



COUNCILLOR ROY AH SEE

SILVER ANNIVERSARY SPEECH

PARLIAMENT HOUSE, NSW

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2008

STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

FIRSTLY, LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE COUNTRY THAT I SPEAK ON. I ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR ONGOING CUSTOMS, THEIR BELIEFS AND THEIR STRENGTH.

LET ME SAY FROM THE OUTSET THAT I AM VERY HONOURED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN SUCH A FORUM, IN SUCH A HISTORIC AND SIGNIFICANT PLACE FOR THE PEOPLE OF NSW.

TODAY, I WANT TO JOIN MY FELLOW COUNCILLORS IN HIGHLIGHTING OUR COUNCIL'S WORK AND IN PROMOTING AND ACHIEVING STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE.

THIS IS THE SECOND OF THE KEY PRIORITIES IN OUR CORPORATE PLAN.

THIS IS A KEY ISSUES FOR OUR ORGANISATION AND LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS ACROSS OUR NETWORK.

OVER THE COURSE OF MY LIFE, MY NOTION OF LEADERSHIP HAS CONSTANTLY CHANGED AND EVOLVED.

I HAVE WITNESSED MANY STRONG LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

THEIR KNOWLEDGE, DARING, SAVVY AND PERSISTENCE TOOK THEM TO THE FOREFRONT OF THE ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS MOVEMENT THROUGHT THE 70S, 80S AND 90S.

MANY OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS ARE IN THIS ROOM TODAY.

THERE ARE OTHER LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES WHO DO NOT SEEK ELECTED OFFICE, SPEAK AT RALLIES OR LEAD PROTEST MARCHES

BUT THEY SHARE THAT THE SAME VISION, PASSION AND THE COMMON SENSE.

MY MOTHER, PATRICIA ROSE, WAS ONE SUCH LEADER.

AS A SINGLE PARENT, AGAINST THE ODDS, SHE RAISED A FAMILY OF EIGHT ON THE NANIMA RESERVE, 10 KILOMETRES FROM WELLINGTON ON THE BANKS OF THE MACQUARIE RIVER.

THEY WERE TOUGH TIMES FOR ABORIGINAL FAMILIES GROWING UP ON A RESERVE.

BUT DESPITE THE HARDSHIP AND ADVERSITY, SHE HAD THE VISION, THE DRIVE AND THE PATIENCE TO PUSH US KIDS TO WANT TO ACHIEVE BETTER THINGS.

SHE TOLD US TO GET A GOOD EDUCATION – TO STAY AT SCHOOL –WHEN OTHER KIDS DIDN'T.

SHE WANTED US TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF WELFARE AND POVERTY – WHEN OTHERS COULDN'T.

MOSTLY IMPORTANTLY, SHE TOLD US TO GET IN THERE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THAT IS THE REASON WHY I DECIDED TO RUN IN THE LAND COUNCIL ELECTIONS 12 MONTHS AGO.

I WANTED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND TO DO THAT I HAD TO BE PREPARED TO GET INVOLVED, BE PART OF THE SYSTEM AND DO THE HARD WORK.

IT IS TOO EASY TO STAND ON THE SIDELINES AND CRITICISE.

SADLY, MANY IN OUR COMMUNITIES TAKE THIS OPTION.

OUR CHALLENGE IS TO EDUCATE THOSE ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PART OF THE LAND COUNCIL NETWORK.

I AM THE YOUNGEST COUNCILLOR ON THE NSW ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL.

I HAVE LEARNT A LOT IN MY FIRST YEAR.

I ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS OF MY FELLOW COUNCILLORS.

I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT, TOGETHER, WE ARE COMMITTED TO STRONG LEADERSHIP, GOOD GOVERNANCE, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ALL LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS IN NSW.

WE HAVE MADE THAT COMMITMENT THROUGH OUR CORPORATE PLAN.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP, PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN A HIGHLY EFFICIENT, FINANCIALLY ROBUST AND PROFESSIONALLY MANAGED ORGANISATION.

WE SEEK TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY FOCUSING ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

ONE SUCH EXAMPLE OF THIS IS NSWALC'S PARTNERSHIP WITH REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS AND TRAINING CONSULTANTS TO DEVELOP AN INNOVATIVE TRAINING PROGRAM TO DEVELOP THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT CAPACITIES OF LALC BOARDS.

THIS GOVERNANCE TRAINING IS A REQUIREMENT THAT MUST BE ATTENDED TO BY ALL NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND IT MUST BE PROVIDED NOT LATER THAN 6 MONTHS AFTER THE ELECTION OF THE BOARD MEMBER.

GOVERNANCE INVOLVES THE ATTITUDES OF BOARD MEMBERS, THE RULES, PROCEDURES, AND THE PRACTICES IN PLACE TO GOVERN AN ENTITY, IN THIS CASE, ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS.

THERE ARE NO PERFECT OR UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTIONS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE.

THROUGH EXPLORING SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE AND EXAMINING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT, THE AIM OF THIS TRAINING PACKAGE IS TO CONTINUE TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF BOARD MEMBERS AND CEOS OF LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS TO GOVERN AND MANAGE THE AFFAIRS OF THEIR LALC.

ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS THERE ARE CURRENTLY 859 LALC BOARD MEMBERS IN THE STATE.

AS OF TODAY, NSWALC HAS TRAINED 539 OF THESE BOARD MEMBERS IN GOVERNANCE, WITH TRAINING WORKSHOPS CONTINUING TO BE CONDUCTED THIS MONTH, AND MORE WORKSHOPS PLANNED FOR JULY/AUGUST.

THERE HAS BEEN A 90% PARTICIPATION RATE OF BOARD MEMBERS IN THE ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NSWALC GOVERNANCE PROGRAM.

OVERALL THERE HAS BEEN AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THIS PROGRAM, WITH LOTS OF EXCELLENT FEEDBACK PROVIDED VERBALLY AND IN THE COURSE EVALUATION FORMS COMPLETED BY LALC BOARD PARTICIPANTS.

WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THESE COUNCILS COLLECTIVELY MANAGE THE RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES DELIVERED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.

THESE SERVICES INCLUDE HOUSING, LEGAL AFFAIRS, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT.

THIS STRUCTURE IS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.

THROUGH OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE HAVE ALSO COMMITTED TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE THROUGHOUT OUR ORGANISATION AND NETWORK

YOU'VE HEARD OF TWO EXAMPLES OF THIS LEADERSHIP TODAY.

NAMELY, OUR \$30 MILLION DOLLAR EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND AND THE \$205 MILLION DOLLAR WATER AND SEWERAGE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NSW STATE GOVERNMENT.

AS OTHER COUNCILLRS HAVE SAID WE COULD EASILY HAVE TAKEN THE SOFT OPTION AND ARGUED THE PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES WAS A CORE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE PROPOSED MAINTENANCE AND MONITORING PROGRAM WAS BEYOND THE FINANCIAL REACH OF THE NSWALC.

WE ARE NOT TAXPAYER FUNDED.

WE COULD NOT, HOWEVER, IGNORE THE NEED TO PROVIDE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE DRINKING WATER IN THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES..

I AM PROUD, AS ARE OTHER COUNCILLORS, OF THE LEADERSHIP WE DEMONSTRATED WITH THIS INITIATIVE.

WE AS A COUNCIL ALSO RECOGNISE THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY WITHOUT COMPROMISING OUR CULTURAL OR CORPORATE IDENTITY.

BUT MOST IMPORTANT WE MUST WORK WITH OUR OWN PEOPLE.

I AM FORTY YEARS OF AGE.

AS I LOOK AROUND ME I DO NOT SEE MANY PEOPLE OF MY GENERATION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

WE CLEARLY DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVING THEMSELVES IN OUR LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS OR THE LAND RIGHTS NETWORK IN GENERAL.

I DO NOT SEE A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG LEADERS COMING THROUGH.

ONE OF THE RESPONSIBILTIES WE HAVE AS A COUNCIL IS TO INCREASE OYUR MEMBERSHIP.

IT IS VITAL TO DO SO TO ENSURE THAN TWENTY FIVE YEARS ON WE ARE LISTENING TO A NEW CROP OF LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN WORKING AND PAYING THEIR DUES IN THE SYSTEM.

I SPEND A LOT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT THIS.

I AM SURE THERE ARE MANY BARRIERS TO THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS.

I'M SURE THE FACT THAT WE DEFER TO OUR ELDERS MAY BE ONE MAJOR REASON.

ONE THAT I THINK NEEDS TO BE LOOKED VERY SERIOUSLY IS THE AGE AT WHICH YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF A LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL.

IT IS CURRENTLY EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

I'D LIKE TO SEE SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT GIVEN TO HAVING THIS LOWERED TO SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

I THINK WE MIGHT LOSE A LOT OF POTENTIAL MEMBERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF SIXTEEN AND EIGHTEEN.

IF YOU CAN BECOME A FULL LALC MEMBER AT SIXTEEN WE MIGHT NOT LOSE SO MANY.

AT THE START OF MY SPEECH I SPOKE OF MY MOTHER. OF HER VISION, HER DRIVE, HER PATIENCE AND HER DESIRE TO ACHIEVE BETTER THINGS FOR HER FAMILY.

TO ME, NSWALC'S QUALITIES ARE THE SAME.

I WANT CONCLUDE MY SPEECH TODAY WITH A FEW WORDS THAT I ALWAYS DRAW INSPIRATION FROM.

**IN FACT, THEY WERE THE FIRST WORDS READ OUT IN THIS CHAMBER 25 YEARS
AGO AND IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT THEY SHOULD BE THE LAST WORDS HEARD IN
THIS CHAMBER TODAY.**

THEY ARE:

**“LAND IN THE STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES WAS TRADITIONALLY OWNED AND
OCCUPIED BY
ABORIGINES.**

**LAND IS OF SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE TO
ABORIGINES.**

**IT IS FITTING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH LAND HAS FOR
ABORIGINES AND THE NEED OF ABORIGINES FOR LAND.**

**IT IS ACCEPTED THAT AS A RESULT OF PAST GOVERNMENT DECISIONS THE
AMOUNT OF LAND SET ASIDE FOR ABORIGINES HAS BEEN PROGRESSIVELY
REDUCED WITHOUT COMPENSATION.”**

THANK YOU