



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 31 May 2011.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [6.30 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is an honour to stand here in this place today, before this historic institution. I stand here today where the story of our State so far has been written. I stand here today where a new chapter in that story is now just beginning. And I stand here today only because of the power of strong ideals—ideals that have shaped this State and ideals that have shaped my story. And these are the ideals that I wish to speak about this evening. The first ideal is sacrifice. It is the story of my family. We are all here today indebted to those many people who have worked side by side with us for so many years. My amazing wife, Helen, knows the demands of work and family that we as Australians face in the twenty-first century. For many years while working full time in numerous jobs, including the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force, Helen also worked late into the night completing a law degree at night school.

She worked hard like so many Australians to better themselves and better their community. Late into the night she applied herself to her studies and cared for her family. I am immensely proud of her as a talented professional, as a soul-mate, and above all as a mother who continues to give everything she has to her two children: Charlotte, who is here in the gallery today, and Amelia, who is due to be born in a few months. To all those parents, particularly mothers, who know the demands and rewards of work, of family and of simply getting through another day I would like to say thank you; we are always in your debt. I had the privilege of growing up in a large family. I am the third of 12 children. As you may imagine, my mother ran a very tight ship. But with so many of us around, she realised very quickly she could not get everything done by herself—and that is where we kids came in.

For most kids, each new school term brought with it a new season. For me—it meant a new job rotation. I polished 12 pairs of shoes in summer. I packed 12 lunches in autumn. I changed 1,200 nappies in winter and then changed them again in spring. My mother took the term "working families" to a whole new level. But it was not just my mother who pushed us hard. My father has always been generous with his wisdom and unstinting in his work ethic. He has worked in small business, in large business, in government business and in non-government organisations to develop our Asia-Pacific neighbours. Dad used to impart his wisdom attained from all his weird and wonderful adventures at our family dinners. In fact, it was at this dinner table where my love of politics began.

From the age of 10, we were required to present an article on current affairs to the family at dinner. I learnt very quickly that current affairs did not include an analysis of the highs and lows of the Balmain Tigers. At a very young age, we were debating a variety of issues ranging from the economic and social developments following the peaceful democratic revolution in Mongolia, to more local issues, such as how the Australian Labor Party could possibly oppose the building of the M2. Such activity, of course, led to some robust political debate. I can often remember being sent to my room from the kitchen table. I only hope that I can prevent the same thing from happening in this place.

It is said that you cannot choose your parents—that they are an accident of birth. Well then, I am the recipient of a very lucky accident. Now that I have a child of my own, I have come to understand that children do not just learn from what parents say, but also from what they do. And if there is one value that my parents, through their example, have personified for me it is sacrifice. They have sacrificed the big houses. They have sacrificed the expensive holidays. They have sacrificed many small and large things that would have made their lives much easier and more comfortable over the past 30 years. And they have sacrificed these things willingly and happily because they chose instead to make an investment in us—their children. I can never repay that investment. But I can acknowledge it and hope to imitate it, not just in my own family but also in the service I give to the people of Castle Hill and to the State of New South Wales.

My second ideal is generosity. It is the story of my electorate. It is customary in these speeches to pay tribute to the beauty of one's electorate. Castle Hill possesses natural bushland, market gardens and State forests, but they are not the qualities that make my electorate special, nor should they. Castle Hill is not defined by its geography, but by its people and, more specifically, by the character of the people who live there. And the defining element of that character is generosity; a generosity, informed by a spirit of service, and expressed through a recognition of our greater obligation to help those in need. This is why I can proudly say that my electorate has one of the highest levels of volunteering not only in the State, but in the entire country. This spirit of service is expressed in spite of the many challenges the residents of my electorate have to deal with on a daily basis.

They face the challenges of rising interest rates. They face the challenges of crippling tolls. And they face the challenges of the ever-increasing cost of living. When Tony Abbott talks about the forgotten families of Australia, he is talking about the families of the Hills district. The families of the Hills are generous by nature. They do not complain. They give of their time. They contribute much through their taxes. And they ask for little in return. Yet I am sad to say that the previous Government took this generosity for granted. For far too long, the blatant neglect of the Hills district has meant our vibrant local community has grown without any

adequate growth in infrastructure. Nothing further illustrates this than the failure to build the north-west rail line.

