



## INAUGURAL SPEECHES

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** I call on the member for Bathurst and congratulate him on his election to this place.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.31 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Fellow members of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales, National Party staff and executive, family and friends in the gallery, and all my constituents in the Bathurst electorate watching this live, what a great moment. This is for all of us to share! The privilege that has been given to me is a reflection of the confidence and trust that has been placed in me by those I represent. I undertake to take the journey that lies ahead of me with commitment, dedication and enthusiasm, and with the belief that I have an opportunity and a responsibility to make a difference. If that difference is just changing the life of one person, then that will empower me to continue to ensure that the people of regional New South Wales will continue to grow and prosper for future generations.

In the recent election, yes, we set unprecedented records. We changed the voting patterns of some people for the very first time and we will endeavour to hold their confidence. We will not take them for granted and we will deliver a progressive electorate for all to enjoy. During the campaign I met so many people who made the move to support the National Party. They were mums and dads who lie awake after their children have fallen asleep, wondering how they will pay their mortgage; pensioners wondering how they will pay their next electricity bill; miners worrying about whether they will have a job tomorrow; farmers worrying about food security for the region; and so on.

On 26 March 2011 a vote for the Coalition meant that there was new energy to harness, new jobs to be created, and new hospitals and new schools to be built. The road ahead will be challenging and long: There is much to do and many wrongs to right. We may not get there in one year or in one term, but I am confident that the Coalition Government will put us back on the right path and return New South Wales to its rightful place as the leading State in this nation. Along the way there will be false starts and setbacks, there will be some who do not agree with every decision or policy made. We have a large job ahead of us and I know the Government cannot solve every problem. But by being honest and listening to and communicating with the electorate we can work alongside the community and deliver real results for each of our electorates.

I joined the National Party because I believe it is the only party that truly represents regional and rural communities. It is a party made up of local champions who want the best for their local areas and who are willing to fight for their local communities. This high standard of representation is embodied in outstanding members in the Central West—Andrew Gee in Orange and Troy Grant in Dubbo—and my other colleagues who have recently been elected, Leslie Williams in Port Macquarie, Kevin Anderson in Tamworth, Stephen Bromhead in Myall Lakes and John Barilaro in Monaro. The National Party is back and will remain a significant voice. We will deliver for each of our communities.

My pathway to this place began some three generations ago when my grandfather, Jack Toole, ran as the Liberal candidate back in 1956. However, in 1984 my dad saw the light and joined the National Party. In 1996 he ran as The Nationals' candidate, only to narrowly miss out by several hundred votes that came from Greens preferences to give Labor victory. My dad, who is my idol, is the person whom I have followed in the political arena since I was three years of age. He was a local councillor for 21 years and a mayor for 16 of those years. During his various campaigns I would keep him company in the ute; we visited and doorknocked so many rural constituents. My job was to walk up to the door and hand over the brochure or to open the gate of rural properties and stay there as he took off, leaving me in a puff of smoke, only to wait for his return, sometimes half an hour later, close the gate and go to the next property.

Meeting these people over so many years gave me the impetus to stand for local government when my father decided to retire. I have been a councillor for the past 16 years, representing both the rural and urban communities of the Bathurst district. During that time I have also been deputy mayor and mayor. Those opportunities and experiences have provided me with the skills and knowledge that I bring to this place today. One thing that stands out to me in every election that I have experienced is the high respect that my dad has in the community. People say to me all the time, "If you're as half as good as your dad, then you'll be okay."

I grew up on a farm some 15 kilometres outside Bathurst. I am one of nine children. Yes, David, I know you are going to ask if we had a television—we had two. I also pay tribute to my mum, who is also in the gallery today, for her unyielding love and support she has given to each and every one of us.

I acknowledge on the public record the work of the former member, Mr Gerard Martin. His contribution both as a councillor on Lithgow City Council and as a State member for the past 12 years has seen him give 37 continuous years of service to his community. I wish him and his wife, Kathy, all the best in his retirement.

