



Inaugural Speeches

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Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: (Inaugural Speech): I rise tonight for the first time in this historic Chamber in response to Her Excellency's address to this Parliament. In doing so, I firstly offer my congratulations to you, Mr Deputy-Speaker, on your well-deserved election to your role. I also offer my congratulations to Madam Speaker on her historic and well-deserved election to her role. In addition, I offer my congratulations to all my new parliamentary colleagues on their election to this House and to the other Chamber.

Tonight I renew my pledge of loyal service to the Premier, the Deputy Premier and all the Cabinet members in assisting them in their vital service to our State as part of the Fiftieth-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. I stand here tonight a humble yet very proud member for the Dubbo electorate. From the outset I would like to acknowledge the former member, Ms Dawn Fardell, whom I have succeeded to this place, and wish her well with her future. I stand here now as the thirteenth State representative of the proud electorate of Dubbo, first proclaimed in 1894 and since its second incarnation from 1930. This is not an honour that is lost on me for a single moment.

I was not born into poverty, nor was I born into privilege; I am just an ordinary bloke with an extraordinary opportunity. I was born into a normal family under whose care I was afforded every opportunity to live and learn to serve others before self; to take every step to right a wrong wherever possible; and to live by the ethos that to whom much is given, much is expected. I am proud to be the first Grant to be a member of this Chamber and to continue my family's proud Scottish heritage of service to both Crown and community that has been entrenched in my DNA since the year 1047.

I recognise today my family who have joined me, and I offer my thanks to them for all their love and support throughout my life, across what has not always been an uneventful life without its challenges but a life that I could lead knowing that there was a safety net of love and support ever present while I pursued my dreams. To my father, Ken, a retired New South Wales police inspector of 33 years distinguished service, and to my mother, Ronda, a retired nurse who worked mostly in aged care, I say thank you.

I am the older brother of twin sisters Kim and Kathleen. I grew up, however, with only one sister after we lost Kathleen at birth, Kathleen being buried at Moree. As I grew up, despite the usual sibling rivalries and conflicts that arise in any family, the love from my sister was and remains unequivocal. Kim, who has joined me tonight, your love and support of my family and me from childhood to now has never been anything other than absolute. My absolute love and support I return to you with interest. To you and your family—Craig, Jassy and Connor—I could not be more proud of you all. Kim, you are the most remarkable and kindest person I know, and there is no prouder big brother in the world than I am of you. To my extended family of Rino and Lesley, Paul, Renita, Bryan, Damian, Robyn and Bill, and Lyn and Lou, who are spread across the country and spread across the world, I consider myself extremely lucky to have you and your families in my life, which is far richer for the honour.

I consider myself a son of regional New South Wales. I unashamedly love my State, and I love my community. I was born in Maitland and spent my schooling years at Kootingal Public School and Oxley High School in Tamworth. Throughout my life I have had the privileged opportunity to have lived and worked in so many wonderful towns and regional cities, and I feel a dual responsibility to represent not only my electorate but also the communities I have at times called home. These include communities within the Maitland, Barwon, Tamworth, Newcastle, Charlestown, Swansea, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Goulburn, Northern Tablelands and Drummoyne electorates. In addition, I have family living in the Port Stephens, Central Coast and Tweed Heads electorates. From that it should be abundantly clear that my rolling stone existence means that my interests lay across the breadth of this wonderful State.

On behalf of my electorate and those communities I have outlined I stand here tonight with clarity of mind, courage of conviction and unshakeable determination to ensure that regional New South Wales gets a fair share and that my communities get a fair go. I share this determination with my very talented Nationals colleagues, who have become very genuine good friends—in the upper House the Hon. Niall Blair and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell; and in this Chamber Mr Stephen Bromhead, the member for Myall Lakes, Mr Andrew Gee, the member for Orange, Mrs Leslie Williams, the member for Port Macquarie, Mr Kevin Anderson, member for

Tamworth, and Labor conquerors at Monaro and Bathurst, my great little mates John Barilaro and Paul Toole. We are proud to have entered this Parliament, respectful of our party's immense history and tradition but excited to join with our Nationals colleagues who have been returned to this House in our pursuit of making significant contributions to the future of The Nationals and this State.

Today I commit to contributing to the restoration of the integrity of this historic and proud Chamber and to the restoration of the standing of the New South Wales Parliament in the eyes of those who, without question, have had too much opportunity to mock and ridicule those who have let not only this institution but also their communities down in recent years. It is a privilege to be able to serve one's State. I have now been able to do that in two different capacities. In 1988 I joined the NSW Police Force and six months later took an oath of office to protect and serve my community—an oath I have held dear for over 21 years. Over those years, to steal a football analogy, the NSW Police Force owes me nothing. Indeed, I am forever appreciative of all the opportunities this proudest of callings has offered me.

