



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 15 February 2018

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 15 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 14 February 2018.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (10:11): It gives me great delight to continue to highlight the work of the New South Wales Government. The Government is continuing with record levels of investment in infrastructure, committing \$72.7 billion over four years. This Government is ensuring the benefits reach every corner of this State. After working hard to take New South Wales from being the worst economic performer to number one, we are now in a position to make a real difference to people's lives, whether they are in regional and rural New South Wales or metropolitan areas. New South Wales is the only State with strong surpluses, negative debt, a growing net worth, a triple-A rating, low unemployment and record investments in services and infrastructure. We are delivering more than major transport infrastructure projects; we are also investing record amounts in local infrastructure which enables families and communities to thrive.

The budget includes \$7.7 billion over four years for world-class hospitals and health facilities. This is more than a 50 per cent increase. The budget includes \$4.2 billion over four years for new and improved schools, which is a 61 per cent increase. The Government is maintaining record levels of transport and road investment, totalling \$41.1 billion over four years, which will allow commuters to arrive home earlier than before so that they can spend more time with their families. The budget is providing relief to families with a \$4.3 billion housing affordability package; a \$270 million investment, which will allow all New South Wales children to access early childhood education; and a \$207 million allocation to the new Active Kids rebate, which will ease the cost of children's sport for parents by \$100 per child per year and will give every child the chance to get active.

To support growing regional centres and their economic potential, the Government has reserved \$1 billion for a new four-year Regional Growth: Economic Activation Fund that will support rail, road and energy infrastructure as well as sports and cultural centres, thereby enriching the lives of regional residents. That funding is already benefiting the community of the Wollondilly electorate in the Southern Highlands. The budget delivers also for those who need it most, including \$100 million for better palliative care services; an additional \$20 million to provide more transitional support for the homeless; and \$63 million more over four years to help protect children most at risk of violence and neglect.

I am delighted to see the many project and funding announcements in the Wollondilly electorate. It is a \$1 billion-plus spend by the Government on the needs of Wollondilly, the Southern Highlands and the regions. This investment has delivered a \$632 million upgrade to Campbelltown Hospital. The Premier, the health Minister, the Treasurer, the member for Camden and I were pleased to announce the great news to doctors, nurses, clinicians, patients and administrative staff. I was happy to secure a \$134 million upgrade to the Campbelltown Hospital, and the further injection of \$236 million is fantastic news. The people of our region deserve the best possible health care and I am proud to be delivering to the community.

Stage two will include expanded paediatric services including more inpatient beds; enhanced mental health inpatient and community support services; additional emergency department capacity, which is desperately needed; additional medical imaging equipment, including a CT scanner; additional capacity in intensive care; more medical, surgical and maternity beds; and more clinic rooms and treatment spaces for ambulatory care. This hospital looks after the majority of people living in the Wollondilly, Camden, Campbelltown and Macquarie Field electorates. This massive investment has never been seen before. The State Government is also committed to providing health facilities in the Southern Highlands, and I was able to announce a \$50 million upgrade to the Bowral and District Hospital.

The budget has already allocated \$5 million to ensure the work commences and the week before Christmas I announced that the initial works are commencing. When I visited the site last week it was great to see

this 89-year-old hospital finally receiving an upgrade. Until I became a member in this place, it took two decades for any government to invest in the Bowral and District Hospital. It is fantastic that we have a Premier, Treasurer and health Minister who recognised the need for the upgrade and allocated the necessary money. More recently, I announced that a proposed public-private partnership for the hospital will not proceed. The Government listened and responded to the community. As occurred with Campbelltown Hospital, I am committed to securing more funding for stage two to ensure a further upgrade so that the needs of my community are looked after in the future.

An additional \$5 million has been allocated to commence upgrades on hospital car parks. Millions of dollars in economic benefit are expected to flow to the region as a result of the construction and expanded operations. As we have seen across the State, wherever the New South Wales Government builds infrastructure, thousands of jobs are created and businesses benefit. This investment is further evidence of the New South Wales Government reinvesting the success of the State in our communities. We have doubled our 2015 election commitment of investing \$300 million in this term of Government with today's allocation of \$632 million. Campbelltown Hospital will be the jewel in the crown of first-class health services for the region.

The area has seen a baby boom. I can report to the House that my wife is due to give birth any day, so if my phone rings please excuse me; I will be out the door. For the families in my electorate, the increased funding for health is great news. This Government is supporting the hardworking nurses, midwives, doctors, clinicians and support staff. As a former Minister for Mental Health, I am pleased to see additional money being invested in mental health services in my region, particularly for adult and adolescent mental health facilities which will be upgraded as a result of the funding announcement. The Government is not only investing in bricks and mortar, it is investing in the people of New South Wales.

Although our hospitals have received a significant funding injection, the Government will provide training for increased numbers of medical staff on the ground. The 4,500 frontline staff include an additional 2,250 nurses and midwives, 850 doctors, 600 allied health professionals and 800 support staff for the hospitals. I enjoy visiting our local hospitals each year to meet the new interns who have graduated from Western Sydney University. They have a lot of excitement and enthusiasm for health care.

The health highlights in this budget are \$366 million for increased hospital activity, including 28,000 extra emergency department attendances; 45,900 extra admissions, including 3,200 additional elective surgeries; almost \$1.7 billion in capital works funding to continue the unprecedented program of building and rebuilding hospitals and facilities across New South Wales; \$9.8 million to recruit an additional 55 specialist nurses and midwives, 10 mental health clinical nurse educators for new graduate and undergraduate support, and 30 clinical support officers; \$2.3 million to provide an extra five rural generalist training and 15 medical specialists training positions, as well as extra medical, allied health and oral health scholarships; \$7.5 million to employ an additional 50 relief paramedics to assist in reducing fatigue in rural and remote areas; and \$10 million to protect the health and wellbeing of NSW Ambulance staff to help paramedics avoid workplace injuries.

Further health highlights are \$10 million to establish an integrated violence abuse and neglect service in NSW Health; \$4.5 million for meningococcal W vaccinations for years 11 and 12 students in response to increasing numbers of notifications of this strain in Australia; and \$10 million towards delivering increased oral health services, enabling 17,000 more patients to receive a course of dental care. When I was the Assistant Minister for Health in this Government, I was very proud to launch the Aboriginal Dental Strategy which provided scholarships for Aboriginal students to undertake studies in Sydney. When they qualified as a dental clinician or dentist, they could go back to their communities and provide those services. This strategy was well supported by Sydney Rotary, among others; it was a collaborative effort.

Another highlight in the budget is \$6.7 million to tackle alcohol and drug misuse in communities. The Health Care Complaints Commission will receive more than \$700,000 extra to improve complaints handling. With a record Health budget of more than \$23 billion, the Government will fund record activity in our hospitals, bolster our clinical workforce and continue our massive hospital building program. And the list goes on. This budget includes \$2 billion recurrent funding for supports and services, including \$1.3 billion in funding to the National Disability Insurance Agency [NDIS] for clients who are now being supported under the NDIS, and \$1.4 billion to help people with a disability to participate socially and economically in their community.

Under the Illawarra Restart Fund, funding of \$900,000 was secured for Challenge Southern Highlands to build a 10-bed supported accommodation facility where clients can live. Just across the road is the Welby Garden Centre, which does amazing work. I enjoy going there every couple of months to meet the people. This facility is not just a result of funding by this Government. Wingecarribee Council donated the land and many other organisations and individuals donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in time, effort and goods to ensure that that facility is up and running. It is making a real change in the lives of many people. The Government will deliver \$1.48 billion for emergency services, including funding to enhance warning systems for communities affected by natural disasters and to continue to engage large firefighting aircraft. This Government is committed to supporting

the men and women who protect us during fires, emergencies and natural disasters. That is a massive relief to the people of my region, who in recent times know only too well the devastating impacts of fire and flood. [*Extension of time*]

In 2012, my electorate had devastating bushfires. The community came together and, in conjunction with Tahmoor Lions Club, we set up an event called Brigade Aid, raising much-needed funds to help people who needed help. It enabled us to buy equipment for all of our Rural Fire Service brigades. A couple of years ago a massive storm flooded the Picton township and others areas such as Tahmoor and places in the Southern Highlands. More than 100 businesses were devastated and destroyed and homes were lost. The generous people in my community contributed to a fund and, again, with the Tahmoor Lions raised just over \$90,000 to help those who had lost everything. Through fire or flood, our emergency services, with more than 1,000 volunteers, provide assistance within a couple of hours of an event. That is the spirit of my community and I am very proud to represent them.

In relation to education, the extensive upgrade of Picton High School has been budgeted and planned. I note that the Minister for Education is in the Chamber. Late last year he joined me and announced a \$100 million redevelopment of Picton High School. The Minister is only too well aware that this school is the only public high school in the Wollondilly shire. Kids go to 35 different other high schools because my electorate is geographically spread over 3,500 square kilometres. The Minister listened firsthand to my community and will now provide this \$100 million upgrade to Picton High School which will enable more students to attend a state-of-the-art facility. Planning is being undertaken for a second high school for Wollondilly at Wilton. It is very exciting that this Government has the money, energy and drive and an education Minister who will look after my community.

New South Wales public schools are expected to enrol an additional 164,000 students by 2031, and this project will ensure students and staff have the resources they need to succeed in the twenty-first century. This is again awesome news. The State Government will start to build or upgrade more than 120 schools and complete work on another 33 over the next four years with a whopping \$1.6 billion increase on last year's budget. This Government has already revealed that \$4.2 billion will be spent on new schools and significant school upgrades over four years. I love it when the Minister or one of his ministerial officers knock on my door or send me an email because it always good news. Under this Minister for Education, every one of my schools in both Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands communities has received extra funding, whether it is a public high school or a primary school.

In my electorate there are a large number of schools with huge maintenance backlogs. Just this year alone a lot of money has been poured into getting rid of that backlog. It means that teachers can teach and students can learn in proper facilities. Little things make so much difference, and I thank the Minister for all of his hard work. The projects announced in the budget were part of a long-term commitment to ensure that New South Wales schools were able to cater for surging student numbers. By 2031, more than half of all new jobs in Sydney will be created in Western Sydney, and the Government is working on ensuring that the road users and workers are connected with jobs across the region. Our region has received significant funding. Billions of dollars are being spent, in collaboration with the State and the Federal governments, to build the roads of the future.

An amount of \$648 million of combined Federal and New South Wales government funding will be made available to continue building and upgrading roads to support the future Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek. This funding includes the completion of the first stage of the Northern Road upgrade between Camden Valley Way, the Old Northern Road and Peter Brock Drive and the first stage of the Bringelly Road upgrade between Camden Valley Way and King Street. I acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Camden in relation to that matter. The package will see construction commence on the second stage of the Bringelly Road upgrade as well as the second stage of the Northern Road upgrade. An amount of \$21 million has been allocated for planning of the M12, while \$2 million has been set aside for planning of the Outer Sydney Orbital. The budget includes also \$3.2 billion to continue the delivery and development of WestConnex.

In relation to police, nearly \$15 million has been put aside for the Southern Highlands Police Station. Last year construction commenced; the project is well and truly underway and will shortly be fully operational to support our police. I had the pleasure of a recent visit by the sports Minister, who visited Tahmoor to check out the good use of \$30,000 to provide sight screens for the cricket club. It was a commitment that was made under the Community Building Partnership program, of which I know every member in this House is a big fan. Last week in the House I spoke about some of the fantastic projects that have been funded through that program in my electorate. The Start Strong funding reforms link needs-based funding to 600 hours of enrolment in quality education in the year before school to ensure that more kids participate. As I said, the \$217 million is additional to the initial \$115 million Start Strong commitment, delivering an historic investment in early childhood education. It was great to visit some early childhood learning centres at Mittagong and Bargo with the Minister. The parents and staff were so happy with the funding. It will make a huge difference.

For at least the past eight or nine years a major issue in my electorate has been the loss of water from Thirlmere lakes. When Labor members were last in government they refused to listen to me and my community and conduct an inquiry into the matter. As soon as this Government was elected an inquiry was set up. The report that came back was inconclusive as to whether the lakes had been impacted by mining, weather events or some other natural occurrence. However, all of the scientists, including the Chief Scientist, agreed that the Government needed to invest more money.

I am proud to say that we have secured \$1.9 million to conduct baseline studies and bring our scientific community and universities together to undertake some research to see whether something can be done. I am pleased to report that water is returning to Lake Werri Berri, but it is early days. I am very committed to ensuring that we protect one of the world's most beautiful locations and we have done a lot of work on the matter. By purchasing back petroleum exploration licences 2 and 454 we have ensured that there will be no coal seam gas activities in the water catchment areas of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands in future.

We are also working to make owning a home a reality for more people by streamlining and simplifying the planning system so housing approvals can be fast-tracked and by continuing to release and rezone more land. The budget includes \$117.8 million of new investment over four years to deliver infrastructure, housing employment initiatives, review land use and infrastructure strategies for priority growth areas, and implement regional plans. In addition, there are measures to address housing affordability by expanding priority precincts and priority growth areas to deliver around 30,000 additional dwellings and to support the reform of infrastructure contributions. Reforms to financial contributions by developers towards new developments will further support the provision of local infrastructure and speed up the delivery of housing.

I note that the education Minister, who was previously the planning Minister, is in the Chamber. The Minister is a great friend to Wollondilly and has done so much, such as announcing the vision for a new town at Wilton that will be established at a greenfield site and become the fifth largest regional town in New South Wales. I am pleased not only about the affordable homes that will become available for families but also about the infrastructure that the new development will bring. We have been working with council, the community and several agencies to bring transport links, more than 15,000 jobs, new primary and high schools and new employment precincts to the area. The new town at Wilton will deliver much-needed infrastructure to my community and services including health services. We have been working with the South Western Sydney Local Health District to set up the Wollondilly Health Alliance that will oversee the development of a precinct that will enable us to deliver many vital allied health services.

As I have said, Wollondilly is not quite the city and not quite the country; it is a bit of both. Under the Labor Government country dollars started in Goulburn and city dollars stopped at Camden, meaning that Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands were always in the Bermuda Triangle, as I called it. That is no longer the case. We are making huge investments in the region. I could go on for hours about how much money the Government has invested in my community, but I know many of my colleagues want to do the same. We have managed the budget and we are reinvesting hard-earned taxpayer dollars into the assets, infrastructure and services that are important to everyone's daily life. I commend the budget to the House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (10:35): The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government budget for 2017-18 fails to deliver fully for the people of Maitland. Given that my time to speak in this debate will be truncated because of the sessional orders—and because the Minister for Education is in the House and it is difficult to get hold of him—I will focus my comments on education, the school maintenance backlog and those sorts of things. When I began to read the budget papers last year I had hoped that the Government had listened to the parents of Maitland who have told this Government time and again that our schools are overcrowded and in desperate need of maintenance. From documents obtained under Government Information (Public Access) Act requests we have learned that 93 schools across the Hunter are at 100 per cent capacity or higher. Maitland Grossmann High School in my electorate is at 103 per cent capacity.

The Government is failing teachers and students. My office is inundated by parents and students saying that they cannot get into schools that their siblings have attended and with which they have long associations. It is a real problem. Students deserve individual attention. Teachers deserve manageable class sizes and manageable school populations. Overcrowding is also affecting outer zone enrolments. In 2017 children who had applied to study at schools outside their enrolment zone were knocked back at unprecedented rates. That means that younger siblings are being forced to study at different schools from their older brothers and sisters. Parents are having to manage a complicated school run to get kids to school. The Government is cruelly forcing parents to send their kids to other schools where they will not have the support of big brothers and sisters.

School overcrowding is not the only issue in my electorate. Despite the maintenance backlog blitz over the summer holidays that Government members keep proudly speaking about, many of our schools are still suffering. I am not talking about luxury items but basic things like replacing broken fans and heaters, fixing

leaking taps, repainting classrooms and replacing threadbare carpets. The Government boasted that its budget was the envy of the Western world, with a \$4.5 billion surplus. Rivers of gold are supposedly flowing into Treasury coffers from stamp duty revenue. They are not flowing to Maitland. The people of Maitland are entitled to ask the question: If our Government has so much money, why is it not being redirected to students who make up the foundation of our community?

The Minister and I have previously spoken about Gillieston Public School in my electorate, which parents and students are particularly keen to upgrade. I have met with many concerned parents who are considering pulling their children out of that school because of the Government's refusal to improve it. The issues include a number of infrastructure problems. Most of the classrooms are demountables. They are meant to be used as temporary structures to allow students to continue their education while permanent classrooms are being built. They are not designed to be used as permanent classrooms, but that is the reality for students and teachers at Gillieston Public School. It is an unacceptable situation.

The school does not have sewerage and is instead connected to a septic tank. When I asked asset management staff about the matter they told me that it was too hard to have the sewerage connected. There are houses not 30 metres from the toilets. I do not understand how they can be connected to sewerage and the school cannot. Parents have told me that their children are not using the toilets at the school because of the stench from the septic tank. I have also been told that the flushing mechanism on these toilets has not been working properly for years—it was not working properly last week when I visited the school. This summer in Maitland we have experienced some extremely hot days. Hardly any of these classrooms are air-conditioned and these students are being forced to learn in sweltering hot demountables. What a disgrace. I have also been told that parents are having trouble getting up the steps into the school hall, which is also a demountable building with no air-conditioning.

The fence surrounding the school only reaches waist height. This has obvious implications for a school with so-called runners—namely, students who run away from the school. Instead of having high steel fencing to keep students inside the school grounds, which is very strong and secure, Gillieston Public School has a small farm fence that the children can quite easily climb. The response of the school staff has been for these students to wear high-visibility vests. This has inevitably led to some children being excluded and singled out. The Government needs to install proper security fencing. The small piece of school playground equipment destroyed in April 2015 has only just been replaced. However, when I was at the school on Friday I noticed it was tapped off. It is still not ready to be used by the students because safety checks are being conducted.

We are now in the third week of the 2018 school year and the students of Gillieston Public School, who have waited for three years for this resource to be replaced, are still waiting to use it. That is not good enough. This Government's priorities are wrong. It can spend more than \$2 billion knocking down stadiums in Sydney, yet we have toilets in this school that are in such a disgusting state that students are not keen to use them. I implore this Government and the Minister for Education to take action on these issues. I understand that a site was available in the Gillieston area but the Government could not get itself together to put a cheque in the mail to the developer before the private independent schools got hold of it. This shows a lack of planning on the part of the Government. In the lead-up to the last election Labor committed to providing a new primary school and a new high school at Maitland. It is the policy of the Labor Party to support schools and hospitals before stadiums.

We want Gillieston Public School to be upgraded or a new school built. It is not fair for these students to be studying in sub-standard accommodation whilst the Government continues to boast about budget surpluses and spending \$2.5 billion on stadiums. That is an outrage. I invite the Minister for Education to visit Gillieston Public school to talk to the parents about a possible way forward to getting a new school. I give credit where credit is due. Minister Stokes has met with me about this school but I want him to meet with the parents. I want him to look those parents in the eye and understand the pain that this community is going through. I note that in order to get that meeting with the Minister I had to put together a video. It is a matter of great concern that I had to go to those lengths to get action from this Government.

Debate interrupted.

Bills

FOOD AMENDMENT (SEAFOOD COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING) BILL 2017

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 8 February 2018.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (10:44): I contribute to debate on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. At the outset I thank the member for The Entrance for drafting and introducing the bill. I thank him also on behalf of the many commercial fishers in Port Stephens. The bill will

allow the people who live in Port Stephens, and the thousands of people who visit us, to know whether or not the fish that is being served in one of our beautiful local cafes or restaurants is from local waters. The bill also recognises the importance of the work of our commercial fishers to put local fish on our tables. On 1 July 2018 the 2016 changes to country of origin food labelling, introduced under the Country of Origin Food Labelling Information Standard 2016, will commence. These country of origin laws outline the labelling requirements for food grown, produced, made or packaged in Australia. Like most Australians, I fully support transparent country of origin labelling laws, but there will be a deficit in those standards when they commence. We could resolve that deficit problem today.

Under the current standards the country of origin requirements do not apply to restaurants, cafes and outlets selling seafood for immediate consumption. It is estimated that 75 per cent of seafood sold in Australia is imported. It is now more important than ever for consumers to have all the information they need to make informed choices about their seafood consumption. This bill will remove the proposed exemption and bring restaurants, cafes and other outlets into line with other retailers and provide customers and consumers with an accurate understanding of where the seafood they are eating came from. It is not that hard. New South Wales is not the first to take this step in supporting local commercial fishers and meeting community demand. The Northern Territory has already introduced a similar change. It is a requirement that menus label non-Australian caught fish as imported, although the source country is not required to be listed on the menu. A similar requirement is being introduced under this bill, with non-Australian caught seafood labelled as imported.

The member for the Entrance has consulted widely on this language and recognised that some businesses use seafood from a variety of source countries. A single term provides the most flexibility for these businesses. The Northern Territory's experience, following the introduction of this change in 2008, has been positive. I know the pressure that local fishers in Port Stephens face. A simple change like this will have profound impacts on these family-run businesses. I have spoken with many commercial fishers who are doing it tough. They support this bill. They work hard and do not ask for much, yet the Government continues to smash them. I have spoken previously in this place about the contamination at RAAF Base Williamstown and the heartache it caused in the local fishing community. The contamination led to the closure of fishing in the Hunter River and Fullerton Cove for 12 months. That precautionary ban almost destroyed the businesses of dozens of fishing families and forced some, who had worked hard all their lives, to rely on charity and government support for the first time in their lives. It was heartbreaking and many are still continuing to rebuild their lives and businesses.

It is time for this Government to put local fishers first and support this bill. The majority of commercial fishers have struggled to stay afloat during the government's fishing industry adjustment program. Many had to spend enormous sums of money to keep doing the job they were already doing and some were forced to purchase the right to do less than they were previously doing. This so-called reform has caused much hardship, with many fishers leaving the industry and others are struggling to remain. Another challenge faced recently by local commercial fishers in my electorate has been the impact of the joint NSW Department of Primary Industries and Huon Aquaculture Group Limited five-year trial of an offshore fish farm near Hawks Nest.

A month ago fears of local fishers were confirmed when one of the so-called fortress pens buckled in rough seas and 20,000 mature kingfish escaped into the marine park and surrounding waters. Yesterday the Minister confirmed that 15,000 of those large fish are still swimming in our marine park. Fishers hold serious concerns about the impact of this on their businesses. Following this expensive reform process, we could find ourselves in the situation where the Department of Primary Industries—Fisheries forces commercial fishers to buy the right to fish for, say, \$400,000 worth of fish, but the fish they are authorised to catch are potentially being wiped out by these escaped kingfish.

To make the situation worse, the Department of Primary Industries—Fisheries imposed a ban on fishing in that fish pen area. The ban, which was due to expire last week, has now been extended to the end of this month. In all its actions, the Department of Primary Industries—Fisheries has consistently prioritised the commercial interests of Huon Aquaculture as well as its own over the commercial interests of others. We now find ourselves in a situation where the regulator has taken fees from fishers and told them what they can catch and from where, but that same regulator has also set up a joint business in the same area which, after an incident, is now impacting on the fishers that it regulates.

I repeat my call for a fully independent, arm's-length review to investigate what has occurred with the fish farm off Hawks Nest because fishers up and down the coast, particularly in Port Stephens, are being let down by this Government. They have been struggling for years. Many of them have worked in their family's business for generations. By refusing to support this bill, Government members are showing how out of touch they are with small business and the community. People value local produce and respect our hardworking local fishers. They deserve to know whether the fish that they are eating in a cafe or restaurant is locally caught. It is not hard. Government members could just support this bill but that is not what will happen today. The least that Government

members could do is allow this widely supported change to labelling laws so that they can point to something—anything—that they have done to support our hardworking local fishers.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (10:50): I am proud to support the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin) Labelling Bill 2017. I congratulate the member for The Entrance for introducing this sensible bill. He, like all other Labor members of Parliament who represent coastal communities, recognises the importance of the commercial fishing industry for the economy and for those communities. The bill, which is fairly simple, requires food outlets selling seafood for immediate consumption to inform their customers whether that seafood is caught locally in Australia or is imported. These sensible measures will help to inform consumer choice and we all know that many diners want that sort of information.

The bill tries to help out local fishers who have been hit for six by this nasty, incompetent Government. This Government is nasty because its fishing reforms have destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of small family-run businesses up and down the coast. This Government is incompetent because the reform process has been botched. This bill simply delivers what the Government announced more than 18 months ago. Eighteen months on the Government cannot deliver a simple piece of legislation that lets consumers know whether they are eating locally caught or imported seafood. Labor members got sick of waiting for the Government, which has been sitting on its hands, and decided to try to get it done themselves. Government members now have an opportunity to join Labor members and vote for this bill. Despite the devastation wrought upon the commercial fishing industry, Government members now have an opportunity to say, "We support consumer choice and our local fishing industry."

But I have my doubts. This Government does not care about the small guy; only the views of the big boys matter. Dozens of Government members who represent coastal electorates do not seem to care about a sustainable, vibrant fishing industry. The fishing industry is responsible in part for making our coastal communities what they are. If we lose our fishers we will lose not only our source of locally caught fresh seafood but also a quintessential part of what makes up our coastal towns. Last year, when dozens of fishers came into this place to make their plight known, not one Government member turned up to listen to their concerns. Since then they have hidden behind weasel words and spin as business after business has shut down.

It is not just fishers that are being driven to the wall; the economic disaster that is this Government's commercial fishing reforms is placing a huge economic cloud over many businesses that supply goods and services to the fishing industry, as well as the fishing cooperatives that dot the New South Wales coast. This is the reality of the Government's reforms. What makes it more tragic is that there was no real problem with the status quo. Everyone made a living in a generally sustainable fashion. People caught fish, businesses got by and local economies ticked along, but they are now in jeopardy. Where are Government members on this issue? Where are the North Coast Nationals who should be challenging their Minister on this issue? Where are the South Coast Liberals? Do they even know what is happening in their local towns? All we have had is deafening silence. They do not care about the small guy. It is of no concern to them if a small business goes to the wall.

This bill shows that Labor not only supports consumer choice but also wants to do what it can to get behind our local fishers, their families, and the coastal businesses and cooperatives that rely upon their trade. The Government should support this bill. The fact that it will not do so shows just how out of touch it is. This Government does not want to know about small businesses that are battling. I am proud to support this bill—something on which the Government should have focused instead of running hundreds of small fishing businesses into the ground. I again congratulate the member for The Entrance for introducing this bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (10:55): I commend the member for The Entrance for introducing the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin) Labelling Bill 2017. This bill, which is long overdue, is a positive step in the right direction. The Hunter region is famous for its local produce and for its fishing products. The Newcastle Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Limited, which was formed in 1945 to service the needs of local commercial fishers, provides a great deal of equipment and facilities and assists in the marketing of the daily catch, either locally or in Sydney. The cooperative has 130 shareholder members who work independently in their fishing businesses either in the estuaries or in the fish and prawn trawlers, depending on individual endorsements. Their catches are consigned through one of the cooperative's seven receiving depots located over a 200 kilometre area between Tuggerah and Seal Rocks. A number of Government members who represent coastal electorates will be directly affected by and would gain considerable benefit from this legislation.

These receiving depots are located at Gorokan, Tacoma, Swansea, Newcastle, Nelson Bay, Tea Gardens and Bungwahl and the administration office is located in Newcastle. I am surprised that no-one north of Port Stephens is in the Chamber to support this bill. The Newcastle Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative sells approximately 50 per cent of its catch locally through retail shops with the balance going to the Sydney Fish Market for auction. Value-adding and filleting occurs at the local processing facility in Newcastle. Newcastle

Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative and all the fishermen in that area would benefit from the legislation before us. They have had it pretty tough over the past few years, particularly after Fullerton Cove was closed due to contamination from Williamstown.

As there are a number of fishers at Hexham in my electorate as well as Fullerton Cove we really need to consider local fishers and put them first. They have also suffered through the Government's restructure program as they have had to buy shares at great expense to do what they have been doing. The Government has not been friendly to our fishing industry. This bill is one small change that could have a positive effect. There is a great deal of evidence to support that, for example, the Legislative Council inquiry that recommended the introduction of labelling regulation. The Northern Territory currently regulates labelling and it is very successful. Detailed studies were conducted before labelling regulation was introduced in the Northern Territory.

The Government promised an improved labelling system but so far it has done very little to deliver. I implore Government members to support the bill introduced by the member for The Entrance who has done a lot of their work. There are concerns that local restaurants are passing off Vietnamese basa fillets as fish of the day dory. One importer tried to market the pest fish tilapia from Indonesia under the trademark Kariba bream, despite the fact that the fish is not even in the bream family. At a minimum, consumers should be able to make informed decisions about their meals—I certainly want to, and I imagine everyone else in this House wants to.

Mr Ron Hoenig: I want to know what's kosher and what's not.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: Absolutely. Tricia Beatty, the Chief Executive Officer of the Professional Fishermen's Association, certainly welcomes this bill. She says that most consumers are not aware that 85 per cent of seafood in New South Wales is imported. That is quite an amazing statistic. Ms Beattie believes that this legislation would have a very positive effect on the local industry. Producers like seeing their product in the supply chain. Consumers will not be left in the dark and restaurants will be able to celebrate their seafood selections in a fair way. Quite a few myths surround seafood labelling. It is a fallacy that people do not care where their seafood comes from. More than 86,000 consumers have signed petitions for country of origin labelling. People think that consumers will not pay more for their seafood, but people are already paying more for their local seafood and they often pay premium prices for it in restaurants.

Another myth is that voluntary labelling works in Australia. It does not work at all. Restaurants and cafes are willing to label seafood as local to charge premium prices, but very rarely are their customers voluntarily told if that seafood is imported, and with 85 per cent of seafood imported one can guess what the reality is. Another myth is that Australian seafood will cost too much and that it would be too onerous on the food service industry. Restaurants and cafes are labelling local seafood already without being worried about menu writing costs. We must give Australians and New South Wales consumers what they want. Consumers want to know what they are eating, what is on their plate, where it is from and what quality it is. This bill goes a very long way to addressing that. Again, I commend the member for The Entrance for bringing this bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:01): On behalf of The Greens I contribute to debate on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017, which proposes to mandate country of origin labelling for the sale of seafood, including in restaurants and in takeaway shops. The Greens strongly support measures that promote local seafood supply and therefore support this bill. I acknowledge the work of the Opposition on this bill, particularly the member for The Entrance. This is a crucial stepping stone to ensuring the ongoing viability of our domestic fishing industry.

The benefits of country of origin labelling are clear. The large majority of fish currently consumed in New South Wales is imported—as we have heard today, a staggering 85 per cent. In my area, even in an area as rich in fish as the North Coast, when I buy fish I am always amazed by how much imported fish is in our local fish shops. Empowering people to make a deliberate choice about where the seafood they consume comes from has been shown to reduce the intake of imported products and increase the demand for locally sourced food. Country of origin labelling is widely supported from all ends of the supply chain including fishers, retailers and consumers. For The Greens, country of origin labelling is a no-brainer. It promotes a culture where Australians value domestically sourced seafood, and consumer choice and jobs in regional communities.

I turn now to the impacts of this bill on my electorate of Ballina, where commercial fishing plays a vital role in our local economy. My grandfather was a fisherman and I am proud of our local fishing industry, which includes businesses such as the Ballina Fishermen's Co-operative. Commercial fishing ventures such as the co-operative contribute to Ballina's economy through the retail sale of seafood, as well as through attracting tourism to our area. I am very proud to be working with the co-op in trying to reinvigorate that area to encourage people to come to buy fish. There are also flow-on benefits to other local businesses associated with the seafood industry. In my area everyone is very interested in locally sourced, boutique, bespoke cottage industries, and that is why this legislation would be so useful to us. This contribution is vital to a long-term sustainable economy in

Ballina and I will continue to work with local fishers in my community to promote their industry and the local businesses they support.

The commercial fishing industry in my electorate has already suffered through the challenging reforms pushed through by this Government. The long-term impacts of the reforms remain to be seen, but we all have an interest in ensuring the long-term sustainability of a local seafood industry. The Greens were critical of the reform process and the uncertainty that many fishers faced as a result of the Government's approach. However, we have worked constructively through the committee inquiry into commercial fishing, which reported last year. My upper House colleague Mr Justin Field was a member of that committee throughout that inquiry.

Given the determination of the Government to proceed with the reforms, we focused on trying to ensure that assistance to support local businesses would flow through into the future. The report contained a strong recommendation that the Government commence implementation of a country of origin labelling scheme by December 2017. That clearly has not happened, which is why this bill is important. It is hard to understand why the Government does not support Labor on this bill. The Greens also moved to strengthen recommendations in the inquiry's report for the creation of a New South Wales seafood label and community awareness program to showcase local New South Wales seafood producers. As I have said, my region is known as having a strong local food culture. Knowing our local growers and food manufacturers, and supporting local produce is in our DNA on the North Coast.

