



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Thursday 2 June 2011.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [12.01 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Mr Deputy-Speaker, congratulations on your election and also congratulations to the Hon. Shelley Hancock on being elected Speaker of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. It should be noted that the Coalition did not require affirmative action to appoint the State's first female Speaker. It is very humbling to make my first speech in this Chamber in the company of my parliamentary colleagues, my dearest friends, my hardworking campaign team and my loving family. When my parents, Domenico and Anna Maria Barilaro, arrived in Australia from Italy in 1968 they would never have imagined that one of their children would be standing in the oldest Parliament in Australia delivering his inaugural speech. I acknowledge their sacrifice and courage, heading to a foreign land with no family support and an unfamiliar language, but with a dream, hope and desire for a better life. Mum and dad, thank you.

My parents are fundamental in my being in this Chamber today. My father, whom I admire, has always been my hero and, as a small boy, all I wanted was to be just like him. He is a hardworking and selfless man, who will always be characterised by his generous nature. My mother, who has always put the family first and is the foundation of the Barilaro clan, continues to support all her children in reaching their goals. They both instilled in me the value of family and community service and also their thirst for building a better life here in Australia. The family discussions and arguments around the kitchen table over a plate of mum's lasagne certainly gave me an early baptism in politics, even though not quite the Bear Pit of this great place. I am very fortunate to have been elected to represent one of the most beautiful and diverse regions in the State. Banjo Paterson's iconic poem *The Man from Snowy River* best sums up the Monaro electorate:

And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges raise
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,

But beyond its rugged beauty, the Monaro is about the fighting and pioneering spirit of the people and the strong sense of community and mateship. I am blessed to call Monaro my home and honoured to have been sent to this place by the people of my community. At the apex of the electorate is Queanbeyan, a vibrant and culturally diverse city where the vision for the nation's capital was cultivated—a place I call home. Heading east is Bungendore, a growing major tourist centre expanding rapidly in recent years, popular with visitors from Canberra. As we continue on the Kings Highway we find historic Braidwood, the first town to receive heritage listing, and a lovely reminder of days gone by. Heading south down the rolling hills of the Monaro plains is the heart of the Monaro and capital of the State's alpine area, Cooma—an Aboriginal name meaning "open country"—and the gateway to Australia's winter playground, the majestic Snowy Mountains.

At the foot of the mountain is of course picturesque Jindabyne, beautifully framed by Lake Jindabyne. And in the manner of all things Australian, we find Adaminaby, home of the big trout that now appears on the back of Redhead matches as part of the company's "Australia's Big Things" theme that pays homage to some of the country's most iconic attractions. And we could not talk about the Monaro without mentioning platypus country in the hardworking town of Bombala, a town that embodies the fighting spirit of the Monaro, resilient in the face of the many broken promises and setbacks of the past 16 years but ready for a Government that will back the strong timber industry and get on with creating jobs. Monaro is also the home of the mighty Snowy Hydro scheme, a symbol of what this country can achieve. A symbol of vision, leadership and community banding together for the enrichment of this country—unlike the short-sighted policies and wasted opportunities of past governments, with one eye on the election ahead. In the words of James Freeman Clarke, an American preacher and author:

A politician thinks of the next election—a statesman, of the next generation

Many people have asked me why I would leave a successful small business and become a member of Parliament. My answer is that the influence of my family, a career in small business, my community service through my passion for football—go the mighty Monaro Panthers—and kids and time as a local councillor have contributed towards developing a desire to serve the community at a higher level. But they are the positive drivers in my life. The negative drivers can be summed up as follows: I have had a gutful of a Government, led by the vocal minority, selling out our hopes and dreams; a Government that was infected by a corrupt culture, which was attacking and abandoning the virtues and qualities of this once-great State.

When I look across this Chamber I struggle to find a politician on the other side who will take responsibility for driving this State to

its knees or one who is accountable to New South Wales families and not one who cowers to his or her factional masters. Why did those politicians who had their hands on the controls for so long keep looking away as prosperity was squandered and our future abandoned? Unfortunately for many on the Labor side, they adhered too closely to the words of former New South Wales Labor Premier Jack Lang, who said:

Always back the horse named self-interest, son. It'll be the only one trying.

Perhaps if they could think back to when this country was built, on honesty, integrity and hard work, they would have done the job they were elected to do. I was ashamed of a Government that was so self-serving, so caught up in the power struggle that it did not realise the impact it had on the good men and women of our great State. On 26 March 2011 the people of my electorate endorsed my vision for the Monaro and gave me a mandate to make it a reality. My simple vision is for a more prosperous, healthier and happier Monaro. I have a vision of a Monaro where tourism is thriving, leading to prosperity and growth. My electorate is blessed with a unique tourism product that I intend to champion.