I did not take a carpet ride to the rank of inspector of police during my service, and I am proud to say that I have walked and worked some of the toughest streets in our State. In that time I witnessed the very best and the very worst in people. Like many police, I have held in my hands children lost to their parents. I have looked into the eyes of children who have had their innocence stolen from them. I have comforted those who have suffered unimaginable grief and loss. I have been called upon to help mend broken lives and broken communities. It is these experiences, gained from having a front row seat to life, which steels one and continues to motivate one to seek a better outcome. Those experiences at times have left me "dancing with shadows", running from grey skies, questioning humanity and trying to find explanation and reason in the unexplainable.

In contrast, I consider myself blessed with the opportunities I have had to contribute in arenas never before pursued by police: to build relationships between police and our Indigenous communities in locations never imagined possible, and to work hand-in-hand to reconcile opportunities for young Indigenous people and provide pathways to a better life through education and employment outcomes. These initiatives and outcomes I count as my proudest achievements, along with my success in pursuing and locking up those who preyed on our children. Despite the gap between the depths of despair and the elation of achievement a policing career offers, I remain an idealist without illusions. It is from this base, steeled by my experience and the humility that those experiences bring, that I believe I can make a contribution to the O'Farrell-Stoner Government.

It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to those many I have both served under and served with throughout my career: my brothers and sisters in blue. It was nice to serve with the member for Campbelltown on the streets and it is nice to serve with him once again in this House, although his claim to entry rank privilege in this area has been thwarted by another in the other place: the Hon Michael Gallacher. Colleagues who have played a poignant part in my career are many but a couple who have stood out include retired Senior Assistant-Commissioner Peter Walsh, APM. He was, and remains, a role model to me. He has always supported my community service, which sometimes operated outside of the square, but that did not matter to him. He freely and generously gave of his time, wisdom and advice, but it was always premised with, "Troy boy, you never sprint in a marathon", which was usually followed by a short uppercut to my ribs.

I owe my life to Senior Constable Jason Williams. His courage when we were attacked and I was stabbed early one December morning in 1993, risking his safety to give me the chance to fight for my life, without fear of further harm to himself, bonds us for life and is a debt I cannot properly repay. Despite the odds, 12:2, we did pretty well old mate. Inspector Matthew Lynch and Senior Constable Michael Eaton epitomise the very best qualities to which any police officer could aspire. They inspire me with their tenacity and integrity. Their service to their communities and support of their colleagues is second to none.

In my front row seat over the past 16 years I have witnessed an evolution and growth of this gigantic labyrinth of a governmental monster of sorts. With its vicious, regulatory tentacles it stripped life from those it was charged to protect and serve, it consumed and fed on the very spirit of those it was charged to serve. It was gluttonous in its waste of public moneys and resources. That monster is in need of a new master that will reinstall into our bureaucracy a focus to serve others before ourselves, an opportunity to serve outside of the current silos of its domain, and with the clear focus of putting community first. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Mr David Elliott, the member for Baulkham Hills, shared this view in his inaugural speech, and I wholeheartedly agree with him. The bureaucracy has to function from a decentralised base to ensure that in delivering service the very diverse needs across our great State are met with an equal diversity of service delivery. I do not speak of this challenge with naivety nor lay the blame for our situation at the feet of our tireless public servants. I know the answers are not out of reach and that it is a challenge we can overcome. This was demonstrated nearly a century ago. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 April 1915 printed a submission from Sir George Stephenson Beeby, which read:

Opponents of the present Labor Government must find some progressive ground of union, not a concession 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 experiment 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. No party can take the place of the present governing power unless it is prepared to aim at the better equalisation of opportunity and the creating of new opportunities Let us realise that the changing needs and aspirations of a community compel changes in politics and platforms, and that the present dangerous and degrading system of Government into which we have drifted can only be abolished by a union of opposing elements on a common democratic basis.

On 26 March 2011 New South Wales realised that union. What is alarming, and I believe the greatest challenge for our new Government, is how to prevent what developed some 96 years ago and was reincarnated over the past 16 years from plaguing our State in the future? How did we let the pursuit for equal employment and other equity opportunities leave behind the pursuit and maintenance of personal responsibility and accountability? How did our State get that *Groundhog Day* feeling, despite society's innovations and progress? How did we come so far yet go nowhere in respect of the chilling portrayal of government in 1915? How do we post-26 March make good the union that has been achieved? This very day for this Government I believe the answer lies in three words: opportunity, unity and leadership. John C. Maxwell wrote, "A leader knows the way, shows the way and goes the way." I believe that all members of this Parliament are leaders. It is not about being the leader; for me it is about being a leader.

We all have a role to play and where I believe we have gone wrong and where the challenge lies is to ensure that our leadership of our communities is authentic. Our communities have grown tired of spin doctors and a lack of transparency, as I have, and they are no longer prepared to be apathetic or tolerate being taken for a ride, particularly by those who serve themselves before others. As we demonstrate that leadership, I believe we must pursue unity within our communities, seek a unity of purpose and a unity of aspiration, and in that unity develop an equality of initiative and enterprise. If we are able to achieve these outcomes we have before us an opportunity to chase new horizons and an opportunity for both regional New South Wales and my electorate of Dubbo, as examples, to be at the heart of Government, at the heart of growth and a major contributor to our total State's prosperity.

