



Sophie Cotsis chats with "O Kosmos" co-owner Nick Theodorakopoulos and general manager Panayiotis Nikolaou.

left their families at home on one of the true family occasions of the year to report for work. It was whilst working at the airport I became a member of the Liquor and Hospitality Division of the LHMU.

My experience as a shift worker and union member helping colleagues in our working lives further shaped my values of fairness and equity across the community. They are values I applied to later roles with other unions, at the Labor Council and the L and H Division of the LHMU, where I was privileged to represent many decent hospitality workers who faced difficult working conditions and circumstances.

Hospitality is tough work, often at very busy venues involving late nights and long days - from pubs and clubs, to restaurants, the catering industry and even hot dog stands at the footy. To this day I will never forget one workplace that will always highlight for me the need to ensure all workers enjoy equity, fairness and the right to union representation, no matter where they work. At one workplace, I represented a group of long term casual, female employees who had notched up many years' service.

Whenever any of them took maternity leave they were forced to resign with the promise of reinstatement upon return. This meant losing long service leave entitlements and job security, despite their years of service. It was blatantly unfair, morally wrong and illegal. I remain inspired to this day by the courage of these women. They risked their jobs to fight for what was right. This group of women would have had no recourse had it not been for the intervention of the union.

Madam President,

The union movement's values of access to opportunity, social justice, fairness and equality are deeply shared by the Australian Labor Party. That's why I joined the ALP many years ago. Labor also has a proud history of bold leaders who had vision and the courage to take this country and its people with them as they implemented reforms. My decision to join the ALP in 1993 was partly inspired by one in particular. I refer of course, Madam President, to that mild-mannered Bankstown Boy, Paul Keating.

I was inspired by his vision and reform agenda for building a better Australia, in particular reforms like compulsory superannuation went to the very heart of La-

bor's core beliefs. That year, I joined the local Kingsgrove branch of the ALP and proudly am still a member.

My fellow members are the life-blood of our community and come from a range of backgrounds. Many are also volunteers who contribute to other organisations through community service and bring those experiences to our branch.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow branch members for their support, effort and dedication to the ALP. I acknowledge those Kingsgrove Branch members who are in the gallery this evening.

Madam President,

I have seen from within how a labor government - can bring real change to the people of this state. As an advisor in the Carr\ Iemma Labor Governments, in the office of Michael Costa, a former member of this place. I was privileged to be given the opportunity to contribute to policies that helped people, access better services. Earlier I talked about the impact of partnerships between governments and the communities.

Madam President

One such partnership that highlights, the very heart of Labor's philosophy of access to better services, and captures the values of equity, social justice and fairness was the the extension of the \$2.50 pensioner excursion ticket. The extension gave all senior citizens across the metropolitan area

affordable all day access to public transport for the very first time. It has since been expanded to regional centres also, benefitting pensioners who live outside the metropolitan area.

I am passionate about this change because, this policy has improved mobility for many pensioners, and provided affordable travel on a daily basis to go shopping, visit friends and family and do the things many of us take for granted.

Madam President,

I want to acknowledge the role played by NSW's business community as a driver of economic growth and employment. A strong relationship between government, business, workforce, Unions, and the community is critical if we are to build a sustainable future for this state. Infrastructure is far more than bricks and mortar, a motorway or a rail line. It is the back bone of our community. It drives economic ac-

tivity, creates and supports jobs, links our people to services, and is the foundation for future prosperity. It requires all partners to work together to ensure we can meet the challenges ahead.

That partnership must ensure we have the right skills. That we have the resources available - the materials, financing and capacity to do the job.

Prior to entering this Parliament I spent a period working for the infrastructure builder Parsons Brinkerhoff. This experience has given me a deeper understanding of infrastructure development, relationship building with all sectors and how vital it is for local communities and for economic growth.

Madam President,

I am very lucky to live and raise my young family in this great state of New South Wales. Everything I have been a part of so far has given me every reason to be optimistic and positive about our immediate future and that of future generations. Throughout this wonderful journey there has been nothing more important to me than the strong foundation provided by my family. I thank Arthur, George and Cassandra, my mum and dad, Maria and Angelo, and my parents-in-law, George and Maria, for their unconditional love and support, and for their many words of encouragement. My Godparents Anna and Steve for their support and spiritual guidance and a thank you to my extended family. I thank my brother Billy, my old sparring partner, a decent person with a great spirit of dventure. I would like to acknowledge my friends for coming tonight and thank you for your love and support.

I have been fortunate to have worked with and been supported by many people and organisations. I thank each and every one of you and pledge I will do all I can to



The Australian Hellenic Council (NSW) was represented by its Secretary, Dr Panayiotis Diamadis. Going back to their university days, Ms Cotsis and Dr Diamadis share a passion for Hellenic Studies.

uphold the values we share. While it is impossible to thank everyone by name, I would like to make special mention of a number of friends and colleagues;

- The Premier Kristina Keneally;
- Sam Dastyari, General Secretary of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party, Party Officers, and staff
- Bernie Riordan, President of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party
- Tara Moriarty, Secretary of Liquor and Hospitality Division at the LHMU and my former colleagues at the union who continue on with their valuable work with complete dedication;
- Mark Lennon, Secretary of Unions NSW, officials past and present and the hardworking men and women of the union movement;
- The many local supporters I have been lucky to count as my friends over the years.
- The Member for Kogarah, Cherie Burton
- The Member for Watson, Tony Burke
- The former Member for Hurstville and Lakemba, Morris Iemma, for his commitment to our branch and service to the community
- St George Federal and State MP's
- St George Labor Councillors;
- Young Labor executive Past and Present
- Friends from The St George Hospital Lamrock Committee, thank you
- My parliamentary colleagues and those who work for them;
- Michael Costa and the talented and hardworking staff I worked with
- Mark Dimmock, for the opportunity to work with visionaries and wonderful people at Parsons Brinckerhoff;
- Chris Taylor NSW Business Chamber;

*Personal Thank you  
My Greek Orthodox Parish,  
at Redfern  
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- Started out together
- Helen Sarantopoulos, Bill Kritharas, Harry Faros, Angela Koutoulas
  - Eamonn Fitzpatrick
  - Courtney Roche
  - Jeremy Spinak
  - Ellen Hart
  - Colleen Symington and
  - The staff of the NSW Parliament

Madam President

As a member of Parliament I will always champion the value of education - because I have learnt first hand its transformative effect in the generations of my famil.

As a member of Parliament I will stand for equity in the workplace, because I have seen how unequal treatment of women has placed unfair burdens on our communities.

As a member of Parliament I will support legislation that translates into tangible, practical improvements to daily lives, because I've seen how a simple thing like extending access to PENSIONERS has brought new opportunities for engagement in our communities.

I will pursue the values of equality, access to opportunity, fairness and social justice during my time here for the good people of NSW.

I thank you all.