I would also like acknowledge the support of the Premier and Deputy Premier of New South Wales. Both Barry and Andrew have become friends to the people of the Bathurst electorate. It was never a problem for either of them to visit my electorate or to attend the various functions held during the campaign. I thank them for their support and the trust that they have placed in me.

The electorate of Bathurst is one of the State's most diverse districts. It takes in some 71 hamlets and includes regional centres like Lithgow, which is dominated by coalmining and electricity generation, as well as Bathurst, which has varied industries and government departments that were attracted to the region in the 1970s when the city was part of the Whitlam Government's decentralisation plans. The electorate also takes in the surrounding areas of Oberon, Blayney, Rylstone and Kandos. The electorate covers 14,875 square kilometres and has a population of just under 66,000 people.

The election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations to come. One that comes to mind, however, is the fact that when I put up my hand to be the National Party candidate for the Bathurst electorate many people said, "You will struggle to win the people of Lithgow over. That is Labor heartland." Before Christmas last year I walked into the Lansdowne Hotel, which is in the main street of Lithgow. I grabbed a beer and walked up to a table where about 10 people were sitting. They were watching the television and I asked them how the cricket test had ended up. They looked at me and one piped up and said, "You're Paul Toole, aren't you?" I said, "Yes", and then it came, "Well, you've got the audacity, haven't you? This is a Labor pub and we've never seen a conservative walk into this pub at all."

Not knowing whether I was to be thrown out or dragged out, I just made the comment, "Well, we are all Australians and we like a beer." After a 20-minute conversation about the world and various matters, one of them said, "I'm going to vote for you, and it will be the first time, you know." Another bloke put his hands on his head and said, "I'm a Labor voter and now I'm really confused because I don't know who I'm going to vote for." Before I left, three others signed up straightaway and offered to help on election day and in our campaign office. I walked into that pub with zero out of 10 and walked out of it with five out of 10. After that response I thought to myself: these people are looking for someone to listen to their stories, to listen to their concerns and to be their voice in Macquarie Street—they just want to be heard.

From that point on, we worked in Lithgow and on polling day we won every booth in the Lithgow district. We earned that trust and we will not lose it. Since then I have formed many new friendships and have been welcomed back to the Lithgow area. I have been invited to many functions, including the recent Lithgow Catholic ball, Ironfest, and the opening of the new Commonwealth Bank. Only last weekend I was invited to the sixtieth wedding anniversary of community members Emile and Madeleine Douthiel.

In regional areas The Nationals face many challenges. In regional New South Wales we have a great lifestyle: We have affordable housing, cheap industrial land, pristine environments and strong communities with some of the most resilient and outspoken people on this earth. But there are big challenges ahead. There are declines in many of our smaller towns in the form of job losses, lower income levels and crumbling infrastructure. A government will not provide all the answers, but it must act responsibly so that the creation of wealth in regional New South Wales, and in particular in the Bathurst electorate, will see New South Wales become number one again. To do this we must be innovative; we must seize opportunities and think outside the square. With Government members on this side of the House I am confident that this can and will happen.

My electorate also has a growing tourist industry, as many people discover the values of our lifestyle and the area's many beautiful and historical features. In Bathurst we have the premier racing circuit in the whole world—Mount Panorama—which the V8 supercars go around every year. In Oberon we have the Jenolan Caves. In Lithgow we have the Zig Zag Railway. In Blayney we have the Cadia mine as well as many other attractions. Many of the rural villages in my electorate are run by some of the very best progress associations, and I have enjoyed working with each of them over the years. I look forward to that relationship continuing. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The progress associations have done so much for their local communities. Many of the villages that they represent have been restored to their original heritage state and take visitors back to a bygone era. For example, Hill End is renowned for its discovery of gold in the nineteenth century. However, I believe that we must do more to support these areas and these industries.

Let us not forget that Sydney is a global city and should be seen not only as a destination itself but also as a gateway and hub to regional New South Wales. The Bathurst electorate is a little west of that great sandstone curtain called the Blue Mountains or the Great Dividing Range. I say "curtain" because many people and some politicians living on the coast have never been over the Great Dividing Range; they have never passed through that curtain to see that life does exist beyond the mountains.

