



Full Day Hansard Transcript (Legislative Assembly, 14 November 2012, Corrected Copy)

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday, 14 November 2012.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [5.13 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is a privilege to speak in this House as the member for Sydney. I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay my respects to elders past and present. It is an honour to be elected to a role where I am able to work with so many inspiring Sydneysiders, many of them present, to progress reforms that will benefit so many people, families and communities across the State. I acknowledge also the 200 nationalities represented in Sydney, Sydney's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex [LGBTI] community, and the many community leaders, advocates and activists who make the seat of Sydney one of the most engaged, vibrant and compassionate electorates in the country.

One of our most inspiring communities is our public housing community. Residents in areas including Millers Point, Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills have taught me a lot about Sydney and the importance of community over the past few months. Public housing tenants actively contribute to the fabric of our city, and they deserve greater security and respect. Sydney is a dynamic electorate. We have the State's highest population, the highest density, the most number of couples without children, the most single-person households, the lowest levels of car ownership but high levels of bicycle ownership and large numbers of young adults. We have populations of very rich and very poor. The electorate includes Sydney's heart—the central business district and our beautiful harbour.

My family first moved to the inner city in 1988 from country New Zealand. In that year an Independent member of Parliament was elected to New South Wales to represent the then seat of Bligh—her name was Clover Moore. Clover hit the ground running with fierce determination to transform Sydney into a family-friendly, diverse and welcoming home for all. Her many achievements include laws that enabled small bars to operate and public ownership of the former showgrounds site, saved the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf, initiated the medically supervised injecting centre and made it illegal to incite hatred of gay men and lesbians. A very important piece of historic legislation introduced and championed by Clover was same-sex adoption. When Clover first introduced this legislation in 2000 she was the only member of Parliament to support it in the Legislative Assembly. She sat on one side of the Chamber by herself, with all other members sitting opposite her to oppose it.

Finally, in 2010 her legislation passed with the support of then Premier Kristina Keneally and our current Premier Barry O'Farrell. This House will soon debate legislation to grant the children of those same-sex parented families the right to have married parents. I am encouraged that already we are starting to see the same political cooperation to progress marriage equality in New South Wales as we did with same-sex adoption. I look forward to being an active member of the multiparty marriage equality working group. As many would know, Clover is my political hero and a role model. Like most people in Sydney, I was shocked and appalled at the legislation that led to her being forced to resign from a seat she was democratically elected to represent. I was humbled to receive her endorsement as a candidate and I will honour her and the people of Sydney by building on her hard work and continuing her grassroots approach to politics.

My success at the by-election is a tribute to Clover's determination, courage and integrity. I will fulfil the high expectations of our community. Thank you, Clover. I will continue Clover's loud and determined voice for keeping inner-city public housing and expanding affordable housing, championing environmental sustainability and advocating for better transport alternatives. Clover Moore also has been a lone voice for the voiceless in our Parliament, and I share her passion for protecting animals from pain and suffering. I will work closely with animal advocates to combat cruelty, including factory farming, puppy farming, pig dogging, goat racing, wild animals in circuses and duck hunting. This is more important than ever with the Shooters and Fishers Party holding the balance of power in the upper House.

At 31 years of age I am one of the younger members of this Parliament. However, I bring with me 10 years' experience running a small business finding jobs for people and five years' experience in political activism at State and Federal levels. My hope is that at the next State election, in just 2½ years, we will see more young people put up their hands to run for public office. This Parliament would benefit from a greater diversity of representation, including more women and young people, who would bring with them fresh ideas, life experiences and new energy. One area on which our State needs to focus more is embracing the digital economy and promoting new platforms that will help the small business sector grow, including social media, application development and ecommerce solutions. With the skills, knowledge and networks that already exist in New South Wales our State has the opportunity to not just be best in practice but next in practice.

Having been around politics for five years and having travelled around the country and State, it is clear that people have become disenfranchised with the way politics is practised at both State and Federal levels. Many people have complained that the focus is becoming more combative and less collaborative, and more about personality than policy. It is time for this to change. I believe the recent by-election was testament to the inner-city's dissatisfaction with the political party system. As an Independent, I am committed to working with all members to achieve outcomes for my community, regardless of party or faction. I will work with the State Government to achieve light rail services in the inner city and improvements to the sporting stadia and in expanding the bike network. I will work with the Opposition to oppose cuts to jobs and funding cuts to health, education and community services. I will work with The Greens to progress legislation that promotes environmental sustainability, including supporting container deposit legislation, and encouraging greater use of renewable energy sources.