The Greens recognise an opportunity to help the seafood industry to take on a similar approach to other food industries, connecting fishers and seafood producers directly with local restaurants and consumers, profiling local businesses, and promoting sustainable fisheries management through a strong consumer brand for ethical and sustainable products. I know, and Mr Deputy Speaker would know, that in our area we have a boutique beef industry and all kinds of meat products, fish and other produce that people flock to our area to buy. Whether it is local coffee, local chocolate, or local protein, there is a booming industry in our area. It was disappointing that the Government did not support the proposals for sustainable fishing at the time.

As I understand it, the \$400,000 promised for a community awareness program for local seafood has not been fully allocated. I hope the Government can update the House on how this program is being rolled out. As a democratically elected representative of a coastal regional community, I know how important the local fishing industry is to the future of my community. I want to see the next generation of fishers in Ballina have the same opportunity to take up this profession and contribute to the production of high-quality seafood for which Ballina is so famous. There is much more we can do, but supporting compulsory country of origin labelling is a great start. For those reasons The Greens support the bill.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:07): In reply: I thank all members who have contributed to the debate on the Food Amendment (Seafood Country of Origin Labelling) Bill 2017. On the Government side, the member for Tamworth and the member for Wollondilly said that the Government does not support this bill. That is disappointing and I will address their comments in a moment. From this side of the House, I thank the member for Shellharbour, the member for Rockdale, the member for Gosford, the member for Maitland, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Port Stephens, the member for Swansea and the member for Newcastle. I also thank the member for Ballina, who spoke on behalf of The Greens. The comments made by the member for Rockdale—a respected and successful businessman in his own right—on business regulation should carry some weight in this House. He said that this bill does not seek to advantage local producers; rather, it removes a disadvantage that local producers face:

Throughout my business life the one thing that was needed and wanted from the Government was certainty. This bill will provide that certainty ... The member for Maitland, who was also a small business owner before she came to this place—she operated in the tourism industry—said that industry thrives on local product and that it is important to provide the correct information to consumers on local product. This bill will ensure that information is provided. The Greens stated that small business communities in regional and small towns rely on a business model that is very much focused on locally sourced product to thrive, and this bill supports that aim. This new business model will give a start to local businesses in regional towns that are trying to rebuild themselves. Local information and consumer information that supports local product is necessary. I appreciate The Greens support for the bill and their comments. All Labor members have shown their support for the bill and I thank them for their comments. I thank also the Labor Caucus for its support, and the shadow Minister in particular for his support with the drafting and passage of the bill through the House. I turn now to the Government's response to the bill. The member for Tamworth led for the Government and stated:

The Opposition claims that country of origin labelling will become a licensed condition for food retailers under clause 45 of the Food Regulation 2015.

I did not say that. In explaining carefully the effect of the bill, as I was mindful to do, I said that it created no penalties—in other words, no monetary fine—specifically linked to the labelling obligations set up under the bill. However, the Food Authority website shows that 1,200 businesses in New South Wales are referred to as "vulnerable food service businesses"; they all sell and provide seafood for immediate consumption to consumers and those businesses require a licence. Under the regulation those licence conditions include all elements of the

Act and a licence obligation would be created in respect of the requirement to label seafood that they serve appropriately.

Let me be clear: under the bill—and the Act if amended—a penalty would arise only if the label provided a false description of the origin of the seafood. That is hardly an unforeseen penalty. That is the wording the Government used a number of times in the debate. Business is already required to make accurate statements on labels and advertising about its products. There are well-known penalties for false and misleading labelling. In other words, the bill creates an obligation to label seafood origin and a penalty arises only if the origin is falsely stated. The member for Tamworth then suggested that we were trying to set up a voluntary scheme. His reasoning became a bit confused at that point. I reiterate that the bill creates an obligation for all those who provide seafood for immediate consumption in New South Wales to label the origin of that seafood. It is not a voluntary scheme.

The member for Tamworth then expressed concern for the consequences. He talked about a five-year jail term for people who did not comply; he became really confused at that point and unnecessarily alarmist. He referred to a voluntary scheme on the one hand and then suggested that people might be thrown into jail if they failed to label their seafood in this State. I could not have been clearer about the intent of the bill. The member for Tamworth and the member for Wollondilly said that seafood importers do not support the bill. That is hardly surprising; they are making a killing because at least 70 per cent of seafood consumed in this country is imported. If Government members were serious about supporting primary producers in this country they would be taking steps to turn that situation around.

One of the positive steps that could be taken is to properly label the source of the food we consume at restaurants, and from takeaway food shops and so on. This has been done in the Northern Territory with positive results. It is a small burden on business, but the response from members opposite was disappointing. The member for Wollondilly referred to Bidfood, which expressed to him its opposition to the implementation of country of origin labelling. Again, I am not particularly surprised. Bidfood is a large food service distributor, importer and supplier to clubs and caterers. It provides no fresh seafood in its product line-up. All its seafood is frozen and I would almost guarantee to the House that most of that would be imported.

The member for Tamworth referred to seafood names and how that would cause confusion. Let me be clear: The bill does not refer to any obligation to name the seafood appropriately or to use the Australian Fish Names Standard. I addressed that matter in my second reading speech. The bill deals only with the source; sources that are either Australian or imported. It could not be simpler. The member for Tamworth said that Labor would be moving amendments. I have never communicated that to the Government, so I am not sure where that came from. Government members implied that compliance was a problem in the bill, given that no direct penalty was attached to the failure to actually label. Many factors ensure compliance with the Food Act and Food Regulation in this State. The Government's policy is that this should be done on a voluntary basis without relying on penalties and legal enforcement except as a last resort. The Department of Primary Industries policy on compliance states:

It has been identified that the most effective way to gain and maintain voluntary compliance is by building a relationship of trust between DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety, the community and industry. This relies on the premise that if regulated businesses are treated as trustworthy, they will repay this by:

- voluntarily complying with their obligations
- being truthful and cooperative in their dealings and
- meeting their requirements as and when they fall due.

It goes on at length; it is all about voluntary compliance and education, with many mechanisms set up under the Act and the Food Authority to achieve compliance. All food retailers are required to notify their local council before they begin to trade. Council environmental officers are authorised officers under the Act; they can inspect food businesses and issue improvement notices as opposed to penalty notices. Improvement notices lead to changes in behaviour and compliance. Further, all food retail businesses that prepare and serve food that is ready to eat—including restaurants, cafes, takeaway food shops, caterers, pubs, clubs and hotels—are all required to have a trained food service supervisor on hand to ensure compliance with food regulation.

One of the obligations of a food service supervisor is to ensure compliance with the Act—again another way that a mechanism already in place could ensure compliance with the bill, but does not require a penalty to be applied to business. Finally, councils use a standard checklist when they inspect food premises in New South Wales. Retailers selling seafood and other products not for immediate consumption are already required to label that product, so the standard checklist already has a labelling box requiring a tick or a cross. The paperwork to ensure compliance with this bill is already in place. Very little would need to change to ensure compliance with this bill. As I said in my second reading speech, this bill will have minimal impact on business.

I thank all the commercial fishers and small business fishing families in my area and across New South Wales who have talked to me during the preparation of this bill. I acknowledge Allan Reed, a fisherman from my

area, who sent me a text message this morning saying that he would like to be here, but he is out catching fish. He had a good catch this morning, which kept him out longer than he expected. I acknowledge the Professional Fishermen's Association Executive Officer Tricia Beatty, who is a fine advocate for commercial fishers in this State. I thank the fishing cooperatives that have sent me letters of support during this process. I acknowledge Clarissa Bye for her nice article on this issue in last week's *Daily Telegraph*.

I note that no Government members from coastal electorates spoke to this bill, which is disappointing. The headline in today's *Daily Telegraph* is "It's a bit fishy". I thought I might have made the front page with the bill, but not so. It is an article about the fishiness in the National Party, which is disappointing. The National Party has some great members who are advocates for primary producers. I know there are good men and women in this House who support this type of regulation, but they are held back by their Coalition partners who are free marketeers and are interested in only a voluntary scheme of labelling in this State. I wish them all the best with that, but I do not think it will get us anywhere.

During debate the Government created a straw man called "unforeseen potential penalties", and have sought to use it to scare businesses into backing its ongoing consultation on the labelling project; a project that so far is going nowhere. A vote against this bill is a vote against commercial fishers in this State; it is a vote against the small family businesses that rely on fishing to earn a wage, and it is a vote against the co-operatives up and down our coast, which are unique and important business models of cooperation and community provision, which we should support as much as we can.

Most of the seafood we consume in this country is imported. We will only turn that around with proper labelling. When we consume seafood at a restaurant, from a takeaway food shop, or from a fish and chip shop in this State we should do so knowing its origins; we should not have to ask. This bill achieves that aim with the least possible impost on business. Above all, it offers valuable support to the fishing men and women of this State. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes35

Noes46

Majority.....11

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Dib, Mr J
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T F
Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E
Car, Ms P
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Donato, Mr P
Greenwich, Mr A
Hoenig, Mr R
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Piper, Mr G
Tesch, Ms L (teller)
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Bali, Mr S
Catley, Ms Y
Daley, Mr M
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D
Hornery, Ms S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Warren, Mr G

NOES

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Fraser, Mr A
Gulaptis, Mr C
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Goward, Ms P
Hazzard, Mr B
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E

Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Cooke, Ms S
Davies, Mrs T
Evans, Mr A
Griffin, Mr J
Henskens, Mr A
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Provest, Mr G

NOES

Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G
Wilson, Ms F

Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

PAIRS

Cotsis, Ms S
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N

Humphries, Mr K
Anderson, Mr K
Gibbons, Ms M

Motion negatived.

WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (PROTECTION OF INJURED WORKERS) BILL 2017**Second Reading Debate**

Debate resumed from 21 September 2012.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (11:31): On 21 September 2017, the member for Cessnock introduced to this place a private member's bill, the Workers Compensation (Protection of Injured Workers) Bill 2017. He commenced his second reading speech by saying that his bill:

... is not for the purpose of political pointscoring, but I know that is what critics will say. If the Government would like to introduce a similar bill I will happily withdraw mine. I do not want accolades; I just want what is right for injured workers across the State.

That is where the member makes a huge mistake. Where was the member for Cessnock in 2012 when a bankrupt system had \$4.1 billion in unfunded liabilities, the blame for which he accorded to the global financial crisis? The global financial crisis was not responsible for unfunded liabilities for workers compensation claims. The problem with the member's position on that issue is his allocating blame to the global financial crisis shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the way workers compensation operated in this State. He then went on to say that he was going to canvass the electorates to ensure that persons who were impacted by the content of his bill contacted their local members and advised them to act in accordance with their conscience and support his bill.

Primarily, the member's bill removes the section 39 five-year cap relating to claims. The member for Cessnock told a compelling story that at Christmas time last year some people would have their workers compensation entitlements stopped. He identified that potentially 4,200 claims would cease in December 2017 and that another 1,500 would be terminated by June 2018 and said that members should identify with the plight of those workers and should support his bill. The response to his call for persons to contact members' offices has not been overwhelming. In fact, not one person has contacted my office to say that their workers compensation entitlement would cease.

Mr Greg Warren: I will get a few people to email you, Damo. I'll forward the emails.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I acknowledge that interjection. I thought that is what the member for Cessnock had invited people to do. I am sure that is the case. In his speech, he said, "... I know that is what critics will say." I am a critic of what he is proposing to do in this bill. It is much more about political pointscoring than it is about workers. The amendments that were made by this Government are the single most important reforms that have ever been made to workers compensation in the interest of workers in this State. Opposition members embark upon a position that is ideologically driven and they cannot see any other process for delivering greater benefits to workers. I will outline the circumstances in which injured workers in this State have had their circumstances improved as a result of this Government making amendments to the Workers Compensation Act. This bill is not about the protection of workers because workers cannot be protected—and this is the fundamental position—by an insurance system that is financially unsustainable. This bill will immediately plunge the New South Wales workers compensation system back into a state of financial unsustainability. The primary position of good government and good legislation is to ensure that the scheme offered to injured workers delivers the best possible results and is financially sustainable.

Mr Greg Warren: I thought you were the party of the worker?

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: We are the party of the worker because we offer injured workers the best possible results to deal with their injuries.

Mr Greg Warren: Really?

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Really.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members of Standing Order 52.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In 2012 the Government had to make a choice between supporting those injured workers who need help the most and leaving New South Wales with a broken workers compensation system. That was the choice we had to make. To this day, Opposition members do not acknowledge that the system was broken and that it did not provide support for those workers who needed it most. It was financially unsustainable. In making those decisions in 2012, the Government sought to achieve a balance between helping an injured worker return to work, providing ongoing support to workers with high needs, ensuring the system was financially sustainable and allowing New South Wales employers to receive competitively priced premiums. They were the conflicting needs that had to be addressed by the Government.

In 2012 the Government made the hard decisions it had to make to reform the scheme and return it to a sustainable position. Governments are elected to make tough decisions. That is what this Government did based on the best available information and advice. In 2012 the Government increased the amount paid to the vast majority of injured workers; we helped workers and increased the protection provided to them. In October 2012 the single statutory rate payable to injured workers who had received 26 weeks of payments was \$439.50 per week. The 2012 reforms introduced a new deemed weekly benefit amount of \$736.72 for injured workers who were subject to the weekly payments reform. That is some reform. Today these figures are \$494.30 and \$828.72 per week. That is an increase of 60 per cent.

For example, an injured worker with a dependent spouse and two dependent children is entitled to weekly payments that are more than 15 per cent higher today than the weekly payments they would have received under the old, broken, unsustainable scheme. The reforms introduced by the Government provide and reinforce protections for those who need it most. This included providing a minimum weekly payment for those injured workers with the highest needs. This provides protection for young and low-paid workers who are tragically injured in the workplace and their injury results in a permanent impairment of more than 30 per cent. They receive a minimum payment of \$814 per week, regardless of their pre-injury earnings.

The bill before the House proposed by the member for Cessnock puts that at risk because the proposed scheme would return the workers compensation system to a financially unsustainable scheme. What will this bill do, therefore, to help injured workers? It would leave them supported by an unsustainable, unfunded, unaffordable system that does not help workers. That is why we are the party that looks after injured workers most comprehensively, and that is why I say that this bill is not about the protection of workers, it is about political pointscoreing. The workers compensation reforms implemented by the Coalition governments in 2012 and 2015 have created a system that is working well. The reforms have created a system that provides support where support is most needed. The reforms turned around a failing, unsustainable workers compensation scheme and addressed the \$4 billion deficit.

As a result of the reforms, the workers compensation system is now performing better than it has in years and, for the first time in a long time, the system is affordable and sustainable and delivering for injured workers. I think we all agree that returning injured workers to the workforce is the best outcome that can be achieved. All I ask of the member for Cessnock is to acknowledge that fact. Significant bodies of research support this fact. Perhaps the member should read them. A study by Wainwright and others called "Fit for Purpose? Using the fit note with patients with chronic pain: a qualitative study" states that "Good work can help in the recovery from injury and illness". I can provide the reference to the member for Cessnock.

I suggest that the member also read the study by Johnson and Fry for the WorkSafe program in Victoria, which states, "The longer someone is off work, the less likely they are to return to work". Finally, I suggest that he reads a policy document by the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, which states, "Good work is good for our mental and physical health and wellbeing". How is the New South Wales workers compensation system performing now? In 2011-12 the return-to-work rate for injured workers at 26 weeks or six months was 86.7 per cent. In 2016-17 this rate was 89.5 per cent. These are not just numbers; they are real people being supported by an effective system to get back into the workforce and to continue to be productive contributors.

Debate interrupted.

Motions

JOBS GROWTH

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (11:44): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government on New South Wales having the lowest unemployment rate in the nation.
- (2) Notes that the Government has achieved the lowest unemployment rate in the nation for a straight 31 months, entrenching New South Wales as the jobs capital of Australia.
- (3) Welcomes the near 140,000 jobs created in 2017 alone.
- (4) Notes that the Opposition has opposed the Government's tax cuts and infrastructure investment, which have driven jobs growth across the State.
- (5) Notes that the Liberal and National parties are now the parties of the worker.

It is a self-evident truth, which Labor does not seem to understand, that if nobody had a job then there would be no workers. The concept of jobs and workers go hand in hand. That is why it is alarming that in all the time I have been a member of this House I cannot remember the Leader of the Opposition uttering the word "jobs" or speaking about the economy. A reasonable and legitimate question to ask is: If Labor won the next State election, who on its team would keep the New South Wales economy powering and jobs creation continuing? We know that the Leader of the Opposition has no interest in economics. It is hardly surprising because he has never really had a job, only ever having been a union official or a political hack.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. If the member for Ku-ring-gai wants to launch an attack on the Leader of the Opposition he should do so by way of another motion, not as part of this motion.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: That is ridiculous.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I was not paying attention. I will read the motion of the member for Ku-ring-gai.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I ask that the clock be stopped.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It is a typical, ridiculous objection by the member for Liverpool, who specialises in doing this.

Mr Paul Lynch: Stop pontificating.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: He is a failed lawyer and a failed politician and he is wasting the time of the House.

Mr Paul Lynch: And you were Hartcher's silk—the lowest insult that anyone could hurl.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Under Standing Order 73 and Standing Order 74 I ask the member for Ku-ring-gai to withdraw his remarks.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: About whom?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: About the member for Liverpool.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Being a failed lawyer and a failed politician?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Absolutely.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Isn't truth relevant to this House?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Ku-ring-gai has the call.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Nobody on the Opposition frontbench has the wit or experience to manage the New South Wales economy, which is the powerhouse of the national economy and one of the largest economies in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In the public interest, it is essential to have a debate about the economy and jobs. The record of the New South Wales Coalition speaks for itself. Under Labor, New South Wales had the highest unemployment rate of any State in the nation. It now has the lowest. Nearly 140,000 jobs were created over the past year, representing employment growth of 3.7 per cent. That is above the long-term average of 1.6 per cent. More than 44 per cent of the full-time jobs created nationally over the past year were created in New South Wales, and many of those jobs were in regional parts of the State. For 31 consecutive months the New South Wales unemployment rate has been the lowest in the country. The unemployment rate is now 4.8 per cent—nearly a full percentage point lower than the nearest State.

Jobs growth has not come by accident. It has been the product of hard work by the Government. Strong economic management means governments can embark on record infrastructure programs like our current

four-year \$80 billion program. It means that governments can invest in projects like WestConnex, NorthConnex, hospitals, and heavy and light rail projects. It means that governments can give tax cuts. All of those things create jobs. Labor has opposed most of our infrastructure initiatives. It opposed our asset recycling program that has done so much to create wealth and jobs. During the course of the Coalition Government, this State's net worth has increased and the unemployment rate has decreased. Labor does not seem to care about the economy or about jobs. What is Labor's plan to create jobs? In seven years of opposition it has never articulated one economic policy or initiative that would create one job for a citizen of New South Wales.

While we can talk all we want about economic indicators and numbers, important social issues lie behind them. The numbers reflect real human beings. The employment statistics represent meals on tables and roofs over families' heads. They reflect social cohesion rather than social division. Paul Keating said that the best thing you can do for a worker is give them a job. The Labor Opposition has turned its back on the workers. This motion should be agreed to because jobs are important. They represent the integrity of individuals and the economic wellbeing of families. They also represent a good and bright future for this State and its citizens. That is why the Coalition is doing so much for the workers and why the Coalition parties can rightly claim to be the parties of the worker. That is why it is important to debate this motion and why this House should agree with its terms. This House should note and appreciate this Government on having the lowest unemployment rate in the nation for 31 consecutive months and for creating 140,000 jobs in the past year. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (11:53): We will not be agreeing to the motion moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai but will be arguing vigorously that the Government has once again misled the House. The Government likes to talk about numbers. One number it may not like to hear is 5.1, which is the unemployment rate for January 2018, as recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. Why is 5.1 per cent important? It is important because that was the unemployment rate when Labor left office. In this debate we first have to try to get up-to-date statistics. That is a problem for members opposite; I understand it is always a challenge. Labor members try to keep to the most contemporary data, even though we are in opposition and have one-tenth of the Government's resources. The fact is the 5.1 per cent unemployment rate is the same as when Labor left office.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Quote your source.

Mr RYAN PARK: I will quote the source. It is very unusual and made up of three letters—ABS. I know that is unusual; it is not very reliable and lacks transparency. There are only a couple of members of The Nationals here but I hope they can understand that.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: What month?

Mr RYAN PARK: January 2018. The other number I will talk about is 210,663. That is the number of unemployed persons in New South Wales—the highest rate since January 2016. It is unusual for a member of the Government to spruik jobs and unemployment when there has been no improvement in the past couple of years. And what about the fact that wages growth has remained completely stagnant under this Government? There has been no wages growth at all. Under this Government the cost of living has increased, including on tolls and electricity and other utilities. It might also have to do with funding new stadiums, which is a big priority that the Government feels is extremely important.

The member for Ku-ring-gai said that he is interested in Labor's jobs plan. I am a mad sports fanatic. I love sport, and right now I love it even more because the Winter Olympics are on. I absolutely love them. This year they are being held in a magnificent country called South Korea. Anyone who has been there will know it has great snow, nice people and fantastic cuisine. Obviously, South Koreans must also build trains well. The good member for Ku-ring-gai talked about infrastructure and the train build. It was astonishing for him to mention it, because the trains are being built in South Korea. It is great to watch the Olympics and it is a great country to visit, but I do not know why we had to assist the South Korean unemployment rate by building our trains there. Anyway, that is what we have chosen to do.

I say to people as they are watching the magnificent Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang that they should pat this Government on the back. It deserves an enormous amount of credit for single-handedly reducing unemployment in South Korea. That is a credit to it; not many governments have been able to deliver such a thing from Macquarie Street. It is fascinating that the member for Ku-ring-gai would raise the subject. I understand he is getting jittery about not being on the front bench—a lot of members opposite are—but when we debate motions it is important that we look at the numbers and check what we are doing.

The unemployment rate in New South Wales is the same as when Labor left office. The number of unemployed persons now totals 210,663, which is the highest number since January 2016. The Government has also contributed to the unemployment success of South Korea. Those opposite have asked what Labor will do in

office. We have already announced that we will use 90 per cent Australian steel in all our infrastructure projects. The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for Skills have announced that Labor will ensure that the 15 per cent target is met when we construct infrastructure projects worth more than half a million dollars. We have already outlined a number of key job generating programs. In the great region of the Illawarra we have committed to \$250 million in direct infrastructure upgrades. This will improve employment in one of the largest regions in New South Wales. I look forward to talking further about this issue. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (12:00): Employment generation is incredibly important in providing meaningful and productive endeavour for both individuals and society to reach their potential. High employment rates are fundamentally crucial in a fair and thriving society. Jobs are vital to providing independence, a sense of identity and purpose for us all. Employment also creates community connections, takes pressure off social services and reduces social problems. I am glad that those opposite fundamentally agree and recognise those things, but they do not recognise the difference in the employment performance when they were in government compared to our time in government.

Let us take a look at the facts because they speak for themselves. Under Labor this State consistently had a higher unemployment rate than the average across Australia. Quarter by quarter New South Wales consistently had the lowest employment growth of all the States and Territories—number eight of eight. Under Labor unemployment was not a priority. In 2017 some 140,000 people were in new employment under this Government. Our unemployment rate is 4.8 per cent, which is more than a full percentage point below the average unemployment rate across Australia—the next best is 5.7 per cent.

We continue to aspire to do better in employment generation, but on any measure we are clearly a shining beacon across Australia. By any objective measure, as opposed to the measures of the delusional shadow Treasurer, we are doing very well. One needs only to look at the State of the States report and various other objective reports, including those of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Those opposite clearly do not understand, so I will share with them the reasons for it. First, in this State we have an infrastructure program worth more than \$80 billion. That program is generating not only great infrastructure in health, education and transport but also tens of thousands of new jobs for workers in this State. It is positively affecting people's lives. Labor has opposed much of that infrastructure program and therefore the employment of many people.

Secondly, we have strong housing growth encouraged through more land releases and more efficient approval processes. That means we have tens of thousands of new jobs and new homes—roughly double the number of homes generated on an annual basis under Labor. Thirdly, we have encouraged private sector employment through creating an environment conducive to confidence and opportunity for business. This has been done through economic management, including export growth and free trade. The shadow Treasurer has shown his colours. He wants to line up with President Trump as a protectionist and is opposed to free trade. This Government has also supported small business through the Jobs Action Plan and payroll and other small business grant incentives. Finally, we have restored confidence in our community. Labor destroyed it. This Government is fighting for the worker. We are going to provide more jobs and we are going to continue to make this economy strong for all of the people in New South Wales.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (12:05): I make a contribution to debate on the motion of the member for Ku-ring-gai, who is an articulate member who continues to inform the House about the big picture. The previous speaker to this motion, the member for Davidson, also highlighted the outstanding effort that this Government has made in jobs growth in this great State. Jobs, jobs, jobs, is the catchcry often heard on this side of the House. Indeed, there are so many jobs that at times people are tripping over each other. In my electorate jobs are at the heart of every family. My constituents understand that jobs are important not only for today but also for the future. They are concerned about how they will put food on the table and how their children who are leaving school will get jobs—for example, jobs in infrastructure, especially in the construction industry, provide opportunities for a lot of people in my electorate.

The other day I was approached by one of my constituents who is about to open a sports warehouse in Seven Hills Plaza—healthy lifestyles and physical activity is a growing industry. He is taking a business risk in opening a store. We talked about how many jobs he will be providing in that small location—full-time jobs for workers during the week, part-time jobs for young people, and casual jobs on weekends to help with busy crowds. I also visited the new café that has opened near Seven Hills railway station. Young people who had undertaken courses and been to TAFE are now working in that café. They are very happy to be employed in their first job. As I said, jobs are at the heart of the people in my electorate.

The employment statistics referred to by the member for Ku-ring-gai are great news for the people of New South Wales. Last year employment in New South Wales increased by more than 130,000 jobs. That was more than in any other State and 34.7 per cent of the national growth. Through the year employment growth was 3.7 per cent, well above the long-run average and above the national result of 3.3 per cent. Over the past year

New South Wales has added more than 44 per cent to full-time employment nationally. As the member for Ku-ring-gai said, the unemployment rate in New South Wales has remained the lowest among the States for more than two years. The participation rate has also increased.

It is all good news, particularly in Western Sydney. Western Sydney is a major contributor to growth and to jobs in this State, particularly in the areas of construction, wholesale trade and the health sector. Those sectors are important to the people of my electorate. The Sydney Metro Northwest, which is being built not far from my electorate, will provide thousands of construction jobs and civil contracts are being awarded as we build railway tracks and railway stations to support that great metro system. This type of infrastructure will help to drive growth in New South Wales. There are more cranes in the sky and more underground tunnels. This jobs growth is great news.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (12:09): I speak with enthusiasm in debate on the motion moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai concerning jobs growth and what has been achieved by this Government. When the Liberal-Nationals Coalition was elected in 2011, New South Wales was clearly a dysfunctional basket case and had been rated eighth in the nation by CommSec for many quarters. The then Premier set a clear agenda that was taken up by Premier Baird and Premier Berejiklian—namely, that a strong economy is the backbone of a healthy, vibrant State. The Government made the tough decisions required to create a strong economy and to ensure that jobs growth is front and centre. Low levels of unemployment and record job numbers will ensure a strong New South Wales economy which means that everything else will thrive.

It is clear from having spoken to people about this issue that employment is necessary to generate self-worth. This Government has ensured that people retain their employment and it has also created additional jobs. For the past seven years that has been the focus of Premiers and Treasurers in the Coalition Government, supported by the whole of Cabinet and by all backbench members. As a backbencher I am extremely proud of Cabinet's achievements over the years. Cabinet made a number of tough decisions that ensured 140,000 people were employed last year, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of people who have been employed over the years. We have watched unemployment figures drop. I commend Premier Berejiklian, those who have gone before her, Deputy Premier Barilaro, Treasurer Perrottet and Cabinet Ministers for their achievements.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:13): I support the motion moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai—a good motion that highlights how well this Government has been travelling for the past seven years in reducing unemployment and creating jobs in this State. Every step that this Government has taken has been opposed by those opposite. Job creation is all about having the economy right and having the right investment. Let me go through some of the things that this Government has done. When the Liberal-Nationals Coalition came into government the New South Wales economy was ranked approximately eighth with Tasmania—that is how badly we were travelling. There was a budget black hole of \$7.1 billion, unfunded liability in workers compensation of \$4.1 billion and unfunded liability in police death and disability. We have been able to turn that around so that New South Wales is now number one in Australia. Members should not take my word for it; they should look at CommSec's State of the States report. On every measure, New South Wales is number one in Australia.

That means we are in the position to invest in things like infrastructure. The infrastructure spend in this State is the highest in Australia's history. As a result, we are creating jobs. Almost 10,000 people are working on Pacific Highway infrastructure in the Assistant Speaker's electorate of Coffs Harbour on the North Coast of New South Wales. In my electorate local people are in local jobs on the stage one redevelopment of the hospital. I am sure the Assistant Speaker would agree that that is another beautiful thing about the infrastructure spend. This motion is not just about jobs in Sydney; it is about jobs across the State, including regional areas. This Government has created those jobs.

What Labor did in its 16 shameful years in office resulted in a reduction in jobs and less opportunity. We have been able to turn that around. Nothing is better for an individual's self-esteem than to be employed and to contribute to society. That was not happening under Labor and it will not happen if Labor ever regains control of the Treasury benches in this State. Heaven forbid that we should ever go back to those shameful years when the only thing of concern to Labor members was what they and their mates were going to make out of any deal. In the past 12 months this Government has created 139,700 jobs in this State. We are creating almost as many jobs in this State as are being created in the rest of Australia put together.

In the past few years approximately 140,000 jobs were created in regional New South Wales. On the North Coast the unemployment rate is decreasing and in my electorate the unemployment rate is lower than it was a couple of years ago. But that does not mean that the Government is resting on its laurels; it is doing even more to create jobs. Only yesterday members spoke about small business start-up hubs which are creating jobs in the technology industry not only in Sydney but also in regional New South Wales. In 2010 one person in my area

commenced operations in his backyard. He now employs approximately 15 people making apps for telephones and providing computer services for local and international customers. I wholeheartedly support this motion.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (12:17): By leave: I support the motion moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai. Other than the nonsensical observations made by the shadow Treasurer, every person who has spoken in debate on this motion has been a Government speaker. It is a great tragedy that we hear nothing from our opponents in this place about what they would do to stimulate the economy and to create jobs in New South Wales. They never come to this Chamber and say, "Here is a plan that will deliver more jobs," or, "Here is a plan for the delivery of infrastructure that will assist in creating jobs." They say nothing other than, "We oppose everything that the Government does." They oppose plans that deliver significant economic reform not only for this State but also for Australia generally. Other speakers in this debate have alluded to the number of jobs that have been created in regional New South Wales. I have relatives who live in Wagga Wagga.

Wagga Wagga is a typical regional New South Wales town. One of the great challenges in regional New South Wales is to create jobs. When we came to office, the unemployment rate in Wagga Wagga was more than 6 per cent; it is now down to 3.3 per cent. I challenge those who decry the work that we do in respect of economic stimulation to say to the people in regional areas, "We want to deprive you of jobs. We want to create a situation where young families can no longer go and reside in regional areas in New South Wales because there are no jobs for them." Effectively, what this Government has done is the greatest act of decentralisation that the State has ever seen—the Government has created jobs in regional areas by being able to tell country towns that the Government will stimulate their economy. Every project we do, whether it is in relation to roads, hospitals or electricity infrastructure, it is all about the delivery of jobs and creating better standards of living for Australians.

In my inaugural speech I said that the greatest form of social welfare that can ever be provided to a person is to give them the dignity of a job. Opposition members say to people that they will deliver to them social security but they will not deliver them a job. Government members say we will deliver people a job and keep them off social security. The fundamental difference between Government members and Opposition members is that we acknowledge that the dignity of human beings is best served when they can bring home a wage packet for their family. One of the great things we have in my electorate is a cranes index. One can see the very many cranes on the skyline around my electorate—all generating jobs for people in Sydney and across New South Wales. This motion should be supported by everyone in this place, but when it comes to a vote I wonder what those opposite will do. Will they congratulate the Government on the number of jobs it has created? No, they will not, because for those opposite it is all about ideology. I commend the member for Ku-ring-gai for moving this motion and congratulate the Government on what it has achieved.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (12:21): By leave: I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to address what is one of the most fundamental necessities in our society—job security. As an employer of almost two decades, I know that looking after the jobs of one's workers is paramount to ensure that they have security and the confidence that they can look after themselves and their families and can provide them with shelter, recreation and all their other needs. Importantly, jobs give people a structure in their lives, a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose. The member for Ku-ring-gai mentioned how crippling it can be to be unemployed, not only financially but also emotionally. Can members remember the dark days of Paul Keating's "recession that we have to have"? Hundreds of thousands of people were put out of work simply at the whim of the Treasurer at the time, Paul Keating, and the Labor Party because of their lack of respect for the workers in this State and in this country?

Mr Stephen Kamper: Half of you voted for him.