We must invest more in our roads and rail. There has to be greater focus on regional infrastructure and, in particular, our roads and rail systems. That is why I was pleased that during the election campaign the now Premier announced that we will look at all options when it comes to providing a daily rail return service between Bathurst and Sydney.

Agriculture is an important industry and employer in my electorate, which is why food security issues must be addressed. We produce some of the best beef, wheat, lamb and wines. We must support our primary producers once again. Many of them have suffered over the years from drought, bushfires and, more recently, floods.

Decentralisation is also another policy that we must embrace and get right, and I welcome the opportunity for consideration of a decade of decentralisation. With Sydney expected to grow by 1.5 million over the next 25 years, it is essential that we put programs in place to take the pressure off Sydney and to ensure that regional communities that are keen to grow their population can do so by stimulating their local economies and attracting new skills and investment.

To me, health has always been at the heart of every election, whether it be at a State or Federal level. I note that the Minister for Health is present in the Chamber. I thank her for making regular visits to my electorate and I look forward to a very long association with her in the years to come. It is critical that in the Bathurst electorate we see the return of essential services and that we stop the bleeding of various services from regional centres. More needs to be done to attract professional health workers to our area. Country hospitals are already short of specialised staff, and I strongly support the push by Charles Sturt University in its bid for a medical school. To see this come to fruition would not only address the issue of the massive shortage of doctors in rural areas but also it would result in many students who study in regional and rural areas staying on and practising medicine in these areas.

Another project that is crucial to the development of the entire Central West is the road over the Blue Mountains. The current major route from Sydney to the west is the Great Western Highway, which is now, and has been for a number of years, undergoing major upgrades. But it will not deliver a road that will open up the Central West for future economic development. The current route through the Blue Mountains is heavily urbanised, and even the four-lane sections are subject to various speed limits. That is a significant barrier to the transport of goods and materials to the eastern seaboard. I welcome the Premier's announcement to look at these types of projects of significance through Infrastructure NSW.

In planning, a good system should enjoy public support and confidence, and provide certainty to residents, investors and communities. I cannot wait to see the end of 30-year-old planning legislation that is in such desperate need of an overhaul.

I would not be standing here today without the unyielding support of my best friend for the past 11 years, the love of my life, my wife, Joanne, and our three beautiful children Rhayne, Keely and Scout. I thank all of them for the opportunity that has been given to me to be able to go on this journey. I know that at times it will be tough and it will be lonely, and that at times it will be demanding for you on your own. But remember at all times that I love you all. At times I did not know whether I would stand as a candidate, but Joanne's push and support along the way helped me to make a firm decision. And kids, if you think that dad was slow going down the street before because he was being stopped by people, then all I can say to you is that it is not going to get any better.

To my grandmother, who is at St Catherine's in Bathurst watching: I know you are very proud and I thank you for playing such a pivotal role in my life. To my in-laws, Gary and Barbara Field: Thank you for all your assistance and your response to last-minute requests for babysitting. It has not ended; I will need you much more now.

To my campaign manager, Gary Rush and the entire Nationals team comprising Kay Martin, the duty member of the Legislative Council for Bathurst the Hon. Rick Colless, Ben Franklin, Douglas Martin, Nathan Quigley, Peter Pilbeam, Tony Sarks, David Veness, Terry Clarke, Sam Faraway, former shadow Ministers and now Ministers, Mike Baird and all our 400-plus polling booth helpers: You made this happen. We formed one of the most formidable campaign teams ever gathered in the history of politics. I am forever grateful to you for what you have all sacrificed to make this happen. Your tremendous loyalty, support and professionalism and your 24-hour dedication achieved this great result for the people of our electorate.

To my dearest friends at the Assumption Primary School, at which I taught for 17 years: What an amazing time we had together. I will admit on the public record that sometimes I was the bad boy on the staff. However, the executive, comprising Peter Nugent, Di Walkowiak, Therese Hooper, and all the staff gave me the best support and friendship that anyone could ask for. Thank you.

