

**WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY BILL 2011**  
**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2011**

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I remind all members that the Hon. Paul Green is about to make his inaugural speech. I ask that members extend to him all the usual courtesies.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [5.02 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Before I commence the substance of my inaugural address to the House, I must acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, who has led me to this place to serve the people of this great State. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation. Today I am before the House with incredible honour and humility. I remain in awe that I am amongst such esteemed people. I formally congratulate you, Mr President, and all the new members of the Fifty-fifth Parliament on their election.

My journey in this world started this time two days short of 45 years ago in 1966. It was the year that Robert Menzies, Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister, retired and was succeeded by Harold Holt; the Australian dollar replaced the Australian pound; widespread rains finally eased a severe drought that had brutally affected large areas of Australia since 1957; General Motors Holden became the first local car manufacturer to install seat belts as standard equipment in all new vehicles; New South Wales yacht, *Cadence*, won the Sydney to Hobart Race; the St George Dragons won their eleventh consecutive New South Wales Rugby League Premiership by defeating the Balmain Tigers; and, of course, the most important event of the year was my birth. Something you can't remember? You could say it was a drive-by birth. I was meant to be born in Crown Street Women's Hospital—however, mum only made it to Liverpool Hospital before I made my way into the world with some urgency.

For a very short time, I grew up with my five brothers and one sister in Revesby. It was there my mother was forced into a situation to guarantee the safety of her six living children from my then father. After finding love a second time, my newly wedded mum had us calling a little town 13 kilometres west of Taree, called Wingham, home—to be more specific, a place at the foot of the Combine Mountains called Moral Creek—where Wendy Machin resides. It was there I cut my teeth on what it meant to live off the land: we robbed bee hives, shot turkey, fished for perch, eels and catfish, and ate parrot soup with extra gizzards regularly. They were good days. My new father helped us gain a passion for the land. He showed us there was great potential for a high yield if we looked after the land. It was not just hunting and gathering of provision that was special, but hearing of the great depth of knowledge my dad had of the land, and the price he and others had paid to farm it.

I think fondly of those times: we hooked, grubbed and poisoned acres of lantana and privet, went fencing on the side of many ridges and settled for a good tin cup of billy tea at smoko. Normally, milk was a luxury, so we added plenty of sugar to offset the missing liquid substance. We would sit and listen to yarn after yarn of the good old days. We would discuss how times were changing and we would reflect on how the art of cultivating the land was fading to a less knowledgeable stakeholder—namely, what dad called the "mug farmer". The mug farmer was described as someone who sold up their assets in the city and chose to share in the clean air and textbook farming on offer in the country. Those folk usually lasted about 12 months before returning to the full services of the city. The sparse country services were usually all too much for them to bear. Dad would quite often befriend them. He would offer good advice, but he often found the local knowledge was ignored for the textbook approach.

Then there was my mum, a woman who had her fair share of challenges through life. At six months of age, one of my older brothers contracted meningitis and had the battle of his life at hand—a battle he only partially won. Later in life he became a product of the Richmond report—the same report that saw the eventual downfall of institutionalising people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Not long after that, one of my sisters, who was a twin, died within in four months of her birth. She had passed away from golden staph pneumonia.

As if that were not enough, mum experienced a challenging marriage, which forced her to make some difficult decisions to protect herself and her kids. Mum did this by temporarily farming us out to various State institutions whilst she got her life together. Our family life was inadvertently affected and proved never to be the same. Quite some time later, in early adulthood, one of my brothers was hit by a car after leaving a nightclub in the early hours of the morning. This accident proved to cut short his quality of life. He now resides in care at a very good nursing home. Despite all the disarray in our early life, we still found a lot of time to laugh, play, shout and work.