I acknowledge my colleagues Mr Jamie Parker and Mr Richard Torbay for their support over the past couple of days. I will draw support and advice to always do what is right from my fellow Independent Richard Torbay and The Greens Jamie Parker. I will always challenge failures and applaud good work. In that spirit I would like to acknowledge the Premier for being the first New South Wales Premier to attend the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and for maintaining State Government funding to that important community and global event. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, towards making New South Wales a safer, fairer and more equitable place for workers and union members.

I assure the Labor Party they have an ally in me when it comes to protecting the pay and conditions of New South Wales workers. I would like to thank The Greens for making action on climate change a political reality and I acknowledge the leadership of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann in introducing her bill on the rights of the terminally ill, a bill I will be supporting. By working together we can achieve more. For my part I look forward to putting Sydney's case forward for greater community consultation in planning, for strata reform and for protecting public and affordable housing. I will voice the community's concerns about the casino proposal at Barangaroo.

Another campaign close to the hearts of many Sydney families, including my own, is the need for more public education facilities, including a comprehensive public high school. A growing number of families with high school-aged children do not have any options within the electorate and many young students have to commute well over an hour to get to school. We have the facilities within Sydney to provide a location for a high school, including the former Cleveland Street High School site, and I look forward to working with parents and the Government to make this a reality. As a proud gay man and representative of one of the gayest electorates in the country—

Mr Greg Piper: We are all pretty happy.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: That is good to know. Mine are happy in a special way. As a proud gay man and representative of one of the gayest electorates in the country, I will continue to champion much-needed Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex [LGBTI] legislative reform. I have already mentioned marriage equality. Additionally, this House has the opportunity and duty to strengthen antidiscrimination laws so that, for example, teachers can no longer be fired for being gay and students can no longer be expelled for being gay. We must also put an end to the "gay panic" defence, and I applaud the work of the Hon. Helen Westwood, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and others towards this.

It is my intention to serve the people of Sydney for as long as you will have me. In that regard I must thank my husband, Victor. We married in May of this year and our honeymoon consisted of an intense campaign for the Federal vote on marriage equality, a local government election for the City of Sydney and the recent Sydney by-election. Thank you for your patience and support, Vic, I love you. I would like to thank my entire family for their support: my mother, Carolyn, for always being an inspiring role model and so committed to all her sons; my father, Victor, for his care and compassion; and my brothers, Victor and Nick, for the encouraging yet grounding influence they have always had on me.

I would like to thank the national committee of Australian Marriage Equality for the trust and faith they placed in me during my five years as the National Convener. We have gained such strong community support across this country for marriage equality. We have achieved so many significant victories, including having same-sex marriages counted in the census, working with Rainbow Labor to change Australian Labor Party policy in favour of marriage equality, motions in support of reform from Tasmanian, Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales parliaments, and breaking records for the most submissions ever made to a parliamentary inquiry.

Many of the people who have played a key role in progressing this important reform are here today. I would like to thank and acknowledge my friends Professor Kerryn Phelps, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Mardi Gras Chair Peter Urmson and GetUP National Director Sam McLean. I would like to pay special tribute to the current National Convener of Australian Marriage Equality, Rodney Croome, and thank him for teaching me so much about advocacy, lobbying and the political process. To all those who assisted in the by-election campaign, let me assure you this victory is a shared one. Your commitment, encouragement and determination throughout the campaign helped set us apart and resulted in a definitive victory. We ran a fast community campaign

on a tight budget. I left feeling inspired by the people who donated their time to door knock, hand out pamphlets at street stalls and on election day and run the office.

I particularly would like to acknowledge the many hours put in by David Pocklington, Wendy Williamson, Nikos Enginertan, Alan Zurvas and Elaine Czulkowski and thank the many long-term Clover Moore supporters and volunteers who brought their campaigning skills and expertise to the campaign to keep Sydney Independent. Any political party can learn a lot from the team that backed the campaign to keep Sydney Independent. The dedication was overwhelming throughout. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my new staff: Tammie Nardone, Roy Bishop and Leanne Abbott. Being able to start working for Sydney so quickly and effectively is thanks to your knowledge, skills and passion for the Sydney community. I would like to thank the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, for the faith she has in me. I look forward to doing you proud, Clover. Most importantly, I would like to thank the people of Sydney for the confidence they have displayed in me by electing me as their representative in this House. This is a responsibility I do not take lightly and I thank you in advance for holding me to account and being the active and engaged constituents that you are. There is a lot to be done, let's get to work.