Finally, I want my electorate to get back to providing local services for our local communities, whether that be better roads, hospital boards that listen to our communities, improvements in our PCYC centres, flashing lights for schools, full-time fire stations, additional teachers and nurses, more police officers or better infrastructure. As elected representatives it is critical that we stand up for the interests of our communities. There will be tough decisions to make along the way and at times we will confront steep mountains to climb. However, those decisions must be made so that the New South Wales economy may once again flourish, and so that this State is open for business and number one again.

I will conclude by offering a quote to my electorate and members in this Chamber: "We are happy, we are joyful that the verdict has been given by the Australian people but never forget the fact that governments are elected to govern not only for the people who vote for them, but also for the people who voted against them."

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** In congratulating the member for Bathurst on his inaugural speech, I acknowledge his dad, Trevor Toole. Everything he said about his father is correct. Well done.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.56 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech):** There is almost nothing more futile than a politician without conviction. In the end they have no credibility and deliver little for those they serve. We all have and represent different views and opinions. What determines whether our views and opinions will influence public discourse and public policy is whether each of us has the strength of our convictions and the fortitude in character to prevail in the rough and tumble of our political process. This is what people judge us on today: conviction and character. Today and on every occasion that I speak in this House, I will espouse the values and convictions of my family, my community and my party.

It is with pride and humility that I enter Australia's oldest Parliament as a representative of the Australian Labor Party in the electorate of Bankstown. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to their elders. The original inhabitants of the area of Bankstown were the people of the Eora nation. Their land bordered that of the Dharawal and the Darung people. Australia's Indigenous history is our nation's proudest, but what has become of the Indigenous people still remains our nation's humiliation. Tomorrow, 26 May, is National Sorry Day. It is a reminder that despite progress in recent years there are still many more wrongs to right.

Bankstown's European settlement can be traced back to 1795 when Matthew Flinders and George Bass sailed the Georges River aboard an eight-foot craft called the *Tom Thumb* to determine whether the area west of Botany Bay was hospitable. They landed at what is now known as Garrison Point at Georges Hall. They reported back to the Governor that the land indeed was hospitable and it was named Bankstown in honour of Sir Joseph Banks. Today Bankstown is still hospitable in welcoming people from around the world. It is a lively and cosmopolitan city with more than 130 cultures and 60 languages spoken. From the Asian grocery store and the Greek pastry shop to the Lebanese restaurant, the spoils of multiculturalism are there to be enjoyed by all. It is a community that has given us great sports people, entertainers and thousands of unsung heroes.

The Bankstown community has a great sense of pride and has every reason for having it. We proudly celebrate our diversity and traditions through an annual calendar of festivities, including Christmas carol events, Australia Day, our different Easters, Ramadan and Eids, and Chinese and Vietnamese New Year celebrations to mention just some. Many in the Bankstown community may not be wealthy, but we are rich in hospitality, generosity, culture and life experience. We have been very fortunate in Bankstown to have had quality parliamentary representatives in this place. Tony Stewart was an integral part of the last 16 years of Labor government in New South Wales. However, it was Mr Doug Shedden who was the member for Bankstown when I first joined the Australian Labor Party and the local Bankstown branch. Mr Shedden continues to be very much part of the Bankstown community.

I am eager to place on record my enormous gratitude to the many people who assisted and supported me in the election, many of whom are here today. First among them I thank my campaign director, Khal Asfour, for his unstinting support and loyalty. Khal worked with a fantastic campaign team—Gisele Doumet, Greg and Jenny Golledge, Wilma Hickey, Claire Haig, Pam Gavin, Albeer Hayek, Mick Stephenson, Ken King, Brendan Kavanagh, Annie Bertolli, Raymond Arraj, Abdul Hasna, Gerald Keneally, Faical Ryma, the Keevil family, the Hanna family, the Shahho family, the Asfour family and all the team that came out in force on election day. Thanks also to Graeme Kelly from the United Services Union and Gerard Dwyer from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association for their support.