In 1978 I was 12 years old and still living on the farm. Mum, dad and nan decided to go to town for the annual Christmas drinks migration. My brothers and I cleverly decided to play with some petrol, and it was not long before we learnt an extremely valuable lesson. Whilst playing a game in the dairy my brothers had tied me to a pole with a long leg rope. I was unable to move because the rope was so tight. Someone decided to light a loop of petrol around the pole I was tied to, which seemed like a really cool idea at the time. The pole just happened to be situated on a sloped slice of cement. As the fire made itself around the ring, rather like at the circus, we realised something was going terribly wrong. The fire made it around the ring without a hitch, but proceeded on a course to the pole I was tied to.

For what seemed like an eternity, I shouted the loudest silent scream, as I realised I was being burnt at the stake. After being untied and disarming the fire, I managed to walk up to the farmhouse. I soon realised that my skin was forming numerous painful blisters of significant sizes and that the skin was following me. I felt and thought I was going to die. I share this particular story because it was a significant, life-changing moment. I could have told you about the pigpen injury, or I could have told you about the horse going under the stay wire of the telegraph pole nearly amputating my brother and me above the shoulders; but, no, this particular story is the one that defined the start of my journey. I was in hospital for about two months and experienced continual soaking in Lux baths while skin was being cut from me.

Unfortunately, the dairy farm had to operate seven day a week, which meant mum and dad were not able to visit much after the initial weeks in hospital. I did, however, find a couple of nice nurses—one being male and the other female—who made my tough gig somewhat easier. Night after night I laid in bed covered from head to toe in special SSD cream. It felt rather like being in a sleeping bag full of Brylcreem. The amazing compassion and care provided by the many staff of the Manning River District Hospital stirred something in me, and my dream to become a nurse was born.

School was not easy for most of my family, but we usually persisted until better opportunities presented themselves, so I decided I wanted to do work experience as a nurse. On Saturdays I volunteered to serve on the wards at the Manning River District Hospital as a nurse assistant and I joined St John's Ambulance Brigade to supplement my learning. In year 11 I did two weeks of work experience at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. I recall it fondly because it was around the time that Australia won the America's Cup and Bob Hawke stated, "Every boss who wants to sack their employee for taking this day off is a—"

**Honourable members:** Bum.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** They said it, children. They are not allowed to say that word—or something like that. Around this time I decided to leave school: I did not continue to year 12. My school performed an IQ test and told my mum that I did not have what it would take to go on. I decided to attend TAFE to study a secretarial and bookkeeping course. After finishing the course, as many other country kids do, I decided to head to the big city to get a job. I managed to secure a traineeship at a local council. I usually read the local newspaper whilst walking to work and, on one particular occasion, I noticed an advertisement for a trainee enrolled nurse. The advertisement stirred past emotions and my dream to become a nurse was revisited. I applied, I scored, I trained and I qualified. I loved nursing. I nursed all sorts of people in all sorts of areas: quadriplegics, rehabilitation, general surgical, kids, medical, psychological, palliative care, and sometimes even the burn unit.

I practised as an enrolled nurse but always wanted to go further in nursing. My simple nursing dream of a front-line hospital experience transformed to a university qualification in nursing, so I decided to go for it. I studied a TAFE preparatory program, used to reinforce secondary school studies and to help admission to university. I completed the course successfully, continued to work as an enrolled nurse and was well on the way to becoming a registered nurse. Three years later I stood proudly with a diploma of applied science in nursing. I went on to successfully complete a bachelor's degree in nursing at the University of Wollongong, as it was not on offer when I first started. As a matter of fact, at the time I commenced my studies the nursing faculty was built out of old bales and the cows got a new dairy. It is a really nice historical building, now that I look back at it, but it said a lot about health care priorities at the time. I continued nursing up until 1998 when my wife and I started a small business in wedding photography and video. I do, however, still remain registered as a nurse.

I share these experiences as life has proved not always to be an easy journey. Life has often presented some very challenging moments. Some moments were self-provoking; others may simply be described as "such is life" issues. It was during one of these instances that I was presented with an opportunity to restructure my life—one could say I was born again. After a significant relationship breakdown in my life I called upon the guy I had heard about in all my associations with Sunday school and school scripture, and exposure to other people who seemed to enjoy life. After all, I did not like the alternatives. I now smile at the world, but at that time I could barely face it. I prayed for God to help me—and He did. In 1991 He sent a young man named Stephen. Stephen was non-judgemental and helped me get my life back on track. He invited me to church. I went to the altar, repented of my sins and vowed to God not to go back on my word.