Mr Alister Henskens: It was 1996, old son.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: What happened after 1996? Boom, boom, boom—the economy took off, people found full and meaningful employment, and a level of growth not seen in Australian history took place through those years. I commend the motion of the member for Ku-ring-gai. He knows so much about looking after the interests of the ordinary man and woman and ensuring that they have that security of tenure. As he rightly mentioned, we never hear the Leader of the Opposition mention jobs. The thousands and thousands of jobs that have been created since this Government came to office in 2011 is a testament to the economic management of this side of the House, which people can trust. The Government has delivered on a commitment, and has delivered beyond the targets that were promised. This Government continually makes commitments but, unlike the other side of the House, it delivers them, sticks to its promises and gains the confidence of the community. Once again, I commend the member for Ku-ring-gai and I thank the House for allowing me to speak in debate on this motion.

Mr GARETH WARD: I seek leave to make a contribution to debate on this motion.

Leave not granted.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (12:26): In reply: This debate has been very illuminating in relation to the priorities of the different political parties that are represented in this House. On a motion to speak about jobs, six Coalition members and I have made contributions, but only one member of the Labor Party has done so, and those opposite denied leave for more Coalition members to speak about jobs. The people of New South Wales are entitled to ask: What have those opposite got against jobs and why are they stopping a Liberal member of Parliament, representing a regional area, from speaking about the great jobs that have been created in regional New South Wales by this Government? Why is "jobs" one word that does not seem to be able to pass the lips of the Leader of the Opposition? We have never heard him talk about jobs. The member for Rockdale was mute, chirping only from the sidelines—he never got up to the lectern to speak about jobs. It is a shame that Labor members of Parliament will not talk about jobs.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockdale and the member for Kiama will come to order.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The member for Rockdale, who is an engaging, avuncular sort of fellow who can talk about anything to anybody at any time, has refused to speak about jobs. What has Labor got against jobs? Why will Labor not talk about jobs? Why will Labor not come up with some ideas to create jobs? Why does Labor oppose infrastructure projects time and again? What has Labor got against the New South Wales Government creating wealth and jobs in this State? Why is there nothing? Why does the only plan put forward by the shadow Treasurer involve some sort of restrictive, anti-competitive, anti-free enterprise type of policies? Are they Labor's only policies? In seven years of opposition is that all Labor has?

If the shadow Treasurer were ever to become the Treasurer of New South Wales, we could all confidently predict that the great jobs growth that has taken place over the past seven years would hit a brick wall. It would be a full stop like no-one has ever seen. It would be an economic handbrake on New South Wales the likes of which we have not seen since Paul Keating was the Federal Treasurer in 1991—the recession he said we had to have. The member for Coogee quite eloquently spoke about that. The members for Coogee, Davidson, Seven Hills, Camden, Myall Lakes and Epping all spoke about the great social cost of unemployment and the impact that it has on the lives of real people. They said that what the Coalition Government was doing was wonderful for the families and individuals of this State because it was creating so many jobs.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I point out to the member for Keira that under standing and sessional orders Thursdays are set down for general business.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes48

Noes34

Majority..... 14

AYES

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Evans, Mr A
Goward, Ms P
Gulaptis, Mr C
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Roberts, Mr A
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Crouch, Mr A
Donato, Mr P
Evans, Mr L
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Cooke, Ms S
Davies, Mrs T
Elliott, Mr D
George, Mr T
Griffin, Mr J
Henskens, Mr A
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Provest, Mr G
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G
Wilson, Ms F

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J

Atalla, Mr E

Bali, Mr S

NOES

Barr, Mr C	Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y
Chanthivong, Mr A	Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M
Dib, Mr J	Doyle, Ms T	Finn, Ms J
Greenwich, Mr A	Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Leong, Ms J	Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H
McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T
Minns, Mr C	Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J
Piper, Mr G	Scully, Mr P	Smith, Ms T F
Tesch, Ms L (teller)	Warren, Mr G	Washington, Ms K
Watson, Ms A (teller)		

PAIRS

Anderson, Mr K	Cotsis, Ms S
Gibbons, Ms M	Haylen, Ms J
Rowell, Mr J	Lalich, Mr N

Motion agreed to.**NEWCASTLE BUS SERVICES****Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:37):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Newcastle buses and ferries are operated by Keolis Downer after privatisation by the Government in July 2017.
- (2) Notes that a number of services has been cancelled without warning, stranding commuters from across the Wallsend electorate.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Transport to work with Keolis Downer to ensure that all Newcastle bus services operate reliably, so that commuters can get to work or school.

I make two points about the motion. My first point is that notice of the motion was given on 12 September last year. For a number of months we have been really worried about transport services in the Hunter, which, unfortunately, have been deteriorating.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Order! Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: My second point is the timing and the feigned outrage expressed during the last motion, notice of which was given yesterday. I have been waiting for my motion to be called on since September last year. The motion is important; it was put on the *Business Paper* in the appropriate way and I have waited for the matter to be called on. This important motion is about public transport for the people of Newcastle, who are extremely worried about it.

Prior to the transfer of Newcastle buses and ferries to a private operator last July many, including me and my Labor colleagues, publicly expressed reservations about the proposal. Although the Minister promised Newcastle a world-class transportation system, the experiences of the past few months have been far from ideal. Immediately following the changeover there was a spike in delayed or cancelled services. More than 300 bus services were cancelled in the Wallsend electorate alone, which left stranded hundreds of commuters and students relying on our buses to get to work or school. For months some drivers were unpaid or not paid on time, which caused them great consternation. Public consultation on the planned changes to the network was limited, particularly for people who live in the western suburbs who rely heavily on public transport.

When the changes were announced my office was flooded with phone calls. I know that other Hunter members of Parliament had the same experience. Our offices were flooded with phone calls from local commuters expressing their concern about the proposal. After the changes were rolled out our phones went into meltdown. My office received more than 100 calls and as many emails, as well as a social media explosion of complaints and concerns immediately within weeks of the changeover. No hard copies of timetables were available. Some bus stops were missing from the timetables, and no timetables or maps were posted. Online trip planners were not ready to cope with the demand. Parents were left to worry about how their kids would get to school or whether

they would be stranded after school. The rerouting and rescheduling of services led to confusion amongst commuters, staff and bus drivers, who had no control over the situation. Bus drivers were left to cop the worst of commuter frustration. The *Newcastle Herald* reported:

Tempers frayed on day one of the city's bus timetable overhaul, with drivers subjected to widespread abuse.

On the first day alone numerous verbal altercations between drivers and passengers were reported. Most concerning of all, a brick was thrown at a bus in Newcastle West. Although Keolis Downer claimed that the incident was not related to the new timetables, it underlines how dangerous it can be, and has been, particularly for these drivers since the rollout and changeover. A constituent of mine, a pensioner who lives in Waratah and has health issues that limit her mobility, contacted my office soon after the changes and said:

It used to take me 15 minutes to get to Kotara from my house. I need to take the trip pretty frequently, but now it takes me an hour and 25 minutes. I used to be able to catch the 111 straight from Waratah through to Kotara and now I have to catch the 25 to Broadmeadow and transfer onto a 27. It's an absolute mess.

Another constituent told me about her children, who go to school in Kotara, who are now facing a much more difficult trip. She said:

They used to be able to catch a bus from right near our place straight to school. Now they need to leave much earlier and cross a major road to catch a bus which takes them to a major shopping centre so they can catch another bus which will drop them near school.

A young man with a disability who lives in my electorate and works in Warners Bay will have to catch four buses to get to work. The main bus route taking students from the southern and western suburbs of Newcastle into the University of Newcastle Callaghan Campus has disappeared. These are but a few examples. Worse still, so far the Minister has shown contempt for Wallsend commuters and their concerns. He has gone so far as to threaten funding to a major infrastructure project if we continue to complain. This is unacceptable. I call on the Premier and the Minister to intervene in this chaos. Our drivers need protection, commuters need certainty and security, and as for the world-class transport system promised by the transport Minister, we have a third-level, third-tier transport system at the moment.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:44): I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, which asks that this House notes that from July 2017 Newcastle buses and ferries have been operated by Keolis Downer after being privatised by the Berejiklian Government; acknowledges that a number of services have been cancelled without warning, stranding commuters from across the Wallsend electorate; and urges the Minister for Transport to work with Keolis Downer to ensure that all Newcastle bus services run so that commuters can get to work or school reliably.

The privatisation of Newcastle buses has had a significant impact on both the Charlestown and Wallsend electorates. Commuters from across the wider Hunter community depend on a reliable bus service to go about their daily lives. The privatisation of Newcastle buses has resulted in limited operating hours, altered routes, and significantly increased journey times. I am deeply concerned at the number of complaints I am receiving about the impact of the changed timetables and bus routes on some of the most vulnerable members of our community, including children and people with a disability.

Simple commutes to work and school are now untenable. I have heard of the experiences of people living with disabilities who have given up their jobs because it is just too difficult for them to be retrained in the new bus routes. Jodie, a constituent of mine, has had to give up her work in Hamilton because she cannot navigate the new system. It is too difficult for her and she cannot get private transport into her place of work. I met with a number of parents with adult children with disabilities who are in the same boat. They are experiencing increased private transport costs, and more difficulty with their adult children getting onto buses and being able to navigate multiple buses. On top of that, schoolchildren have been left with significantly increased journey times.

Some people have chosen to move homes because they no longer live within a suitable distance from a bus stop. Multiple constituents have contacted my office saying that they chose to live in a particular location because it was well serviced by a public bus, and those public buses no longer stop near their homes. Commuters from across the wider Hunter region are losing independence, social interaction and money, all because of these outrageous changes to our public transport system. When Government should be encouraging people to use public transport, commuters are getting back into their private vehicles. Public transport is an essential part of ensuring that we do not have incredible traffic difficulties throughout our cities and also that we are looking after the environment. This privatisation and the lack of utilisation of buses because of bad routes is putting people back into their cars and increasing traffic gridlock in Newcastle.

Journey times are not only being extended but also, due to shorter routes, they include multiple bus changes, and lengthy walking times. The abolition of many direct bus services has resulted in young school students having to cross major roads daily. Many of these children have also been stranded because of delays or

missed connections. Prior to the timetabling changes implemented on 14 January my constituent, Rebecca, caught the 320 bus, which went from her home in Warners Bay to Adamstown, to get her daughter to school. Since the implementation of the new routes and timetables, Rebecca and her daughter have to walk 20 minutes to Lake Macquarie Fair/Mount Hutton Plaza to catch the 28 to be at school on time. They are leaving home at 6.45 a.m. and not getting home until 5.30 p.m. That is what a 10-year-old girl has to do just to get to and from school. However, Rebecca is one of the lucky few who does not have to catch multiple buses, risking delays and missing connections.

The 320 bus used to transport many students from the eastern side of Lake Macquarie to a number of schools in Newcastle and surrounding suburbs. Those children are now catching a number of buses. Over the past two weeks I have stated repeatedly in this Chamber that this Government must ensure that those children have a safe, direct service. Rebecca has spent the past two years planning work, education, and other family activities around local public transport. Rebecca is now planning for her daughter to change schools because of the disaster that is Newcastle buses. This bus timetable is not fair on the children in my electorate. Many others like Rebecca have made the decision to drive their own cars to work, school or university because the new bus routes are more of an inconvenience than the current Newcastle central business district parking chaos. That is why I fully support the member for Wallsend and commend her motion to call on the Minister for Transport to work with Keolis Downer to ensure that all Newcastle bus services run reliably so that commuters can travel to school or work.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:50): This is an important issue for the residents of Newcastle. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the motion to the attention of the House. For the benefit of people in Newcastle who are live streaming the discussion on the Internet, there is a transport revolution in Newcastle and it is being led by this Government. It has a vision for Newcastle to bring people back to the city centre. It is strengthening connections between the city and the waterfront, creating job opportunities, providing more public spaces and delivering better public transport. The \$650 million Revitalising Newcastle program is helping breathe new life into Newcastle. Major progress and change occurred in 2017: work on the light rail commenced in numerous locations, the Newcastle interchange was completed and opened, manufacturing of the new light rail vehicles was commenced, and new public spaces were developed and delivered throughout the city.

Mr Alister Henskens: Hunter Street is full of workers.

Mr MARK COURE: It is. I was there a couple of months ago. A lot of development is happening in Newcastle. This Government is changing and improving the way that the people of Newcastle are travelling. On 25 August 2017 this Government announced the allocation of an additional \$150 million to the Revitalising Newcastle program, taking the total investment to more than \$650 million. The additional \$150 million includes more than \$75 million being invested in future land sales for new public spaces on the former heavy rail corridor, \$35 million to deliver wire-free light rail, much-needed footpath upgrades and street trees to key locations on Hunter Street and Scott Street, \$40 million to deliver road intersection upgrades and much more. Light rail is a key pillar in transport; it is a transport connector. Under this plan, the Government is providing free and reliable travel options through the city centre's key activity precincts. It is restoring Hunter Street and Scott Streets to the thriving main streets they once were. Major on-street connection work for the Newcastle light rail commenced in September 2017. *[Extension of time]*

Newcastle transport is a new model of public transport in Australia with a single operator running multiple modes of transport to deliver timetable efficiency and easy connections with a local-based approach to ensure best services for customers. Evidence from around the world has shown a locally based multimodal approach works extremely well in cities such as Newcastle. This Government is working with the operator, Keolis Downer, to transform the existing Newcastle bus and ferry network into a world-class service. I will repeat it for the dummies opposite: It will be a world-class service for Newcastle. Keolis Downer is one of the world's largest and most experienced transport operators and has devoted time and energy to design travel services for Newcastle. Newcastle is in the midst of a 10-year journey. A number of improvements need to be made and they cannot be delivered straightaway.

Keolis Downer is monitoring closely the performance of the new network and remains open to making changes as necessary when they are needed. The operator has a strong local knowledge and its team is based locally. Decisions are being made in Newcastle and input is being sought from key stakeholders and the community to deliver better transport for Newcastle. Keolis Downer's contract requires it to carry out community consultation before any significant changes are to be made to services. The Newcastle Voice community engagement program ran from 1 July to 4 September 2017. Keolis Downer received more than 600 submissions from the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie communities with significant interest from the Wallsend and Swansea communities.

Approximately 33 per cent of the network was influenced by the ideas of the Newcastle Voice community engagement program. The new network was launched in January this year and provides 1,200 bus and ferry

services each week, including an extra 200 services on Saturdays and Sundays. The new timetable provides better connections to train stations, with key bus routes timetabled to meet trains. Buses and ferries are more frequent on core routes and have additional services on weekends. More importantly, operating hours have increased on frequent routes with services running between 5.00 a.m. and midnight.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:57): I acknowledge the member for Wallsend and her diligence for bringing this motion to the attention of House. I acknowledge the oratory of the member for Oatley. The member for Ku-ring-gai is a Novocastrian and he has told me on a regular basis that the work the Government is delivering in and around Newcastle is transforming the city. This Government has a decade-long vision to deliver a network with better connectivity to Newcastle.

Mr Tim Crakanthorp: Keep him on the North Shore.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I note the interjection from the member for Newcastle. When he was a member of the council he was not sure if he was for or against light rail. Transport for NSW is working closely with Keolis Downer to transform the existing Newcastle bus and ferry network into the world-class service that the city deserves. After years of neglect under a Labor government Newcastle is now thriving. It is a metropolis. It is an exciting time for all the Novocastrians living in Newcastle. We are eight months into this decade-long journey to improve those services. We know that a number of improvements need to be made which cannot necessarily be turned around overnight. The reality is that perfection sometimes takes time.

The franchising of the Newcastle transport network has been designed to allow a single operator to run multiple transport modes, delivering timetable efficiency, providing easy connections and the delivery of a locally based approach to ensure customers receive a world-class public transport experience that they never had under those opposite. It was just a pipe dream for the people of Newcastle and now their dream has become a reality. The private sector has strong incentives to use infrastructure efficiency, as was quite clearly outlined by the member for Oatley, and deliver a better operational performance to improve that customer experience. Private companies such as Keolis Downer are also able to deliver a significant global experience operating multiple public transport networks and deliver better outcomes for all Novocastrians. It is a very exciting time to be a Novocastrian.

The government has been working closely with the community to design a network that the locals want. This Government has been listening to the community, and the development of the new network was strongly influenced by the ideas of the Newcastle Voice program which is about inclusiveness, for which this Government is well renowned. We asked people to put forward their voices. The new network that was launched in January 2018 provides more than 1,200 extra weekly bus and ferry services and better connections between buses, trains and ferries. We know that the member for Newcastle hates light rail but he will have his turn to speak. Four direct routes have been implemented from the outer suburbs to the city centre. These services run every 15 minutes between 7.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Bus connections have been improved between key locations such as John Hunter Hospital, the University of Newcastle—which is a fantastic institution that I have visited on numerous occasions—major shopping centres and beaches. This Government has improved connections between those locations. Interchanging is more convenient due to the timetable connections, with minimal waiting time between buses, ferries and trains.

Ms Yasmin Catley: The buses can't go to the interchange.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I note the interjection from the member for Swansea, who will soon have an opportunity to speak to the motion. The member's time has expired.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (13:02): I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this timely motion. When former Premier Mike Baird was at Civic Park he addressed 300 community members who were protesting against the privatisation of the bus services. He said it would not go ahead if they could not provide better services. The people in the crowd told him that they will hold him to account, and that is exactly what the Opposition is doing today. We are holding the Government to account for a failed privatisation of Newcastle buses. Where is the member for Oatley? He wrote to me yesterday and stated, "We are having extensive consultation."

On Monday I was at Access Disability Services, which has been established in Newcastle for 40 years. It employs 100 people, 80 per cent of whom catch buses. Access said, "We were talking to Keolis Downer who said 'We didn't even know you existed here'". Access said it had been there for 40 years and everyone else in Newcastle knows that. Was it extensive consultation? No. The member for Oatley referred to improved connections. I have a letter from Cathy, whose children travel five kilometres on a direct route formerly from Adamstown to Georgetown. She stated:

... there now appears to be several options, none of which are direct; a) detour along Lambton Road and change buses near McDonalds ... before back-tracking to Turon Road ... 40 mins wait between buses; b) travel to The Junction (routes 14 ... then 12 to make the trip back); or c) travel to Stewart Ave interchange ... then the 12 back.

Is that more direct? No. The Government says it has put on extra routes, but it has merely cut one route into four routes and now people now have to catch four buses. It says it has put on many new services but in reality bus figures are going backwards and on-time running statistics for Newcastle buses have deteriorated. They have gone from 95 per cent in July 2017 down to 79 per cent. Measured mid-journey, on-time running fell from 87 per cent to 52 per cent. In a note accompanying a graph Keolis Downer says it did not meet its "key performance indicators" and made up a lot of excuses for it, such as congestion impacts and school formals. I have never heard of that before, so what is going on? Bus figures are going backwards. An article in the paper was headed, "Parents fear school travel shake-up". Kids are being left on the side of the road. Melanie wrote:

My daughter arrived at the bus stop at 8:22 intending to catch the #13 bus ... which was due at her stop ... It didn't arrive. Nor did the next one due at 8:45.

As you can see from the real time data ... her bus was late. The next one was 10 minutes late (and appears to have overtaken the earlier bus) ...

Sylvana explains the matter. She wrote:

Public transport is supposed to get better—it's a total mess.

I have been catching the public buses for over 3 decades and not one complaint. Coming back from some time off in 2018 it's been nothing but a nightmare. I have been late every day. I could walk faster than catching the bus. As if changing the routes wasn't bad enough but the numbers were changed as well ...

It is a disgrace. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (13:07): As the member for Wallsend said, this motion was put on the *Business Paper* in September last year—before the new timetable was even unveiled, let alone implemented. Notice was given of a motion to complain about the new timetable before it even existed. We are already convinced that they were going to whinge about it regardless. Like the member for Newcastle, they were going to talk about things that happened months ago and pretend they had something to do with the new timetable. The member for Newcastle would not answer the question about when the things he mentioned happened because the vast majority of matters to which he referred happened before the new timetable came into effect. The new timetable had nothing to do with them.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Order! There are too many interjections. The member for Riverstone will be heard in silence.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: The vast majority of matters the member for Newcastle referred to are probably appropriate to the motion because they occurred before the new timetable came into effect. The member for Wallsend has said that the new timetable is the problem, which is a little different and a sleight of hand. The Opposition really has a philosophical objection to private investment in transport infrastructure. The Opposition cannot abide the fact that the private sector might provide anything. We are not concerned about an ideological objection about who invests the capital, but we are concerned about providing a better service to the community.

I will look at the facts of the new timetable. The new network provides more than 1,200 extra weekly bus and ferry services for the people of Newcastle. Surely 1,200 extra services means that Newcastle residents are being given greater opportunities to move around, to meet their needs, than was ever the case in the past. When timetables or routes are changed some people will be advantaged and others will be disadvantaged. People who are ideally suited to the previous timetable or route may not be so suited to the next one, but other people may have had their needs neglected for years but will be better served by the new timetable or routes. There will be thousands of those people across Newcastle because of the 1,200 extra weekly bus and ferry services that will move people around in a much more coordinated fashion to more logical destinations than was often the case in the past.

The connections between modes—buses and ferries; buses and trains—and the better interchange times will mean that many people will be advantaged by those changes. We know that the vast majority of people who contact an office of a member of Parliament are the ones who are not happy. Unhappy people are far more likely to raise their voice than those who find that they now have a service that was never there before. That is human nature and it is to be expected.

The other key element of the changes to the new Newcastle transport network that must be noted is that customers at Lake Macquarie can now book buses from or near their home to a local transport hub using the new on-demand service. A trial of the service during off-peak periods commenced on Sunday 14 January in Dudley, Mount Hutton and Warners Bay. Customers are able to book a service and pre-pay by using a credit card or a mobile phone app, by buying a ticket at the Newcastle Transport Hub, or by paying cash to the driver. This service

explores a new way of offering public transport and reaches out to people travelling in off-peak periods more effectively than has been possible in the past. It is a demonstration of this Government being flexible and creative, and meeting the needs of our communities.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (13:10): By leave: I congratulate the member for Wallsend on moving this motion. I know only too well what her community is suffering. The member for Newcastle, the member for Charlestown and the member for Lake Macquarie also have constituents who are suffering as a result of this Government's actions. The notion that Opposition members are exaggerating the difficulties that our constituents are experiencing with the new network is shocking. Government members are burying their heads in the sand. Hundreds of letters have been sent to both Keolis Downer and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure about the new public transport network, and not acknowledging their concerns is shameful. It is a slur on them personally, not on members of the Opposition. We will cop it; we put up our hands to represent our constituents; we came here to make their lives better. In fact, I think all members do that. However, members opposite are disregarding the concerns of individuals who have taken the time to write to Keolis Downer and to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and for the Opposition to say—

Mr Adam Crouch: No, we are the Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: No, the member for Terrigal is a fraud. Members opposite have admitted that they know changes must be made. At least the member for Terrigal had the guts to say that the Government has got it wrong and that it will fix it. However, the member for Oatley said, "What we have done changes the way Newcastle travels." That could not be more accurate. We have longer travel times, connectivity does not exist, and passengers are facing the inconvenience of multiple journeys and shorter operating hours.

I can provide members opposite with examples of the difficulties being experienced. Children living at Swansea Heads who go to the selective school at Broadmeadow must now travel for one hour and 50 minutes, whereas in the past the trip took less than an hour. In respect of connectivity, passengers can no longer catch a bus from Swansea or Swansea Heads anywhere past Belmont, which is the next major town centre. Passengers must transfer to travel to Charlestown. Every second bus leaving Charlestown goes into Newcastle, but passengers on the alternate bus must transfer to get to Newcastle.

Passengers do not go to the wonderful interchange the Government built because the buses do not go there. They travel to the other end of town and have to transfer to another bus at Perkins Street to get to the interchange. That trip involves travelling on four buses. One of the most dangerous aspects of this issue is the reduction in operating hours. I will share with the House an example of the impact of these changes. The police were called to attend an incident involving a drug-affected man on a bus heading north. The police removed him from the bus, but a woman and her two young children were waiting at a bus stop opposite. Bus services in the area ceased for the day at 6.23 p.m. and the police officers were so concerned about the woman and her children that they offered to drive her home. I think that is called cost-shifting. The police are now escorting citizens around our electorates. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:14): By leave: I thank members for participating in debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I would like to calm things down a bit. Government members appear not to understand the severity of the issues being raised by members on this side of the House. I appreciate that they are provided with advice by the Minister's office and that they are required to prosecute the argument. However, the member for Wallsend, the member for Swansea, the member for Charlestown and the member for Newcastle have provided many examples of problems with public transport in their electorates. Those stories are similar to the stories I am hearing in my electorate.

The question is whether or not this policy has been implemented in ignorance or incompetently, and I am not suggesting that. I have met people from Transport for NSW and I do not believe that they wanted to disadvantage anyone who already had public transport services. However, that is the result of the changes that have been implemented. The member for Oatley and the member for Riverstone said that if new services are added or if changes are made there will be winners and losers. Perhaps people have been ignored for far too long. I am sure every member has written to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure asking for more public transport coverage in their electorate. However, it is another thing to remove services from areas in which individuals and families have invested because of the existing public transport system. This is not a simple matter of someone having something they did not have previously. It might be a bonus, but they did not expect it.

I can provide members with a good example of that in Cardiff South. An ageing couple in their mid- to late-60s—they are still fit—have lived in the area for some time and they have renovated their home so that they can age in that place. They have made a substantial investment in their home and it is perfectly located for their needs. The service they can access at the bus stop across the road takes them to the aged care facility housing the woman's mother, and to Garden City at Kotara, which has the medical services they need. That bus stop has been

removed. Of course, there are other public transport options, but they will not be appropriate as they age. They will now have to sell and move on. They also might find that they need to buy a car they do not now need. I often hear stories like that. I have also heard stories about people with special needs who are missing out.

Did the Minister set out to do that? I do not believe that for a moment. When he talked about providing an extra 1,000 services, did he divide them among different areas? I do not believe he did. In fact, I think he is genuinely proud of what he is delivering. However, the stories members have related to the House cannot be dismissed. These changes are having a huge impact on our local communities. I had a pleasing meeting with Transport for NSW officials yesterday at which they indicated they were willing to consider changes. I would like all members to realise that this is a genuine issue.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (13:18): By leave: I have observed the debate from my office. I thank all members for their contributions, and acknowledge the comments of the member for Lake Macquarie. He is right; there is an opportunity to review the network. That was indicated to him, and all members should be aware of that. When a new timetable is bedded in, the aim is to maximise the benefits for the maximum number of people while recognising that some people will be affected.

There was a drop in patronage of the Newcastle public transport network by about 14 per cent, which indicated that it was not working. All members want to see an increase in the number of people using public transport. Based on the data we are starting to see some positive signs. The department has given me the figures for a monthly comparison of patronage. In January 2017 there were 314,330 trips on the network. In January this year, after the implementation of the new operator, there were 319,360 trips. That is an improvement, which is a good sign for the city. It is an increase of around 5 per cent, which is what we want.

A lot of the comments by members—and comments in the correspondence that I have received—relate to people who have been disadvantaged by changes to their services. It is important to look at that because we all want to see public transport succeed. I am particularly conscious of the issues for people with disability. Those issues have been raised by a number of members. The Minister for Disability Services and I have both indicated to the member for Newcastle that we will look at issues around access. The Minister for Disability Services and I know better than anyone about the barriers in terms of human rights for people with disability.

In a city where people are looking for greater frequency of ferry and bus services and better connections between the modes of transport, when services increase by about 1,200 that is a good outcome. A number of people are concerned because a service that used to go past their front door has changed. That is where the review comes into play, so that the operator, the department and local members can have a look at the issues. The exciting point that I make for residents who may have been subjected to changes is that we now have on-demand services. I see that the member for Wallsend is looking askance but seniors will benefit from being able to book a door-to-door service. That mode of transport is in its infancy. We will see how it goes and then expand it. I thank members for their participation. I will keep working at this and deliver a great outcome for the people of the Hunter.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:22): In reply: I thank the speakers on this motion, including every member—Labor and Independent—of electorates in the Hunter which are affected by this. It is a testament to the fact that we all care about public transport and we want to make it better. I thank the members representing the electorates of Charlestown, Oatley, Terrigal, Newcastle, Riverstone, Swansea and Lake Macquarie, and the Minister for Transport and member for Bega. This has been a good debate. I am pleased that the Minister was involved in the debate and I was pleased to hear that there is an opportunity for a network review. That is what we are asking for, because there have been so many major problems with this service. Those problems have been highlighted by every one of the members on this side of the House who spoke today. We acknowledge that there were problems with the services before, but those services have not been improved.

The Minister talked about data, and some positive signs. I wonder if the increase in the number of trips is due to people now having to catch three or four buses instead of one. That will be worked out. I am also glad that the Minister acknowledged concern for people with disabilities. He is conscious of their needs, so let us hope that improvements can be made for people who have lost their jobs because they cannot get to work, as mentioned by the member for Charlestown.

Fixing those sorts of problems is what we are about here today. I want to make it better for people. I have been a member for 11 years because my job is to fix those sorts of things for people. That is the job of all members of Parliament. The member for Charlestown talked about people with disability who have had to quit their jobs. Let us hope that that can be fixed now that the Minister has listened to that contribution. The member for Charlestown also talked about the proximity of some of the public transport services that are now no longer available. That is a worry. She mentioned young students who have to cross dangerous roads to get to schools. That is also a worry.

The member for Oatley is a smart guy but unfortunately he seems to have read the wrong motion. He talked a lot about trains when the motion did not mention trains. He was advocating very hard for the Government, and I understand why he did that. He spoke about a world-class transport service, but unfortunately what we have right now is a Third World transport service. Let us make sure that it is improved. The member for Terrigal is also a smart man but he was a little bit off track today. He talked about Transport for NSW, easy connections and delivery of services. We have not quite achieved that but we are hoping for some changes.

The member for Newcastle made a good point. He reminded us that when Mike Baird was the Premier he came to talk to us at Civic Park. Mike Baird said that he would not go ahead with a change to services if he could not promise better services. Let us hope that the Government holds itself to that promise. The member for Newcastle also highlighted the complicated bus routes for some people, and the time-consuming journeys that they have to take. Those things do not encourage residents, no matter where they live, to catch public transport.

The member for Riverstone was a little bit confused because, even though the network started in January, Keolis Downer took it over in July last year. I just wanted to correct that because we live there so we know. The member for Swansea also spoke very eloquently. She talked about the Government at the time refusing to acknowledge that there were problems with the services. The Minister now has been made aware of those problems. The member for Lake Macquarie also highlighted the things we have been talking about. I thank members for diligently participating in this debate. I urge them to support the motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes35
Noes46
Majority.....11

AYES

Atalla, Mr E	Bali, Mr S	Barr, Mr C
Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A
Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M	Dib, Mr J
Donato, Mr P	Doyle, Ms T	Finn, Ms J
Greenwich, Mr A	Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Leong, Ms J	Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H
McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T
Minns, Mr C	Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J
Piper, Mr G	Scully, Mr P	Smith, Ms T F
Tesch, Ms L (teller)	Warren, Mr G	Washington, Ms K
Watson, Ms A (teller)	Zangari, Mr G	

NOES

Ayres, Mr S	Barilaro, Mr J	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Brookes, Mr G	Conolly, Mr K	Constance, Mr A
Cooke, Ms S	Coure, Mr M	Crouch, Mr A
Davies, Mrs T	Dominello, Mr V	Elliott, Mr D
Evans, Mr A	Evans, Mr L	Fraser, Mr A
George, Mr T	Goward, Ms P	Grant, Mr T
Griffin, Mr J	Gulaptis, Mr C	Hazzard, Mr B
Henskens, Mr A	Johnsen, Mr M	Kean, Mr M
Lee, Dr G	Maguire, Mr D	Marshall, Mr A
Notley-Smith, Mr B	O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Pavey, Mrs M	Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E
Provest, Mr G	Roberts, Mr A	Sidoti, Mr J
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L
Wilson, Ms F		

PAIRS

Cotsis, Ms S
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N

Berejiklian, Ms G
Humphries, Mr K
Anderson, Mr K

Motion negatived.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery my guest Barry Tomkinson from the Milton branch of the National Parks Association. I welcome also year 11 legal studies students and their teachers from Brigidine College, St Ives, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Treasurer, and member for Davidson. I welcome a delegation from Maitland University of the Third Age, guests of the member for Maitland.

Question Time

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:18): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How many of the new train services will the Minister be dumping in order to salvage something from the wreckage that is his new timetable?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:18): One thing we will not be doing is what those opposite have announced—that is, cutting services to south-west Sydney by 92 per cent, to Parramatta by 40 per cent and to Penrith by 21 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition has announced that he is going back to the old timetable. He has run around and told Western Sydney commuters that he is going back to the old timetable and cutting all of those services. That is Labor's policy. Guess what? It is not dissimilar to what they did when they were in office and cut hundreds of services. This Government is proud to have invested \$1.5 billion in more transport services. We are investing in 24 brand-new Waratah trains. We have invested in hundreds of services on the weekends and for Western Sydney commuters during peak hour. Everyone remembers the multiple incidents and service disruptions that occurred on the network on 8 and 9 January.