There are a number of friends within the Bankstown community who have supported me over the years. I will name just a few: Helen Williamson and the Greenacre Lions, Bruce Pawley, Jack Bedford and the Bankstown RSL, John Murray and Bankstown Sports, John and Trent Engisch and Torch Publishing, Father Antoine Tarabay, Stan and Marie Quirke, Mr Thanh Nguyen and the VCA-New South Wales Chapter, Dr Vinh Bin Lieu, Kim Huynh, Peter Theo and St Euphemia Church. The Labor Party and I also owe a great debt of gratitude to our local party faithful, in particular, Mick Stephenson, Hilda and Charlie Garwood, Mick Quinlivan, June Ryan, Patsy Patton, Heather and Margaret Wicks, and Ken King. These are people of strong convictions and faith and I thank them for their tremendous long-term support and friendship.

Special thanks go to the NSW Labor Party Office, in particular, Sam Dastyari, Chris Minns, Brendan Kavanagh and Courtney Roche for their support and assistance in the campaign. They will lead our efforts to renew our party and I am confident that this team has both the capacity and the enthusiasm to make the necessary changes that will help restore faith in our party. Equally, I have faith in John Robertson and in our whole team that we will play our role in rebuilding our party by holding the Coalition Government to account and being a credible alternative in 2015. I thank the former Premier Kristina Keneally for her support and for launching my campaign, and I thank Barbara Perry for her support over the years. Above all, I thank the electorate of Bankstown and the people who placed their faith and their trust in me. I thank those who voted for me and I look forward to representing you, and to those that didn't, I will work equally hard to represent you and I hope to earn your trust.

Becoming a councillor in 2004 and a mayor in 2006 provided with me with a tremendous opportunity to invest in community life. But I have not been alone in this task. We are blessed to have a large number of inspiring people who contribute to community life in Bankstown. I acknowledge the contribution of community organisations, licensed clubs, sporting groups and service clubs in channelling their time, effort and funds into supporting the recreational, community and cultural needs of our residents. Today I pay special tribute to the men and women who contribute towards Bankstown's Meals on Wheels program; our emergency service personnel including Bankstown police; the State Emergency Service; the staff and volunteers of the Bankstown hospital and in aged care; the teachers and volunteers at our local schools; our Lions and Rotary volunteers; our community service workers; and our Bushcare volunteers. The list of volunteers in Bankstown is endless.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my fellow councillors, management and staff at Bankstown City Council. Special thanks to Rachel Symons, my executive assistant for the past five years who has provided me with tremendous support and one of Bankstown council's greatest assets, who has provided me with tremendous support. In speaking about local government it is also important also to acknowledge the great work of the United Services Union in protecting its members' rights and conditions, in particular, under the stewardship of Graeme Kelly. Local government has an enormous role in developing cities as the unique and distinct identities they are and should be, and in providing much-needed services and infrastructure. Its relevance must be strengthened and not undermined. It is my strong view that local government should be enshrined in our Constitution.

It is often stated that education opens up all doors. But in my experience doors also begin to shut if one is not gainfully employed. Australia's renowned egalitarianism is directly linked to the opportunities provided by stable employment that encompass a career path. Education must be viewed broadly as it clearly has both private and public benefits to its recipients. The value of apprenticeships, TAFE courses, community colleges and traineeships cannot be forgotten, not just because these lead to employment and the commencement of small business, but because it empowers individuals to appreciate the value of their actual and potential contribution to society over the stretch of their lives.

The opportunities coming our way from the buoyancy of the South Asian and East Asian economies require both the public and private sector to focus on building infrastructure. Primary in this is strong transport links. Managing the development of an integrated transport network for western and south-western Sydney is a matter of urgency for our economy and our environment. The M5 corridor connects the centres of the Sydney central business district, Sydney airport and Port Botany with greater western Sydney. This stretch of road supports Australia's third-largest economy after the Sydney central business district and south-east Queensland. The widening of the M5—most importantly the duplication of the M5 East—is critical to the future of our State.

