



# Full Day Hansard Transcript (Legislative Assembly, 11 May 2011, Corrected Copy)

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday, 11 May 2011.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.50 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I will speak in the right of reply to Her Excellency the Governor Marie Bashir's opening address to the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. It is an honour and privilege to address the Chamber today as the member for Parramatta. The first people of Parramatta were the Burramattagal people, a clan of the Darug. They lived along the upper reaches of the Parramatta River and can be traced back some 60,000 years. The river was their focus of daily life, as it was during colonisation, for food, fresh water and transport. Anyone who has visited the electorate of Parramatta knows of its beauty and bounty. However, I am not going to talk about the beauty and bounty of Parramatta. Instead, I will talk about the conundrum that is Parramatta. Perhaps the title of my first speech should be "What to do with Parramatta?"

To address that question, I will talk about Parramatta as the future powerhouse of New South Wales. Sydney's central business district is almost full and future growth will be in Sydney's western suburbs. The need to integrate the Parramatta central business district with the Sydney central business district will entail decentralising business activities and services. My speech will answer three questions: first, what is the importance of Parramatta as an integrated part of the Sydney central business district; second, what is my motivation to lead the electorate of Parramatta; and, third, what I am going to do? There is a saying, "The more things change the more they stay the same" Quite frankly, Sydney does not know what to do with Parramatta. I say this because from the first days of colonisation, Parramatta was set up to be the capital. However, it became obvious that Sydney Cove was the hub of commercial activity. But the conundrum still exists: what will be the relationship between Parramatta and Sydney? How can the tensions be resolved for the betterment of all New South Wales?

In 1788, the British colony arrived in Sydney Cove and soon faced starvation. Governor Arthur Phillip selected Parramatta to grow food to feed the colony. Without Parramatta, the colony would certainly have starved and failed. Arthur Phillip was instrumental in establishing Parramatta's first hospital and barracks to maintain law and order. He laid out the town plan and built the first Government House, which is located in Parramatta Park. It is of note that until the 1850s many governors chose to rule from Parramatta rather than Sydney. Arthur Phillip began the city, and today, whilst it has changed from agriculture to industry, the legacy of health, law and order, and the focus on productivity remains.

The local government area of Parramatta has grown to 170,000 residents and 90,000 jobs. It has vibrant retail, entertainment and leisure, education and business service precincts. It is an economic zone estimated to be worth \$10 billion per annum to the State's economy. It is home to the mighty Parramatta Eels. To test the hypothesis that Parramatta will become integrated into the Sydney central business district, just look at New York. The original city of New York began at the southern end of Manhattan, expanded northwards and then, between 1874 and 1898, incorporated land from surrounding counties. When Central Park was built, it was seen as a remote parkland in the middle of nowhere. Now it is central. The unified whole of Manhattan is now a major commercial, financial, and cultural centre of both the United States of America and the world.

The central business district is just one part of the Parramatta electorate. The electorate is made up of the suburbs of Wentworthville, Westmead, North Parramatta, Oatlands, Telopea, Dundas, Ermington, Rydalmere, Harris Park, Rosehill and Parramatta, where I live. Those suburbs offer the choice of city living or leafy green suburban streets, ideal for singles, couples bringing up a family or those retiring to enjoy life. With such opportunity, it is no wonder that people from around the world choose to make Parramatta their home. In fact, 44 per cent of Parramatta residents were born overseas, and two-thirds of those have at least one parent born overseas. We are home to large and active communities from nations in North-East Asia and the Middle-East, as well the largest South-Asian community in New South Wales.

As a community and as a society, we are richer for the presence of such a diverse mix of cultures and the contribution that they make to modern, multicultural Australia. People seeking opportunity come to Parramatta—just as my ancestors came from the United Kingdom with some arriving on the Second Fleet and some from southern China up to 140 years ago. They contributed to the growth of Parramatta where they worked as carpenters and bricklayers in the early days, and later in the building of the railway to the west. My Chinese great-grandfather had a market garden on the banks of Duck Creek at Guildford, where he provided food for many of his neighbours during the Great Depression

People often ask me why I entered politics. I had built a successful small business and I held a senior role at the University of Western Sydney, so I wanted the opportunity to use my skills and experience to enable Parramatta to realise its potential. Parramatta is not just the second central business district, it is the capital of Western Sydney. We have established finance, insurance and business service sectors, the second-largest legal precinct in New South Wales, and the largest health precinct in Australia at Westmead. Parramatta has the opportunity to service the whole of Western Sydney, the future growth areas of Sydney. Parramatta has yet to realise its full potential and I will be the leader of change. Clearly, I am not the first to recognise Parramatta's

potential: the Darug clan recognised it and Arthur Phillip recognised it. I recognised it in 1991.

In 1991, I sold everything I had, and borrowed money from my mum and dad to start a garden centre and landscaping business in Parramatta; a business that would grow over the next 10 years to employ many locals and serve the community. Along the way we were fortunate to win some awards. Those who have been involved in small business would know that having a business is rewarding when times are good, but when times are tough it is very difficult. Working seven days a week for 10 years of my life and being responsible for the livelihood of staff gave me an appreciation of the pressures of small business. Today, New South Wales relies on its 640,000 small businesses as employers and innovators and for their significant economic contribution. A business community that must be encouraged to prosper fuels our economy. Small business is in my DNA as it is in the Liberal DNA.

