water every time it rains. It is no longer acceptable that doctors and nurses trip over power cords on the floor of operating theatres because of the faulty electrical system. And it is certainly no longer acceptable that critically ill patients have to share the intensive care unit with possums. The wards are so old one almost expects to find Florence Nightingale on duty. I am proud to have secured a commitment from the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, and my great friend the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, of \$50 million for the phased redevelopment of Hornsby hospital. This funding represents the single biggest cash injection that the hospital has ever seen. It is a great start but I am going to fight for much more.

I acknowledge in particular the role of my predecessor, Judy Hopwood, in leading the fight for a better Hornsby hospital. Her campaign for the hospital is emblematic of the service that she gave to the people of Hornsby. If not for Judy Hopwood, the Labor

Government would have shut down Hornsby hospital for good. I am conscious of the big shoes—albeit not literally—that I have to fill in following Judy Hopwood into this Parliament. She has the genuine admiration, regard and affection of the Hornsby community because of her extraordinary devotion to the residents of our area. Judy loved our community and they love her.

I also acknowledge her predecessor Stephen O'Doherty, who continues to make an important contribution to our community. Hornsby has been represented by many fine people including Neil Pickard and John Maddison. They have set a high benchmark of distinguished service which I am determined to follow. And federally, the residents of Hornsby have been represented by the lion of the Liberal Party and liberalism, Philip Ruddock. His contribution as a local member, a Minister and father of the House has rightly earned him an enduring place in the hearts of Liberal supporters all across the country. He has been a great mentor and supporter to me and I am indebted to him.

In July 2000 the goods and services tax was introduced as the long-term solution to Commonwealth-State funding arrangements. The GST hailed the end of the failed and flawed Premiers conferences. However, after barely 10 years, the Council of Australian Governments funding arrangements have been undermined by the continuation of the historical bias against New South Wales in favour of Western Australia and Queensland. These once small, poor States were justified in the past in receiving a share of Federal funding higher than their share of population. However, in what is the second decade of the twenty-first century, this argument is an absurdity. New South Wales continues to receive far less than its fair share of GST revenue. The less fair our allocation from the Commonwealth is, the greater our dependence is on inefficient stamp duties and property taxes. At the same time Western Australia and Queensland provide low tax environments courtesy of the families and businesses of New South Wales. The services economy is to New South Wales what mining is to Queensland and Western Australia. The services sector needs low taxes and sophisticated public services and infrastructure.

Yet after 16 years of the worst government in the history of this State—a Labor Government—we are left with high taxes, a gaping infrastructure hole and bloated public spending. No government has ever had so much opportunity as the Carr Government, and no government or Premier has failed to do so little good—and so much harm. Our Government has the opportunity to deliver New South Wales the policy and settings our economy needs. Nevertheless, we cannot do it without the recognition that New South Wales can no longer afford to underwrite the boom economies of Queensland and Western Australia with our taxes. Therefore, we must go back to the table on Commonwealth–State relations and tax reform. We need to recreate the spirit of federalism of the Hawke-Greiner era and, in its early years, the Kennett-Howard era. We must not allow fear and timidity to be the reaction to the genuine public anger at the increasing cost of living. We must not let anxiety be confused with reform fatigue. The O'Farrell Government can and must lead Australia in reform.

I was not going to address the issue of mental illness tonight. In planning what I wanted to say in the brief time I have available to me, I made a conscious decision to leave it out. But 22 days ago Mike Powell committed suicide. He was just 18. He left Shore school last year. He was studying accounting at the University of Technology, Sydney and was about to commence work at PricewaterhouseCoopers as a trainee. Mike had joined the Northcott Young Liberals in December last year. This is exactly the same path I trod when I left school. He was bright, charismatic and generous. Most importantly he was loved—by his mother and father, his five siblings and his friends. With immeasurable enthusiasm, he threw himself into his new passion—politics. He joined my campaign and letterboxed, handed out at street stalls and worked for 12 hours on election day. He shone with all the brightness of a future star: compassionate, generous, smart, and disciplined. He loved his family and friends and they—we—loved him. So I feel compelled to speak about mental health and suicide prevention in this speech tonight.