The New South Wales ski fields have been forced by successive governments to compete with one hand tied behind their back. My vision is to make the New South Wales ski fields number one again, by removing barriers, aligning government policy and industry opportunity, creating a level playing field and engaging all stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to deliver a world-class alpine experience to rival the best ski resorts in the world. I wish to see the Monaro's farming region once again given the respect and support it so rightly deserves. We need to tackle issues around land use, native vegetation, biosecurity, water and infrastructure.

I look forward to the review of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities boards, which will restore the confidence of our farming sector. I am excited about communities having a say in the delivery of health care through local district boards, where election promises such as fixing issues at Queanbeyan Hospital, a satellite dialysis centre for Cooma and new building works at the Multi-Purpose Service in Braidwood are being driven by the community. I am determined to address issues around infrastructure for roads, sports fields, and educational and community facilities, with a new emphasis on regional communities given priority and returning more planning powers to communities by empowering and supporting local government.

I am a steadfast supporter of government easing, through good government policy and strong fiscal management, the cost-of-living pressures that have stretched the family budget to breaking point. That may at times require tough decisions, but there will be long-lasting benefits for the future. The overwhelming message I received from the people of Monaro is that they are passionate about their community but they were discouraged by a Government that just stopped listening. They understand the local issues and they want to be part of the solution. I do understand that government is seen at times to hardly ever be the solution to the problem but quite often the cause, but this can change by allowing common sense to prevail and restoring accountability and transparency to government.

As I campaigned, I was inspired to find out about the passionate work and efforts of groups such as Home in Queanbeyan, the Australian Capital Territory Eden-Monaro Cancer Support Group, the Cooma-Monaro Renal Dialysis Group, the Monaro Early Intervention Group, the Queanbeyan Children's Special Needs Group and the Doug Smith Committee—to name just a few—that are finding local solutions where government had not and are ready to partner with government to continue this good work. I also met with many great local businesses in the Monaro that are passionate about their communities. As a small business owner, I have a great deal of empathy for farmers and small business people, as I have experienced the pressure of the bank knocking at the door and having your home and livelihood on the line, all in the name of being part of the thriving small business economy, which is so important to many regional communities.

I see small business as the engine room for growth within the Monaro electorate and this State. I will be a strong advocate for the local chambers of commerce, the business enterprise centres, industry associations, tourism, farmers and all small business, because if they are allowed to prosper, the region and State will prosper. I welcome our election commitment of giving small business a real voice with the appointment of a small business commissioner as well as government leading the business sector through a decade of decentralisation and our Jobs Action Plan. Red tape needs to be slashed and disincentives removed that will allow small business to do what it does best: create prosperity and jobs.

Even though the Leader of the Opposition claims to represent the working class and blue collar workers, who are the heart and soul of small business, I do not believe he understands the honest and trusting relationships that small business owners have with their staff. He is happy to criticise successful local small businesses, those who are proud to be local and Australian, those who give back so much to their community and those who offer their employees more than just a job. In an article in the *Queanbeyan Age* of 26 March 2010 the Leader of the Opposition, for petty political advantage, attacked my candidacy by attacking my business and its integrity—something that I can and have rebuked. To actually attack the integrity, work and pride of my workers is shameful.

The fundamental threat to business and industry is the issue of the skills crisis we are facing in this country today. Many young people are turning away from trade apprenticeships. The financial burden has become such a disincentive that many apprentices

just do not last. Unfortunately, the rates of pay for apprentices have not changed in line with the shifting profile of an apprentice. They are older, most have large financial commitments and many no longer live at home; all these factors have made the completion of an apprenticeship almost financially impossible.

If we do not address this issue we will continue to lose industry overseas, as well as lose valuable skill sets that we will never be able to replace. It is time to draw a line in the sand and get rid of the antiquated apprentice award system, as well explore a Higher Education Contribution Scheme style loan system to cover study, accommodation and personal equipment costs during the term of an apprenticeship. We need to look at the way training is delivered and we need to be flexible in regional communities in how training can be provided locally. We have a responsibility to get this right for the sake of Australian industry and our kids.

My background in manufacturing energy-efficient building products, and my passion and interest in innovation and discovering practical measures in sustainable building practice drive me to believe that we can be leaders in industry and we do not need to sell our jobs offshore. It is this same passion for sustainability that is core to my approach for the environment of being green, not extreme. We need a balanced approach in caring for the environment but not obstructing the production of food and fibre, industry and destroying jobs through another big fat tax, which is an attack on many families and regional communities.

