



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 8 February 2018

The SPEAKER (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 10:00.

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2017-2018

Debate resumed from 7 February 2018.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (10:11): This is my first contribution to the budget take-note debate. Despite being well beyond the halfway point of the 2017-18 financial year, members are still engaged in this debate. That says something about the budget process. Although the half-yearly budget update has been released, many members in this place have yet to contribute to the original budget debate. This is the first opportunity I have had in a formal context to outline my concerns about this Government's neglect of the needs of large parts of the Illawarra. The concerns of Wollongong residents and the willingness of the Government to ignore their needs have been raised in this place.

Before I comment on initiatives for the Illawarra which should have been in the budget, it is worthwhile considering the current economic position. On Tuesday this week the Governor of the Reserve Bank announced that the cash rate would remain unchanged. He noted that wages growth remains low, employers are finding it more difficult to find skilled workers, and while further progress in reducing unemployment and returning inflation to its target was expected, a change was likely to be gradual. Stagnant wages growth was identified as one of the downside risks in the Government's half-yearly budget review. These influences were noticeable in the outcomes of the December 2017 business conditions survey released by the NSW Business Chamber earlier this week. In particular, the results from the survey for the Illawarra and South Coast reported a welcome slight growth in business confidence but indicated it remains below that of the rest of the State. There was a reported decline in total capital spending, a decline in sales revenue and a decline in total profits. The Executive Director of the Illawarra Business Chamber, Adam Zarth, noted:

The major cost pressures for business across the board should come as no surprise: rising energy costs and finding quality staff, with the highest operating costs being reported by businesses in accommodation, food services and manufacturing. He concedes that there is more work to do to return confidence levels to those reported in December 2016. The concerns of businesses outside of Sydney were reflected in the recent Sensis Business Index, which found that regional business confidence had fallen below the national average. This report found that in the last 12 months, in comparison to other States, New South Wales had dropped from first place to last place in terms of business confidence. The impact of stagnant wages growth was writ large in research released recently by the Australian National University and reported in the *Sunday Telegraph* that Australian living standards have declined for the first time in a generation. This follows a recorded 69 per cent improvement since 1988. It is largely attributed to the fact that wages growth is not keeping pace with household costs growth. It was reported that in New South Wales medical and health expenses have almost doubled since 2007, rising to more than \$4,000 a year. This is in addition to increases in the cost of insurances, electricity bills and rent.

It is interesting to note that households and businesses are reporting that the cost of energy is among the greatest cost pressures they are facing. As we know, it is only going to get tougher for many to meet the cost of their energy demands. This financial year families and businesses in Wollongong are set to cop a hefty increase in power prices. Bills are expected to increase by up to \$320 a year for households and \$920 a year for small businesses. Power prices are increasing because the New South Wales Government has sold off power stations and allowed the new owners to shut them down. The Liberals' privatisation of our power supply has resulted in less competition, allowing electricity retailers to charge up to three times more than they charge in other States. The New South Wales Government even went to court to stop the Australian Energy Regulator cutting network costs, which could have seen power bills fall by up to \$300 a year for the average household and \$523 a year for small businesses. This has occurred despite the former Premier promising at the last election that power prices would fall.

The NSW Council of Social Service [NCOSS] has warned that many families are struggling to put food on the table because power bills are far too high. Members would be aware that over the past few years the operations of BlueScope in Port Kembla have been under pressure. Labor has committed to pursuing more procurement of local steel and has twice introduced a bill to implement that commitment. The procurement of local steel will help drive the use of more steel in New South Wales and throughout the country. Last year, then

Chief Executive Officer Paul O'Malley indicated that rising energy costs were part of the issue for Bluescope and that over the past two years its energy costs have increased by 93 per cent. The Illawarra Business Chamber also reported that despite many businesses seeking better energy deals, the rising cost of energy was "reducing profits and threatening viability".

While this Government just looks on and has encouraged dramatically rising power prices, NSW Labor has a plan to put downward pressure on electricity prices by re-establishing regulatory oversight of retail electricity prices; using the proceeds from a nationalised Snowy Hydro to invest in renewable energy generation across New South Wales; increasing clean solar energy generation on rooftops of government-owned buildings; and making the Independent Price and Regulatory Authority [IPART] solar tariff mandatory so that power produced by household-generated rooftop solar is paid for fairly. It is clear that only Labor has any real plans to ease the pressure on rising energy bills of businesses and households.

I was intrigued yesterday when in question time the Treasurer described the current state of the New South Wales economy as "the holy grail of economic management". He went on to claim that people from around the world, including President Trump—someone the Treasurer obviously admires greatly—are looking to New South Wales as to how it invests in infrastructure. In some sort of fantasy world where trickle-down economics works, he went on to tell us the virtues of corporate tax cuts in the United States and that we should be backing them in Australia. It is interesting that the Treasurer has suddenly become bold about the Turnbull Government's tax cuts. I can only assume it is for two reasons.

The first reason is because his Government is fiercely resisting the release of the top 100 corporations that benefited from \$1.8 billion in tax cuts in 2016 as it needs to protect the beneficiaries of its tax cuts from "hard public criticism". Yesterday the Treasurer said he wants the Opposition to back Trump-like corporate tax cuts, yet his Government will not let people know who benefited from its tax handouts. It is an interesting contrast. If the Treasurer were serious about outlining the benefits of corporate tax handouts, he would make sure his Government released the list of beneficiaries. The second reason we should be concerned about corporate tax cuts is the stagnant wages growth being experienced by workers in New South Wales. The half-yearly budget update notes that wages growth is expected to remain constrained over the medium term. The Commonwealth Treasury, in a report released late last year, suggested that weak wages growth may undermine the case for a corporate tax cut as there is a greater disconnect between labour productivity and real wages for larger companies. As Federal shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen said at the time:

The Treasury report clearly demonstrates that for larger companies with turnover of more than \$50 million — the same threshold of the Turnbull government's unlegislated big business tax cuts—workers are not remunerated in line with their productivity.

I now reflect on a comment the Premier made in this place in November last year. In response to questions about the Government's decision to scrap the free Gong Shuttle, the Premier claimed, "The Illawarra has never had it so good." Yesterday in question time the Premier also claimed that this Government is delivering for Labor electorates. I invite the Premier to Wollongong to speak with residents and outline exactly what her Government is delivering through the 2017-2018 budget for the Wollongong electorate, as it hardly rated a mention in the Illawarra media. Despite the claims of delivery for all parts of the State, Wollongong appears to be one area that consistently misses out.

In fact, when I asked the Premier to identify projects in the Wollongong local government area that are funded from the \$20 billion Rebuilding NSW Infrastructure program, not one was identified. Was I surprised? Sadly, no. Was I disappointed? Absolutely. Yesterday when the Deputy Premier was asked by the member for Keira to identify how the Illawarra would benefit from the Government's decision to spend \$2.5 billion on Sydney stadiums, not only could he not use the word "stadium" in the answer but also he could not identify a single benefit to Wollongong or the Illawarra from the biggest infrastructure spend that the Government is undertaking. Was I surprised? Sadly, no. Was I disappointed? Absolutely.

This is the tale of the Illawarra under this Government. The vast majority of the region is skipped over, despite its needs. From Helensburgh to Kiama it appears that the needs of our region are largely ignored. This is despite the claims of the Premier that her Government has compassion at the centre of its decision-making and that it is delivering for all parts of the State. The Wollongong local government area occupies a unique place within programs announced by this Government. It is often ineligible to apply for regional funding programs, left to compete against the demands of a rapidly growing Sydney for spending priorities. But in an odd turn of events, just south of the Wollongong local government area, across the relatively short Windang Bridge, the Shellharbour local government area is, in most cases, eligible for many regional funding programs.

This is a strange situation to many in the Illawarra, particularly since before one of the many backflips that have come to characterise this Government it was its intention to merge Wollongong and Shellharbour councils. The Government considered us enough of one community for our council areas to be merged, but it does

not consider us to have a common eligibility for funding through many of its expenditure programs. This logic has left many of us in the region scratching our heads. Some cynics might suggest that if it is a program driven by The Nationals Wollongong is excluded, while if it is a Liberal Party program Wollongong stands a small chance of being included. Either way, Wollongong is not getting its fair share.

If that means we need a different definition for geographic separation of the State based on major cities or large regional centres, then we should have that debate. If it means that the Government should backflip on some of its eligibility criteria, then so be it—it has backflipped on many a policy position before so why would it balk at this one? The bottom line is that the needs of Wollongong—the third largest city in the State—should not continue to be ignored. The willingness of the Government to ignore the needs of Wollongong stands in stark contrast to Labor's position.

Unlike the Government, Labor is committed to helping Wollongong become an even better place to live and work. In order to do this it is necessary to invest in the infrastructure—social, economic and environmental—that is necessary to support the growth of the city. It is easy for many in Sydney to forget the strong growth that the Illawarra has experienced recently. The growth in property prices in the Sydney market has driven many to relocate to the region. This, in turn, has driven our own property price growth to well over 60 per cent in the Wollongong electorate in the past few years. It has helped the Government's budget bottom line through increased stamp duty revenue from transfers, which this year is approximately \$10 billion. It has also meant many people have looked beyond the Sydney basin for more affordable housing options.

Since 2011 the average property price increase in Wollongong has been approximately two-thirds, with property prices in some suburbs growing more than 80 per cent. This has also driven an increase in the number of people renting properties in the electorate with approximately 40 per cent of people currently renting their homes. While higher property price growth in Sydney is prompting people to look at Wollongong as a realistic option for affordable housing, this has created additional pressure on key services such as health and education. It also means we have to do what we can to support organic job growth in the region.

That is where Labor's Illawarra Jobs Action Plan comes into play. The people of the Illawarra thought they may all get a share of the budget pie this year, given the Government's rhetoric of wanting everyone to share in the success of New South Wales. Instead, we got nothing more than some crumbs from the budget billions. On the other hand, New South Wales Labor has a \$225 million plan to share the success of New South Wales with the Illawarra region that was announced during the Wollongong by-election. I note again that that was a contest that the Government abandoned. If New South Wales Labor were in government today, if this budget we are debating here this morning were its first budget, then it would have begun to deliver the pledged Illawarra Jobs Action Plan.

Labor's Illawarra Jobs Action Plan outlines its approach to secure the future of Wollongong and create more local job opportunities to strengthen the economy through smart investments in people and infrastructure. I will speak more about that later. Already the independent observer can see a large difference between what the Government delivers in the Illawarra and what Labor is offering the region. I have never begrudged any local community benefiting from funding or infrastructure investments provided by governments and announced in budgets. It is a positive thing to see governments investing in communities along the South Coast, but let me be blunt: Many of the projects, especially on roads along the South Coast, were commenced or initiated under the former Labor government. Road projects do not just pop out of nowhere. The infrastructure takes a long time to plan, studies are undertaken, concept designs are put together, environmental and regulatory approvals are obtained and funding is then allocated. Then the building starts.

Others are fond of coming into this place and slurring the record of the former Labor Government on road projects in the Illawarra and the South Coast, and New South Wales more broadly. The members opposite who make such slurs must have travelled around on a magic carpet between 1995 and 2011 because road infrastructure was proudly delivered by Labor governments. The verifiable record confirms that, in each budget delivered under every year of a Labor government from 1995 to 2010-11, funding for road projects across the Illawarra region was allocated and delivered. To illustrate plainly the untruth of the Government's claims relating to the record of the former Labor Government on Illawarra road infrastructure spending, I asked the independent Parliamentary Library to assess every budget under Labor and every budget under the Coalition. An independent examination of the record confirms that the difference between what Labor spent on Illawarra roads between 1995 and the 2010-11 budget and what the Coalition has spent on roads since March 2011 is a little more than \$170 million, using 2016 dollars.

One would have thought, given all the rhetoric from the other side over the past six years, that the difference in the Illawarra road and infrastructure investment by Labor and the Coalition governments would have been far greater. This Government has a major problem keeping its infrastructure projects on budget. Over the past few months there have been stories in the media about massive cost blowouts worth more than \$13 million

in all of the Sydney-based infrastructure projects. Some of the more extravagant are: WestConnex, \$6.8 billion; Parramatta Light Rail, \$2.5 billion; Sydney CBD and South East Light Rail, \$600 million; and the intercity train fleet, \$1.1 billion. Even the Berry bypass, which was opened twice in the space of a few days—once in the dead of the night by the member for Kiama, who is always very keen to open a project before his ministers get the opportunity to, and a second time by the Premier—was subject to a cost blowout of approximately \$70 million.

Too many members in this place—especially on the other side—suggest that they know how business works and how to contain costs but they do not understand that they can only spend a dollar of public money once. A dollar spent on a cost blowout is a dollar lost to another service in health, education or community safety or on an infrastructure project. It is little wonder that some Illawarra projects that need to be funded have been overlooked or placed on the backburner year after year since this Government came to office.

An example of the impact of cost blowouts and the reprioritisation of business that I have spoken about a number of times is the upgrade of Unanderra station. I have barely missed an opportunity to raise that issue in this place. The installation of lifts at Unanderra is about one issue alone—and that is fairness. It is about our most vulnerable people—our elderly, parents with prams, and people with a disability—being able to do what the rest of us take for granted. These people only want to be able to catch a train at their local station. Why is that too much to ask? It was not too much to ask of Labor.

The Government continues to stubbornly ignore the community's demands for lifts. I have uncovered documents that the Government would like to keep secret relating to how it decides which stations are upgraded. Previously secret documents obtained under a Government Information (Public Access) Act request reveal that the Government is making political determinations about which stations are upgraded and which are forced to wait. The secret documents confirm that Unanderra station is ranked higher than almost every other station that received funding for an upgrade in the June budget. We know that the design and planning work for installing the lifts was completed in July 2011 and that the Labor Government allocated funds to build them in 2009. We know that the Liberals took the funding away in 2011, and we know that the Berejiklian Government should be embarrassed and ashamed about its neglect of Unanderra station. *[Extension of time]*

I will continue to use every opportunity open to me to lobby the Government and anyone who will listen about the need to upgrade Unanderra station and install lifts to enable the elderly, parents with prams and people with a disability to access trains. If the Liberal Government remains stubborn and does not install those lifts, a Foley Labor government, if elected in March 2019, will do so by allocating \$25 million in its first budget. Another issue upon which the Government remains hopelessly stuck is providing additional train carriages on the South Coast line to address unacceptable overcrowding.

Every day thousands of Illawarra commuters use passenger rail services to head to work in the Sydney central business district. Their day starts early—really early in some cases—and ends after dark. I know; I have done it myself for nearly a decade. Some daily train services from Central to Wollongong, especially those in the afternoon, are so overcrowded that passengers are forced to stand in aisles and passageways. Most South Coast line passenger services have eight cars; however, some services only have four cars. In my mind, that is simply not good enough.

I have taken up the concerns of commuters and demanded that the Government adds more carriages to train services on the South Coast line, particularly for the afternoon commute from Sydney to Wollongong. The Government says that Illawarra commuters will just have to wait until the new intercity fleet is commissioned sometime in 2019. But the new intercity fleet carriages—which are being built overseas instead of in New South Wales—will have less seating than the current carriages. South Coast line commuters deserve better than that.

I take this opportunity to repeat the call I made in May after the 2017-18 Federal budget was handed down for the Government to nominate the South Coast line for business case funding under the National Rail Program. I understand that the Government has nominated a project relating to the South Coast line and I welcome its adoption of my suggestion. I hope to find out some more of the detail as we progress. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the Government to examine the options required to improve the connection between the Illawarra and the Sydney central business district [CBD].

It is an opportunity to contribute towards completing the Maldon to Dombarton rail link, which lies half completed. It was stopped 30 years ago this year by the then Greiner Government before it was cancelled. That Government's decision was the most short-sighted in living memory. It is time that we corrected that wrong. Completion of the Maldon to Dombarton rail link will free up the existing congestion on the South Coast line and end the competition between passenger and freight trains use of the line. Completion of the Maldon to Dombarton line will open a new frontier for Port Kembla to south-west Sydney by linking these two great regions forever.

Mr Jai Rowell: Hear, hear!

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I note that my colleagues the member for Campbelltown, the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Wollondilly, who are present in the Chamber, support the completion of that rail link. That is because they understand that the connection between our regions, with Badgerys Creek airport and with the University of Wollongong for Campbelltown and Liverpool residents is central to the future of each region we represent. The call to improve rail services is not made only by the members I have mentioned. Stakeholders who welcomed additional road funding noted there is a need to improve transport services to Sydney.

Surprisingly the range of stakeholders—from the South Coast Labour Council to the Illawarra Business Chamber—is considerable. That represents that both Labor and business combined recognise the need not only to improve connections with the Sydney CBD but also to improve connections with south-west Sydney and Western Sydney. While I note that the Government is likely to argue that it is progressing the F6 extension and that that will be an important connection to Wollongong I point out that building a new toll road—that does not even connect to the F6 so it is a bit of a stretch to still refer to it as an extension—at the exclusion of all other options artificially limits the potential of the Illawarra.

While the Government's budget once again has failed the Illawarra—for the sixth time—I indicated at the commencement of my remarks that I would comment on Labor's plan. As I mentioned during the Wollongong by-election, Labor announced its own Illawarra Jobs Action Plan, which represents a \$225 million investment in the future of the region. It is a \$225 million investment in connections with south-west Sydney by linking the Illawarra with the new second Sydney airport, by upgrading the Appin Road and, as I mentioned earlier, by building the Maldon to Dombarton rail link. Part of that \$225 million investment will be upgrading the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong, which will be 20 years old this year. It is time that it received its first major overhaul instead of knocking down 17-year-old stadiums.

Labor's Illawarra Jobs Action Plan will mean investment in moving more than 200 jobs to Wollongong by relocating Liquor and Gaming, upgrading the Mount Keira Summit Park to make that a more attractive tourist destination, establishing new opportunities for innovation by investing in an iMake MakerSpace at the Innovation Campus of the University of Wollongong; and building a new Masters and Springhill roads interchange to improve the free flow of traffic between the Wollongong CBD and access to Port Kembla and BlueScope Steel as well as upgrade the intersection that has been the site of more than 70 accidents.

The Government promised that every community in the State would be sharing in the success of New South Wales. Wollongong, as the Illawarra's regional capital, is at this time not sharing in that success. This neglect can be rectified by electing a Foley Labor government in March 2019. Many voters in Wollongong cannot help but feel that they are not getting a fair hearing by this Government. They feel that way because their concerns appear to not being taken seriously. Good examples of why they feel that way is that, despite the current Premier and Treasurer being in their positions for more than a year, the time they have spent in Wollongong can still be counted in minutes rather than hours. The Premier stopped in for a coffee on her way down the coast, returning later on a quick visit to announce that a school would be upgraded. Of course she could not outline how much would be spent, what the school would end up looking like or when it would be completed; but she announced it nonetheless.

The students, their parents and teachers at the Gwynneville Public School are rightly excited that their school finally will be upgraded, but on the one hand the Premier being so scant on details suggested that the visit was more about ticking an electorate visit box rather than taking the region seriously, and on the other hand the Treasurer is yet to formally visit the region since he took on the Treasurer role. Late last year I wrote to the Treasurer and offered to arrange a series of meetings with stakeholders in the region, who are keen to discuss the region's needs in more detail, but I have yet to even receive an acknowledgement of that invitation. I note that while the Treasurer has held that office and not been in Wollongong it has hosted two royal visits—one by Sir Elton John, who played his only concert in New South Wales at WIN Stadium, and one by Prince Andrew, who took the time to be involved in a Pitch at the Palace start-up pitch competition at the University of Wollongong Innovation Campus. It is amazing that the third largest city in the region can be the subject of royal visits yet the Government's most senior members are willing to take only a passing interest in the area. I will continue to take up the concerns of Wollongong residents at every possible opportunity in this place.

Mr Jai Rowell: You are a good monarchist!

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I would prefer a republican president to visit the region, but I will settle for a response from the Treasurer. The growth pressures building in our region are considerable. I highlighted the pressures on Wollongong Hospital yesterday during debate on the Health Legislation Amendment Bill, and those pressures could be managed with sound investments in our future. Wollongong has fantastic potential, but that potential must be backed by supportive government investment. It must also be backed by the social, economic and environmental infrastructure investment that the Opposition has outlined in its Illawarra Jobs Action Plan. The Government has an opportunity in June when it delivers, hopefully, its last budget for some time to correct

the record and to address its neglect of our region. It has the opportunity to look to the Opposition's plan and to adopt some of the smart investments it proposes. In the lead-up to this year's budget, the Government must consider Wollongong's needs seriously and not continue to ignore them as it has done in the past six budgets.

Debate adjourned.

Bills

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (CONTRACTS OF CARRIAGE) BILL 2018

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Warren, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:41): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is a privilege to introduce the Industrial Relations Amendment (Contracts of Carriage) Bill 2018. The object of the bill is to amend the Industrial Relations Act 1996 to include contracts for the transportation of bread, milk or cream for sale or delivery for sale as contracts of carriage under that Act. As a result, any such contract will be subject to the proposed provisions of chapter 6 of that Act, including enabling the Industrial Relations Commission to make determinations in respect of the remuneration of the carrier, and any conditions, under the contract and to exercise dispute-resolution powers in relation to the contract.

This bill is the culmination of months of work undertaken by many people and organisations, and I will acknowledge them later. Most importantly, it is the culmination of years of struggle by the honest, hardworking truck drivers and other workers it seeks to assist. I acknowledge my colleagues the member for Macquarie Fields, Anoulack Chanthivong, who has offered immense support; the member for Keira, Ryan Park, representing the Hon. Adam Searle in this place; the member for Wollongong, Paul Scully; the member for Rockdale, Steve Kamper; and members opposite, particularly the Minister for Industrial Relations. Ultimately the role of members in this place is to introduce legislation that puts provisions and measures in place to make the lives of those we are privileged to represent better. Indeed, that encompasses the objectives of those who have contributed to this bill. On 17 October last year I addressed this matter in a private member's statement. Some sections of this second reading speech will repeat the concerns raised in that contribution because I believe it is necessary for those concerns to be considered in the formal process of this bill.

In New South Wales we are fortunate to have some of the strongest industrial relations protections for owner-drivers in Australia. Chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act covers the overwhelming majority of owner-drivers who are engaged as contractors and, specifically, it empowers the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission in two important ways. Firstly, it allows the commission to make and approve contract determinations and contract agreements, which are essentially the equivalent of awards and enterprise agreements. Secondly, it allows for the commission to resolve disputes in the transport industry—an important protection afforded to many other workers in New South Wales. Chapter 6 has enjoyed support from both sides of the aisle for many years and this bill does not seek to call that support into question. In its submission to the Federal Government's review of the Road Safety Remuneration System the New South Wales Government said:

... the provisions [in chapter 6] constitute a well-established and robust regime for the regulation of pay and conditions in the transport industry.

However, as "robust" and "well-established" as those provisions may be, there are a significant number of owner-drivers who are inexplicably exempted from the chapter 6 provisions. Section 309 (4) of the Industrial Relations Act lists a number of different types of owner-drivers who are not covered by chapter 6 protections under the Act. The most notable exception of those listed is section 309 (4) (d), which exempts owner-drivers engaged in a contract "for the carriage of bread, milk or cream for sale or delivery for sale". The exact reasoning behind this exemption is largely unclear. Some stakeholders believe it stems from many decades ago when the delivery of bread and milk direct to people's homes, rather than to supermarkets and other stores for sale, was once considered an "essential service". Whilst that may or may not be the case, it is ultimately beside the point. Even if the delivery of bread, cream and milk is considered essential, that does not mean the workers involved in their delivery should not be afforded the same basic industrial rights as somebody delivering other products, albeit they are fast-moving consumer goods,

People employed in other essential services—such as nurses, firefighters and police officers—have industrial rights and protections; so should workers involved in the delivery of bread, cream and milk. This bill is designed to fix that. The bill is brief—only a couple of lines long—but its effect will be much greater. It will

remove section 309 (4) (d) from the Industrial Relations Act and deliver basic industrial rights and protections to the workers involved in the delivery of bread, cream and milk—rights they have gone without for far too long. The bill will not make any substantive changes to the industrial relations system in New South Wales; it merely aims to include bread, cream and milk delivery drivers in the scope of the system. It goes not only to the heart of the ethos of the Labor movement and the Australian Labor Party, but also to the heart of the Australian ideology and egalitarian ethos of a "fair go".

It is a fundamental cornerstone of any fair society that all citizens should be treated equally under the law—whether criminal, civil or industrial law. This bill seeks to resolve the situation we currently face in New South Wales where a driver delivering bread, cream or milk from a producer to a supermarket does not enjoy the same industrial rights and protections as a driver doing the exact same thing with a truck full of meat, vegetables or even potato chips. This will make the difference in the lives of many who currently do not have a framework of industrial protection, yet deserve it just the same and equally as others.

Truck driving can be an incredibly dangerous line of work. As a former truckie I understand that more than most other members in this place. The inherent danger and risk involved in truck driving is precisely why it is so important that all truck drivers have strong, rigorous industrial rights and, indeed, protections. But the dangers of truck driving are not just limited to the drivers themselves. Where inadequacies of the industrial relations system force drivers to work longer hours, cut corners and take unnecessary risks to make ends meet, the safety of all road users is put at risk.

The bill will not instantly resolve all industrial issues faced by truck drivers, but it will enable owner-drivers engaged as contractors for the delivery of bread, cream or milk to engage formally in the industrial relations system in this State, which will protect and improve the working conditions of those drivers and, in turn, improve road safety for all road users. This bill need not be about politics. It is really about a simple question of whether all truck drivers deserve to be treated equally and fairly under the industrial relations laws in this State. This gets to the fundamental value of equality and everyone being equal under the law.

As some members may recall, in November last year the ABC's *7.30 Report* aired a story about this very issue. In that program, it was reported that the New South Wales Government would "explore the issues raised by drivers, including the possibility of legislative changes". I welcome that. While that particular quote was not attributed to a direct source within the Government, I can only assume it accurately reflects the views of the Treasurer in his capacity as Minister for Industrial Relations, as this matters falls within his portfolio. The Minister has been quite open to discussions with me about this matter and, like many, I am encouraged by the comments featured in the *7.30 Report*.

I urge the Minister and his Government to do the right thing by these honest, hardworking bread, cream and milk delivery drivers by supporting this bill, which will not only put a framework of protection in place that will benefit the lives of thousands but also ensure that there is an equitable process for all—while putting safety measures in place for road users, as I previously mentioned. Regardless of what side of politics we come from, I think all of us in this place can agree that every citizen deserves to be treated fairly and equally under the State's laws—including industrial laws.

Although this is indeed a private member's bill, and I am the one who has been given the privilege of introducing it, in reality it is much bigger than just one person. This bill is the culmination of the hard work of a number of people and organisations who deserve to be thanked for their efforts. First, I thank the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations in the other place, the Hon. Adam Searle—represented today by the member for Keira and shadow Treasurer, Ryan Park—for his guidance and assistance in the development of this bill. I thank the Transport Workers Union, which has been a steadfast advocate for the rights of all truck drivers for decades, including those truck drivers affected by the loophole this bill seeks to close.

I thank Charlie Lynn, a former Liberal member in the other place, who, together with some other constituents, brought this matter to my attention many months ago. His undying commitment to a fair go for these drivers is truly to be commended. He is a shining example of the good things that can be achieved when both sides of politics work together towards the common good and a better outcome. The Hon. Adam Searle is present in the gallery and I again thank him for his sound advice, support and contribution. I also acknowledge my senior electorate officer, Mitchell Wright, who has worked tirelessly and passionately to address this matter and ultimately has done a lot of the work in bringing this together. But finally, and most importantly, I thank the drivers who have risked everything by speaking out about this injustice and how it affects them—in particular, the drivers featured on the *7.30 Report*: Graeme Wong, Paul Clapson and Mark Goldfinch, who represent the broader issues in this matter. These men have shown incredible courage and commitment by standing up not only for their own rights but also for the rights of every other driver in the same situation across New South Wales.

I am proud that this is the first bill I have had the privilege of introducing in this House. As a proud trade unionist, protection of the rights and conditions of hardworking Australians is at the core of my political existence. I thank my Labor Opposition colleagues for their support of this bill. However, this is not a Labor versus Liberal issue. This is not an ideological issue. This is an issue of fairness versus unfairness. I encourage the Minister for Industrial Relations, all Government members and every member in this place to support this bill.

Debate adjourned.

FOOD AMENDMENT (SEAFOOD COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING) BILL 2017

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 14 September 2017.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (10:56): On behalf of the Government, I speak in opposition to the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. This bill will require that all restaurants, cafes, fish and chip shops, and other food outlets to prominently label whether ready-to-eat seafood is sourced from Australia or is imported. The Government is a strong supporter and defender of the New South Wales seafood industry and knows how important seafood is to local economies. I noticed raised eyebrows when I, as the member for Tamworth, began to speak about the seafood industry and fishing industry. My father was a professional fisherman. I grew up on boats. Starting from Cape Otway in Victoria, we worked our way up the east coast of Australia all the way to Queensland and into Papua New Guinea. Along the way we fished a variety of animals including shark, crayfish, prawns and barramundi. Although that memory is fading a little, I retain extensive knowledge of what commercial fishing was like then, so I fully understand the need to look after and support the fishing industry in Australia and New South Wales.

The Opposition claims that the purpose of this bill is to improve consumer information on seafood and that that will promote local fishing industries. The Government opposes the bill because it will fail to meet this intent and therefore is unnecessary. The Government recognises that most seafood consumed in New South Wales is imported. This was discussed in 2016 during the parliamentary inquiry into commercial fishing, but this bill falls far short of offering an answer. A significant issue with this bill is that it does not include any specific penalties for non-compliance. The Opposition claims that country of origin labelling will become a licensed condition for food retailers under clause 45 of the Food Regulation 2015, but that is incorrect. Clause 45 of the Food Regulation 2015 refers to licences issued under a food safety scheme. I am advised that the seafood safety scheme covers the harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting and wholesaling of seafood. It does not cover food retailing.

Dr Geoff Lee: The devil's in the detail.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: The devil is in the detail. As I have just outlined, it does not apply to seafood retailers and food businesses that only sell seafood for immediate consumption, such as for clubs, pubs and cafes. Those businesses that only sell seafood for immediate consumption are not required to obtain a licence to sell seafood to the public. The member for The Entrance has made it clear that the bill does not include any specific penalties for non-compliance, presumably because it is intended that the bill will introduce a voluntary seafood labelling scheme.

I am most concerned about the consequences that this bill could have for retailers if we pass it today—it could affect our favourite fish and chip shops across New South Wales, whether they be in Cobar, Coffs Harbour, Tenterfield or Tamworth, because there could be serious consequences for non-compliance by retailers under the Food Act 2003 and the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Non-compliance could include corrective advertising costs, addition to the NSW Food Authority's name and shame list, and up to five years imprisonment, and mum-and-dads businesses would be significantly disadvantaged—in fact, in some areas wrongly disadvantaged.

False or misleading labelling is already prohibited under the NSW Food Act 2003. This bill will do nothing to address allegations that retailers are deliberately mislabelling seafood because the New South Wales Food Act 2003 already prohibits false or misleading conduct in relation to the advertising, packaging or labelling of food for sale. This includes retailers offering seafood for sale that is deliberately presented with an incorrect species name or the use of overseas names of imported fish that may be misleading to the local consumer. To avoid confusion, the NSW Food Authority encourages businesses to use the names listed in the Australian Fish Names Standard, which was developed in consultation with industry and government.

While seafood sold for immediate consumption, such as in restaurants or in takeaway outlets, is not required to be labelled with the country of origin, any statement made in advertising and/or on menus must be accurate. The NSW Food Authority takes seriously instances of false and misleading conduct in relation to the

sale of food, including seafood. The NSW Food Authority has taken, and will continue to take, compliance action against retailers found to be deliberately mis-labelling or falsely advertising food for sale. I understand that the Opposition intends to move a number of amendments to the legislation. I will pre-empt that move and outline some of the things that are happening already—which may alleviate the need for those amendments.

Dr Geoff Lee: That's right.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I agree with the member for Parramatta, and Parliamentary Secretary.

Dr Geoff Lee: They'll be good, whatever he says.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: Absolutely. I am advised that when the Minister for Primary Industries in the other place, the Hon. Niall Blair, sought the view of stakeholders on this bill—particularly those of the Seafood Origin Working Group—significant concerns were raised. The Seafood Importers Association of Australasia Inc. described the information provided by the member for The Entrance about the bill as "somewhat misleading" as it failed to alert businesses that they could be exposed to unforeseen penalties. Big Food said that it opposes the implementation of the mandatory country of origin labelling [CoOL] scheme for seafood products in the food service sector and, in turn, does not support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017 as introduced by the member for The Entrance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It sounds a bit fishy.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: It is not fishy. This is a very serious matter, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: The debate is an opportunity to highlight the positive work that this Government is doing to support the commercial fishing industry in New South Wales. The commercial fishing industry is a significant way down the path of a major structural reform program that will ensure that the fisheries are sustainably maintained and managed, are commercially viable and continue to be part of the social fabric of coastal communities for generations to come. I understand that transition is challenging and through its raft of initiatives the Government is working closely with fishers to help them navigate this new system and increase the resilience of their businesses.

The initiatives aim to improve fisheries not only now but also well into the future. This bill will distract from the productive conversations that are occurring already not only within the fishing sector but also about seafood labelling. There is no point stirring things up and muddying the waters; we must understand the ramifications, penalties and problems that this bill will create. Therefore, I oppose the bill. It is not in the interest of this Parliament to support such a poorly thought-out bill—particularly one that lacks the support of major stakeholders and the supply chain. The Government opposes the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:06): Like my colleagues before me, I speak in debate on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. I commend the hard work of my colleague the very good member for The Entrance. I state at the outset that members opposite are all talk and no action. Just a year ago the then Deputy Premier stood up at The Nationals annual conference and told everyone that he was going to make a great change to the way in which seafood is marketed in the food services sector by legislating country-of-origin labelling. This caused great fanfare, with media releases sent out suggesting that real change was going to occur. Yet more than a year later what have we seen the Government deliver? It has delivered absolutely nothing.

The Nationals have retreated to being Liberal Party lapdogs and rolled over on this important issue. Despite the grand proclamation to legislate country-of-origin labelling for seafood served in restaurants and takeaway food shops, the Government has copped out; it is now working towards only a voluntary labelling scheme. What a joke! The grand plan announced by the then Deputy Premier, and member for Dubbo, may have gone down the drain. A voluntary labelling scheme will not effect any change in the food services industry. Like many others, I was surprised to learn that approximately 85 per cent of all seafood consumed in New South Wales is imported. This makes it even more important to label whether seafood is sourced locally or imported. People must not continue to remain under the impression that what they are buying was harvested locally when, on the numbers, this is most likely not the case.

The bill is about ensuring that consumers can make an informed choice about what they order when eating out or buying takeaway. The bill means that when someone orders snapper at a restaurant or a fish and chip shop they will know immediately whether it was harvested locally because that will be shown on the menu. No doubt will cloud their minds; consumers will not have to just presume the snapper was harvested locally when in fact it has come from overseas. They will not pay a premium price for seafood under the impression that it is local

when in fact it is not. No longer will consumers be misled about the origin of their seafood when buying it from a restaurant or a takeaway shop. To my mind, that is only right and proper.

Research shows that labelling does inform consumer choices and the introduction of seafood country of origin labels may increase an interest in local seafood. That would be a great outcome. There is no doubt that we need to support local industries, but, most importantly, we must allow diners to make informed choices on the seafood they are eating. Country of origin labelling rules already apply to seafood bought in a store. Why do they not apply to seafood bought from a restaurant or takeaway food shop? It does not make sense. Importantly, the bill provides flexibility on the information given about the country of origin labelling. It does not require cafes and restaurants to specifically list which country the seafood comes from, merely whether it is locally sourced, imported, or a mix of both.

If there is a change in the supply chain and a restaurant that usually serves seafood from Thailand instead serves seafood from Vietnam, the required statement of "This seafood is imported" will still be acceptable. Restaurants and takeaway food shops will not have to change their menus every time the supply chain changes. To say so is ludicrous. Seafood country of origin labelling in restaurants and takeaway food shops is already in place in the Northern Territory, and the sky has not fallen in. In fact, according to the Northern Territory Seafood Council Chief Executive Officer, Katherine Winchester, seafood is outcompeting other proteins on menus because "people are confident to make the purchase because they know what they're getting".

The cost argument is also a red herring. A report released after the Northern Territory implemented country of origin labelling for seafood in the food services sector found that the cost of compliance was generally "not significant". There has been continued support for a seafood country of origin labelling bill. The Portfolio Committee No. 5—Industry and Transport report on commercial fishing in New South Wales recommended that the Government complete its consultation on country of origin labelling requirements and put legislation into place by the end of 2017. However, there is no indication that the Government will do anything other than to implement a cop-out voluntary labelling scheme. It is a quick fix. In 2014, the Australian Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee recommended that:

... the exemption regarding country of origin labelling ... for cooked or pre-prepared seafood sold by the food services sector be removed ...