Bankstown is filled with many migrant stories and amongst those stories is that of my own family which, with the indulgence of this House, I shall share. In particular, I want to place on the record how a person with the name Mihailuk came to be the member for Bankstown. Members in this place learnt how to say "Berejiklian" so I am sure they can learn also to say "Mihailuk". My parents were born in China and my grandparents in Russia. My paternal grandfather, Timothy Mihailuk, fought for the Russian Army and during World War I his military unit was stationed in Manchuria, now north-east China, protecting the massive rail infrastructure being built at the time to foster trade. As the Russian Revolution began, the army dismantled, civil war escalated and my grandfather remained in China.

In 1917, in the city of Nikolayevsk On Amur in Russia my four-year-old orphaned paternal grandmother, Valentina, and her six-year-old sister were placed unaccompanied on a train to travel 20 hours to the city of Harbin, China, to meet an aunt whom they knew only by name. Not long after they left most of the city's inhabitants were massacred and the city was burnt to the ground. In the early 1930s my maternal grandfather and grandmother, Tihon and Maria Nesmashin, after losing three children in a famine forced on them by Stalin to control the masses, travelled for weeks by foot from southern Russia into the north-west province of Xinjiang, China. In China my grandparents, along with other Russians, settled as refugees.

In the late 1940s and 1950s circumstances in China began to change rapidly making it necessary for my family to leave. My father abandoned his university studies, boarded a cargo ship and ended up in Brazil. Within a few years he was granted an opportunity to come to Australia, this time via a passenger liner, while my mother waited for months in Hong Kong before finally receiving her visa to Australia. My father arrived in Australia in 1959 and my mother in 1960. For my parents Australia was a place to call home and it afforded them the opportunity for the first time in their lives to be citizens of a nation. They have been so grateful they have never left Australia since—not even on a holiday. Australia afforded my parents a fair go, the ability to own their own home, to earn their own keep and to vote for the first time—the basic staples of a civil society.

My father treated seriously his newfound right to vote and comprehensively researched the Australian political landscape. My father proved too smart for Menzies' "Reds under your beds" propaganda and he identified very early that the values of Labor matched his ideals. As a child I remember receiving Keating's letters as our local member. My father always said, "Hawke and Keating are smart men" and, with a dismissive wave of his hand, he would say, "The rest are idiots." My parents bought their first home in Punchbowl. My father eventually found work at Telecom and my mother looked after us at home only to start work in aged care when we were at high school. Their goal was the Australian dream—to pay off our home. There were no holidays, piano lessons, swimming lessons, organised sport, ballet classes or new clothes. When our car was stolen we relied solely on public transport for more than a decade. But I never felt as though I missed out. We were rich in culture, knowledge and life experience. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

My parents inspired me in many ways. My father inspired my interest in politics, history and learning. He always wanted me to pursue tertiary studies and instilled in me a belief in lifelong learning. He would take my younger brother, Paul, and I every fortnight into the city as children. We would catch the old red rattlers and it was always an educational experience. We would visit the State Library, museums, the Opera House, the Botanic Gardens, the Art Gallery, countless numbers of stamp and coin exhibitions and the New South Wales Parliament House. It was these family excursions that inspired my belief that all governments have a duty to provide communities with great cultural, social and educational opportunities and institutions.

My mother fed me with the staples of life, giving me advice on day-to-day living, teaching me to be cautious with spending, hardworking and resilient. My mother never particularly understood any of my studies but she was streetwise and kept me well grounded, always more interested in what was in my bank balance. To my mum, having a degree meant nothing if it did not help pay off a mortgage—advice I have come to appreciate. My mother also focused on making church central to our lives. Standing on one's feet for a few hours on a Sunday morning on an empty stomach listening to prayers in Slavonic was no easy task but in time the Russian Orthodox faith became ingrained in me. I am by no means perfect in the practice of my faith but my faith is important to me and I respect that religion, and we are blessed to have many, is important to the vast majority of people in Bankstown.