I am also concerned with the over-zealousness of the National Parks and Wildlife Service over national parks in the electorate. National parks should not only be well managed but be open for everyone to enjoy, not only for appeasing the chardonnay socialist types in Balmain who only ski in Saint Moritz. I value our Federation and the sovereignty of New South Wales. I honour and respect the Australian way of life and will fight to uphold our traditions, symbols and system of government. I am conservative by nature and I stand in this Parliament as a strong advocate for the family unit, Christian values and a fair go for all. I was taught at an early stage of my life about the value of respect and the need to be honest, reliable and hardworking—values I bring with me to this job. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

At this point I pay tribute to two former members for Monaro—Peter Cochran and Peter Webb. Both were very good local members who worked very hard and achieved a great deal for the Monaro electorate, and it was disappointing that they were not given the acknowledgement that they rightly deserved by members of the Labor Party. I also commend the former Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, whose record of achievement was remarkable and his support invaluable. He is here in the gallery today. Unlike previous practice, I acknowledge the former member, Steve Whan, for his service and work as the member for Monaro over the past eight years, as well as the sacrifice of his family, especially his wife Cherrie, as it is a team effort. I wish them all the best in their future.

Many people have contributed to The Nationals' fantastic win in Monaro on 26 March, but I acknowledge three strong women who have been part of this journey, the highs and lows of a 12-month campaign and my life. First of the divas three is Melinda Pavey, who has painstakingly represented the Monaro electorate as the duty member of the Legislative Council for the past eight years, with a real enthusiasm for the people of Monaro. It was the work that Melinda did that laid the foundations and formed the relationships that made my job as a candidate easier—all of this at the cost of time away from her family, a sacrifice worthy of note. Most importantly, she always believed in me, regardless of the polls or what she was being told. Melinda Pavey is one of the reasons I am part of the strong Nationals team of today. Thank you.

Also, to our extraordinarily hardworking State Chairman in Christine Ferguson and State Director Ben Franklin and his team, Greg, Nathan, Felicity and Laura, just to name the few whom we pestered over the course of the campaign: Your guidance, wisdom and leadership is the reason I can stand here today as a member of an O'Farrell-Stoner Government. Thank you. I pay special gratitude to my friend George Lemon, a long-serving member of The Nationals, who encouraged me to run for State Parliament, seek nomination for The Nationals and stayed firm with me on this very long journey. Be it our passion for football, the council election of 2008 or all things Nationals, you have been there with me. Thank you. It was a very easy decision to join The Nationals, the grand party of New South Wales politics—one with a platform, philosophy and ideals that sit well with my own beliefs. Perhaps the following helps sum up why The Nationals are the party of choice for so many. It is part of an extract that was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

Opponents of the present Labor Government must find some common progressive ground of union, not a confession of faith on every conceivable political theme, but a fighting platform, dealing with essentials, and offering sane and definite progressive legislation, in contrast to the ill-considered experiments with which we are further threatened.

Much that the Labor party professes to want to do must be done. The trouble is that in doing it present Governments adopt methods which lower the tone of public life, which weaken individual sense of social responsibility, which kill initiative and enterprise, and which intensify sentiments of intolerance and class hatred.

Now one may have thought that this extract was about the previous Labor Government, but it was not. It was actually penned by the rascal George Beeby, a patriot of our party, back on 26 April 1915. Unfortunately for the Labor Party, the extract indicates that

not much has changed for Labor in 96 years—a party that has learned so little from its past mistakes, a party that continues to fail the very people it claims to represent. I acknowledge The Nationals' supreme historian, Paul Davy, for this background information. I also acknowledge the work contributed to my campaign by my hardworking campaign committee: Emma Watts; George Lemon; Peter Langhorne; Jen Southwell; my sister, Angelina Pavan; Henry Pike; Aaron McDonnell; Erin Adams; Beth Wright; Andrew Heath; Alistair Coe, MLA, and in particular someone who sadly is not here today, Gaye White, who kept me going and whom I affectionately now call my "campaign mum".

Most importantly, I must pay tribute to the second of the divas three of my campaign, Emma Watts, for her leadership and commitment as my campaign director. She is a woman of strength and integrity, a woman who gave up part of her life over the past two years for me and this campaign but, more widely, her commitment to The Nationals in her role as the Vice State Chairman. She is selfless and deserves special thanks. Thank you. I am also indebted to the members and branches of The Nationals and the Liberal Party both in the Monaro and the Australian Capital Territory, who proved that The Nationals and the Liberals can work together. They are an example of the spirit behind the O'Farrell-Stoner Coalition.