This year more Australians will die from suicide than will be killed on our roads. So many of them will be young Australians with so much they should be able to look forward to. Suicide is the single largest killer of women under 34 and men under 44. I want our Government to lead Australia in suicide prevention. I am proud that we will establish a standalone mental health commission and I am proud that we will deliver \$2 million of recurrent funding to Lifeline. But more has to be done. High-profile, high-impact public advertising campaigns have reduced the once devastatingly high number of road deaths in New South Wales. Last year the New South Wales Government spent \$8.1 million on road safety campaigns. Research shows that most suicides are preventable. We cannot shy away from the need to confront the crisis of suicide in Australia. Six Australians die from suicide every day and scores more attempt suicide. If six Australians drowned every day there would be a national outcry. I want New South Wales to spend as much money on suicide prevention campaigns as it does on road safety campaigns. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I want the New South Wales Government to fund a \$10 million annual advertising campaign on suicide prevention. We must send a clear message that no matter how dark, how ashamed, how helpless and how hopeless you may feel there is a way through. While there is much debate about how we talk about suicide—particularly in the media—there is no debate that we are better talking about it than ignoring it. I want a simple message that lets people know they are never alone and there is always someone there to listen and to help. It is great we have a 100 Day Action Plan; it is great we are going to build the North West Rail Link; and it is great that we will cut hospital waiting times. But it will not mean a great deal if we still live in a society where we are unable to stop a friend, a brother, a sister, a son or a daughter from feeling as though they have no option available to them other than to take their own lives. I proudly come to this Parliament as a progressive Liberal. For me that means recognising that the fundamental unit of society is the

individual. It means recognising that the role of government must be to enhance and not to limit individuals from reaching their full potential according to their own ambitions, goals and beliefs.

As a Liberal, I believe the essential elements of our civil society must be freedom, equality and opportunity: freedom to live our lives unfettered by the State; equality before the law and the institutions of government and society, no matter what our gender, creed, colour or sexuality; and the opportunity to achieve the goals that we set for ourselves using our own talents and attributes, not those outcomes that government would preordain. That is why I see our free enterprise system as the cornerstone of our individual prosperity and happiness. It always amazes me that many people on the Left will vigorously defend civil and human rights but not recognise that economic freedoms are just as important to the advancement of the individual.

It is why I recognise also the role of government in promoting competition and preventing monopolies destroying small businesses and their enterprising spirit. Those who start small work so hard and aim so high in their businesses. It is why I see multiculturalism as a natural extension of liberalism, for surely it is nothing more than allowing individuals to live their own lives according to their own customs within the framework of respect for our democratic institutions and the rights of others to do the same. But tolerance must be reciprocal. Those who come to Australia and refuse to accept the right of others to live their lives as they wish should not be welcome. It is why I find religious intolerance so repugnant and why I strongly support the separation of church and State. It is why I support policies that strengthen families because a strong and stable family life is the best foundation for every individual to enter this world. And it is why I marvel and applaud what we have achieved as a society so relatively quickly to break down age-old discrimination.

But I recognise that there is more to do. It is these beliefs that I bring to this Parliament that will guide my assessment of the policies that our Government develops and the administration of our State. I would not be here if it were not for the support of some very special people. I would like to acknowledge my Liberal Party family and the people who have believed, supported and invested in me. I particularly single out my great friends Michael Photios and Trent Zimmerman. Both those men have had a profound impact on me as a politician and as a person. I thank them for their leadership, their unwavering loyalty and their friendship. To Gladys Berejiklian, Greg Pearce, Don Harwin, Justin Taunton, David Begg, Paul Fletcher, Marise Payne, Ben Franklin, Tony Chappel and John Brogden, the best Premier New South Wales never had: thank you all. To my local conference in Hornsby: It would be hard to find a harder-working, committed or caring group of Liberals across the division. You worked tirelessly to achieve this victory and it is as much yours as it is mine.