As families from across New South Wales flocked to the Hills district, the Labor Government acknowledged back in 1998 the need to deliver a rail line to the north-west and 13 years later we are still waiting. The Coalition Government is determined to right this unacceptable wrong and my commitment to my electorate is to see this project through. It will be a proud moment when I stand alongside my parliamentary colleagues of the north-west when the first train pulls into Castle Hill since Labor closed our line back in 1932. The community of Castle Hill has always been defined by the principles of honesty, hard work and generosity. Great communities are built on these qualities—and great States as well.

My third ideal is freedom. It is the story of my political beliefs and the party to which I belong. I believe in freedom, because it is only by exercising freedom that individuals can develop the habits of generosity, hard work, fairness and concern for others. I believe that these habits have made our country great and are ultimately the foundation for the pursuit of the good life. You cannot do good without striving to be good. You cannot do good without knowing what is right and then having the courage to do it. And that is what freedom is. It is incumbent on people in this place to lead the way. True leadership in this place requires knowing what is right and doing what is good. And that is what service is.

I have been inspired by many great people to set goals, take on challenges and "give it a go". As the youngest member of this place I feel a special responsibility to encourage other young people to set ambitious goals and embrace big challenges. After leaving school I visited Santa Teresa, a small Aboriginal mission outside Alice Springs. The experience was enriching, not because I was made to attend through some kind of arbitrary curriculum, but because I was inspired to do it myself. The experience helped me shape my goals and aspirations. I embarked on travels overseas, I joined Charlie Lynn on the Kokoda Trail, and I have encouraged others to do the same. I encourage all young people to follow their ambitions and dream of how they might influence others for the good.

I pay special tribute to Ian Campbell, who passed away earlier this week. Ian was a great man; he was the former co-ordinator of the Hills St Vincent De Paul Society and he introduced me to the society. I am of the firm conviction that it is the Liberal Party that best embodies those ideas of freedom and service. John Howard called the Liberal Party "the political custodian of the liberal conservative tradition". Traditionalism with its emphasis on virtue and libertarianism with its foundation of freedom are both vital and necessary strands of the fabric of conservative thought. I believe the Liberal Party is at its best when it embraces both. In my time here I intend to draw on both of these traditions that have guided my own beliefs. I believe that the family is the cornerstone, the nucleus, of our society. As John Paul II said:

As the family goes, so goes the nation and the whole world in which we live.

I believe that true social justice is one that is built on the foundation that respects the dignity of every human being without distinction of race, gender or colour, whether they are born or unborn, whether they are infant or frail aged, whether they are sick or healthy. I believe that every human being has equal dignity and intrinsic value. I strongly support the principles of free markets—we are the party of small business, of enterprise and of wealth creation. And I agree with Churchill when he calls the socialist model the equal distribution of poverty, not wealth. I oppose plans for more social engineering, more welfare handouts and the continual obsession with our rights at the expense of our responsibilities. These toxic ideas signal the death of the opportunity society.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to the role that faith has played, particularly our Judeo-Christian heritage, and the role that it will continue to play in our development as a people. Values like compassion, tolerance, diversity and respect for human dignity are all virtues drawn from this rich heritage. And I am passionate about the ideals of a free society, with limited government; I reject calls for more government spending and intervention in our lives. These are the ideals that inform me. These are the ideals that animate my party. These are the ideals of mainstream Australia. And these are the ideals that will make New South Wales number one again. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

My fourth ideal is opportunity. It is the story of my State. Perhaps no other idea divides the modern Liberal and Labor traditions more than our concept of opportunity. Whilst Labor believes in equality of outcomes, we as Liberals believe in equality of opportunity. Milton Friedman says that "equality of opportunity is an essential component of liberty". I say it is also an essential component of good governance. We have enormous opportunity here in New South Wales. We are fortunate that our State has all the ingredients for success. We have boundless economic potential. We have a superior climate for agriculture, with a large quantity of productive land. We have a capital city that is the financial services centre of the nation and a hub for the Asia-Pacific. At the same time we are well positioned on the tourism front, possessing spectacular scenery, mountains and beaches. We have major seaports. We have multiple regional centres. We have a diverse and growing population.

And yet with all these resources at our disposal, and all these opportunities, it is clear that New South Wales has failed to live up to its reputation as the premier State. We have an urgent need for fresh ideas to revitalise our communities—fresh and clear ideas that make sense to the farmer, to the factory worker and to the philosopher. Our goal here in New South Wales should be, as Tony Abbott says, to create the opportunity society. And to do this, we must do three things. First, we must give businesses the freedom

to achieve. It is small businesses that are the engine room of our economy. To that end, we must do all we can to reduce the burdens on them—by cutting red tape, by reducing taxes such as payroll tax and by simplifying regulation.