The Government has fallen short again. The Opposition and the member for The Entrance will push for real action on this important issue. Diners deserve to know where their seafood comes from and whether they are getting what they pay for. They should not be left to the mercy of this hopeless and useless Government. The Opposition will take action on this important issue; the Government will not. The Nationals are too busy being lapdogs to the Liberals to stand up and take action. They have copped out of making this important change. The contribution to this debate by the member for Tamworth was disappointing. When the former member for Dubbo made the announcement at The Nationals conference, his view was that a voluntary labelling scheme would not do anything, that it was a waste of time and money, and that most restaurants would not update their menus and diners would remain in the dark about where their seafood comes from. This bill will ensure that consumers—whether they are buying seafood at supermarkets or ordering seafood at a restaurant or takeaway food shop—will know where their seafood comes from. I support this bill in its current form.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (11:13): I support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. The bill helps provide fair information to consumers and gives our high-quality local seafood the recognition it deserves. At the outset, I acknowledge my colleague the member for The Entrance, David Mehan, for his hard work in developing this bill and the extensive consultation he has undertaken with representatives of many sectors of the industry. The broad support that the bill has received from the Australian fishing industry, small retailers and parts of the food industry is indicative of the great work David has done in selling these reforms and of the common sense of the bill.

Country of origin labelling laws already apply to supermarkets. However, our small retailers, local fish and chip shops and seafood restaurants, which often need to differentiate themselves by selling a premium product, are most disadvantaged by the lack of labelling laws. When I was talking about this matter with a fishmonger in San Souci, she stated that the lack of awareness by consumers of the difference between local fish and imported, usually frozen products means that currently it is very difficult to get a fantastic local fish into the hands of consumers. That is largely due to the fact that most people assume that the fish they are buying is caught locally.

When the matter of advantaging Australian products is discussed, the shadow of protectionism is often invoked. In this case we must address a disadvantage, because although fishmongers across our State want to sell high-quality, local products and consumers want to buy local fish of the best quality, insufficient information is supplied to purchasers when they buy seafood. Essentially, this bill does not seek to advantage local products; rather, it removes a disadvantage that local products face. The Australian public are serious about the quality of

their fish and our State and our nation can be very proud of our fishing industry. As my colleague the member for The Entrance pointed out when introducing the bill, currently there is a strong assumption by members of the public that the seafood they buy has been caught in Australia. Sadly, that is not the case. Many consumers have concerns about contamination, including excess mercury and the like, and they deserve to know that the fish they eat comes from somewhere they trust.

We take great pride in the cleanliness of our waterways, the high standards expected of our domestic industries and our world-leading food safety laws. Foreign imports should not be able to coast by on a combination of misinformation and the sterling reputation that our local fishers have built up over generations. The bill before the House is a very reasonable and thoughtful step forward. It contains long and fair lead-in times in order to allow small businesses to make the necessary provisions. With better information about the origin of our seafood, I have no doubt that consumers will want to buy Australian seafood—not simply because it is a local product but because they know it is a superior product. The disclosure requirements contained in the bill are simple and uniform and provide the type of certainty that small businesses want. Seafood that is imported will have to be declared as such, but for Australian products the name of a locality will suffice.

As we know, most restaurants and fish and chip shops proudly display the origin of local products. It is a point of pride to have Sydney rock oysters, Tasmanian salmon or Murray River cod on the menu. For many years we could not eat Murray River cod because of its dwindling population, but so popular was this great local New South Wales favourite that a booming fish farming industry has brought this succulent fish back to our plates. Similarly, the growth of salmon farming in Tasmania—which now employs more than 5,200 people and generates almost a billion dollars in sales revenue each year—shows that the Australian public want to support our world-class fishing industry because they know and trust our produce.

As I have already said, it is not about our Australian products needing an image boost or any form of protectionism, it is about imported products needing to be labelled fairly so that people do not have the incorrect belief that they are buying locally sourced seafood. While local fishmongers with a passion for their product may want stronger product differentiation for their Australian produce, we cannot expect any reasonable business operator to unilaterally degrade its own products without a uniform requirement across the entire industry.

Throughout my business life the one thing that was needed and wanted from the Government was certainty. This bill will provide that certainty by requiring all businesses to comply with fair and transparent labelling of their products while still allowing for exceptions where necessary, such as children's menu items. The bill contributes to a proud Australian tradition. Who among us does not have fond memories of beer-battered flathead from our local friendly fish and chip shop? As we bite into that batter what we expect is the taste of great local product. Sadly, that is no longer the reality. It is more likely that the product has travelled thousands of miles and been frozen for who knows how long before it reaches your plate.

The member for Lakemba recently told me of a situation in his local area where he was romanced by a \$10 plate of fish, chips and salad. The member assumed it was beer-battered flathead. After ordering and consuming the meal on several occasions the member pulled a whisker out of the fish. He then questioned its origins and established that it was a foreign frozen catfish. That situation must be avoided. The public needs to know the quality of fish and its origin before consuming it. We take our food seriously in Australia. We must celebrate the local produce and allow it to compete on a level playing field with imported produce. I encourage this House to support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017 to ensure future generations continue to enjoy the great locally produced seafood we know and love.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:21): The Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017 is not just about country of origin labelling. This legislation will protect the New South Wales and Australian fishing industry. Australian produce is valued around the world. The pollution in the seas and rivers of other nations highlights the need to protect our environment and our local fish stock. Australian products are clean, healthy and of high quality. Unfortunately, not enough is done to protect and sustain what is available on our doorstep. Environmental laws around the world differ substantially to those in Australia. In Australia strict regulation and vigilant enforcement protect human, wildlife and seafood health in our estuaries and waterways.

Recent changes by this Government to fishing legislation and subsequent processes are affecting the fishing families of Brisbane Water and the Hawkesbury River. These local fishermen need all the support they can get. Due to legislative changes these fisherpeople will now need to buy or lease more shares to keep fishing. Many fishers cannot afford to buy more shares. Despite having the same number of shares as last season it will not be enough to continue. These local fishers will be forced to give away equipment, skills and a livelihood to large operators who can afford to buy into the Australian market.

The small operations in my electorate that have been run by families for generations will be bought out. Their operators will join the unemployment queues because of changes made by this Government. I live on the

edge of Brisbane Water and have watched the fishing boat numbers diminish to one. Local fishermen cannot afford to operate under the new regulations and many have left the industry. Based on the coast, my electorate is privileged to enjoy local fish all year around. People drive from Sydney to the Woy Woy seafood co-op to buy local Brisbane Water seafood. We have a diverse and delicious range.

We need this Government to support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill or the public will continue to lose both local fishers and their opportunity to buy fresh local seafood. Imagine the iconic Woy Woy Fisherman's Wharf not stocking fresh fish caught locally. As more people are removed from the industry we will see the price of seafood go up and there will be less local produce. That is not what the people of New South Wales want. People come to our electorate just to buy seafood. It is worth travelling from Sydney to spend a day in Gosford. People can eat fresh seafood for lunch and take fresh seafood home without the hassle of crowds, traffic and the cost of parking at the Sydney Fish Market.

Tony has been a fisher since 1988. He has two boats—a prawn trawler and an estuary runabout. Although it is a commercial runabout it is becoming less practical because of increasing Government legislation. Sadly, Tony's yellow fishing boat is the last one in Brisbane Water. The community watch his boat go out and return with local harvest. Rolf visited the Central Coast on holidays as a kid. I have seen his photos of the beautiful fishing boats that fascinated him as a child. He had the dream of fishing when he grew up, and he started fishing in 1992. He has lived his dream. He brought up four kids as a single dad on the money he made from fishing.

Even though Tony had the opportunity to buy a retired fisher's shares, he says he will have to give it all up in the current market. As a result of the new legislation, Rolf claims that his boat and 16 fishing nets will become redundant and he will be forced to burn them or leave them at the tip. We must protect our fishers and do all we can to support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill which will encourage people to continue to fish our local waterways. We want to have the choice of buying local seafood. When we order seafood at our local fish and chip shop or high-end restaurant, we want to know the fish is sourced from Australian waters.

When the Northern Territory introduced legislation requiring restaurants and takeaway outlets to label its seafood with the country of origin, it was supported by retailers and consumers alike. Surveys conducted following the introduction of the new legislation indicated that the initial cost was negligible—35 per cent of retailers claimed they had spent more than \$500 to accommodate new menu requirements and 60 per cent indicated they had spent less than \$500. Further down the track, 70 per cent of businesses in the Northern Territory support nil ongoing costs while the remainder support less than \$500. It is disappointing that industry leaders such as the New South Wales Restaurant and Catering Industry Association claim it will cost \$8,000 to \$10,000 per restaurant with no evidence to justify the claim.

The term "imported" as a catch-all phrase in the legislation allows large clubs and restaurants that source seafood from a number of countries the flexibility to vary importer as suppliers change over time. It ensures that one menu can cover a variety of locations. It is exciting for Australian fishers that Labor's labelling bill influences choice. Every time I visit an Australian restaurant I have the option of choosing Australian wines and I am proud to do so. Businesses and restaurants were quick to catch on that consumers are willing to pay a premium price for locally caught seafood and are happy to deliver.

It is great to know that ClubsNSW and the Australian Hotels Association have a desire to support the Australian fishing industry and were engaged in drafting the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. It is disappointing to hear the member for Terrigal neither supports his local fishers in Brisbane Water nor this bill. Our consumers must be certain that they are eating Australian-caught fish. I love knowing that the mullet I ate at lunchtime was caught fresh in the Hawkesbury River at the Spencer Riverside Cup—it was beautiful. The people of Patonga want to know that the new menu will clearly label locally caught fish. The people of our community want to know we are supporting our industry. I look forward to the day that I can know the origin of the fish I buy in my local takeaway or restaurant. I will know that I am supporting the fishing men and women of our State. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (11:28): I speak on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017, which is a very important issue. I am a big fan of properly labelling our food, and this Government has been getting on with the job and working on many important reforms in infrastructure and on other issues such as food labelling. The Government opposes the bill because it is already actively working with industry to develop a solution that will deliver for all parties across the supply chain. Given the significant concerns raised by the seafood and service industries, it is apparent that the bill before the House is not a suitable solution.

A number of discussions and initiatives are happening at the Commonwealth and State levels related to seafood labelling. I note that the Labor Party has been in opposition for the past seven years. It had 16 years to do

something about some of these issues but it did nothing. That is why this Government has been getting on with the job of providing certainty for consumers and protecting the seafood industry so that an industry that we all love and know continues to prosper. Key stakeholders from the fishing food service and food supply industries have attended industry-led forums to discuss and develop options for a seafood country of origin labelling scheme. This group's purpose is to improve transparency in the supply chain and to find ways to add value to New South Wales produced seafood, which includes identifying ways to promote products.

Discussions so far have been productive and wideranging. Participants have had the opportunity to discuss consumer preferences and to develop a better understanding on how different parts of the seafood supply chain operate. This detail is important as we work towards a solution with the input of different stakeholder groups. I encourage members of the Labor Party to speak to the industry and to consumers, and to become involved with the industry. There are no knee-jerk reactions, we have a detailed approach and we have good public policy—not just leading up to elections; this policy has been in place for a long time.

The working group heard firsthand from a Northern Territory restaurant owner about his experience—an issue to which some people referred—and this Government has been listening. A major point of discussion was how to inform the consumer by labelling menu items while still allowing the outlet to have creative control of its offerings. Potential options were discussed to provide additional information across different formats as well as regional branding. Another key area of focus was how the scheme would be enforced and implemented without placing an undue regulatory burden on small businesses—something that Opposition members have failed to acknowledge or articulate in this debate.

Government members talk about less red tape and allowing businesses to get on with the job of employing people. The Liberal Party is a party for the worker. Opposition members would have people believe that their bill will create jobs and help industry, which is simply not true. It would result in job reductions not just in metropolitan Sydney but also in the rural and regional areas that I represent. Opposition members cannot handle the truth.

Dr Geoff Lee: The truth hurts.

Mr JAI ROWELL: As the member for Parramatta said, "The truth hurts." We want to get on with the job of doing what is right—supporting local jobs. While discussions have been productive, more work needs to be done before a proposal with broad industry support can be finalised. Major reform of any policy or any portfolio area works best when everyone is involved in making sure that it works and that industry supports it.

Dr Geoff Lee: It's about buy-in.

Mr JAI ROWELL: As the member for Parramatta said, it is about buy-in but it is also about consultation and listening. Currently there is no consensus amongst stakeholders about the best approach. The working group has identified a range of issues that still need to be resolved and this Government is committed to resolving them. The key recommendation to come out of this industry-led working group is to develop a trial to obtain a greater understanding of the impacts of seafood labelling to consumers and retailers. It is important to recognise that the members of the working group have different views about voluntary and mandatory labelling.

Ms Liesl Tesch: What about the workers, the fishers?

Mr JAI ROWELL: Opposition members talk about workers but they want to destroy them. NSW Labor and the Federal Labor Party introduce laws, bills and regulations, and implement more red tape in order to stop growth. Bill Shorten wants company taxes to go through the roof so that small businesses are no longer able to employ people. America has taken the lead with its policies, which have had a positive impact. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created as a result. At the Federal level Labor wants to block those policies. It is great to see people in the public gallery today. I am sure they will be able to differentiate between good and bad public policies. The Government also recognises that the Commonwealth Government is currently reviewing seafood labelling. A national approach is the preferred solution to overcome any issues that might emerge due to differences in laws across jurisdictions.

Mr David Harris: So you are not going to do anything in New South Wales.

Mr JAI ROWELL: I note the interjection of the member for Wyong. If he had been in the Chamber for the first seven minutes of my contribution he would have heard me refer to some of the things that this Government is doing. The bill introduced by the member for The Entrance is not great but at least he refers to Labor policy—the first time in seven years that a Labor member has done that. This bill would undermine the productive discussions that have already taken place at a State and a national level. We should await the outcome of those discussions rather than jump to a solution that lacks the support of a broad cross-section of stakeholders, particularly when those stakeholders are already working towards implementing a seafood labelling trial.

Ms Liesl Tesch: We have already lost jobs.

Mr JAI ROWELL: One thing we can do to secure jobs is to ensure that Opposition members never get into office. The member for Tamworth said earlier that when the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Niall Blair, sought the views of stakeholders and the views of the New South Wales seafood labelling working group, significant concerns were raised. The Seafood Importers Association of Australasia Inc. described the bill as somewhat misleading as it failed to inform businesses that they could be exposed to unforeseen penalties. Bidfood said it opposed the implementation of a mandatory country of origin food labelling scheme for seafood products in the food service sector and it did not support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017 introduced by the member for The Entrance.

The Restaurant and Catering Industry Association of Australia said that it did not support the passage of the bill in its present form. I note that the member for The Entrance thanked ClubsNSW and the Australian Hotels Association for their assistance with the bill. The Minister for Primary Industries met with ClubsNSW and the Australian Hotels Association to discuss the bill. Like other stakeholders they raised concerns about the unexpected consequences for noncompliance of their members if this bill were passed. I thank the member for The Entrance for raising an issue that we can talk about. More work needs to be done, but at least Opposition members are on a policy trajectory. ClubsNSW subsequently wrote to Minister Blair to express these concerns and said:

Regarding the bill, ClubsNSW understands that should it pass, registered clubs may be exposed to possible unforeseen penalties that were not identified when the bill was drafted. Although such a consequence may not be intentional, ClubsNSW holds concerns about this and believes such an outcome should be avoided. Accordingly, Clubs NSW would prefer to work with you and the working group on an alternative approach to the draft bill.

[Extension of time]

The Australian Hotels Association NSW also wrote to Minister Blair to say that due to the unforeseen potential penalties associated with the bill and the absence of any amendments, it would rather work with other industry groups on the seafood labelling working group. Labor members say that they have consulted with stakeholders and the industry but what they say in this place and what happens in the industry are two different things. It is important to get all parties together to achieve a solution, which is what this Government is doing. The Professional Fishermen's Association [PFA] thought that the bill did not go far enough. Despite playing a role in the drafting of the bill, the PFA said that it supports a whole of seafood supply chain transparency regarding the origin of the seafood supplied. It strongly believes that this must be supported through mandatory requirements under the legislation.

However, the PFA said that it was concerning to learn that the bill would apply only to licensees under the food regulations legislation. For those in the gallery, that means that, no matter what side of the debate people are on, no-one wants to support Labor's approach. They want a sensible approach, and that is what we are doing. Similarly, the Sydney Fish Market said, "The SFM believes that a voluntary approach to Country of Origin Labelling will not be effective and therefore a mandated and enforceable approach is required." Clearly, this bill does not have the support of key stakeholders, including fishers, cafe operators and restaurateurs.

My community is fortunate to be home to the fantastic Ambarvale Fish Market at Macarthur Square, which services the Wollondilly, Camden, Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown electorates. It has been in operation for more than 35 years and is run by a local family. Aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces—they all work in that business. It is one of the most awesome fishmongers in the State. Whenever I have a question about seafood, they tell me what is what. They know where the fish has come from and how to cook it. I certainly cannot go past their homemade seafood sauce.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Do they serve barramundi?

Mr JAI ROWELL: The member for North Shore certainly likes a barramundi on a Sunday.

Dr Geoff Lee: What about potato scallops? Do they have those?

Mr JAI ROWELL: They do have scallops, but I digress. These are important reforms. I support good policy and labelling of our food but we must get it right. Unfortunately, this bill does not do that and I recommend that members oppose it.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I welcome to the gallery members of the Way In Network, guests of the member for Oatley.

I remind members of Standing Order 52, which provides that members will be heard in silence. There were far too many interjections during the previous contribution. I will not put up with any further interjections. We will have a respectful debate or I will not hesitate to call members to order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (11:41): I am glad to speak in debate on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017 because it is indicative of how this Government has treated the fishing industry. Members opposite said nothing in this debate before suddenly realising they should rush off and pretend to consult stakeholders so that they could come in here and have a go at this legislation. The reality is that they have not taken seriously their obligation and commitment to the fishing industry to properly deal with country of origin labelling. I recognise the member for The Entrance and the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Mick Veitch, for their work in putting the bill together. It is fair to say the stakeholder comments that the member noted demonstrate that this legislation falls somewhere in the middle of stakeholder opinion.

It was interesting to hear members opposite talk as if they listen to small business owners and consider their views. Their record on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy, greyhounds and the commercial fishing reforms indicates that they do not give a hoot about small businesses in this State. In fact, over the past year the Government has laid the commercial fishing industry out on a plate and gutted it with a fillet knife. It has not stopped bleeding due to the Government's disregard for small communities and generational businesses. Obviously, the member for Wollondilly has not read the Auditor-General's report into the reduction of red tape. The Government came to power promising to reduce red tape for small businesses. It has done nothing of the sort, and the Auditor-General has said it has not done anything. The amount of regulation that it has imposed on small businesses as well as the volume of contrary legislation containing unintended consequences is a disgrace.

The Government's failure has been noted not just by the Auditor-General and Opposition members but also by industry and local communities, who are sick to death of this Government gutting their industries and doing nothing else. Currently commercial fishers are dealing with more than just disastrous Government reforms. The member for Wollondilly did not mention that allegations made by the commercial fishing industry are before the courts. A large business has been permitted to operate a king fishing farm in a marine park from which all the fish escaped. Although commercial fishers could have assisted in the recovery of that fish stock by live catches, for example, they were excluded. Currently Fisheries NSW officers are guarding in a marine park wild fish that are top-line predators, which are reducing fish stocks. The member for Port Stephens may elaborate on that later. Another debacle and disaster in Port Stephens is the Williamstown Defence base's contamination of watercourses, which has had an adverse impact on commercial fishers in that region. The current situation is simply shameful.

Every single day, even worse than simply leaving commercial fishers alone to get on with operating their small businesses, the Government fails to protect or even support the commercial fishing industry, which is an absolute disgrace. How the member for Wollondilly can say that the Government has any small business credibility, particularly regarding commercial fishing, defies belief. It makes me wonder how he defines reality. The Commonwealth Government's new requirements for country of origin labelling will come into effect on 1 July 2018 but will exempt cafes, restaurants and other food vendors from specifying where their seafood is from. Because removal of the exemption has been recommended by the Senate's Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee and by a New South Wales Legislative Council committee, why is the Government dragging the chain and failing to enact reform? Government members who constantly speak about getting on with the job and making things better for businesses in New South Wales should vote in favour of this bill.

If the Government does not agree with the Labor Opposition's bill, that is fine: The Government should amend the bill, thereby doing something useful for the commercial fishing industry. The Government should not just be a naysaying negative nelly and do nothing when there already is a bill that will support the industry the Government gutted and killed. The Northern Territory's labelling regulation has been implemented and is working effectively. It requires fish and chip shops, cafes, restaurants, supermarkets and other retailers to disclose whether the seafood they sell is local or imported. That is pretty basic. As the member for Gosford said, the label on a bottle of wine states whether it is a product of Australia or New Zealand or Canada. Why should the very same labelling requirement not apply to seafood? Do Government members not want to know that the seafood they purchase is a great quality Australian product?

Before I was elected to Parliament, I worked in the tourism industry and know firsthand that tourists came to Australia to taste Australian produce. Australian food is the cleanest and best in the world. Parliaments should be supporting the people who produce it—growers, fishers, winemakers and others. They really need government support. I offer one example of the effect of the bill before the House: A fish and chip shop will need only to indicate for each meal on its menu whether the seafood sold was local, imported or a mix of the two. That is a very simple but necessary change. It is not onerous. A retailer will not need a degree in rocket science or marine biology to work out what it means but need only to ask themselves: Did I buy this seafood from a local commercial fisherman, or is it imported, or is it a combination of the two? It is not difficult, but obviously it is too difficult for Government members.

Over the past several decades, consumers have indicated a desire for more transparency and information about the products they buy. The Australian Made logo—I am sure members will recall the green triangle with the yellow kangaroo—has been revamped. More recently labels have indicated the percentage of the product that is made by Australian producers. A typical example is "100% Australian ingredients". The performance of the current New South Wales Government in relation to industry support is shameful. Australian manufacturing industries and food production industries must be supported by government; otherwise, Australian production industries will be taken over by global businesses replacing Australian producers in market share. The Labor Opposition's bill should be supported by all members of this House. As Australians, we all buy Australian products first and foremost because we want to support businesses that create jobs and contribute to a strong economy. We know that consumers are willing to pay more for Australian products. That is because they know they are of a higher quality than products that come from elsewhere and that the waters they come from are clean.

I can see people nodding. We know Australians want the best. In May 2016—nearly two years ago—the Government announced that it would work with commercial fishers and retailers on a seafood labelling scheme. We have heard nothing since. How much more time does the Government want to deliver on its promise? The member for The Entrance and the Shadow Minister for Primary Industries have presented a bill, but the response of Negative Nelly opposite is, "It's not our bill and we won't support it." That is not good for businesses in this State. The Government has sat on its hands for more than a year watching commercial fishing businesses that have been operating for generations become unviable. Members opposite do not understand the value of businesses in regional communities.

Ms Kate Washington: They don't know anything about hard work.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I acknowledge that interjection. Members opposite are putting our fishing cooperatives at risk, forgetting that they support our regional coastal communities to the tune of tens of millions of dollars a year. Those communities will not survive if we do not have a local fishing industry. The Opposition has been working to support small businesses across the State, and particularly fishers, who have been done over by this Government. Traditionally oppositions make themselves small targets and do not announce policies this far out from elections. However, this is a vital issue for small businesses in our regional and small coastal communities. They deserve more than this. This Government is legislating at a snail's pace; there is very little proposed legislation. When we look at its record, that is understandable. It has contaminated every sector it has touched, from the greyhound industry to emergency services, local government, health— [*Time expired.*]

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:52): I support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2018. Australian consumers have been and will continue to be at risk while exemptions remain in place that allow outlets to not clearly label seafood that is offered for sale for immediate consumption. Under the current standard, outlets such as restaurants and cafes are not required to display information relating to the origin of the seafood being offered for sale for immediate consumption. The introduction of this bill highlights the current lack of information available to consumers, severely hindering their right to be fully informed about their consumption of local or imported goods. I hope this legislation will act as a guide for citizens who have noticed the prevalence of imported seafood being sold at restaurants, cafes and speciality shops across the country, which is estimated to be as high as 70 per cent.

It is my firm belief that Australian consumers have the right to be aware of and properly informed about the origin of the produce they purchase, especially digestible produce. In 2016, 69 per cent of respondents to a Marine Stewardship Council survey stated that they wanted to be informed of the origin of the fish they were consuming. I believe Australian customers value food that can be traced to sources that are known, trusted and valued. Proposed section 20A is a valuable addition to the Food Act 2003 and will allow shoppers to be aware of both their purchasing power and consumer rights. Australian shoppers have a right to know whether they are supporting Australian seafood producers by buying local fish. It is also important to ensure that notification is regulated and visible to all customers.

The case for a better labelling system was put forward in Senate reports in 2014 and 2016. The State Government has already promised to introduce an improved system, but so far the citizens of New South Wales have been kept waiting by a Government that refuses to deliver. I hope this legislation will prove to be a deterrent to those who choose to participate in illegal fishing and importation practices. Although previous legislation addresses these issues, it is vital that we continue this fight to protect the fishermen of our country.

Debate interrupted.

Motions

BOWEL CANCER AWARENESS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (11:55): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Supports efforts to promote awareness that bowel cancer is the second most common cancer and second most common cause of death from cancer in New South Wales and notes 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be treated successfully if they are detected early.
- (2) Congratulates Bowel Cancer Australia on its national Don't Wait Until It's Too Late campaign, being conducted throughout February 2018.
- (3) Calls on all members to encourage men and women aged between 50 and 74 years to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program when they receive their free faecal occult blood test kit in the mail.

Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in this State and nationally, and the second most common cause of death from cancer. I thank the House for supporting my motion yesterday to have this extremely important motion debated today. In 2012 there were 1,750 deaths from bowel cancer in New South Wales, which accounted for 12.4 per cent of deaths from cancer in this State. Over the past 10 years the rate of death from bowel cancer in New South Wales has decreased, but it could decrease even further if all people aged between 50 and 74 years participated in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Up to 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be treated successfully if they are detected early. Earlier diagnosis means that treatment can be less invasive.

Bowel cancer often develops without any early warning signs. The National Bowel Cancer Screening program uses a screening test called a "faecal occult blood test". Samples of bowel motions are collected, which are then analysed to detect whether tiny traces of blood that are invisible to the naked eye are present. The screening test cannot diagnose bowel cancer, but the results will determine whether a further test is needed to rule out bowel cancer. Bowel screening involves testing for bowel cancer in people who do not have any obvious signs of the disease. The aim is to find cancers early, which is when they are easier to treat and cure.

Bowel Cancer Australia is a non-government charitable organisation dedicated to prevention, early diagnosis, research, treatment and care for anyone affected by bowel cancer. It is responding to a new report that shows many people in Australia have low levels of awareness about bowel cancer and the national bowel cancer screening test. Throughout February Bowel Cancer Australia is reminding people to take advantage of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program free faecal occult blood test when it is sent to them every two years. The Government, through the Cancer Institute NSW, will conduct its own bowel cancer screening awareness campaign between April and June, in preparation for Bowel Cancer Month in June. In New South Wales and nationally too few people are participating in bowel cancer screening—about 39 per cent overall. Men have a lower participation rate than women, with about 30 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women taking advantage of the free national screening program.

As I said, screening for bowel cancer saves lives. There are several cancers—being breast, cervical and bowel cancers—for which cancer screening has been demonstrated to be a key life-saving tool through early detection of the cancer and its precursors and a reduction in mortality. The bowel, which is part of the gut, is made up of different sections, including the colon and the rectum. Bowel cancer is also referred to as colorectal cancer, colon cancer or rectal cancer, depending on the section of bowel where the cancer starts. Bowel screening involves testing for bowel cancer in people who do not have any obvious symptoms. The aim is to find cancers early, when they are easier to treat and to cure.

As I said, we need more people between the ages of 50 and 74 years to participate in bowel cancer screening by having a faecal occult blood test. According to an article published in the journal *Public Health Research and Practice* last December, many people have low levels of awareness and knowledge about screening for bowel cancer. This is consistent with the findings of the Cancer Institute NSW, which has found that there are low levels of awareness about bowel cancer, low levels of perceived susceptibility and low levels of knowledge about the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Between April and early June this year, in preparation for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month in June, the Cancer Institute NSW will conduct a new bowel cancer screening awareness social marketing campaign. The campaign will aim at encouraging men and women aged between 50 and 74 years to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program when they receive their free kits in the mail.

Approximately 80 Australians die from bowel cancer every week, 33 of whom are in New South Wales. Participation in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is low across Australia. If this participation rate could be increased to, say, 60 per cent, approximately 300 lives could be saved each year in New South Wales. These people would also have less invasive and shorter courses of treatment because, in general, their cancer would be less advanced. The Cancer Institute NSW has looked into why people do not participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Reasons include lack of understanding about the purpose of screening, particularly for people who do not have symptoms; lack of confidence in completing the test kit; and embarrassment. For people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities there are also language barriers.

The Cancer Institute NSW's new social marketing campaign will communicate the message that completing the bowel cancer screening test is relatively easy. It has been tested with members of Aboriginal communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to ensure that its messages are culturally appropriate. Bowel Cancer Australia has developed its new Don't Wait Until It's Too Late campaign in response to the journal article published in *Public Health Research and Practice*. Throughout February, Bowel Cancer Australia will be working to raise awareness about bowel cancer, its risk factors and symptoms, and to encourage people to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Bowel Cancer Australia is also encouraging people to understand the risk factors for bowel cancer and make changes to their lifestyle. The risk of bowel cancer increases with age, and your risk is greater if you are aged 50 years and over.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (12:03): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for moving this motion in support of Bowel Cancer Australia's national campaign, Don't Wait Until It's Too Late. As the second most fatal form of cancer, the impact of bowel cancer has been felt by far too many families and their friends and loved ones. Approximately 80 Australians die from bowel cancer every week. Like most cancers, bowel cancer does not discriminate. Women and men, young and old, fit or frail, this disease can arrive with few symptoms to warn us of its advent. Seventy five per cent of people who develop the disease have no family history of the illness. But, through the work of Bowel Cancer Australia and others, there is some good news. Ninety per cent of cases can be treated successfully if detected early. Early detection provides the greatest chance of long-term survival and brings hope to many sufferers and their loved ones for the opportunity of a future lived together.

The greatest barrier to early detection of bowel cancer is convincing otherwise healthy people to be tested. This is the challenge and that is why public health campaigns like Bowel Cancer Australia's Don't Wait Until It's Too Late campaign are so important. Support for more medical research and better treatment options is always welcome. However, changing community attitudes is one of the hardest tasks of our public health system. Advocacy bodies such as Bowel Cancer Australia are doing a champion job. I commend that organisation for its important message and for the important role it is playing in improving health outcomes in our communities. Changing hearts and minds is a decades-long process. The public health campaigns around smoking or drink-driving have taken many decades to change public attitudes. Through the work of Bowel Cancer Australia and other agencies, public attitude towards bowel cancer and early screening has begun to change.

All Australians aged between 50 and 74 years routinely receive a testing kit in the mail and are invited to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. This automatic and discreet process has been incredibly important in increasing the screening rates for bowel cancer. I can only imagine the number of lives that have been saved already through the relatively simple early intervention process that forms part of this important program. From 1 January this year, every Australian resident aged 50, 54, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72 and 74 will receive a National Bowel Cancer Screening Program kit in the mail. From next year residents aged 52 and 56 will be added to the program, completing the decade-long rollout of this program and ensuring that all residents aged between 50 and 74 receive a biannual testing kit. Testing kits are essential for early detection; however, those people with known risk factors for bowel cancer should speak with their doctor about how to reduce risk factors and discuss other detection options they should consider.

The risk factors for bowel cancer include smoking, high alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Although many people with bowel cancer have no family history of the disease, around a quarter of people diagnosed do. Unfortunately, participation rates for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program vary significantly across New South Wales. According to the Bowel Cancer Australia Atlas, around a third of residents in my area of Port Stephens participate in the program. In Bourke, the figure is closer to 17 per cent. We must strive to increase participation rates in all areas. Non-Sydney residents of New South Wales have better completion rates than do Sydneysiders: 29 per cent of Sydneysiders return their tests compared with 32.5 per cent of non-metro New South Wales residents. That is an unusual about-face in statistics—regional areas usually participate less in such programs and have poorer health outcomes.

The 3.5 per cent difference between Sydneysiders and non-Sydneysiders can represent thousands of lives. It is a good demonstration of the importance of equal access to postal testing kits and of raising awareness through all communities in New South Wales. While the public health message is getting through, there is still a significant amount of work to be done to ensure that it reaches all areas of our State. Even on a State-by-State basis, New South Wales has some way to go in getting the message out. In New South Wales 30 per cent of residents complete their testing kits. This is roughly equal to Queensland and well ahead of the Northern Territory's rate of 20 per cent.

However, New South Wales is still below the national figure of 32 per cent and well behind Victoria's 33 per cent. We must improve those statistics across the entire nation. Bowel Cancer Australia's campaign is trying to achieve those increases in completion rates because it will make a difference to so many people's lives. As we

recognise the Don't Wait Until It's Too Late campaign today, I ask my colleagues in this place to take the message of the campaign back to their electorates and share it with their constituents in an effort to see an increase in screening test participation rates.

Whether it is via newsletters or by speaking at events, there are many ways for us all to help spread important health messages in our communities, particularly the message from Bowel Cancer Australia, which, hopefully, will prevent people from getting this terrible illness. I thank the member for Myall Lakes for bringing this important motion before the House so that we can voice our concerns about cancer affecting too many people in our community and raise awareness of bowel cancer by spreading the message of Bowel Cancer Australia that early screening is paramount. I urge everyone who receives a screening test kit at home not to ignore it, not to put it on the kitchen bench, not to put it in their office, not to hide it away, but to participate. It is important to have the screening test in order to assist in early detection.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:10): Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in Australia and in New South Wales and the second most common cause of cancer death. That is why we are discussing this matter today. We thank the member for Myall Lakes for bringing this very important motion forward. The risk of a person in New South Wales being diagnosed with bowel cancer by the age of 85 is one in 13. In New South Wales, in 2013 there were almost 5,000 new diagnoses of bowel cancer, accounting for 11.8 per cent of all cancer diagnoses in New South Wales that year. Also in 2013 there were almost 1,700 deaths from bowel cancer in New South Wales, accounting for 12 per cent of all deaths from cancer in New South Wales. The rate of bowel cancer deaths in New South Wales has decreased over the past 10 years, which is good news, but we need to continue to be ever vigilant, not only by way of personal tests but also by looking at options for screening.

Between the periods 1995 to 1999 and 2005 to 2009, the five-year survival rate from bowel cancer improved from 60.9 per cent to 67.5 per cent. These outcomes could improve even further through population participation in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, which is for those aged between 50 and 74. The Commonwealth Department of Health is responsible for operating the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and for sending free faecal occult blood test [FOBT] kits every two years to men and women who are between the ages of 50 and 74. An important feature of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, which is operated by the States and Territories, is the Participant Follow-up Function for participants of the national program who have received a positive test result. This ensures that these participants continue along the screening pathway by discussing their result with their general practitioner and usually having a colonoscopy.

In New South Wales, the Participant Follow Up Function is performed by the Cancer Institute NSW. Follow-up function officers are in regular contact with screen participants, general practitioners, and the waitlist and booking staff of hospitals and specialists who perform follow-up procedures such as colonoscopies. Social marketing campaigns run by the Cancer Institute NSW aim to raise awareness of the importance of bowel cancer screening and prompt behaviour change in order to increase participation by people in New South Wales in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. A statewide social marketing campaign, funded by the New South Wales Government through the Cancer Institute NSW, was on air in May and June 2016 and 2017, using the Commonwealth Department of Health's "A Gift For Living" campaign.

A public relations strategy that was implemented to support the campaign included a comedian ambassador, health and medical experts and testimonials for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. The Cancer Institute NSW's new social marketing campaign will air between April and early June this year, in time for National Bowel Cancer Awareness Month in June. The Cancer Institute NSW has also developed a NSW Bowel Cancer Screening Marketing and Recruitment Strategy, involving extensive stakeholder consultation with charities and non-government organisations.

Over the previous four years the Cancer Institute has supported work that is done in local health districts to improve access to timely colonoscopy for participants in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Grants to local health districts and primary health networks are designed to support initiatives that improve access to colonoscopy in public hospitals for people who receive a positive result on their bowel cancer screening test. The project aims to trial a combination of education and support for Aboriginal health workers as well as the provision of a direct screening kit to promote awareness and encourage increased participation rates among Aboriginal peoples, who have markedly lower screening rates.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:15): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for proposing this motion on the bowel cancer campaign "Don't Wait Until It's Too Late" for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. As my colleagues have already stated, bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in Australia and in New South Wales is the second most common cause of cancer death. Up to 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be successfully treated if they are detected early, which is why this month is focused on ensuring that people are screened to detect the presence of bowel cancer. They should not wait until it is too late. Early diagnosis also

means that treatment can be less invasive. One of the big challenges with bowel cancer is that it often develops without any early warning signs.

My electorate of North Shore has a fantastic colorectal clinic at Royal North Shore Hospital, which was launched in 2016 and is led by Associate Professor Alex Engel. The clinic services both public and private outpatients. The focus is on patients with a colorectal surgical problem ranging from proctology to colorectal cancer screening and management. It offers primary referrals, second opinions and advice on early and late complications after surgery. Indeed, this evening, which is good timing for our debate today, a brand new research initiative will be introduced for colorectal cancer patients at the Northern Sydney Local Health District, that is, the Sydney 1000 Bowel Cancer Study and Biobank, a pioneering 10-year observation study prospectively recruiting newly diagnosed bowel cancer patients. I send my congratulations to Associate Professor Engel on that initiative and wish the team luck as they progress this research and the education program of their senior registrars and colorectal fellows.

The New South Wales Government also has an interest in supporting research and investment in screening for bowel cancer and, through the Cancer Institute NSW, has awarded primary care grants worth more than \$700,000 to four primary health networks. These grants focus primarily on engaging in supporting general practices to participate in structured quality improvement activity aimed at increasing their practice populations' participation in the breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening programs. Grant funds have already been used to review and improve local screening and assessment pathways. People can certainly take measures to reduce their risk of bowel cancer, such as not smoking, quitting smoking, drinking alcohol in moderation, maintaining a healthy body weight, being active and eating healthily. However, this month is a reminder for everyone aged between 50 and 74 that the most important thing is to participate in bowel cancer screening.