As transport Minister I asked for a review into that major incident to find the underlying causes and investigate what could be done to minimise the effect of the recovery. An inconvenient truth for members opposite is that there has been a major surge in patronage demand on Sydney Trains. In fact, demand surged by 11 per cent not in a four- or five-year period but in 12 months. We took the sensible decision not only to invest \$1.5 billion in network improvements such as the Hornsby junction and signalling and track improvements but also to invest in new trains. As a result, we have introduced new services and a new timetable that is operating with 8 per cent more services than the last timetable and at the same level. Every day it is typically at around 93 per cent.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Say that again.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is 93 per cent. That is the beauty of Opal data flowing around the network; we know what is going on. Unlike members opposite, we are proud to be delivering more services to Western Sydney. Given the massive surge in demand, we will not cut services to places such as Seven Hills, Penrith and Parramatta by reverting to the old timetable.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The bottom line is members opposite are the same Labor and they present the same danger. They want to cut services, which they are experts at doing.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. With schoolchildren in the public gallery, their behaviour is embarrassing. The member for Prospect will cease interjecting.

ACTIVE KIDS REBATE PROGRAM

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (14:22): My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government encouraging families to adopt a healthier lifestyle for their children with the Active Kids Rebate program?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:22): I find it curious and disappointing that the so-called alternative government opposite does not think this is an important issue. Guess what? In the past two weeks 319,000 vouchers have been issued. I am extremely pleased that the recent job figures released this morning show that for the thirty-second consecutive month we have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. We know we have a strong economy.

Mr Clayton Barr: Have you seen today's figures?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That's what I'm talking about. Do you know how to read them?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Today we have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation and the greatest jobs growth. We know we have a strong economy and a strong budget, and that is why we are supporting the community at every opportunity. About a fortnight ago I was pleased to join the Minister for Western Sydney, and member for Penrith, and the Minister for Mental Health, and member for Mulgoa, in South Penrith to officially launch the Active Kids Rebate program. Under the program, every school-age child is entitled to a \$100 voucher that their parents or guardians can claim on their behalf to support them being active in the community. Whether they are a member of a sporting organisation or participate in a dance class, so long as children take part in an out-of-school activity they are able to apply.

It is no secret that I was blown away when I saw the figures for the take-up rate in the first fortnight. I thank the member for Heathcote for giving me the opportunity to talk about this issue today. I understand how important it is for constituents right across the State. In the first fortnight some 316,000 vouchers have been claimed. I am sure the House is interested to know which electorate has claimed the highest number of vouchers so far. I have not told the member yet but I am sure he will be very excited. So far the member for Riverstone has had 6,500 vouchers claimed in his electorate. Guess who came second? It was none other than the great member for Heathcote who asked me the question. More than 6,400 vouchers have been claimed in the electorate of the member for Heathcote. The electorate of Camden has claimed just over 6,000 vouchers, the electorate of Terrigal has claimed just over 5,000 and the electorate of Mulgoa has claimed over 5,000.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will cease wandering around the Chamber. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Notwithstanding the interjections coming from those on the far end of the Opposition frontbench, I thank those members opposite who have been promoting this program in their electorates and consequently have had a very successful result. In particular, I thank the member for Gosford. She appreciates what this means to her community and has been tweeting a lot about it. The member for Gosford has had 4,000 vouchers claimed in her electorate. The member for Wyong has also been very active on Facebook about this program. In his electorate more than 5,000 vouchers have been claimed. The member for Campbelltown has been talking about this program and other government policies. In his electorate 3,500 vouchers have been claimed. I am sure he is also thanking us for the hospital we are building in his electorate. I encourage the so-called leadership on the Opposition frontbench to join the backbench and get on board in support of this program. Hardworking members in this House appreciate what this means for their communities. We would not be able to offer families—

Mr Jihad Dib: Can we have forms in languages other than English as well?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The interjection of the shadow Minister for Education disappoints me. I would have thought he would be supportive of this program.

The SPEAKER: I was about to ask the member for Lakemba to cease interjecting.

Mr Jihad Dib: Can we have forms in languages other than English as well? That is what I said.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member going to address his comments through the Chair or is he having an open debate? The member knows the standing orders. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If those opposite do not support such a policy or have issues, they should come and talk to us. [*Extension of time*]

I do not know anyone in the State who would not support giving parents \$100. This is an example of where a government in a strong financial position is able to return money to families. We are the party for the workers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for The Entrance will cease interjecting. The member should talk to the Premier later if he opposes the policy.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government is delivering for workers and families but those opposite could not. We know that household budgets come under stress. You name it—whether it is rebates for kids, green slips, free registration, public hospital car parks—this Government is providing relief.

[Interruption]

Those opposite are very touchy about this.

The SPEAKER: Order! If members continue to interject they will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can tell those opposite that there is more to come.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockdale will calm down or leave the Chamber. The Minister for Corrections will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We on this side of the Chamber know those opposite are embarrassed because we are delivering what they could not deliver. We are delivering what those opposite will never be able to deliver.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease conversing across the table. The member for Rockdale will cease conversing across the table with other members. Government members will cease conversing with the member for Rockdale. That is not the etiquette in this Chamber.

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:30): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, who is yawning. Given that the Minister's own department warned that the new timetable meant "delays will be cumulative and irrecoverable", was it incompetence or arrogance that made the Minister proceed regardless?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Drummoyne will cease conversing across the table. I remind Opposition members who are on calls to order that if there are any further utterances they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr Luke Foley: I want arrogance.

Mr Michael Daley: I want incompetence.

The SPEAKER: I want members on calls to order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:32): At least I do not get drunk behind the wheel.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the third time. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: A question has been asked already about the rail report but I am happy to answer it again with this second question. I say very clearly that this Government is happily delivering more services to the people of Western Sydney. Everyone is aware that this report contains a number a key recommendations that the Government welcomes through the review.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the third time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Chief Executive Officer of Sydney Trains is going to implement them. They are important recommendations.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Cessnock that he is on three calls to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: One of the things the rail operator wants to do is to build more capacity to respond when critical incidents occur. It is important to note what has happened with the railways since we have been in office. We have grown the services. Customer satisfaction was turned around when the Premier was the transport Minister. There has also been a 10 per cent improvement since we have been in office. Prior to that, the railways were operating as a shambles. Does the member opposite want to say something?

[Interruption]

I am glad we have some interjections from those opposite. Under Labor there were years when on-time running was at 62.7 per cent. Labor promised 626 brand-new carriages to replace 30-year-old, non-air-conditioned trains. None of those was delivered. More than 1,000 parking spaces were physically fenced off and locked up right outside key stations for exclusive use of staff, not customers. Only two in five stations were wheelchair accessible.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129. The question relates to the current timetable and whether the delays are irrecoverable and cumulative, and why the Minister proceeded, knowing that this report clearly told him that was the case.

The SPEAKER: I understand, but the Minister is contextualising and is not out of order. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The way that the railways were operating under members opposite compared to what they are doing now is very telling. The member for Maroubra was a fierce advocate for middle management. Under those opposite, Sydney Trains was operating with 4,000 middle managers and growing. What we have seen in railways has been revolutionary. This Government is proudly delivering record spending on our railways. There is no hiding the fact that it is an old, complex railway, but that is why we are investing \$20 billion in our new Metro train network. We are untangling the mess in the railways that those opposite left and the union featherbedding that went on and on and on.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Blue Mountains to order for the first time. She will cease shouting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Our railways are now operating at an average of approximately 93 per cent. We will continue to invest and we will continue to deliver. I am very pleased that Howard Collins and Rodd Staples did this report, because it contains a number of key recommendations that we will adopt for our customers. We will build resilience and spare capacity to be able to respond to unplanned, unexpected events on our railways.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those include fire, such as the one we saw at Circular Quay the other day; weather events, such as lightning strikes taking out substations at critical infrastructure; unwell passengers; and, unfortunately, personal tragedies which play out on the network from time to time. We have worked hard to deliver an uplift in services to the people of Western Sydney. Those opposite have said clearly that they will cut train services and go back to an old timetable that does not cater for the growth in demand and patronage. God help the railways if we ever see the member for Strathfield running them.

WESTCONNEX

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (14:37): My question is addressed to the Minister for Western Sydney, the Minister for WestConnex and the Minister for Sport. Why is the completion of all three stages of WestConnex critical for easing congestion and creating jobs across this great city, and are there any opposing views?

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (14:38): I thank the member for Drummoyne for his question. When people open the Service NSW website on their iPad, they can select the language that they want. They can choose all the languages.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. I am more than happy to discuss that issue with the member for Penrith.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba will resume his seat. You do not have a conversation with the Minister. Either you have a question or you have a point of order. You did not have a point of order.

Mr Jihad Dib: Madam Speaker, can I say something?

The SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order?

Mr Jihad Dib: It is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr STUART AYRES: I just wanted to help the member for Lakemba. I thank the member for Drummoyne because he understands the importance of the WestConnex project. People across New South Wales, and particularly people in Western Sydney, need to understand that all three sections of WestConnex are critically important. We cannot leave the job half done. We have the tunnel underneath Parramatta Road, passing 22 sets

of lights and creating a link to the city that the people of Western Sydney have never seen before. Almost from the day the M5 tunnel opened, it was at capacity, so we are duplicating capacity by creating another tunnel.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: We cannot leave a dead end at the end of those two roads, so it is critical that we link the M4 with the M5 and create the Rozelle Interchange to allow access to the Anzac Bridge, Victoria Road, and a future second harbour tunnel. Yesterday those opposite voted against all three stages of the WestConnex project. Labor is sending a clear message to people across Western Sydney that it wants them trapped in their cars for the rest of their lives—it does not want the extra capacity those tunnels will provide. Labor does not want the people of Western Sydney out of their cars. It wants them trapped in their cars and backed up in traffic as far as possible. As well as lacking any coherent policy on tunnels and WestConnex, those opposite also have no coherent policy on tolls.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: They voted against the free registration policy of this Government that puts up to \$715 back in the pockets of motorists, most of which is collected on toll roads introduced by those opposite. Only members on this side of the Chamber understand the pressures that people are under. Whether it is Active Kids or this Government's free registration policy, we are putting money back in the pockets of people across Western Sydney.

The member for Auburn is the most anti-Western Sydney leader that the New South Wales Labor Party has ever had. The Labor Party does not support Metro West or Metro Northwest. It does not support the redevelopment of Sydney Olympic Park or Parramatta stadium. It does not support the tunnel underneath Parramatta Road or the duplication of the M5 tunnel. There is nothing it supports in Western Sydney. Not once has the bloc of members opposite who purport to represent Western Sydney, whether in their electorates or across their shadow portfolios, voted to support anything in Western Sydney. Do you know how contorted they are? They are now so worried about the inner west seats that yesterday they even gagged The Greens from talking about WestConnex.

The member for Auburn is not only the most anti-Western Sydney leader of the Labor Party but also a duplicitous leader of the Labor Party, who has one message about WestConnex in the inner west and a different message about WestConnex in Western Sydney. In places like Campbelltown or Penrith, those opposite say, "Yes, we support the tunnel. We won't tell you what the toll is. Don't worry, it's in the bottom drawer. It will come out after the election." We tell people what our toll is, so why will those opposite not tell people what their toll is? The only reason not to is that it will go up. If they were going to have a lower toll or the same toll, they would tell us now. They should just tell people what they will do.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: As well as that, we hear nothing from Labor that says the people of Western Sydney will get any of these projects, not even the hospital builds that the Minister for Health is delivering in Campbelltown, Nepean, Blacktown and Westmead.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Rockdale to order for the second time.

Mr STUART AYRES: Members opposite have said nothing to indicate they will support those projects—not one single thing. When we announced the investments into Nepean Hospital, the Hon. Walt Secord from the other place just said, "We will look into it." [*Extension of time*]

Whether it is supporting key projects such as Parramatta stadium or ANZ Stadium in Western Sydney, or whether it is making sure that projects such as WestConnex are completed, no-one on that side of the Chamber supports jobs growth, jobs creation, or infrastructure in Western Sydney. It gets even worse when the Leader of the Opposition tells people across Western Sydney that he believes in the Western Sydney Airport—the first time Western Sydney will have an airport connecting it to the world. If the member for Auburn really believes that, he has no choice but to demand the resignation of the member for Blacktown from the mayoralty of the City of Blacktown. The member for Blacktown is taking \$100,000 in his role as mayor to run a campaign against the Western Sydney Airport. If the Leader of the Opposition is pro-jobs and pro-Western Sydney Airport, then he should demand that the member for Blacktown, who now sits on his team, cannot double-dip. He cannot have \$100,000 come in to fund the campaign against the airport and then sit here in exactly the same—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 73. The Local Government Act was amended by the Government a few years ago. The member for Blacktown is not breaching any law. If the Minister wants to attack him, he should do so by way of substantive motion, or otherwise sit down and resign. It is a cowardly attack on someone who is doing his civic duty and is not breaking any law.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. His behaviour is aggressive. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr STUART AYRES: If the member for Maroubra wants to keep defending the \$100,000 that goes into the pocket of the member for Blacktown for being the person at the front of the anti-Western Sydney jobs campaign he can take a point of order every day of the week and I will stand here and listen to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr STUART AYRES: Those opposite have every opportunity to support WestConnex, Parramatta Stadium, ANZ Stadium, hospitals in Western Sydney and the airport.

TRAIN DRIVERS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (14:45): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How many additional train drivers does the Minister need to run the system and how will the Minister be able to recruit them given that they can earn more in Victoria and Queensland and given that the Minister has repeatedly insulted them and denigrated their performance?

The SPEAKER: Order! That question goes too far. Questions should seek information and should not contain imputations or criticism of a member or a Minister. The first part of the question is acceptable; the second part of the question is out of order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:45): I am happy for the first part of the question to be accepted, but I reject the second part because I would like the member to find anything on the public record that says I have attacked a train driver. I have not and I reject that.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members who are already on one or two calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. Members will be removed from the Chamber if they continue to be disorderly.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Like her leader, the member for Strathfield has just misled the House. It is somewhat ironic that a member of the Labor Party has just asked about train drivers going to Victoria. First of all, in Victoria there are no guards on trains, there are fewer workers, so they are able to pay the drivers a bit more. But also guess what? Victoria has a privatised network.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Drummoyne will come to order. I call the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation to order for the first time. I call the Minister for Counter Terrorism to order for the first time.

Ms Trish Doyle: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 59, tedious repetition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat.

Mr Anthony Roberts: To the point of order: The honourable Minister has quite nicely offered the member for Blue Mountains the opportunity to reword her question, if she would like.

Ms Trish Doyle: Why do you hate the workers?

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Blue Mountains to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It looks like the member for Blue Mountains has gone and broken a policy embargo of about 12 months. Now that we learn that those opposite are going to privatise the railways if they win the next election, it reminds me of what the Leader of the Opposition said back in July 2015. He said:

The issue is not whether the public sector or the private enterprise should own assets and provide services, the issue is what is in the best interests of the people of New South Wales.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister accepted the first part of the question, which was about how many more drivers are needed. It does not matter whether it is privatised or not, they have left New South Wales because you are arrogant and you are incompetent. That is why they are no longer here—because you are useless, because you disparage them and you insult them. That is why they are not here. You should tell this House how many drivers are required.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not want a repetition of that behaviour from Government members. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the third time. If he continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I think it is important for the benefit of Hansard to make it clear that the member for Strathfield said it does not matter if it is privatised or not.

The SPEAKER: Order! That was out of context, Minister, but carry on.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I wanted that noted at this date and time because those words are going to carry for a very, very long time. Just to help the Labor Party and the good member for Strathfield, I have learned that Penny Sharpe, in the other place, has described herself on the Labor Party website as the shadow Minister for Transport. I suspect that this afternoon that sounds like a sensible thing to do.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I refer the Minister to the first part of the question, which was: How many drivers?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has concluded his answer.

JOB CREATION

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (14:52): My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. What is the Government doing to create jobs and how does it compare to other job-creating approaches?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:52): Once again, the Premier has given me this information. The member for Lakemba asked about the Active Kids Rebate and languages. Here is a release in Arabic; here is a release in Greek; here is a release in Chinese; here is a release in Spanish—"Fantastico", it says. There is even a release in Basque.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order: It relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. What the Treasurer is speaking about is completely irrelevant to the question he was asked.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has said no more than two sentences. It is too early for me to judge whether it is relevant. I remind the member for Lakemba that he is on three calls to order.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: No government has done more than the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. It was remiss of me yesterday to not wish the shadow Treasurer a happy Valentine's Day. I hope he got my flowers. Ryan, I love you being shadow Treasurer, mate, but my wife is so much easier. Today's figures show that the unemployment rate is at 5.1 per cent—once again, the lowest in the country. As the Premier has pointed out, it is the thirty-second consecutive month that we have had the lowest unemployment rate. Since 2015 more than 240,000 jobs have been created.

Last year alone New South Wales created 134,000 jobs. To put that in context, that is more than Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania combined. Since 2011 the Government has created over 400,000 jobs for the people of our great State. Whilst these numbers are not good for the Labor Party, they are good for Wayne Swan. As someone soon to be unemployed, he can certainly come to New South Wales and find some work if anyone would like to take him on. Maybe the shadow Treasurer, as part of the new mentoring program, could advise him and teach him some of the dark magic of Labor Party economic policy—debt, deficit, destruction—and the modern Labor way.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order. I direct the member for Keira to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Keira left the Chamber at 14:55.]

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: They love their revisionist history. They all got so triggered when Wayne Swan's economic record was brought into question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Keira will expedite his exit or he will be removed from the Chamber for the rest of the day. The member is like a naughty little boy.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. As flattering as the bromance of the Treasurer is with his opposite number, I ask that he answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: There have been distractions down in Canberra but it should not distract us from the retirement of the worst Treasurer in the history of this country. The member for Cessnock was triggered, interjecting with fake economic facts.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. This is a personal reflection. The Treasurer is being irrelevant under Standing Order 129. He has not come close to being relevant

to the question. He is talking about a former member of Parliament in another place. Whether he likes him or not—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is being entirely relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The member for Kogarah did the right thing by supporting the decision to remove the member for Keira from the Chamber after his little tantrum about Wayne Swan and my challenging the economic record. The shadow member for waterworks, the little water boy sitting on the benches—he is not carrying the drinks, he is leaking on the team. [*Extension of time*]

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I give credit where credit is due. I am a supporter of former Labor members like Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, who did some great things—floated the Australian dollar, deregulated the financial system, dismantled the tariff system, ended subsidies and privatised inefficient State businesses. The reality is that these were all very sound Liberal policies. Bob Hawke and Paul Keating were nothing more than loyal puppets of the Liberal economic agenda. They work for us. Do not be fooled by the mentoring; they now vote for us. I sent Paul Keating in to help them. The real question is why Liberal governments create more jobs than do Labor governments. We know that our job-creating policies are the ones that create prosperity for the State of New South Wales.

We work with business; we cut taxes. As the Premier knows, in the last two budgets there were billions of dollars in tax cuts. We encourage investment and we build the infrastructure and as a result jobs follow for everyone. As we know, those opposite fail to create jobs because they have policies that destroy economic growth. Every Labor Treasurer increases taxes, destroys the budget, are slaves to their unions and cancels infrastructure projects. As the Minister for WestConnex quite rightly pointed out, in this Chamber yesterday they not only opposed the WestConnex project to support the families of Western Sydney, they opposed the tens of thousands of jobs that come with the WestConnex project. We will always stand up for Western Sydney. We will always stand up for jobs. Only a Liberal-Nationals Government can bring prosperity to this State.

WILLIAMTOWN CONTAMINATION

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (14:59): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that there have been more than 50 confirmed cancer cases along a five-kilometre stretch of road in the poly-fluoroalkyl [PFAS] contamination area at Williamtown, does the Premier stand by NSW Health's claim that there is no cancer cluster even though it included in the study thousands of residents who live up to 30 kilometres away from the actual contamination zone?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:00): I thank the member for Port Stephens for this very serious question. As she would be aware, the last time I was in Port Stephens I visited and spoke to members of the community and I made an undertaking to them. The State Government has certainly done everything we can within our power to support and assist them. I undertook to raise their concerns with the Prime Minister, which I have done. I want to assure the community of Port Stephens who raised those issues with my colleagues and me that we appreciate the stress they feel. We appreciate what they are going through and we will continue to support them in every way we can as a State government. I have seen through on the undertaking I gave when I met with them at a very robust and quite emotional meeting. I appreciate that they came to the meeting and told me directly what they thought. I was pleased to hear about it firsthand. I appreciate when members of the community have those concerns that it should be up to the Premier of the day to make sure she listens and then takes the necessary action.

WESTERN SYDNEY FUNDING

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (15:01): My question is addressed to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services. How is the Government supporting communities and jobs in Western Sydney?

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

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (15:01): I thank the member for Parramatta for his question. He has been a wonderful advocate for his electorate and a wonderful advocate on behalf of that great cultural festival known as Parramasala. I was very proud a few days ago to stand with the member for Parramatta, the well-respected Chairman of Multicultural NSW, Dr Hari Harinath, and the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Andrew Wilson, to announce Parramasala on 9 March to 11 March. Once again we will see the city of Parramatta lit up with this wonderful

cultural festival, which includes food displays, dancing, special guests and over 500 performers representing 40 different nationalities.

I was pleased to announce on the day that the Government has recognised the importance of Parramasala to the local economy by increasing the funding by \$600,000 to bring the total investment in Parramasala to over \$2 million between the years 2016 to 2020. With an injection of around \$2 million per annum, there is probably about a 4:1 return on investment for that funding. Importantly, the Parramasala festival brings people together, with 40 nationalities represented. It is a great way to improve our harmony and social cohesion. It started as a south Asian festival, predominantly Indian, but through its great spirit of generosity has expanded to embrace over 40 different nationalities. It brings all people together, improving and increasing our cultural cohesion, and acknowledges the great benefits of cultural diversity.

I acknowledge and thank the Premier and the Treasurer for the Active Kids Rebate program. It has been written in various languages to support different cultures. Some time ago, together with the Premier, I announced an injection of \$11 million into community language schools to help maintain important links to heritage and culture and provide an opportunity for people to learn another language. As we sit here today and look at the make-up of Australia, half of our population were born overseas or have a family member who was born overseas. We are the sum total of every nationality around the world. The ability to speak multiple languages is a value add to this country.

There is only one risk to cultural diversity and cohesion and funding for festivals such as Parramasala, the Tet Festival and Africultures Festival. That threat comes from the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is the only risk to low unemployment, infrastructure programs and social cohesion. The Leader of the Opposition is the Captain Risky of the Labor Party. Members have seen Captain Risky driving in a demolition derby, crashing into things and destroying homes. Not one insurance company will go anywhere near him. The Leader of the Opposition is the Captain Risky of the Labor Party. That is how he would act if he ever had access to Treasury.

It is wonderful to be part of a government that recognises cultural diversity and understands the importance of locating the office of Multicultural NSW in Parramatta. It is the beating heart of multiculturalism in Western Sydney. Since it came to office, this Government has done more for cultural diversity than the Labor Party could ever have imagined. The only risk to the perfect cohesion we now have continuing in the future is the Labor Party and Captain Risky recklessly pursuing other agendas. [*Extension of time*]

I acknowledge the record funding provided by this Government to festivals that celebrate our amazing cultural diversity in Western Sydney. The Government is investing in high-quality international and domestic events reflecting Parramatta's status as a leader in the State's economic and cultural boom. It highlights the Government's commitment to the State's growth, not only in economic terms but also through community and cultural projects that enrich us all. Parramatta is in the middle of a major economic boom, which coincides with a record investment in infrastructure, including the Parramatta Light Rail and the \$2 billion-plus redevelopment of Parramatta Square. I am proud of the improvements made by this Government to cultural diversity and the harmony it promotes. I am proud of a government that is investing in Parramatta and providing important infrastructure that will benefit all members of the community and drive down unemployment.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newcastle will come to order.

DISABILITY ADVOCACY FUNDING

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:08): I direct a question to the Premier. Given that the cuts to disability advocacy funding in New South Wales will wipe out an estimated 50 organisations, will the Premier commit to meeting with disability advocacy representatives to discuss reversing the \$13 million cut so they can continue their vital work?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:09): I thank the member for Newtown for asking this question on an important issue because it gives me the opportunity to put the facts on the record. The Minister for Disability Services has the facts in his head, so if I incorrectly state anything he will let me know during the course of my address.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gosford will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Five years ago, due to the great work of the then Premier and then Minister for Disability Services, New South Wales was the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]. At the time, the Opposition supported the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will not correct the pronunciation of other members.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Will members respect the member for Newtown's question and allow me to answer?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Swansea will come to order. The member can leave the Chamber if she does not want to be here.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: From memory, disability advocacy groups in New South Wales receive between \$10 million and \$13 million support from the New South Wales Government. During part of the transition, the Federal Government has set up a \$130 million fund for advocacy, of which New South Wales will get a huge share. We are one-third of the nation.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I predict that New South Wales disability advocacy groups will be in the running to access more funding than has ever been received in the history of this State. Anyone who knows a family who supports someone with a disability understands how stressful it is.

Ms Jenny Leong: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant to the question she was asked. The interjections may have prevented the member for Newtown from hearing the answer.

Ms Jenny Leong: My point of order is relevance. I asked if the Premier would meet with representatives.

The SPEAKER: That was part of your question. I am sure the Premier will answer that part. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The question makes the assumption that I have not already spoken and written to people. The member for Newtown asked a question and I am responding by saying that the Government cares deeply about anybody supporting someone with a disability in New South Wales. As the then transport Minister, I recall each portfolio gave up funding towards the transition to the NDIS. The Government signed up because it appreciated its importance. In relation to independence, support or advocacy, New South Wales people will be better off. One thing I have noticed about the Opposition is that it does not let the facts get in the way.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maitland will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opposition would rather cause stress for those most vulnerable in the community than tell them the truth.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order or she will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

Ms Jenny Leong: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Does the member for Newtown have a point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: My point of order is Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maitland will resume her seat. The member for Newtown has precedence as she asked the question.

Ms Jenny Leong: My point of order is relevance. I asked the Premier if she would meet with disability advocacy representatives. Only 10 per cent of people living with disabilities are eligible for the NDIS.

The SPEAKER: I am sure the Premier understands that. The member for Swansea will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government does not have a strong economy and budget for the sake of it; it is to care for those most vulnerable. This Government will care for them. *[Time expired.]*

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (15:14): My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. How is the Government's record road investment creating jobs across New South Wales?

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (15:14): The member for Clarence is enjoying the benefits of the work occurring on the Pacific Highway as a result of the hard work of this Government and the Federal Government. In total, 7,500 jobs have been created as a result of this work, with

2,500 in the Clarence electorate alone. The Pacific Highway upgrade is saving people's lives. This Government is managing its budget and spending on infrastructure. When this Government came to office Labor was spending \$1 on operating and maintaining the State's roads and 70¢ each year on building new roads.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bankstown will listen in silence.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: This Government is spending \$1 on maintaining and operating our roads and \$3 on building new roads. This Government has achieved a fourfold increase in construction. This Government is employing people, creating jobs and changing lives. The member for Western Sydney and I were commenting on our recent visit to the Lendlease project in Penrith which is changing the lives of people in Western Sydney. We met five young women, two of whom were single mums. Their lives are being transformed by the jobs this Government is creating and the money it is investing in Western Sydney. A few months ago the member for Mulgoa and I visited roadworks in Western Sydney that are creating 40,000 new jobs. This Government is building infrastructure and changing the lives of people in this State. We are managing our budget and recycling assets while at the same time lifting the State's asset base.

New South Wales is being transformed. This Government has taken it to where it is today—the leading State in this nation. Under Labor, it was at the bottom of the list. Last week I visited the Newell Highway in western New South Wales to take part in the community's celebration of a \$36 million upgrade to the Newell Highway at Trewilga, which is outside Parkes. The project will make the Newell Highway safer. We had the opportunity to talk to the workers; Labor would not listen to the workers. We spoke to Haslin Construction employees such as Brooke Emmett, the project manager; Stuart Light, the safety coordinator; and Linton Hewsens. Those workers were working in 36-degree heat to help build the road. It is an important project. The upgrade to the Princes Highway has created 2,265 direct and indirect jobs in the southern part of New South Wales. I was asked about alternatives to job creation.

It is no surprise to Government members that last week the New South Wales branch of the Transport Workers Union [TWU] was accused of making donations to its mates in the Labor Party. The TWU and its members continue to enjoy the benefit of the record spend on our roads, which is making those roads safer for truck drivers and the communities of New South Wales. The problem is that the donations were allegedly made without going through the proper union channels. It has been alleged also that the new administration has revived the TWU's "long lunch" culture, which will suit the failed candidate for the Senate—tired Tony Sheldon. It is obvious to Government members that job creation does not mean taking money from union members to give themselves long lunches. Let us not forget what the member for Maroubra did when Labor was in office and he was a former roads Minister—it was not much. He was part of the team that proposed the M4 East and then cancelled it. This Government is now building WestConnex. In 2009 Labor proposed to widen the M5 from four lanes to six lanes and then cancelled it. This Government widened the M5. [*Extension of time*]

Labor planned to connect the M2 to the F3. In true Labor tradition, it did not do it. This Government is building NorthConnex. Who could forget Labor's commitment to widen the Spit Bridge in 2007, only to be the first of God knows how many promises. This Government is for the workers, the regions and the people of this State. This Government is carrying out the record road investment that is creating record jobs. Only this Government will continue to get on with creating more jobs across this State because Labor is incapable of doing so.

Personal Explanation

MEMBER FOR WOLLONDILLY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (15:21): By leave: In my inaugural speech I referenced Alan Jackson's song *Small Town Southern Man* in which he said, "His greatest contribution is the ones you leave behind." He was speaking of family. The best job I will ever have is to be a dad to Will and Menzies and a husband to Belinda. Everything I have done in my life is to make this world a better place for them. My wife is expecting our third son, Chase Patrick George Rowell, and the best job I will ever have will be enhanced with another son. Belinda is due anytime now. I am blessed with a supportive wife and family. Both our sons have only ever known their dad whilst in politics and, like my beautiful wife, they have had to share their weekends, holidays, nights and days with the community that we all love. This job also means members are away from home for large parts of the year. Belinda has had some complications with this pregnancy, yet she is the most amazing woman keeping our family running.

Our baby is due to arrive. Given that both of my beloved parents are unwell, and as it is one year out to the 2019 election and nominations are now open, it is with mixed emotions that I announce I will not be contesting the next election. It is time for me to support 100 per cent those who have supported me. No longer will my family miss a husband, father and son. I have taken some time over the break to consider my position and I have not

come to this decision lightly. It is important that I stand with my wife and watch our children grow into fine young men. I am lucky to have the loving support of my parents, Ted and Yvonne, my sister, Ebony, and my in-laws, John and Annette. They have done everything they can to help my family and me live as normal a life as is possible in this job. It is important that I help my parents as they have helped me. I cannot do these things effectively and contest the next election. I love my family very much. I thank Premier Gladys Berejiklian not only for encouraging me to recontest but also for understanding my decision. I am proud of this Government's achievements and wish her and the team all the best for the next election.

I thank the communities of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands who have worked with me to make our region a great place. We have achieved a lot delivering billions of dollars in much-needed infrastructure and services such as upgrading Bowral and Campbelltown hospitals, announcing a new public high school, creating jobs, helping our most vulnerable and protecting our environment, to name just a few. Their support has meant everything to me. I say to the people of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands that I will continue to fight for what is important to them. There is still much fire in my belly. I thank my colleagues, staff, party members and supporters, too many to list now but I look forward to mentioning them all in a valedictory speech later in the year. If my sons remember any advice I give them, it should be this: Love God, always put your family first, support your community, and remember that dad and mum love you. To my darling wife, Belinda, I look forward to the next chapter of our lives leaving those footprints in the sand together. The best gift I can give my wife and beautiful children is time.

The SPEAKER: We thank the member for Wollondilly for his commitment to his electorate, this Parliament and his previous portfolios as a Minister. We thank him for his genuine commitment and passion. We will certainly miss him.

Committees

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER GENERAL

Report: Report on the Eleventh General Meeting with the Valuer General

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

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:26): As Chair: The report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Eleventh General Meeting with the Valuer General, which was tabled in the House on 13 February 2018, follows the committee's established practice of examining all annual reports issued by the Valuer General. The report tabled this week reviews the 2015-16 reporting period, where evidence was taken from the Valuer General and the Director of Valuation Services. The committee's report builds on previous committee reviews and makes further recommendations to improve the overall governance and operation of the Office of the Valuer General and his interactions with landowners.

The report makes seven recommendations designed to safeguard the independence of the valuation process, foster collaborative research efforts, improve the engagement of local councils, strengthen interagency collaboration, optimise service delivery and better utilise the expertise of the Land Valuation Advisory Group. Major developments since the committee's previous review include amendments to legislation governing the operation of the land valuation system. This involves changes to the Valuation of Land Act and the Land Acquisition Act to provide new valuations every three years instead of every four years and to improve the procedure for the acquisition of land on just terms by authorities of the State. In addition, as a result of amendments to the Act, determinations of compensation are now being provided directly to landowners and the amount of compensation for relocation disadvantage has been increased.