Initially I struggled to work out my new life as a Christian; nevertheless, I continued to honour my commitment to God. Slowly, but surely, my life began to change as I studied the *Bible* and the promises it had to offer. My situation improved significantly as I pursued His way of living and not my own. I now realise the pivotal part that scripture played in my life as well as in many others' lives. I now see how precious special religious education is to our public education system and how many children rely on that special time to find refuge, not judgement. I went to Bible College, where I learned essential leadership skills. I was called to the South Coast as a youth pastor in a church called Mannahouse Ministry. At this time I would like to briefly acknowledge the mentorship of the pastor of that church, Pastor James and Annie Halliday. Pastor James's wisdom, frankness, and tension-breaking humour proved

to be invaluable in my life. In many ways he was like a father figure. Pastor James and Annie have been, and continue to be, pivotal in my journey as a Christian and a leader.

It was during this calling that I met and married my wife Michelle, and we went on to have six children: Benjamin, Jonathan, Emma, James, Michael and Eden, now aged nine to 15 years of age. At this time I acknowledge my wife Michelle. Michelle is a wonderful, gifted, purposeful and strong woman—unlike her husband, who is weeping like a baby. Michelle has been a constant loving support and at all times my best friend, my confidante, my business partner and mayoress of the best city in the world—Shoalhaven. I call her my Proverbs 31 wife. Michelle, your efforts are immeasurable and I love you, honey.

My children—all of whom I profoundly love—have been a never-ending joy to our life. My kids have God-given gifts and talents, and I know they will do well in life. Proof of this is their already finely tuned business skills. They have skilfully noted I have altered my day job, analysed the CPI and have consequently asked for a pocket-money raise. Quite often after spending time with my kids I am reminded of why I do what I do. I pray that the Lord Jesus will continue to bless us with many more years of love, fun and good times as a family.

Michelle and I continued in church ministry in a full-time capacity until 2004, when our calling changed to politics. We pursued this calling and, with the help of many people, I was successfully elected as an independent councillor for Ward 2 in Shoalhaven City Council—the same ward you, Mr President, happen to live in, and I have no doubt in my mind that you voted for me. In 2007 I went on to be elected deputy mayor and in 2008 I received one of the greatest honours in my life: I was elected independent mayor by the people of the Shoalhaven. It was during my time as a councillor that my then mayor, Councillor Greg Watson, suggested a political party that carried my Christian world view, and that I should inquire. That is what I did, and obviously the rest is history.

I find it timely to acknowledge those who have gone before me to establish this faithful party. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, my esteemed colleague and Christian Democratic Party Leader, is acknowledged and renowned for upholding our great Australian Christian values and, with his wife Elaine, for their honest and courageous stand on matters of public principle. For nearly 30 years the Christian Democratic Party has represented the concerns of people who support Christian values, schools and caring institutions, and family life, and who uphold the importance of the Commonwealth Constitution. While we have fought for the values that made our nation, we are committed to the future development of our nation as an inclusive community based on cohesive values that made us a people.

The Christian Democratic Party seeks to support and promote pro-Christian and pro-family policies for the benefit of all Australians, and to ensure that all legislation is brought into conformity with Christian principles, with a special emphasis on the ministry of reconciliation. The *Bible* states we are made in the image of God, and because of this a core value of our party declares we value all stages of life, from conception to natural death.

I wish to acknowledge and thank all of those faithful servants who have contributed in so many ways to encourage Christian representation in every level of government—Federal, State and local—by seeing Christian candidates endorsed, supported and elected across the country. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the 86 candidates that ran in the Legislative Assembly and the 20 candidates that backed me on the upper House ticket. I particularly note the efforts of Pastor Robyn Peebles and her assistant Anita Bird. I also would like to note the efforts of my local churches: Mannahouse Ministries, including Pastors

James and Annie Halliday and their congregation; Nowra City Church Pastor Peter Pilt and Melanie Pilt and their congregation, who are with us today in the gallery; Victory Church Pastors Doug and Pat Collins; and the many other churches that backed me.