An important feature of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, which is operated by the States and Territories, is the Participant Follow Up Function, which ensures that if there is a positive test result, individuals are encouraged to continue along the screening pathway by discussing their result with their general practitioner and usually having a colonoscopy. As we know, the risk of bowel cancer increases with age and so the risk is greater for people aged 50 years and over. Other risk factors include having excess body fat, being physically inactive, having high alcohol consumption, smoking and having a high intake of foods such as processed meat.

I commend the Cancer Institute NSW for its social marketing campaign that aims to raise awareness of the importance of screening for bowel cancer and to prompt behaviour change to increase participation by people in the program. I reflect on a story at Royal North Shore Hospital of Katie, a woman affected by bowel cancer. In 2014, after delivering her child, Katie experienced symptoms and discovered that she had bowel cancer. She has given an endorsement of the wonderful chemotherapy and radiation staff at Royal North Shore Hospital, highlighting their compassionate attitude and genuine interest in her case. I am glad to hear that she, her baby and her husband are all well.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:19): In reply: I thank the member for Por Stephens, the member for North Shore and the member for Tamworth for their contributions to this important debate. The name of the "Don't Wait Until It's Too Late" campaign says it all. Early detection of this disease saves lives and prevention is better than cure. Each of us can reduce our risk of bowel cancer by quitting smoking, drinking moderately, exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy weight. The other part of the equation is to not wait until it is too late to get checked, because early detection saves lives and prevents people from having to undergo invasive treatments. When my grandfather was 90, he was diagnosed with bowel cancer. He had the cancer removed and had a colostomy, and then six months had another operation and the colostomy was reversed. He lived until he was 96 and did not die from bowel cancer.

If diagnosed early, someone may have to only have polyps removed. A colonoscopy is the second part of the diagnosis, which can enable the removal of polyps that could otherwise grow and become cancerous. Removing them early is better than having colostomy surgery or having the cancer spread to other parts of the body and ultimately being the cause of death. We have heard the number of deaths and people diagnosed in New South Wales every year. Only approximately 30 per cent of people bother to do the bowel screening test when it is sent to them. We need to raise awareness and make people understand that when they get the test in the mail, they should do it. People do not do the test because of a lack of awareness, the "it'll never happen to me; I don't have to bother with this" mentality and the embarrassment of the dealing with faeces—although we deal with faeces every day of our lives, and parents deal with their babies' faeces multiple times a day.

It can be icky, but it can save lives. We need to stop the argument that it is too embarrassing and just do it. If we raise the percentage of people taking the test to 60 per cent, we will save 300 lives a year in New South Wales. I commend Bowel Cancer Australia for its national campaign, and I implore people to do the faecal occult

blood test when they receive it and to see their doctors so they can survive bowel cancer. We do not want people to die from this horrible disease.

Motion agreed to.

SHELLHARBOUR GOVERNMENT CLEANING STAFF

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:23): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the Government for its changes to the contractual agreements of cleaning staff employed by the Government.
- (2) Notes that on 26 July 2017 six cleaning staff employed on Government sites within the Shellharbour electorate presented to the Shellharbour electorate office concerned with undisclosed proposed changes to their working contracts.
- (3) Calls on the Government to disclose the contents of the contracts being developed for cleaning staff working within Government-operated sites within the Shellharbour electorate and the greater Illawarra.
- (4) Calls on the Government to provide a guarantee to relevant workers that an equal level, permanent position, will be offered to staff members under any new contractual agreement. I gave notice of this motion six months ago, after a meeting in my office. On 26 July last year, I met with six cleaners employed on government sites within the Shellharbour electorate. These staff members are long-term, contracted employees at schools and government offices. They have, collectively, worked 134 years at these sites—that is, an average of 22 years each. Last year the New South Wales Department of Finance, Services and Innovation notified United Voice, the union representing government-employed cleaners, that current employment guarantees were "not to be extended into the new contracts from 2018 onwards". These guarantees have been in place since 1994. In three months' time the New South Wales Government will put its cleaning services contract to tender for the first time in 24 years.

The six employees I met with are a small fraction of the total group that will be worse off because of this decision. Seven thousand workers across our State now fear for their future and their future employment. The proposal put forward by this Government will see every single one of these workers forced to reapply for the positions they currently hold. It will not matter whether they have held these positions for weeks, months, years or even decades. This is an absolute insult. What is more, the positions they are reapplying for will be short-term contracts that include zero guarantees in terms of their working hours and conditions.

The workers who approached my office rightly had secure jobs, steady working hours and reliable pay cheques for decades but their world has now been threatened by the Government's announcement. I remind the House that insecure employment is not a method by which to increase efficiency or work ethic. Instead, treating workers with the respect they deserve will deliver the best outcomes for the working and learning environments in our State as a whole. The proposal introduced by this Government also includes an intention to pay cleaners according to the size of the space they clean rather than by the hours that they work. This shameful proposal only lends itself to corner cutting, job rushing and compromises. A push to deliver on quantity will always negatively impact the quality of the work delivered. That is a simple fact. Similarly—this should be common sense—the complexity of a cleaning task, and how much time the task consumes, is not solely dependent on the size of a classroom.

I remind the House that our State schools need cleaners. The safety and cleanliness of the educational environment for our children depend on the work that the cleaners do. This may be a workforce that goes unseen by the majority, but the work and the services that cleaners provide is critically important. This Government is effectively asking us to compromise on the educational environment we provide for the State's children, and this is simply unacceptable. With this Government's track record this proposal should not come as a surprise to anyone. After all, this is the same lot that prioritised two Sydney stadiums over every single one of our State schools and every single one of our State hospitals. The act of abandoning our State's workers and cutting corners in schools seems pretty typical of a Government that would waste \$2.5 billion on a knockdown and rebuild of two stadiums. Meanwhile, our State's health and educational infrastructure continues to struggle for adequate funding.

This Government has even gone to the length of describing the current system of pay as "outdated". If it is outdated to pay an individual for every hour they work, for the effort that they put in and for the time that they are forced to spend away from their families then maybe the old system is better than what is currently being proposed. To ask employees of this Government to live their lives worrying about the future of their jobs, whether their place of employment will change and whether they will have a place of employment at all on a year to year basis is an absolute disgrace. The workers across our State need and deserve a jobs guarantee. These are parents—individuals who depend on their income to pay the rent or mortgage, pay their bills and feed their families. To

force them to give up this security to live in constant fear of the future is simply unacceptable. This should not even be up for discussion.

After the Victorian Government introduced a similar system it came to light that a majority of cleaners were being severely underpaid. In some cases workers reported being paid as little as \$2.63 an hour. The Victorian Government had left its workers to the mercy of dodgy operators, and this was the result. We can no longer call ourselves a modern and just society if we are willing to risk employees being paid 85 per cent below the minimum wage. We cannot allow this failed policy to impact some of the State's hardest workers. Dodgy operators will seize the opportunity and our State's citizens will be forced to suffer the consequences. No matter the issue or the industry, this Government's first option always has been to outsource and privatise.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:29): It is a pleasure to speak in debate on the motion moved by the member for Shellharbour. As I move around our State's education facilities as I am the Parliamentary Secretary for Education, I am impressed with the spick-and-span condition of the classrooms. There is no doubt that the Government respects the important role that cleaners play in ensuring the health and wellbeing of all students and teachers. I commend them for their hard work. There are 7,500 cleaners employed under the whole of government facilities management contract. These decent hardworking men and women service our schools, police stations, courthouses, government offices and TAFEs.

Around 40 New South Wales government agencies come within the whole of government contract. The current contract does not reflect modern practices in the cleaning industry which means that the work is not equitably distributed across government facilities. I will supply an example in relation to schools. Under the current contract, school A may have 50 per cent more floor space and classrooms than school B, yet they are both allocated the same number of cleaning hours. These inconsistencies are repeated across the 4,200 government facilities covered under the existing whole of government contract. The Government is proposing that all cleaning should be based on a per square metre rate, which is consistent with the industry standard for commercial cleaning.

As is appropriate, the Government is consulting with the union and will continue to do so until agreement is reached. The Government has ensured current workers are protected by mandating that the new contractors are required to offer all existing employees an interview. It is important that low-paid workers in our community, such as cleaners, are treated with fairness and respect. This is not an insignificant contract; it is \$400 million per year. It is important to deliver value for money for taxpayers and that is what the contract will achieve. It involves balance. We have to get the balance right and ensure that we protect taxpayers and workers. The way to do that is by building or upgrading more than 120 schools and completing work on another 33 over the next four years. This Government is providing a whopping \$1.6 billion increase on last year's budget commitment.

The Government is spending \$4.2 billion on new schools and significant school upgrades over the next four years. It is the biggest New South Wales government investment in education infrastructure in the history of this State. The Government is providing balance through building 1,500 new classrooms that will educate more children and provide employment for teachers and other staff, including the cleaners we value. The reality is that there will be more employment opportunities for cleaners when the next contract takes effect in July 2018, not less.

The Government will continue to work with stakeholder groups, including United Voice, to ensure that existing employees are provided with adequate information regarding new facilities management contracts. That practice occurs across government as contracts are put out to tender. Whole of Government Facilities Management Services delivers cleaning services to approximately 4,200 sites and maintenance services are delivered to approximately 3,000 sites. These sites include colleges, courthouses, government offices and essential service buildings such as ambulance, police and fire stations. The existing whole of government contract expires on 30 June.

The Government Cleaning Service was outsourced to the private sector in 1994. Contracts were tendered and awarded to the private sector in 1999, 2006 and 2011. The current contract was awarded in 2011 and is due to expire. The Coalition has a long and extensive history of supporting the rights of cleaners and other workers, as it should. It has provided employment guarantees since services were first outsourced to the private sector in 1994. Since that time contracted companies have provided a reliable quality cleaning service for schools and public buildings, ensuring that they are clean and well maintained. Cleaners are at the frontline of these services. Approximately 6,300 cleaners are employed in permanent, part-time or casual roles to service the current facilities management contracts. The cleaners are currently employed directly by cleaning providers, not by the Government. It is a contractual arrangement, as I am sure members are aware.

As happens periodically, the Government is running a procurement process to re-let the contract. Similar procurements were undertaken in 1999, 2006 and 2011. When in office, governments of both political persuasions have done the same. Property NSW manages the whole of government facilities management contract to provide

outsourced maintenance and cleaning services on behalf of participating government agencies and other eligible clients, including Education, Justice, Transport, TAFE NSW, local government, not-for-profit groups, and other government office buildings.

On 29 May 2017, Property NSW called for expressions of interest [EOI] for the first stage of procurement for a contract beginning on 1 July 2018. The Government invited providers to present ideas on how improvements in quality and innovation can add value to the delivery of cleaning and maintenance services. Our cleaners do a quality job and are proud of their work. The expressions of interest closed on 3 July 2017. Following the assessment of the EOI responses, Property NSW invited successful companies to provide further information in a request for proposal [RFP] to refine bids and award contracts for 4½ years from 1 July 2018. The RFP was released on 25 October 2017 and closed on 15 December 2017. The Government is committed to delivering value for money from its contracts and ensuring that the procurement process does not compromise on quality while ensuring fairness for the cleaners.

Following extensive consultation with the industry, the union and stakeholders across government, we decided to fully protect the rights of cleaners. We are committed to protecting the rights of cleaners. Cleaners are at the coalface every day, providing the essential services that everyone requires to do their jobs. Teachers and students will continue to get the same high-quality service that is currently provided to them. There will be no impact on service delivery. Following wide consultation with cleaners and feedback from stakeholders, the New South Wales Government has agreed to continue with an hours-based contract. This option will maximise the employment guarantees for cleaners. This Government has a long history of supporting the rights and entitlements of cleaners and workers and will continue to do so. I am proud to make this statement in the House today. I congratulate our cleaners on their outstanding work.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:36): I support the motion moved by the member for Shellharbour. Like me, she cares for cleaners who are the most vulnerable and hardest workers in our community. The actions of this Government have made cleaners in Wallsend and Shellharbour fearful about job losses. The Government is stripping away all job security provisions and 7,000 school cleaners have been forced to reapply for their jobs under the new cleaning contract that is starting in July this year. How daunting is that? They will lose entitlements such as sick leave, which is an entitlement that the Government should consider providing for our cleaners. The new contract will affect 4,500 sites, including 3,200 schools—80 per cent of cleaning jobs are at schools as well as TAFEs, ambulance stations and the offices of members of Parliament. I support United Voice campaigning to protect the rights of cleaners. The union will stand up for those workers and help to allay the job insecurities that will inevitably occur in July. In October, the Secretary of the Department of Finance wrote to the Secretary of United Voice and stated:

... under the new contract, all existing cleaners will be offered the chance to attend an interview with the successful tenderers. This means they will be reapplying for the same job, which is a waste of time. Should cleaners be grateful for the opportunity to receive an interview for the job they have had for many decades? I do not think so. I can speak from experience because my mother was a school cleaner for 24 years at West Wallsend Public School. I know how hard cleaners work. I appreciate the importance of their role in terms of the health and wellbeing of our students. I know this debate is not about hospitals, but our public and private hospitals would be in a sad state without quality cleaning. Despite a number of meetings with cleaners, the Minister for Finance, Services and Property, unfortunately, has shown no sign of caring about job security for school cleaners or maintaining cleaning standards. The Premier must intervene on this issue. Cleaners who are currently working should be able to continue to be employed regardless of who is awarded the next contract.

I am also bothered by the whole notion of contracts. I make sure that I always know the name of the cleaner who works in my office. I have worked in this job for nearly 11 years and I have met about 12 cleaners. We are going through them at a rate of knots. They do not remain in their job. Why do so many different cleaners come and go? It is something to do with their job conditions and security, unfortunately. In the end it means that the offices of members of Parliament are not cleaned as well as they should be. I agree with the member for Kiama: We value our cleaners and know how important their job is. If the Government values cleaners as much as I do, it should make sure that they have the same job security to which they are entitled. Let us also preserve their sick leave as it is important to them. I support the motion.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:40): I am the second speaker for the Government following the member for Kiama. Under the whole of government [WoG] facilities management contract, cleaning services are delivered to approximately 4,200 sites and maintenance services are delivered to approximately 3,000 sites. It is a very wide-ranging services that covers sites including our fantastic schools, TAFE colleges, courthouses and our own government offices, as was highlighted by the member for Wallsend. I also acknowledge the fantastic work of the cleaners in my office. I am often the last one to leave in the evenings and I meet them arriving. They have a great eye for detail and do a fantastic job. Keeping a member's office clean might sometimes be a little bit difficult, given the nature of the job, but the cleaners in my Terrigal electorate office do an amazing job and should be commended for it. The service also covers essential services buildings such as ambulance, police and fire stations, which no doubt would be onerous given the scale, scope and size of those facilities.

As outlined by the member for Kiama, the existing WoG contract expires on 30 June 2018. Cleaning services were outsourced to the private sector in 1994 following the transition from the Government Cleaning Service [GCS]. Contracts were then tendered and awarded to the private sector in 1999, 2006 and 2011. The current contract was put in place in 2011 and is due for renewal. When those contracts were due for renewal they would go through the same evaluation as they are now. The Government has a long and extensive history of supporting the rights of cleaners and other workers, having provided employment guarantees since services were first outsourced to the private sector way back in 1999. Since that time, contracted companies have provided a reliable, quality service keeping our schools and other public buildings clean and well maintained. I agree that they do a wonderful job, especially in our electorate offices.

What has happened to date? As happens periodically, the Government is running a procurement process to re-let the contract. Similar procurements were undertaken in 1999, 2006 and 2011. Property NSW manages the WoG facilities management. Contracts to provide outsourced maintenance and cleaning services on behalf of participating government agencies and other eligible clients, which obviously includes the Department of Education, justice, transport, TAFE NSW and other departments. On 29 May 2017 Property NSW called for expressions of interest [EOI], the first stage of procurement for the contract beginning on 1 July 2018.

The Government invited providers to present ideas of how improvements in quality and innovation can add value to the delivery of the already outstanding cleaning and maintenance services that those departments receive. The EOI closed on 3 July 2017. Following assessment of the EOI, Property NSW invited successful companies to provide further information in a request for proposal [RFP] to refine bids and award contracts for 4½ years from 1 July 2018. The RFP was released on 25 October 2017 and subsequently closed on 15 December 2017. This is standard government practice. I congratulate the cleaners on doing a wonderful job, especially in the schools in my electorate.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:45): I thank the member for Shellharbour for moving this motion. Let us call it for what it is: a complete outrage. I like the member for Terrigal and I appreciate his well-considered and well-thought out comments. Let us bell the cat on exactly what is happening here with these contracts and discuss the KPMG report that clearly states that there is a 30 per cent saving to be made in the new contract. The reality is that 80 per cent of the costs in cleaning contracts are wages. The other 20 per cent of the costs are for chemicals and equipment, and are basically non-negotiable. Whoever has the cleaning contract has to use essentially the same equipment and chemicals to get the same outcome. Where are the 30 per cent savings going to come from? They are going to come from the wages. That is the purpose of this exercise.

The wages and salaries of the cleaners of our schools and public buildings—some of the lowest paid people in the State—are under attack. That is the bell we need to put on this cat. This information is not made up; it is the reality. It has been tested in budget estimates. Questions have been put to the Minister, who has acknowledged much of the detail that I have outlined. Thirty per cent is to be cut from the cleaning contracts. That is a 30 per cent attack on some of the lowest paid people in our society. That is what this is all about. The approach is to say we need to check the contestability of cleaning on a per square metre delivery. That is cool. I am happy for that in a work environment such as here in Parliament House and in our offices upstairs, or at the Roads and Maritime Services offices, or elsewhere. However, one cannot compare a square metre in a school classroom with a square metre in this building.

I have been a school teacher and have seen classrooms at the end of the day with food scraps, paper, paperclips and pencil shavings all over the floor. I have seen the spitballs that the kids have spat across the room—mostly at the back of my head—land on the board. I have seen it all. A square metre in a school classroom is not the same as a square metre here. The approach that this Government takes is to say that we need to check the amount we are paying in schools for the square metre is the same as that which is commercially available in other sectors. What a load of trollop. That is absolute nonsense. Depending on which report one believes, it takes school cleaners either six minutes or 12 minutes to clean each classroom.

Let us use 12 minutes as an example. What would a 30 per cent cut to 12 minutes per classroom equal? Eight minutes. Who thinks four minutes—30 per cent—can be shaved off cleaning a classroom? I invite members to join me and attend any school in the State and try to clean a classroom in eight minutes. The challenge is out for all members. I will do it and video it. We will post it on YouTube and see how we go. What if the truth is six minutes, and we cut that to four? Who wants to send their child to a dirty classroom that has only four minutes allocated to clean it? I thank the member for Shellharbour for belling the cat today.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (12:49): I welcome the opportunity to speak in debate on this motion. In doing so I believe it is important to focus not on the conclusion reached by members opposite, but on the reasoning that led them to that conclusion. Their reasoning seeks to condemn this Government by presenting selective information to distort reality. I will outline the facts minus the hysteria and hyperbole we have heard. Cleaning and maintenance services are delivered to approximately 7,200 sites across New South Wales. From

courthouses to ambulance and fire stations, we are committed to providing fair working conditions for decent and hardworking employers and their staff. Each year the Government spends more than \$400 million on cleaning and maintenance services. It is important that the services delivered under facilities management contracts provide the best possible outcomes for taxpayers and workers.

People are often reluctant to take on board information that is inconsistent with their conclusions. That is certainly the case on this matter for members opposite. The fact is that the current contract was put in place in 2011. It is outdated and not keeping pace with industry best practice. It is not best practice because it sets out cleaning services against a historical formula based on fixed hours at different locations—which is important information that members opposite left out of their remarks. We propose that all cleaning should be based on a per square metre rate that is the industry standard for commercial delivery. I reiterate the Government's commitment to fair working conditions. For that reason, the expressions of interest and requests for proposal include requirements for suppliers to ensure that workers have protections as provided by the Fair Work Act and industrial relations legislation.

It never hurts to hear an opposing point of view, but that is only so long as it contains all the facts. As the member for Kiama rightly said, when the contract takes effect in July there will be more employment opportunities for cleaners, with better protections, not less. Cleaners perform important work that the Government values and that is critical to the running of schools across New South Wales. That is why the Government is focused on ensuring that procurement achieves a quality service for agencies using the contracts and fairness for cleaners. It is important that our ambulance, fire and police stations, schools, hospitals, courthouses and other public buildings are clean and safe. Over the next four years we are building or upgrading more than 120 schools, providing more than 1,500 new classrooms and delivering 32,000 student places as part of a multibillion-dollar investment. That new infrastructure will open up even more job opportunities for cleaners across the State. I am proud to make this contribution and commend some of the hardest workers in our community—our cleaners.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:52): By leave: I was observing this debate from my office and decided I wanted to make a contribution. I thank members for their indulgence. I commend the outstanding member for Shellharbour for standing up for people who need someone to stand up for them. As I have said many times, we all come into this place to make a difference. We all want to make people's lives better. We have differences in our ideologies about how we think things should be done, but we are fundamentally here for the same reason. Everywhere I go I say that members in this place and the other place are by and large doing the right thing for people, which is their intention. Having said that, there is a bit of a problem with this government cleaning contract. Opposition members have highlighted the problems and Government members have sought to justify the contract.

The member for Cessnock gave some examples. I love the challenge he issued about cleaning a school. I will take him up on that challenge and I think some others will join us. The member said that a square metre in a place like Parliament House is different from a square metre in a classroom. I know from my experience that even within schools square metres are different. A classroom that is used for a core subject such as English or mathematics is different from a woodwork or art classroom or a kitchen. All members of Parliament visit a wide range of schools and know the difference in classrooms, but what about school ovals that present a massive cleaning task?

Everybody likes to think the best of kids and think that they will always walk over to a rubbish bin and place their rubbish in it. I am really sorry to tell people that kids do not always do that. What we think does not necessarily translate to what happens in real life. Cleaners are good people who work their hardest, and try to do their very best. They do not earn much money, but they take enormous pride in their work. That is evidenced by the high standard of cleaning that is done in Parliament House and in other workplaces. The worst that can happen for cleaners is having to rush through their work and forgo breaks. That is just not right. When payment is strictly according to time lines or metreage, that does not take into account the various levels of difficulty involved in performing the work. Each workplace is a little bit different from others.

United Voice is working very hard on a campaign for schoolteachers. I strongly support that campaign because I know what happens in teaching. I have worked with people who are so dedicated that they come to work a little bit early and leave a little bit late. They never say that something is too much for them. But I sound a note of caution: Once additional pressure is put on them, what are we, as members of Parliament, accepting? Are we, as legislators, saying, "We want you to perform to a reduced standard?" Would we, as members of Parliament, accept that? No, we would not. Would we prefer that rooms are not messy? Of course we would. I have worked in some schools where some teachers do not require the children to put their chairs in place around tables and where some teachers do not take pride in the state of their own classrooms. Conversely, I have worked in schools where teachers do take pride in their classrooms and require children to clean up the classroom and clear their desks.

It is impossible to predict whether a classroom can be cleaned properly in six, eight or 12 minutes because all classrooms are different. A classroom of a former public school principal—such as the member for Wyong, who took enormous pride in the state of his classroom—will be much easier to clean than, for example, my classroom, which might be very messy. Although I understand the point made by the member for Manly and some of the reasons he gave, his overall proposition is wrong. It is not possible to have a blanket rule based on square metreage apply to all cleaning tasks because the tasks are very different depending on context and place. I have cited the example of schools, but cleaning in Parliament House is different from cleaning in government buildings. The cleaning task depends on the clientele. I thank Government members for granting me leave to participate in the debate. I thank the member for Shellharbour for moving the motion and the drawing attention of the House to this issue.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:57): In reply: I thank the member for Wallsend, the member for Cessnock, the member for Kiama, the member for Terrigal, the member for Manly and the member for Lakemba. Whenever I hear Government members talk about fairness of wages and conditions for working men and women in New South Wales, I only have to recall the events of 2012—when this Government completely gutted the New South Wales Workers Compensation Act, which ensured that injured workers would be thrown onto the scrapheap after a set period—to know that what they are saying is not correct. I am sure other members share my experience of injured workers saying they will be forced to sell their homes because they cannot afford mortgage repayments as a result of being thrown onto the workforce scrapheap. Despite that, Government members have the gall to state in this House that they stand up for New South Wales working men and women.

In reality, when Government members encounter working men and women, they turn and look the other way. Government members take absolutely no interest in ensuring any fairness whatsoever for working men and women in the State when it comes to industrial relations. Labor Opposition members have witnessed the current Government gut the New South Wales industrial relations system. When Government members state in this House that cleaners will get a good deal from them, that is an absolute kick in the guts for cleaners. Labor Opposition members know which political party looks after workers. Labor, under a Labor Government, always has ensured and always will continue to ensure that New South Wales workers are looked after. Shellharbour government cleaning staff have every right to be scared of contract changes. Anyone who has worked in one job for 20 years and who has been forced to find alternative employment would know what a nightmare seeking employment would be, especially for older workers.

The Parliament House cleaners do a fantastic job. Imagine they are approaching the age of retirement and are told, after 10, 20 or 30 years of service, that they have to reapply for their jobs. What an insult to those people! It will come as no surprise to members to learn that if this contract is outsourced private operators will seek younger workers and they will underpay them. We should be rewarding the loyalty and the tireless efforts of our workers rather than abandoning them. The member for Kiama talked about how proud he is of the workers, what a great job they do, and how much he values them. If he truly believed that, he would join members on this side of the House in voting to protect them—particularly given that he is the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast. This motion affects every electorate in the State.

I call on the Government to disclose the content of the contracts covering cleaners working at government-operated sites across the State. I also call on it to guarantee the 7,000 workers who will be impacted that they will be offered an equal-level permanent position under any new agreement so that they are not required to reapply or to be reinterviewed for their position. This Government speaks volumes when it claims to be the workers' best friend. We all know members opposite are anything but that. The industrial agreements the Government is negotiating across the State demonstrate that workers' contracts are slowly being gutted. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union is fighting for its members because this Government can never be trusted when it comes to dealing with working men and women in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes33
Noes46
Majority.....13

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Dib, Mr J
Greenwich, Mr A

Atalla, Mr E
Car, Ms P
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D

Bali, Mr S
Catley, Ms Y
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J

AYES

Hoenig, Mr R
Leong, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D (teller)
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Warren, Mr G

Hornery, Ms S
Lynch, Mr P
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T F
Washington, Ms K

Kamper, Mr S
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Piper, Mr G
Tesch, Ms L
Watson, Ms A (teller)

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Fraser, Mr A
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C
Petinos, Ms E
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Wilson, Ms F

Aplin, Mr G
Brookes, Mr G
Cooke, Ms S
Davies, Mrs T
Evans, Mr A
George, Mr T
Griffin, Mr J
Henskens, Mr A
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

Ayres, Mr S
Conolly, Mr K
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Evans, Mr L
Gibbons, Ms M (teller)
Gulaptis, Mr C
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

PAIRS

Cotsis, Ms S
Foley, Mr L
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N
McDermott, Dr H

Goward, Ms P
Berejiklian, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L
Barilaro, Mr J
Hancock, Mrs S

Motion negatived.

GEORGES RIVER LIONESS CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:08): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Georges River Lioness Club on over 30 years of service to the St George community in the areas of fundraising, social awareness and community support.
- (2) Notes that while after 32 years of service the Georges River Lioness Club has been disbanded, its legacy and generosity still live on in the St George area.
- (3) Acknowledges the 21 presidents who served during this time and that over \$350,000 has been raised to support groups such as Diabetes NSW, Australian Lions Drug Awareness Foundation and the Garvan Institute of Medical Research among many.
- (4) Congratulates and thanks all members of the Georges River Lioness Club for their dedication, hard work and commitment to making the St George area a better place to live. I acknowledge the wonderful work of Georges River Lioness Club, which was created 30 years ago as an offshoot of Lugarno Lions. Georges River Lioness Club, which is a women-only organisation, is part of the mighty worldwide Lions movement. The Lionesses have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for worthwhile community organisations in my electorate and surrounding electorates. Until recently, for many years they held an annual fair at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, Peakhurst, where I attend church. Over the years they have been at the forefront of not just bucket collections and sausage sizzles but also making items—for example, jars of jam and chutney—to raise much-needed funding for many of the worthwhile causes that they choose to help.

They have raised money for larger organisations such as Diabetes NSW, the Australian Lions Drug Awareness Foundation and the Garvan Institute. They have also helped raised money for many worthwhile

organisations in our local community, such as St George Hospital. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Rockdale. He is probably familiar with Georges River Lioness Club, as the member for Bankstown probably is too, because they represent electorates near to Oatley. Georges River Lioness Club is recognised not only in my electorate but also in surrounding electorates—Rockdale, Kogarah, Bankstown and Canterbury—along with Lugarno Lions, Oatley Lions and St George Lions, of which I have been a member for almost 15 years.

Mr Stephen Kamper: You would have joined up before you were 18.

Mr MARK COURE: That is right.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Members will direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr MARK COURE: That is what good, community-based local members of Parliament do. They are active in their community, member for Rockdale. The Lions do a great job in our community. Over the years, those other Lions groups I mentioned have held events such as annual fairs. The Lugarno Lions fair is the largest fair outside the Sydney Royal Easter Show—that is a proven point. The Oatley fair is held in October. Both fairs raise much-needed funding for worthwhile causes such as Heart Walkers. The local annual Lions sports breakfast raises money for groups such as the Autism Community Network and many other worthwhile groups in our community. Lions Clubs International is an organisation that has hundreds and thousands of clubs right around the globe and millions of members. As I have mentioned before, it is a movement, and the members are all part of this volunteer movement that raises much-needed funding. They are the first on the ground.

I have spoken about this in the Chamber over the years. Lions, like Rotarians, are always the first with boots on the ground when it comes to bucket collections and raising money for flood or fire victims, not just in this State but throughout the world. I have participated in bucket collections at Westfield Hurstville and helped local Lions clubs to raise money for bushfire victims throughout Sydney and Victoria. Yesterday was the anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, which wiped out a number of homes and, unfortunately, took the lives of many innocent people. On that occasion, my local Lions club was one of the first to have a bucket collection, and it did so the very next day. We raised thousands of dollars for people and families who were in need of shelter, support, food and other assistance. Lions and Rotary clubs have participated in more recent activities as well, with both being at the forefront of raising money to help the victims of the recent flooding in Queensland.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (13:16): I echo the kind words of the member for Oatley about the Georges River Lioness Club which, sadly, has disbanded after 32 years of service. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I congratulate all volunteers who have been part of the Lioness club. I know how difficult it is when a Lions club disbands. A club that my husband and I have been involved with for a number of years, the Yagoona Lions Club, disbanded recently, after more than 55 years of service in the Bankstown region. I share the sentiments of the member for Oatley in congratulating the Georges River Lioness Club on its amazing years of dedicated service to the Georges River area and on raising more than \$350,000 of funds for a variety of different charitable causes.

Two years ago, the Lions Clubs International movement celebrated its centenary. The movement's motto is "We Serve". Anybody who has been a member of the Lions club movement knows that it has some amazing and special people, who are willing to get up on a Saturday morning, cut hundreds of onions, cook sausages and butter bread to raise funds at the local market or outside the local supermarket. They do not do that for glory. They do it because they want to assist and serve the community by collecting funds to donate to charitable causes.

I share the sentiment of the member for Oatley who commended the many presidents and club members of Georges River Lioness Club for their hard work in that region for 32 years. It is wonderful to see that the Lugarno Lions and Lions Club of St George continue to be strong. A number of members of the Georges River Lioness Club perhaps have moved on to those clubs. Even though the Yagoona Lions Club has disbanded, we still have the Lions Club of Bankstown, the Greenacre Lions Club and a number of other service club organisations, such as Rotary, which continue to grow from strength to strength. These groups provide an opportunity for people who are willing to serve the community to be part of a valuable organisation.

To address some of the problem, we need to encourage younger people to be involved with service clubs and to be interested in volunteering and giving back to their community. That is one reason we are seeing some of the clubs disband—the younger generation are finding it difficult to enter club organisations because of their own commitments and, to some degree, they do not appreciate the need to have these types of service clubs and to serve in them. If we can do more to encourage volunteering amongst our newer and emerging communities and also amongst our young we will see Lions clubs and other service clubs continue to be part of our community and

continue their amazing work. I again thank the member for Oatley for bringing this motion to the House, which, undoubtedly, the New South Wales Opposition supports.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (13:20): I too speak in general about the wonderful movement that is Lioness clubs across the world. I am very proud that this year, at the Camden Council Australia Day Civic Awards and Citizenship Ceremony, Camden Lioness Club won the Community Group of the Year. The club was not only nominated but it won the award. What did the club do to achieve such an honour? Camden Lioness Club was founded in 1977 and has spent more than 40 years working tirelessly to support individuals, families and groups in the local community. Some of those original members from 40 years ago are still working tirelessly with the club.

In 2017, Camden Lioness Club raised more than \$27,000 for residents in the Macarthur area. The club is involved in many projects, all aimed at providing a better quality of life for local citizens. During 2017, Camden Lioness Club's major projects were to supply \$150,000 worth of life-saving equipment to Camden and Campbelltown hospitals, and to refurbish Camden Hospital's palliative care gardens. Other Camden Lioness Club projects include: volunteering at Camden District Activity Centre; supporting Leukaemia Foundation Light the Night; providing mobility walkers for children with mobility issues; knitting trauma teddies, beanies for homeless and quilting for premature babies; funding a Camden Community Connections breakfast program; and sponsoring Angel Babies, an organisation that supports early infant death.

Camden Lioness Club could not be so successful without great leadership. At the Australia Day Civic Awards and Citizenship Ceremony, Jennifer Murphy was nominated for Camden's Citizen of the Year. What brought her to that nomination? Jennifer has been president of the Camden Lioness Club for three years. She took on the role after retiring as a teacher from Camden Public School after 32 years of service. Jennifer has implemented a number of initiatives that have raised in excess of \$27,000, which was donated to various charities within the local community. She has been a driving force within the club. Jennifer has creative ideas for fundraising and encourages all the members to do their best to serve the local community. She truly believes that we serve to help those who cannot.

We thank every member of the Camden Lioness Club for their wonderful efforts—everything they have done over the past four years to make the Macarthur region the wonderful place it is. I know, though—and many Lionesses would agree—that quite often the Lions, the men, feel a bit left out. Just so they are not left out in this instance, I feel the need to acknowledge the Community Event of the Year. The winner of Community Event of the Year—the winner, not just the nominee—was the Macarthur Lions Australia Day Parade. The Macarthur Lions Club was formed in 1981 and has supported the Camden community in a wide variety of ways. It has helped support a number of local community events including Camden Festival and Paws in the Park, fundraised for life-saving equipment for Camden and Campbelltown hospitals, and has been organising and running the Australia Day Parade through Camden since 2006. I say well done to all the members involved.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (13:24): It gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Oatley. It is very important to recognise the service groups in our community that do such great work. My electorate is well served by service clubs, like the electorates of the member for Oatley and other members who have spoken on this motion. I am a member of Wyong Lions Club but my electorate has several Lions and Lioness clubs that serve our community very well. In fact, last year was the Centenary of Lions Clubs International. I think it was formed in 1917.

Mr Mark Coure: If it was the centenary.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Yes, it was the centenary. You can see I was an English teacher and not a maths teacher. It was a significant time with lots of celebrations taking place throughout Australia and around the world to acknowledge the work of Lions clubs and their work across our communities. I will specifically mention two matters. One of the Lions clubs in my electorate, Tuggerah Shores Lions, is engaging all Lions clubs and other community groups on the Central Coast to try to build a respite care facility for palliative care.

At the moment the Central Coast does not have a dedicated hospice so that club has taken upon itself to galvanise the community to raise funds to set up a palliative care hospice that can be accessed by people across the Central Coast. The club has arranged several fundraising events because of the strong belief that, although some government assistance would be welcome, the community must start by assisting itself. It has a strong belief that, rather than just putting a hand out for money, the club would galvanise the community to raise money. Fundraising so far has involved the holding of two balls, and other fundraising activities are being considered, including talking to private entities, the local area health district and others to find a suitable location.

I will also mention a constituent of mine, Sarah Evans, who was involved in a fundraiser for Lions Save Sight Foundation, which is supported by Lions Clubs International. Sarah did a 12-hour swim in the pool at

Mingara Recreation Club. I was able to support her on the day and we have become quite good friends since. She is a very community-minded person and is involved in fundraising for the hospice also. Sarah trained and trained and was able to complete that 12-hour swim with the support of family and friends, raising considerable money for the foundation.

Wyong Lions is a very active club. It regularly holds barbecues, at which Lions members across the State are very skilled, raising funds for local organisations and the Lions foundation. I congratulate the member for Oatley on moving the motion. It is good for all parties in the Parliament to stand together to celebrate and congratulate all our communities on their great work. It is a very important part of being a local member to support those groups and recognise them in this place. I am sure all members will roundly support this motion.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (13:28): It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of the motion and thank the member for Oatley for bringing it to the House. It is wonderful to see the Georges River Lioness Club recognised for such a large contribution to its community over the past 32 years and its fantastic fundraising effort of more than \$350,000 for some very important charities and foundations. Lions and Lioness clubs play a large and important part in our communities. Their website states:

Lions are friends, family and neighbours who share a core belief: community is what we make it.