Another milestone has been the separation of Land and Property Information and the transfer of Valuation Services to Property NSW, as part of the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation. The Valuer General assured the committee that there had been no significant impact on the valuation system from these changes or the services provided and that Valuation Services conformed to the corporate processes operating within Property NSW. The committee was particularly keen to ensure that the independence of the Valuer General was safeguarded in these new arrangements. The committee was told that the Service Level Agreement with Valuation Services includes mechanisms to address and contain any conflicts of interest in the delivery of services by Valuation Services on behalf of the Valuer General. In addition, the Valuer General emphasised that he had taken positive steps to maintain the separation of his role within the restructured administration. The committee will maintain a watching brief to ensure that this independence is not compromised.

Council amalgamations constituted another change since the committee's previous report. The Valuer General has taken steps to offer information sessions to all councils issued with new valuations for ratings. The take-up rate for these sessions has only been 50 per cent; however, the committee considers that more work can be done to encourage greater participation at such forums. Local government information forums provide an

opportunity for additional public outreach to let local communities know about the valuation system and its impact on their land values. In response to the committee's previous recommendations, the Valuer General has improved the operation of the objections and compensation processes for landholders. This includes the provision of more information on the Valuer General's website, as well as improved processes for asking questions, raising concerns and making submissions. This has significantly improved the fairness and transparency of the system and reduced exposure to adversarial litigation. Stakeholder surveys have supported the benefits of these improvements for all concerned.

As the committee has previously stressed in past reviews, the lack of a comprehensive standalone annual report has limited the ability to assess the full extent of the Valuer General's operations in an easily accessible format. It is pleasing that this has now been remedied and the committee looks forward to reviewing the next annual report as a separate document. The publication of a separate operational annual report will help to raise the public profile of the Valuer General and give him the opportunity to more fully inform the community about the valuation system, his charter and the services provided. In closing, I thank the Valuer General and the Director of Valuation Services in Land and Property Information for providing evidence at the eleventh general meeting. I thank also my committee colleagues and the committee secretariat for their hard work, support and contributions to this inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 48/56

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 49/56

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: I move:

That in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7) the reports of the Legislation Review Committee, being Orders of the Day, (Committee Reports) Nos 1 and 3, be considered together.

Motion agreed to.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The question is that the House take note of the reports.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (15:31): As Chair: Today I will refer to Legislation Review Digest No. 48/56 and Legislation Review Digest No. 49/56 of the Fifty-sixth Parliament tabled on 6 February and 13 February respectively. Before I turn to the digests, I take this opportunity to thank the former chair, the member for Upper Hunter, Mr Michael Johnsen, for his diligent work and contribution as chair of the committee over the past 2½ years. Last week's digest was a significant edition, reviewing 10 bills and six regulations. Given its size, I will highlight a few of the salient issues identified by the committee.

The Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment (Proper Industry Reform) Bill 2017 is part of a broader reform package to continue the professional development and training of real estate agents and property service professionals. The committee identified that the bill permits the secretary the discretion to exempt a licensed business from employing someone who holds a class one licence to be in charge of that business. This could potentially be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power as there are no parameters in the Act governing this discretion. Although such parameters can be outlined in regulations, those regulations are not subject to the same degree of parliamentary scrutiny. As the reform package is intended to ensure that professionals in the industry are appropriately trained and qualified, the committee drew this matter to the attention of Parliament.

The State Debt Recovery Bill 2017 sets out a new framework for the collection of debt owed to government agencies and local councils. The committee identified that the bill permits the chief commissioner to direct the sheriff to give priority to a property seizure order over another property seizure order, regardless of the order in which the sheriff receives them. The committee noted that the bill does not provide guidance on what factors need to be considered when prioritising property seizure orders. This could potentially lead to discrimination if there is no clear basis for the decision.

The committee also reported on six regulations, including the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment (Information Sharing) Regulation, which contains several provisions concerning information sharing agreements between certain agencies. The committee identified that it may trespass on the right to privacy if an offender's personal information is shared. However, the committee recognised that the clause only allows for a narrow range of information to be disclosed and is proportionate to the legitimate aim of recovering unpaid fines. I now turn to some of the remarks highlighted in Legislation Review Digest 49/56, in which we reviewed two bills that were introduced in the Parliament's first sitting week of 2018, being the Industrial Relations Amendment

(Contracts of Carriage) Bill 2018 and the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The committee identified some potential issues with the latter.

The Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 amends several Acts within the Justice portfolio. An issue that the committee identified is that the bill does not require the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to issue written reasons for certain guardianship decisions if there are three tribunal members deciding the application. That means that the tribunal would not have to issue written reasons for decisions relating to minor medical and dental treatment, recognition of guardians and managers in other States, and ancillary or interlocutory decisions. That may be problematic in the context of guardianship matters that may involve vulnerable people. However, those decisions concern relatively minor issues and the tribunal must also provide written reasons upon request. Accordingly, the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on Legislation Review Digest Nos 48/56 and 49/56. I thank my fellow committee members for their contribution. I commend the digests to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:36): On behalf of the Opposition I comment on Legislation Review Digest Nos 48/56 and 49/56 of the Legislation Review Committee. In Legislation Review Digest No. 48/56 the committee considered 10 bills and commented on six. The retrospective elements of the Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment (Property Industry Reform) Bill 2017 were drawn to the attention of Parliament and I understand were subject to debate in this House. During consideration of the State Debt Recovery Bill 2017 Mr David Shoebridge moved that the committee comment that one of the most serious potential compliance measures for the failure to pay a fine, being the suspension of a licence, would impact on a person's right to work. The rest of the committee did not support that; however, a number of items in the bill were drawn to the attention of Parliament and were debated in the House.

Only two bills were considered in Legislation Review Digest 49/56. The committee commented on a number of issues in the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 but drew only one matter to the attention of Parliament, which was the definition of a member of teaching staff, which would impact on the rights of school employees accused of having sexual intercourse with students. There was a detailed debate on that issue and it was appropriately dealt with by Parliament. I thank the secretariat for their support. I also thank the outgoing Chair, the member for Upper Hunter, and welcome the incoming Chair, the member for Manly. I commend the reports to the House.

Reports noted.

Matter of Public Importance

SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:39): I am pleased to discuss as a matter of public importance the fortieth anniversary of the 1978 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. In the past couple of years parliaments at a State and Federal level have taken significant steps on the pathway to progress and justice for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning [LGBTIQ] community. Obviously, the big news federally was the public campaign and subsequent popular support for a change to the Marriage Act to allow same-sex couples to marry. In early 2016 in this place, it was my honour to join with a great many other members to move a motion of apology to participants of the original Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1978 for the mistreatment, physical assault and public persecution they were subjected to at a time when society was a much more intolerant, fearful and violent place.

It was long overdue that the New South Wales Parliament apologised for its part in a long history of oppression and marginalisation of LGBTIQ communities. Today, a couple of weeks out from Mardi Gras in March, I pay tribute to the rainbow community past and present for its ongoing efforts to campaign for equality and recognition. Today the Mardi Gras is a city-wide celebration of the LGBTIQ community, but it began as a protest movement and a struggle for basic rights. They were campaigning to oppose police brutality, repeal anti-homosexuality laws and abolish the Summary Offences Act that restricted the right of people to organise and participate in public protests. A former President of the Legislative Council, Labor's Meredith Burgmann, was a 78er. She wrote recently about the 1978 march:

Up Oxford Street we trooped yelling, "Stop police attacks on gay women and blacks!" But this soon gave way to "Out of the bars and into the streets" as we moved into the gay bar district. Interested drinkers and the occasional drag queen joined us.

Her recollection of the first part of the evening is vague, but she says that as soon as the police moved in everything came into sharp focus. She wrote that she had never seen such brutality, saying:

Fifty three protesters were arrested and thrown into the cells at the old Darlinghurst Police station. The rest of us thronged outside waiting in the cold, knowing that our friends were being assaulted inside.

Writing on the SBS website, 78er Mark Gillespie outlined the lived experience of a gay man from the bush in the 1960s and 1970s:

Having arrived in Sydney seeking refuge from the never-ending police state of mind that was life under the Joh Bjelke-Petersen Queensland government, I was renting a studio flat in Crown Street, Darlinghurst, at the time.

All through history, cities have offered people like me a measure of escape from oppression and persecution. But in 1978, even in a big city like Sydney, refuge and security could not always be found and, without even basic human rights, we were always vulnerable.

As a high school teacher working for the NSW Department of Education, "coming out" posed a major risk for me—it could mean the loss of my job. For those who were subjected to electric shock treatment in the 1970s at the old Prince Henry Hospital in Little Bay, it could even mean losing your mind.

When politicians and activists like me and a number of colleagues and supporters march in the modern Mardi Gras as allies of the LGBTIQ community it is easy to forget the reality for those original 1978 Mardi Gras activists. They were not safe in their own city. They were not safe at home or at work. They lived in constant fear of physical persecution, losing their jobs or being ostracised socially by their friends and family. It is important to mark the fortieth anniversary of the groundbreaking effort by those activists and to acknowledge the advances and reforms that came as a consequence of their struggle.

The decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1984 was made possible by the 78ers, who dared to struggle against oppression and persecution. I pay tribute to them and I congratulate them. I note that my friend and comrade Jo Haylen, the member for Summer Hill, would have joined me in discussing this matter of public importance but she is on leave with her newborn twins. I acknowledge the work and activist zeal of Legislative Council member Penny Sharpe and former member and my dear friend Helen Westwood, AM. I wish them all a happy Mardi Gras in a few short weeks.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (15:44): I thank the member for Blue Mountains for bringing this matter of importance to the attention of the House. On 3 March I am looking forward to joining with other members of Parliament and members of the wider lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer [LGBTIQ] community and their supporters in celebration of LGBTIQ pride as we march along Oxford Street in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. We will not only be remembering our past but also remembering that 40 years ago there was a much different ending to the night. These days people party on in pubs and some are even lucky enough to have a ticket to the Mardi Gras after party.

On 24 June 1978 a number of people assembled in Oxford Street. They had permission to hold that march, which was then called the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras, in commemoration of the Stonewall Riots that took place in New York many years earlier. Those who marched on that occasion are now fondly called the 78ers and, as I said, we will be honouring them in this year's Mardi Gras. A few of those people are dear friends of mine. In fact, I have known a couple of them since 1979 and what took place was fresh in their memories when they recounted that experience to me when I was just a young boy.

Last Friday evening I had the privilege of joining other members of Parliament at the launch of a book by Joseph Carmel Chetcuti, a 78er, who has written an extensive history of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, as it is now known. Some perhaps have been incorrectly remembering the history of that march. I hope that Joseph's work, which has been verified by many people who attended the first march all those years ago, will be one of many that will set the record straight. Even though the first march took place in 1978, it was not until 1984, six years later, that homosexuality was decriminalised in this State. It was not until late 2003, with the equalisation of the age of consent, that homosexual acts between consenting adults had full equality before the law. This is my first contribution to debate on gay and lesbian rights since the historic marriage equality vote was held last year.

We have not yet achieved absolute full equality before the law—some forms of discrimination still exist—but we will not be resting on our laurels. In one of his final speeches to some schoolchildren, Winston Churchill is reported to have said, "Never give in, never, never, never, never." We will take that advice and keep working towards full equality, full acceptance and full understanding of our community. This is particularly important to me as the first openly gay member elected to this House—which I found astonishing. I was quickly followed by the member for Sydney, so I am no longer the only gay in the village. In March we, along with many other members of this House, will march with pride in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (15:49): I am proud to make a contribution to discussion on this matter of public importance. In the coming weeks thousands of people in our community will celebrate the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. This is an exciting, dazzling, and electric time of year. In commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras I reflect on the decades of pride and passion that have enabled the Mardi Gras to evolve into the iconic event it is today. On 24 June 1978 more than 500 activists marched down Oxford Street, Sydney, calling for an end to discrimination against the gay community.

Their demands were simple—for police to stop harassing lesbians and gay men, for the Government to repeal the New South Wales anti-homosexual laws in the Summary Offences Act, to stop workplace discrimination and to protect the rights of lesbians and gay men. Although I said they were "simple" demands, we are still struggling to adhere to them. I acknowledge the protesters who were there that night, now known as the 78ers, for their bravery in advocating for social change. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has grown to represent far more than a march of pride through the streets of Sydney. For many in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer [LGBTIQ] community this is an important festival in which routine discrimination does not cast its dark shadow.

Discrimination is a huge contributor to poor mental health. I acknowledge that people in the LGBTIQ community experience triple the rate of depression and double the rate of anxiety when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. That is a sad indictment of people who are not members of the LGBTIQ community and the way in which we deal with people from that community. We should celebrate Mardi Gras, which creates a safe space for those who may not have access to one. Unfortunately, later this month a local safe space in the Hunter community will be closing its doors. The Gateway Hotel has been an important part of night-life for music lovers within the LGBTIQ community in the Hunter region. Its loss will be felt deeply and I am hopeful that in the future the Hunter will have more safe local spaces for the LGBTIQ community. I wish all of my LGBTIQ friends and people from that community in my electorate of Charlestown, as well as the gay and lesbian members of this Parliament, a very happy Mardi Gras.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:52): By leave: I thank the member for Blue Mountains for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House. Members may or may not know that the member for Blue Mountains is somewhat of a gay icon in her electorate. She has a particularly strong support base in the Pink Mountains—the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer [LGBTIQ] community in her electorate. They are very proud of the work that the member for Blue Mountains does in this House. This year is the fortieth anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. At this time we reflect on the heroism of those in 1978 who were simply marching for fairness, equality and ending discrimination, but were met with brutality and violence. To the police, government agencies and the media those people, now known as the 78ers, had a stigma.

Members will recall that this Chamber, led by the member for Coogee, delivered a formal apology to the 78ers. The *Sydney Morning Herald* also formally apologised for outing so many of them after a number of arrests. Tony Crandell from the NSW Police Force also issued an apology but we are still eagerly awaiting a formal apology from the NSW Police Force for the violence and brutality experienced by the 78ers. The New South Wales Parliament has a strong association with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Clover Moore was first elected to this Parliament as the member for Bligh and was my predecessor as the member for Sydney. She was the first member of the Legislative Assembly to march in the Mardi Gras. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile also often attended the Mardi Gras. He did not take part in the march, but stood on the side to watch.

Fred no longer comes to Mardi Gras but Clover still comes, and I particularly look forward to marching again with her and with supporters. This year's Mardi Gras, as well as being the historic fortieth anniversary, is the first mardi gras in Australia with marriage equality. That will be a significant moment for our community, with people celebrating that historic achievement, which only came about because of the hard work of the 78ers and those before them. The Equality Campaign is looking forward to marching with members of all political parties this year.

Mardi Gras involves the work of many people. I acknowledge the organisers, the volunteers, all the participants and the co-chairs of Mardi Gras, Kate Wickett and Brendan Bear. This is a very busy time for them. This will be a great Mardi Gras. As we know, Cher will perform at Mardi Gras this year. I look forward to joining the member for Coogee, the member for Newtown and any other members on the dance floor while Cher is performing. The room will largely be full of sweaty, shirtless men as we navigate our way through the dance floor. It is a wonderful time when people come together to acknowledge the heroism of the 78ers and celebrate the work that has been done—and the work that is still to be done in this place and in the Federal Parliament. I thank the member for Blue Mountains and wish everyone a happy Mardi Gras.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:56): By leave: I am pleased to speak on behalf of The Greens on this matter of public importance introduced by the member for Blue Mountains. It is always wonderful to speak about Mardi Gras, but it is particularly lovely this year. Not only is this year the fortieth anniversary of Mardi Gras but, as the member for Sydney reminded us—and how could we forget?—it will be the first year that we will be marching down Oxford Street celebrating changes to the laws of this country that have resulted in marriage equality and the end of discrimination that we had had for so long.

The original Mardi Gras marched down Oxford Street towards Hyde Park. Mardi Gras now usually marches the other way, from Hyde Park towards Taylor Square. On the night of the yes vote, I and many thousands

of others experienced one of the most incredible things. There was a gathering and a flag raising at Taylor Square. Many of the original 78ers were there, as were many who had been campaigning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] rights long before 1978 and many who continued those struggles in the years that followed. The wonderful people of Reclaim the Streets who usually enjoy celebrating around the inner city of Sydney and Newtown had come together with a number of other groups including Community Action Against Homophobia and the Equality Campaign. Through some careful negotiations with various people, including the NSW Police Force, it was agreed that Oxford Street would be closed. People celebrating in their thousands marched down Oxford Street in the original direction from Taylor Square to Hyde Park, and continued to celebrate in the park that night.

It was wonderful to be able to march down Oxford Street with some of those 78ers and witness them become overwhelmed by the fact that, close to 40 years on, they were marching the same route and chanting the same things. I get goosebumps when I talk about this moment: The 78ers were standing behind the banner at the front of an enormous crowd. I encouraged them to take a minute to stop, turn the banner around and look at the thousands of people who were gathered and marching behind them. They cheered and everybody cheered for them. It felt like there had been genuine change and progress—and we know progress can take a long time. I give a massive shout-out to the many volunteers and the board members of Mardi Gras for all their work. It will be a pleasure to join the parade yet again. I will be dancing up Oxford Street this year.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:59): In reply: I thank the member for Coogee, the member for Sydney, the member for Charlestown and the member for Newtown for their contributions on this very important matter of public importance. In acknowledging the sad history of oppression around this upcoming day, it would be remiss of me to not also mention the uplifting, proud and positive work undertaken by many smaller groups that often do not get mentioned. I acknowledge Rainbow Families, which was quite a prominent part of the marriage equality debate. It is wonderful that families come out and dance, sing and celebrate life with us now. I acknowledge Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]—those fabulous parents, carers and families who step in to support public awareness raising for their families. I acknowledge Ruth and Ron Green from my electorate.

I acknowledge the organising committee and all the volunteers. As other members mentioned, hours upon hours of work go into putting the Mardi Gras together. I acknowledge the many communities—such as mine, the Pink Mountains—who travel from far and wide to participate in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. I thank all who have made a contribution and all who have been here to listen in the name of equality and justice and the struggle of determining rights. Rain, hail or shine, may this fortieth anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras be a never-ending dance party.

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**.

The CLERK: I announce that the following petition signed by more than 500 persons has been lodged for presentation:

Lower Clarence High School

Petition calling for a new high school to be built in the lower Clarence region, received from **Ms Tamara Smith**.

Community Recognition Statements

TRIBUTE TO PAM NIPPERESS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:01): I recognise a champion of the Mount George community in my electorate, Mrs Pam Nipperess, who has lived in the Mount George community for 30 years and enjoyed a career as a schoolteacher, starting at Salty Creek Public School in 1958. In retirement Pam has kept herself active volunteering in the Mount George community. Pam returned to school to work at the canteen and

scripture classes, and with the parents and citizens association. She is also an active member of the Mount George Rural Fire Brigade. She returned to teaching hazard reduction at the Taree Rural Fire Service headquarters to fill in time on the weekends. Pam continues to contribute to the *Wingham Chronicle* with the Mount George Memos column. She is also a member of Red Cross, the School of Arts committee, the reserve trust and the Mount George/Upper Manning Local Area Committee. I thank Pam for her service to our community.

LIVERPOOL CHARMING ASIA LUNAR CARNIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:02): I recognise the Charming Asia Lunar Carnival held on Saturday 10 February at Bigge Park at Liverpool. This was, I think, the first lunar carnival held in Liverpool. The members of the Charming Asia Association and the organising committee should be congratulated. So should their sponsors, including Liverpool City Council. I note Mayor Wendy Waller and Councillor Charishma Kaliyanda were present at the event. I acknowledge also the role of Xiao Jing Li, Chairman of the Charming Asia Committee, and Moon Xu, General Secretary. Among others also present who addressed the opening ceremony were Dr Anthony Pun and Helen Sham-Ho. The event was another successful demonstration of the vibrant multiculturalism that is characteristic of Liverpool. It was a great event and I was delighted to be able to attend.

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK BUSHFIRES

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (16:03): I recognise all the Rural Fire Service brigades, volunteers, emergency services and agency partners involved in battling and providing assistance in the recent fires on 20 January 2018 that raged through the bushland in the Royal National Park. I commend the way all the agencies and volunteers united, resulting in a swift response so that the fire was contained and a major disaster was avoided. We owe them a great debt for their sacrifices in protecting our communities. In particular I thank NSW Rural Fire Service; Bundeena Rural Fire Brigade; Communications Brigade; Engadine Rural Fire Brigade; Grays Point Rural Fire Brigade; Heathcote Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade; brigades from Illawong, Kurnell, Loftus, Maianbar, Menai, Sandy Point, Waterfall, Woronora, Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Macarthur, Cumberland and the northern beaches; National Parks and Wildlife Service; Fire and Rescue NSW; NSW Police Force; NSW Ambulance; Roads and Maritime Services; Surf Life Saving; Marine Rescue NSW; and Sutherland Shire Council.

PROSPECT ELECTORATE LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVALS

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:04): I acknowledge the upcoming Lunar New Year festivals, and their importance to the Vietnamese and Chinese communities living in the electorate of Prospect. Tonight I will have the honour of attending the Vietnamese Buddhist Phuoc Hue Temple in Wetherill Park on the eve of Tet, which is likely to be attended by 10,000 people. Tomorrow I will visit the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society Lunar New Year event at Mingyue Lay Temple in Bonnyrigg. I am looking forward to joining my friends in the Vietnamese and Chinese communities to celebrate both of these events and to bring in a happy and prosperous Year of the Dog. Sin-quan Gua-ler. Chuc Mung Nam Moi—have a happy and prosperous Lunar New Year.

NSW AMBULANCE OFFICER RALPH BLACK RETIREMENT

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:05): I recognise New South Wales Ambulance officer Ralph Black, who retired on Saturday 10 February after 41 years of service, 30 of those in Albury. Commencing work as a fitter welder, he decided it was not for him and he applied to become an ambulance officer. In 1976 Ralph began working as a paramedic in Bathurst. He transferred to Kelso and Newcastle before his promotion to deputy superintendent in Albury in 1988. Ralph returned to full-time operational ambulance duties about 18 years ago, and he retires as a level IV advanced life support officer and recipient of a National Medal. Ralph has seen many changes and improvements in treatment over the years, and his extensive knowledge will be sorely missed by all. We wish Ralph all the best in his retirement.

JORDANIAN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:06): On Saturday 3 February I was delighted to attend the inaugural Higher School Certificate high achievers recognition dinner for the Jordanian Australian community. Mohamed Alqadi and the Australian Jordanian Community Association brought together hundreds of people to recognise the 22 students who each achieved an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] of over 90. I especially congratulate Mohamed Ghoshi, who recorded the highest ATAR of the year—an outstanding 95.55. This is an extraordinary result for a small community that highly values education and the opportunities available to their young people in Australia. It is a result that is important to celebrate and acknowledge. Also acknowledged at the event were the community leaders who have contributed over decades, particularly Neil El Kadomi. The event was a great success and I am sure it is the first of many to come every year.

TRIBUTE TO ALLEN FRASER RAMSEY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:06): This afternoon I pay tribute to Allen Fraser Ramsey, a true icon of the Northern Rivers area, who sadly passed away last Saturday. Fraser had a long career as a livestock auctioneer and was involved in all aspects of rural living. He was on the steering committee to start cattle dog trialling in Australia, and in April last year he officially unveiled the bronze statue of a working cattle dog erected in Bonalbo to commemorate the town as the birthplace of working dog trials, with the first trial being held in 1950. Fraser also loved campdrafting and he competed for the Warwick Gold Cup for 50 years. Although he came second twice he was never able to win this prestigious event. In 2001 Fraser was honoured for his lifelong commitment to campdrafting at the Warwick Rodeo. I extend my sincere condolences to Fraser's wife and family. We have lost a true country gentleman.

WYONG ELECTORATE SENIORS CLUB

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (16:07): Toukley 50 Plus Leisure and Learning Centre is the largest seniors club in Australia. Its members are from all corners of the world. They are determined and united in their cause that "old dogs can be taught new tricks" and that life does begin at 50. The club offers a wide range of learning activities including computer classes, art classes and yoga, proving that even some of the wisest among us are able to learn new skills and talents. The centre's range of leisure activities is unparalleled, and caters to all ages and abilities of its members. From the walkers group, to the tai chi and knitting groups and so many more, the Toukley 50 Plus Leisure and Learning Centre gives its members a vast offering of activities that many people have told me give them a new lease on life. I take this opportunity to thank the club for all it does in our community and for what it will continue to do in the future.

TWEED HOSPITAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:08): I congratulate and welcome 18 new medical graduates to the Tweed Hospital as part of a record intake of interns funded by the New South Wales Government. I was delighted recently to meet with the new interns over lunch, where they shared their place of origin, and the university where they studied before they started at the hospital. Two of the ladies were born in Tweed Hospital and are from the local Tweed area. It was great to see them return to the area. This year a total of 999 interns have taken up positions in our hospitals across the State—up from 992 in 2017. I am sure this will be a very informative and exciting year for all the interns and clinicians involved. I wish our interns every success as they progress their new careers.

PYRMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE FUNDRAISING

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:09): On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate the active and engaged team of community volunteers in Pyrmont and Ultimo on their inspiring fundraising efforts through Christmas in Pyrmont, which celebrates the festive season and helps build a stronger community, with a daylong festival in the streets of Pyrmont and at the Pyrmont Community Centre. The event raises funds for local charities and helps inform the community about their work. It also promotes local community groups and businesses who benefit the community. The event includes children's activities, entertainment, stalls, live music and games, and is the last in a yearlong program of fundraising events. In 2017 Christmas in Pyrmont collected and donated funds for Freedom Hub's work to stop human trafficking, Pyrmont Cares' furniture and whitegoods recycling to help people in need, and Barnardo's' Aboriginal Early Years Program. Christmas in Pyrmont is a fabulous representation of this community and I commend everyone who helps make it such a success.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE NSW TOURISM AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:10): I offer my congratulations to Cupitt's Winery and Brewery and Mollymook Beach Waterfront on their outstanding achievements at the 2017 NSW Tourism Awards. Cupitt's Winery and Brewery—a fantastic venue—took home gold in the Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries award and silver in the Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services category. Mollymook Beach Waterfront was the winner of the Hosted Accommodation category. These accolades at the State's Tourism Awards were well-deserved recognition of the South Coast's outstanding tourism offerings. Tourism is an important industry for the region. The awards recognise the incredible work and expertise of these two businesses that are contributing to the South Coast's increasing number of domestic and international visitors. I congratulate both businesses, their owners and their staff on the win that will help raise the profile of the region as a whole and will continue to bring more and more visitors to the beautiful South Coast.

BATTLE OF PASSCHENDAELE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:11): This afternoon I recognise all of the individuals involved in organising the Maitland's commemoration of the centenary of the 2017 Battle of Passchendaele.

A dedicated group of Maitland residents and community organisations put together an exhibition commemorating the 34th Battalion, colloquially known as "Maitland's Own". The exhibition focused also on the role of women in Maitland during the First World War. I acknowledge Dr Janece McDonald and Peter Bogan, whom I have previously recognised in this place; Dr Janis Wilton, OAM, for research and curation of the exhibition; Kim Blunt, the curator of the Maitland Regional Art Gallery Passchendaele exhibition; David Schiffer for research and digitation; Ruth Trappel, Secretary of the Passchendaele Committee; Peter Hedges, President of the Passchendaele Committee; and Joe Eisenberg, OAM, artistic director of the exhibition. These individuals were instrumental to the success of this wonderful exhibition. I appreciate their efforts, and recognise and thank them for continuing to educate our younger generations about our past.

QUEENSCLIFF NETBALL CLUB

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:12): I update the House on the Queenscliff Netball Club and wish its executive and players all the best for the upcoming season. The club, which has an incredibly strong program for both junior and senior teams, plays at the John Fisher Netball Courts in North Curl Curl alongside the iconic Greendale Creek and Curl Curl Lagoon. It is great to see sport, especially for young women, go from strength to strength in my electorate of Manly. It is very encouraging to see the club promote the Government's Active Kids Rebate among its junior members and their families, which will reduce registration fees for its players by \$100. I am passionate about growing sporting opportunities for our young people, and I look forward to meeting with the executive of the club soon, including president, Sonia Hatvany, and secretary, Sonia Pearse, and seeing where I can lend my support to the club in the coming years.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (16:13): International Women's Day is held each year on 8 March. This year's theme is "Press for Progress", recognising the need to continue to push for equality for women across the globe. I recognise two groups in my community that have been pressing for progress for many years by hosting International Women's Day events each year. Salamander Bay Rotary Club is doing it again this year, hosting a luncheon at the Soldiers Point Bowling Club on International Women's Day. I thank Salamander Bay Rotary Club for its continued commitment to championing the rights of women, and I particularly thank Janelle Upton, Jennifer Gray and Ina George for organising this year's event.

In the small hamlet of North Arm Cove, International Women's Day has been celebrated for 20 years. I extend congratulations and thanks to Maureen Kelly and her amazing team of volunteers, who will be hosting their twentieth International Women's Day event this year. I am sorry that I cannot make either event this year due to Parliament sitting. Both events are always inspiring. As a society, we have made many gains, but gender parity is still a long way off. We cannot afford to be complacent; we must continue to press for progress.

LISMORE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENT GEOFF HANNAH, OAM

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (16:14): I congratulate a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] recipient from my electorate. Geoff Hannah is a well-established master craftsman and cabinet-maker who was awarded an OAM in the Australia Day 2018 Honours List. Examples of Mr Hannah's masterful and intricate skills include the Yarralumla Cabinet, which is located in Government House, Canberra; the Hannah Cabinet, which was unveiled at New South Wales Parliament by the former Governor, Her Excellency the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir, and is currently displayed at Lismore Regional Gallery; and the Australiana Cabinet, which was purchased by an international trading company and is located in the Grand Place, Belgium. From my long association with Geoff, I know that this award is well-deserved and recognition of his hard work and dedication to his industry and our local community. Geoff recognises that this would not have been possible without the love and support of Rhonda and his family.

COWORK NEWTOWN

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:15): I draw the attention of the Parliament to CoWork Newtown, a new small business initiative from the Newtown Business Precinct Association in partnership with the Inner West Council and the City of Sydney Council. CoWork Newtown, which opened recently just opposite my electorate office in the heart of Newtown, provides local businesses, start-ups, freelancers, creative people and entrepreneurs with access to its amazing new shared work space in the heart of Newtown, as well as face-to-face business mentoring, workshops, training and, most importantly, networking opportunities. I encourage anyone who has not recently been to the south end of King Street to check out this initiative, only one of the local initiatives popping up to support locals to thrive and become sustainable in the heart of Newtown. I congratulate the Newtown Business Precinct Association President Richard Adamson, CoWork Newtown Manager Simon Shaw and the whole team on putting together such an important initiative. I thank also the Bloodwood team for providing delicious food.

CAMMERAYGAL HIGH SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE HALL

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:16): Today I talk about a new share-use hall at Cammeraygal High School which I am pleased to announce the Berejiklian Government has committed to deliver following my advocacy, in consultation with the school community and the member for Willoughby. The multipurpose hall is planned to be accessible by not just the Cammeraygal High School, which is a new senior high school in my area, but also the local community outside school hours for a range of activities. This is an example of excellent planning and in-depth consultation with our community, with the Government delivering real benefits to the North Shore.

I give special thanks to the Cammeraygal High School Principal Kathy Melky and the Parents and Citizens Association President Elyse Sainty for their contributions in this process. The new school will accommodate up to 600 senior high school students and will include 30 new classrooms fitted out with the latest technology to support learning. I thank the Minister for Education, Rob Stokes, for working with me to deliver this outcome, which is all part of the biggest investment in public school infrastructure in the history of New South Wales. As we all know, the Government is spending \$4.2 billion over four years to build 120 new or upgraded schools.

UMINA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:17): Today I send a huge thank you to all members of the Umina Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC], whose growing membership now totals over 800 members. The club serves an estimated 150,000 visitors to the beach during the 2016-17 patrol season. Last season Umina surf club conducted 132 rescues, 3,920 preventative actions and 95 first aids. I say, well done. I extend sincere congratulations to 15-year-old rising Umina surf club star Kaylah Holmes, who recently returned from the Royal Life Saving Australian Pool Life Saving Championships, which were held in Adelaide in January, with a total of 17 medals.

Kaylah won three gold and two silver medals and was named national Under 16 Women's Champion. She was joined at the competition by Umina teammates Bronte Smith, Rachel Wood, Lachlan Braddish and Blake Hessel. I congratulate also January's Rookie of the Month, Bethwyn Caller, who was nominated for being a very valued club member who participated in all rookie events. Umina SLSC reported that she is always happy and smiling around the surf club, is willing to help wherever possible and is a great role model to the younger members. I extend my congratulations to Bethwyn and to all members on their fabulous support and mentoring of our young community members.