The Christian Democratic Party is a party that aims to resist the slippery slope of morality. Biblical morals are now more than ever up for political debate. I think we call it "retail politics". Everything seems to be open to the highest bidder. We should not be surprised about this type of politics, given our consumeristic generation of "go with what you feel", "do as you want", and "don't worry about the possible damage that you may be leaving behind". Our Christian values, boundaries and the complexities of applying evangelical revelation to the pressing issues of today are regularly contested.

It is becoming increasingly hard to balance today's realities whilst trying to submit to the revelation of God's word. I know that some would argue that the *Bible* is out of touch or incompatible with the current culture. I myself feel caught up in the sometimes painful tension between these two worlds. But the calling is to remain loyal to our inheritance in Christ whilst living in the sensitivity of the present. This is what faith is all about. I guess that is what Christ meant by saying, "Be in the world but not of the world." This balancing act is not borne out of intolerance for people but rather a combination of working out one's faith whilst continuing with one's Christian journey. My aim is to be faithful to my God by loving Him and loving others.

Many of us in this place have experienced interesting life journeys and I would like to share one of mine with the House. About 18 months ago I took a bunch of teens on a little leadership training walk. The walk went for 10 days and subsequently changed the way I process the true price paid by our troops for our nation. The little walk was the Kokoda Trail. Words cannot describe the impact this experience had on me but it made me realise the huge price that was paid for our freedom in Australia. As I meandered around the war memorial at Bomana War Cemetery looking for the soldier William H. Williams, whom I had been allocated to research as part of the Kokoda Trail experience, I noted that I could not find his name on any headstone. I later found it acknowledged on a pillar in the garden grounds. I found there were lots of memorial headstones at that cemetery with the words "unknown soldier" inscribed on them, with a further inscription noting they were "known only unto God". This brought me undone as I reflected on those that came across to fight for our nation, never to return home again or to see their families and loved ones. Tonight I honour them all. Lest we forget.

I come before the House today to fight for our State. As my esteemed colleague and leader, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, stated in his inaugural address back in 1981, "I too shall be concerned with issues, not parties, with policies, not personalities". I am not here to hinder the Government but to help the Government make a stronger State. To make a stronger State we need strong families who build strong communities. The late Pope John Paul II stated:

Marriage is an act of will that signifies and involves a mutual gift, which unites the spouses and binds them to their eventual souls, with whom they make up a sole family—a domestic church... To maintain a joyful family requires much from both the parents and the children. Each member of the family has to become, in a special way, the servant of the others... As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.

The Australia Bureau of Statistics supports this view and further states:

Families are a vital part of society, forming the basic unit of home life for most Australian people ... The significance of the family to the wellbeing of a society as a whole is recognised by Commonwealth and State and Territory government agencies and a wide range of policies and programs are directed towards supporting families... The strength of community functioning and levels of social capital within communities has been seen as having a large impact on individual, family and community wellbeing.

Unfortunately, the breakdown of the family unit has severely impacted on our ability to unite for the common good. Reasons for breakdown of the family and community unit include marital divorce, addictions and abuse, amongst many more complicated issues. In terms of marital divorce, the Australian Bureau of Statistics states:

... around one-third of all marriages in Australia now end in divorce. Therefore, most Australians would have had some experience of marriage breakdown divorce and its aftermath—that is, they may have obtained a divorce themselves, seen their parents divorce, and/or witnessed other family members or friends undergo the process.

I noted in my research that the average age of a child in a divorced family was something like seven years. That is really sad because a child of that age needs their mum and dad. In terms of drug addictions, the Australian Bureau of Statistics states:

For many in our society, the most important aspects of illicit drug use are the pain and disruption which the use of illicit drugs can inflict on others, rather than the health or legal consequences to the user ... According to the 1998 report of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, National Drug Strategic Framework 1998-99 to 2002-03, the problems experienced by the families of people who have a substance-use disorder include social stigmatisation, financial burden, negative effects on family relationships and the social implications of associated criminal activity.