In my local area the local Lions and Lioness clubs provide valuable and important assistance to the community, including Wattle Grove Lions Club, which has been in existence for only a few years but is growing and going brilliantly. The Sutherland Shire Lioness Club and the Liverpool Lions Club are also phenomenal clubs. The Sutherland Shire Lioness Club does great work for residents of the shire. Towards the end of last year, the club ran a charity theatre evening at the Arts Theatre Cronulla to raise funds for the Children's Medical Research Institute and will be holding an International Women's Day lunch in March. I am grateful for this wonderful group of women who do amazing things year after year. In the Liverpool area, the Wattle Grove Lions Club and Liverpool Lions Club have both done some amazing work to support the community.

In October 2017, the Wattle Grove Lions Club held a charity movie night to raise funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society Liverpool Men's Centre, which provides crisis accommodation and a case management centre for disadvantaged men in the area. The Liverpool Lions Club is also not shy of getting involved in the local area. It regularly runs fundraising barbecues and conducts environmental clean-ups across Liverpool. Both of these groups make a huge difference. The clubs' initiatives would not go ahead without the dedication and passion of the people leading them. I thank Wattle Grove Lions Club President Lorena Valeri and Liverpool Lions Club President Joy Goddard for their passion and service. They dedicate a large amount of their time to ensure that their clubs run effectively and efficiently to support our local community.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:31): In reply: I thank members on both sides of the House who spoke in debate on this motion today. The theatre groups, concerts, Bunnings barbecues, Lugarno and Oatley fairs, golf days, cookbooks, cupcakes, Christmas carols and other social activities organised by the Georges River Lioness Club have raised much-needed funding for Cancer Council Australia, Bezzina House, Calvary Health Care, St George Hospital, the Lions Children's Mobility Foundation, also known as the Hart Walker program, and many other worthwhile projects. Lions Clubs International has 46,000 local clubs and 1.4 million members in approximately 200 countries. Over the past 35 years the club has done an outstanding job at raising much-needed funding for our local community. On behalf of every member of the House I thank the ladies involved who have done an outstanding job and Sue Stapleton, former president of the George River Lioness Club. Sue has been president a number of times over the years. I thank her for leading the marvellous Lioness club in our local community.

Motion agreed to.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I shall now leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a warm welcome to Cheryl Borsak, District Commissioner of Canterbury Vale Scouts, who is accompanied by Brian Hughes and Steve Gough, visiting on behalf of the Kindred Lodges Association. They are guests of the member for Canterbury.

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I inform the House that the Minister for Health, Minister for Medical Research will today answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Family

and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the House I say what a solemn and frightful day it was yesterday without your presence. There were prayers and concern for your safe return. On behalf of the House I welcome you back safe and well. Thomas George is also grateful you are back.

Announcements

PHOTOGRAPH OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that a photograph of the House in session will be taken next Tuesday before question time at 2.15 p.m. I ask that all members arrive promptly.

Question Time

PREMIER OFFICIAL MEETINGS

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:21): I direct my question to the Premier. Given that Gino Scutti was convicted of damaging property by fire and publishing false material to obtain financial advantage after he burnt down his hotel, will the Premier advise the House why she met with him and what they discussed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I do not recall who that person is. If I disclosed it in my diary then I met with him. I will return to the House with any further details. I publish my diary on time. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, it would be useful if he also did that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prospect will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The only reason the Leader of the Opposition publishes his diary is because I highlighted in this place that he had not done so, despite promises, for months. Just as my diary and all ministerial diaries are on the public record, so should the Opposition front bench diaries be placed on the record.

PUBLIC HOSPITAL CAR PARKING

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (14:22): I address my question to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government delivering for hospital patients across our State?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:22): I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. The member for Riverstone, the member for Seven Hills, the Minister for Health and I visited Blacktown Hospital to officially open the new car park. It was a great morning. The new car park provides an extra 400 spaces and is part of the \$700 million commitment to that precinct. Where Labor failed to do so, the Coalition is investing in Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals. It was extremely pleasing that while opening the car park we received an update about the development of that hospital.

Last year the Minister for Health and I announced that the Government would provide concessions for people who had to frequently use public hospital car parks. If a patient or a carer has to make frequent visits to a public hospital, those costs can add to their stress. On that day, John, a recent cancer patient, informed us that due to his cancer treatment he had to make regular visits to the hospital. The concession had saved him \$200 during that time. For people who are under stress, those dollars add up. John said that his treatment was relatively short compared to others, who would save more.

Since we announced that policy 110,000 concessions for public hospital car parks have been issued. When we talk about the cost of living, it is not just hot air and rhetoric; we get on with the job. When we talk about investing in Western Sydney, we do it. The Minister for Health reminded the community that we are investing in excess of \$3.6 billion in Health infrastructure in Western Sydney alone. The people of Greater Western Sydney know their local hospital is not only receiving upgrades but it will also be a hospital of world-class standards where new students and interns can provide the best care available.

The car park is the first of its kind because of its ability to support patients. It is so well designed that cancer patients and other patients have their own special section depending on where they need to access the hospital site. Whether I am in Gosford with the member for Terrigal talking about the hundreds of millions of dollars we are investing in Gosford Hospital, or whether I am at Nepean Hospital with the member for Penrith—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Concord.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —or Concord hospital with the member for Drummoyne—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Campbelltown.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —or Campbelltown Hospital with members in the Macarthur region— I could go on, but my point is that even though patients are grateful for the contribution we are making to hospital upgrades they want to know that the car park is also receiving an upgrade. Today is an opportunity for us not only to recommit our investment in Health infrastructure across the State, particularly in Western Sydney, but also to highlight that this Government is taking real action on the cost-of-living pressures. Last year a young teenager told this Government about the stresses his family was facing in paying for public hospital car parks. We took action and now we have issued 110,000 public hospital car park concessions in the first six months. Those concessions are in addition to other cost-of-living measures this Government has introduced.

Nothing pleases me more than visiting the Blacktown hospital site. The last time four Ministers were there they saw a hole in the ground. Now there is a building that is seven storeys high. I am told that the topping-out ceremony will occur soon because of the progress being made. This is real money going to real investments, which Labor was not able to do when it was in office. It pleases me no end that we are able to make this contribution to the people of this State because they have entrusted us with getting on with the job of building record infrastructure and providing the services that they rely on day in and day out.

PREMIER OFFICIAL MEETINGS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (14:27): My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to the recent meeting with Mr Nicholas Tinning. Given that Mr Tinning was convicted last year of illegal possession of poker machines, can the Premier advise why she met with him and what was discussed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:28): I will seek advice on that question. I do not remember the person's name or the circumstances of the meeting. I am pleased to report the advice to the House when it is received.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (14:28): I ask a supplementary question. Arising out of that answer, did the member for Wagga Wagga inform the Premier of the criminal histories of Gino Scutti and Nicholas Tinning before meeting with them? If not, does he retain the Premier's confidence as a Parliamentary Secretary in this Government?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:28): I refer the member for Liverpool to my previous two answers. As I said, as soon as I receive the information about the details of those meetings, I will present it to the House.

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:29): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales. What is the Liberal-Nationals Government doing to help farmers and communities prepare for drought and extreme weather?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:29): The member for Upper Hunter represents a diverse electorate that is known for its mines, wines and bovines.

Mr Michael Johnsen: Equines and bovines

Mr JOHN BARILARO: And equines as well. It is an important part of the State that is great for jobs and for the economy that ensures that regional New South Wales accelerates. It is a good question because farmers in most parts of the State and the nation are enjoying good times. Prices are great for sheep, lambs, cattle and wool, and we have had some good seasons across the board. But other parts of our State are still stuck in drought. Drought has not only a financial impact but also an impact on the wellbeing of individual farmers, their families and communities. That is why it is so important that this Government works hand in hand with farmers to be prepared for the next drought.

I wish I could do a rain dance and make it rain, but I cannot—no-one wants to see me dance. I want to work with our farming communities to make sure that we build resilience and that we are proactive rather than reactive. In the past we were quite reactive when drought occurred and then, when farmers and their families, and communities were on their knees, government stepped in to assist them. We do not want to do that and that is why it is important that government policy is about building resilience to support farmers for the future. We want to make our farms stronger and put infrastructure in place that delivers what we want, that is, a strong agricultural sector, and our farmers are the first part of it.

Unlike fires and floods that come without warning, we know that drought creeps up on communities, farms and families, and all too quickly a number of years have passed. Right up to about 2010, the Monaro endured six to eight years of drought. The drought broke when we got rid of Steve Whan, the then Minister for Rural Affairs, and I was elected. For all those who think I am not doing a great job I am the lucky one, if anything, who broke the drought in the Monaro. The floodgates just opened up. To make sure that we build the appropriate infrastructure we partner with our farmers. In 2014 the Government introduced the Farm Innovation Fund, which provides financial assistance through loans so that farmers can build key infrastructure. In relation to resilience, they are preparing for those tough times. The best time to build that infrastructure is when we are going through good times, which is what is happening right now.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will cease arguing, being loquacious and garrulous.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: For instance, Queensland is gripped by an eight-year drought. The Government has to react now with grants and loans to help farmers to get through the drought because they need a hand. But the better position, and what Queensland would love to have, is the ability to be proactive, not reactive. Our \$300 million Farm Innovation Fund enables farmers to put in place measures to droughtproof for the future. We can only do the best we can. We want to prepare. We want farmers to build pipelines, dam storage, silos and sheds, and make sure they are ready when Mother Nature turns and we have to endure problems.

I have some great examples from across the State of 200 farmers who have received a loan, the average of which is about \$150,000, to build pipelines, to access to bores and to put sheds and silos in place. Recently the candidate for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party in the Upper Hunter tweeted about how the Queensland Government issues \$40,000 grants to support farmers. My point is the Queensland Government has to be reactive. If one goes to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party website what is its policy? [*Extension of time*]

Last year the Shooters and Fishers Party changed its name to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. Simply adding "Farmers" to the title does not change the party's policies. The title must reflect what the party does, what it stands for and what its policies are. If one looks at the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party website in New South Wales, one would see that it does not have a policy on drought.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party candidate in the Upper Hunter should understand that the party he is associated with has no plan or policy to support farmers in New South Wales. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party has a Federal program that talks about building resilience and being proactive. We have some great examples. The Cochranes in Walgett have 2,700 hectares in a drought-ravaged region. They secured a \$74,000 loan under the Farm Innovation Fund to build a 10-kilometre pipeline to a bore that now gives them some security. They comment, "It's providing crucial water that's not coming out of the sky." The Schillers—west of Hay and a district of sheep producers—have more than 12,000 hectares. They took a \$150,000 loan under the Farm Innovation Fund, and invested it in a water pipeline and stock watering system. They are building a 25-kilometre pipeline from a channel off the Murrumbidgee River feeding water across eight farm dams.

They said, "At least this time we don't have to panic as much. With the pipeline, stock and domestic water is always available. If there's no stock in the paddock, we don't need water. If there are stock in, then water is available." This strategy is about building resilience and ensuring our farmers have the appropriate infrastructure on their farms so that we have a strong agriculture sector in New South Wales. What do we have? We have the Farm Innovation Fund, record funding of \$300 million, a record number of programs available and farmers being assisted, proactive and preparing for the next drought.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (14:36): My question is addressed to the Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veteran Affairs. What is the New South Wales Government doing to keep communities safe, reduce reoffending and any related matters?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:37): I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question. He is a former police prosecutor and he is used to asking questions. There are many questions to be asked in the House, such as why the member for Prospect sacked all of his staff before Christmas, and why the member for Fairfield is being challenged by a police officer for preselection. He is the shadow Minister for Police and he has a police officer challenging him for preselection.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Talk about stakeholder engagement. They have to be kept inside.

The SPEAKER: Order! Whoever is making that noise will be removed from the Chamber if it continues. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Another question to be asked is why the member for Prospect is driving a car with a P-plate affixed. There are many questions to be asked in the House, but this question is very important. Last year, after the Government passed the Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act, Corrective Services NSW, the NSW Police Force and other agencies have been working to introduce the scheme. This new law will keep radicalised and dangerous criminals behind bars if they pose an unacceptable risk of committing serious offences after completing their sentences. It will apply to offenders in prison or on parole. Most of those Labor members of Parliament who are in jail at the moment probably will have to comply with this. These offenders will face continuing detention orders or extended supervision orders after an application.

Ms Kate Washington: Sick of all your mates in the Hunter.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I acknowledge the interjection from Madam Eight Per Cent, the first woman in 150 years to drop the f-word in Parliament. Her mother must be proud. Does she kiss her mother with that mouth?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease shouting at the Minister.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: This legislation is about being responsive to the threat of terrorism. If an offender continues to be an unacceptable risk it is vital that we have laws that will protect the community. These are counterterrorism laws, but I note those opposite still do not have a position on counterterrorism. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition criticised me for not going hard enough. He is trying to outflank me from the Right. I am a big bloke—there is not going to be much room there.

A year ago the Leader of the Opposition said that we did not need a Minister for Counter Terrorism; now he is saying that I am not doing enough. Meanwhile, the Cessnock branch of the Labor Party is calling for a counterterrorism Minister, but the police shadow Minister cannot buy in because he is being challenged by the Police Force. I cannot believe where the Opposition is trying to go with counterterrorism laws. As I said, yesterday those opposite were even criticised by The Greens.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will cease shouting.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: This Government is committed to reducing the rate of adult reoffending by 5 per cent. We are trying to get on top of that by incarcerating as many former Labor members as possible.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: We are delivering \$237 million for a package targeting high-risk and persistent offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Our intervention recognises that on previous occasions high-risk offenders slipped through the gaps and had to wait until they were in prison to participate in programs. Targeting a priority cohort earlier at all points in their contact with the justice system is having the greatest impact on reducing reoffending and increasing community safety. Through this package we are expanding participation in addiction, violence and sex offender programs for prisoners and parolees; we are introducing one-on-one case management and intervention for priority domestic violence offenders after they are charged; and we are improving training for staff. As part of a record spend, we are employing 345 psychologists, community corrections officers and other skilled staff. It means that each year Corrective Services is engaging with 42,000 offenders in evidence-based interventions that will reduce their risk of reoffending.

The Government is also targeting priority offenders. The Extra Offender Management Service is a voluntary, 12-week program in which offenders work to address the underlying causes of their offending. The program is delivered by non-government organisations that work closely with Corrective Services and other organisations at a local level. I am delighted that the service is being delivered in Burwood, Parramatta, Dubbo, Northern Rivers, Liverpool and Tamworth. The Local Coordinated Multi-agency Offender Management program is providing coordinated multi-agency case management for a more targeted group of priority offenders who are managed by Corrective Services and the Extra Offender Management Service. This more intensive program is for offenders whom Corrective Services deem to be a priority. The initiative aims to assist the offenders to address the underlying causes of their reoffending. [*Extension of time*]

The partner agencies working in conjunction with each other to rehabilitate offenders are Corrective Services NSW, the NSW Police Force, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services. But we are not stopping there. The Government has introduced reforms to the parole system that provide more powers

to parole officers to manage breaches, introduce a community safety test for the State Parole Authority, strengthen supervision for all parolees, and introduce a tailor-made parolee system for juveniles. The Youth on Track diversionary program has been a great success for this Government, with the number of juvenile detainees decreasing from 330 when I became Minister to 284 today. The Youth on Track scheme is designed to successfully coordinate services for 10- to 17-year-olds who are at risk of long-term involvement in the criminal justice system. It gives police and teachers a means to refer young offenders into support without a court order and is being delivered in the Hunter, on the mid North Coast and in Blacktown. We are rolling out three new sites in the Central West, Coffs-Clarence and New England.

More than 500 young people and their families have participated in the program, with exceptionally good results. Specifically, 86 per cent of participants reduced or stabilised their formal contact with the police in 12 months. In the 2016-17 financial year 578 suitable young people were referred to Youth on Track, with 248 voluntarily engaging in the program. That means the number of participants in our highly successful reducing reoffending program has doubled over the past two financial years. Community safety is a priority of this Government. With this investment in prisoner beds and rehabilitation programs, we will reduce reoffending and make a real and lasting difference to the people of New South Wales.

INNER WEST BUS SERVICES

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:44): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Will he confirm that the Government has already decided that Transit Systems will operate his privatised bus service in the inner west of Sydney and that he has kept that decision from the public?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:44): I thank the shadow Minister for Transport for her question. I hate to break it to the member, but no contract has been signed.

Ms Jodi McKay: The question is not about the contract.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Strathfield that question time is not the time for discussion or debate. The member will come to order. She asked the question. I will not tolerate any further discussion on this point from Opposition members. It is too early in the Minister's answer for Opposition members to take points of order relating to relevance.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I wish to clarify—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that it is too early in the Minister's response to take a point of order relating to relevance.

Ms Jodi McKay: My question did not relate to the contract; it related to the decision.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is absolutely no point of order. The Minister uttered approximately six words. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: To assist the member for Strathfield in relation to her question, I point out that last year Transport for NSW announced that it would call for tenders for a contract for region 6, which is the process. At that time I indicated that in early 2018 the announcement of the successful tenderer would be made. The member for Strathfield has asked a question about one operator. I have indicated that the contract has not been signed and that an announcement will be made when the Government is ready.

Ms Kate Washington: Has the decision been made?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens did not ask the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I might add that a government agency received more than 40,000 complaints in a contract region, region 6.

Ms Jodi McKay: If the Minister will not announce it, I will.

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member for Strathfield have a point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: I am pleased to announce that the Minister has privatised the buses and that Transit Systems will deliver the services.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time. She is taking points of order merely to have an argument. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the second time. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the third time. She is completely out of line, and she knows it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What we have just witnessed is an example of why Labor should never be in charge of managing contracts or be in government.

Mr Michael Daley: You are always slippery, Andrew. People do not like you because you are always slippery.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I will not take a lecture from the member for Maroubra, but I will note that lately he has been spending a lot of time on shared bikes because he is not driving a car anymore. He has been dumping the bikes everywhere around the city. For the benefit of the Opposition, I make this point: The Government indicated that it would announce the contract region early in 2018 and—guess what—we are still in early 2018. Moreover, a government agency received approximately 43,000 complaints relating to a contract region. I was pushed to take action when the member for Strathfield demanded in the *Inner West Courier* that I take action to address the complaints, and the Government did take action.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: The member for Strathfield asked the Minister to confirm that Transit is the operator.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury did not listen to the answer. The member will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: My community is suffering because of this privatisation.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. If I say there is no point of order, then there is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am being entirely relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members that two of them are on three calls to order. If there are any further utterances from members who have been called to order three times, they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The member for Strathfield demanded in the *Inner West Courier* that the Government take action to address the complaints about services in region 6, and that is what I have done. She urged me to take action. The member for Drummoyne has been vocal about his concern relating to bus services and the need for innovation in providing more bus services to the inner west.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the third time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I assure the House that when the new operator is in place on 1 July there absolutely will be an improvement in bus services for the people of the inner west.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of two hours under Standing Order 249A.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 14:49.]

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. This is the worst-kept secret in town. Why is the Minister being slippery? He should tell the truth for once in his life.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not remotely a point of order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We all remember what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did with the gentraders. The point I was making is that the Government will deliver more bus services and more innovation to the people of the inner west, including on-demand buses. They are being trialled across the State and some positive signs are emerging. I know the member for Drummoyne has been proactive in this regard. [Time expired.]

WESTERN SYDNEY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (14:50): I address my question to the Minister for Mental Health. How is the Government improving mental health services for the people of Western Sydney, and are there any alternative approaches?

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (14:50): I thank the member for Parramatta for his question; he is a fantastic advocate for those living with mental illness in his community. Western Sydney is one of the State's important growth areas. In fact, the catchment area for health services is the fastest growing of the 15 local health districts in New South Wales. It has the second largest district population and is projected to have more than 1.3 million people by 2031. However, the growth being witnessed in Western Sydney—which we expect to continue—comes with a challenge to provide quality health care.

As communities grow and flourish, the Government must ensure that supports are in place to provide the social infrastructure that nurtures and protects vulnerable people. Western Sydney's strong population growth marks it as a priority area for investment. To support that growth, the Government is investing \$288 million in mental health services this year in the Western Sydney and south Western Sydney local health districts. That is a 5 per cent increase on last year. That sustained investment supports, in part, the Government's decade-long mental health reform process to better shift the balance of care from hospitals to community-based care to ensure that people with a mental illness can live well in the community.

Strong population growth means more children and young people. We know that if we catch emerging mental illnesses early we can better treat young people so they are able to live happier and healthier lives. To this end, the Government is in partnership with the Department of Education and Minister Rob Stokes to expand the Getting on Track in Time—Got It! schools-based program. The program screens schoolchildren for emerging conduct disorders and supports young children who are at high risk of conduct problems or disorders at a young age. I was fortunate to visit Got It! with the Premier and to hear from principals and staff about the difference the program makes to children and their families, and also to their classmates.

The Government is also investing in a new integrated mental health and drug and alcohol service which is delivered in partnership with the Department of Family and Community Services. Whole-family teams work with families with identified parental mental health and drug and alcohol issues. The services provided by the teams are proven to significantly decrease the risk of harm to children. In fact, the evidence indicates a decrease of up to 58 per cent in reported incidents. This Government is assisting families in need so that no child suffers. In addition to expanding services for children and young people, in the past year the Government has expanded specialist perinatal mental health services and specialist services for adults and older persons in the community.

We are constantly expanding mental health services so that they reach the people who need them. It is a fact that people with a mental illness recover better in the community. One of the key metrics for the quality of care we provide is the number of patients who return to hospital within 28 days of being discharged. We not only want to expand services, we want to deliver better quality of care. The most recent 28-day readmission rates data show that fewer patients admitted to our inpatient services are back in hospital. Unfortunately, under Labor the number of patients back in our health system was on the increase because Labor failed to invest in community-based care to keep patients well and out of hospital.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will cease interjecting.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Under those opposite the readmission rates peaked at 17.3 per cent, while under the Liberals and The Nationals the number of people back in hospital has been steadily trending downwards. Our record means that thousands of people are experiencing better quality care. This Government is providing quality care. Another indicator of better quality care is the rate of seclusion and restraint. We are focusing on the reduction of the practice of seclusion. In 2005 those opposite committed to action but, unfortunately, failed miserably. Under the former Labor Government seclusion rates increased; year-on-year under this Government there have been improvements. We are currently well below the national average. [*Extension of time*]

This Government is not only investing record amounts in health infrastructure, we are also leading a cultural shift to provide better health care. I can assure the House that as the Minister for Mental Health this will continue to be my focus. We are achieving this because the Liberals and The Nationals have the courage to invest in new ideas. In an Australian first, this Government has partnered with Flourish to provide care for vulnerable people suffering from mental illness. Over seven years Flourish will deliver the Resolve Program to mental health patients in Western Sydney. The program will provide participants with two years of comprehensive community mental health support. It will also include a residential program with 24/7 peer and psychosocial support in the community. The program will complement existing mental health services and is supported by a \$7 million social

benefit bond, which has been raised by Social Ventures Australia. This program is helping to improve the health and wellbeing of people experiencing mental health illness by better supporting them in the community.

Social impact investment offers an opportunity for the New South Wales Government to lead the way in mental health care. We are committed to delivering world-class mental healthcare services in Western Sydney to those affected by mental illness. This financial year we are investing a record \$1.9 billion in mental health funding to support the most vulnerable in Western Sydney and across the State. Last Monday I visited the Nepean and Blue Mountains Local Health District. Cathy Crowe, General Manager for Mental Health in the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, told me that her team and the carers who work in that district are now partnering with the University of Technology Sydney. They are bringing in experts in architecture and building design to re-examine inpatient mental health care and how to change things for the betterment of their patients.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (14:57): My question is directed to the Premier. Considering reports that in November last year the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption heard submissions from the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] that an estimated \$2.5 million would be needed to ensure "resources adequately met demand", what has the Government done to provide the urgently needed funds to ensure that ICAC can do its job effectively?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:58): I can assure all members in this place that there is absolutely no room for corruption in this State. This Government will continue to ensure that the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] has the resources and the people it needs to carry out all of its investigations. I give that assurance to the member for Balmain and to this Parliament because the public has that expectation of us and we will not fail them in resourcing the ICAC. I can also assure the member for Balmain that not only have we maintained the ICAC budget but, from time to time, when the ICAC has asked the Government for additional resources, we have acceded to those requests. Indeed, when the two new ICAC commissioners were appointed, I made it very clear to them that if at any time they needed additional resources they should approach the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Government would provide additional resources.

I assure the member for Balmain that that is ongoing. If at any stage those requests are made to Government, of course we consider them. To date, I understand that we have acceded to their requests on a number of occasions in addition to their annual budget allocation. I assure members of this place that not only do we condemn all acts of corruption but we will also do everything we can to prevent corruption. When the community knows we have a strong ICAC, a strong ICAC committee, and a government that goes to the letter of the law in maintaining all levels of probity, it can have confidence in the process. I thank the member for that question. It is an important question.

I give him the assurance that I have made very clear to the new commissioners that, should they require additional resources, they should approach the Government and, of course, we will consider that request. I have made that abundantly clear to them. In that vein, with the indulgence of the House, I was asked some questions about a meeting that I had on a recent visit to the Riverina community. I met with people I had not met before. They raised with me concerns about country hotel lessors. They felt they had been disadvantaged by amendments to the relevant legislation passed by the previous Labor Government. I undertook that I would pass on their—

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Premier. I include the Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs in my call for members to come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When members of the community ask to meet with me when I am making regional visits, especially those in country New South Wales, I will meet with them. On that occasion they explained to me the hardship their families had faced in relation to changes in laws which they felt adversely—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra and the Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You asked the question and I am answering it. As I said, I did not know those individuals. I listened to their concerns and I undertook to pass them on to the relevant Minister, which I did.

JOBS GROWTH

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (15:01): My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government creating record jobs in the New South Wales economy and are there any job-creating alternatives?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (15:01): I thank the member for Epping for his question and congratulate him on his birthday, which he celebrated recently. As they say, there are two things that are certain in life: death and taxes being cut by the Liberal and National Government. When the Premier was Treasurer, we cut \$1.8 billion in taxes in the 2016-17 budget. Under my stewardship last year we cut another \$1.6 billion worth of taxes. We do that on this side of the House because we know that cutting taxes leads to growth, prosperity and job creation. Those of us on this side of the House have been able to deliver surpluses, cut taxes and deliver record infrastructure. Usually those things are mutually exclusive, but not when it comes to the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government.

The Government has worked tirelessly to improve the New South Wales economy so that more and more people can get ahead. We can see in the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] employment data that New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 4.8 per cent. This unemployment rate is nearly a full percentage point lower than that of any other State. In the short time that I have been Treasurer the Government has created close to 140,000 jobs, with more than 65,000 of those jobs in Western Sydney alone.

Mr Clayton Barr: It is all due to you, Dom.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Well, it is you who says it, member for Cessnock. But what I am most happy about is that these numbers also reveal that full-time female employment in New South Wales has grown by 7 per cent. This Government has more women in full-time work than ever before. We know that having a job is vital, because at a time when, as those opposite say, the cost of living is a challenge for families in this State, one of the most important things we can do as a government is provide the environment for strong employment, because you cannot pay your bills if you do not earn a wage, and you cannot be a worker if you do not have a job.

On the topic of jobs, I refer to the "job-creating alternatives" of the question. Over the summer break I had a good time but was occasionally interrupted by thought bubbles from the Leader of the Opposition. Some of them upset me more than others. I give credit where credit is due: He had one good idea that was set out in my favourite newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, in an article by Anna Caldwell, who is doing a great job. According to Ms Caldwell, Mr Foley says his entire shadow Cabinet is "on notice" and no-one is safe. The biggest threat to the jobs of Opposition members is their leader. The article also states that his team needs a "crash course in governing" and that they will be mentored. It claims none of them is safe. On this idea, the Leader of the Opposition and I are on a unity ticket. I wanted to get more information about this mentoring program, so I contacted my people in the Leader of the Opposition's office. They provided me with the syllabus.

Mr Michael Daley: We'd have to read it to you.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Is this your copy? What I found most interesting was the day's training agenda for the mentor program. The day was to begin with a lecture by the former Labor minister Paul McLeay on the benefits of quickly deleting your internet history. We could have a second session in the morning by former transport Minister David Campbell on maintaining logbooks for ministerial vehicles. In typically lazy Labor style there were only two sessions in the morning before a big lunch at the Golden Century restaurant with a guest lecturer all the way from Beijing—Sam Dastyari—on how to supplement your ministerial income in tough times.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. We could get Chris Hartcher and Barry O'Farrell in. We could talk about how to cop \$10,000 in a brown paper bag while you are operating on a Labrador. If the Treasurer wants to start, it will be a long afternoon.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It is a long afternoon on this sheet. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra will not argue with the Treasurer. I remind the Treasurer that he is straying somewhat from the question.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It is about jobs, and this is a job Opposition members want. After lunch, there was meant to be a session by the former Premier Nathan Rees on honesty and integrity in politics, but it was struck off the agenda because there were no enrolments.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I know what this point of order will be. I have already advised the Treasurer that he is straying somewhat from the question.

Mr Michael Daley: The Opposition will not have this from someone like him: It is not going to happen. I will stand here and shout for two minutes if I want.

The SPEAKER: I will stop the clock if the member for Maroubra would like me to do that.

Mr Michael Daley: That is fine, but the Opposition will not have this.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra will cease shouting and resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: That is okay. Madam Speaker, shut him up.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra will neither tell me what to do nor yell at me. The Treasurer will return to the leave of the question or resume his seat.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: There was no session on anger management. Instead of that, they were going to have a panel discussion at Long Bay Jail with Obeid, Macdonald and Milton.

The SPEAKER: This is the Treasurer's last warning. I point out to the member for Cessnock that I have already warned the Treasurer. The member for Cessnock does not need to take another point of order just because he does not like what the Treasurer is saying. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Clayton Barr: Madam Speaker, I am only trying to support you in your judgement, which is to sit the Treasurer down.

The SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock will resume his seat. If the Treasurer strays once more from the leave of the question, he will be directed to resume his seat.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The biggest joke is that those opposite actually believe that the people of New South Wales will ever forget and again put their trust in Labor to lead this State. We in the Government side of the House will continue to deliver the best economic results and jobs growth for the people of New South Wales.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

The CLERK: I announce that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons have been lodged for presentation:

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Companion Animals on Public Transport

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Committees

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Report: Inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in NSW

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:10): The report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled "Inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in NSW" was tabled on 22 November 2017. At the outset I acknowledge the chair of the committee, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps from the other place, and the outstanding work he has done leading this committee, particularly on this topic. The inquiry was established to look into whether the use of random sampling in preference counting in local government elections was still appropriate.

The report makes 10 recommendations which include: that random sampling be removed from preference counting in local government elections and be replaced with the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method; that there is increased transparency in the electoral system and that improvements be made to the scrutineering process; and that certain changes will remove inconsistencies between local and State electoral systems. The key recommendation is that random sampling is removed from preference counting in local government elections. Almost all committee members agreed that random sampling should be removed.

Random sampling was originally introduced as a means of simplifying the process for a manual count. Random sampling means that rather than having to distribute every ballot, a partial sample is taken. The preferences of this sample are examined and the ballots are transferred accordingly, at a "full vote" value. However, random sampling can introduce an element of chance into an election. If different samples are taken, it can lead to different preferences being distributed, which is far from ideal. In very close elections it can even mean that different candidates could be elected if elections were run again—also far from ideal. This element of chance has led to a reduction in public confidence in the reliability of election results. Therefore, the committee has recommended that it be removed and replaced with a new method of preference counting.

As times have changed, the number of councils that conduct manual counts is minimal, with the majority of counting taking place electronically these days. The committee received evidence on various vote-counting methods but decided that the fairest and most accurate was the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method. This is a form of fractional transfer which is slightly more complicated, but modern technology is more than capable of making the relevant calculations for this method. Under this system, all ballots are considered when transferring preferences. Votes that are transferred more than once are then treated differently to give them less value at each subsequent transfer.

Another area that the committee made recommendations to improve relates to scrutineering methods. The committee heard that as technology has become more common in the vote counting process, old methods of scrutineering are becoming harder to undertake. Therefore, the committee recommended that a new scrutineering policy be developed to assist scrutineers in their work observing modern elections. This policy will affect all local government elections, regardless of who conducts the election. The committee found also that there should be better auditing of the data entry process to ensure that votes are entered correctly.

The committee heard also that there are some discrepancies between local government elections run by the Electoral Commission and those run by other providers. We received evidence that less data was made available following an election by those councils whose elections were not run by the Electoral Commission. For the benefit of candidates and voters, more consistency in the availability of this data was recommended. The committee was very grateful for the input of election experts in this inquiry. They do important work that relies on having accurate information. Therefore, the committee recommended that the Government outline minimum levels of data to be released following an election. To ensure consistency, this will apply regardless of whether the election is run by the Electoral Commission, a private provider or the councils themselves.

I place on record my thanks to all those who made submissions and appeared before the committee to give evidence. This was a complex issue on a rather a nice subject but we met with very passionate people. I thank also my fellow committee members and the chair, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, from the other place. I acknowledge the outstanding work done by committee staff, who collate the submissions and put the evidence together for us. I commend the report to the House.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:15): I commence by thanking the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for his dedication and expertise in this role. I will provide a brief summary. The report entitled "Inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in NSW" includes 10 recommendations, split into three broad categories. I will speak briefly on each of the three broad categories. First, recommendations were made relating to the preference counting method utilised in local government elections today. Currently, once candidates reach their quota of votes needed to ensure their election, any surplus votes recorded beyond this point are distributed to the remaining candidates. This distribution is decided using the preferences of a randomly selected sample of surplus votes.

A number of issues are inherent in this random sampling method. These include but are not limited to: first, random sampling prevents the election count from being able to be reproduced—if a different sample had been chosen, preferences may have been distributed differently and in cases of a tight margin, this selection method could change the election result; secondly, public confidence in the integrity of the local government electoral system has been negatively impacted because of this method; and, thirdly, the method of random selection was originally designed to simplify the process of a manual count. However, this has not been accurate and smaller councils involved in the inquiry did not support the random sample method.

As such, alternative methods for local government election counting were investigated and are detailed in the report. Ultimately the method recommended in this report and that returned the greatest level of support from stakeholders is the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method, as stated by the member for Terrigal. The Gregory Method was discussed at length. The advantage of the Gregory Method is that all votes held by candidates are considered when distributing their surplus and that it differentiates between votes that are transferred more than once. It is my opinion that recommendations 1 and 2 of the report should be upheld by the House in order to ensure the integrity of our State's electoral system. In a truly democratic society every citizen's vote should be counted and should go on to determine the result. The election of the State's representatives should not and cannot be left to chance.

The second broad category of the report's recommendations relates to improving the transparency of the count in local government elections. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters believes a policy should be developed to improve the ease with which scrutineers can examine paper ballots, electronic records and data entry records. Similarly, councils that administer their own elections should be required to adhere to any scrutineering policy developed by the Electoral Commission. The committee also recommends an audit process be introduced to ensure that the data entry of ballots is accurate in every local government election count that uses electronic counting and that scrutineers be allowed to observe this audit process and the result. The Government

should also provide an outline of minimum levels of data to be released following an election so that results are verifiable and able to be tracked.

Finally, the report produces three recommendations on additional inconsistencies identified in the electoral system. First, the provision that allows a candidate to pay for a recount of the election result should be removed. This provision can undermine the confidence of both voters and candidates, and create public doubt in the election result. Secondly, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters recommends that the NSW Electoral Commissioner should maintain the authority to conduct a recount at the request of any candidate in the election or on their own initiative. Thirdly, the provision that sees transfer values in local government elections calculated to four decimal points appears to be an arbitrary constraint and should be removed. These recommendations will work to ensure the integrity of our electoral system and improve public confidence in local government elections. I commend the report to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:20): I support the recommendation for all votes to be counted in local government elections. When the amalgamation of Sydney City Council and South Sydney City Council occurred in 2004, I was The Greens candidate. The final spot on the council was won by approximately 400 votes. A random sample of votes was taken and the result was given. There were many people in the community, myself included, who were concerned that when a vote was that tight, a random sample of preferences and votes was taken. The recommended change recognises the importance of local government representation; ensuring that people's votes are heard and counted; and a preferential voting system, which allows those preferences to be heard.

Reported noted.

COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Report: Inquiry into Zonal Taxation - Interim Report

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:21): As Chair: The Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development's report entitled "Inquiry into Zonal Taxation—Interim Report" was tabled out of session on 19 January 2018. The interim report follows a reference from the Hon. John Barilaro and the committee's resolution to inquire into and report on the possible benefits of zonal taxation for regional economies, infrastructure and services in New South Wales. The term "zonal taxation" refers to the application of particular taxation policies, such as tax concessions and other incentives to specific geographic regions to promote growth and development. The committee sought submissions to examine possible zonal taxation approaches, particularly with regard to payroll tax, stamp duty, land tax, and utility and fuel charges in New South Wales. In December 2017, the committee resolved to complete an interim report on the issues that have been raised by submission makers to date.

The interim report has also allowed the committee to refocus the inquiry on a number of key issues that it will further consider and report on in a final report. The committee has reopened the inquiry for further submissions about the identified issues and possible zonal taxation approaches. Submissions are open until 23 February. The key issues identified by the committee for further analysis concern regional payroll tax and commercial property stamp duty. Submissions identified that the current payroll tax scheme may discourage regional businesses from expanding due to the tax liability that applies once a business exceeds the payroll threshold. This can be a real hurdle for regional small businesses, particularly those situated in border areas that must compete with different payroll tax conditions in neighbouring states. This issue is especially relevant considering the recent changes to payroll tax in Victoria, where payroll tax concessions are now available to regional employers who employ regional workers. These changes have reduced the Victorian regional payroll tax rate from 4.85 per cent to 3.65 per cent, with a threshold of \$625,000. New South Wales has a payroll tax rate that is currently 5.45 per cent for the whole of the State, with a threshold of \$750,000.