TRIBUTE TO RONIN MURRAY AND CALLUM CUNNINGHAM

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:18): I acknowledge an act of extraordinary bravery by two South Coast locals, 15-year-old Ronin Murray and 14-year-old Callum Cunningham. On Sunday afternoon these two boys were surfing at South Bombo when it became apparent that three members of a family were in serious danger of drowning in a rip. Ronin was in the water and paddled over to help the lady who was farthest out and managed to get her on his board and calm her down. He then brought her around to the side of the rip and safely back into the arms of her family. Meanwhile, Callum swam into the rip with his surfboard to help another member of the family back to the shore. Then Ronin helped the last lady back to safety. It is a reminder for everyone to be aware of rips and to educate themselves on what to do if caught in a rip or if they need to help someone. The boys acted calmly and showed great bravery in helping these adults. They are not the strongest or necessarily the biggest 14- and 15-year-olds and it was not necessarily an easy task for them. However, they displayed great courage and should be highly commended for their actions. They are outstanding examples of great Kiama citizens.

SERBIAN FESTIVAL SYDNEY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:19): I recognise the Serbian community in Sydney, especially south-west Sydney and in particular at Liverpool. I recognise the sixth annual Serbian Festival held on Saturday 10 February and Sunday 11 February at Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour. I was delighted to be able to attend the festival. I note the attendance of the Serbian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Petrovic, Consul General Branko Radosevic, Consul Branislav Grbic, His Grace Bishop Siluan, Bishop of Australia and New Zealand, and His Grace Bishop Milutin of Valjevo. The festival is said to be the largest Serbian festival in the Southern Hemisphere. It is organised by the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodox Youth Association, known as SOYA. The event is arranged and conducted by volunteers, who put on an extraordinary and impressive show given that it is done on a volunteer basis. It is a great display of Serbian culture and tradition and a spectacular example of multiculturalism. It is a pleasure to be invited to the event.

HORNSBY RELAY FOR LIFE FUNDRAISER MOLLY STREET

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (16:20): Today I make special mention of a remarkable nine-year-old from Berowra Heights, Molly Street. Molly was the highest fundraiser at the 2017 Hornsby Relay for Life, raising a whopping \$3,000. She was among 450 other fundraisers who contributed to the overall \$91,000 raised at the Hornsby campaign. I attended the Relay for Life, which is one of my favourite local events. All the money raised from this wonderful and fun event is donated back to the Cancer Council. Every dollar raised will help go towards defeating cancer, so it is a great cause. Molly made a video about why she thought it was so important to participate in the event. Her video garnered major community support and awareness. She then walked 126 laps with her team, the Berowra Girl Guides, a great organisation that is loved by the Speaker. Molly is an exceptional young lady who is making a real difference in the lives of those affected by cancer. Having achieved this goal at such a young age, I cannot wait to see what else Molly's future holds.

TRIBUTE TO SUE BARTLETT

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:21): I recognise Ms Sue Bartlett of Rutherford. This month Ms Bartlett will be moving to a remote community in the Pacific island of Kiribati. For those not familiar, Kiribati is located past the Solomon Islands among a remote string of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Sue will be spending the next two years working with schools in the area to assist in improving the health of Kiribati's young people. In addition to her nursing, she will be focusing on increasing awareness of and practical assistance with nutritional eating, hygiene issues and health risk factors. The work Sue does within Kiribati directly impacts the ability of locals to develop their own skills and independence and assists in reducing the community's dependence on overseas aid. The intensive work that Sue will be undertaking in Kiribati is completely voluntary. Her placement is funded through fundraising and donations. Sue is just one beautiful example of the high calibre of medical and allied health personnel in Maitland. We wish her all the very best on her trip and are proud to have her representing our community.

AUSTRALIAN FUTSAL PLAYERS BRAITHE AND BRONSON WAITES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:22): I make special mention of two brothers from Wingham in my electorate who are making their mark in the world of futsal. I speak of 15-year-old Braithe Waites and his 10-year-old brother, Bronson Waites. Braithe's most recent tour as part of an Australian team was to Brazil where he had the opportunity to attend training camps with Brazilian coaches as well as compete against local Brazilian teams. One of the matches saw the Australian team take the lead in the last 60 seconds, a first for a visiting Aussie team. Last year Bronson joined the Australian Futsal Association's under-10 team, which undertook a 10-day tour of Malaysia where Bronson played 12 games honing his skills. The team won both competitions and was warmly welcomed by many local schoolchildren and the Malaysians sports Minister. I am told that both brothers are highly competitive and I look forward to tracking their success in the future.

WYONG SALVATION ARMY OASIS CENTRE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:23): The Salvation Army Oasis Centre at Wyong opened its doors to the community on 27 November 1999. The centre was a collaboration between the Salvation Army and the local and Federal governments, and with help from our community. The centre's goal was to deliver a range of services to young people that are designed to promote their wellbeing by raising self-esteem and providing them with work and living skills. The centre's services include counselling, case management, education, training, sport and recreation, work placements and other welfare support. More recently, the centre has become a wider community centre that includes a bakery, cafe and discount grocery store. The centre provides laundry services to people sleeping rough in the community. The Oasis Centre provides services that both stop people falling into crisis and help them if they do. It is an invaluable community asset and I am honoured to recognise in this Chamber the work it does for my community.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE COMMONWEALTH GAMES QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:24): Last week South Coast locals were given an opportunity to be a part of our nation's history with the Queen's Baton Relay for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games arriving on the South Coast. The baton carries a message from the Queen to be read at the opening ceremony. The baton left Buckingham Palace in March 2017 and has made its way to every nation of the Commonwealth before arriving in Australia in December. The baton travelled from Wollongong to Kiama to Nowra, where 19 local baton bearers nominated by the community carried it through Nowra's streets.

I congratulate and thank those baton bearers: Captain Fiona Sneath, Julie Dart, Andrew McVey, Rajarshi Ray, Rosemary Morgan, Ken Hutt, Susan Courtney, Leslie Sykes, Rodney Crouch, Jan Gilmour, Stuart Leyland, Craig Norris, Michael Vassallo, Casey Sablowski, William Barry, Makynli Dale, Melissa McManus, Kristine

Vincent and Raymond Vincenton. I thank the volunteers and authorities who made the day a great success in Nowra. I acknowledge Ulladulla residents Margaret Sheedy, Zarley Oakman, Julie Sydenham and Samantha Howcroft, who carried the baton in the Bateman's Bay leg, which was the last leg of the baton's journey through New South Wales.

GOSFORD ELECTORATE RETURN AND EARN FACILITIES

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:25): I thank the owners of Skippers Takeaway and Asian Noodle Takeaway on West Street, Umina, for their community leadership, effort and resourcefulness in developing the only two Return and Earn facilities in the Gosford electorate. I commend the quick work by the manager and staff of the two stores. They had less than a week to prepare the businesses for the only two recycling facilities in the electorate before the Government launched the project. Those who live in the Gosford electorate are grateful that they have opened their shops to improve the quality of our environment by encouraging recycling and non-littering behaviour.

We thank them for fitting in community recycling amongst their food preparation time and outside their peak times of operation. Whilst the community would love the Government to provide a 24-hour Return and Earn facility in the Gosford electorate, instead of having to drive 40 minutes to Lisarow, we appreciate the 9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. operating capacity of the two stores. We also appreciate that they have dedicated staff and storage space to support the recycling community, despite the fact that the bags of recycling are collected only once a week and government payments for their efforts have lagged. I commend the owners and staff at Skipper and Asian Noodle takeaway shops in West Street, Umina.

LISMORE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENT MARGOT SWEENEY

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (16:26): I congratulate Margot Sweeney, who was named this year in the Australia Day Honours List in recognition of her service to the credit union sector and to the community. Her service to the community and financial sector is significant across many roles including: Chief Executive, Summerland Credit Union Lismore; Director, Australian Settlement Limited; Lismore Friends of the Koala; member of the Policy Advisory Group, Lismore City Council; and founding member of the Northern Rivers Community Gateway. Ms Sweeney has also had wide-ranging involvement with Southern Cross University. This award is well-deserved recognition of her hard work and dedication to the community and to her field of work. It is wonderful to see Margot acknowledged in this important way and I wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

CATHOLIC CHURCH SYDNEY ARCHDIOCESAN ANTI-SLAVERY TASKFORCE REPORT

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:27): I recognise the launch in Sydney on Thursday 8 February of the Catholic Church Sydney Archdiocesan Anti-Slavery Taskforce report. The launch was preceded by Archbishop Anthony Fisher celebrating a mass for the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita at St Mary's Cathedral. The formal launch of the taskforce report and the archdiocese's response took place in the church hall and featured speeches by Archbishop Fisher and the former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, John McCarthy, QC. Slavery includes human trafficking, forced labour and forced marriage. The task force will consult with Sydney Catholic Schools regarding purchases of equipment. The archdiocese will aim to slavery-proof supply lines. CatholicCare Sydney, assisted by the task force, will pilot schemes with contracted cleaners to eradicate exploitation in the cleaning industry.

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:28): I speak today about the greatest intake of medical doctor interns in this State's history, with a record 999 graduates starting in hospitals across New South Wales. I was ecstatic to see that the fifth-largest intake was at my local Royal North Shore Hospital. I visited the hospital last Monday where I met a few of the 48 graduates starting there this year. When our lives truly depend on it we rely on the services of our State's greatest minds. It was reassuring to meet such accomplished and intelligent graduates, and in such great numbers. I met Dr Glen Abbott, Dr Pamela Karas, Dr Matthew Schwass, Dr Bianca Galgut, Dr Henry Lu and Dr Pooja Rastogi. We were also joined by Junior Medical Officer Manager Brianna Gerrie, Director of Medical Services Dr Philip Hoyle and Director of Prevocational Education and Training at Royal North Shore Hospital Dr John Vassiliadis. I have always had great faith in our public hospital system and that faith was strengthened following this visit. I commend the work of the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health for achieving this record high intake.

A TAIL OF TWO DIGGERS MILITARY HISTORY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:29): I recognise local Maitland author John Gillam and illustrator Yvonne Fletcher for their joint efforts in the publication of their book *A Tail of Two Diggers*. It is one

of a number they have written together to educate young people about our military history in an engaging and informative manner. John and Yvonne have used this latest book to raise awareness of our veterans' struggles with mental health. Their book is now a resource available to veterans and their families in the veterans' mental health precinct in South Australia, which provides mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder services to veterans. They are also keen to see their dog, Digger, become a mascot for the upcoming Invictus Games. What a fantastic thing that would be, and I hope they are successful. John and Yvonne are a wonderful example of the talent within Maitland's local community. I applaud their commitment to enhance and benefit the lives of those who have so bravely devoted theirs to protecting our nation.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENT DAVID CLAYDON

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (16:30): Today I pay tribute to Reverend David Claydon from Hornsby Heights. On Australia Day this year he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the Anglican Church, interfaith relations and refugees. He has worked not only in Australia but also abroad, travelling to over 80 countries. His work for the human rights organisation has taken him to the Middle East and North Africa. He was the rector for St Matthew's, West Pennant Hills, from 1982 to 1987 before he was made Federal director of the Church Missionary Society. He is chair of many organisations and committees, including the Dealing with Diversity Conference, and is the author of several books. He is Canon Emeritus of St Andrew's Cathedral and Canon of All Saints Cathedral in Egypt. Both he and his wife, Robyn, have led a dedicated life of service. I have named only a few of his achievements today but I can assure all members of the House that he is deserving of this prestigious honour. I congratulate Reverend Claydon and thank him for all he has done both here in our community and abroad. He has made a huge difference.

Petitions

WESTERN SYDNEY INCINERATOR PROPOSAL

Discussion

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:31): I acknowledge the stop the incinerator group for bringing this important issue to the House with this petition of over 12,000 signatures. I thank them for their tireless commitment to this issue. I thank them for standing up for our communities when the local member for Mulgoa does not have the courage to do so. In my time as a councillor and as a member of Parliament there are few issues that have inspired this level of activism in the community. On those occasions, I have proudly stood with the community to fight this Government's plans. The plan is to dump radioactive waste in Western Sydney. The plan is for industrial tips.

My Labor colleagues and I are proudly fighting the proposal for the world's largest incinerator in the middle of Western Sydney. Western Sydney has one clear message for this Government: We will not be treated as a dumping ground. We will not cop it. Let us talk for one minute about this dodgy proposal and its dodgy proponent, Mr Ian Malouf. The science behind energy from waste facilities is far from pure. The proposal talks of burning thousands and thousands of tonnes of garbage next door to homes and schools. This technology has been proven to have devastating consequences for the environment and human health. Do not take my word for it. The Government's own Department of Health states:

The proposal to build and operate an incinerator within city limits is not consistent with over 100 years of environmental regulation to improve urban air quality by removing incinerators and power stations and other sources of pollutants from urban areas.

We have every right to be concerned about this proposal and its proponent, the great mate and donor to the Liberal Party Ian Malouf. This snake oil merchant would have us believe that breathing in toxic fumes does not cause any harm. That is a great comfort to Western Sydney families. He is a man who would not for one second want this built in his own backyard. I would hazard a guess that no-one on the other side of the Chamber would want it built in their backyard.

I will tell the story of Michelle Evans from St Clair, in the electorate of the member for Mulgoa, who has been a vocal advocate on this issue. Michelle and her children suffer from acute asthma. Guess how they feel about this proposal. Michelle told me that they will have to sell their house and leave the area if this proposal goes ahead. That is the sort of concern that this issue is causing in the community. Michelle and the members of her family are just one group in the thousands of people whose signatures have been collected. Signatures have come from people in many suburbs, and I want the Government members to listen to the names of these suburbs very carefully. Signatures were received from families in St Clair, Erskine Park, Minchinbury, Mt Druitt, Rooty Hill, Colyton, St Marys, Blacktown, Eastern Creek, Pemulwuy and Prospect. All over Western Sydney there is growing concern about this proposal.

I thank the stop the incinerator group and its committee for organising to collect these signatures and bringing this petition to the Chamber. I want to make it clear that it is a mammoth effort for a community group

to collect over 12,000 signatures. The activism and commitment of that group to stopping this incinerator in extremely difficult circumstances have been a long journey. I am proud of everything the group has achieved so far. Labor members will be with them all the way in seeing this disgusting project rejected. I say well done in particular to Kim Vernon, Melinda Wilson, Kerri Bradbury, Kim Louise, Maya Uluc, Leah Llagas, Julie Martin, Dianne Fitzgerald, Antony Lewis, Mary Court and Penrith Valley Community Union, and Minchinbury Fruit Markets. All those people have played a role and we thank them. It is clear Western Sydney has spoken. We reject this proposal and we demand the Government respects that mandate.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Members know the ground rules. They will be removed from the Chamber if they are disorderly. The member for Londonderry will remain silent. Members will be heard in silence and will be given respect. I remind the member for Rockdale that he is on three calls to order.

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (16:36): I pass on my sincere thanks to every single community member who has worked tirelessly to obtain signatures on this petition and to generate this debate today in the House. I know about the work involved because I have been part of a community fight which generated 18,000 signatures. It took weeks and weeks. I acknowledge and thank every person for their commitment to achieving this debate here today. It is very important that the community understands where I stand on this matter. I do not support this incinerator in Western Sydney. I never have. The proponent sent his sidekick to my electorate office to inform me of this proposal. When I saw those two smokestacks in the drawing I questioned him. I asked him four or five times, "What are these smokestacks for?" He never answered that question. For more than a year I have been suspicious about the intention of and the plans for this development.

Let me be absolutely clear. When the Coalition formed Government we were determined to clean up Labor's dirty "decisions for donations" culture that it had cultivated. Two Labor Ministers from that time are now in jail. The Government has developed an independent planning process, and this proposal is going through that process right now. It is critical that the members of the community know that whatever decision is made it will be a certain, firm decision. Unfortunately, the bills that Labor has proposed will give no certainty with respect to this current proposal. There is no certainty that the Labor-Greens bill will apply retrospectively and stop this proposal.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The member for Londonderry and the member for Maitland will remain silent.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Importantly, this petition raises the issue in the community. It speaks loud and clear for the people of Western Sydney.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I direct the member for Rockdale to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the discussion of the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 16:39.]

Ms TANYA DAVIES: This petition is calling on the Parliament to act. The Parliament does not approve development applications. It is important that the community understands that councils, planning panels and the independent Planning Assessment Commission will determine the outcome.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I direct the member for Londonderry to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the discussion of the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Londonderry left the Chamber at 16:40.]

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The Parliament listens to the people. An upper House parliamentary inquiry is inquiring into the energy from waste proposal.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I direct the member for Mount Druitt to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the discussion of the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Mount Druitt left the Chamber at 16:40.]

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Labor and The Greens have jumped ahead of the parliamentary inquiry handing down its powerful findings and have introduced bills. We need a solution that brings certainty to the people of this State. This petition discussion will end soon but the issue will not and the fight will continue. My petition—which calls on the independent Planning Assessment Commission, the body that will determine the application—is open and growing. I urge every person who signed the petition that generated this debate to also sign my petition so that we can send a clear and affirmative message to those who determine this application that it is the wrong proposal for Western Sydney. It is imperative that the community continue to work together to fight this proposal. Mr Malouf has had a litany of fines imposed on his business operations in other areas of the industry. He is a questionable, dodgy operator in the waste processing industry. He cannot be trusted. It is clear that the fight will

continue. I urge every person who is opposed to this technology to sign my petition and to stand with me until we find a solution. *[Time expired.]*

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Coast will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:42): When talking to Alan Jones on radio this morning, the Premier made it clear that the main function of the Government is the safety of the people. Alan Jones and the Premier were talking about flying foxes. A massive incineration plant in the middle of Western Sydney is more important and more dangerous than bats. Hence, the Government must take immediate action to address the concerns of the local residents to stop this proposal from going ahead. The people of Western Sydney need leadership from this Government. If the Government gets it wrong and waits for certainty, firm proposals and decisions—as was suggested by the member for Mulgoa—we will miss the boat and the people will suffer catastrophic consequences.

The Government has been asleep at the wheel on the energy from waste issue. When this proposal first arose three years ago, I approached the then Minister for Planning, the then Minister for the Environment and a number of other people, as well as council staff. I told them they did not have the right regulations in place and that a new set of regulations were needed to address this problem. The Minister at the time told me, "Give me six months and we will update the regulations." Three years later nothing has happened. That is why the upper House inquiry was established. Council and local groups have lobbied members to ensure that the upper House takes control of this debate and gets to the bottom of the issue. Arguably, this proposal has already been rejected three times. They have had to amend their focus three times. Why? It is because of the quality of their data.

Hydrogen fluoride is a highly corrosive and highly dangerous gas that can cause severe and delayed health effects. It is measured in milligrams per cubic metre. New South Wales has no standard for safe levels of this gas. The European Union standard is one milligram per cubic meter. The initial environmental impact statement that The Next Generation proposed would have allowed three milligrams per cubic metre. Then it was amended to four milligrams per cubic metre. Obviously, it realised the standard was wrong because it has since been amended to 0.05 milligrams per cubic metre. The Next Generation constantly changed its theoretical constructs and eventually ended up with a proposal that works—this proposal will make it through.

We must take control of these standards. We must not allow the Planning Assessment Commission to come up with its own standards; the Parliament and the Government must take the lead on these guidelines. The Leader of the Opposition has met with community groups to talk about the issues and what needs to happen. I call on the Premier to meet with all those community groups, including No Incinerator for Western Sydney, to work through what can be done. Ian Malouf states in a letter that he sent to one constituent— *[Time expired.]*

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:46): I thank the people of Western Sydney who signed the petition. That shows they care about their community. The Government does listen, and that is why we are discussing this petition. Those opposite must know that we have a robust planning system in this State because they helped to develop it. Obviously many people lost faith in the way that those opposite implemented that system, but we on this side of the House will implement it independently and fairly. The existing legislation provisions in the planning and environmental legislation are robust enough to determine whether a development project is suitable for any given location and to manage the potential impacts of any such development. Land use zoning, implemented through local environmental plans, sets out the types of development that are suitable for certain areas as a first step in guiding development.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I direct the member for Maitland to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the discussion of the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maitland left the Chamber at 16:47.]

Mr Stephen Bali: But it's allowable, so you are in favour of the incinerator.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: No. I am in favour of the planning process.

Mr Stephen Bali: But the planning process has not got the guidelines.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: There is a process that we must follow, and it is robust. Those opposite helped to develop that process but the community has lost faith in them because of the way it was implemented, with brown paper bags being shuffled between Ministers' offices. Two former Labor Ministers are in jail because of that practice. The planning system tasks decision-makers with responsibility for undertaking thorough and robust scrutiny of proposed projects, including assessing their potential impacts and the views of the community. The community will be listened to. Major projects such as waste incinerator facilities require the preparation of an environmental impact statement that examines all matters likely to affect the environment.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Blacktown will come to order. He has had an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: The Department of Planning and Environment, along with other relevant agencies, will thoroughly review the project and consult with the community and local council before a decision is made. There will be consultation. If the assessment outcome finds that a project will have unacceptable negative impacts, it will be refused.

Mr David Harris: Rubbish!

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: We are not like Labor; we do not change our minds when a brown paper bag is slipped under the door. We know what those opposites are like. They like those brown paper bags—that is why they want to get rid of plastic shopping bags. The project will be approved if the assessment indicates that the impacts are acceptable and manageable. This merit-based approach enables decisions regarding developments to be made having regard to the particular circumstances of that location and that development, and based on quantifiable facts, not emotion or political motivation. This approach is a well-established component of the planning framework not only in New South Wales but also in other jurisdictions.

Dr Hugh McDermott: I seek leave to make a contribution.

Leave not granted.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Prospect will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:50): Mr Temporary Speaker, first, until this Government came to office there was no opportunity for the community to lodge a petition and have it debated in the Chamber. This Government has given a voice to the community. Secondly, the Labor Party has members on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee. If they want to change the standing orders, they can ask the committee to do so.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I note the comments of the member for Myall Lakes. Is the member for Cessnock seeking the call?

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (16:50): Mr Temporary Speaker, I was going to ask you to apply the standing orders and direct the member for Myall Lakes to resume his seat as he is unable to contribute to the debate under the standing orders.

Private Members' Statements

BAYSIDE COUNCIL

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:51): I refer to the severe financial shortfall faced by the Bayside community following the forced merger of the former Botany Bay and Rockdale local government areas by the New South Wales Government, and add my support to the forthcoming council request for additional State funding to help them complete the merger transition. Last night at a meeting of the Bayside Council a resolution was passed unanimously that the council would make representations to Premier Berejiklian and the Minister for Local Government seeking a financial contribution of \$17 million to repay the Bayside community for costs related to the extenuating circumstances of this particular merger over and above what has been provided by the State Government to date, as well as costs related to the misappropriation of funds by officers of the former council of Botany Bay and the ensuing Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation, legal representation and external audit required by the new council.

It has become clear since the Government's forced merger process that in many cases the funding provided to facilitate the merger process has been woefully inadequate. After the poorly implemented and now abandoned merger process, I believe the least the Government can do is provide fair funding to councils like Bayside that have been unable to comply fully with their merger obligations with the funds provided. In addition, the residents of Bayside have had to face the incredible indignity of discovering that they were being robbed blind by a group of corrupt council officers at the former City of Botany Bay, as uncovered by Operation Ricco.

The former Government-appointed administrator of Bayside Council, Greg Wright, has acknowledged that the loss from the theft of public funds by those council employees was well above that reported by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. While I understand that some of this money may be recovered by Bayside Council through legal action, there is still likely to be a major shortfall that will be borne by the community. When the State Government announced the council mergers, although we had some misgivings, my colleagues and I took a reasoned and measured approach to our local mergers in St George and Botany. We have been interested only in the ongoing welfare of our communities. This was on the basis that the State Government would bear the cost of the mergers. Unfortunately, in the case of Bayside Council, the State Government's funding

has simply not been anywhere near enough to cope with the dual issues of merging the councils while dealing with the fallout from the gross misconduct of the officers identified by Operation Ricco.

Although I know that there are ongoing recovery actions by the Bayside Council against the various targets of Operation Ricco, I understand that many of those who have allegedly misappropriated funds have stripped themselves of assets while simultaneously having inexplicably wealthy spouses and having made other similar arrangements, which makes recovery by the council difficult. In addition, I believe there is scope for the State Government to pursue those wrongdoers or crooks through the Crime Commission. There has been reluctance on the part of the council to refer those matters, as it would have no guarantee that funds recovered as part of any investigation by the Crime Commission would be returned to the Bayside Council and defrauded ratepayers.

It would be only just that a guarantee be provided to the people of Bayside that anything recovered as proceeds of crime would be returned to Bayside in this instance. I encourage the Government to make this goodwill gesture to Bayside and to open this option for the city. While it is all well and good that the Independent Commission Against Corruption highlights that type of behaviour, justice will not have been done for the people of Botany Bay, Bayside or New South Wales until the offenders have been brought to justice, and local councils and residents have been compensated for their loss. Mayor Bill Saravinovski and the elected councillors are doing the best they can to fight for the community, but the time has come for the State Government to step in and do what is right. I encourage the Minister for Local Government, the Minister for Police and the Attorney General to actively pursue all available options to ensure that the people of Bayside are treated fairly.

PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:56): This Government's record investment of \$1.6 billion in the Princes Highway has been a boon for the people of the South Coast. With travel times to major centres including Sydney reduced, more and more people are travelling to, visiting and moving to the South Coast electorate, which was clearly evident over the recent holidays. Domestic and international tourist numbers continue to increase. The South Coast region is one of the fastest growing regional areas in Australia. Residential land values are increasing. Business confidence is growing.

The Princes Highway serves as the main transport spine that connects the entire region—its villages, towns and freight network. Since 2011 there has been completion of major upgrades at Burrill Lake, Termeil Creek, Berry, Gerringong and South Nowra. Soon works will commence at Albion Park Rail. Currently works are underway between Berry and Bomaderry. Sadly, for 16 years the Princes Highway was completely neglected under Labor. The prospect of achieving improvements was one of the reasons that I nominated for election in 2003. For the sake of my region and local residents, I will continue to ensure that Princes Highway upgrades remain a priority and that the highway meets the future needs of our growing community.

Nowra Bridge across the Shoalhaven River is a key section of the Princes Highway. Approximately 50,000 vehicles use the bridge every day. Heavy vehicles and freight make up 6 per cent of the traffic that crosses the river during the day. It is a busy and heavily used section with four major intersections connecting the highway to the Nowra central business district as well as the South Coast rail line's terminating station at Bomaderry and surrounding suburbs. It is an area with a high crash rate. Roadworks or accidents cause significant delays, particularly at peak times. The New South Wales and Federal governments invested a total of \$11.6 million to plan for the improvement and upgrade of this section, resulting in an extensive and comprehensive consultation period managed by Roads and Maritime Services.

During the planning phases the existing southbound bridge—the iron Whipple truss bridge, which is now 137 years old—was independently assessed and found to be unsuitable for the current and future operational demands of the Princes Highway and the local road network. The recommendation was that it be closed to vehicular traffic for the future. Built in 1881, the historic Nowra Bridge is an important part of our history and is of great cultural significance to the local community. Initial community feedback indicated that the community wanted the iconic bridge to be maintained and kept for future generations. As part of investigations for a new crossing over the Shoalhaven River, the Government sought the community's views. Extensive consultation over a two-year period resulted in 1,850 people sharing their feedback through community engagement activities including pop-up kiosks and information sessions. The community overwhelmingly voted to retain the bridge. Five hundred and forty submissions from a total of 720 supported the Nowra Bridge, which means that 75 per cent of respondents voted in favour of retaining the bridge.

I am pleased to inform the House that following extensive lobbying of the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Treasurer, the member for Kiama and I have secured a commitment from the New South Wales Government to retain and maintain the Nowra Bridge. We are thrilled to have secured a commitment to ensure that the ongoing maintenance costs of this important asset and treasured icon will be met. The next step is

to look into potential uses for the bridge once it is retired from the road network, ensuring that it is easily adaptable for multiple purpose use and that it also includes a shared pedestrian and cyclepath. Of course, the community will be at the centre of any decisions regarding the future use of the Nowra Bridge. The project is soon to enter the final planning and consultation phases, with the preferred option report for the new Nowra Bridge over the Shoalhaven River with intersection improvements on the Princes Highway due to be released shortly.

The Government's track record on the Princes Highway speaks for itself. We will deliver this project just as we have delivered upgrades for so many other sections of the highway. Rest assured, we will continue to deliver record funding from the Government for roads in the Shoalhaven, on the South Coast, in the Kiama electorate and further north, and further south into Bega. We will advocate for Commonwealth funding to help meet demand. Temporary Speaker Evans would be aware that very little Commonwealth funding has been directed to the Princes Highway. Most of it has gone to the Pacific Highway in the north. We understand the reasons for that, but it is about time that the Princes Highway received its fair share of Commonwealth funding.

The State Government has invested more than \$1.6 billion in Princes Highway upgrades, and the people of the South Coast have seen it happen. I remember members opposite saying that not one span of concrete had been laid and no projects had been opened. Clearly, they have never been to the South Coast or Kiama electorates to see the extraordinary works that have been carried out along the Princes Highway as a result of our investment. They have probably never been south of Wollongong. The member for Kiama and I meet regularly about these issues. We will continue to lobby the Federal Government to attract funding to the Princes Highway. I know that we will succeed.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:01): The best thing about Sydney is the road out of it, and this Government is making it even better. I commend the member for South Coast, who in opposition was a tenacious fighter for the Princes Highway. The Sydney-centric Labor Government ignored the Princes Highway for 16 years but now, because of the work of the member for South Coast, projects have been completed and investments have been made that we would not have dreamed about. An upgrade has been completed at Termeil Creek and the Burrill Lake Bridge has been constructed. The member for South Coast recently organised an outstanding walk across it. Upgrades are also underway at South Nowra and further north. The member for South Coast and I are working assiduously to make sure we secure funding for even more projects. I join with her in calling on the Commonwealth Government to adequately fund the Princes Highway upgrade through an 80:20 funding mix just like the Pacific Highway received. While ever we are in this place we will continue to stand up for South Coast roads and the Princes Highway in particular.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:02): Through its Community Building Partnership program the New South Wales Government is doing a fantastic job in rolling out grants to small community groups across regional New South Wales. Since I was given the honour of being elected as its local member, the Myall Lakes electorate has received more than \$2.1 million in Community Building Partnership grant funding. We know that every dollar of grant funding we give to a small community group creates three or four dollars of spend or bang for the buck. I will now outline some of the grants that were recently announced, beginning in the Great Lakes region.

The Great Lakes Pearl Dragons will receive \$7,000 to purchase two racing kayaks that will be used for technique training, stamina building and to broaden the on-water activities of the club. The Tuncurry Rural Fire Brigade will receive \$9,700 to purchase two forward looking infrared guns to detect body heat or other hotspots in fires and to build two sun shelters. The Wallis Lake Men's Shed will receive \$8,100 to buy a mobile hardwood sawmill and other equipment. The eight men's sheds in my electorate are doing a great job for men's health and for the community.

Riding for the Disabled in Rainbow Flat received \$10,493 to build a five-metre by three-metre Colorbond shed, providing all-weather access and wheelchair pathways. Riding for the Disabled is another organisation that does great work for people with disabilities. There are some riders at the club who represent New South Wales and Australia in the Olympic Games and the like. The Great Lakes Women's Shelter received \$3,425 to purchase a trailer, towbar and storage facility to enable volunteers to collect and store donated goods. The Great Lakes Women's Shelter started only two or three years ago. It does a fantastic job and has tremendous support from the community.

The Forster Arts and Crafts Society received \$15,508 for a new roof for the south side of the building, new gutters and flushings, and other repairs. The Tuncurry Public School Parents and Citizens Association received \$5,495 to add air conditioning to the library mezzanine floor, purchase a container for storage, and add new wireless access points to accommodate laptop use. The Forster Tuncurry Rugby Union Club received \$5,568 to purchase and install guttering to the existing club roof, and upgrade the current drainage system. The

Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club received \$8,500 to resurface the old courtyard with paving to rectify old, damaged and unsafe surfaces and provide disability access.

In the Manning Valley area, the Taree Greyhound Racing Club received \$9,000 to upgrade toilet and shower facilities. The Hallidays Point Lions Club received \$7,000 to design, purchase and install an Anzac memorial. Tinonee Public School Parents and Citizens Association received \$3,000 for the purchase of a dishwasher for the canteen. Taree Bridge Club received \$6,200 for the replacement of gutters and painting of the building. The total cost of the job is \$16,000 so the club is putting in the rest of the money. Dundaloo Support Services, a disability support service, received \$10,000 for an exterior makeover of the building. Oxley Island Pony Club received \$8,000 to upgrade the car park, install a hot water system and replace the barbecue trailer. Krambach School of Arts received \$2,500 to repair and paint the front facade of the hall. Late last year, Krambach Hall was badly damaged by a storm. Obviously, the insurance has paid for the roofing repairs but there is other work that needs doing inside.

Krambach Rural Fire Service received \$20,000 for fire station extensions to accommodate a meeting and training area, again supporting the volunteers of the Rural Fire Service. Manning Valley Rifle Club received \$7,000 for 10 automatic turning targets and timers. Manning Valley Cycle Club received \$5,500 for timing equipment for road circuits and criterium track. Those are some—not all—of the organisations and groups in my electorate that applied for and received funding under the Community Building Partnership program. They are all great organisations. The Myall Lakes electorate is a fantastic community that helps those in need. I commend all of the groups and look forward to visiting them to see the progress of works.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:07): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for informing the House of another successful year of Community Building Partnership grants in the Myall Lakes electorate. I congratulate all of the community groups that received funding under the program. It is grassroots funding that will directly benefit many communities and community groups in electorates across New South Wales. It will deliver new vital infrastructure and help pay for much-needed improvements and upgrades to schools, churches, not-for-profit community groups, public spaces et cetera. I congratulate all of the successful organisations on their applications. I am pleased that the funding will help community groups and make a positive difference in the electorate of Myall Lakes.