I pay tribute to the hundreds of volunteers who helped me in the campaign, with special thanks to Richard Coventry, Sam Jackson Hope, James Howlin, Jeff McCormack, David Pavan, Alex Tine, Neil Thompson, Andrew Constance MP, Niall Blair MLC, Senator John Williams, Councillor Bronny Taylor, Sue Lichfield, my brother Tony Barilaro, Gary Wadsworth, Velice Trajanoski, Ilije Tomeski, Duncan Osborne, Jesse Robinson, Jimmy Kiplox, Elizabeth Biggs, Kerry and Merry Watts, and of course Rachael and her team from Quizine Cafe and Catering; and to the wider membership of the Monaro Nationals, who kept the faith, who turned up to shows, stands and meetings and who are the reason why our party can proudly celebrate more than 90 years of existence. The party in New South Wales was formed in 1919 by representatives of the Farmers and Settlers Association. Their platform was to create a progressive party, unlike the project-centralist Labor Party that was controlled by union organisations, and that platform is as relevant today as it was then.

To my party leader and a good man, Andrew Stoner: Thank you for your trust, support and leadership. I am proud to serve with you. Premier Barry O'Farrell, thank you for your leadership, strength and support of a united Coalition, backing The Nationals in Monaro and your personal belief in me. Thank you also to my parliamentary Liberal and Nationals colleagues who made the trek to the Monaro in support of the campaign. There are far too many to name, but I give special acknowledgement to the Hon. Jillian Skinner for the many trips to the Monaro and the Deputy Leader of the New South Wales Nationals, Adrian Piccoli, whom I count as a friend and who is part of the ever-growing Italian faction of the National party, which now stands at two—it maybe two and half if we count Melinda Pavey, because she is an Italian wannabe.

Most of all, I thank the people in the Monaro electorate for their vote of confidence. My commitment to them is that I will fight to ensure that their voice will be heard, their concerns addressed and their hopes realised. Most importantly, I would not be here today without the amazing support of my loving family. To my parents, my brothers, Sandro and Tony, but most importantly my sister, Angelina, and her husband, David, who always without reservation are there for Deanna and me. At times I do not quite thank them adequately. My father-in-law and his wife, uncles, aunties, cousins and all the extended family, thank you. You are all very special to me. A special thanks to my uncle Frank, who voted Liberal and Nationals for the very first time, which almost killed him.

To my precious daughters, Alessia my eldest, my angel, a shining light with such a gentle and generous soul, and my youngest, Domenica, my little princess with a heart of gold, a spirit so strong and a smile so soft. Thank you so much for your sacrifice, support and love. I am so very proud of you and today I stand here because of you, and as a symbol that anything is possible. Do not settle for anything less than what your heart desires. Dream big, aim high, because anything is possible and I have no doubt that you, too, will leave your mark in this world.

Last but not least, the third of the divas three and the pillar of my existence is my beautiful wife, Deanna, whom I love and cherish; a woman who continually allows me to follow my dreams and desires, a woman who has been my foundation of strength and a woman without whom my life thus far would not be. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a soccer coach and a business woman. She is a strong woman who, in the face of adversity, still stands strong with her head held high and is the essence of many women and values that should be celebrated by society today. Finally, to all members of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government who have been given a vast mandate from the people of New South Wales, the job ahead is immense and fixing the damage of 16 years of Labor will take time. This sentiment was well embraced in the words of President John F. Kennedy:

All of this will not be finished in the first one hundred days, nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

I am looking forward to forming lifelong friendships with members of the Coalition, but particularly new members of The Nationals class of 2011, good men and women, champions and strong advocates of their communities—Leslie Williams, Troy Grant, Paul Toole, Stephen Bromhead, Andrew Gee, Kevin Anderson and our new upper House members the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the Hon. Niall Blair—and members of my staff, Henry Pike, Romney White and Emily Sharp. I conclude by reminding everyone in this House:

Let us not lose sight of what we have been elected to do on behalf of our communities. The job of a local member is simple: Speak with the people's voice and promote the vision designed by them. Our job is to enhance the communities and lives of those who live in this great State and we cannot become skewed by the game of politics or become indulgent in its pomp and ceremony. In light of this, let me finish with this quote:

Being in politics is like being a football coach. You have to be smart enough to understand the game, and dumb enough to think it's so important.

Thank you and God bless.