Concerns were expressed that providing tax concessions to a specific geographic area could possibly disadvantage neighbouring areas. It is also possible that having different regional payroll tax schemes within the State could result in additional administrative complexity. A more viable, widespread model should be examined, looking at the application of possible different schemes for metropolitan and regional New South Wales as a whole. The committee wants to look further at whether broader changes to regional payroll tax could affect where businesses decide to set up or expand in New South Wales.

The committee also identified stamp duty arrangements as an important issue for regional businesses, particularly the issue of whether stamp duty concessions for commercial property in regional areas could result in the removal of red tape and stimulate economic activity. The committee heard suggestions from stakeholders that regional stamp duty arrangements could be more efficient and encourage businesses to take up more commercial leases or remain in regional town centres. The committee will look closely at possible commercial stamp duty

arrangements and what effect changes might have on investment and regional development. We welcome further submissions from the public on possible regional commercial stamp duty approaches.

Submissions to the inquiry are open until 23 February 2018, and I invite anyone to make a submission to the inquiry as we further examine these issues regarding possible regional taxation approaches for payroll tax and commercial stamp duty. The committee members and I look forward to continuing this inquiry and we will release a final report on these matters later in 2018. I am pleased to present this interim report and thank my fellow committee members for their contributions and assistance. I would also like to thank the previous chairs of the committee, the member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Melinda Pavey, and the former member for Cootamundra, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, who have contributed to the inquiry to date. I would also like to thank the committee staff for their ongoing assistance to the committee. I commend the report to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (15:27): I put on record some of my thoughts and ideas on the interim report of the Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development's inquiry into zonal taxation. As a member of the committee for the last couple of years I have been a little disappointed that the committee has had more chairs than an RSL club. We have gone through a series of chairs from The Nationals, which I think is unfortunate. It is a poor reflection on The Nationals that they would not prioritise an important committee like this to make sure that they had a good, long-term chair. That is no reflection on the present chair, who I think is wonderful. The member for Albury has also been a long-term member of the committee; he cannot be the chair simply because he is from the Liberal Party.

I guess the intellectual intention of zonal taxation is to support and help develop regional areas. Some purists would say, right from the outset, that that is a bad idea but people who come from regional New South Wales would probably start with the view, "This sounds okay; let's have a look at it." That is what the committee has been trying to do. In 2012 a committee on economic development across New South Wales looked at similar issues. The finding of that committee was that this type of taxation really would not work. Like many members in the Chamber, I like to make informed decisions based on information that is brought to hand. Being on a committee forces members to do research and background reading that they might not otherwise do, and that helps members to come to decisions. That is the process that we are going through at the moment. To that end, I support and welcome the opportunity to extend the inquiry and to call for more submissions so that when the committee puts out a final report the information that we offer and the recommendations are as well-informed as possible.

It is worth noting that the 2012 report comes to the conclusion that this type of zonal taxation does not work. It is also worth noting that these types of zones have been set up in a number of countries right across the globe, because this is a problem facing all governments. By and large, they have not worked and there have been some unintended consequences in a number of those areas. I note a series of inclusions in the final interim report, which I objected to at the committee stage. I lost the vote. Having lost the vote I then moved to include it in the report. The vote is the vote.

I place on record that starting on page 4 of the interim report at paragraph 1.20 through to page 6 paragraph 1.28 the Government is indulging in a self-congratulatory process—from the Government, for the Government, by the Government. It has nothing to do with the intent or purpose of the committee. It does not address zonal taxation. The work of committee members, the time, energy and activity by hardworking committee staff, and the money spent on excursions to the far reaches of the State requires mindfulness of the purpose of the inquiry. I look forward to continuing to work with the committee, finalising the report and having any recommendations adopted by the State.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (15:30): This Parliament has spent the best part of a decade considering zonal taxation. Different taxes are favoured or targeted by different representative bodies. One group wants to cut or remove stamp duty and move the burden to property via reformed land tax, while another group says this would ruin its industry and therefore wants the opposite. And, as we all know, payroll tax is a tax on jobs. The Victorian Government is pushing to attract business and families across the border. Its regional payroll tax is almost 2 percentage points below ours, with a mere \$100,000 threshold difference. Victoria has better first home incentives. Victoria also has a cash fund established with Federal money to help the State deal with the loss of car manufacturing. Yet, for all the noise and fury, what do I see on the ground? A large manufacturer shifts from Albury to Wodonga, and Bunnings moves its trade centre from Wodonga to Albury. Maybe incentives are critical in their decision-making but I know other factors also weigh in on that decision-making.

When I speak to business people in my regional border electorate they state the following as hindering economic growth: energy and water costs, energy and water availability, and a gas supply that may literally be unobtainable. The failure of the NBN to deliver on its promise when combined with the dismantling of an effective postal service has profoundly impacted regional business—you cannot receive it in your hand or get it online. An educated workforce is another issue. A troubling underlying malaise with education is brewing far away from

Sydney. I hear of problems with truancy, young people disengaging from school, and poor test results. The Albury electorate thanks the Minister for Skills for delivering Corowa's TAFE expansion.

Years of pressure on TAFE course funding has left a legacy of confusion in the minds of many people. Combine this with the Federal Government's inexplicable barriers to financial support for children to study in a capital city and there is a real problem. Regional families with first generation tertiary students are easily dispirited by geographic and financial hurdles. Businesses and business advisers state that the lack of an educated workforce becomes apparent when they attempt to employ skilled, or motivated unskilled, staff. Mentoring is also mentioned as a direction for reform and input from beyond a regional geography and economy.

Electricity, gas, water, connectivity, employability, motivation and mentoring are factors at least as important as moving stamp duty revenue to land tax revenue, or vice versa. These State taxes comprise a raft of exclusions and concessions. Creating a local economic zone for Albury would have to include Wodonga—and is that notion even in the room let alone on the table? The committee's interim report quotes the NSW Business Chamber as stating:

[China's]...SEZs [Special Economic Zones] have not generally been regarded as successful where they have been established to create favourable tax or policy environments with the intention of boosting economic activity in that location. The successful implementation of zones has been in "reforming transition economies". That is, in helping an area catch up to metro standards. Most general talk about zones focuses on the former, not the latter. This is worthy of further investigation. What also seems to work in respect of Government intervention in the marketplace is finding bespoke support mechanisms to reform an economy going through transition. This happened when a large manufacturer closed in Orange and when loose-fill asbestos destroyed 15 per cent of housing in Holbrook. In that case, the Government provided financial support to keep residents in town—it worked. The support will soon reach its natural end. Grants programs can help lift a business to a new level that it could not otherwise afford. Again, this is a tailored solution. In hospital, a patient is brought to health through a highly personalised medical regime. Why not take the same bespoke approach with the State's regional towns and cities? I look forward to continuing participating in this inquiry on zonal taxation.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)

Report: Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office 2017

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (15:35): As Chair: I speak on the Public Accounts Committee report on the Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office of New South Wales, which was tabled on 6 February 2018. The periodic review of the Audit Office is an obligation under section 48A of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983 and follows the previous review conducted in 2013. Under the provisions of section 48A, the Public Accounts Committee is required to appoint an external reviewer to conduct a review of the Auditor-General and his or her office at least every four years, and to receive and table the report upon completion. Pursuant to the Act, the review must examine the current auditing practices and standards of the Auditor-General and determine whether there is compliance with those practices and standards. This involves assessing audit methodologies used by the Audit Office of New South Wales so as to ensure compliance with current professional standards, legal requirements and statutory responsibilities under the Public Finance and Audit Act.

After having established specific terms of reference for the review, the committee resolved to invite organisations to submit bids by September 2017 to carry out the task that was to be completed by December 2017. Although not required to publicly advertise the call for tenders, the committee used the Government's eTendering portal to invite nine tier 1 and tier 2 audit compliant companies registered on the portal to tender for the review. As a further measure to safeguard the integrity of the review process and to demonstrate its independence, the committee stipulated that a reasonable period, such as 12 months, should elapse between post-review engagements with the Auditor-General and the reviewer, and business associates of the reviewer.

In addition, the Auditor-General has a policy of excluding any firm contracted to undertake the review from tendering for any Audit Office services for the duration of the process. As well as the client confidentiality provisions of the Code of Professional Conduct issued by the professional accounting bodies, the Act also has specific secrecy provisions that apply to the Auditor-General and staff, and contractors of the Audit Office. Under section 48A, those conditions are applied to the reviewer and support staff undertaking the review. After a comprehensive evaluation process according to a set of assessment criteria approved by the committee, the tender from Deloitte Australia was successful in meeting the committee's requirements and came in under the allocated budget set aside for the review.

The main conclusions of the review were that the Audit Office of New South Wales has robust methodology and tools in place to effectively, economically and efficiently deal with its core business and comply with appropriate accounting standards. The review makes a number of recommendations to streamline internal processes, which the Audit Office has agreed to implement as soon as possible. The review also makes four strategic recommendations to the Government to maximise the ability of the Audit Office to deliver optimal service within available resource constraints. The first of these is the so-called "follow the dollar" mandate, which refers to the fact that the Auditor-General does not currently have authority to directly examine performance outcomes from private sector and non-government agencies that are in receipt of government funding.

The involvement of the non-government sector in the delivery of its programs and the growth of contracting out services to such agencies limits the ability of the Auditor-General to ensure that public money is spent in an accountable manner. The fact that these powers are exercised by Auditors-General in all other Australian jurisdictions and have been the subject of previous recommendations to adopt this approach by the PAC gives further weight to the need for an amendment to the Act to effect this recommendation. The other strategic recommendations, which the committee fully supports, are: to give the Auditor-General the mandate to provide independent assurance of the performance-based outcomes reported by government agencies; to conduct an annual review of the New South Wales budget; and to provide transitional funding to enable more comprehensive auditing of local government functions.

I strongly urge the Government to act on these recommendations to bolster the effectiveness of financial oversight in New South Wales. In comprehensively endorsing the review's conclusions and recommendations, I place on record my confidence in the professionalism and integrity of the New South Wales Audit Office and its officers, and the strength of the working relationship between the office and the committee in safeguarding the public accountability of government expenditure. In conclusion, I also thank my hardworking committee members for their contributions in furthering the work of the committee, and the invaluable and professional assistance of the wonderful committee secretariat for their diligent support and hard work. I commend the report to the House.

Report noted.

Matter of Public Importance

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:41): I am delighted to speak to this matter of public importance, which recognises a festival that is significant to the Chinese Australian community across New South Wales. The importance of this festival in Australia can be interpreted through the various events that have and will be going on, including plans to light up the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge in the lucky colour of red. In this House we acknowledge the Year of the Dog and those across the world who celebrate Lunar New Year. The festival celebrates the commencement of the new lunar calendar, and the celebrations extend for 15 days. The festival is symbolised by red—a colour that is said to scare off evil spirits.

The first day of the lunar calendar falls on 16 February this year, but most families and friends gather on 15 February for the New Year's Eve reunion dinner, when food that symbolises good luck and prosperity is shared. It is also customary for families and friends to visit temples on New Year's Eve to pray for a lucky year ahead. Given the significance of the festival in Sydney, not only have I been invited to many events but also I will be hosting a few, including a walk through Strathfield tonight with the God of Wealth, handing out red pockets and Fai Chun posters. Red pockets symbolise good luck and are given by elders or seniors in the family. In return, it is customary for children to wish their elders a happy new year, good health and good fortune.

I have a wonderfully diverse electorate, and so Lunar New Year is important to my Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese Australian communities. As such, I will also be handing out the Fai Chun, which is a red, long poster with a lucky phrase on it. It is traditional for these posters to be displayed in homes to scare away evil spirits. I will also be leading a traditional Chinese lion dance through Burwood to extend my best wishes to businesses and the general public. This year joining me on the walk will be members of the West Tigers rugby league football team, and of course their mascot. I thank Tommy Tong and his lion dance group from Tommy Tong's Traditional Chinese Performing Arts Centre for performing every year.

I am pleased to join the Chinese Australian community in attending many of their events, the first of which will be the inaugural Chinese New Year celebrations held this weekend with the Australian Zhaoqing Fellowship Association and Australian Zhaoqing Industry and Commerce Association. This event will be held at a farm in Rossmore in honour of the farming history of the Zhaoqing people in Liverpool. Also in Liverpool this weekend I will be attending the charming Asia New Year Festival. New Year's Day is always very busy, and I will be spending a part of that day at the Chinese New Year celebration at a temple in Bonnyrigg hosted by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society. I thank Vincent Kong and his society for their continuing contribution to

our Chinese Australian community. New Year is celebrated not only in temples, homes and businesses but also by community groups, and of course in nursing homes.

I have spoken before in this place about the work of the Bernard Chan Nursing Home in Burwood, and I look forward to joining residents for an afternoon tea. I also thank Ada Cheng, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Nursing Home Foundation, and her staff. They provide excellent care for the elderly in my community. I also commend the work of the Chinese Australian Services Society, an organisation that supports the Chinese Australian community in the inner west. I will join them in their celebrations, as I have done in previous years. In early March we have a wonderful day at the China Fun Fair in Burwood Park. I thank the Australian Commerce and Culture Association for their efforts each year.

Lunar New Year events will be held across Sydney, including the opening of the Chinese New Year Lantern Festival, hosted by the Australia China Economics, Trade and Culture Association; the New Year Celebration Dinner, hosted by the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation; the Vietnamese New Year—their Tet Festival—organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia (NSW Chapter); and the annual Cultural Chinese New Year banquet, hosted by the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce. These are more than a few of the events that will be held this year. It is fitting that Australia's oldest Parliament wish the Chinese Australian community a happy Chinese New Year of the Dog.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (15:47): I contribute to the discussion of this matter of public importance about one of the world's most colourful and exuberant events: the Lunar New Year, which is also known as the Spring Festival or Chinese New Year. Our State is home to more than half a million people of Chinese ancestry and this year their celebration of the Chinese New Year begins on Friday 16 February. It concludes with the magnificent Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the first Chinese calendar month. In Gregorian calendar parlance that is 4 March. What happens in between can vary, but the evening preceding Lunar New Year's Day will usually see families gather for reunion dinners. That tradition will also see those families thoroughly clean their house in order to sweep away any ill fortune and make way for incoming good luck.

Lunar New Year is now one of the high spots in our multicultural calendar of events across New South Wales. The celebration is stunning, replete with firecrackers and fireworks to ward off evil spirits, plus larger-than-life lion and dragon dances, in glorious, spirited reds and golds. The positivity, strength and learnings we take from this very special time of year for the Chinese community, which they share so generously with us, gives us a buoyancy that is unparalleled. This spirit of inclusion and affirmation reinforces and cements our strong community ties, helping to forge a nation where we admire and celebrate our cultural diversities and rejoice in the strength that individuality brings to us all. Since 1972, when Australia established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, we have enjoyed years of close cooperation and friendship. Since 2007 Chinese students have accounted for the largest number of international enrolments in New South Wales, making up about a third of our international students.

Last December the Premier signed several trade deals during her trade mission to China. Among them was a two-year arrangement with Chinese travel agency GZL that will promote New South Wales to Chinese travellers. Our State leads the nation in attracting Chinese visitors, whose numbers have grown by more than 150 per cent over the past six years, from 285,000 annual visitors to more than 700,000. In the last financial year, Chinese travellers spent more than \$3 billion in New South Wales, which means more jobs at hotels, tourism operators and shops. It also boosts regional areas.

I am very lucky to live in Young. Each year we hold a multicultural festival that celebrates elements of the town's early gold rush days when Chinese miners came to try their luck at the diggings. The event also celebrates the contribution of Chinese people to Australia and features afternoon and night Chinese lion and dragon dancing, a sunset lantern parade amid tai chi demonstrations, and a marketplace filled with a mouth-watering array of Chinese and Asian delicacies. The festival gives tremendous insight into Chinese culture to the people of our region, and it gives Chinese visitors a taste of New South Wales country life—yin and yang. I say "Gong xi fa cai" in Mandarin and "Kung hei fat choy" in Cantonese to all who join in the Chinese New Year celebrations. May this Year of the Dog reflect the qualities of honesty and loyalty of that zodiac sign.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:51): I thank the member for Strathfield for moving this matter of public importance—the first on which I have spoken. I would not miss it for the world because Chinese New Year is an important matter for our community. It is important to recognise the wonderful contribution that Chinese Australians make to our great State and country. Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is the launch of the lunar new year. The Chinese zodiac follows a 12-year cycle. This year's symbol of the dog is thought to come from the historical importance of the domestication of the grey wolf in China.

Mr Mark Coure: Really?

Mr CHRIS MINNS: That's right. You learn something new every day. I understand that comes directly from Wikipedia—a very reliable source.

Mr Mark Coure: Your zodiac sign is the goat.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: There you go—1979 was the Year of the Goat. In Chinese culture, it is believed that people born in the Year of the Dog inherit some of that animal's wonderful characteristics such as loyalty, patience and reliability. This holiday is a wonderful reminder of the contribution that Chinese people have made to Australia's dynamic multicultural society. It is also a happy harbinger of Australia's future, with China already Australia's largest trading partner. The Chinese diaspora in Hurstville in my electorate, which is made up of ex-pats, citizens, permanent residents and people on student or family reunion visas, adds dynamism to commerce, community relations, culture and dining. Particularly in southern Sydney, they are drivers of our civic life. It is wonderful that in this Parliament and more broadly we can take time to celebrate their special day.

In particular, I acknowledge Dr Lam and Mr Wang from the Australia China Economics, Trade and Culture Association; Mrs Maggie Wu from the Australian Chinese Community Association Dance Group; and Lina from Asian Woman at Work. I also acknowledge the amazing Benevolent Society of Hurstville, which has a deep engagement with the Chinese community through Mimi Lui, and Captain Sean from the Salvation Army at Hurstville. Many wonderful organisations have been established to bring the Chinese community together. They are doing good work in our society and I recognise them for their hard work.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:54): By leave: I thank the member for Strathfield for drawing Lunar New Year celebrations to the attention of the House. Next Friday 16 February is the Chinese Lunar New Year. Gong hay fat choy, or gong xi fa cai. The Chinese Lunar New Year is a celebratory season for many people in the St George region, which is why it is a great honour to recognise the occasion in Parliament. The Chinese New Year is the most important traditional Chinese holiday because it symbolises the arrival of luck, joy, health and goodwill. The New Year traditionally is a time of new beginnings and an opportunity to show our appreciation for the gifts and life opportunities we enjoy. It is a special time to share with family, friends and neighbours and a chance to reflect on the past year.

Chinese New Year is when families gather together for annual reunion dinners in peace and happiness. Many Chinese families have chosen to settle in the St George region, particularly in Hurstville in the Kogarah electorate and in my electorate of Oatley. It is a great honour and privilege to represent them in the New South Wales Parliament. I acknowledge and thank our local Chinese community for its contribution to our State. Today I hosted a morning tea for the Wei-in Network, which is a group of ladies who are prominent leaders in the Chinese community and who raise money for local charities, particularly in relation to women's health. Over the years they have contributed so much to various organisations and causes across Australia. I take this opportunity to thank the President of Wei-in Network, Annie Tang, on behalf of all members of the network for her leadership and vision in carrying the movement forward and for ensuring that charitable work continues to thrive and progress.

The Wei-in Network and their service to the community are deserving of appreciation. I honour the work of the Wei-in Network in this House on this occasion. The network is one of many Chinese organisations—the member for Kogarah mentioned the Australia China Economics Trade and Cultural Association—that marks the New Year by having many celebrations and festivities in forthcoming days and weeks. The Spring Festival Gala I attended on Friday last week in Hurstville brought me into the festive spirit as our community ushered in the New Year. I ask everyone who was born in the Year of the Dog to accept my best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2018. I was born in 1978—the Year of the Horse.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:57): In reply: I thank the member for Oatley, who is present in the Chamber, the member for Cootamundra and the member for Kogarah for their wonderful contributions to the discussion on this matter of public importance. It is important at this time of the year to acknowledge the significance to our communities of the Lunar New Year. It is wonderful that the member for Cootamundra, who represents a country electorate, participated in the discussion out of respect for the Lunar New Year festival, which is celebrated across New South Wales. The members who participated in the discussion spoke about the importance of community in celebrating the Lunar New Year. I referred to the importance of family and community groups.

The member for Kogarah and the member for Oatley know that community is at the heart of Lunar New Year celebrations. I see the member for Oatley at many events that we both attend and I know that he is well regarded within the Chinese-Australian community. We experience firsthand the great enthusiasm of many of our community groups, which is at no time more evident than in celebrations of the Lunar New Year. As the member for Kogarah said, the Chinese-Australian community is very much a driver of culture and commerce in the communities in which they reside. As the member for Cootamundra said, that includes the students living in our

electorates and the tourism it generates. These celebrations are important to the way this State operates. When we get together to enjoy the Lunar New Year celebrations we create something spectacular.

I acknowledge my staff member Michael Ng, who has worked with me in organising my many Lunar New Year functions. We are involved in many events, and my officers and I go to a great deal of effort. The office is festooned with decorations and we have about 3,000 red pockets that we will distribute over the next week, starting in about two hours when I take the God of Wealth through Strathfield Plaza and meet with my Korean community. This weekend I will be joined by the Wests Tigers in walking down Burwood Road. It is fitting that we will have the lion and the Tiger getting together in the Year of the Dog. Michael has done a wonderful job organising these events with my community. We have heard that the member for Oatley is a Horse, and I am a Rooster. It would appear that these zodiac signs are fitting. I wish everyone a Happy New Year in the Year of the Dog. Kung Hei Fat Choy!

Community Recognition Statements

MANNING RIVER SPORTS STAR OF THE YEAR WADE HARRY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:01): I acknowledge Wade Harry, who was announced as the fifty-seventh winner of the *Manning River Times*-MidCoast Council Sports Star of the Year on Australia Day. Wade toured Europe with the Australian All Schools hockey team and played in all seven matches. He also won the coach's award following the Four Nations tournament, in which Australia finished second. Wade travelled back from Goulburn—where he was playing for New South Wales in the Australian under 18 indoor hockey championships—to attend the Taree Australia Day ceremony at the Manning Entertainment Centre. Unfortunately, New South Wales went down to Victoria four to three in the match. Wade thanked his parents for their support and showed true sportsmanship in congratulating the other nominees on their individual success. On behalf of the Myall Lakes community, I congratulate Wade, and I look forward to witnessing his great success in the future.

ST MARK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH SERVICE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:02): I acknowledge the Commencement of Ministry Service held on Thursday 1 February 2018 for Reverend David Morgan, the new rector of the Anglican Provisional Parish of St Mark's Anglican Church, Sadler. The invitation to attend the event was issued by wardens Norma Esler, Darren Page and Allan Patterson. The wardens and the congregation welcomed Reverend David Morgan and his wife Priya to their parish. Also present were the Reverend Mark Short, who delivered a sermon, Bishop Peter Lin of George's River, and Reverend Stuart Pearson from St Luke's Anglican Church at Liverpool. I note that the parish will shortly celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, and the new rector will undoubtedly have a significant role to play in those celebrations. David Morgan was warmly welcomed by the parishioners, who look forward to his ministry.

CHILDREN'S WEEK PARLIAMENT

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (16:02): I acknowledge Aurora Matchett of Gynea and Kyan Aitken of Bonnet Bay, who were involved in the Children's Week Parliament on 25 and 26 October. Over the three days both Aurora and Kyan, along with 93 other students, learnt about parliamentary processes and spoke in the Chamber about issues that are important to children and young people in New South Wales. Aurora highlighted the issues surrounding youth homelessness and the possible ways to get children off the streets. She put forward a range of ideas to the Greater Sydney Commission to help homeless youth, including the need for youth-specific services available 24 hours to supply the basic necessities for survival. Kyan discussed the importance of technology in classrooms today and its value in our education system. He stated that there are many ways students can use technology in their education, including being involved in robotics, computer sciences and coding. I commend Aurora and Kyan on their extraordinary speeches in Parliament and thank them for raising such important issues on behalf of the children and young people of New South Wales.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:03): I acknowledge the Australia Day Award recipients in my electorate of the Blue Mountains and our newest Australian citizens. I congratulate Blue Mountains Citizen of the Year, Mrs Carmel Higgins, for her lifelong contribution to women's sport, and particularly for her devotion to mentoring, coaching and organising netball for almost 50 years. The Young Citizen of the Year was Andrew Gunn, who won the award for his substantial efforts in a range of youth services, particularly as a Blue Mountains youth councillor. The Community Achievement of the Year Award winner was the Springwood Foundation Day Committee 2017, which won the award for organising a very successful event. On behalf of the Blue Mountains community, I congratulate and formally welcome all who took the pledge to become Australian citizens this year. Our nation, our people, our communities, and our culture will be all the richer for their having done so.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:04): I congratulate four local heroes from my electorate who have been chosen as baton bearers in the Queen's Baton Relay for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Richard Taffs has dedicated 15 years of service to Marine Rescue Wooli and is also a member of the State Training Advisory Group. Peter Webster has shown remarkable resilience following a head-on collision almost 30 years ago that broke his back and resulted in him having a leg amputated. He is an amputee sports star and an inspiration to other amputees. Glyn Williams has been dedicated to junior sport over a long period of time, organising many swimming, athletic and sporting events within the community. Harry Menzies is a 19-year-old soccer player who was named North Coast Football's community coach of the year and has been a Pierre de Coubertin award recipient. My congratulations to all.

SHELLHARBOUR YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR KIKI RATNA CUDA

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (16:05): I bring to the attention of the House the work of Miss Kiki Ratna Cuda who was recently named the 2018 Shellharbour Young Citizen of the Year. At just 12 years old, she is the youngest person in Shellharbour's history to receive this honour. Kiki is known by her friends and our community for her kind, caring nature. For her eleventh birthday, in lieu of gifts she requested her friends and family donate to Sydney Children's Hospital and raised \$500 in the process. She also regularly makes care packages for homeless organisations and Australian soldiers deployed overseas. On behalf of the Shellharbour community I thank you and congratulate Kiki.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:06): As Australia prepares for the Commonwealth Games, which are to be held on the Gold Coast in April, the Queen's Baton has been travelling across the country. Last weekend the baton arrived on the Central Coast and I was there, along with many hundreds of others, to cheer on the baton bearers as the baton arrived at the Central Coast Stadium. The Queen's Baton Relay is a tradition that celebrates community spirit in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games. A number of local heroes in my electorate were selected as baton carriers for this historic occasion. My congratulations to Rae Anderson, Graeme Carroll, Peter Thomson, Phil Walker, Maria McConville, Christopher Dodd and Lester Pearson. I also congratulate my good friend Phil Walker who took part in the event. Thanks must go to the Central Coast Council for hosting the free Family Fun Day to coincide with the baton's arrival in our community. Good luck to all local sportsmen and women who will be participating at the Commonwealth Games in April.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I remind members of Standing Order No. 52: When a member is speaking other members should not converse.

WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENT GEORGE BARTOLO

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:07): I congratulate a good friend and champion of the Maltese community in the Illawarra, George Bartolo, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2018 Australia Day Honours List. Since migrating to Australia George has spent 60 years supporting Maltese migrants. In fact, George started helping his fellow migrants while still on board a ship travelling from Fremantle to Sydney, by translating and helping people open new bank accounts.

Since then George has been President and Secretary of the George Cross Club; inaugural President of the George Cross Falcons Club and instrumental in helping source the funds to build the Cringila club; founding member of the Maltese Community Council of New South Wales, serving as President, Vice President and Secretary, and awarded life membership in 1988; a foundation member of the Cringila United Soccer Club and a foundation member of the Wollongong Wolves Soccer Club; member, chief instructor, president and life member of the Illawarra Dog Training Club; life member of the Australian Labor Party; and in a 42-year contribution George was a foundation member and is the current Senior Vice President and life member of the Multicultural Communities Council of the Illawarra. I am sure all members agree a Medal of the Order of Australia is more than fitting recognition for a lifetime of service that continues to this day.

CAMDEN VALLEY WILDFIRE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (16:08): I congratulate the Camden Valley Wildfire under-12 boys basketball team on winning the Junior State Cup. The team consisted of seven boys: Adam Obeido, Isaac Kelman, Jaerhyn Certeza, Jordan Kotevski, Kaiser Tat, Matthew Coffey and Liam Nicholls. Liam is a local Prestons resident, and I especially recognise his excellent performance and passion for basketball. The boys played in Newcastle on Sunday 27 August 2017. They had a tough qualifying game in the morning against Newcastle Hunters. The match ended with a close score of 43-36. That afternoon the boys played one of the best games of their season in the grand final against the Hills under 12 boys team. They managed to win by more than 15 points,

with the end score being 65-49. Their hard work and dedication lead to this amazing win. Together they took out the Molten Waratah Junior League State Cup. I congratulate all the boys and the coaching staff on this excellent achievement.

PENRITH CITY NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S MEMORIAL

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:09): Last Sunday it was a privilege to attend the twelfth anniversary of the Penrith City national servicemen's memorial at Victoria Park, St Marys in my electorate and to mark National Servicemen's Day. I thank John Taylor, the honorary president-secretary, for the invitation and for the opportunity to lay a wreath to commemorate the memory of our national service men and women who were conscripted in 1951 to 1959 and 1964 to 1972. We honour the contribution made by all men and women who have served and those who currently serve in our armed forces. I thank the Penrith City Sub-Branch of the National Servicemen's Association for all the work it does in commemorating and remembering our national service men and women.

TRIBUTE TO COLIN WOOD

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:10): Colin Wood, the longest serving chairman of the Henty Machinery Field Days, died on 5 December 2017, aged 79. Colin farmed in Cookardinia and was Henty Machinery Field Days chairman for more than 30 years, retiring in 2007. He was also a councillor for Culcairn shire for three terms and a board member of St Paul's College, Walla Walla. Colin was a great-nephew of the pioneer inventor Headlie Shipard Taylor. A natural leader, he helped make the Henty Machinery Field Days the popular three-day event it is today. Vale Colin Wood.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ANTOUN

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:11): I acknowledge Mr Michael Antoun, who retires from the New South Wales public education system tomorrow. I worked with Mr Antoun for nine years at Punchbowl Boys High School, where he taught for almost 32 years, including 22 years as a Saturday school of community languages teacher. Mr Antoun started as a physical education teacher and went on to be a language teacher, but he was much more than that. He was the epitome of a teacher going above and beyond the call of duty for the benefit of children. He was always the first to volunteer his time and he was a person I knew I could rely on when I needed someone to help resolve a difficult situation or to assist a family of a student he may have taught over those years. I wish Michael and his wife, Therese, and their family all the very best for the journey ahead. I thank him for being a proud public schoolteacher and for helping guide students at Punchbowl Boys High School, including one student who scored 100 per cent in a Higher School Certificate examination during his tenure. I wish him good luck and all the very best in his life ahead.

PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:12): I recognise Port Macquarie players Maddi Drewitt and Teleah Walker of the Port Macquarie Hastings Hockey Association. Maddi and Teleah were recently selected as part of the New South Wales under 13s team. Their appearance at the national under 13 indoor hockey title held from 12 to 15 January was their first in the sky blue, although Maddi Drewitt had played previously for her State in outdoor hockey. It could not have been a better debut for the talented pair as New South Wales claimed the title. Both girls starred at either end of the field with Teleah defending and directing the team as goalkeeper, making several game-changing saves.

Maddi played out of position in the tournament as striker. However, the positional change seemed natural to her as she scored six goals in eight games during the tournament. The New South Wales team won six of their eight games in the tournament, and sealed the final with a 3-2 win over Victoria. The pair returned to Port Macquarie after the tournament proudly sporting their gold medals. I congratulate Maddi Drewitt and Teleah Walker on an impressive debut for New South Wales. I wish them well in their future sporting endeavours.

BRISBANE WATER JET SKI RESTRICTIONS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:13): All of us who live there—and those who just visit—love Ettalong Beach. We can walk the dog, watch the kids play on the playground, drink coffee or cocktails, grab a tasty something to eat at The Box and watch the world go by. We swim at Ettalong, Umina or Ocean Beach, and normally it is heaven, but for the last couple of summers some rogue jet ski users have been upsetting the usually peaceful beachfront. I encourage those jet ski users to take more time to respect tourists and locals alike. We do not appreciate their illegal speeding and dangerous antics close to swimmers. I remind jet ski users not to use them within 60 metres of swimmers. I thank the team from Roads and Maritime Services who came to the area during summer to crack down on and educate those boaters who are sometimes less aware or less respectful of the laws

regarding the safe use of waterways. We love the beautiful waterways of Brisbane Water. Let us continue to enjoy them together in harmony. I thank all the wonderful jet ski users who respectfully enjoy beautiful Brisbane Water.

NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:14): On Australia Day we celebrate our great country, but we also celebrate the people who make it great. It is an extraordinary honour to receive an award on this day and I was thrilled that so many individuals from the North Shore were recognised. I congratulate our Medal of the Order of Australia recipients: Mr Pedr Davis for his service to journalism and the automotive industry, and Dr Bruce Horsfield for his service to the preservation of military history and sport parachuting.

I congratulate our Officer of the Order of Australia recipients: Dr Simon Poole for distinguished service to science in the field of photonics research and development as an academic and through advisory roles and board membership; and Professor Ronald Mitchell for distinguished service to ophthalmology. I congratulate our Member of the Order of Australia recipients: Mrs Colleen Godsell for service to youth through scouting and through roles with education, historical preservation, Indigenous tourism and social welfare groups; Mrs Maya Cranitch for her service to education and teaching English as a second language; Mr Harold Davis for service to fire protection and the security industry; and Mrs Vicki Clitheroe for service to the community, particularly the visual arts, supporting emerging artists, cultural organisations and youth.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER JOHN QUIRK

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:15): It is with great pride but also a sense of sadness that last Sunday I farewelled longstanding parish priest Father Brendan Quirk at a celebrated mass in Rockdale. Father Quirk has served the parishes of Arncliffe, Bexley and Rockdale for the past 16 years. He oversaw the successful merger of the Rockdale and Arncliffe parishes and made an incredible contribution to the St George community and the local Catholic community. The warmth our community feels for Father Quirk was evident on Sunday as approximately a thousand worshippers and wellwishers turned up to support him. We were fortunate to be joined on the day by another local St George boy, the Most Reverend Bishop Terry Brady, who kindly served as the principal celebrant during the mass. Father Quirk will be sorely missed by our community. However, our loss is the Australian Defence Force gain as he will be starting an exciting new role as an Army Chaplain. I thank Father Quirk for his tireless work for our community and wish him the best of luck as he continues to help those in need.

TAZ MCLAREN, AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENT

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (16:16): I congratulate Taz McLaren on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day honours this year in recognition and appreciation of her significant service to Southern Cross University, Lismore and to the relationship between Japan and Australia. Ms McLaren is currently the Japanese liaison officer and coordinator of the Japanese exchange program at the university and received the Consul-General of Japan Award in 2013. This award is well-deserved recognition of her hard work and dedication to her field and our local community. It is wonderful that Taz has been acknowledged in this way. On behalf of the community I thank her for all she has done.

NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR MARK HUGHES

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (16:17): Today I pay tribute to cancer advocate and fundraiser Mark Hughes, who was recently announced as the 2018 Newcastle Citizen of the Year. The retired former Newcastle Knights star and brain cancer survivor has been recognised for the work of his charity, the Mark Hughes Foundation. The foundation has raised more than \$1.75 million for brain cancer research through the nationally recognised Beanie for Brain Cancer campaign. Before retiring from rugby league in 2006, Mark played 161 games for the Knights and was a member of the premiership winning 1997 and 2001 teams.

After being diagnosed with brain cancer in July 2013, he underwent brain surgery, radiation treatments and chemotherapy. Since 2015 he has had no cancer regrowth. Mark has successfully used his profile as a former rugby league star to shine the spotlight on brain cancer, its effects on people and their families, and the research efforts behind the fight to find a cure. Since its formation in 2013, the Mark Hughes Foundation has funded a brain cancer biobank at the Hunter Medical Research Institute and a dedicated brain cancer care coordinator at the John Hunter Hospital. I congratulate Mark Hughes, Newcastle Citizen of the Year.

VISSLA SYDNEY SURF PRO

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:18): Exciting activities are underway in Manly in the lead-up to the Vissla Sydney Surf Pro, which the New South Wales Government and I are proud to support. The theme of the Sydney Pro is upcycling—turning waste into want. The community has embraced the concept with many brilliant ideas. Nadine Cattell and Lucy Flanagan recycle sailcloth cut-offs destined for landfill into surf socks

that enable surfers to slide into their wetsuits more quickly. I thank Dimension-Polyant, a sailcloth company from Brookvale, which provides Lucy and Nadine with its excess cloth. The Surf Sock is a reusable, durable and sustainable product synonymous with Manly and the Vissla Sydney Surf Pro. I wish Surf Sock the greatest success for 2018 and beyond.

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS WOODS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:19): I pay tribute to Mr Chris Woods, a former councillor who served on former Marrickville Council until its amalgamation to form the Inner West Council. Chris is Labor to his bones. A high school teacher and a NSW Teachers Federation activist, his passion is public education: For many years he many years at Dulwich Hill High School of Visual Arts and Design. Chris also contributed to his beloved Marrickville community as a councillor, serving as chair of both the infrastructure committee and the traffic committee. In those roles he helped oversee the renewal of the Marrickville Hospital site, which will deliver new affordable housing, a public library and a community centre for a growing suburb.