I would also like to speak briefly on the impacts of gambling on the family unit. Based on the 2010 Productivity Commission report, nationwide total gambling expenditure, measured by the net losses of gamblers, exceeded \$19 billion in the financial year ending 2009, or on average \$1,500 per adult that gambled. The Public Health Association of Australia states:

Gambling can cause mental, social, legal, and physical health problems. About 2.1% of the adult Australian population experience a spectrum of mild to severe gambling problems ... People with severe gambling problems suffer from a wide range of mental and physical health problems, including suicide attempts, depression, relationships and marital breakdown, criminal activity and imprisonment, as well as severe financial difficulties. The effects of problem gambling are not confined to the individual. It has been estimated that one compulsive gambler affects on average 5-10 other people. The spouses and children of problem gamblers also suffer serious consequences including emotional distress such as grief, stress, and the breakdown of family relationships, as well as financial difficulties such as loss of household income. The spouses of problem gamblers often report similar emotional and physical symptoms to those of the gambler. Problem gambling may also impact on the community, in terms of lost productivity, increased pressures on financial, legal, and social services, and the costs of criminal behaviour.

It is of great concern that approximately 160,000 people are heavily addicted to gambling, and this has a ripple effect to those loved ones around them. One of the hardest things I have ever had to do was to go to a school, pick up two teenagers, sit them down with their mother and advise them not only had their father committed suicide, but he had also gambled away their house and associated assets. This type of breakdown is unacceptable. For the record, those youths are now grown up, happily married and well adjusted. However, as legislators, we need to move towards helping some of our more vulnerable citizens, whether they are gamblers, alcoholics, abusers of substances or sufferers of other things. I state these facts as there are a number of pertinent concerns to do with family and the communities in which we live that I would like to see addressed during my term. Allow me to briefly expand on my direction.

I would like to see the establishment of the Family Impact Commission. My esteemed colleague and leader, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, has introduced the bill whose object is to establish the Family Impact Commission, which will study the moral, social and economic effects on the family unit of certain laws, proposed laws, government expenditure and related matters. And I want to see that bill being given assent. I would like to see funding for the rollout of the Bravehearts education program. I notice Wendy Woodward and her husband, Roger, are present in the gallery as well as our esteemed friend Bob Wilson. They are passionate about the Bravehearts program, Ditto, being implemented in public schools.

The most recent national figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicate that in Australia during 2009-10 there were 286,437 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made to State and Territory authorities. A recent study funded by a criminology research grant estimates that the cost to society of child sexual assault, without intervention, is approximately \$180,000 per child. At a national level, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence conservatively estimates that 40,000 children will be assaulted each year, which equates to approximately \$7.2 billion annually. Currently the Ditto Education Program for keeping children safe is being seen by well over 1,000 children nationally and effectively is protecting tens of thousands of Australian children every year. An independent evaluator states that the Ditto program has the potential to reduce the incidence of child sexual assault by up to 50 per cent, which equates to approximately 28,000 children a year. It is probably far easier to protect the child than it is to heal the wounded adult.

I would also like to see the Liquor Amendment (Health Warning for Pregnant Women) Bill being given assent. The bill was introduced by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. It is an essential bill whose object is to require packages of liquor to display a health warning about the danger of drinking when pregnant. It is widely reported that the drinking of alcohol during pregnancy, even moderate or light drinking, can cause a wide range of physical and mental birth defects. Recent government surveys indicate that approximately one in 12 pregnant women drink during pregnancy and that about one in 30 pregnant women report binge drinking, which is five or more drinks on any one occasion. Simply put, women who binge drink or who drink heavily greatly increase the risk of alcohol-related damage to their babies. It is therefore essential that health warnings be posted on alcohol packaging in the same way that health warnings are displayed on cigarette packets.