To Euan and Eleanor Gilmour, Vic Batten, Lyn Drabsch, Colin and Mary Wood, David and Joanne Baynie, Uncle Joe Saliba, Eric Cooper, Bev and Brian Carney, Lachlan Mansell, Warren Hendy and Gordon Fensom: thank you for your leadership of the conference and for continuing to believe, even during the tough times. Your support during the campaign was extraordinary and will not be forgotten. Thank you to my campaign team for your extraordinary efforts in what was a tough battle. Thank you to my campaign manager Peter Bardos and my volunteer coordinator Julian Leaser. Both of you were exceptional and provided the foundation on which victory was won. To our amazing team of volunteers who worked day in, day out to achieve the result—Trevor Stacey, Ken Anthonisz, Ross Reid, Peter Srouer, Matt Cross, Courtney Williams, Sabah Hussain and my young protégés Ed Martin, James Wallace and Al Cameron: thank you.

I would like to thank the organisation that has provided me with the skills and opportunities to succeed in politics—the Young Liberal Movement. It is an organisation I love and will always support. It has been a great honour to serve as the vice president of the Young Liberals, and I have been very lucky to work alongside a great leader and friend, Scott Farlow. The Young Liberal Movement has been a great nursery for developing the future political talent in our party and I am pleased to be joined in this place by four of my Young Liberal contemporaries. I joined the Young Liberal Movement nine years ago with my best mate Tom Callachor. I have been so blessed to have had him by my side every step of the way and I will never be able to express how grateful I am for all his friendship and support. We decided to join the Young Liberals nine years ago because we wanted to change the world. Tom, I think we had better get to work on New South Wales first.

I would like to thank my previous employers and close personal friends Sam Witheridge, John Brogden and Catherine Cusack. I will never forget the wonderful opportunities they gave me to learn politics and how to effect change. To my friends and professional colleagues at PricewaterhouseCoopers: thank you for the investment you made in me and for teaching me the lessons of intellectual discipline, professionalism and hard work. A special thank you to Kristin Stubbins for her loyalty and friendship. I am grateful to my personal staff who have made the transition to this place as smooth as possible. To Vanessa Crago, Linda Smith and Christine Chalker: thank you for using your remarkable talents to help in the way you have. To Gabrielle Salter: none of this would have been possible without your love and support over the years. I thank you for coming on the journey with me.

My parents, Noel and Cecilia, are very special people. Words cannot describe my feelings for them. They have given me every opportunity to succeed and have been a constant source of support, guidance and love. My father is a public servant and my mother is a teacher. They made great and frequent sacrifices to give me more than they had. My mother teaches scripture at local schools and my father was an acolyte at our local church. He always coached my football and cricket teams—we never went a

Saturday when dad was not on the sidelines. Dad, if I could be even half the man you are I would be very proud. My brother and sister, Damien and Emma, and my cousin, Brad, have always supported me in my ambitions and endeavours. I thank them.

My own journey to this place reflects the values of my parents and those who educated me. I am greatly honoured to have had a Jesuit education at St Ignatius College, Riverview. It is not surprising that so many politicians and community leaders—I would suggest a disproportionate number—were educated by the Society of Jesus. I was taught to be and to live my life as a "man for others". My grandfather, Jack Kean, was a soldier in World War II. When he returned from war he joined the Commonwealth Public Service in the Department of Employment where he worked until his retirement. My father, Noel Kean, has been a New South Wales public servant all his working life. Public service runs deep in my family, and tonight I start my career as the servant of the people of Hornsby and the people of New South Wales. That, to me, is what politics is all about.