Chris will always put up his hand to help, whether it is to volunteer to coach youth basketball or to apply his expertise to the Inner West Traffic Committee, where he is my representative. As a councillor, he represented that part of my electorate in the former Marrickville Council area. He is one of the most capable, hardworking and dedicated councillors I have had the pleasure to work with. I thank Chris for his service and commend him to the House.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:20): Every young person should have the opportunity to experience high-quality creative art in our cosmopolitan city. I am pleased that Sydney Theatre Company encourages school students and teachers, including from my electorate of Davidson, to learn about theatre, through theatre. Last year, students from Brigidine College in St Ives attended Sydney Theatre Company performances with subsidised tickets, with some young women introduced to live theatre for the first time. Senior Brigidine students also participated in free learning programs "Young Wharfies" and "Work Experience Week", designed to foster the next generation of artists and arts industry leaders.

Also in 2017, primary school students of St Ives North Public School enjoyed a backstage tour, receiving behind-the-scenes insight into theatre production. I commend Sydney Theatre Company, led by Executive Director Patrick McIntyre, for its admirable efforts in educating the next generation in theatre, arts and culture. I encourage other New South Wales schools to be involved with the theatre's various free or subsidised programs, as listed on the Sydney Theatre Company website.

MAITLAND REGIONAL MUSEUM

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:20): I thank the Maitland Regional Museum for all its hard work to showcase the important history of our community. It is just coming up to the bicentenary of European settlement in Maitland and the museum has a lot of work to do. The museum has been very successful in getting grants at the local, State and Federal level, but, unfortunately, it has not been able to obtain a building at this stage. The museum is holding a lot of pop-up exhibitions in collaboration with many other heritage, and arts and cultural groups around the city, but Janece McDonald and the museum are very determined and very passionate about getting a permanent museum space for our community. I am supporting them very much in that cause and I hope that the museum will be successful in getting support from the Government for a new museum space.

SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT RURAL FIRE SERVICE LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:21): On 2 December 2017, together with the member for Kiama, I had the great pleasure of attending the Shoalhaven District Rural Fire Service Long Service Awards ceremony. Seventeen members from Rural Fire Service [RFS] brigades across the Shoalhaven were honoured that day, with each of them having served more than 10 years. In the Shoalhaven we rely very much on our RFS volunteers, who understand the value of community spirit and the importance of looking out for your neighbour. Whether they are fighting bushfires, conducting hazard reduction burns or attending car accidents, they keep us safe, despite often challenging conditions.

My sincere congratulations go to the following recipients of awards: Adam Jordan, Lily Hrouda, Denise Burton, Kenneth Crocker, fantastic young councillor Mitchell Pakes, Joel Grimston, Nathan Benson, Shannon Fryar—a fantastic recipient—Joshua Ward, Joseph Revesz, Wayne Goodman, Mark Peterson, Sanna Reeves, Kenneth Scarisbrick, Ross Smith, and Clive Turner and Paul Thompson, who have served in the Shoalhaven and Conjola brigades respectively for 20 years. Congratulations go to all the recipients.

AUSTRALIAN MALAYALEE MIGRANTS ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:23): I recognise the Australian Malayalee Migrants Association [AMMA]. Over two weekends in November and December 2017, AMMA organised an Indian dance competition known as Nadanotsavam 2017. The awards to prize winners for this competition were presented in Liverpool on 3 February this year. I acknowledge the roles of AMMA President, Jestin Abel, and dance teacher and judge, Nikhila Kiran, on that awards night. Other participants in various roles on the awards night included Shylaja Saju, Lena Regin, Shashi Bala, Sanidhya Kumar and the master of ceremonies, Blessy Fernandez. It was a pleasure to be invited to the awards night. It was a great example of Liverpool's multiculturalism. I wish AMMA all the best for the future.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ROBBIE COLLINS RETIREMENT

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:23): Today I acknowledge Associate Professor Robbie Collins who, after more than two decades with the University of Wollongong and 14 years as head of Shoalhaven Campus—where I did part of my degrees—has announced her retirement. Robbie will be taking the next step on her exciting path in life and the University of Wollongong Shoalhaven Campus simply will not be the same without her. An afternoon tea will be held on Thursday 22 February at the University of Wollongong Shoalhaven Campus to honour and thank Robbie for her many years of dedication as a leader, educator, teacher, mentor and a good friend to many. Thank you, Robbie, for your distinguished service to our local community. There are so many people in our community who would not have had a tertiary pathway without her. Robbie is a passionate Shoalhaven local, and at a function recently she commented that she is now going to have time for the things that she wants to do in her personal life. After all her years of service and dedication she is owed that at the very least. Congratulations, Robbie, on your service. We are proud of your commitment and dedication.

CAHILL PARK, WOLLI CREEK

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:24): I was very pleased to join members of the local community and local councillors over the weekend to officially open the fantastic new Cahill Park equipment at Wolli Creek. Cahill Park is a wonderful little park on the shores of the Cooks River that serves the rapidly growing population around Arncliffe and Wolli Creek, and was badly in need of a bit of tender loving care. It was my privilege to be able to support a \$2.5 million allocation of Stronger Communities grant funding towards the Cahill Park master plan as part of the merger of Bayside Council. The new equipment, facilities and landscaping will really put this local park on the map. I thank council staff for all their hard work, the councillors and mayor Bill Saravinovski for delivering this project and the hundreds of local residents who came out to enjoy the grand opening.

TRIBUTE TO HELEN WALLACE

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (16:25): Today I speak about a Wahroonga resident to whom many owe a large debt of gratitude. Born and raised in New Zealand, Helen Wallace trained as a nurse before moving to Sydney in 1967 and working at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. She subsequently worked in aged care nursing until 1989 and then in Hornsby day surgery until 1996. Between 1996 and 2004 Helen made no fewer than nine two-week, self-funded trips to Nepal as a volunteer member of a plastic surgery team that was coordinated by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. It is a testament to Helen's courage and dedication that she kept going back. In 2002 Maoist rebels twice bombed the clinic where she was working as well as the team's accommodation. After concluding her work in Nepal, Helen then spent seven years as a volunteer guide at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. This was a familiar environment to Helen, as she had served on the Conservatorium High School Parents and Citizens Association between 1983 and 1992 while her daughters were in attendance. Last year Helen received a Lions Community Service Award for her services to humanitarian aid.

TRIBUTE TO WENDY GILLESPIE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:26): We are so lucky that Wendy Gillespie chose the Gosford community. Wendy arrived from Queensland with a wealth of knowledge about our beautiful pelicans. Gosford hosts one of Australia's few pelican breeding colonies located in close proximity to urban development, which brings risk of harm and damage by ignorant humans. Wendy is very well known and respected, and works tirelessly in our community to care for our pelicans. Every season she studies the fledgling chicks and is our community go-to person when a sick pelican is spotted. Wendy is the rescuer, rehabilitator and researcher who is contacted by the community. She cares for birds impacted by urban run-off and fishing injuries. Wendy also provides our own tourism contact point, educating and entertaining visitors and locals alike nearly every afternoon at the famous Woy Woy Fishermen's Wharf as pelicans recycle the fish co-op waste. I thank Wendy, the New South Wales Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service [WIRES]—the Australian wildlife, rescue and care service—for the great work it continues to do in our community.

MACARTHUR AND SOUTH WEST SYDNEY VOLUNTEER CAROLE-ANNE PRIEST

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:27): I congratulate Carole-Anne Priest on being named 2017 Macarthur and South West Sydney Volunteer of the Year. Carole-Anne, who is a resident of Razorback in the Wollondilly shire, is the Chair of Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections at Warwick Farm where she has been a volunteer for four years. In addition, she has spent many years helping women with free legal and business advice. She is passionate about women's issues and empowering women to achieve what they often perceive as being beyond them. Many of the women who receive assistance from Carole-Anne are financially disadvantaged and would struggle to receive or afford the level of professional assistance provided by Carole-Anne. Many are from backgrounds of domestic abuse and unfortunate situations. Carole-Anne has helped these women to not despair, but has encouraged them to focus on talents that, in many cases, they were unaware they possessed. They have now flourished and gone on to enjoy success in their new lives. I thank Carole-Anne for her generous spirit and note that it is to be found not just in Wollondilly but right across the State.

ASSOCIATION OF IRAQI ACADEMICS EVENT

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:28): I recognise an event held on 4 February this year honouring achievers among Higher School Certificate students and university graduates in the Iraqi community for 2017. The event was organised by the Iraqi community, especially the Association of Iraqi Academics in Australia and New Zealand. This is an annual event to honour talented students and graduates in the Iraqi community, and involves all the various religious groups and ethnicities that make up that community. It was a pleasure to attend the event. I acknowledge the role of the head of the Association of Iraqi Academics in Australia and New Zealand, Dr Ahmad Alrubai. Also present on the night, apart from a number of parliamentarians and elected representatives, was a representative of the Iraqi Consulate General, Anwar Al-Issa. It was a pleasure to be at the event.

MANNING REGION CITIZEN OF THE YEAR DENNIS MARRIOTT

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:29): I congratulate Dennis Marriott on being named Manning Region's Citizen of the Year. Dennis has lived in the Manning since 1972 and is a British ex-serviceman. Dennis has a long association with the Taree RSL sub-branch, serving as secretary while he worked on memorials for World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Dennis has an active retirement career: He is a former president of Taree Probus Club; has worked in various capacities with the Anglican Church; and previously volunteered for the Taree Leisure Link respite program, where he spent many hours working with people with disabilities. A man after my own Celtic heart, Dennis was also president of the Wingham Highlands Committee. On behalf of the Myall Lakes community, I thank Dennis Marriott and his lovely wife, Margaret.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN BARON, OAM

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:30): I commend John Baron for his contribution to the Liverpool community. Recently John was announced as a recipient of an Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to veterans. John is well known not just in the veterans community but throughout Liverpool, and his award was greeted enthusiastically by the community. One local paper had a front-page headline that stated, "On yer mate, you're a bloody bottler". John spent 20 years as the pensions officer for Liverpool's RSL and has been the welfare officer for the Mounties club for 18 years, helping members with tasks such as arranging funerals. and reading and writing. In earlier years, he was involved in the telecommunications industry and the Communications Workers Union, trying to improve conditions for employees. John is also a moving force behind the annual Canley Vale Victory in the Pacific Day commemorations. John's award was well and truly deserved. He has made a great contribution to our local community.

*Petitions***MAITLAND HOSPITAL****Discussion**

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:31): More than 25,000 people have signed a petition that calls on the Government to publically own and operate the new Lower Hunter hospital. After seven years, three Premiers and two health Ministers, the people of Maitland have finally got the outcome they have fought so hard for. We should rename Australia Day "Maitland Hospital Day" because it was the day that the people of Maitland won the debate to have a fully public health system in this State. The day before, Minister Hazzard announced that the planned privatisation of the new hospital would be abandoned. The win was a great victory for people power over a Government agenda that members on the other side of the House fought tooth and nail for.

Mr Geoff Provest: We're paying for it.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: It is all very well for the member for Tweed to say that he wants the public hospital—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Maitland will not respond to interjections.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: It is all very well for the member for Tweed to interject because his hospital was never at risk of privatisation. The member for Upper Hunter, whose constituents will be using the new Maitland Hospital, tried to tell a gallery full of people that it was good for them to have a public-private partnership [PPP]. The Government has now said that it agrees that a PPP is not the way forward for the community. In 2016 the former health Minister announced that the Government was planning to privatise five public hospitals, in Wyong, Goulburn, Shellharbour, Bowral and Maitland. I pay tribute to the member for Wyong and the member for Shellharbour, who fought with our communities to ensure that this travesty did not take place. However, there is still one more PPP planned for the northern beaches. As late as 30 November 2017, Scot MacDonald was telling me that the new Maitland Hospital was going to be a PPP with a not-for-profit operator—it was finished.

As Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, the Central Coast and the Hunter, he refused to listen to the community or relay their wishes and thoughts to the health Minister. The health Minister will say that I have been lobbying him on this issue for the whole time he has held that office. Where was Scot MacDonald then? The truth is that you cannot trust the Liberals. Scot MacDonald is one of those people who, at the next election, will be trotting out the view that private hospitals are better for you, just as he has done for the past three years. We reject that model. There are real issues for the Northern Beaches Hospital with respect to transitions. A lot of staff have said that they still do not know whether they have a job to go to, less than nine months out from the hospital's opening its doors to the public. The Government has abandoned the Manly and Mona Vale hospitals by not replacing staff.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: If the member for Maitland wants to talk about the hospital in my electorate she should do so by way of substantive motion. This discussion is about a petition from her community, which I am happy to talk about. The member should stick to that; she is being a little silly at the moment.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Maitland will return to the leave of the discussion on the petition.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: In relation to the hospital in my electorate, the community that I represent sent a message to the Premier, to the Minister for Health and to the former Minister for Health that our community would not accept anything other than a public hospital. I thank the Maitland Community Unions Alliance, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Health Services Union, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation, the Retired Unionists Network and Unions NSW for their unwavering support in this fight. I urge the Minister and the Government not to reject the good decision that has been made after seven years. The hospitals in our State should remain public forever and ever.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (16:36): As the member for Maitland just observed, the Government has delivered on a promise to ensure that there will be a new hospital at Maitland. The former Minister indicated quite properly that she would look at a range of options to try to deliver the best possible hospital facilities in Maitland and in other areas. She indicated that that would be looked at and assessed. That is what has happened. This Government has had the benefit of being very effective in managing the economy so that it can build the infrastructure that is necessary for our hospitals, roads and schools. For 16 years I watched the economy of the former Liberal Government be absolutely decimated by the Labor Government. Over those years it became more and more obvious that Labor was completely incapable of managing the State's economy. As a result, despite its best intentions, that Labor Government was incapable of delivering hospitals, roads and schools. I recollect having a discussion with a senior Minister of that Government about the fact—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: The petition is about Maitland Hospital. It is not about the excellent management by the former Labor Government of schools, roads and hospitals.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The Minister has the call.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Maitland is certainly right: There was no excellent management. As a result of the management of the State over the past seven years, the economy has been turned around and this Government is therefore able to deliver a lot of the infrastructure that was missing for 16 years. Maitland Hospital was one of this Government's priorities. So over the past year or so the Government has weighed up the issues and listened to the community's desires for Maitland. As a result, the Government was able to make an informed, balanced decision, which has seen the announcement that the Government will build the Maitland

Hospital as a fully public model. As the member for Maitland indicated, that announcement was made on the day before Australia Day.

In her contribution today, the member for Maitland did not thank me for meeting with her constituents, as I have on many occasions. She did not thank me for my offer of an open door to my office to speak about the issues. She did not mention that her constituents were given a good hearing on the issues. She did not mention that the Government, after listening to the range of views, made an informed decision. That decision is great news for the people of Maitland. The Lower Hunter will benefit from a fantastic new hospital and the \$450 million commitment by this Government. I congratulate the people of the Hunter, not necessarily the local member of Parliament. Previously the member for Maitland has behaved in a reasonably balanced manner but today she is overly enthusiastic and acting a little silly.

I commend the people of the Lower Hunter for discussing the issues with me. I thank the Nurses and Midwives' Association, the medical practitioners, the Medical Staff Council and a range of other stakeholders. I have spoken to each of them. I met with them in Maitland and we had a public meeting where the member for Maitland behaved appropriately and was fair and reasonable. As a result of that fair and reasonable approach, there has been a fair and reasonable outcome. The Government is delivering \$7.7 billion worth of infrastructure into hospitals over the next four years. Never before in the history of New South Wales has so much funding been provided to hospitals. I congratulate the people of Maitland. The Government is looking forward to working with them. I have instructed that the substantive works commence before the end of the year.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (16:41): I congratulate the member for Maitland on the hard work she has done on behalf of her electorate. I acknowledge every resident, nurse and doctor from these five hospitals who gave of their time to ensure this hospital remains in public hands. I have been involved in many campaigns and this community-run campaign regarding the hospital has shown the community's deep feelings about the Americanisation of the healthcare system.

Mr Alister Henskens: What a load of rubbish.

Ms ANNA WATSON: It is not rubbish. Coalition governments cannot be trusted on health funding, at the State or Federal level. It is in their DNA; they do not like public health and they always oppose it. If the Government believes that the people of New South Wales will be happy about privatising our public hospitals it should think again. It should remember this failure. We will not forget and we will continue to fight for a guarantee from this Government that it will not privatise any more hospitals in New South Wales. That campaign will continue. This can never happen again. The citizens of this State oppose the Americanisation of the healthcare system.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: All I am hearing is white noise. I ask the Chair to direct the member to return to the leave of the motion rather than speak on broader issues of class warfare. The standing orders require that the member speak to the petition, which relates to Maitland Hospital

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Shellharbour will return to the discussion on the petition.

Mr Brad Hazzard: She may not know where Maitland is. I do not think she has been to Maitland.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I have already spoken about Maitland and I thanked the member for Maitland.

Mr Brad Hazzard: If you have already spoken about Maitland, then sit down.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The Minister will resume his seat.

Ms ANNA WATSON: In 2015 the community of Shellharbour was told by the member for Kiama and the then health Minister—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order: The petition has nothing to do with the community of Shellharbour. I ask that the member be drawn back to the leave of the motion.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The petition does refer to the privatisation of health services.

Ms ANNA WATSON: This Government has tormented the living daylights out of every citizen of New South Wales with its privatisation agenda—the failed council amalgamations and now the privatisation of public hospitals. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:44): I support the health Minister in this discussion about Maitland Hospital. As members know, I have made an announcement in my electorate about the significant investment in our local health system, which will help to improve people's lifestyles. I am perplexed that members

opposite are complaining and criticising the fact that they are receiving \$450 million for a state-of-the-art emergency site—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Did you fight for seven years for it to be public?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I fought for many years under a Labor government for hospital funding. Looking at the public gallery, I can see how much interest this discussion has generated! In all honesty, the clue is in what the health Minister said. We must be responsive to the needs of the people of New South Wales. For four years when I was in opposition, I saw a lot of wasted investments, such as \$500 million on the metro and \$500 million on the Tcard. That money was wasted. It was not until the Liberal-Nationals Government introduced firm economic policies that funds were ensured. At the last election, many of the members opposite campaigned against the recycling of assets. They said it was a terrible move and that the roof would fall in. Without that money, they would not have a record amount of money being invested in health. Full credit goes to the Treasurer and to the health Minister. What am I missing? Why is the Opposition dissatisfied that the Government is spending \$450 million on a hospital in the Maitland electorate which will improve the lifestyles of its community?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: I ask that the member for Tweed direct his comments through the Chair and not attack me for defending my community for seven years.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Tweed will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: The member for Maitland does not understand rhetorical questions because they have a deep edge. I am amazed that a member would complain about a hospital in their electorate receiving a \$450 million update.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: We never complained about that.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I have heard you complaining about it in this Chamber. I have heard the statements of the member for Maitland, of the member for Shellharbour and of the Maitland community, and I am gobsmacked. I am sure that people would be shocked if they knew that the member for Maitland was complaining about the Government spending a record amount of money in her electorate.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (16:48): By leave: I thank members on the other side for their indulgence. I support the member for Maitland and the people who have fought for Maitland Hospital, but I recognise this Minister, who was able to break free from the ideological restraints that were put in front of him by the former Premier and former Minister. I have to say that this Minister listened to people in Wyong, Shellharbour and Maitland. Public health is one of the most important killers of government. I visited the electorates of Maitland and Shellharbour and attended several rallies with people from my electorate. People on the street and at the rallies believed our hospitals should be publicly owned and operated—that was at the root of the issue. People in our communities that fundraised when our hospitals were originally built felt they had a personal ownership of those facilities. I know health is a very difficult portfolio area and health funding is a very difficult issue, but the public believes there are some things that governments should do 100 per cent—and public health is one of those.

The public understands that there must be private hospitals that work in partnership with fully owned and operated public hospitals. I do not blame the current Minister for the Government's decision but it has caused anxiety to the communities and particularly staff members because they were worried about their future. They told me that they did not know if they could take out a loan because they did not know where they might be working for the next 12 to 18 months. Governments have to take into account the severe impacts of these decisions on people who work in and use the system. I know that all of our communities are thankful that their hospitals will remain in public hands. They are happy that we took up the fight on their behalf in this place and represented their views—but they also recognise that the Government listened, and they appreciate that.

Private Members' Statements

BUILDING STANDARDS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:52): I inform the House of concerns of a constituent of mine, Con Thanopoulos, relating to the building industry in this State and owner-builder permits. Mr Thanopoulos is a chartered professional structural engineer and licensed builder. He is concerned that there are major flaws in the current system of owner-builder permits and that there are significant related safety issues. The relevant Minister advised me in response to a question on notice that between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016, 8,501 owner builder permits were issued and between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017, 8788 were issued, which gives a sense of the potential scale of the issues.

Mr Thanopoulos points to the problem of insurance issues. If someone obtains an owner-builder permit they then would normally choose subcontractors. These are typically bricklayers, concreters and so on. Each subcontractor with a contract over \$20,000 is obliged to provide home warranties insurance from the Home Building Compensation Fund to the owner-builder. There seems to be no check on this and no enforcement. On many occasions, as I understand it, this obligation is simply ignored. That has several consequences. One is that the contract price is cheaper than would otherwise be the case and saves the owner-builder money. It gives an unfair advantage to subcontractors who do not comply with the law compared to those who do. It makes getting an owner-builder permit an attractive option for those who are prepared to flout the law. Owner-builders can thus build far more cheaply than registered builders who comply with the law.

One obvious proposal that could be considered would be to make it a condition of obtaining a completion or occupation certificate from council that all home warranties insurance certificates and documents have been obtained. Another serious issue is the competence and regard for safety by owner-builders. An applicant for an owner-builder permit has to pass a multiple choice exam. That may be undertaken online. It is apparently notorious within the industry that someone other than the owner-builder actually completes that test. The test is for safety awareness, which is obviously of critical importance. But this practice means that apparently significant numbers of owner-builders do not have the knowledge relating to safety concerns that the community expects. Mr Thanopoulos raised these concerns with me and said:

Quality and safe construction procedures are being compromised. These only incur cost to the community and raise the likelihood of hazard, including structural collapse during and after building completion.

This is a very different regime to that for licensed builders. There are stringent and appropriately demanding requirements to be met to obtain such licences. Licensed builders have to acquire home warranty insurances, with significant sanctions if they do not. Additionally, licensed builders—as do many professionals—must complete continuing professional development, which includes seminars and courses. These are paid for by the licensed builder and are a condition of licence renewal.

Another problem with the way the owner-builder system operates is that some people are manipulating the system to effectively function as professional builders while masquerading behind owner-builder permits. There is meant to be a six-year gap between the issuing of owner-builder permits to individuals. This problem seems to occur in particular with purported owner-builders with large families or extended families. One family member applies for a permit and as soon as that dwelling is completed another family member applies for another permit, and so on. Mr Thanopoulos points to anecdotal evidence of this practice where one person uses other family members to run a building company behind the veneer of owner-builder permits. It seems somewhat reminiscent of the practice of dummy selectors in the days of nineteenth century land selection. There are no statistics about this—which, of course, is part of the problem.

In response to question 7059 that I placed on notice, I was advised that NSW Fair Trading does not capture data on how many owner-builder permits were issued to family members of people who already had a permit. NSW Fair Trading would only know of another family member's property if that family member was a joint owner of property with the applicant. The other data NSW Fair Trading does not capture is how many holders of owner-builder permits continue to reside in the home concerned. In the case of legitimate owner-builders it would be expected that a high proportion of them would continue to reside in the home for a while. In the case of the sham owner-builders that I described earlier the tenure would be expected to be limited. Knowing that information would allow an assessment to be made of the seriousness and extent of these issues. Without it, it seems likely that legitimate, professional builders are being undercut by cowboys who have little regard for either the law or community safety. As Mr Thanopoulos further said:

In conclusion, the owner builder permit scheme is a complete contradiction of our policies and to date continues to provide opportunities to those to break the law due to its mismanagement. As a result it deprives professional licensed builders of work opportunity and compromises safety and quality.

These are serious issues and deserve serious attention by the regulatory authorities.

CYCLIST SAFETY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (16:57): I bring to the House's attention a matter that means a great deal to me but, more importantly, is also of great concern to many of my constituents. In New South Wales there is a law pertaining to cyclists that I and many others believe needs to change. When a child reaches the age of 12 they are no longer permitted to ride a bicycle on the footpath in New South Wales. The roads of Sydney become ever more congested with cars, motorbikes, trucks and buses, presenting an ever-increasing risk to cyclists of any age, let alone a child of 12. I believe a change to the law needs to be made and made soon to allow children up to the age of 18 years at the very least to ride their bicycles on footpaths in New South Wales. I believe adults

who ride at a moderate speed in areas that have high levels of vehicle movement should also be permitted to ride on footpaths.

I am not a lone voice in calling for this change as it relates to minors on bicycles. In November last year Callum Gordon, a constituent of mine, contacted me for my support for his petition to change this law. Callum's daughter, Macy, was soon to turn 12 and would then be required to ride her bike on the road. I am terrified whenever I ride a bike on the road in my busy electorate of Coogee. Members can imagine the stress Callum must have felt at the prospect of his young daughter riding on those same roads, particularly during the peak hours when she rides to and from school. His campaign has been reported widely, including in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Last November in this House I gave notice of a general motion calling for a change in the law. I also wrote to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight outlining Mr Gordon's concerns and supporting his call for the law to be changed.

Many benefits will come about from a change to the current unacceptable law. Parents will feel more confident in allowing their children to continue cycling into their teenage years, which we hope will lead to those teenagers continuing to ride into adulthood. Not only will our young people be safer; they will also be healthier as a result of the physical activity of cycling. They will become more in tune with their neighbourhoods and appreciate their environs at the more human pace that cycling affords. They will also discover and learn to love the independence and freedom that comes with bicycle riding. They will be using a sustainable mode of transport and will not be contributing to the ever-increasing road congestion that is so often created by private vehicles occupied by only a driver. Last week I received a reply to my letter from the Minister informing me that the Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety will undertake an assessment of the impact of a change to the law. I thank her for taking this matter seriously.

As is to be expected with any legislative change that has an impact on our daily lives, there will be naysayers. Some will express concern that pedestrian safety will be severely compromised. However, numerous studies and experiences in other jurisdictions have demonstrated that the fear is unfounded. Indeed, New South Wales is lagging behind all other States except Victoria in making this change. In December the former Western Australian roads Minister informed me that the change to the law in that State lacked any controversy. I welcome support for this reform from Bike NSW, the Amy Gillette Foundation and many other cycling groups and organisations. However, this call for change from me and many others must not be misinterpreted as an excuse to ease up on the planning and construction of many more much-needed dedicated off-road cycleways. With ever-increasing urban density on the fringes of the Sydney central business district, getting people onto bikes is a simple, low-cost and incredibly effective means to get them to where they need to be and back again. We have a duty to make people's journeys—especially those of our youth—as safe as they can be.

HIDDEN TREASURES HONOUR ROLL

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (17:02): Last year the Upper Hunter electorate was fortunate to have 13 remarkable women honoured on the 2017 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll for outstanding contributions in volunteering and giving their time, expertise and energy to a wide range of social and community organisations and initiatives. It was the eighth year in which the Government has produced this important publication, which is an initiative of the Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network to celebrate women volunteers who give so much to their rural communities. It should be noted that 103 women from all over New South Wales were recognised on the honour roll. I am proud that 13 of them are residents of the Upper Hunter.

It is with great pleasure that I inform the House of the women in my electorate who have been recognised. Kim Allwood from Dungog is very involved within the community. She has held the position of Scout leader and has been involved in Parents and Citizens Association groups. She assists with the local rodeo, the Horse Tails program for children in need and assists with many fundraising activities. Over the past 18 months Kim has helped at the local community centre through Project Bounce Forward, assisting people who have lost their homes due to the floods. Suzanne Bibby from Cassilis is a member of the local Rural Fire Service brigade. She has held the positions of secretary, treasurer, deputy captain, Rural Fire Service association delegate, first aid officer and junior member coordinator. Suzanne also works part-time at the Coolah Aged Care Hostel.

Marie Blundell from Quirindi has served the Quirindi Country Women's Association branch as treasurer for many years and also coordinates its trash and treasure stalls to raise funds for the local community and help those less fortunate. For many years Tracey Briggs from Wallabadah has volunteered and worked for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service [RFS]. Tracey visits the local primary schools to teach fire safety and teaches fire safety within the community. Tracey also helps with cadet training. Tracey spends most of her weekends and time off volunteering. I note that Tracey was nominated by one of her proud children.

Kim Brown from Parkville has been an active member of the local RFS for more than 30 years, holding down many positions: first aid officer, deputy captain and Brigade Captain, and RFS Community Engagement Officer delivering fire safety programs to schools and the community. Kim is involved with the Food Pantry, Clean-Up Australia and the Biggest Morning Tea and also is a keen member of the local Parkville Tennis and Social Club. Barbara Campbell from Merriwa is fondly known as "Aunty Barb" and has been involved with the pastoral care of the youth of the community teaching Scripture in local schools as well as the Auslife program in the secondary department of the Merriwa Central School. She is a tireless worker for St David's, organising street stalls, Samaritan's Purse and she is a member of the local branch of the Country Women's Association [CWA]. Barbara also has been an enthusiastic committee member of the renowned Festival of the Fleeces for the past five years.

Suzanne Duggan from Merriwa has devoted 19 years of service to the aged care community of Merriwa. Suzanne is the supervisor of the Gummun Place Hostel and goes above and beyond the call of duty, making herself available to staff, medical professionals, residents and their families regardless of the time of day and night. Suzanne is very involved with fundraising activities and initiatives for the hostel. For many years Francene Halliger from Quirindi has been a devoted member of the Quirindi CWA, the Quirindi Show Society, the Quirindi Arts and Craft Shop, the Quirindi Heritage Village and the Quirindi Historical Society. Francene has shared her many talents by teaching women a variety of crafts at the CWA and has contributed her numerous skills, such as spinning and weaving. Kay Hopton from Scone has volunteered for many organisations including 31 years with the RFS and 20 years with the State Emergency Service [SES], both of which she is still helping. Kay also has held positions of treasurer and secretary for the Parkville RFS, the Parkville Social Club, the Wingen Bushman's Carnival, the Upper Hunter Junior Rodeo and the Kingdon Ponds and Tributaries Water Users Association.

I do not know where to start with the contributions of Sheila McNamara, OA, from Quirindi. This lady of 93 years of age has volunteered on countless organisations and has been involved in various church activities involving fundraising. She has donated her time and efforts to parents and citizens associations, the Catholic Women's League, and the St Vincent de Paul Conference for more than 40 years. She also has been a helper in the Vinnies Shop, a founding and continuing member of the Kidney Foundation Quirindi and has been a long-term member of the Retirement Homes Association. Sheila started many support groups including Meals on Wheels. Sheila still sells raffle tickets.

Gwen Meyer from Sandy Hollow is a passionate educator who has worked with generations of students and parents in our community. Frances Wallace, OA, from Quirindi is known as "Fran", or the "Guide Lady" or the "Meals on Wheels Lady" and by many other titles for her volunteer work over the years. Over the years Jodie Wilton of Cassilis has assisted with the Cassilis Rodeo Committee and many other activities within her community. I acknowledge and celebrate these wonderful women for their contributions to our Upper Hunter electorate and for their inclusion last year on the honour roll.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:07): On behalf of all members of the House, I acknowledge those amazing women in the Upper Hunter electorate. Many of them are unsung heroes who have provided, donated or volunteered unstintingly over many years. I congratulate each and every one of the ladies referred to in the speech made by the member for Upper Hunter. Those unsung heroes do not seek acknowledgement; they do their volunteering each and every day as a big part of their life just as we do our job every day of our lives. I thank the member for Upper Hunter for drawing to the attention of the House the wonderful contribution that each lady has made to their community.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary and remind him that if he comments for a minute on each of the 45 private member's statements, that will take an additional 45 minutes of the time of the House.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (17:08): In recent years considerable debate has focused on the celebration of Australia Day, what we want it to represent, what it should mean for us as a nation, and what values we share. In my electorate of South Coast, Australia Day is when we celebrate the very best of our community. Irrespective of the ongoing debate, over the Australia Day long weekend we come together each Australia Day in all electorates to pay tribute to the most dedicated, committed, kindest and most brilliant members of our community, which in my case is the South Coast community.

Since 1999, the Shoalhaven Australia Day Awards have been an opportunity to recognise the many outstanding members of our community who embody community spirit and who make a difference. This year was no different. I was thrilled to be in attendance to see the top prize of the night, the Shoalhaven Citizen of the Year Award, handed to long-time community advocate Aunty Nell Mooney. Aunty Nell was awarded this great honour

for her dedication to Shoalhaven youth and her commitment to Aboriginal culture, particularly in the southern Shoalhaven.

Aunty Nell has established and worked for numerous organisations across the Shoalhaven, including the Ulladulla Local Aboriginal Land Council, the South Coast Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Homework Centre—which she founded—in the Milton Ulladulla district. Her tireless commitment to her culture and community has been instrumental in facilitating the International Four Winds Conference taking place in the Shoalhaven. She founded the Wandarma Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in Ulladulla, and has been president of the group since its formation. Aunty Nell is a source of cultural knowledge and is held in high esteem by the Shoalhaven community. Her quiet drive to inspire others to step up has seen young Aboriginal people follow their passions and achieve their best across many aspects of their schooling. I have known and worked with Nell for many years and congratulate her most sincerely on receiving this honour, which she thoroughly deserves.

Highly Commended Citizen of the Year was awarded to another good friend, Brian Muller, for his fundraising for the Children's Variety Club Bash and leadership in the Shoalhaven business community. Brian has dedicated 24 years to Variety South Coast supporting sick and disadvantaged children. In his role as President of the Culburra Beach and Districts Chamber of Commerce Brian also mentors local businesses to help them to reach their full potential. Noel Webster took home the Environment Award for his commitment to preserving the environment and traditional practices. His tireless passion has empowered others to work with country in an environmental and sustainable way. He has shown outstanding leadership in his role with the Mudjingadalbaraga Firesticks Program.

The Junior Sports Award went to Dante Hyam in recognition of his achievements in motocross. Dante is an outstanding leader in his sporting community, representing Australia in the Junior Motocross World Champions in Russia. In 2017, Dante was a State champion and ranked third place in the Australian Junior Motocross World Championships. The Sports Award went to William Miller for his representation in rugby union. He has been involved in the Shoalhaven sporting community for many years and now plays professional rugby union with the Melbourne Rebels in Super Rugby. William will represent the New South Wales Waratahs in the 2018 season. He remains dedicated to his local club by mentoring younger players and contributing financially. Chris Mitchell was the recipient of the Highly Commended Inclusive Award for his work over more than 25 years to improve the design of sailing boats for people with disabilities and to promote the region as a tourism destination for people living with disabilities and their carers.

Gayle Dunn—another good friend and fine citizen—was awarded the Inclusive Award for creating a legacy of hope and strength for the community as the founder of the Dunn Lewis Centre in Ulladulla. The centre is an all-abilities accessible space that supports wellbeing, sport and social activity programs. It is something to behold. Gayle has gone above and beyond by creating a youth development foundation and school holiday craft activities, and providing facilities for community groups.

Young Citizen of the Year went to Riley Nolan. Riley is a committed role model for his peers through his involvement in the brilliant didgeridoo group at Ulladulla High School. He is an invaluable member of his school and local community, and has an unwavering dedication to those around him. He also works with Budawang School, where he is undertaking a Certificate III in Teaching and Education, and is junior coach with Yuukan Judo Club, mentoring children between the ages of five and 15 years to learn new martial arts skills and to feel confident.

I sincerely extend my congratulations to all those nominated—including my nominee, Sue Borrowdale, who has worked with the Rural Fire Service for 30 years—and to all the award recipients. Well done and thank you for what you do for our community. Gayle Dunn, an award recipient, whose son died in the Bali bombing, said that she never would have believed what she has been able to achieve with the Dunn Lewis Centre. It is a brilliant facility that is the result of her tireless advocacy and work. It is one of the best youth projects I have seen.

BAYSIDE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (17:13): I acknowledge the fantastic work of the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre, formerly known as the Botany Bay Business Enterprise Centre, and thank it for hosting me at the executive meeting this morning. The Bayside Business Enterprise Centre has been operating for more than 30 years within the territory of my good friend the member for Heffron. The centre is relatively new to Rockdale, but I am highly impressed with its professionalism, organisational structure and skill base. I welcome the centre to my community. The Bayside Business Enterprise Centre, which is part of the network of business enterprise centres across Australia, provides a range of professional services, training, networking opportunities and support to local businesses. What strikes me as special about the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre is the fantastic job it does in bringing small, medium and large businesses together in a mutually beneficial manner.

The Bayside Business Enterprise Centre was first formalised in 1987 as the Botany Enterprise Development Agency with support from the Botany Municipal Council, relatively early in the member for Heffron's long tenure at the helm of the City of Botany Bay. The board of directors was made up of senior employees—often the chief executive officers of a range of major local businesses, including banks, airlines and port-related businesses—and this tradition continues to this day, with many major companies taking on leadership roles within the business enterprise centre. The business enterprise centre was set up to create links among businesses and all levels of government, and it continues that job admirably to this day. The Bayside Business Enterprise Centre is lucky to have the support of some of the State significant businesses that call the Botany Bay area their home—Port Botany, Caltex, airlines and others with major pull—and they share their expertise and resources across the entire local business community. I am happy to see that collegiate spirit enter the Rockdale business community.