I state for the record that I am not for one minute trying to be a moral ambulance chaser. This comes down to addressing the needs of hurting people—hurting families, hurting mums and dads and hurting kids. I feel the pain of people who are affected by addictions and abuse. As my colleague Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile stated in his inaugural speech:

I will do all I can to improve the protection of children, including the unborn, from all forms of exploitation ... I will endeavour to assist in building their lives on a solid foundation of faith, hope and love, and wherever possible, in a secure and loving family environment.

Another issue of concern that I want to address in my term is the overall environmental situation in New South Wales. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states that Australia is the sixth largest country in the world, occupying an entire continent of some 7.6 million square kilometres. Its ocean territory is the world's third largest, spanning three oceans and covering around 12 million square kilometres. In his book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, John Stott states:

The greatest threat to humankind may prove in the end to be not a wartime but a peacetime peril, namely the spoliation of the earth's natural resources by human folly or greed.

It is therefore essential we care for our great southern land. Caring for our environment can be one of the most spiritual acts of worship one can participate as a Christian. Being good stewards of The Lord's earth is an essential part of being a Christian. The Bible, namely Genesis 2:15 states: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

This includes all aspects of environmental care.

I am honoured to be the mayor of the number one overnight tourist destination outside Sydney—the plugs keep coming, I know—and I note the rich cultural heritage of the custodians of that land, the Yuin Nation. Mr President, as you know, people visit the Shoalhaven because of its clean, green and pristine environment. Shoalhaven boasts a coastal temperate climate, just like Sydney; a clean, safe, pollution-free rural environment; a topography of mountains; coastal plains with many bays; lakes, rivers and 109 splendid beaches; and 300,000 hectares, or 741,000 acres, of national park. In fact, Shoalhaven boasts over 3,000 square kilometres of New South Wales' forests, national parks or Crown lands, representing 64 per cent of the total Shoalhaven area, and the Shoalhaven River is a major natural water supply resource to the Shoalhaven and certainly, during periods of drought, to Sydney.

I mention all those features to make the point that sustainability is defined as a broad concept that encompasses balancing economic, social and environmental considerations to ensure a healthy and sustainable future. Sustainability is based on evaluating how things currently are done, what the impacts will be of continuing in that way, and how things can be done differently to reduce the impacts for future generations. I note the pressures on coastal townships and villages—and there are 49 of them in the local government area—associated with managing coastal risk with urban growth. More now than ever, myopic not-in-my-backyard attitudes are placing increasing pressures on our local government and State government areas. Some do not want us to build up and some do not want us to build out. Some do not want us to subdivide current residential blocks and others do not want us to take up valuable agricultural land. And furthermore, others do not want us to force them into retreating from coastal land because of coastal erosion and threatened climate change.

All of those environmental planning challenges are occurring throughout New South Wales, and that is without even establishing the mapped local environmental plan [LEP] habitat

corridors and without future listings of threatened and endangered species. The scale presents a real challenge for local councils and State planning for future population growth. There is no doubt this will make for a good debate at a later time, and I look forward to it.

As a local mayor, on a regular basis I see gaps in decision-making between State government and the grassroots level of local government. At times a good idea in this place can be the demise of a local community, especially if the local community is not properly consulted. I cite the example of the affordable housing State environmental planning policy [SEPP]. One of my passions is to see the money from the section 88 waste and environmental levy, which is paid by councils, returned to councils. In 2009-10 the section 88 waste and environmental levy equated to almost \$348 million. This money should have been hypothecated to local and regional sustainable waste management and resource recovery related initiatives, other related environmental initiatives, production of local green skills and jobs, reduction of greenhouse gases, ongoing reduction of land filling and landfills, and enhancement of the environment of local councils—not to general revenue for a totally unrelated expenditure. I will pursue that matter in coming months to ensure fairness and equity is achieved by returning the levy to local councils so that they will be able to responsibly manage waste.