While I am committed to representing people who have a faith, I am also equally committed to representing those who choose not to have one. Having faith as helped my family cope with many of life's challenges. My parents' lives were turned upside down when my older brother, at the age of 2½, was diagnosed with severe autism. In the 1970s very little information or support services were available. Autism involves a degree of compulsive, repetitive and, at times, impulsive behaviour which coupled with tantrums can lead to self-harm and aggression. By the age of 10 it was no longer possible for my brother to live with us and he became a permanent resident of Marsden Centre at Westmead. Recently he has moved into a more independent home. As a parent I now understand and pay tribute to my parents, in particular, my mother for providing my brother with unconditional love and never giving up on him. Some families in these circumstances understandably give up and their children are left wards of the State.

Undoubtedly, having an autistic brother shaped my view on the needs of people living with a disability, and their carers. Every time a government decides to make budgetary cuts, to contract out essential services or to sell residential homes, my brother and others in similar circumstances can be adversely affected. One of our nation's greatest shames is that prisoners are afforded better facilities and support than people with severe disabilities. I congratulate the former Keneally Government on its \$2 billion Stronger Together 2 package providing growth funding for disability services. I hope that the Coalition Government commits to and properly administers this package.

A combination of geography, family and social circumstances defined my political persuasion. In 1995 I handed my details over to the Labor club at Macquarie University and it was a letter calling all Young Labor members and supporters to help the then Prime Minister Paul Keating's campaign in 1996 that sprung me into action. I resigned from my part-time paid job—much to my mum's disappointment—and started to campaign as a volunteer. My life has never been the same since. I must confess that I was, am and will always be a "true believer". My first week in this place provided me with a stark reminder why I am here as a member of the Australian Labor Party. To helplessly watch the Occupational Health and Safety Act being stripped back with no community or industry consultation was appalling. The Act was amended to bolster the ability to prosecute the often reckless endangerment of lives at the workplace. All workers, their families and respective communities deserve the best occupational health and safety protection that can be afforded by the government of the day.

In closing, I thank my mother, Alla, who is helping Alex and me raise our children. I owe my mother a debt that I can never repay. I acknowledge my father, George, my brothers, Alec and Paul, my godparents, Boris and Nina, my brothers-in-law, George and Victor, sisters-in-law, Anna and Mischelle, my nieces and nephews, and my in-laws, Vasily and Nadja, who welcomed me into their family as one of their own. I thank my husband, Alex, who, unlike anyone else in my life, has showered me with an abundance of generosity, kindness and patience. When I knew Alex was the one—and believe me I knew a lot sooner than he did—I issued him with an ultimatum. It was not an ultimatum to marry me, or to buy me a ring or a house—I did that much later. It was an ultimatum that he should join the Australian Labor Party and just attend a couple of meetings a year. Anyhow, Alex got the message and today, a decade later, he is a delegate to the Australian Labor Party State conference, secretary of a branch, and a Bankstown city councillor. There are many reasons Alex is special and one of them is that he never has any ill will towards anybody—a rare trait in politics. A more genuine person you will not meet.

Lastly, I mention my greatest joy, my three children, Larissa, Matthew and Daniel, who remind me every day what is truly important in life. Their happiness and progress are my ultimate motivation. I wish to afford my children the opportunities everyone deserves in life and I hope they appreciate their good fortune. I want my children to have the values that inspire them to confront and challenge injustice and not be bystanders. Most of all, I want them to be happy and live in a society where they reach their full potential. I wish this for my children and for all the children of our nation. I am proud and humbled to be here and represent the values and convictions of my family, my community of Bankstown and my party. As my daughter wholeheartedly assures me on her way to school that she will do her best, I make the same earnest and unequivocal commitment to do my best for Bankstown and New South Wales. The people expect and deserve no less. Thank you.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** I, too, congratulate the member for Bankstown, Tania Mihailuk, on her inaugural speech. I hope that all members master the correct pronunciation of her name.