It is well known that I am a passionate advocate for local businesses in my community and across New South Wales. I ran my own businesses largely out of the Rockdale area for 30 years before I entered politics and as the local member I take a keen interest in promoting employment and business opportunities within my electorate. In my financial practice I spent a great deal of time advising clients on growing their businesses and thinking outside the square. I am well aware of the importance of skill sharing, advice and support in making or breaking local enterprise. That is why I am so excited by the quality of the services being offered by the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre and the opportunities this will offer to businesses in Rockdale as they expand across the local government area. It will offer great new opportunities, which have not always been highly accessible, in the Rockdale area.

I congratulate Executive Officer Marcus Dwyer, who has led the push to expand into Rockdale and grow the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre. I would recommend to all businesses in my electorate that they engage with Marcus and the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre to see how they might be able to support, and be supported, by this fantastic local network. Crucial to modern small businesses, Marcus and his team are providing advice and training in how to tackle the challenges of the digital economy, how businesses can engage with online marketplaces, how to make use of shared workspaces and virtual offices, how to deal with the challenges of cyber security and the possibilities created by our increasingly globalised world. The Bayside Business Enterprise Centre has set the gold standard for local business advocacy and advisory services. I look forward to working with the centre in the future to support our local business community and economy.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:17): As a former director of a business enterprise centre in my capacity as a councillor at Kogarah City Council, I too acknowledge the Bayside Business Enterprise Centre for its contribution to the small business community not only in Rockdale but also across the St George area. It is well known that small business is the backbone of our community, but small business only prospers in a good economy. Since 2011 this Government has turned the New South Wales economy around in every key major economic indicator. New South Wales is now contributing to more than 80 per cent of the economic growth across this country. We are creating more jobs, building infrastructure and reinvesting into local economies. It is good to see that small businesses are continuing to grow not only in my community but also in the community of the member for Rockdale.

MANNING BASE HOSPITAL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:19): I call on the New South Wales Minister for Health, Mr Brad Hazzard, to allocate \$2 million for planning stages two and three of the redevelopment of Manning Base Hospital. A clinical services plan was completed in late 2013. At the same time, a master building plan was completed that called for a three-stage redevelopment of Manning Base Hospital. Before the last election the Government promised \$20 million for stage one redevelopment. I am pleased to say that stage one is in progress and will be completed later this year. It includes a multi-level car park, which has been completed and is open. A basement car park, a new oncology facility and a new renal dialysis facility are also part of stage one.

When the \$20 million was promised, it was for stage one of the hospital redevelopment and not for the entire redevelopment. The clinical services plan and the master building plan called for a three-stage process, and that is what is expected to be delivered. Some scaremongers in the Myall Lakes community are saying that the clinical services plan needs to be updated. We all know that when a clinical services plan is done under health infrastructure guidelines it is good for at least 10 years—it is a 10-year plan. The phase after the clinical services plan and the master building plan is the detailed planning design, which can be tweaked.

The master building plan that has been completed is a high-level conceptual plan. The next step is to get the detailed design required by the builder. That includes specifications, engineering designs, utilities designs and all the other things that are needed. I am calling for \$2 million for the planning of stages two and three. That planning needs to take place because stage one will be completed later this year. The staff of Manning Base Hospital deserve to have the very best hospital—a twenty-first century hospital—because they are doing such a

fantastic job, meeting and exceeding all key performance indicators. It is the best-performing hospital in the Hunter New England Local Health district because of the hardworking doctors, nurses and ancillary staff.

When the Liberal-Nationals came to government, the hospital's clinical services had been so neglected by the previous Labor Government that the hospital was in jeopardy of losing its accreditation. Since then, we have increased the number of specialists, including anaesthetists, emergency specialists, intensive care unit specialists, obstetricians, geriatricians, general surgeons, nephrologists and cardiologists. For the first time ever, we have an oncologist. We were told that we did not need an oncologist as there would not be enough work for one. I am pleased to say that this week a second oncologist is starting at the hospital. Dr Marchett will be joining Dr Ted Livshin, who has been there for several years. That is an important development for the Myall Lakes community.

Stages two and three of the hospital redevelopment include some of the following: relocation of the pharmacy and demolition of the existing pharmacy building; expansion of outpatient clinics; creation of a new pathology building and demolition of the existing building; relocation of imaging into stage one; relocation of medical records from the current building into vacated imaging department areas; provision of a new after-hours car park for emergency; demolition of building 2; demolition of the existing mortuary building; construction of a new engineering services building and delivery yard; and redevelopment and construction of the cafe.

Stages two and three also include the demolition and relocation of the dental service building and the creation of increased car park capacity; creation of a new two-storey vertical expansion of stage one buildings; development of a new three- to six-storey inpatient wards building, including kitchen and support services and outpatient expansion on level 1, 30-bed wards on levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, and plant on level 6; relocation of administration into the main area of the hospital; creation of increased mental health and subacute services through additional floors; expansion of community health; further expansion of the raised car park deck; expansion of inpatient wards; and development of a three-storey building for education and a possible administration building.

BONDI BEACH BLACK SUNDAY EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage) (17:24): On Sunday 4 February I joined Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club and North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club members and nippers at Bondi Beach to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of Australia's deadliest mass surf rescue, Black Sunday. Many people out on the beach enjoying their Sunday swim or walk watched as our local lifesavers re-enacted the event. I was also joined at the beach by the Mayor of Waverley, councillors Sally Betts and Leon Goltsman and more than 80 lifesavers, local nippers, volunteers and beachgoers.

On 6 February 1938 tens of thousands of Bondi beachgoers were enjoying a 40 degree summer's day at the beach when three huge successive waves swept 250 swimmers out to sea. Men, women and children were knocked off their feet and fought for their lives in a frenzied bid to save themselves. Dozens of lifesavers began rescuing swimmers in a scene of panic. As each unconscious patient was brought to the beach it began to resemble a battlefield, which is why the incident is referred to as "Black Sunday". Several lifesavers nearly drowned as they were pulled under the sea by those they were trying to rescue. In those days the men and boys who served as lifesavers wore woollen swimsuits. They fought the ocean heroically, and the sand became littered with people who others were attempting to revive. The re-enactment I attended on Sunday was to honour those who died but was also a tribute to those lifesavers who showed their skill, heroism, selflessness and bravery on that day by saving so many lives.

According to the North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club President Mark Cotter, who was with me last Sunday, Black Sunday was the day that the legend of the Australian surf lifesaver was etched into immortality. Our modern lifesavers at Bondi Beach are the descendants of those people who lost their lives on that day 80 years ago, so the event was also a tribute to them. They follow in that Black Sunday tradition every day through their brave and selfless work on our beaches. Since this terrible tragedy occurred 80 years ago, there is no question that lifesaving has evolved. There have been significant advances in medicine, technology and equipment that have aided our rescue and resuscitation techniques. There were no helicopters, jetskis, inflatable rescue boats or even simple swim fins 80 years ago. On Black Sunday in 1938, dozens of surf lifesavers swam into the surf to rescue swimmers while wearing simple belts attached with rope to surf reels.

I thank the lifesavers at Bondi and North Bondi who, this summer alone, collectively have volunteered more than 13,000 patrol hours, performed more than 300 rescues, administered first aid to 710 people and prevented countless rescues through their vigilant management of Bondi Beach. I thank them for their efforts and the time they selflessly gave to ensure that every swimmer, whether a local or from around the world, is safe on our local beaches—and particularly on Bondi Beach. They are our Bondi Beach heroes and I am proud to represent them as the member for Vaucluse.

I also thank the President of the Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club, Jacob Waks, for organising the event and inviting me to Bondi Beach on Sunday. Jacob's motto as a lifesaver is "prevention and education". Sunday's re-enactment of Black Sunday has fulfilled both of those key priorities as lifesavers have continued to increase public awareness of the dangers of rips, promote beach safety and educate swimmers to always swim between the flags. I look forward to returning to Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club and North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club during the year. As the weather is already proving, I am sure that it will be a busy 2018 on the beach. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:29): This week we have heard much in this place about the utter debacle that is the unworkable new train timetable introduced by the vainglorious Minister for Transport and Infrastructure on 26 November. The new timetable has resulted in cancellations, delays and a total mess. There are not enough drivers to meet the timetable unless they work enormous amounts of overtime. The Minister spoke of there being winners and losers from the timetable, and certainly commuters in the Granville electorate have lost out. They have been penalised in order to make travel to the city a few minutes quicker for commuters in the few remaining Western Sydney seats held by the Government—that is when the trains actually run to the timetable, which is not very often. The timetable is more of an aspiration than an indication of when and where trains are running. Overall there may be more timetable services, but in my electorate there are a lot fewer.

Granville is no longer a major interchange; it is not even indicated in bold on the Sydney Trains map anymore. Fewer trains stop there than at Clyde. A suburb founded as Parramatta Junction when the train line was first built west from the city, which has been a major interchange between buses and trains between the South and Western lines for more than a century, is no more. During the week platforms 1 and 2 are closed and the Western Line services do not even stop. Journeys to the city which took as little as 28 minutes five years ago now routinely are replaced by all-stations trains, making the journey 43 minutes. That inconvenience flows through to Merrylands and Guildford as well, with the South and Inner West lines being combined. It will come as a massive surprise to no-one that Granville, Merrylands and Guildford are not full of people travelling to Lewisham every day.

During peak times, many of the trains are the old non-air-conditioned S sets, which were recommissioned to meet the demands of this idiotic, unworkable timetable. Some passengers have recorded temperatures on the trains as high as 51 degrees Celsius in the recent heatwave. Many of the passengers on these trains spend over an hour in these awful conditions. They are not just occasional trains; they are running every day during peak times—eight every morning and six every evening. When passengers get to work they need a shower. I have caught the trains myself, as recently as yesterday, and it is awful. To make matters worse, passengers cannot travel further west than Parramatta from Granville anymore. People who have an appointment at Westmead Hospital, our local hospital, where parking is an absolute nightmare, need to change trains at Parramatta. A journey that used to take six minutes can now take 20.

Commuters from Merrylands and Guildford are often encouraged to go to Parramatta to change onto trains to the city. Anyone from Granville who can get a bus to Parramatta instead of walking to Granville is doing so, and this is destroying the shops at Granville station and the livelihoods of the families that depend on them. Parramatta station cannot cope with the extra crowds and it is getting quite dangerous, as well as making it much harder to make connecting trains through the giant throng of people. No-one seemed to think of that when the timetable was put together, but it is a massive safety issue. The new timetable is totally unworkable, it is creating dangerous overcrowding and it totally disadvantages whole areas of Sydney. It is an utter debacle that could be seen coming a mile off.

There are not enough drivers. Retired drivers are being begged to come back to work and the timetable relies on overtime. Yet two years ago this incompetent Government cancelled driver training for new drivers. Clearly, the timetable makes no allowances for any problems and it is causing massive delays. Before Christmas an incident in the morning at Wentworthville caused cancellations and delays until late into the evening, and throughout January we saw what an utter mess this timetable is. On Monday 8 January, 18 trains were cancelled. The following day, lightning strikes caused all sorts of problems across the network. It is not a particularly random or unusual weather phenomenon but it was enough to completely stuff up the network under this timetable. There were not enough drivers, and passengers faced long queues and overcrowded platforms across Sydney—that is if they were not turned away altogether from the overcrowded platforms. On 10 January there were further cancellations.

Arising from all this mess, we found out the embarrassing secrets about the much-hyped new timetable. Last year documents were leaked showing that the new timetable lacks any capacity for contingencies. The transport Minister knew that but pressed on with the new timetable. There are not enough drivers to service the new timetable. The Minister also knew that but still he pressed ahead. He has no judgement whatsoever—as we

saw with the embarrassing Ferry McFerryface-rigged election and now see with the timetable. When the Premier was transport Minister she spoke of not increasing fares until customer service improved, but under this Minister that quaint notion has gone out the window. The trains are stuffed but fares keep going up, and the Opal card incentives to increase train usage have been wound back. The people of my electorate and everyone in Sydney deserve better. We deserve and pay for a transport system that can reliably move hundreds of thousands of people around our city cheaply and efficiently. The Minister needs to go back to the drawing board and come up with a workable and fair train timetable and fix this mess.

ILUKA EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:34): I inform the House of the need for emergency health services for the village of Iluka. Iluka is a small coastal community in my electorate but it deserves to have high priority health services and emergency health services. Last year I presented a petition to the House, instigated by John and Ann McLean, calling for an ambulance station in Iluka. John and Ann worked very hard to get 11,500 signatures on their petition, which is quite extraordinary given Iluka is a community of only 2,000 people. However, Iluka is a coastal town whose population swells over Christmas with holiday-makers from far and wide. It has a high proportion of older people, it is remote, it is a holiday destination, it is a beachside village and it deserves to have an ambulance station.

We know that the incidence of heart disease is more prevalent in older people. They should not be forced to leave their home and community to be closer to health services. Allowing people to stay in their home, with their family and friends close by, is good for people's health and general wellbeing. Therefore, we should be encouraging people to stay in their communities, and the provision of health services to these communities is vital to enable this to happen. It is important to ensure that when people call emergency health services, because their life is at risk from a heart attack or some other life-threatening condition, that help arrives as quickly as possible. Whether it is a heart attack or a shark attack, the provision of these services has an impact on where a person chooses to live or holiday.

The number of calls seeking ambulance assistance to Iluka is significant enough to warrant consideration for an ambulance station. In 2015-16 there were 380 call-outs for ambulances for Iluka and Wombah, a nearby village, and in 2016-17 there were 344 call-outs to both villages. The Minister's response to the petition was not supportive because the Maclean ambulance station, which is only about 30 minutes away from Iluka, has been upgraded to include seven additional paramedics and now operates 24/7, while Yamba, on the opposite side of the Clarence River to Iluka, can also respond to calls from Iluka. However, the Minister did advise that the township of Iluka has been identified as highly suitable for the establishment of a community first responder service.

There are a number of community first responders across the State. Indeed, Glenreagh, Nana Glen, Lowanna-Ulong and Coramba are serviced with community first responders, as are another 50 in other communities across New South Wales. This is a terrific opportunity for Iluka and for all our small communities. Having a first responder within the community would be a wonderful step towards saving lives and building resilience within the community. I agree that it is a big call for volunteers but we already have these people within our community. We already have first responder volunteers with the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue and Road Crash Rescue. Our volunteers are what make our regional communities so great.

Community first responders are Ambulance Service of New South Wales volunteers. They are trained by paramedics locally and provided with support by the Ambulance Service of New South Wales. They live locally in the town and can respond immediately once a 000 call is made. An ambulance is dispatched at the same time and may take time to reach the scene, even if there is an ambulance station in town. We all know that ambulances do not stay parked in the ambulance station waiting for an incident to happen in town. They are on the road, where they should be. However, community first responders live within the community and can be on the scene in minutes, providing lifesaving care as well as being in continual communication with ambulance officers whilst the ambulance is coming.

Last Sunday I was at the Iluka markets, along with the Ambulance Service, canvassing the idea of establishing a community first responder for the town. I know that the community wants an ambulance station, and so do I. I would like an ambulance station in every small community in my electorate. In the short term the establishment of a community first responder may help whilst the fight for an ambulance station continues. I see this as a first step in the process, just as it was at South West Rocks, which started off with a community first responder and ended up with an ambulance station a few years later. I thank John and Ann for their extraordinary efforts in raising community awareness about this very important community service.

NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:38): Today I speak about 12 exceptional groups serving the community in my North Shore electorate that have been rewarded through the 2017 Community Building Partnership program. The organisations I speak about today are driven by extraordinary people who often volunteer their time in various capacities and roles, each being immensely important to our community and those who rely on their services. Despite being a wide variety of groups, they all have one thing in common: they bring together the community of North Shore.

Clubs, churches, charities, councils and schools have received funding in the latest release of the Berejiklian Government's Community Building Partnership program, which I have been closely involved with. The funding will allow organisations to carry out projects that will benefit the electorate of North Shore. The Middle Harbour Public School Parents and Citizens Association received \$40,000 for a performance platform and outdoor learning space. I congratulate David Miller, Carole Jaye and Laura Barry on securing that funding. I have had the great privilege of spending time at Middle Harbour Public School on a number of occasions and know that this funding will benefit students and staff.

Mosman Cricket Club has replaced its junior cricket training nets, thanks to Warwick Adlam and Bernie Smith securing \$41,758 of funding. Mosman Cricket Club not only attracts players like Brett Lee and Johan Botha, but also trains hundreds of future cricket legends. Thanks to Paul Dale and Craig Roberts securing \$25,000 of funding, St Augustine's Anglican Church, Neutral Bay, will be able to renovate its community-use kitchen, which will enable it to provide much-needed additional after school care for local kids. Thanks to the work of Kate Blunden, Steve Connelly, Kate O'Brien, and Nadia Tobia, Mosman Public School Parents and Citizens Association will use secured funding to upgrade the school's playgrounds. I have spent a lot of time at Mosman Public School and was even roped into the five kilometre "Mini-Mos" community fun run, which is an epic fundraiser and community event run by the school's wonderful Parents and Citizens association.

Taldumande Youth Services upgraded the youth crisis refuge bedrooms in its Neutral Bay facility, thanks to Lisa Graham and Kevin Tran's application for funding. When I attended Taldumande Youth Services' most recent annual general meeting I was once again floored by the organisation's compassion and the impact of its services on young lives. I look forward to seeing the staff at their gala dinner in May. North Sydney Boys High School Parents and Citizens Association also helped its school community achieve a grant for a flexible outdoor learning space. I congratulate Yugen Pilay on the achievement. North Sydney Boys High School is a great school with community-minded students, whom I joined with for the Red Shield Appeal last year.

The Government and North Sydney Council will undertake upgrades to local playgrounds, which I will open with Mayor Jilly Gibson early this year, thanks to a grant. With many young families living in the area and almost half the community living in apartments, I am always striving to invest more in public spaces. Richard Neal and Lachlan Edwards applied for and received funding for much-needed repairs to the building and entrance steps of Christ Church, Lavender Bay. I have had the great pleasure of getting to know Lachlan Edwards, who is the church's minister. This funding will make a big difference to the church community. Cancer Council NSW secured funding to enable the erection of information displays at Mater Hospital in Wollstonecraft. I thank Emily Kam for that application. I have had a lot to do with the Cancer Council and participated in its Stars of the North dance for cancer event last year. However, I was told I will not be asked back this year.

North Sydney Community Centre used secured funding for a community mosaic project. John Gallo, Harold Marshbaum and Rabbi Chaim Koncinski secured funding for the construction of a multipurpose community space for Cremorne Synagogue. I thank the Cremorne Synagogue community for welcoming me to celebrate Hanukkah with them last year. Andrea Bird secured \$45,000 for a function room and deck overlooking the public walkway at the Mosman Rowers club. I have met with members of this great organisation and attended many functions at its unique and picturesque community club, which provides services for many community organisations.

The Community Building Partnership is providing more than \$300,000 of investment for necessary and worthwhile projects within the electorate of North Shore. The program is only made possible by this Government's incredible management of the budget, which has delivered time and again not just for the North Shore but for the entire State of New South Wales. I thank the Premier and the Treasurer for their outstanding leadership, which has made this money available to my community. Equally important, I thank all the volunteers, who do such great work within the North Shore.

WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (17:43): There has never been a better time to live in regional and rural New South Wales—that is the recent catchcry heard in regional areas, such is the stream of

funding that is coming into our electorates. In fact, there has never been a better time to live in regional and rural New South Wales under a Liberal-Nationals Government. This year, community partnerships delivered \$300,000 to my electorate. I joined community members at a number of events to announce this funding.

One of the highlights of the Community Building Partnership program this year is the grant to the Lockhart Shire Council for The Rock Regional Observatory. The Rock Progress Association applied for \$100,000 to build an observatory in The Rock. This building is about 16 metres long and 10 metres wide, with a teaching space. It will house two telescopes—one of about 24 inches and the other of about 28 inches. Those telescopes have been gifted by Canberra, along with the domes needed to complete the construction. This observatory has the support of The Rock community as well as the Lockhart Shire Council, and the project has been driven by Gail Driscoll of The Rock Progress Association along with Dr Graeme White, a scientist employed at Charles Sturt University. This will be the only observatory in the south-west region; the nearest observatory to it is the one in Canberra. It is my hope that every school student within the Riverina and the Albury-Murray region has an opportunity to look at the stars through the lens of a telescope at The Rock. It will be great for tourism and for education. I have certainly embraced and encouraged this project.

While I was at The Rock I made an announcement about The Rock and District Men's Shed. The shed has been developing over a number of years and has been the recipient of grants to fix the flooring, which was uneven. This has been particularly helpful for people with disabilities. During this week's visit I announced more funds to help the organisation extend the shed and put in kitchen facilities as well as a dining room. The \$19,750 will be used to extend the steel shed and create a new meeting room and a separate space for the industrial workshop. The Australian Men's Shed Association is a fantastic organisation. There are sheds in Adelong, Tumut, The Rock and Lockhart and two in Wagga Wagga. Even in Talbingo the community is beginning to create a Men's Shed. They are terrific places for men to get together and talk about things that matter to them, particularly with a focus on health and wellbeing.

While I was at The Rock I announced that \$6,094 would be granted for the replacement of existing Australian Football League [AFL] goalposts. That grant is on top of funding for a bore which is used to water the grounds, and further enhancements are being planned. The Rock Memorial Bowling Club provides Meals on Wheels to older frail people in The Rock and throughout the Lockhart Shire. This funding will help the club fit a dishwasher and hot water system, and purchase a gas fryer and fridge. It will also enable the club to install a disabled ramp. The Rock Memorial Bowling Club has been subjected to a number of floods. It is the meeting place for that community.

The community welcomes these grants and I am sure all members of this place get a great deal of pleasure out of joining with applicants to announce them. Whether the grants are small or as large as \$100,000 the benefit to the communities is measurable and appreciated. Those Community Building Partnership grants of \$100,000 from the Treasurer and Premier should be welcomed by all members of this House. As I started by saying, there has never been a better time to live in regional and rural New South Wales. There has never been a better time to live in this State than under this Liberal-National Government. And as the Mayor of Wagga Wagga says, there has never been a better time to live in the City of Wagga Wagga. prospect electorate Sudanese Community

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:48): Today commemorates the Catholic feast day of St Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of Sudan and victims of human trafficking. This feast day has great significance for the Christian Sudanese population in my electorate. Civil war has led to the diaspora of the Sudanese community from Sudan. Throughout the Catholic community this day is designated as an international day of awareness of human trafficking. St Josephine Bakhita was born in 1869 in Sudan, and was kidnapped and enslaved at an early age. She suffered abuse at the hands of her Arabian and Sudanese owners, including regular beatings, forced conversion to Islam, and ritualistic scarification.

She forgot her birth name due to the trauma and took on the name given to her by the slavers, Bakhita, which is Arabic for lucky. This sad story is often repeated in Sudan and other African nations. Bakhita was taken to Italy and an error by a slave master resulted in her freedom while in the care of the Canossian Sisters, a religious institute in Venice. She forgave her captors and became a sister of the order. St Josephine worked and lived with the Canossian Sisters until her death in 1947. She was canonised by Pope John Paul II in 2000.

Today, St Josephine Bakhita is a symbol of many things: the legacy of European colonialism across the world, the continuing horror of human trafficking, and the strength of modern Christian Sudanese. Tonight I will join civic leaders, community groups and religious organisations to celebrate this day in her name. To this day, there are serious issues surrounding human trafficking that have not yet been addressed. I commend the organisations, including the Catholic Church, that will today announce initiatives to eliminate modern slavery around the world.

More than 45.8 million people worldwide, including an estimated 4,000 people in Australia, are subjected to modern slavery. St Josephine Bakhita symbolises the ongoing strength of the Sudanese people in dealing with the Christian Sudanese diaspora. Sudan and South Sudan is a nation in the grip of great struggles that include civil war and widespread violence. I have spoken previously of the strength of the South Sudanese community in New South Wales and my electorate of Prospect. This community grows by 30 per cent each year. These are hardworking immigrants who have escaped persecution and terrible conditions in order to contribute to our community in Western Sydney. Saint Josephine Bakhita's story is about finding acceptance in a new homeland. I am proud to speak for the many families in the electorate of Prospect who have fled violence in their homeland to start a new life in Australia.

As the head of the Catholic Church in Australia, Archbishop Fisher will tonight deliver a mass at St Mary's Cathedral. The shadow Attorney General and others will attend that mass to celebrate the life of St Josephine Bakhita. The church will announce initiatives to end modern slavery. I commend the Catholic Church for its actions and I thank the South Sudanese community in my electorate. I will continue to work with them to eliminate slavery in this country and raise awareness of the issues still present in Sudan that impact the families in Western Sydney today. I thank the House.

BOAT TRAILERS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (17:53): Today I speak about an issue that I first raised in 2011. The House is aware that 204,000 boat trailers are registered in New South Wales. That number has been forecast to increase by 3 per cent a year. Currently a boat trailer can be parked for an indefinite amount of time unless there are parking restrictions or reasonable grounds to believe that a trailer has been left or abandoned. This Government asked a number of councils to participate in a trial to develop solutions to address the issue of boats being parked indefinitely in the same spot. The City of Canada Bay participated in that trial.

The results of that trial have been monitored. Some 28 per cent of boat trailers that are parked in the City of Canada Bay do not belong in the electorate; their owners live kilometres away in other Sydney suburbs. This problem has been happening for years and is becoming increasingly frustrating for people living in my electorate. I have worked with the council for a number of years to rectify this problem. It is unacceptable to conduct a trial and not act on the results. Over the next few weeks I will work closely with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Minister for Local Government to resolve this issue. I will read the following correspondence from my constituents:

I have lived in Drummoyne for almost 40 years, the last 28 years in Napier Street. Over the last few years I have noticed increasing numbers of boat trailers with boats on board being parked on the local streets.

My constituent stated that this might be due to the many upgraded facilities in my electorate. He further stated that a trailer with a boat that has been parked on his street for the past two years is creating all sorts of issues. He said:

I have spoken to the owner of the boat pointing out the problem caused by his boat at that location.

He said it is creating traffic issues and will lead to accidents, but nothing has been done. Another constituent stated:

I refer to your previous correspondence ...

It is pleasing that Roads and Maritime are now covered by the same Department which hopefully will lead to more commonsense policies and actions.

Under the present laws boat owners who moor their boats on the water pay significant money to do so. However, those who choose to litter the streets with them escape any payment whatsoever and in fact seem to be welcomed by local council. This is surely discrimination of the worst type and totally unfair.

Another constituent commented on a trailer in his street and said:

The trailer was parked on an angle so they could place a security chain around the tree. This made the rear of the boat/trailer extend out onto the roadway making it very difficult (and unsafe) for us when reversing from our driveway.

This practice is dangerous and unacceptable. It is disappointing that the trial has suggested many recommendations but nothing of substance is being done. The time has come for the New South Wales Government to act. Hopefully we will achieve a resolution shortly. I have discussed this problem in detail with the staff of the City of Canada Bay. They have drafted a policy which states that boat trailers cannot be left for more than 24 days in the City of Canada Bay. If they are, they will be impounded. The problem is that owners will move their trailers around the corner and the 24-day period will have to start again. I am happy to table a response from the council about its solution. Although it may take a bit of will from government departments to act on the policy, I am confident that they will. Over the coming days and weeks I will do my best to solve this issue. It is unacceptable to conduct a trial for years without a suitable remedy to resolve the problem.

COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:58): Tonight I pay tribute to a former constituent and a current constituent that I have known for more than 40 years. Both men received Medals of the Order of Australia on Australia Day. Geoff King is the local Holden dealer in Coffs Harbour. I say with all sincerity that I have never known a more generous man in all my life. When people ask him for help, they always walk away with something. He has sponsored surf clubs and has been a member of the Westpac Helicopter board for many years. Every year he holds a Christmas party on the Monday before Christmas at which there is a butt of beef and who knows how many kegs of beer. He does this to say thank you to police officers in the Coffs Harbour electorate.

Geoff always resists any gratitude or a thank you and says, "Mate, it's part of my life". I first met Geoff in Port Macquarie when my wife bought the first car she ever bought off him, which was well before I became a member of this place. Geoff then bought a dealership in Coffs Harbour and from the moment he moved there he has contributed to every charity. He supported the Police Citizen's Youth Club. I think he is patron of every surf club—Sawtell, Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour—in my electorate. He provided a water tank to water the golf course at Nambucca Heads. He does not tell anyone he does these things, but I know about them as do some others. We were thrilled to provide a reference for him to the honours committee, and I am thrilled that he finally has been recognised. In 2004 he was Coffs Harbour Citizen of the Year. He gives generously of his time and his money. His wife, Gay, is yet another great citizen who no doubt does without for the charities in our community to which he donates. On behalf of every member of the Coffs coast community, I thank Geoff King.

I also recognise Robert Lee Denner who used to be my constituent but now lives in Dorrigo. Bob Denner, who is returned serviceman, has been one of the most phenomenal contributors to returned service personnel. He has held a number of positions, including: President of Coffs Coast Legacy from 2013 to 2015 and a member since 1992; Secretary of the Dorrigo RSL Sub-branch since 1993; pensions welfare officer since 1993; President of the North Coast District Council from 2003 to 2005; North Coast District Council sub-branch representative since 1993; Dorrigo Memorial RSL Club board member; Secretary and Treasurer of Dorrigo Youth Clinic; volunteer, Bellingen Shire Council Advisory Committee 2009 to 2012; Australia Day Committee volunteer 2009 to 2012; Dorrigo Plateau Community Incorporated member; Dorrigo Seniors' Action Housing Group member; Dorrigo Multi-Purposes Service Advisory Committee member; Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service member for more than 10 years; and Secretary and life member of the Dorrigo Drama Club from 2006 to 2008. Bob has done everything.

Coffs Harbour had the first soldier killed in active service since Vietnam—Matthew Locke. Each year Bellingen holds a football match, which the Governor of New South Wales has been attending since before his appointment as Governor. Bob and I talked about how we could honour Matt's history. Matt received the Medal for Gallantry. Eventually we asked Bellingen Shire Council to name a bridge over the Pacific Highway in honour of him and it has happened. Sadly, the council put the plaque on the side of the bridge that could not be seen from the highway. When this Government was elected I talked to Duncan Gay and he arranged for the sign to be moved onto the bridge. Bob, on behalf of the RSL, instigated that honour. Bob looks after ex-service personnel and his community as I have enunciated. He well and truly deserves this honour.

CYCLING

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (18:03): Cycling is a clean and healthy transport option that can reduce traffic and public transport congestion. Population growth is stretching road and public transport infrastructure. Building new roads increases congestion in the long term, and leads to pollution and loss of public space and private property. Most commutes in Sydney are a rideable distance and if those who can ride have access to safe cycling options, they will. While cities around the world such as London, Paris and New York have embraced cycling as an alternative transport option, the New South Wales Government has shown cyclists contempt. Penalties for bicycle offences now match penalties for motor vehicle offences, despite motor vehicle offences creating significantly greater safety risks. Most offences now attract a fine of between \$319 and \$425. Interestingly, a car driving in a bus lane is fined almost double that for driving in a bicycle lane.

Last financial year the Government raised \$2.2 million from 9,750 cycling offences, most for not wearing a helmet or not having a bell. During that period only 17 drivers were fined for overtaking too close to a cyclist. Cycling fatalities and injuries have dropped because regular cycling rates have dropped by more than 4 per cent in the past two years. Cyclist fatalities and injuries overwhelmingly are the result of driver offences. Cyclist safety is best improved by providing safer cycling options. But Sydney's most used cycling infrastructure was removed in 2015 to appease anticyclist tabloid media. The lane was never used by traffic, and the more than 2,000 riders using it each day outnumbered the people in motor vehicles in adjacent lanes. Parents driving children to school is a major factor in peak traffic congestion, yet most families live within cycling distance of their schools.

Last year in a private members' statement the Minister for Education called for improved walking and cycling infrastructure connecting schools to their communities. Connecting students travelling from the east and west to the planned inner-city high school on Cleveland Street is a priority. Chalmers, Elizabeth, Lee and Regent Streets are the key access roads. They are major traffic routes, and risky for inexperienced and young riders. In response to my requests, the Government has deflected responsibility to council, ignoring that it has an obligation to provide a dedicated cycleway that would provide safe options over the light rail track to Prince Alfred Park, which would link to the school as part of the consent conditions for the CBD and South East Light Rail project.

Footpath laws must also change. All States except Victoria allow bikes on the footpath. In New South Wales, everyone aged 12 years and over must ride on the road, unless they are an adult supervising a cyclist under 12. Even an older sibling who is not an adult cannot ride on the footpath to supervise their younger brother or sister, creating a strange anomaly. Parents riding with toddlers in a child carrier must also ride on the road. I welcomed the member for Coogee's support and his comments earlier today in his private members' statement, which outlined that the Government is looking into this concern. We should not force inexperienced and less confident riders to cycle with fast traffic and heavy trucks. Most will opt to drive instead. If people could ride on the footpath when there is no safe cycleway, many would.

The introduction of bike share companies and the growth in app-related food delivery services such as Deliveroo and foodora are seeing new trips made by bicycle and show that business wants to invest in cycling. We must make cycling safe for new riders. Interestingly, bike riders in the city of Sydney are bucking the State's trend of declining cycling rates due to the council's program of building connected bike paths. Twice as many women ride in the local government area than in Greater Sydney. I welcome the Government's commitment to fix the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway, which puts cyclists and pedestrians in conflict, especially around Fort Street Public School, and has inaccessible steps north of the bridge.

But much more is needed. Plans set out in the Draft Future Transport Strategy must be brought forward. We urgently need the city centre cycleway network planned in the Sydney City Centre Access Strategy completed and reconstruction of the College Street cycleway or an alternative full-time north-south connection to Circular Quay. We must design and complete the Sydney Airport links. Targets to increase the proportion of journeys taken by bicycle within a five-kilometre radius of a town or centre are needed, with a whole-of-government approach from Roads, Transport, Health and Education. Cycling is an important transport option that has massive health, environmental and economic benefits. I call on the Government to work with councils and bicycle groups to ensure cycling rates reach their potential.

MIRANDA ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:08): I acknowledge the recipients of the Australia Day honours across the electorate of Miranda. Australia Day emulates the values of Australia and encompasses what it means to be an Australian. We come together to reflect on our past and our present, and to look forward to the future with a shared sense of national pride. It is also a day that we acknowledge the contribution outstanding Australians made in our local communities. I often say that the electorate of Miranda has an unbounded sense of community. This is due in no small part to the achievements and successes of these celebrated individuals. It is an honour to acknowledge Ernest Schmatt, who was appointed as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for significant service to the law in the field of legal education and review, and through the use of technology to assist the judiciary.

Mr Schmatt has been at the helm of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales since its creation 31 years ago. The Judicial Commission, which reports to Parliament, provides education for judges and magistrates and investigates complaints made against them. Mr Schmatt helped establish the commission and was its first deputy chief executive until being appointed chief executive in 1989. He is heavily involved in the commission's work relating to Aboriginal cultural awareness following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. I commend his commitment to ensuring a just legal system for the people of New South Wales.

Ross Smith of Alford's Point received the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the building and construction industry. Ross started as an apprentice carpenter and worked his way up to become foreman, site manager, project manager and eventually construction manager. He has worked in this role for 20 years and overseen a number of projects across Sydney and South-East Asia, ranging from \$10 million to \$130 million in value. During his term as president of the Australian Institute of Building from 2008 to 2010, Ross co-founded the NSW Building Scholarship Trust Fund to help underprivileged university students to have a future in the building industry. In his current role Ross is training seven apprentices to become site managers and is also responsible for 15 university undergraduates who are studying for a Bachelor of Construction Management. He is passionate about training young people in the construction industry and says that it is a privilege to be able to put knowledge and experience back into our community. I thank Ross for diligently passing on his experience and knowledge to future generations.

Detective Chief Inspector Angelo Memmolo of Sylvania was awarded the Australian Police Medal. Mr Memmolo joined the NSW Police Force in 1986 and was initially stationed at Redfern as a probationary constable. He served at the Australian Crime Commission and in the Gangs Squad and Middle Eastern Organised Crime Squad before being appointed to his current position as coordinator of the Homicide Squad. He is often called on by others for advice, and throughout his career he has gained the greatest respect and admiration of his superiors, peers and those he leads. For more than 30 years Mr Memmolo has protected and served the community. His work in many high-profile homicide and violent crime investigations continues to ensure our safety.

The final recipient, Naomi Prince of Oyster Bay, received the Australian Corrections Medal for her work as the chief psychologist of risk management programs. Naomi has worked with Corrective Services NSW since 2009 and is a highly skilled clinician who is committed to tackling offending behaviour and preventing reoffending. She has also been instrumental in obtaining funding for disengagement support programs for inmates who are at risk of radicalisation. Despite working with some of the State's most high-risk and challenging inmates, Naomi has always acted with compassion and distinction to keep our community safe and she has earned the respect of her colleagues.

Naomi is modest about her achievements, saying that she does not go to work with an intent to win any awards but that she is very proud to be a psychologist and is passionate about improving the management of offenders in custody. I congratulate Naomi on her work with high-risk offenders and on the prevention of reoffending in our society. It is fantastic to acknowledge the hardworking members of the Miranda community and to recognise their contributions. I again congratulate every Australia Day honours recipient and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:13): Christmas Day is supposed to be a time of joy and happiness, when people enjoy the company of their loved ones and appreciate the good things in life. But for thousands of injured workers, last Christmas was a time of heartache and upheaval as the Government pursued its ideologically driven attack on injured workers by cutting their entitlements and throwing them onto the scrap heap. Earlier this year I met an injured worker who is a constituent of mine. Now in her early sixties, her quality of life has been considerably diminished thanks to the reckless actions of the Government. After suffering a workplace injury close to 20 years ago, my constituent took extended leave in the hope that her condition would improve and she would be able to return to her pre-injury duties. Unfortunately, despite many years of medical treatment and support, that improvement never came. My constituent reluctantly left her dream job—her words, not mine—and lodged a workers compensation claim.

The consensus among medical professionals was that her condition had deteriorated so much that she would never be able to return to work. For years, she relied on the financial support provided by the workers compensation scheme to pay her mortgage, her utility bills and to help care for her elderly mother. Members can imagine the impact that the Government's cuts have had on her. She no longer has a form of income and, because of administrative delays at Centrelink, she has not been approved for a disability support pension or other payments. With no income—I emphasise she has had literally no income for the past month—she is unable to pay for the basic necessities of life, let alone pay her mortgage or her bills.

This woman is a shell of her former self. Recently, she was diagnosed with clinical depression. A major contributing factor of her depression, in the opinion of her doctor, has been the cutting of her entitlements by the Government's 2012 legislation. When we met, her words were, "This has ruined my life." She went on to say, "With no financial support, how am I supposed to pay my mortgage, my council rates, pay for my medical appointments and feed myself? It simply is not possible. My life has been destroyed and I think the only way to escape this pain is to end it all." This is where we are at. Sadly, the current workers compensation scheme is pushing people to their death. Injured workers are taking their own lives because of the situation in which they find themselves. I know that to be true because I have met some of those people, who are no longer walking on the earth through no fault of their own. It is the fault of legislation that was passed in this House.

Government members may pretend that my constituent's experience is a one-off, but deep down they know that similar situations are widespread and true. I know that members of the Government have been meeting with people who are in situations similar to that of my constituent. I know that because the very same people who meet with Government members sometimes come to see me, as the shadow Minister, in a last attempt to try to obtain justice. Members of Parliament across the political spectrum have sat with injured workers, consoled them, and probably agreed that their situation is indeed horrific. But because of legislation passed in this House we have not done the right thing by our constituents. In some small way, members of this House are responsible for the sense of uneasiness, loneliness and hopelessness felt by so many injured workers, such as my constituent. The lack of compassion displayed in this House where legislation is passed, our lack of bravery and our contempt for the worker forever will tarnish the reputation of this House in the eyes of those whom we represent.

SRI LANKAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (18:17): I draw to the attention of the House the celebration on 4 February by Sri Lankan Australians of the occasion of Sri Lanka's Independence Day. I have the privilege of being the member of this House who represents the Lankarama Buddhist temple at Schofields, which has led me to form a strong bond with the Sri Lankan Australian community over a number of years. Seventy years ago on 4 February 1948, Ceylon—as it was then—became independent from Great Britain after centuries of control successively by the Portuguese, Dutch and British. Sri Lankan independence is commemorated by Sri Lankan Australians in many ways and in many places.

I had the privilege to attend two of the commemoration events in Sydney. One was held by the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Sydney and the other was held jointly by the Sinhalese Cultural Forum and Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales. The first was on independence day, 4 February, at the Roselea Community Centre at Carlingford. I congratulate the President of the Sinhalese Cultural Forum, Ms Chandrani Buddhipala, and the President of the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales, Mr Sam Masachchi, on co-hosting this respectful and inclusive celebration of the occasion.

As is usual at commemorative events, there was a showcasing of Sri Lankan traditional culture that was performed by children of the Sri Lankan community. These children have had passed on to them Sri Lankan language and culture by volunteers to ensure that Sri Lankan cultural heritage is passed from one generation to the next. The second event was hosted by the Consul-General of Sri Lanka for New South Wales and Queensland, Mr Lal Raj Wickrematunge, and was held at the Great Hall of Sydney University on Monday 5 February. I was impressed, as I have often been at Sri Lankan events in Sydney, by the participation and collaboration of religious leaders from the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim faith communities, which are represented within Sri Lanka. It is important that the New South Wales community builds those bridges and consciously involves all strands of the Sri Lankan community in local events.

Venerable Pundit Meegahakumbure Dhammagavesi Thero, Chief Resident Monk at the Lankarama temple in Schofields, was one of the four leaders who led the prayer and welcomed all attendees at the commencement of the event. Members are impressed by my pronunciation of his name. He is a friend of mine and I have taken the time to practise saying it. The High Commissioner for Sri Lanka to Australia, His Excellency Somasundaram Skandakumar, spoke on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka. The Premier was represented by the Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC, and my colleague Damien Tudehope, the member for Epping, also attended, as did the Consul-General for India, Mr Vanlalvawna.

A theme of the celebrations was one of hope for a country which, while it has endured years of lost opportunities since achieving independence due to internal conflict, is now well and truly on a path to both reconciliation and greater progress and prosperity. If the goodwill I have observed among Sri Lankans of all community backgrounds in Sydney is reflected in the population back home in Sri Lanka then that hope may be well-founded. The history of Sri Lanka involves many waves of invasion, occupation and migration from various parts of India and the wider world, and current-day Sri Lanka reflects that history. The communities of Sri Lanka are at last trying to overcome the stresses and strains of recent decades and to build a country in which they all have a stake and in which all can be included and share in the good things that it can offer. I wish all Sri Lankan Australians the very best for themselves, their families and the future of their mother country as it works towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

WESTERN SYDNEY INCINERATOR PROPOSAL

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (18:22): I congratulate the more than 12,000 residents of Western Sydney who signed a petition calling on the Government to stop the construction of a toxic waste incinerator in their area. The Opposition has lodged the petition in this House with their support and we will be debating it in the coming weeks. However, I am using this opportunity to make a private member's statement to raise the issue again because it is causing great anxiety for many residents of Western Sydney. I particularly congratulate members of the Stop the Incinerator Group on their tireless work in standing up for their community against this toxic incinerator. They have done an amazing job in collecting the signatures on the petition. We still have a long way to go, but I am extremely proud to support the group and greatly appreciate their efforts in getting the signatures, organising rallies, and keeping the pressure on the proponent and the Government to reject this toxic proposal.

The decision before the Government is whether an incinerator that burns garbage to create energy should be built in close proximity to residential suburbs. I do not believe anyone would want such a facility in their community. No-one wants to see an incinerator built close to homes and schools; no-one thinks this is a good idea. It is so toxic that the Government's own agencies and departments have submitted that such a proposal could have devastating consequences for human health. NSW Health states that there is a risk of developing cancer from

being exposed to the toxic fumes. Why would the people of Western Sydney be comfortable with this proposal? We are now on the third iteration of the development application and we are worried that the Government will give it the green light.

I have spoken to thousands of members of our community about this issue and I know how concerned they are. Above all else, they are worried that the local member, Tanya Davies, sits at the Cabinet table but she will not stop this proposal. People are worried about what this facility will mean for the community and about having to sell their homes. Parents of children suffering with asthma have told me they will have no choice but to leave the community they love. The community implores the Government to reject this toxic incinerator and for Tanya Davies to stop wringing her hands. The local member needs to do something about this proposal.

When the member for Mulgoa first came to this place, the people of Western Sydney were fighting multiple applications for waste-related proposals. Indeed, at that time many of the councillors at Penrith City Council, including me, were fighting the proposals with her. As a candidate for this place, she fought the proposal to dump radioactive waste from Hunters Hill in Western Sydney. She also fought the proposal to put an industrial dump at Orchard Hills, in her now electorate. She is now a Minister, with the ear of the Government, but she refuses to put herself on the line and fight against this incinerator. It is the job of a local member to stand up for their community. If the member for Mulgoa cannot do that—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Order! I remind the member for Londonderry that private member's statements are not to be used to attack another member or Minister. I refer the member to a ruling by Speaker Kelly:

A member who wishes to attack a Minister should do so by way of substantive motion.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: Mr Temporary Speaker, you pre-empted my point of order. I support the ruling that you have made.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): That is the commonly accepted practice.

Ms PRUE CAR: I note the Government's attempt to stop me speaking on this issue on behalf of the people of Western Sydney.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Order! The member will take note of and respect the ruling of Speaker Kelly, who is a former member of her party.

Ms PRUE CAR: I am representing the people of Western Sydney who are demanding that their local members stand with those who brought them to this place and fight against this toxic incinerator. The Government is trying to silence us on this important issue but the people of Western Sydney have long memories. They will remember who stood with them in the fight against this toxic incinerator, which will damage their health and that of their children.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (18:27): I make a clear statement as the Minister for Western Sydney, and member for Penrith, and I have said on numerous occasions, including at budget estimates hearings, that I do not support this proposal or this incinerator. In her private member's statement, the member for Londonderry spoke about the member for Mulgoa. Tanya Davies put this post on social media after the most recent rally outside Parliament House:

I am wholeheartedly opposed to this proposal and will fight hard to stop the Next Generation incinerator.

It does not get any clearer than that. The difference is that we support an independent planning process. Those opposite want to go back to part 3A, brown paper bags and people behind the jails. That is what those opposite stand for. Government members are representing their communities.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Order! I remind the member for Londonderry that it is unparliamentary to make comments from outside the Chamber.

TWEED HOSPITAL

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (18:28): I have spoken in this House before about the much-needed upgrade to Tweed Hospital and the funding of \$534 million allocated for a new hospital in the Tweed. The Government will be announcing shortly the site of the new hospital, which will be almost double in size. I always stand behind our doctors, nurses and support staff, including the cleaners and maintenance staff. Recently I had the privilege of welcoming 18 medical graduates for 2018, as part of a record intake of intern doctors funded by the New South Wales Government.

The Minister for Health, Mr Brad Hazzard, and his team have been very responsive and understanding, and they have been able to deliver real benefits for the people of the Tweed. Across the State, 999 interns—that figure has increased from 992 in 2017—will commence their new positions, representing the New South Wales Government's commitment to introducing new doctors into the health system, with the State leading the country in funding and conditions. More than \$107 million has been invested into the statewide internship program to boost the number of doctors in cities and regional areas.

I was delighted to meet the interns over morning tea recently. I am pleased that New South Wales is playing a part in leading the country when it comes to training junior doctors. I was also lucky enough to meet two local girls who went away to continue their studies and have now returned to their home ground, the Tweed. Rachael Robinson went to Mount St Patrick College in Murwillumbah and Brigid Doolan attended Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School at Tweed Heads. Rachael is the sister of Sapper Rowan Robinson, who unfortunately fell during a fierce firefight in Afghanistan on 6 June 2011. The young combat engineer grew up in the lush country around the Tweed. He will be always remembered. Both girls are ecstatic to have secured positions at Tweed Hospital. I know they will go on to make their families and their communities proud.

New South Wales is the only State to offer two-year employment contracts to graduates commencing their internships, which include a rotation through a network of metropolitan, regional and rural hospitals. In addition, under the New South Wales Rural Preferential Recruitment pathway 132 medical graduates will spend the majority of their first two years working in a rural setting. This year is particularly significant for the program, with 20 Aboriginal doctors commencing their internships. I wish the interns every success as they progress in their careers. We have also been advised that 34 trainee nurses and midwives will be coming to the region. It is not only about spending capital on hospitals; it is also about the staff. It is about training young people from our regional and rural areas to assist the community.

Finally, our hospital will be announced shortly. It will be built and it will be of great benefit. The number of beds will increase from 220 to approximately 450. There will be full oncology, full radiation treatment and full cardiac services as well. It will be a great plus. The Tweed is a very special place. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed. Approximately 20,000 new homes are about to be approved but, as the health Minister pointed out today, approximately 30 per cent of the 60,000-odd people presenting at our emergency department each year are actually Queenslanders. We help out our Queensland neighbours.

I am concerned that the shadow Minister for Health, the Hon. Walt Secord, has raised issues in this place based on a lot of misinformation. Where does he get off in criticising the performance of the hardworking doctors and nurses in our local area? That is shameful. He never praises them or talks about their achievements. He never talks about the great investment in the future. But then again, he did fill Eddie Obeid's seat in the upper House. I will leave it at that: It goes with that seat. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:33): What a debacle! We knew the new train timetable was bad for the people of the Central Coast, but since 26 November coasties seem to be worse off than they were before the new timetable was released. This Government may brag about new services to Western Sydney and new buses on the northern beaches and in the eastern suburbs, inner west, lower North Shore, northern suburbs and Hills district—that is all very good—but what did the people of the Central Coast get from the new timetable? The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure announced that New South Wales had 1,500 extra services and only one new train from Newcastle to Sydney—no extra trains for the ever-growing Central Coast to the city and home again. More commuters now need to change trains to get to work on the North Shore line and in the city.

This is not good enough from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. He should listen to the people of the Central Coast, who are fed up with the poor service to Sydney. They are fed up with delays, cancellations and packed trains. Our commuters were horrified when the Minister for Transport changed services on a weekday to the weekend timetable, forcing hundreds of Central Coast commuters to pack into inadequate afternoon trains on their trip home before the Australia Day long weekend. The situation was made worse when train drivers from our community revealed there were sufficient drivers available to work that day who were left sitting around at stations with nothing to do, despite NSW Transport management claiming an excessive number of staff were on sick leave that day. More lies like Ferry McFerryface are not good enough.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I remind the member for Gosford to refer to the Minister by his correct title.

Ms LIESL TESCH: Since well before the new timetable, commuters on the 5.09 a.m. train from Woy Woy have been telling me—and the Minister for Transport—that they need more than four carriages. Passengers on the early morning tradies train from Gosford and Woy Woy are fed up with standing on the stairway and in the

vestibule. They had to stand under the old timetable, but what does the new timetable bring for the Central Coast? More new services to the western suburbs and no additional carriages for the commuters of the Central Coast who have longer travel times to the city—while standing.

Travellers from the Central Coast commute long hours to jobs in Sydney. With unemployment figures on the Central Coast rising last quarter, more people from the Coast are forced to work in Sydney. For many of us, this wastes at least three hours a day in travel. Throw in completely inadequate community parking facilities at stations up and down the coast, and media abuse from the Mayor of Hornsby, and the future for commuting coasties looks even worse. These commuters continue to send me photos of packed trains from the coast that are due to arrive in Sydney before 6.30 a.m., with people crowded in, standing or sitting in stairwells.

Once the North Shore line is peeled up to make way for the new Epping line, we will have no direct trains from the Central Coast to the North Shore, further extending the inconvenience for commuters. In six months when the new timetable is reviewed, I ask this Sydney-centric Berejiklian Government to consider coasties' quality of life, time we want to spend with our families and our general wellbeing. The New South Wales Government needs to listen to the commuters of the Central Coast. We want eight carriages on all our commuter trains, trains to run on time, full timetables on every weekday and adequate services to deliver the people of the Central Coast to their jobs across the city, including continued direct trains down the North Shore line.

The people of the Central Coast rely on having guards on our trains. Guards support passengers at a number of unstaffed stations across the Coast. They look after our elderly population and people with disabilities who rely on public transport. Train guards ensure that anyone—including families with prams, oldies with walkers and anyone with mobility challenges—can get on and off the train safely. I call on the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to keep the guards on the trains. On 27 November a passenger at Woy Woy station fell between the train and the platform. This was upsetting for other passengers, who immediately alerted the train guard. I commend the train guard, the driver and the Woy Woy station platform staff who worked efficiently to ensure the passenger's safety and to allow the train and its passengers to continue on its journey. The passenger was later transported to Gosford Hospital for treatment.

Who will look after our passengers when the guards are no longer there? Who will look after the oldies, families with prams and small children, and people with mobility challenges at smaller stations across the Central Coast that no longer have platform staff? The Government has spent \$2.6 billion on stadiums, massive budget blowout on Sydney road development, new buses for the Northern Beaches and a North Shore underpass, but when will it listen to the people of the Central Coast and begin delivering for them?

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:38): This Government does listen. It caters for commuters and passengers from all parts of New South Wales. I know for a fact that the number of services from the Central Coast, including express services, is significantly higher than under the last Labor Government. There has been a significant increase in services from the Central Coast. This Government has made a concerted effort to increase train capacity across New South Wales, which allows us to move more passengers. We are cognisant of the growing needs of the Central Coast, including in the electorate of Terrigal. The transport Minister has considered the needs of the Central Coast, as he has considered the needs of all New South Wales. The change during the week to a weekend timetable was prompted by threatened industrial action. It was an unfortunate situation which now appears to be on the way to a resolution.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (18:39): It gives me great pleasure to bring to the attention of the House the 11 community groups and organisations in the Wollondilly electorate that have been successful in securing grants under the Community Building Partnership program for the year 2016-17. During the course of my seven years in the place I have had the pleasure of supporting many organisations through this program and I have seen how a bit of help goes a long way. I am delighted to announce funding of \$200,000 in that year for many of our worthy clubs and organisations. This funding will make an enormous difference to the way these groups and organisations function and it will go a long way towards ensuring that they remain viable and strong for our community well into the future. It is an investment in facilities and equipment used by many in our community as these clubs and organisations provide opportunities for those making use of them to take their sport or area of interest further, if they choose.

With the indulgence of the House, I will mention the organisations that have received that round of funding under the program and provide some insight into how those funds will make a difference to them. I thank Picton Tennis Club's secretary and vice-president, Alison Radford, as she then was—she is now the president—for her participation in the application process, which led to the club securing \$52,000 for the resurfacing of the club's hard court tennis courts. The funding allows for the two aged courts to be resurfaced with Plexipave, a more modern and suitable surface—the same surface as used on the courts at the Australian Tennis Open.

As well, \$30,000 has been secured for Tahmoor District Cricket Club to upgrade facilities at the club's main oval at Tahmoor and for purpose-built training facilities at its Picton satellite ground. I am happy to say that the funding was the full amount applied for and will allow that project to be completed without the club seeking additional funds from elsewhere, such as from the local council or, as many organisations do, fundraising from raffles and sausage sizzles. Last year it was great to host the Minister for Sport at Tahmoor cricket club to launch the Active Kids rebate program, a program that gives every school-aged student \$100 to participate in sport or a fitness activity.

I also congratulate Picton Rugby League Football Club, Challenge Southern Highlands and the Anglican Church Property Trust Diocese of Sydney. Each of those were recipients of \$20,000, which will provide much-needed disability access at the Picton Rugby League clubhouse, refurbishments to toilet facilities at Challenge to comply with disability requirements, and an undercover area for the church to provide shelter from the sun and rain after weddings, funerals and services. At Warragamba Preschool, \$10,000 has been made available for the school to purchase and install shade sails and blinds to support the school's sun-safe policy, which will provide students with the opportunity to spend more time playing safely outside. It was fantastic to learn that those sails have been installed and are doing a cracking job in protecting the skin of our next generation. I thank the school's director, Amanda Douglass, for participating in the Community Building Partnership program in that round of applications and I congratulate her on the quality and success of that application.

The Picton-Thirlmere-Bargo RSL Sub Branch received \$10,000, which it plans to put to good use in installing air-conditioning and giving its hall an electrical upgrade. As many in this House can attest, it will make a huge difference for its members during the warmer months of the year and certainly during the cooler months, which have an impact in our region. For those in the House who are unfamiliar with the Touched by Olivia Foundation, let me express my happiness at being able to announce \$10,000 in funding for this terrific community group. The foundation exists to create play spaces in communities across the country to ensure that every child has the opportunity to play. The funding will be put into Livvi's Place at Warragamba to set up a community hub where people of all ages and abilities can play together. We were recently able to secure a grant of \$300,000 to ensure that we provide an all-inclusive playground for our community.

I am delighted to announce that \$15,000 has been made available to the historic Bong Bong Picnic Race Club. As many in the House may be aware, the Bong Bong Picnic Race Club holds a special place in Australian cultural and racing history. Formed in 1886, the club had the distinction of being the largest picnic race meeting in the world, with crowds reaching close to 35,000 at the height of its popularity. It was also the first to be televised in both black and white and colour, and the first to have races restricted to female riders. So it is with pleasure that the Government has made \$15,000 available to improve facilities at the existing amenity block. The Picton Community Preschool also received funding of \$3,000 for the construction of a shade sail on the existing outdoor play area. This is a great program and I look forward to informing the House of the latest round of funding and of the difference it makes to those organisations.

RED LIGHT SPEED CAMERAS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (18:44): On 5 October last year my eldest son, Ben, was involved in a sporting accident during his indoor soccer final. It was a nasty accident in which he broke his ankle, was rushed to hospital in an ambulance and had to undergo surgery. Although he was on crutches and sported a stylish moonboot for a while, he is starting to make a good recovery now, although I suspect it will be some time before he takes to the soccer field again. However, what literally added insult to injury was the fine he received in the mail a few weeks later. It was a penalty notice issued to him for running a red light camera in Bradbury in south-western Sydney. He owed the Government \$439 and lost three points off his licence.

Ben took one look at the fine and knew he had not been the driver. It could not be him because at the very time the offence was committed he was in an ambulance on his way to hospital some 50 kilometres away. Indeed, the guilty party was not even driving his car. Ben drives a black sedan. The car involved was a white hatchback. The red light camera mistook the registration number. There is allegedly a system in place to prevent such mistakes from happening. Each camera-detected offence is checked to ensure that the photographed vehicle matches the description held by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS]. A cursory glance by the RMS bureaucrat responsible for checking these things over would have seen that the photo of the guilty car did not resemble my son's car in the slightest.

What it took for the Government to recognise that it had got it wrong was a phone call from the *A Current Affair* journalist who was covering the story. The fine was immediately withdrawn. It is perhaps the only example of same day service a government agency has ever delivered, no doubt due to the fact that the innocent party had a member of Parliament for a parent who happened to know a producer at *A Current Affair*. If it could happen to Ben, it could happen to anyone, but obviously not everyone in New South Wales is as lucky as Ben, and that is not justice.

Indeed, of the 700,000 camera-detected offences issued against New South Wales drivers every year, around 1,400 of them are withdrawn because they were issued against the wrong person and that is only because drivers have taken the time to double-check whether they were innocent in the first place. Who knows how many of these mistakes have slipped through the cracks and motorists have paid a fine in good faith and lost points, not knowing that they were atoning for another's sins? I suspect that most of us would receive a fine in the mail and just pay it. How many pensioners or university students are needlessly paying fines out of fear of losing their licence or having to go to court?

The New South Wales Government earned \$185 million last financial year in speed and red light camera fines. It is on track to earn even more this year. Just how many of those dollars is the Government not entitled to? It is an outrage and is a red light camera rort. In my view, my son was ripped off by a money-hungry government that does not care who it fines: It is just interested in revenue raising. To make matters worse, despite the fact that the error was pointed out to the RMS almost three months ago, Ben has not received any written confirmation that the fine has been withdrawn, let alone an acknowledgement of error and an apology. He found out through the *A Current Affairs* program in an announcement made by some bureaucrat. It is a slap in the face. The Government does not seem to care that it got it wrong. It is disrespectful for someone not to apologise when he or she makes a mistake and I expect the same from the Government.

I hope the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight is listening, as it would only be common courtesy to apologise to someone who has been wrongly accused, just as my son and thousands of other New South Wales motorists have been accused every year. I encourage each and every person who receives a fine to check and recheck their penalty notices to ensure they are not at fault. Traffic fines are accusations by the State of wrongdoing and the court proceedings necessary to determine whether or not one is guilty of that wrongdoing are, in effect, criminal proceedings. Nobody should have to unnecessarily undergo those criminal proceedings because of government error. The Government should apologise in this matter. I maintain that any cent given to the Government unjustly is one cent too much.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:49): To the extent that I empowered to do so, on behalf of the Government I apologise to Ben for that error. However, for the member for Heffron to impute the motives that he has to this Government is inappropriate. The Government takes responsibility for when mistakes are made by the bureaucracy, which is why I have issued an apology and why the fine was promptly reversed. I have taken what was said in the member's private member's statement on face value and in good faith. In that same sense of good faith I have, to the extent that I can, issued an apology on behalf of the Government. I wish Ben well and a speedy recovery from his injury. I reiterate that a mistake was obviously made with no bad faith. I reject entirely that the Government has the motives that he has imputed.

CRONULLA ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (18:50): I congratulate my constituents featured in the 2018 Australia Day Honours List. I congratulate Dr Peshotan Homi Katrak of Grays Point, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. Dr Katrak was recognised "for significant service to rehabilitation medicine as a practitioner, to medical education and professional organisations, and to the Zoroastrian community." Dr Katrak has served as a senior staff specialist in rehabilitation medicine at the Prince of Wales Hospital since 1993. He has been an honorary lecturer at the faculty of medicine, University of New South Wales, where he was involved in training more than 100 registrars in rehabilitation medicine.

In 1995 Dr Katrak was elected President of the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, and helped to provide training and education for rehabilitation medicine fellows and trainees. Dr Katrak was also recognised for his contribution to the Zoroastrian community in Australia. He has served as an honorary priest for forty years and has performed the community's ceremonies in Sydney. Dr Katrak's continued leadership in his community is demonstrated through his involvement as the President of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales in 1981 and in his current role as trustee of the Australian Zoroastrian Association building foundation.

I congratulate Charles Mifsud of Burraneer, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the general division "for service to the Maltese community of New South Wales". Mr Mifsud has worked for the Maltese community of New South Wales, serving as a foundation member in 1988, and as President of the Maltese Cultural Association of NSW since 1996. Mr Mifsud arrived in Australia 67 years ago and has worked for more than 50 years in various organisations to support Maltese Australians. Mr Mifsud's involvement in community radio through the 1980's until a few years ago demonstrates his commitment to the Maltese community. More widely, Mr Mifsud was involved in the Melita Eagles soccer club for more than 40 years in various committee positions. In my local area, Mr Mifsud's work with the Maltese community in Australia has focused on helping those in need. Mr Mifsud started a Sutherland and St George Maltese Social Group, which aimed to bring people together and enjoy outings as a group.

I congratulate Mr Brian Thompson of Caringbah, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the general division "for service to Surf Life Saving". In the electorate of Cronulla, visiting the beach is an immensely popular recreational activity, attracting locals, tourists and Greater Sydney residents. Surf life saving clubs are an integral part of the community and help keep beachgoers safe through the work of volunteers. Brian's long-term involvement in the club culminated in 2009 when he became the club's patron. Since he joined the club in 1973, he has served as an instructor, club captain and president, and on a number of committees. Brian's involvement in the surf awareness program and other training programs has helped countless children develop into responsible volunteers and improved the fitness of people of all ages.

The Elouera Surf Life Saving Club was established in 1966, seven years before Brian joined the club. Since 1966 the club has continued to organise more activities and its involvement in the community has increased dramatically. The club has expanded from a beach tent to a popular venue in the Sutherland Shire. Brian has also served as a Director of the Sutherland District Trade Union Club since 2000. Once again I congratulate Dr Katrak, Mr Mifsud and Mr Thompson on their recognition in the Australia Day Honours List and their outstanding contribution to their communities.

DISABILITY ADVOCACY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:54): I express my extreme disappointment at the New South Wales Government's refusal to fund disability advocacy beyond June 2018, which will have a huge impact across New South Wales on the lives of people living with disability. After 30 June this year, who will be available to support people with their disabilities, clients who are discriminated against by their neighbours in their housing arrangements, people who are poorly treated on a regular basis on public transport, or people who are refused enrolment in a local education course? Who will be available to support people who are severely disadvantaged within the justice system or mistreated by a National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] provider, which has collected the \$5,000 funds for an employment skills course that promises job interviews, without providing so much as one supported contact or interview, or arranging any visit to a prospective employer over the six-month contract period?

Former Federal Minister for Social Services the Hon. Christian Porter knew how important advocacy services for Australians with disability were and highlighted it in the Review of the National Disability Advocacy Program Consultation Report, which was released last year. Has the New South Wales Minister for Disability Services even read this report? Does he realise that all levels of government have a responsibility to support advocacy for people with disability to ensure they can exercise their rights and freedoms? I emphasise to the Minister that the vast majority of people requiring disability advocacy support will not be NDIS participants, and the transition into the NDIS is already having massive impacts on individuals and organisations that provide support and services for people with disabilities across New South Wales. The Federal Minister gets it. In delivering funding, he knows that disability advocacy support also requires ongoing investment from the States to ensure that people living with disability, and their supporters and carers can continue to resolve issues.

Angie Ballard, a fellow New South Wales Paralympian, worked with the Physical Disability Council of NSW when she realised that the new plans for paving within the City of Sydney included bumpy cobblestones. This is never ideal for any wheelchair user—even a sprint champion!—a pram pusher or anyone with mobility challenges. Angie worked with the City of Sydney to change its paver plans to ensure easy access for everyone in society. Angie would have struggled to achieve this without the support and expertise of advocacy agencies. The Victorian Labor Government has committed longer-term action and investment to ensure a strong and sustainable disability advocacy and self-advocacy sector, and people with disabilities across New South Wales are screaming out for the Berejiklian Government to do the same. Mary Mallett, Chief Executive Officer of Disability Advocacy Network Australia [DANA], the peak body for the independent disability advocacy organisations says:

Advocacy is about helping people with disability navigate systems and most of those systems are state-run systems such as child protection and education. If the states stop funding advocacy they are abrogating their responsibility to their state citizen's.

Mallett said the impact in New South Wales was "dire". I encourage the Minister for Disability Services to go out to regional areas to meet with people with disabilities. I have been out to regional and rural New South Wales and spoken to organisations that may be gone forever after 30 June.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: I am reluctant to raise a point of order. The issues being raised by the member are important, but a private member's statement should be framed in the context of the member's electorate.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The Parliamentary Secretary is correct. The member should refer to her own electorate when delivering a private member's statement.

Ms LIESL TESCH: Aboriginal people living in my electorate and Aboriginal people with disabilities living in remote communities have taken a long time to build relationships of trust with their advocates. They will suffer incredibly when those advocates are no longer there. The Intellectual Disability Rights Service receives advocacy support funding from the New South Wales Government. It has a program that supports everybody in the Gosford electorate and across New South Wales when they are being interviewed by the police, are in jail or are in the court system. That organisation's court Justice Support Network program will disappear. The New South Wales Government is not listening to the disability advocacy sector. I invite the Minister to speak with people at Fairhaven in Gosford when he opens the accommodation there in a few weeks' time.

People with intellectual disabilities such as those in my electorate are devastated that the New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability, which has been in existence for six years, will be finished at the end of June if it does not get funded. Take it from me: Life for people with disabilities is not always an easy roll, or a walk in the park. Discrimination and social exclusion is something we cannot always fight alone. Advice and support becomes advocacy—fighting for respect; creating social change; standing up for people with disabilities; and leading the way with guidance, phone calls, intervention and assistance when things do not go according to plan is part of the service. But soon that will be over for dozens of groups around New South Wales that will be forced to close their doors on 30 June. New South Wales will be a less fair, and less equal place when that happens.

BOWRAL CLASSIC CYCLING EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (18:59): I inform the House of the success of a local event that has already established itself as a premier event on the New South Wales sporting calendar. Remarkably, the inaugural event was held in 2017 and it is already collecting accolades and attracting interest from across Australia and overseas. I am talking about the Bowral Classic, a one-day cycling event held in the beautiful Southern Highlands and centred around picturesque Bowral. More than 3,000 people enjoyed the inaugural Bowral Classic. This was a remarkable result given organisers had hoped for a field of participants of around 1,000. Equally impressive was the \$1.5 million the event injected into the local economy and the \$110,000 that was raised for various charities.

The Bowral Classic is expected to attract more than 12,700 international and domestic overnight visitors to the region over a three-year period, with a total visitor spend of \$4.6 million. This is great news for local businesses and organisations. The influx of competitors and an entourage of families and cycling team members translates to millions of dollars for local hotels, motels and businesses. Our pubs and clubs celebrated the associated boost to their trade. Together with other businesses, they have expressed their gratitude for the event. Local camping grounds, bed and breakfasts, online accommodation, supermarkets and bakeries all received a massive financial boost. The event showcases our wonderful array of food and wine offerings, which continue to draw visitors back, year after year.

The result of this event is especially pleasing to me as a member of a Government that is focused on and committed to boosting regional and semi-rural economies. That is demonstrated through the \$1.3 billion Regional Growth Fund. With that record regional spending budget, the State Government is most certainly a friend to areas outside the big cities. As the Deputy Premier stated when the fund was announced:

It's about bringing big ideas to life. We're creating jobs, boosting tourism, and supporting communities...

That is what this Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and the entire Cabinet have done. This State Government has committed to funding the Bowral Classic through to 2019, and I encourage its support beyond that time. It should continue because it is a winner of an event. The classic was crowned Australian Event of the Year in two categories at the prestigious Australian Event Awards for 2017. I will put that achievement in some context. The Bowral Classic was a finalist in Best New Event and Best Community Event. In winning the Best Community Event, it beat a line-up of finalists that included the Sydney Royal Easter Show. It won Best New Event, beating the Nitro Athletics series that boasted star attraction Usain Bolt—and I have not mentioned the many other terrific events that made the finalist list and were defeated by the Bowral Classic in its first year.

That success is not a fluke. Awards and accolades such as those are the outward confirmation of a tremendous amount of hard work on the part of a lot of people, and I thank them all. They also reflect the faith shown in the event by key stakeholders and sponsors. It highlights the wonderful communities of the Wollondilly and Wingecarribee shires. It is the best place on the planet—as there has been no objection to that statement I will take the silence as affirmation. It makes me proud that the New South Wales Government, through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW, will be supporting the Bowral Classic until 2019. Destination Southern Highlands is producing innovative and wonderful ways to attract visitors and events to this most beautiful region. It is thrilling to see the beauty and amenity of the Southern Highlands being brought to the attention and appreciation of a much larger audience and market.

I am happy to say that the concept put together by this team will be expanded to other States in 2018, with the inaugural Clare Classic to be held in South Australia's stunning Clare Valley in April and the first Noosa

Classic to take place on 26 August. We hear all too often that the regional and rural areas of our fine State are battling—they are doing it tough when it comes to business and economic conditions. Events such as the Bowral Classic and Pie Time, which was launched in the Southern Highlands in 2017, are a demonstration of what can be achieved when a good idea collides with a great team who can grow that idea and deliver it to a willing audience. It is fair to say that our local cycling event is leading the way, and is well in front of the pack.

I reflect briefly on my inaugural speech in which I said that I wanted to focus on tourism during my time in this place. I have seen many organisations conduct their maiden event in my electorate at facilities such as K Ranch Arena, Mowbray Park Farm and Thirlmere Festival of Steam, which boosts our local economies by millions of dollars. That is what happens when we balance the budget: We can save money and support good programs in good communities. I am proud to be a member of this Government that has delivered for the people of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands.

SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:05): I speak on a topic that is dear to my heart. It is not the first time I have spoken on this issue, and it will not be the last. I am talking about the redevelopment of Shellharbour public hospital. As all members in this House are aware, the road leading to the redevelopment of Shellharbour Hospital has been a rocky one. The announcement that this Government was seeking to partly privatise our local public hospital under the guise of a public-private partnership shook our community to its core. What followed can only be described as an admirable and tireless 13-month campaign led by Illawarra's doctors, nurses, unions, patients, allied medical staff and the wider community. This journey was dotted with rallies, demonstrations, community forums, vigils and open letters. Countless individuals gave their time to this cause and we owe this victory to each of them.

I will speak specifically about the work of Dr Geoff Murray and his thoughts on the redevelopment plans for Shellharbour Hospital. Dr Murray is a prominent doctor in the Illawarra and he was one of 27 doctors who originally penned an open document in 2016 to the *Illawarra Mercury* criticising the proposed public-private partnership. He attended the rallies and spoke at the Shellharbour Hospital community forum. Dr Murray has contributed to this fight from the beginning and, for him, the fight is not over. On 15 December last year, Dr Murray included me, the Premier, the Minister for Health, the Treasurer and my parliamentary colleagues in a letter that he sent to the member for Kiama. This letter was in response to a meeting that the member for Kiama had with Dr Murray and four other Illawarra Shoalhaven doctors on 17 November 2017. In this letter Dr Murray reports the deep exasperation that senior doctors in the Illawarra feel about the Government's redevelopment plans for Shellharbour Hospital. He goes on to detail what he and his colleagues believe are fundamental problems with the plans.

The doctors rightly believe the current budget of \$251 million for this project will not be enough. If this project is completed using only \$251 million, there is no way it will meet the current needs of our community—not to mention its future needs. If the project is not fully funded it will be a waste of time and money. This redevelopment is well overdue, but it must be done right so it will not have to be done again. This project will be a failure if we are forced to extend or redo the same work in a few years' time. The figure of \$251 million might sound like a lot of money but compared with funding for other hospital redevelopments across our State, it is not. Campbelltown Hospital has received a budget of \$632 million for its upgrade. Likewise, the Government has set aside a budget of \$720 million for the redevelopment and expansion of Randwick's Prince of Wales Hospital and a \$534 million hospital is proposed for Tweed Heads. Redevelopment of the Nepean Hospital will cost \$576 million. All those projects have been allocated more than double the budget of the Shellharbour Hospital redevelopment. If it is good enough for Campbelltown, Randwick, Tweed Heads and Nepean then it should be good enough for Shellharbour.

The same doctors have asked the Government to finally release plans of the redevelopment project to the public. It is time the Government came clean and told our community, clearly and conclusively, what will be included in this project. I ask the Government to release all documents relating to the Shellharbour Hospital redevelopment so that my community knows what is going to be delivered and what has been left off the list. My community deserves to know what their local hospital will look like and whether it will cater to all of their needs. I thank Dr Geoff Murray and his fellow colleagues from the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District for their dedication to the health care of the Shellharbour community and the delivery of the redevelopment of Shellharbour Hospital. Like these doctors, I share concerns regarding the budget for the redevelopment of Shellharbour Hospital. I call on the Government and the member for Kiama to release the plans for this project to the public and to finally give Shellharbour its fair share.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 17:10
until Tuesday 13 February 2018 at 12:00.**