During my time in this place I will also endeavour to ensure that the Princes Highway to the Victorian border is upgraded. The Princes Highway is the lifeblood of the South Coast: there is no rail access south of Bomaderry. For that reason alone it is essential that the standard of its route provides good serviceability to the communities along its length. The route is important for our residents, our visitors and tourists—many are from overseas—our transport industry and other businesses. For this reason the Southern Councils Group formed PHocus, which is a task force that is working to expedite improvements of the highway. It represents all the coastal councils, the NRMA's motoring and services group, the Illawarra Business Chamber representing Australia Business Limited, and the New South Wales Road Transport Association, whose members are involved in freight movements in the State.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that the Government has committed to invest \$500 million over the next four years to the Princes Highway upgrade from Gerringong to Toolijooa—that was for Gareth. However, I note that the job is far from over. The Princes Highway has claimed so many lives; in fact, four lives already this year. The road requires urgent attention because many families are affected. They are people: mums and dads, pensioners and kids not returning home. The issue needs to be addressed. In my short political life, the good Lord sent me many helpers, but one in particular deserves mention. Ironically, he happens to be the new member for Kiama, councillor Gareth Ward, MP, who also served as my deputy mayor for two years. The people in the seat of Kiama have gained an amazing and faithful member of Parliament. There is no doubt in my mind that I would not be where I am today without Gareth's great support, guidance and unbelievable knowledge of politics. Thank you, Gareth.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the South Coast Christian Democratic Party Branch, and many of its members are present in the gallery—Rhonda, Leo, Fred, Des, Effie, June, Bohdan and Paul—the Christian Democratic Party management committee, the thousands of Christian Democratic Party voters and supporters, and those who prayed for us and will continue to pray for us. I acknowledge some dear friends who have been part of our journey: Nolene and Jessyka Norsworthy, Elisa and Dale Hunter, Ben and Naomi Dootson. I note also the Speaker of the lower House, Shelley Hancock, who was instrumental in me starting my political career. Before I became a councillor I knocked on her door and asked her advice on whether I should enter politics. She said yes, and look where it has got me! I do not know whether to thank her! I repeat those comments for our Federal member for Gilmore,

Joanna Gash, on whose door I also knocked. She gave me rather the same advice. I thank Joanna for her contribution.

I note also Graham French and John Hanscombe of the local media who have been instrumental and helped to frame me to be a better leader. At this point I acknowledge all the former shadow Ministers and Ministers of the previous Government who visited the Shoalhaven and showed me great courtesy. I do not want to name anyone in particular because I acknowledge and honour them all for their contribution, but I note especially and thank the Hon. Tony Kelly, MLC, and Leader of the Opposition, who was most helpful to our city in understanding the concerns of its local residents. Both the current and former councillors of Shoalhaven City Council have taught us lots: Russ Pigg—the best general manager in Local Government Australia—Ernie Royston, John Gould and John Wells, who all retired after I left. I thought it was something I did. They were instrumental in framing my understanding of local government. I thank also Peter Dunn and all current directors and staff of the Shoalhaven City Council, particularly Gordon Clarke.

I acknowledge my personal assistant, Rachael Marshall, who holds my office together at Shoalhaven City Council, and my newly appointed advisor, Marie, who has already proven to be an invaluable help in my parliamentary office. I thought she would have written something more special—for example, "I want a pay increase!" Marie has taken to the job like a duck to water and certainly has helped to assimilate me into this House. I note also the courtesy and professionalism of all the parliamentary staff. I would occupy this place for the next few hours, if not the next few days, if I were to mention all the people who contributed to who I am today. In saying this, I note that I did not win the election on 26 March 2011 alone. All those people have contributed to my life. You could say it was 44 years 363 days in the making. I was going to give my inaugural speech on my birthday and was annoyed when I discovered that the crowd would not be in the gallery. Then I was told it was on a Saturday. So here I am making it on Thursday night. In conclusion, if I have learnt anything in life, I have learnt this: it is not how you start but how you finish, and that character fully outweighs performance. I hope the legacy I leave is a spiritual one, as Matthew 16:26 states:

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?

My hope is that I start and finish with honour as I wholeheartedly serve the people of New South Wales. Mr President, may God bless you in your role and may God bless the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales.