

**NINA
TAYLOR**
MP

Labor Member for
Albert Park

Speech to Parliament
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Inaugural speech as the Member for Albert Park

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay respects to elders past and present and to the enduring wisdom of the oldest continuous culture on earth. My pathway to politics was not deliberate; rather, it evolved through a myriad of life experiences. Even in my early days of law school representing a community at local or even state level was not anticipated.

Experience at AstraZeneca and Novo Nordisk greatly enhanced my understanding of the health system, research and development, and the challenge of inspiring people to take care of their health. I also enjoyed my time as a teacher, albeit relatively brief, leaning on my knowledge of French and German languages and legal skills.

I can vouch for the fact that teachers work extremely hard to bring out the best in their students. Volunteering for the women's legal service following the completion of articles and later working in the Community and Public Sector Union on federal matters represented a personal transition from the private sector to community-focused activity and work.

This brings me to the central tenet of my speech: what makes a great community and what is my role in driving the best outcome for others? My family instilled a strong sense of justice premised on the rationale that there is no community in any functional capacity without a shared vision and a willingness to affect the common good.

Of course the pursuit of just outcomes has a requisite equaliser insofar as this pursuit necessitates a well-reasoned process, a delicate albeit imperfect balance of human experience and our natural world. From composting to nurturing plants without pesticides and beyond, my mother has inspired a respectful relationship with nature from childhood.

Now, historically industrialisation, though arguably a driver of jobs and commerce, purported to unfold ahead of proper recognition of the critical nexus between a healthy planet and the survival of humankind. This has created immense challenges, not the least being climate change affected by human behaviour. I am not suggesting an either/or scenario when it comes to meeting energy demands in a modern economy but rather a holistic approach aptly

encapsulated by our Victorian government's 100 per cent renewable and government-owned SEC commitment. I literally shed a tear when the SEC announcement was made. Granted, I have a reputation for being easily animated by the mere mention of the words 'solar panel' or 'wind turbine' or 'energy efficiency'. You get the drift.

However, one has to acknowledge that this massive energy reform will drive down emissions, creating clean jobs and curtailing energy costs. But most importantly I believe that our community genuinely wants to be part of the solution, and I am determined that collectively we can be. Our sports clubs play an integral role in fostering a healthy community, and I am sure everyone in the chamber can relate. There are very high levels of sporting involvement in the seat of Albert Park – sailing, soccer, swimming, Australian Rules, rugby and so on – and there is such incredible devotion by so many volunteers, each reinforcing through the good deeds that everyone who takes part in the club has a purpose and they deserve love and support.

I was fortunate to be exposed to the many benefits of community connection from a young age, and simultaneously a deep affection for the arts ensued. Initial shyness – hard to believe – was ultimately triumphed over by age 7. I have loved dance, indeed all art forms, ever since. While strictly speaking one would not classify dance as a sport, I contend it is sufficiently physical in nature to be comparable, and the dance teachers fostered great social networks too. Whilst I grew a little too tall for pas de deux, which is the traditional partner dance in classical ballet, the discipline, social benefits of being part of a community-based activity and an authentic sense of both the eternal sacrifice and love for the arts prevails. The seat of Albert Park is renowned for its cultural and creative heart. A strong pillar of Labor values is an unrelenting commitment to and an inherent appreciation of the critical contribution of the arts to a civilised society.

One in 11 Victorians is employed in the arts sector. The arts play an integral role in our community. It is embedded in our identity. The Melbourne arts precinct, for instance, holds treasured memories for me personally, as I am sure it does for so many Victorians – storytelling

through dance, opera, symphony and theatre that enables a vital portal to express the deepest of human emotions and to experience the exhilaration of aesthetic and/or physical brilliance.

Live performance and cultural experiences also speak loudly through St Kilda's iconic venues, many of which have important historical significance. From the National Theatre, where I myself took ballet classes in adolescence, to the Palais Theatre, the Alex Theatre, Theatre Works – I could go on – each contribute to the intricate fabric of our performing arts industry. And let us not forget the phenomenal Luna Park. It only in December 2022 celebrated its 110-year anniversary as Australia's oldest theme park.

My sentimental nexus to St Kilda was founded not only through the arts but through regular frequenting of the former Scheherazade restaurant on Acland Street with my parents when I was growing up. Established by the late Masha Zeleznikow, a Soviet refugee, and her husband, they provided delicious Eastern European cuisine. I blame Scheherazade for my enduring obsession with borsch, cabbage rolls and pierogi. Importantly, Masha and her husband did much more than broaden the palates of locals. They showed great kindness and compassion. The restaurant provided a safe place for many single Holocaust survivors to eat and connect. That is what a community is all about. Whilst the restaurant is sadly no longer there, formidable Eastern European cheesecakes and other culinary masterpieces can be indulged along Acland Street to this day.

