



Inaugural Speeches

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Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.02 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I am an ordinary man from an ordinary background, and I stand here today in this grand Chamber, in this historic Chamber, as a nervous man and a man humbled by the place in which I find myself. I am a man humbled by the faith and trust that so many people have placed in me. The electorate of East Hills was created 58 years ago and I am proud to be the first Liberal member to hold the seat since its creation in 1953. I have been given a great responsibility, and I assure the people of East Hills that I will not let them down. I assure them that I will not take their votes for granted.

I have lived my whole life in East Hills. I was born there. I attended primary school and secondary school in East Hills. I have travelled all over the world, but my youth in East Hills has never been far from me. I still live there now with my lovely wife, Kharen, and my two sons, Zach and Josh. I pride myself on knowing my area, knowing the people who live there and knowing the problems they face each day. As a young boy I grew up with my mother, father, brother and sisters in a housing commission home in Matthews Avenue. We had a big yard that my dad dug up to put in a vegetable patch and a chicken coop. We were not a wealthy family. We ate the food we grew. What we did not need I would load into a wheelbarrow each afternoon after school and sell to the neighbours so I could earn a few extra bob. I learnt the value of money at a very young age. I learnt the meaning of hard work and the meaning of good money management—those lessons that Labor has never learnt.

It was tough growing up in East Hills. But as tough as those years were, I would not trade them for anything because those years taught me a lot about life—lessons that I still rely on, lessons that I still hold true to this day. I owe who I am today to those times, and I am proud of my working-class roots. I will never forget or turn my back on the electorate where I grew up. I bring to this Parliament the work ethic that I have had since I was a little boy, that little boy who sold vegetables from a wheelbarrow to earn a few extra bob. The same work ethic was handed down to me by my mother and father. Dad was a corporal in the army and he made sure that he taught me to be strong and to work hard, because life is hard.

I have passed that same work ethic on to my two sons. One has now entered the workforce as an enthusiastic apprentice, while the other has a passion for soccer and is pursuing that dream. Great days are ahead of both of them. With all of that said, I must confess that I am not a shining example of the New South Wales education system. I am sorry to say that, but school was simply not for me. I spent more time helping the greenkeeper than I spent in the classroom. I got my first job when I was 12 years old, working for a local butcher for a few hours every afternoon after school and every Saturday. And when I was 14 years old I left school altogether.

But while school was not for me, that did not mean I could not be educated. I have learnt many skills on the job, useful skills that prepared me for things to come, skills that I was able to use when, in 1983, I started my first business. All I had back then was a second-hand ute, a borrowed trailer and \$900 in my back pocket. It was not much but it was enough, and over the following years I worked hard and continued to learn new skills. I am proud to say that the business I started back then is now an extremely successful organisation that today directly employs 30 people at Revesby and operates in practically every State in Australia, providing work to numerous contractors.

But as successful as my business is, the one disadvantage of my failed schooling was the fact that I could neither read nor write. I managed to get by, but for me that simply was not good enough. I knew that if I was going to take my business to the next level, if I was going to be able to understand everything about running my company, if I was going to ensure that I could never be taken advantage of or have the wool pulled over my eyes, I would have to learn to read and write. In 1992, with the help of a retired teacher, I learnt to read and write. I may not be a shining example of the school system, but I like to think of myself as an example of what can be achieved when you put your mind to it.

I am a big believer in education, and our youth deserve the very best. But a lot of kids out there, like me, will never perform well at school. They should not be forgotten by our Government. They may not be good with books, they may not be good academically but, given the chance, they can succeed if they have access to work training and skills. Ten years after having learnt to read and

write, I was in a local service station working on one of my motorcycles. I vividly remember that day. A bloke I knew from the area walked in and we struck up a conversation. We spoke about many things, about where our lives were heading, what we were doing and what we could be doing for our community.

That conversation struck a chord with me and soon after I joined the Liberal Party because I wanted to get involved, I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to stand up for those who could not stand up for themselves. That was the beginning of my membership of the Liberal Party. Together with others in the branch I wanted to get a Liberal elected onto our local council, and today I am proud to say that we now have four Liberals on Bankstown City Council. But that was not the end; we wanted to break the hold of the Australian Labor Party on the area and get a Liberal elected as the State member for East Hills. That is what we set out to do 10 years ago. People thought we were mad, but we had a vision, and we set out to make it a reality. I was asked to stand as the Liberal candidate for East Hills in 2003 and again in 2007. Twice we lost but we were not defeated. To cut a long story short, with the support of many volunteers, friends and family, on 26 March 2011 we achieved our goal and for the first time in history, the electorate of East Hills became true-blue Liberal. What a great day that was for East Hills. What a great day that was for the Liberal Party.

The East Hills electorate is a sleeping giant, a largely forgotten corner of the western suburbs that has so much to offer. Surrounded by waterways and nestled on the banks on the Georges River, we have our own airport, hospital, university, TAFE college, private schools, 21 public schools, many, many kilometres of parks, industrial estates, excellent shopping villages and loads of untapped potential. Not many people know this, but believe it or not, East Hills was once a holiday destination. There were fishing cottages along the shores of the river. East Hills was a place where people wanted to go to relax and enjoy what the area had to offer. But Labor betrayed East Hills. It was allowed to slowly die under Labor years of waste and mismanagement. But the potential is still there, and with Barry O'Farrell as not only the Premier of New South Wales but as the Minister for Western Sydney, I know that East Hills will once again revive and prosper.