Whilst working for myself, I studied part-time for an MBA and started my doctorate. I have always been passionate about life-long learning and passionate about education. After selling my business I was fortunate to join the University of Western Sydney. Working at the University of Western Sydney enabled me to contribute to the advancement of thousands of students. It is clear that the economic prosperity of a nation is closely linked to educational attainment. In other words, the more educated people are, the more wealth is created. Increased education equals increased gross domestic product. As a Government our imperative is to ensure that New South Wales has the best education system, with the best schools, vocational education and training [VET] providers and universities.

People also ask me what I am going to do. As Parramatta's leader of change my vision for Parramatta is a place where we can work and live in a safe environment. Parramatta must seize the opportunity to become the engine room of the New South Wales economy, to become the economic food bowl for New South Wales as the centre of commerce and employment for Western Sydney. To do this we must plan for the unification of Sydney's central business district and Parramatta's central business district—it is inevitable with the growth of Sydney's western suburbs. We have started decentralisation of some government departments, such as the law courts, the NSW Police Force and Sydney Water. We already are a hub for financial services, accounting firms and business services, but we need to do more.

We must maintain the balance between sustainable development and the preservation of our suburbs. We must create local jobs by removing barriers to private and public investment. We must preserve our historic buildings and sites and celebrate diverse cultural heritage. As Parramatta's member of the Legislative Assembly I am going to enlist the support of the people of the seat. They are the ones who understand; they are the ones who are at the coalface; and they are the ones who know how best to deal with local issues. I will work with those people who are just as passionate as I am, that is, the people of Parramatta, to meet the challenges of building a city. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Great cities provide an integrated, accessible and convenient public transport system; develop vibrant arts, food, theatre and cultural precincts; and have great universities where students are part of the town and the university is an integral part of the local community. Such vision needs a plan, a roadmap for the next 20 years, and I will be listening to and working with people from all sections of the community to inform on that plan. As Parramatta's leader of change I will fight for a greater share of resources, Ministers—greater, because Parramatta is not just a suburb; it is a metropolis that services the whole of western Sydney. Western Sydney is already home to 1.8 million people: that is, close to one in 10 people in Australia live in western Sydney. It is an \$80 billion economy. It is predicted that western Sydney will grow by another 2 million people over the next 50 years. It is inevitable that Sydney's expansion will be west of Parramatta.

I need to acknowledge and say thank you to many people: Premier Barry O'Farrell, for his constant support of Parramatta, for choosing to hold the election night event at Parramatta and for choosing to be Minister for Western Sydney, and the many then shadow Ministers who made the trip to Parramatta to support my campaign—Jillian Skinner, Adrian Piccoli, Mike Gallacher, Brad Hazzard, Chris Hartcher, Gladys Berejiklian, Mike Baird, Greg Smith, Greg Pearce, Pru Goward, Rob Stokes and Anthony Roberts. The fact that so many members were willing to take the trip to Parramatta speaks volumes about the new Government's commitment to Parramatta and western Sydney.

I also thank the Liberal Party for its unwavering assistance at some difficult times throughout the campaign. I acknowledge the work of the previous member Tanya Gadiel in the seat of Parramatta. I do not think any new member of Parliament could have been treated as well in the handover of what used to be her electorate office. I wish her well in her new role with Parramatta Mission. I am indebted to Charles Camenzuli as campaign director and Team Camenzuli. I see Charles in the gallery. He and his family put their lives on hold to dedicate themselves to a Liberal win in Parramatta. Likewise, the campaign volunteers did a massive job, day and night, and of course on the day.

Thanks go to James Wallace, Mitchell Potts, Kevin Costello and Darren Klower, as well as the many local party members who lent their support—Chris With, Andrew Bide, Mary Mackman, Therese Camenzuli, Colin Robinson, Kate Geddes, Stuart Mead, Lorraine Doyle, Linda Durrant, Vale Sloane, David Swift, Amanda Rose, and so many others whose support I acknowledge. I also acknowledge the support of Damien Jones, and the Wakehurst conference, who went above and beyond in providing carloads of

willing campaign workers weekend after weekend. And, of course, there is my mum and dad, who are in the top gallery, who have always supported me in my endeavours and continue to be an important part of my life. I wish them well. Finally, to the people of Parramatta, those people that have entrusted me to represent them: I will listen to them and make decisions based upon common sense, fairness and equity.

In conclusion, they say that the more things change the more they stay the same. Today we face similar challenges to those of Arthur Phillip over 200 years ago—law and order, health, planning and governance. I started this address by asking the question of what to do with Parramatta. The conundrum still exists. Parramatta has been treated as the little brother of Sydney's central business district and sibling rivalry has been rife. How can we take advantage of the opportunities that Parramatta affords? Sydney has only one way to grow, and that is west. Sydney's central business district is virtually full. Expansion of jobs will come from the west; new homes will be developed in the north-west and south-western sectors of Sydney.

It is inevitable that Sydney's central business district will one day stretch to Parramatta, just as what is today the unified island of Manhattan started at the entry to New York harbour and then grew north. I want to see Parramatta akin to Manhattan and New York City's Central Park. I want to see Parramatta as the western centre of tomorrow's Sydney city. When I think about Parramatta, I think about opportunity. Arthur Phillip recognised that opportunity. Thousands of residents and businesses have recognised that opportunity. I will be knocking on Ministers' doors to get our fair share of resources and infrastructure to provide Sydney with a powerhouse to drive New South Wales' growth to be the number one State in Australia. I will be knocking on Ministers' doors and asking for more.