Indeed the seat of Albert Park has been the welcoming location for significant waves of migration. Since 1854 millions of new arrivals have been processed at Station Pier in Port Melbourne. I can only imagine the intense emotions that new migrants would have experienced as they disembarked, ranging from excitement to anxiety. I am so grateful for all that they have done for Victoria.

Validation of different life experiences and perspectives through multiculturalism has fostered a better place for all of us to live, with the caveat that the benchmark has to be far greater than the mere tolerance of difference. Whilst the demographics of the seat of Albert

Park have changed significantly in recent years, the spirit of worker resilience in the face of harsh and often unforgiving conditions lives on today. Back in the 1800s in Port Melbourne it was not uncommon for stevedores to fall into a hold during loading and unloading or for workers to line up on the waterfront in all weather, not knowing on any given day if they were going to be selected for a shift, precisely demonstrating the crippling nature of insecure work.

Port Melbourne was also identified as the crimping capital of Australia – crimping being the collusion between the ships' bosuns and boarding house keepers who kidnapped men, often drunk, and forced them aboard ships as crew against their will. A testament to the workers of that era, Port Melbourne is the location of the first successful seamen's union in Australia – something to be very proud of. Sharing stories of struggles endured by such brave agents of change is vital. The common good is denied where reckless indifference to worker health and safety leads to the untimely death of a parent, friend or colleague.

Of course no community can consider itself whole without equality for all. Victoria is ranked the most welcoming for the LGBTIQ+ community in Australia and the fourth worldwide. This is not by accident but through a concerted and united will backed by bold legislative and policy reforms and the majestic beacon of safe sanctuary and celebration that is a Victorian pride centre. The amazing feeling of unity amongst all at the Pride March just past was palpable.

The struggle has been worthwhile. I would like to pay respect to the community of Albert Park for your creative, cultural, environmentally conscious and compassionate heart and for caring deeply about the provision of safe shelter for all Victorians. Albert Park boasts a significant proportion of social and affordable housing, just as a healthy community should.

Before I express my thankyou's, and there are a few, I seek to address the underlying purpose of my discussion today. Have I answered the question of what makes a great community and my role therein? I proffer that there is no one answer to this penultimate challenge. But what an incredible honour to serve in pursuit of the greater good.

I am a hard worker, and I promise to give it my all in my service to our community as the first woman to be elected to the seat of Albert Park. Now for the thankyou – and I apologise in advance if I have overlooked someone. I will seek to address that. Thanks to the Premier for leading our united Labor team to another successful term of progressive government.

Thanks to the Attorney-General, Jaclyn Symes – no matter the hour nor the day, unrelenting in the dedication to pass legislative reforms through the red chamber. Thanks to the entire Labor cabinet and caucus for working together brilliantly and supporting equal representation of women in government. Thanks to the former member for Albert Park Martin Foley for showing the community what strong progressive leadership delivers and always saying the right thing to fire me up during the election campaigns. Thanks to the former member for Albert Park Professor John Thwaites AM. You have still got it, unwavering and unequivocal in your devotion to community and specifically to all things climate. Thanks to Dominic Gonzales, Vicki Mastihi, Peter Tanti, Tyson Paterson, Zoe Nomikoudis, Ryan Batchelor, Matilda Gray, Francesca Nardi, David Donaldson, Ross Alexander, Jenny Whelan, Marty Fields, Janet Bolitho, Gillian Wood and Lucas Jameson for all your unrelenting support and hard work.

Thanks to other members of Parliament and other volunteers who spent hours in unforgiving weather, energised by a devotion to the betterment of the lives of others. Thanks to the Community and Public Sector Union, Australian Services Union, Electrical Trades Union and the broader union movement. Every day matters in the life of a Victorian Worker. Thanks to my brother Nicholas Taylor for your deep insights, strong intellect and for being a great support always. Thanks to my mother for your adventurous spirit, always pushing beyond the known with compassion, devotion and love. Thanks to my extended family and friends for your persistence, noting the challenge of catching up with my crazy schedule. And thanks to my late father, Robert William Taylor. Though you were taken too soon, I am grateful for your integrity, intellectual rigour and fantastic humour and that you were a loving and devoted parent. Thank you.