POULTRY WELFARE GUIDELINES

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:08): Animal welfare is important to many constituents in Manly. The draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry is open for consultation until Monday 26 February 2018. The current guidelines for poultry welfare are nearly 15 years old and are voluntary. It is hoped that the new standards and guidelines, which will be supported by all Australian State and Federal governments, will help provide consistent legislation across jurisdictions, and assist in quality assurance and verification of all poultry products. Feedback on the new draft standards and guidelines, which will be shaped importantly by community input and the latest science regarding poultry welfare, will also cover the associated cost impacts of proposed changes to any new regulations.

I thank the nearly 300 constituents who forwarded submissions to me on the draft animal welfare standards and guidelines, in particular Judy Hungerford of North Curl Curl who took the time to meet with me at my electorate office to discuss her concerns about animal welfare. The keen interest of those constituents in this discussion and their subsequent submissions have been integral to my understanding of the issue. The majority of those submissions focused on the welfare of laying chickens, in particular those in caged environments, but the draft standards and guidelines cover the entire poultry industry, including chickens—both the farming of meat and eggs—ducks, turkeys and quail, and other less well-known farmed or domestic species. The welfare concerns raised by my constituents included: the ability for laying chickens to display natural behaviour and freedom of movement; beak trimming, particularly for chickens; and the number of chickens present at any one time in a caged egg environment and their proximity to each other. I note that the New South Wales Government takes very seriously any reports of cruelty or unacceptable standards of animal welfare.

The draft standards seek to ensure general standards and guidelines for all species of poultry, including objectives such as reinforcing responsibility for animal welfare, including humane slaughter; access to feed and water; risk management of weather, disease, injury and predation; and minimum requirements for facilities and equipment, including litter management. There are many options for the implementation of the draft standards and guidelines across New South Wales, including maintaining the status quo arrangements on poultry welfare, and implementing the proposed national standards voluntarily or adopting the proposed national standards whilst also phasing out conventional cage systems over 10 or 20 years.

I recognise also the consultation conducted by independent animal welfare expert Dr Ian Roth across New South Wales on behalf of the Government. This will inform the State's response to the draft standards and

guidelines. After the community feedback is consolidated and submitted, the Government's position will be considered and represented on the national stage on behalf of our communities and industry in finalising the standards following the implementation of new welfare laws. I reiterate that the position of the Government and the Department of Primary Industries will be informed by consultation with the wider community, stakeholder groups and, most importantly, the latest science on poultry welfare. I place on record my sincere thanks to my staff, Adele, Amy, Kim and Daniel, for collating the feedback received by my office. I again thank my constituents for bringing this matter to my attention. I look forward to the New South Wales Government's response on this important matter of animal welfare.

CITY OF LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (17:12): I speak about the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society, and the extraordinary and bizarre behaviour of Liverpool City Council staff in their treatment of that society. The action of council staff has been farcical and runs the risk of making council a laughing stock. For more than three decades I have been involved with the society, initially as a member and subsequently as patron of the society. The society was in existence for decades before I became involved. It is a voluntary society and its bona fides are unchallengeable. From 1970 the society has used the Liverpool council crest on its letterhead; it also uses the crest on a sign. This occurred for many years with no particular commentary or interest. It was thus extraordinary for president Glen op den Brouw to receive a bullying and monumentally offensive letter, dated 22 September 2017, from the council.

The letter was certainly not authorised by a council resolution and, as best I can tell, no elected councillor knew anything about it. The letter was a disgrace. It was exactly the sort of letter that never should be sent by a council officer to a voluntary organisation such as the historical society. The letter asserted that the council had no record of the society asking for permission to use the council crest and formally demanded that the society cease using it. The letter was dressed up in legalese in a pompous attempt to make it more intimidating. The penultimate paragraph of that letter reads, in part:

If you continue to use Liverpool City Council's crest without permission, I expect to receive instruction to take further action. That further action includes Supreme Court proceedings and an order that the president pay costs. The first reaction of the president to this extraordinary letter was to fear whether his house was at risk of legal proceedings. The letter refers twice to the president's name but within literally a few lines his name is spelt differently. That basic mistake reflects adversely on the competence and attention to detail of the council staff concerned. I also note the presumption the letter's author makes in expecting to receive instructions to take further action. I noted that, as far as I could tell, they had thus far received no instruction at all from the elected council, that is a bit rich. Further, council records reveal that in 1971 the society was given permission to use the crest. The council officer concerned either did not properly consult council records or was simply incompetent.

The society has used the crest for almost 50 years and there has never been an issue. I have asked council to identify the harm being caused by the society's use of the crest, but it has refused to provide me with a substantive response. The reality is that there is no demonstrable harm; to assert to the contrary is nonsense. Why did council officers pursue this bizarre course? It seems that they reacted to only one verbal complaint. For that to have provoked this entirely disproportionate response suggests a significant failure of decision-making process. The council response to the president's subsequent expressed concerns are ludicrous. The council misinterpreted the meaning of the privacy legislation and stupidly asserted that, because the council received a complaint, it had to take this action.

That is so wrong as to be genuinely stupid and is a complete failure to understand the correct role of council. The silliness of the council officers' approach is highlighted by the fact that the historical society is not the only voluntary community-based group in Liverpool that uses the council crest in its material. It is now clear there are four other community groups, plus public schools, which have used the crest for many years without problem or difficulty. I note that the council has not threatened them with Supreme Court proceedings. This wonderfully fomented storm in a teacup has now spawned an 11-page report to full council, still to be finally determined. It is clear from the report that, although the bullying, threatening letter to the society was sent in September, the council had never previously bothered to apply for trademark protection for the crest—lodging an application only in October 2017.

The report cites a council resolution about the crest from 2008 which, on its face, does not ban the society or anyone else using it; that is merely the ex post facto gloss put on it by council officers. Officers also suggested that perhaps the crest cannot be used because it is a visual representation of the council seal. I have been involved with the law in one way or another for a fair while and I think by now I can pick up an argument smacking of desperation. The best I can say about that argument is: "Pull the other one—it's got bells on." The other otherworldly argument proposed by officers is that non-council use of the crest in correspondence may result in possible issues relating to the content and council policies or standards. Granted that such correspondence is clearly marked to be from the historical society, the brass band or whoever, that is an unmeritorious argument.

As to the standard of correspondence, the argument is put by people at council who spell the society president's name in two different ways within about three lines of each other. The council officers seem to want community organisations to comply with the council code of conduct if they use the crest, even though they have been using it without issue for 40 or 50 years. That is typical of the arrogant, pompous misbehaviour of these council officers. It might also have been helpful if the council officers had bothered to provide a substantive reply to the representations I made. The council should get on with it and allow the historical society and other community groups to continue to use the crest they have used for 40 years. Council officers should stop fighting this ill-advised rearguard action.

GOULBURN ELECTORATE EVENTS

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (17:17): As we start the agricultural show season in New South Wales, I was thrilled to open the 140th Crookwell Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Society Show on Saturday 10 February. I was very pleased to be able to surprise everyone on the day by announcing that the Crookwell Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Society is the recipient of a major funding boost of \$275,000 through the Stronger Country Communities Fund. I am proud of the Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund and the deep commitment that it demonstrates to regional areas through the development of key infrastructure projects. This funding boost for the society will bring the showground's facilities into the twenty-first century.

The president, Paul Anderson, described the grant as a "truly transformational moment", and only a Liberal-Nationals Government could have made the project a reality. After 140 years, the society deserves our help to make sure it goes on for another 140 years. Following this announcement, I spent some time catching up with the 2018 Crookwell Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Showgirl, Miss Georgia Opie, and her parents. Georgia told a lovely story about becoming a country girl after a year driving around Australia with her family. I wish her well for the finals on 4 March. As I have often said, show season in my electorate is one of everyone's favourite times. I am looking forward to coming weekends when we will celebrate the agricultural success of our region and the arts and crafts, the cake- and jam-making, the children's activities, the sheepdog trials and the woodchopping competitions that are part of the show.

Another exceptional event for my electorate was the opening of the \$700,000 redevelopment of aged-care facilities at TAFE NSW in Moss Vale. On 9 February, I attended the official opening with Kerry Penton, Regional General Manager TAFE New South Wales, and David Guthrey, Manager District Operations for the Southern Highlands. The refurbishment of the aged-care educational areas is an exciting addition to the range of extensive TAFE NSW training facilities in Moss Vale, Yass and Goulburn. The Government has invested in significantly upgrading these aged-care training facilities, which I am confident will now attract students from right across the region and beyond. I am pleased to see this significant investment come to fruition and that these modern learning environments are available to students right now. The new learning facilities include a simulated aged-care ward environment, a rehabilitation training room and a theory room.

This will mean students have the opportunity to learn in simulated work environments and to hone their skills in real work situations, giving them a head start when it comes time to graduate. I enjoyed seeing local aged-care providers at the launch to welcome this new facility. A TAFE investment such as this is vote of confidence in the future of TAFE in Moss Vale as well as the future of the aged-care sector in our region. As a result of our ageing population, the aged-care sector is experiencing rapid growth. Consequently, the private sector would do well to use this facility for staff training. As I said, representatives were present at the launch of the new facility. The Southern Highlands, the Southern Tablelands and now the southern uplands are coming into their own. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals will continue to support this magnificent region and deliver the quality of life and the job and growth opportunities that its people deserve.

COFFS HARBOUR SHOWGROUND

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:21): I have raised this issue before in this House. The history of the issue concerns the Coffs Harbour Show Society, starting from when then Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services Andrew Stoner got rid of the administration by sacking the administrator and putting in place a trust whilst at the same time, unbeknownst to me, handing over the caravan park next to the showground to North Coast Holiday Parks and campgrounds. This meant the showground lost an income stream and was restricted in how it could make money. The show society is keeping its head above water but now the chairman of the trust, John Clark, lives on the Gold Coast, which means the trust cannot muster a full contingent.

As rural and regional members of this place would understand, show societies these days find it pretty hard to make a dollar out of a show. The Coffs Harbour Show Society, which was established more than 100 years ago, last year showed a deficit in its dealings with the trust of more than \$16,700. Since that time, it has repaid

\$11,503. Unfortunately, it seems that the chairman does not realise that the trust is known as the "Coffs Harbour Showground and Recreation Reserve Trust". It is not possible to have a showground without a show society, and now a Queensland private firm the chairman has an interest in has brought court proceedings against the show society. Both the trust and the show society are volunteer bodies, and the chairman is suing the society for the deficit of \$5,267. This matter goes to court tomorrow. To me it is bizarre that someone can, without the initial knowledge of the society, initiate court proceedings against a volunteer society that thus far has repaid \$11,503.

Some of that money owed is rent that they are paying for an office on a regular basis—\$578 and \$398—but it is quite bizarre that this can happen. I believe that if you are a chairman of a trust living in another State you should not even be in the trust, and especially not as chairman, and you should not be influencing that trust to the extent that an action is taken against a voluntary body, which is the show society that runs the show, because it owes \$16,000 initially, which is now down to \$5,000. It is pathetic. I have to question the judgement of the chairman of the trust and those trustees—and there are a number who support him. Other trustees have said to bring the issue to me. I have been trying to negotiate a roundtable meeting with the show society board committee and the trust. That has been resisted by the chairman. But I believe that we could sit down around the table and agree on a way to go about this.

Returning to the original handover of the caravan park that gave an income to the trust, I went to North Coast Holiday Parks—which has now changed its name to Reflections Holiday Parks—and it told me six months ago that a profit share was going to come back through the trust. That has not happened because a large part of the showground was taken by the caravan park under a gazettal. The gazettal was then altered because North Coast Holiday Parks knocked down an amenities block, which it had no right to do—and I blame Andrew Stoner, who was then the Minister responsible for lands, for allowing it to do that. I want to see North Coast Holiday Parks, or Reflections Holiday Parks as it is now called, come to a true arrangement with the trust. We have offered the caravan park a lot and we were told it would deliver a lot—it was going to put in a new amenities block et cetera, which would be utilised not only by the show society but by others. It is a mess.

I ask the Minister to have this issue investigated. I ask the Minister to remove the chairman of the trust and have someone local appointed as chairman. I ask the other trustees and the show society to halt this action and to sit down with me and come to an agreement, because the money will be paid. It is not as if the show society is refusing to pay it; it just does not have the assets. The only money the show society makes is out of the show. To me, it has just developed into a farcical situation that needs to be corrected.

LAKE MACQUARIE LANDCARE NETWORK

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (17:27): Tonight I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding work of Lake Macquarie Landcare. Lake Macquarie Landcare is a partnership between the Lake Macquarie Landcare Volunteer Network, Lake Macquarie City Council and more than 200 community-based Landcare groups in the area. Most groups are small, consisting of one or two people, while some have more than 20 volunteers in their group. The success of the Landcare model is due in part to its bottom-up philosophy. A Landcare group usually starts when community members with common objectives notice a local environmental issue that needs to be resolved and they connect to make it happen.

Groups set their own agendas, work on their projects as often as they like, and choose their own sites. Groups can apply for funding from a range of sources to support their work, including from local, State and Federal government and Landcare Australia. Today I will focus on the hands-on work these dynamic local groups provide to the local community. Each group is individually involved in the ecological restoration and sustainable management of land, water, flora and fauna in my electorate of Charlestown. The members of Landcare groups are passionate—they want to pass on a healthier natural environment to future generations.

The Charlestown electorate is a diverse region with natural parks, forests, wetlands, coastal land and seascapes. We are an electorate that relies on the work of Landcare groups to protect our lands and waterways. Unfortunately, mining degradation and the spread of urban and industrial centres along the coast and the hinterland has had a significant impact on the natural environment. Landcare groups work hard to maintain and preserve as much as possible of the natural environment, whilst assisting land users at all levels to do all in their power to maintain an environment that will sustain the Charlestown community well into the future.

The groups within this network actively work to address natural area degradation in their local bushland, beach, creek or wetlands. These groups include: Mt Hutton Landcare, Redhead Bluff Landcare, Redhead Eco Regenerators, Tathra Landcare Kotara, Warners Bay Landcare, Burwood Colliery Landcare Group, Dudley Bluff Landcare, Fern Creek Gully Landcare, Flaggy Creek Landcare, Pit Pony Paddock Landcare, Kenibea Landcare, Scrubby Creek Landcare, Stobbs Creek Landcare and the Greater Charlestown Sustainable Neighbourhood Group, just to name a few.

I am lucky enough to have met a lot of the volunteers from each of these groups. Fern Creek Gully Landcare Group, as an example, is currently undertaking bush regeneration works in Dudley. A decade of Landcare action in Fern Creek Gully has converted a small mining-degraded, weed-infested site into a thriving rainforest. The Landcare group was formed in 2003 and its original objectives have been to eliminate the bitou bush, lantana, trad and other weeds from the creek line, gully and adjoining slopes and to re-establish rainforest flora that is consistent with the littoral and temperate species that may have existed on the site before coalmining began in the area.

Coalmining commenced in the area in the 1920s and the spotted gum and blackbutt canopy with rainforest understorey was largely destroyed. Except for one or two blackbutts—which may be more than 100 years old—the current eucalyptus canopy's regrowth is probably only 50 to 70 years old. Coalmining ceased in the 1940s and left the soil profile seriously disturbed. In some places on the site the soil at the time of replanting in 2005 was little more than mine tailings. Originally, the rainforest would have been extensive below the cliff line, which faces east and southeast, providing shade from the western sun and run-off from rainfall. This rainforest was almost totally eradicated by coalmining. Landcare volunteers have been working extremely hard to restore the rainforest back to its former glory.

This group of land carers has rehabilitated something which can live for a thousand years, which is an incredible achievement. I am pleased to have seen it a couple of times. The rainforest's life cycle requires a commitment that is passed on from generation to generation. To ensure this work is maintained, the group is always looking for new volunteers. They are also seeking support from the New South Wales Government, and I have written to the Minister seeking funds for the group to rehabilitate further degraded lands. Local Landcare groups are a vital part of our community. From its humble beginnings in 1985 as an initiative of the late great Joan Kirner—the then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in Victoria—to encourage a sustainable, integrated approach to agriculture and environmental management through local community groups, the Landcare movement has become the biggest environmental management movement in the country, and I applaud its work.

PLASTIC BAG POLLUTION

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:32): My electorate and electorates right across the North Coast are very much in sync with their environment. A main concern on the North Coast is the widespread use of plastic bags and the impact they have on our environment when they are discarded and break down. We know that plastic bags pollute our land and water. They are so lightweight they can travel long distances by wind and water. They litter our landscapes, get caught in fences and trees, float around in waterways, and can eventually make their way into the world's oceans.

The accumulation of plastic products in the environment adversely affects wildlife, wildlife habitat and humans. Plastic bags can choke or poison fish, animals and birds. Marine wildlife is particularly vulnerable. When seabirds, sea mammals or fish ingest plastic particles, blocking of the gut is likely to harm or even kill the organism. Approximately 100,000 sea turtles and other marine animals die every year because they either mistake the bags for food or get strangled in them. Plastic buried deep in landfills can leach harmful chemicals that spread into groundwater. Plastic also affects human health. Toxic chemicals leach out of plastic and are found in the blood and tissue of nearly all of us. Exposure to them is linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption and other ailments.

The manufacture of plastic—as well as its destruction by incineration—pollutes air, land and water and exposes workers to toxic chemicals, including carcinogens. Synthetic plastic does not biodegrade. It just sits and accumulates in landfills or pollutes the environment. Knowing all this, why do we use them? Because they are durable, low cost, water resistant, lightweight and convenient and for a number of other reasons. We also know that they are flimsy and do not sit as well as either paper or cloth, in addition to being a hazard to wildlife if they are not disposed of properly. Major supermarkets will ban the use of single-use plastic bags from July, and whilst this progressive move is welcomed I would ask that consideration be given to running an education program on the North Coast to ensure a smooth transition.

I have in my electorate two conservation champions in Cate McQuillen and Hewey Eustace, who are ideally placed to introduce a pilot education program to transition from the use of plastic bags to using something more sustainable. Cate and Hewey are better known to residents of the Northern Rivers by their alter egos, Dirtgirl and Scrapboy. Cate and Hewey are passionate about where they live and the environment they live in. They love teaching people how to live sustainably and how to improve their natural environment. Therefore, they created Dirtgirl, an animated character whose message is about growing good food, sustainability and recycling. Dirtgirl has been an enormous success in educating our kids about how to respect the environment.

While the message is focused on teaching our children, it has been picked up also by communities across the Northern Rivers. A few years ago, with support from the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Waste

Less, Recycle More program Compost ROcks, Cate and Hewey were awarded a \$303,000 New South Wales Government grant for a project designed to motivate more families in New South Wales to get grubby outside with recycled organics diverted from landfill. The project involved the establishment of a Compost Academy to encourage the householder to find multiple uses for compost as well as the development of a toolkit for all local councils in New South Wales to distribute free through their environmental and sustainability education programs.

Dirtgirlworld has proven to be a wonderful environmental program and has been recognised internationally. *Dirtgirlworld* won an Emmy Award at Cannes in 2013 and an Australian Film Industry award. It was nominated for a British Academy of Film and Television Arts award and the Japan Prize. It also won the Best Kids Song at the 2012 International Songwriting Competition. Cate and Hewey's passion and enthusiasm for educating our communities is boundless and infectious. It is easy to see why kids and communities across the world can relate to them and why we have such wonderful waste reduction programs in the Northern Rivers. We are very fortunate to have Cate and Hewey living in our community, and I encourage the New South Wales Government to utilise Cate and Hewey's expertise and experience to assist our communities in making a smooth transition from using plastic bags to using something more considerate of our environment.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:36): I thank the member for Clarence for raising the use of plastic bags in his electorate and across the North Coast. We must consider the use of plastic bags as it is a major issue throughout New South Wales. On my website there is a petition that talks about the need to refuse and reuse and about potentially banning plastic bags, which are killing our marine life. Australians use around 10 million plastic bags a day. Together we can fight this problem and work towards either banning or restricting the use of plastic bags across New South Wales. I have always thought we need an education campaign on the proper use and re-use of plastic bags. An initiative similar to MobileMuster, which recycles mobile phones, could be introduced in supermarkets and shopping centres to reduce plastics across New South Wales.

OATLEY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:38): The Community Building Partnership grants recently announced for my electorate total \$300,000 for a total of 13 projects. As part of its 2017 Community Building Partnership program, the New South Wales Government has committed funds for new community infrastructure projects that will enhance much-needed local facilities. I am very pleased to receive this State Government funding. The funding aims to create more vibrant and inclusive communities. It will deliver positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes. More importantly, this grassroots Community Building Partnership grant funding will directly benefit my community and electorates all over New South Wales. The funding will deliver vital infrastructure and help to pay for much-needed improvements such as upgrades to schools, not-for-profit organisations, church groups, public spaces and much more. I congratulate all the organisations that were successful in their applications. I am pleased that this funding will help community groups across my electorate to make a positive difference in the local area.

I will detail some of the community groups that were successful in receiving Community Building Partnership funding. Georges River Council received \$22,500 for playground upgrades and solar lighting at Boundary Reserve, Peakhurst. The project is the result of a doorknocking campaign conducted about six months ago. Many local families living around Mortdale who identified a need to upgrade Boundary Reserve lobbied the council and applied for much-needed funding. The Kingsway Scout Group received \$8,000 in a joint grant, which my colleague the member for Kogarah assisted in obtaining. The funding will be spent on upgrading a kitchen. The Chinese Australian Services Society, which is located on Boundary Road at Peakhurst, will receive \$18,000 to build a sensory garden for children and young people with disabilities.

The Peakhurst Scout Group will receive \$8,000 for emergency lighting and repairs to doors and windows, which are required urgently. It is a great honour to be able to deliver funding for those repairs. The Penshurst Presbyterian Church will receive \$10,000 for much-needed air conditioning in the church and church hall. That is a great win for the parishioners. Learning Links is one of many organisations that I have helped to obtain funding under the Community Building Partnership grants program. This year it will receive \$24,750 for the construction of an accessible bathroom facility. The 3Bridges Community group will receive \$25,000, which is much needed for a new kitchen at the Penshurst Community Kitchen. Many schools have also received funding through the Community Building Partnership program this year. That is great news for local schools.

Narwee Public School received \$20,000 to upgrade its library; Hurstville South Public School received \$40,000 to upgrade its playground; and Oatley West Public School will receive \$66,341 to extend its outdoor learning space to cater for the growing school population. That includes shade structures and much more. I have attended many parents and citizens meetings at the school over the years. Peakhurst High School will receive \$35,000 for lighting and sound equipment for its new school hall. Riverwood and Punchbowl Anglican Church will also receive funding for its outdoor furniture and a shade structure. Lugarno Public School will receive \$8,000 to install a shade structure and sails. This is a great win for our local community. I thank the hardworking

community groups that have received much-needed funding in the 2017 Community Building Partnership grants program.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin): Before calling on the member for Hornsby, I welcome the visitors in the public gallery. The House is considering private members' statements, which relate to a member's electorate or constituents. I understand that our visitors are particularly interested in the private member's statement of the member for Prospect. If he seeks the call, he will be invited to make a contribution after the member for Hornsby.

Private Members' Statements

BEROWRA ROTARY CLUB OF BEROWRA

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (17:43): Today I acknowledge one of the most dedicated community groups in Hornsby, the Rotary Club of Berowra. For 41 years, the club has been serving our community with distinction. Its members selflessly give their time to help those less fortunate and give young people a chance to thrive and to achieve great things. They also help to make Hornsby the wonderful place we love. Berowra Rotarians are truly dedicated individuals. Most of the Rotary Club of Berowra members have been involved in the club for the past 20 years—some even longer. However, this small group of volunteers has been able to make a huge difference.

Most notably, they hold a plant stall in the lead-up to Mother's Day and Father's Day each year. The stall raises a whopping \$6,000 every year. They do not do it without a little community assistance though. The Berowra Rovers pitch in and help with the heavy lifting every year. It takes pretty bad weather to stop the Berowra Rotary team. The stall has been cancelled only twice in the past 20 years. Every cent of the money raised at this year's event goes back to the Hornsby community. I thank all those volunteers for their amazing work. I acknowledge their support of young people. Over the years they have supported a number of different programs which focus on the development of the youth of the Hornsby shire. This includes an inbound and outbound Rotary Youth Exchange. This program allows students to live abroad for up to 12 months. They also sponsor students to come to Sydney to experience the Australian way of life.

They have sponsored the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards for those aged 18 to 26. The winners of these awards have the opportunity to attend a one-week training seminar to help them develop their leadership skills. Those skills can then be used in the workplace or given back to the community, as the Rotarian values suggest. They sponsor individual citizenship prizes at a number of local schools in the area—something that I do. It is a chance to acknowledge these special students at end-of-year celebrations. The 2017 award recipients were Lucy Elder at Asquith Public School; Neve Rapsey and Sam Young at Berowra Public School; Samara Barrett at Brooklyn Public School; Daisy Lewis and Harvey Dickerson at Cowan Public School; Grace Penning at Mount Colah Public School; Darcy Streek-Warren at Mount Kuring-gai Public School; and Abby Wiswell and Arianna Brown at Wideview Public School.

As well as working with young people, the Rotary Club of Berowra has for many years supported the BowelCare campaign. This raises awareness of the need for early detection of bowel cancer. Berowra Rotarians also get up bright and early for Daffodil Day every year and stand on Berowra station to raise money for cancer research. In the past they have also acknowledged local employees who are going the extra mile in their workplace through the Pride of Workmanship Awards, which is a chance to say "a job well done" to those who work hard in our community. We also see the Rotarians at community events such as the Berowra Woodchopping Festival. It is hard to keep a good Rotarian away from lending a hand at a local event.

It is astounding that all of this is done by just a small group of members. After successfully leading the club for three years the great Tom Borg recently stepped down as president. Rich Moore and Trevor Bailey will share the role in the future. Rich Moore presently serves as foundation director, while Trevor Bailey has been involved with this club for some 30 years. He is a true community hero. In July, Peggy Sanders will be stepping up from her role as public relations and bulletin editor to take on the role of president. I must not forget the amazing Jeanette Bakker and Jan Childs. Jeanette has been looking after the books while Jan is an event organiser extraordinaire. Last year Jan did an amazing job organising the fortieth birthday celebrations, which I was pleased to attend. It was great to see two founding members, Albert Van Huissteden and John McKenna, in attendance.

Recently the members of the club were saddened by the passing of committee member Allan Smith. Allan was an integral member of Berowra Rotary for many years. I offer sincere condolences to the Smith family and in particular to Allan's wife, Pat. I am pleased to hear that the club will soon be inducting Allan's wife, Pat,

into the Rotary Club of Berowra family. The club recently heard from former member Professor Bill Gibson, a world expert in cochlear implant surgery. His work has changed the lives of so many and they are proud to count him as a former member. Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons also serves as an honorary member.

It is volunteers such as these who make the fabric of our community so rich. They have not just been working on the committee for one or two years; they have been working for five or 10 years, or more than 20 years. Their dedication is without question, and I thank them for their amazing service. I encourage any local residents who may be considering volunteer work to attend one of the Rotary Club of Berowra meetings. They will be giving back to the community and helping to make Hornsby shire a better place. I thank all members, both past and present, for their hard work, dedication and sacrifice. They are what makes our community so special.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:48): I thank the member for Hornsby for his wonderful story about the Rotary Club of Berowra. On behalf of this House I thank all the members of that club for 41 years of service to the local community. I thank them for their efforts in making a real difference—by raising much-needed funding, for their service to the community and for supporting young people through the Rotary Youth Exchange. They are members of only one of 34,000 clubs worldwide which totals more than 1.2 million members. The Rotarian motto is "Service above self". The first Rotary Club was formed in 1905 by Paul Harris in Chicago, the United States of America. I thank the Rotary Club of Berowra and the good member for Hornsby.

PROSPECT ELECTORATE WASTE INCINERATOR

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:49): If we ever needed proof that this Government was contemptuous towards the people of Western Sydney we should look no further than at the proposal to build a toxic garbage incinerator at Eastern Creek, bordering the electorate of Prospect. This unsafe facility will be located practically on the doorstep of homes, workplaces and sports and recreational facilities of thousands of people in Western Sydney. It will also be within a few kilometres of three different Western Sydney schools. If this proposed facility is built, it will be the largest energy from waste power plant in the world. It will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I remind the House that the original proposal, before it was downsized, was twice that size—the 552,500 tonnes of residual waste would have been 1.35 million tonnes. For the Berejiklian Government the largest and most toxic garbage incinerator in the world is a compromise measure.

Thousands of tonnes of fumes will be ejected into the atmosphere by two 100 metre-high stacks that will be visible from as far away as the suburbs of Greystanes, Pemulwuy and the Parramatta central business district. According to the October 2017 report of the Environment Protection Agency, the primary emissions from this plant include particulate matter, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen fluoride, carbon monoxide, mercury, cadmium, chromium and arsenic. The particulate matter alone will be terrible for children living nearby, especially those who suffer from asthma. There are three schools and three childcare centres within three kilometres of this site—the nearest is only 820 metres away. There are six retirement villages within a five-kilometre radius of the site.

The output would be terrible for the Prospect Reservoir and the nature reserve, the Western Sydney Parklands, the picnic areas and major tourist attractions such as Wet'n'Wild, Featherdale Wildlife Park and the new Sydney Zoo. The proposed incinerator will pose a risk for children attending those facilities. The report on those carcinogens and mutagens assumes that no hazardous material will make its way into the waste being burned, but there is no way to guarantee that this will be the case. The site will be burning waste from construction and demolition sites, but unless there is 100 per cent certainty that the remains of a demolished building do not contain asbestos, the fumes should not be sent into the atmosphere above primary schools and into the lungs of our children. But I have been speaking only of the fumes, which will be a portion of the final product.

The bulk of the result will be packed ash that is so toxic and so long lasting that the only option is to bury it in concrete, or ship it to Western Australia and put it into disused mines. Our descendants will be dealing with this for generations to come. It will be this Government's legacy, if the proposal goes ahead. As the State Government is considering this proposal it is worth asking, "Who is this garbage incinerator for? What is the benefit to the hardworking families of Eastern Creek, Pemulwuy, Greystanes, Blacktown, Prospect and Bungarribee?" The incinerator's owner, The Next Generation NSW—also known as Dial A Dump—will argue that it creates jobs for Western Sydney locals. Modelling shows that it will create 55 jobs. A Bunnings warehouse in the same spot would create many more jobs than that without adding any health effects.

There is no benefit for the three schools within three kilometres of the site. There is no benefit for the families and children living 800 metres from the site. I have a final question. What is the benefit of this incinerator to the Berejiklian Government?" I can answer that because I have the evidence. The evidence shows that Mr Ian Malouf, on behalf of Dial A Dump, made regular contributions to the Liberal Party. That is the party that is benefiting from this proposal. Thousands upon thousands of dollars have been donated to the Liberal Party but there is no benefit for the people of Western Sydney. The people of Western Sydney know that they deserve better

than this toxic proposal from this toxic Berejiklian Government. Western Sydney families are not second-class citizens. They deserve better than to have a trash incinerator built in their community. It is time that the 100,000 people who live within five kilometres of this site and the 300,000 people who live within 10 kilometres of this site are heard and this incinerator is stopped.

CATHERINE MCAULEY WESTMEAD OPEN DAY SYDNEY MARONITE COMMUNITY

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (17:54): Catherine McAuley Westmead is one of Parramatta's many schools. It is more than a school; it is a community. I look forward to attending the upcoming Catherine McAuley Westmead annual Opening School Mass. The school was first opened in 1966 by the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta and it has upheld the opening of the school year mass tradition for more than 50 years. During this time Catherine McAuley Westmead has educated thousands of young women in Westmead and Parramatta, with many of them making a difference in the world.

School Principal Ms Laetitia Richmond will lead the school community in this celebration and will be joined by School Chaplain Father Walter Fogarty who will celebrate the mass; school captains, Kate Brown and Zainah Reshty; more than 100 staff; more than 1,160 students ranging from years 7 to 12; the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta Congregation Leader Sister Mary-Louise Petro; Executive Director of the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta Mr Gregory Whitby; former school principals; principals from surrounding schools; special guests; and parents and friends. At the conclusion of the mass the student representative council, Mercy in Action Group, house leaders and liturgy leaders will be commissioned.

Catherine McAuley Westmead has a strong tradition of female leadership and encourages all its students to become leaders. The school strives to provide opportunities for students to develop their confidence and exercise their skills in leadership roles. New staff joining the school for the 2018 school year will be inducted and the new year 7 students will receive a school *Bible*. The 208 year 7 students who have joined the school this year have been drawn from many surrounding suburbs and the school continues to be in high demand as the school of choice for local parents. The school will open its doors to all in the local community at its open evening, which will be held on Tuesday, 13 March 2018. It is always an honour to see local schools such as Catherine McAuley Westmead show their dedication and commitment to equipping our students with the skills they need to make a difference to the world in which we live.