My electorate of Dubbo has set the scene for bush laureates to talk of Mulga Bill. It has been the home of much of the bushranger heritage that has shaped our history. It has beamed vision of man first walking on the moon across the world from the dish. It is home to the man who builds the Queen's carriages. It is a community that is a nursery for our nation's sporting champions. It is also home to the Taronga Western Plains Zoo, the world's leading conservationists with initiatives such as creating the world's first rhino embryo in vitro fertilisation in order to save a species that has walked our earth longer than mankind. We are home to the natural logistic road and railway hubs that can provide our State and country with the food and fibre transport routes we require to live and prosper, yet have been denied any investment.

This is a small snapshot of the enterprise that the Dubbo electorate offers New South Wales, but this initiative and enterprise have been stymied over the past 16 years and it sadly reflects where our State was in 1915. This example also demonstrates the opportunity that we now have, and with unity of community and with authentic leadership I believe we can and will rectify this situation. We must now grapple with the challenges of Government to change that situation and no longer let communities wait nine years for failed delivery of health infrastructure and services, as an example.

We can no longer deny a city or our communities readily available access to cancer and cardio treatment that can be found more readily in some Third World countries. We no longer need to deny vital infrastructure that is required for our State's growth because we have been out of sight and out of mind. There are many challenges that must be met. Many of them will require an authentic desire from all members of this Chamber to achieve. The answers to those challenges do not have to be complicated, nor do they all lie as a mystery waiting to be discovered in the future. Many of the answers may well be lessons from past methods and systems from a tried and true era. In conclusion, I would not be standing here today if it were not for the amazing efforts of my campaign team and so many wonderful supporters and volunteers. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for putting so much effort into steering me into this Chamber.

I cannot name all those responsible but I give my heartfelt thanks in particular to the Hon. Andrew Stoner and the Hon. Duncan Gay. To my Federal colleagues Mark Coulton, Senator John "Wacka" Williams, Senator Fiona Nash and John Cobb I say thank you. To all the former shadow Cabinet and now Ministers, particularly the Premier and the Minister for Health, I truly say thank you for your support. I thank the Premier for the trust and faith that he has placed in me as Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources. I pledge to the Minister for Natural Resources, Katrina Hodgkinson, and to all those stakeholders who have welcomed me since my appointment my absolute commitment to this portfolio to ensure we achieve sustainable, pragmatic and appropriate quality water and natural resource outcomes for all of our communities, our State and our country.

To the Hon. Ian Armstrong: Your guidance to me has been invaluable and I thank you for helping me bring back the soapbox and grassroots campaigning. To The Nationals State team: I am indebted for the professionalism and support of the outstanding State director Ben Franklin and State chairman Christine Ferguson and all their magnificent team. In return, I pledge to you today to lead the way in ensuring that our regional communities never have reason to return to the isolation of Independents. I have to pay special

mention to Nathan Quigley and Douglas Martin, my wingmen, but more so to Nathan. To the two men who started me on this incredible journey seeking me out and encouraging me and my family: To Bluey Lyons thank you and also to you, the Hon. Thomas George. Thomas, you are without doubt the very best example of a man any aspiring politician can look up to. God bless you.

Throughout my life I have looked around at times for inspiration and I have found that inspiration in many strange places. Three people who have inspired me beyond worthy recognition, but are definitely not strange, are my children's godparents Tony Studholme, Cath McKenna and Shelly Clarke. You are a constant reminder to me of how much capacity a person has to give to another, and I thank you and your families for playing such a special role in my life. Two gentlemen I wish to acknowledge who know least about my life but have provided me with the most by way of footings from which I could pursue this endeavour and to whom I will be forever grateful are Mr Tim Manning and Police Inspector Phil Shephard.

All those who stand in this Chamber I am sure would agree that it would not be possible for us to be here without the unbelievable support of so many volunteers and helpers and the existence of a close campaign team who share our vision and total commitment to the cause, in my case over nine long months. I had the closest of teams and in my campaign manager, Peter Bartley, I had a campaign manager without peer. Peter Tremble, your generosity and unmeasurable support of me will never be forgotten. Special thanks also go to Pauline and Trevor McAllister and new kids on the block Kirby Dunlop, Belinda Strahorn, Matt Goodwin and Kathryn Wheeler.

I share with others, I am sure, that my greatest pride lies with my own family. To my kids, Taylor, the most honest, forthright, kind-hearted daughter a father could wish for, my Butterfly, you have me wrapped right around your little finger, and that is just the way I like it. To my little man Hamish, a future Socceroo I am sure, you simply make me so very proud every single day. To my best friend and soul mate, my wife, Toni, who has shared all the ups and downs that life with a police officer can bring, you have held my hand through my greyest of skies, you have steadied me at the foot of my greatest challenges and you have lit my heart at the darkest times. If I had achieved nothing else in life other than to have been your husband, that would have been enough. The very faith and trust that has been placed in me by my electorate, my friends and family are a faith and trust I will work hard to repay every day as I stand in this House.