Secondly, we must give our communities the freedom to achieve. Many areas in our State—and I hold up my electorate as an example—are crying out for much-needed infrastructure. The north-west rail line is our start, but it will not be our finish. Thirdly, we must give individuals the freedom to achieve. Our party platform states that governments should encourage citizens through initiative, not limit them by excessive taxes and a stifling bureaucracy. Some say an opportunity society is an impossible dream. Others say that the obstacles are too big and the time too short. I say it is only the opportunity society that guarantees our future prosperity and lays the lasting foundations of our freedom.

There are a number of people who have assisted me on the path to Parliament whom I would like to acknowledge. Whilst I may not have been able to choose my parents, I certainly chose my wife. And I chose very well. I may be new to this place, but I have been involved in politics for many years. And over the past couple of years there have been many ups and downs and some very difficult times. Throughout all of this my beautiful wife, Helen, has been there. She has supported me, advised me, and importantly been there to listen. Darling, you are my rock, and without you I would not be here today.

To my gorgeous daughter, Charlotte, thank you for filling our home with laughter with your constant entertainment. I know that you will be a fantastic big sister to Amelia, when she hopefully arrives sometime in September. To my mum and dad, and all my brothers and sisters—Madeleine, Alexander, Charles, Joseph, Julian, Sophia, Oliver, Gabriel, Francesca, Veronique, Jean Claude and Natasha—thank you for your encouragement, your relentless competitive spirit and overwhelming affection. I would like to particularly single out my brother Charles, who has worked alongside me in politics. We have been a team from the start and will be a team to the finish.

I have been blessed to have many great mates whose friendship and support I truly value. Many of them do not share my love of politics, nor in fact my politics. I thank them for making me even more stubborn in my beliefs. I would also like to thank the following people for their friendship, guidance and advice: Noel McCoy, Steve Joseph, Kyle Kutasi, Nigel Freitas, Thomas Tudehope, Damien Tudehope, Joe Suttie, Phillip Elias, Pat Doherty, Gary Doherty, Tim Abrams, Gerard Abrams, Tony Montgomery, Michael McAuley, Joe Zady, Eddie James, Nat Smith, Anthony McFarlane, Nick Santucci, Richard Fowler, David Ramadge, Jake Hanson, Paul McCormack, Mitch Leach, Steve Dejong and Tamer Masry.

To the members of the Liberal Party who have supported me, and without whom I would not be here, Peter Poulos, Jai Rowell, Dr Peter Phelps, Lynne Webster, Arthur Sinodinos and Scot MacDonald; to the Castle Hill Campaign Committee, my campaign manager, Geoff Clarke, Renate Britton, Julian Whealing, David and Wendy Faulkner-Dick, David York, Ryk and Celia Dabrowski, Riccardo Alloggia, Greg and Monica Guy, Andrew Paddon, Larry Bolitho, Matthew Battersby, Steven Treloar, Les and Gil Dyball, Albert Jaucian and Ronald Azar; to all the members of the Castle Hill conference and the team of volunteers who transformed the electorate of Castle Hill into a sea of activity; to the team at Henry Davis York who provided me with the professional training, discipline and critical thinking to stand me in good stead to make a strong contribution to this place—I thank you all for your friendship and support.

I would like to thank the members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council who have assisted me in my political endeavours. Thank you for your encouragement and most of all for your loyalty. In particular I thank the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, the Attorney General, Greg Smith, the Minister for Resources and Energy, Chris Hartcher, and the Minister for Fair Trading, Anthony Roberts. I would like to thank members in the other place, the Leader of the Liberals in the upper House and Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Mike Gallagher, the Hon. David Clarke, the Hon. Charlie Lynn, the Hon. Marie Ficarra and the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox. I finally wish to single out and pay special tribute to my predecessor Michael Richardson. Michael was a strong advocate of the Hills district in this place. I wish Michael and Cherry all the very best in their future.

I conclude as I began, by saying that I stand here today only because of four ideals: the sacrifice of my family, the generosity of my constituents, the cherishing of freedom within my party, and boundless opportunities that exist within our State. These ideals will continue to guide my decisions each and every day as I begin my journey in this place and for as long as I am worthy to serve my constituents. Our work here is pressing and our time in this place is short. It is time that we move from words to actions. It is time that we put these ideals to work. And it is time that, together, we write a new story for the State of New South Wales.