I feel it a great honour and privilege to be the first Liberal member ever to sit here in the Parliament of the people of New South Wales for the people of East Hills. But I can tell you this: I will not be the last. I am going to use my time in this Parliament to speak out for the people of East Hills. I am going to push for them to have the services that for so long have been denied to them. I am going to push for them to have the job opportunities that for so long have passed them by. I would not be here tonight as the first ever Liberal member for East Hills if not for the loyalty and support of so many good people. I am talking about my family, my friends and the many volunteers who stood with me. I appreciate each and every one of them.

To my mum and dad I simply say thanks. You know what is in my heart and I do not need to say anything else. To my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Jimmy and Trinny, who in the past have travelled down from Iluka to help, but this time they could not make the journey, my thoughts are with you. Thank you. To Bob Silver, Linda Wighton, Rob Dreis, Andy Bull, Sean Maher, my brother, Stinky, and all the other guys at Sydney Signs and Australian Sign Trade, I thank you for your support. To Jim Daniel and Naji Najjar, I do not know where you two get your energy and I appreciate all your help. To Alex Felici, thank you for the hours you spent getting people for my street stalls and for polling day. To Nat Smith, you are a credit to your father, mate, and to the Liberal Party. You gave me your help and advice and I thank you. To Glen Waud, you introduced me to the Liberal Party 10 years ago and you were part of the original plan that sees me standing here today, thank you. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

To Stephen Julian, Michael, Tadros, Wade Mackinerny, Joan Powel, Peter and Jenny Kovacs, Andrew Walther, Steven Iacono, Kerry Jeffs, Rhonda Mealey, Michel and Luna Heloui, Arturo Alibrandi and all the guys from the Bull Sharks, Henry Kha and Janine Orban, thank you. You all doorknocked with me, stood on train stations and worked on street stalls. The Liberal Party has no greater friends and I am indebted to you all for your support. I extend my thanks to Ron Delezio. Ron helped me on our street stalls and drove me around all day from one polling booth to the next. To Kylie Bull, Brett Dryden, Hughsey, Mark and Vanessa Beck, Steve and Janine, Greg and Vanessa, Barts, Ned and the boys, you were all a vital part of my success. To Big Russ, your help with the campaign bus was really important. To Wayne Brown, when I needed you, you were there. Chris, Peter, Joey, Alex and Johnny, I say thanks. To Ren, thanks for coming down from Queensland and helping my wife to keep everyone fed and watered on election day.

To Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and Peter Polous, thank you for your support. To all those people who volunteered their time and worked on a booth on election day, thank you. I hope you realise my victory is also your victory. To Chris Rath and the young Liberals, thank you. To Craig Kelly, Federal member for Hughes and Professor Frank Zumbo, thank you for taking time to help my campaign. A special thanks to Rebecca Haack and her husband, Ben, who served his nation as a soldier in Iraq and gave me his time during my campaign. To Mark Neeham, Chris Stone, Richard Shields and everyone else at the Liberal Party head office, thank you. To Penny George, our campaign battle ground director, thank you for all of your help and guidance. To Alan Jones, the most popular person on Australian radio, thank you for your kind words and support. I suppose I should also thank my campaign manager and now my chief adviser, Geoffrey Grasso. Geoff worked tirelessly and kept the wheels turning. He kept us all on track, thank you.

To my parliamentary colleagues, especially Chris Hartcher, Mike Gallacher, David Clarke, Marie Ficarra, Matthew Mason-Cox and

Charlie Lynn, you came out to East Hills week after week and you gave me so much of your time, thank you. To our new Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, you launched my campaign and you came out to be with me many times after that. Thank you for all your help. To Mike Baird and Greg Smith, thanks. I know that your help had a positive impact on the outcome. To Adrian Piccoli, Anthony Roberts, Andrew Stoner, Brad Hazzard, Don Page and Kevin Humphries, thank you for coming out to East Hills. I really do appreciate your efforts. A special thank you goes to Frank Oliveri for his support not only of me but of all the south-west and the Liberal Party of New South Wales. Frank, thank you. To Paul Azzo, many thanks for your help. To Bernie Finn, MLC, of the Victorian Parliament, thank you for coming to Sydney to help me on election day. That was greatly appreciated. To Liam Barry, who is here with us today, and to all the guys from Victoria, thanks for coming up to Sydney as well. To anyone I may have forgotten, thank you.

And to my beloved wife, who has stood by me all these years, thank you, Kharen, for always being there for me and allowing us to make this journey together. You mean the world to me. To my two teenage boys, I say just this: you may drive me nuts every now and again, but I am proud of you both. You are growing into two fine young men and I could not have asked for better sons. Finally, to the people of the East Hills electorate, I again thank you for entrusting me to serve you as your local member of Parliament. My time in the Parliament will be devoted to you.