I pay tribute to our Australian Maronite community and its contribution to Australia. Parramatta is home to a strong Australian-Lebanese community. Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral in Harris Park is a spiritual beacon in Western Sydney which is led by Father Tony Sarkis. Similarly, the Maronite College of the Holy Family, led by Principal Sister Dr Margaret Ghosn, provides excellent education in academia, community leadership and Maronite Catholic values. Last weekend I was privileged to join the Maronite community at the St Maroun's Feast Day celebrations. St Maroun is the patron saint of the Maronite Church and a solemn mass is held on this special occasion. Maronite Catholics from all over Sydney joined the celebrations hosted by Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia; and Reverend Father Elie Nakhoul, Dean of St Maroun's Cathedral.

This year's event also marked the special welcoming of the ex-ossibus relics of St Maroun for the first time in Australia. St Maroun's relics date back to 410AD and in 1999 were finally returned to the Maronite Church in Lebanon. In 2016 Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay made an official request to have part of the relics of St Maroun situated in the Maronite Eparchy of Australia. With his blessing and guidance, the Maronite Catholic Society worked tirelessly to organise the arrival of the relics in Australia. The presence in Australia of the relics of St Maroun, father of the Maronite Church, is a significant event and Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay said their presence in Australia marks a new chapter in the history and life of our Maronite community in Australia, reconnecting the community to its spiritual roots and strong faith in God.

I recognise Monsignor Marcelino Youssef, Vicar General of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia; Father Elie Nakhoul, Dean of St Maroun's Cathedral; and Mr Bakhos Georges, President of the Maronite Catholic Society; reverend fathers and sisters; parishioners and dignitaries who attended this important occasion. It is always a pleasure to recognise the large and successful Australian Maronite community. It is a strong and proud community that continues to be faithful to its Maronite values, traditions and spirituality. I acknowledge the member for Lismore is in the Chamber, who is a member of the Maronite community.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:59): It would be wrong of me not to say a few words on this matter as my wife is a Maronite. I acknowledge the great work of the member for Parramatta and the wonderful contribution that Maronite Catholics have provided not only to Sydney and New South Wales but also to Australia over many decades. I acknowledge the great service that Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay has provided Maronites

at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, St Charbel Church and beyond. I acknowledge the wonderful service provided by people in Maronite communities across New South Wales, including the president of the Maronite Catholic Society, Mr Georges, and many others in his team. At a recent book launch, I was able to better understand the history of the Maronite community in Sydney. I acknowledge my good friend Peter Khoury, who lives in my electorate.

AUSTRALIAN FUTSAL PLAYER KEEA PARRISH

TRIBUTE TO ALLEN FRASER RAMSEY

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (18:01): I take this opportunity to recognise a local sporting champion from my electorate. At 17 years old, Keea Parrish has been selected for the women's under-20s Australian futsal team. She recently competed in the Australian national titles for New South Wales, where her team was successful. Keea has competed in tournaments in Brazil and China, but this will certainly be her greatest achievement. The Youth Women's Futsal World Cup will take place in June this year. It is wonderful to see Keea acknowledged in this important way. I wish her and her team all the best in the competition.

This afternoon, the member for Clarence, and Parliamentary Secretary recognised the passing of Fraser Ramsey. I support his community recognition statement [CRS] and will also recognise Allen Fraser Ramsey, known as Fraser Ramsey. He was a pioneer, a legend and a well-respected member of the Bonalbo community and beyond. He died on Saturday 10 February 2018, aged 88 years, at St Michael's Residential Aged Care home in Casino, where he spent his last month. He is survived by his wife Laurene, their children Allen, Helen, Susan and Elizabeth, and his beloved border collie dog Judge Judy.

Fraser was born at Bonalbo and educated at Bonalbo school. Due to his father's death in 1946 he spent only one year at Farrer Memorial school. He then began working at Tabulam for his uncle Allen Ramsey and at Bottle Creek for Alan Johnston. In 1947, Fraser's mother purchased a dairy farm at Bottle Creek. Then in 1953, Lance Nicholls encouraged Fraser to join the auctioneering business of Tomkinson and Nicholls at Bonalbo. In the same year, Fraser married Laurene. In 1960, Fraser and Laurene moved to Casino with their family. It was in 1966 when I joined the Rural Bank that I started to get to know them. At that time, Fraser was working at Dalgetys but later started his own business in 1968. I joined the industry in 1970. I came to appreciate that Fraser was heavily involved in the primary industry and the stock horse industry. Fraser went on to become one of the best all-round auctioneers in Casino and has been succeeded by his son, Allen.

Fraser was a pioneer, a legend and a well-respected, thorough gentleman. He was always humorous and a little bit cheeky at times. He not only fully understood and knew the history of the area but also knew practically every family in the Northern Rivers and across Australia. Fraser always enjoyed his work and always had a story to tell. Upon retirement, Fraser began competing with his dogs at working dog trials. As the member for Clarence mentioned in his CRS, on 8 April 2017 and in recognition of Fraser's achievements, he was chosen to unveil a bronze sculpture of a working dog in the Patrick McNamee Anzac Memorial Park at Bonalbo.

Fraser's wonderful contribution to the horse industry, especially the Australian Stock Horse Society, the Bonalbo Show Society, the NSW Working Stock Dog Association, the Stock and Station Agents Association, Rural Industries and campdrafting is unequalled. Fraser was always a proud son of Bonalbo, his beloved area west of the range. Above all, Fraser was a dedicated family man who loved and was always very proud of his family including his wife, Laurene, his children and especially Allen, who has continued Ramsey and Bulmer.

In 2001 I had the honour of launching a book for Helen Trustum, *Sale-O Sale-O*, about the history of livestock auctioneers, carriers, buyers, drovers and industry on the North Coast. Another great tribute to Fraser was the fact that it was his photo that was featured on the front cover of the book. Fraser was so well respected that there was not one person who would have disagreed with him being on the front cover of the book. I recognise Fraser's contribution not only to all of the industries to which I have referred but also, just as importantly, to his family. He was a person dedicated to the area. I send my condolences to his family, and I will attend his funeral in Casino tomorrow. Vale Fraser Ramsey.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:06): I refer to renewable energy and the revolution happening in the electorate of Newtown, where it appears that we are way ahead of the game. On Wilson Street, Newtown, STUCCO Housing Co-operative became one of the first in Australia to install a shared solar and battery storage system. This is the first multi-unit residence to achieve a unified solar panel and battery network in Australia. It is a phenomenal achievement. I urge the Minister for Energy and Utilities and the Minister for Housing, or their staff, to look into what has been achieved by this amazing student housing co-operative in leading the solar and the renewable energy revolution. It is wonderful to see. It is not only about having huge environmental benefits

but it also involves 30 kilowatts of solar panels and 36 batteries, and it now provides 80 per cent of residents' energy needs, saving them each approximately \$35 a month.

The suburb of Newtown has seen a massive spike in solar installation in 2017, and the numbers continue to grow. Late last year we saw more than 1,000 Newtown locals converge on Camperdown Memorial Rest Park to protest the Adani coalmine. In the electorate of Newtown, we understand the need to transition from dirty coal to embrace the renewables revolution, and it is time for the rest of New South Wales to catch up. It is cheaper to build a new wind or solar power station than it is to build a coal-fired power station. As those ageing coal-fired stations peg out in coming years, they will not be replaced by new coal-fired power stations—not for reasons of ideology but because it is cheaper and makes more sense to build a renewable energy plant.

South Australia, where I am from, now has the world's largest battery storage facility. It is making a shift forward, as it is also building 50,000 small-scale solar and battery systems to provide a stable power source to the grid. Installation will be free, funded by selling power. People living in public housing will be the first households to receive free solar energy systems. This is something we in New South Wales should look at. If we look at other parts of the world, the city of Shenzhen in China has 100 per cent electric buses and China is a global leader in renewable energy. Last year China installed enough solar to power every home in Australia and New Zealand combined. China is leading the way in the shift towards electric cars. We need to recognise that, according to the International Energy Agency, the world will install 70,000 solar panels every hour over the next five years. Solar is now the fastest growing source of new power generation. France has announced that it will close all its coal-fired power plants by 2021. In Norway, 52 per cent of cars are already electric.

The Netherlands powers all its trains by wind power. New Zealand already derives 84 per cent of its energy from renewable sources. In America, many cities are powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. Dozens more are in the process of transitioning to a renewable and clean energy future, which is something that New South Wales should step up to. In California, more than 500,000 people are employed in the clean energy sector alone, and the entire State is transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy. Here in Australia we are sitting on just 16 per cent. But in Australia we have ideologically blinded buffoons in Canberra who dictate policy.

Mr Daryl Maguire: That is unparliamentary.

Ms JENNY LEONG: To refer to someone in another Parliament as a "buffoon"? It is okay, I think.

Mr Daryl Maguire: It is unparliamentary.

Ms JENNY LEONG: I withdraw the term "buffoon" and say that ideologically driven people in Canberra, who have their heads in the sand, are refusing to accept the challenge and have done all they can to stop the renewable energy revolution. Nevertheless, investment in renewable energy is surging to record highs. While Liberal governments refuse to face up to reality and continue to make jokes and lighthearted comments about coal, local communities are taking matters into their own hands. Byron Bay has the world's first solar-powered train. The Australian Capital Territory has set a target of 100 per cent renewable energy in the next two years. In Melbourne there is a plan to reach zero emissions by 2020. In Newtown, we have solar-powered beer. Cheers to that!

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:11): I thank the member for Newtown for her private member's statement. The New South Wales Government values renewable sources of energy and clean energy. It was certainly interesting to hear about the experiences of some people in Newtown who are able to save \$35 a month by the application of renewable energy solutions. It is important for renewable energy measures to be affordable or inexpensive. When there are renewable energy sources that combine with battery storage and are affordable, that type of technology should be pursued; but affordability is important and should be included in the equation. There is no doubt that innovation in energy generation should be embraced, but a balance must be maintained between reliability, affordability and sustainability. That is what the Government is endeavouring to do.

WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (18:12): The Government's Community Building Partnership program has been very successful. This year the electorate of Wagga Wagga received some \$300,000 to partner with community groups and others to improve sporting facilities and amenity of the community. The Wagga Wagga and district football association and Wagga Rugby League Inc. applied for \$18,000 to meet the cost of portable goals at Rawlings Park. I am pleased to inform the House that the application was successful. McDonalds Park is the premier park in my electorate. It has been developed in partnership with the Wagga Wagga City Council and Wagga Rugby League Inc. An application was made for funds to install irrigation and turf and to erect permanent fencing at the sportsground, and \$15,000 was allocated towards meeting the cost of that project.

Previously I have referred to refurbishment of the community hub in Lockhart. An allocation of \$25,000 was allocated to that project. Lockhart has a fantastic museum. Sadly, it was subjected to devastating floods that threatened to destroy historical documentation of the heritage of the community. At the museum committee's meeting in 2012, I urged the committee to have the museum moved. Through funding and grants provided by the Liberal-Nationals Government, the museum was lifted to above flood height. The committee applied to purchase the building next door—a Ford dealership. That building was owned by a former mayor of Lockhart, who sadly has passed away. The committee has bought the building and begun to refurbish it.

A \$25,024 grant was awarded to the progress association in partnership with the museum to ensure that it could obtain the building so that machinery and artefacts could be displayed in it. I understand they will build a coffee shop to improve on the existing tourism facilities in the wonderful town of The Rock and preserve its important agricultural history. I expect that more applications will be made, but this is a fantastic project for Lockhart. I suggest that people who are reading this in *Hansard* take the opportunity to visit the verandah town and see the investment that has been made in partnership with Lockhart Shire Council, the museum committee and the progress association to bring about this fantastic project. I can say that former member of this place the Hon. Tim Fischer has made extensive donations to the museum. Last week, when I was there, he donated his Ford 8600 tractor, which is a wonderful addition. Tim Fischer is much loved.

The Wagga City Aero Club, which goes to a great deal of trouble to attract people from all over Australia to fly-ins and recreational events, received \$22,648 to improve its amenities and enhance the fantastic tourism facility that it runs at Wagga Wagga Airport. Also in this round of grants the Tarcutta Transport and Farming Museum received \$40,000. A shed has already been built on the land. The money will be used to help connect important water, sewerage and electricity services. Tarcutta is the centre point between Melbourne and Sydney on the Hume Highway and as such it is a good place for an Australian trucking museum. Tarcutta has a proud history in the trucking industry and I am delighted that the museum has received \$40,000.

The Wagga Wagga Croquet Club has received \$4,000 to replace its courts and the Wagga Women's Health Centre has received \$15,000 to replace the roof on its newly purchased building for which the community raised more than \$700,000. The Leisure Company has received \$15,000 also for a new roof on the building it purchased with the support of the community. Finally, the Lake Albert Pony Club has received \$4,000 to build a new amenities block. These are great outcomes for the community of Wagga Wagga. I thank the Liberal-Nationals Government and the Community Building Partnership grants program.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:17): Full of anguish, despair and hopelessness, Lucy recently contacted my office over the treatment she has received from the insurance company that is responsible for managing her workers compensation claim. Four years ago Lucy suffered a workplace injury. Her shoulder gave way due to repetitive lifting and she was unable to return to her pre-injury duties. She underwent surgery and attended weekly physiotherapy appointments in an effort to improve. Lucy was committed to pursuing any avenue that would lead to her recovery. All she wanted to do was return to her job that she enjoyed enormously.

The recovery was repetitive and tiring, but Lucy ensured that she never missed an appointment and she completed all the additional exercises. Her goal was to return to work, and Lucy was certain she would achieve that; nothing would stand in her way. But, in early 2017, Lucy received the devastating news that nobody wants to hear. She had cancer. The diagnosis was a blow to Lucy and her young family. They had not fully recovered from the issues arising from her workplace injury. Now they had another fight on their hands.

Naturally, Lucy threw all her energy into her cancer treatment. She attended many appointments with specialists and doctors, had stints in hospital and underwent chemotherapy. At the same time, she was trying to keep her family happy. She wanted to assure them that everything would be okay. Understandably, during this time Lucy's attendance at her physiotherapy appointments was not the high priority it had once been. Her new priority was—quite simply—saving her life. She no longer had the energy to attend her weekly physiotherapy appointments, due in no small part to her chemotherapy and other treatments. The insurance company managing Lucy's injury began to question her absence, even though she had already explained her cancer. But it was not interested in hearing Lucy's reasoning. It could not understand that her cancer treatment took precedence over her injury-focused physiotherapy appointments.

The insurance company wanted to get her off its books and back to work. It was not interested in the circumstances and believed Lucy's absence from physiotherapy appointments meant her injury had healed and she no longer required them and would be fine to return to work. This was certainly not the case, but it did not stop the insurance company from punishing Lucy. The company reduced Lucy's weekly payments to \$1 and stopped the ongoing funding for treatments required for her injury, such as physiotherapy. The good news is that late last year Lucy overcame her cancer battle. But her new battle with the insurance company has inflicted serious

financial stress on her family. They have had to sell the family home, enforce strict spending habits on their children, and turn to family and friends to find extra money to pay their utility bills.

This is another example of the morally corrupt nature of some insurance companies in the workers compensation scheme. I have been contacted by many constituents who have been treated poorly by their insurer, but it is hard to find an insurer that has acted more poorly than Lucy's. Her case highlights the behaviours of some of these insurance companies and the fact that the workers compensation legislation as it currently stands allows insurance companies to conduct themselves in a manner that is not consistent with the intent and spirit of the legislation. There is no recourse taken against these insurance companies. Lucy came to me seeking some assistance, direction and empathy. Her treatment by her insurer is cruel and incomprehensible. I have taken Lucy's issue up with the Minister for Finance, Services and Property in the hope that he may intervene in this issue to ensure that Lucy is provided with the support and treatment she so desperately requires and deserves. She has had a challenging 12 months and all the insurance company could do now is show some decency and humanity.

WILLIAMTOWN CONTAMINATION

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (18:21): Earlier this week the Government provided a response to a question asked by Labor's shadow health Minister, Walt Secord, late last year in the Legislative Council. In November, Mr Secord requested that the Government conduct an urgent investigation into the possibility of a cancer cluster occurring within the Williamtown red zone. He noted that the Victorian Government had recently conducted a similar investigation concerning Fiskville in regional Victoria, which confirmed a statistically significant increase in cancer in the area. On Tuesday this week, a response by the Hon. Niall Blair, representing the Minister for Health, noted:

NSW Health is currently reviewing statistical analyses of cancer data in the Williamtown area, with the assistance of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer's Environmental Health Expert Advisory Panel.

As the local member of Parliament representing Williamtown in this place, I was relieved to hear that NSW Health was conducting this study, even though I was frustrated that it had taken so long. My community has been asking these serious questions for years now and too often has heard from government agencies that they do not know enough about what the contaminant does. It was left to the impressive investigative journalism of the *Newcastle Herald* and award-winning journalist Carrie Fellner to piece together the facts, which ultimately revealed that over a 15-year period a sparsely populated five-kilometre stretch of Cabbage Tree Road in the red zone had more than 50 confirmed cases of cancer.

As one would imagine, the media reports of a possible cancer cluster were met with horror, combined with a sinking sense of inevitability because these residents have seen what has happened to their loved ones and their neighbours. Since then, they have been waiting for the New South Wales Government and the Commonwealth Government to connect the dots. They live in the area immediately south of the Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] base on land contaminated by the RAAF and have been using water contaminated by Defence for years. They have lost too many people to cancer. As I said, I was relieved to hear about this study by NSW Health, because it might connect the dots and see that these families are offered some support in the form of land buybacks so that they can escape the area they once loved but now fear. I also learned that the statistical area which was being analysed and cross-referenced with data held by Cancer Council NSW was the SA2 census area covering Williamtown, Medowie and Karuah.

Clearly I am not a statistician, but, given everything this community has gone through on top of the contamination—including a recent bushfire that tore through the area, and a whopping big sand mine that last week was given a tick of approval by the Department of Planning and Environment—I would have thought someone in the Government would have taken a closer look. The population spread of the relevant SA2 includes 14,000 people, stretching all the way from Karuah—30 kilometres from the contamination—through Swan Bay to Medowie and finally encompassing Williamtown and Salt Ash. That means more than 11,000 people in that census statistical area live nowhere near Williamtown. In fact, more than 75 per cent of the people studied have nothing to do with the contamination. To make matters worse, Fullerton Cove, which is clearly within the contamination area, was not included in the study area.

I had grave concerns when I heard about this. My parliamentary colleagues Tim Crakanthorp, the member for Newcastle, and Meryl Swanson, the Federal member for Paterson, shared those concerns. We were informed about this process only yesterday morning in a meeting in Parliament House. Just as the Government's response in the Legislative Council on Tuesday indicated, we were led to believe the process was ongoing. It was not. Last night at about 7.00 p.m. we learnt that the study was completed and a determination had already been made. The health department has concluded there is no evidence of a cancer cluster in Williamtown. I do not understand how the Minister, and later the government officials, could come to this conclusion when almost 80 per cent of the people included in the study do not live in Williamtown. The study appears to be meaningless and harmful.

This has caused a firestorm of anger, disbelief and despair among the affected families—and rightly so. However, this is only the most recent thing the Government should be ashamed about. This Government continues to lurch from stuff-up to stuff-up, without the slightest concern for the people living this awful nightmare. Indeed, it shows how low this issue is on the Government's priority list. So my initial relief has once again turned to despair. Today in question time when I asked the Premier whether she stood by the findings of the study, she refused even to acknowledge it. The Premier should start treating these families with some respect.

TRIBUTE TO FREDA MAY COLLISON

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (18:26): It is with sadness that I inform the House of the recent passing of Mrs Freda May Collison of Wambool, Glendonbrook Road, Gresford. Mrs Collison was born on 6 April 1925 and was a matriarchal figure of the Gresford community. She will be sadly missed by many. This well-respected lady worked tirelessly and volunteered for the Gresford community and beyond. As a young girl she attended the Gresford Public School and went on to become the postmistress at the Cross Roads Post Office at Gresford from 1946 to 1961. In 1962 Freda and her husband, Raymond, purchased a property known as Wambool and there they raised their five children. Mrs Collison also dedicated her time to numerous community organisations in the Gresford district. She was a Volunteer Defence Corps World War II plane spotter from 1941 to 1945; a member of the St Anne's Anglican Church—church choir, Sunday schoolteacher and member of the parochial council and vestry—from 1939 to 2010; a member of the Gresford Public School Parents and Citizens Association from 1955 to 1972; and a committee member and secretary of the Gresford District Brownies and Girl Guides Association from 1970 to 2003.

Mrs Collison was also a member of the Country Women's Association of New South Wales. She was also a member of the Newcastle Diocese Mother's Union of Australia from 1974; a president and patron of the Gresford Ladies Bowling Club; a member of the Gresford Community Health Centre Auxiliary Committee from 1984 to 2005; treasurer for six years of the Tocal College, CB Alexander Campus; a member of Gresford Meals on Wheels; a steward of the Gresford District Agricultural Society from 1996 to 2010 and patron; a member of the Gresford Billy Cart Derby Committee from 1998 to 2014; and a foundation member of the Gresford District Historical Museum. What a remarkable record of volunteer work. The dedication and devotion of Mrs Collison to her duties and countless hours served to those community organisations was exemplary.

Mrs Collison was recognised and honoured for that wonderful work in the many awards bestowed on her over the years, including being the 1992 Dungog Shire Citizen of the Year; a certificate of appreciation from Tocal College, CB Alexander Campus, 1992; a certificate of appreciation from the Hunter Regional Committee of Kidsafe NSW for her support at Tocal College field days, 1993; a certificate of appreciation from the then member for Maitland, Mr Peter Blackmore, for her work in the disastrous local fires in 1993 and 1994; a certificate of appreciation from New South Wales Meals on Wheels; a certificate in recognition of 40 years of membership of the Mother's Union Australia, 2014; an Australia Day recognition award, Gresford Community Group, 2003; and a medallion of appreciation for services to Tocal College, CB Alexander Campus, 2001.

In collaboration with her close friend, the late Hazel Hancock, Freda co-authored two books relating to historical aspects of the Gresford community. Her first book was *St. Anne's Anglican Church History 1898-1998*. Her second book, *Gresford on the Paterson River, East Gresford on the Allyn River and surrounding districts history 1829-1999*, took more than eight years to write and publish. Mrs Freda Collison's exemplary service to her community is inspirational and in keeping with the finest tradition of our rural and Australian heritage. She will be sadly missed within the community. Mrs Collison's funeral took place on 7 February 2018 at the Tocal College chapel and was attended by many. Councillor Glenn Wall had the honour of delivering Freda's eulogy, in which he said:

To clearly understand what Freda's best attributes were is simple. All one has to do is define Faith, Family, Commitment and Dedication.

I too was honoured to contribute to the funeral service with a condolence message, which read:

It was with great sadness with which I heard the news of the passing of Mrs Freda Collison. Freda represented the civic, country virtues of life-long giving to one's community. Our local Gresford community, and beyond, were made all the better for her service to us all.

Vale, Freda Collison.

WORKERS COMPENSATIONS SCHEME

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:31): This is Cory's story. Imagine being unable to sit or stand upright for more than an hour a day. The rest of your waking hours are spent laying on your bed, unable to get up to go to the toilet or even lift your head to answer a phone call. This existence robs you of any independence you once had. You become a shell of your former self. This is the life experience of a constituent of mine who spoke

with me recently. His existence has been completely diminished because of his workplace injury. He lives in constant pain. This affects his quality of life.

Because of his injury and the severe pain and suffering that it has inflicted on him, most of the time Cory is confined to his bed. He is unable to socialise. He is unable to attend significant family events. He is unable to attend his grandchildren's sporting matches and misses wonderful moments such as their first day of school and so on. He was even unable to attend the funeral of his mother-in-law because he simply could not get out of bed. This man is not putting it on or seeking to fox the system. A person does not make those kinds of life decisions if they are pretending to have a significant injury. Cory has a significant injury. In fact, on some days Cory is forced to urinate and defecate in his own bed because he cannot get out of bed to go to the toilet. He then has to remain in his own filth until the pain subsides and he gets feeling back in his legs.

Given the condition Cory is in, I would have thought he would be safe from the changes to the workers compensation scheme announced in 2012—but he is not. In December 2017 Cory's weekly payments were cut off. Under the legislation, he did not meet the whole person impairment threshold because he had been assessed with a whole person impairment of 20 per cent. To stay on the scheme he needed to be assessed as having an impairment of more than 20 per cent. Despite the fact that his legs do not work on some days, despite the fact that he cannot stand or sit upright for more than an hour, and despite the fact that he has missed so much of his life and experiences the inhumane conditions of sometimes lying in his own filth, Cory did not meet the threshold.

He was sent to a doctor by the insurer. It turns out the doctor and the insurer were connected. As Cory entered the room for his appointment, the doctor threw a book at him to test whether he was faking his injuries. Of course, Cory was not faking and the book landed on his foot. He was walking with the aid of a walking stick. Cory asked for a second opinion, so the insurer sent him to another doctor, but one who practised in the same premises and in the same room as the initial doctor who had been consulted and who threw a book at him. The second doctor was hard of hearing and had failing vision. Interestingly, he wrote an opinion of Cory that was the mirror image of the first doctor's opinion. This man is a wreck, and the Government has taken away his workers compensation payments. Cory has been forced to sell almost everything he owns, other than his house, to make ends meet—even his furniture. His house is almost bare, so he has had someone turn fence palings and milk crates into seats, on the off-chance that he gets a visitor.

Cory has done all this because he has been unable to get across the threshold of 20 per cent impairment by even an infinitesimal 0.000001 per cent. His workplace injury affects his back, abdomen and hand and the clinical depression now taunts him every day. He has admitted that on some days he has thought seriously about ending his life and collected the means to do so, until fortunately a friend or family member has phoned him and he has changed his mind. However, the legislation deems Cory fit to return to work, which is simply ridiculous. We need to have empathy for these injured workers. We are throwing them onto the scrapheap that is funded by Centrelink and Medicare, instead of keeping them on a scheme designed for their circumstances. This is Cory's story and I hope not to be attending his funeral anytime soon.

PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (18:36): The wheels on the school bus may go round and round, but it is the parents of Port Stephens whose heads have been left spinning by the poor quality school bus service delivered by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Andrew Constance. How difficult can it be for this Minister to ensure that school buses turn up, that they have enough seats for the number of students they are collecting, and that they get to school safely? This is not a big ask from local parents. All they want is a bus that picks up their children before school and drops them home safely in the afternoon. But even this simple task is beyond Minister Constance, as most tasks are. It seems he cannot even run a ferry-naming poll, let alone a public transport network.

I have been contacted by scores of parents from Medowie and the Tilligerry Peninsula whose children have been left behind at school in the afternoon because overflowing school buses did not have room to take them. These students were forced to wait more than an hour for a public bus to get to their home suburb, only then to have to walk across the suburb to get home. And that is before we get to the issue of students being forced to stand as the buses travel on roads with speed limits of up to 100 kilometres an hour past the scene of previous bus accidents, because this Government has failed to implement the recommendations of the 2012 School Bus Safety Community Advisory Committee inquiry into rural and regional school bus safety. Put simply, this is not good enough.

Adding to the frustration for parents is that their experiences this year are not new. This has become an annual event in Medowie and on the Tilligerry Peninsula. After discussion with parents, teachers and the Minister's office, the cause has become clear. A school's enrolment is calculated in February each year as part of a statewide census. The number of school buses needed for an area is then calculated on this enrolment information. As

students return to school in January, the number of school buses is still being calculated on last year's enrolment numbers. In a growing area like Medowie, and with growing enrolments at Irrawang High School and Hunter River High School in Raymond Terrace, it is clear that this method is every year leaving more students to cram onto the same number of buses, or be left behind.

I understand schools tried to advise bus companies that student numbers were increasing, but the bus companies' contract with the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure means they are only paid for the official number of students. No private company is going to spend more to add a bus if they are not being paid for it. There are around 1,000 students bussed out of Medowie and the surrounding areas each day to secondary schools across the region. This enormous logistical exercise is only forced on local students because this Government has failed to support the community's longstanding call for a public high school in Medowie. Many families will be relieved when the next Labor government fixes this after the next election.

The enormous number of students bussed out of Medowie and the peninsula each day is concerning, but it is the individual stories that reveal the truth behind these experiences. One mother, Karina, called my office to share her daughter's story. On her daughter's second day at high school she was told that there was not enough room on the school bus to take her home in the afternoon. She was told to catch a public bus and to make her own way home. Karina's daughter had never caught that public bus before and one can only imagine the distress of a year 7 student, in the first week of school, being told to catch a different bus on a different route home.

Another Medowie parent, Suzanne, called my office and expressed concern about this situation. Her two girls were some of the lucky ones who managed to get a place on the bus while others were left behind, but this is of no comfort to parents who have no confidence that tomorrow it will not be their children left stranded and told to make their own way home. We had the absurd situation in the first week of school of 30 children from one of the high schools not being able to get on the bus at the end of the school day.

Another parent, Stephen, contacted my office about the experience of his twin boys, who started year 7 this year. These boys travel from the Tilligerry Peninsula to Raymond Terrace. It is a trip that takes about half an hour by car and a lot longer by bus, but Stephen's boys often spend the entire trip standing as the bus travels on a road with speed limits up to 90 kilometres an hour. In fact, last year Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] reduced the speed limit along this road because of the high number of crashes. This road is so dangerous that RMS had to lower the speed limit, but this Government has no problem with children standing on buses as they go along the same road. I offer a simple solution to these problems: build a public high school in Medowie. This Government said in 2011 that it was going to start planning a new school in 2011, but it has done nothing since. If the Government will not build a school, surely it can at least ensure that our kids get to and from school safely.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (18:41): Tonight I relate one story of many that my office is receiving relating to the workers compensation scheme in this State. I know that other members have raised similar issues and I note that earlier today we had a debate in this House on this issue. The Government seems to believe that everything is rosy and that it has put in place a scheme that is looking after people. Tonight I will relate to the House the story of Jean Gibbin—and I have written to the Minister about this. We will see whether the scheme is working as well as the Government believes.

Jean came to see me in June 2016 regarding an issue with her compensation claim. Jean injured herself on 18 August 2014 at work. Jean was with Forsythes Recruitment at the time, working at Kellogg's. Jean was diagnosed with bursitis. She received a cortisone injection, which did not help, and she was advised to have physio. It was also recommended she have a magnetic resonance imaging scan. The scan showed she had a cyst and would need to have an operation to remove it as it was between the joint. When the cyst was operated on, it was concluded that it had formed due to a superior labrum anterior and posterior lesion.

Jean now suffers nerve damage in her arm, which has needed medication and ongoing physio. This has caused more distress as the insurance company, Allianz Australia Insurance, had declined any further treatment back in May 2016. Jean's shoulder problems are ongoing and she has had to constantly contact Allianz to have her physio treatment and workers compensation payments continued. Jean is aware that no further treatment will fix the injury in her shoulder or fix the nerve damage that was caused by the operation. The constant pain and loss of movement in her shoulder is making it difficult for her to function properly on a daily basis. She is unable to lift anything, has problems dressing and is becoming more depressed and dependent on other people.

On top of all her problems with her workers compensation claim, in February last year Jean was diagnosed with breast cancer—three years after her injury. As there is no family history of breast cancer, Jean suspects that it could have been caused by stress. Of course, she cannot prove this, but Jean is only 43 years old this year. The cancer interrupted treatment on her shoulder because she had to undergo surgery and chemo. The

Government says the system is working well, but Allianz then dropped her payments from \$476 a week to \$1. I must say I did not believe that, but she showed me the pay slip for eight weeks, which showed that Allianz had paid \$8 into her bank account.

Allianz has told her the reason her money was reduced was that she did not attend an appointment. However, at the time she was receiving no payment and she was undergoing her cancer treatment, which was another reason she could not get to her appointment. The dollar amount was established based on Jean's ability to work judged by Allianz, not on a doctor's or physiotherapist's report. This has caused financial hardship for her husband and her three children—who are still living at home—resulting in their having to bankrupt themselves to survive. Allianz declined treatment for ongoing physiotherapy sessions and has advised the physiotherapy centre to discontinue treatment. Now she has a problem with her shoulder and breast cancer, and she is getting \$1 a week.

Ms Anna Watson: And Allianz does not care.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: It does not care at all. Jean just wants Allianz to restore the payments that she is entitled to so she can concentrate on getting well and deal with the ongoing battle she has ahead of her. This is just one of many stories. On a daily basis I hear stories of people being harassed by insurance companies and investigators being paid to follow people with injuries. We know that some people in the system do not do the right thing. But these are good people who have worked all of their lives and who have become bankrupted and destitute through no fault of their own, but through insurance companies employing their own doctors to say that their injuries do not exist, even though other doctors say that they do exist. The system is broken. It might look good financially for the Government, but it is not helping people; it is destroying people. I get angry about this. We write and we try to help these people, but there is nothing we can do because the system is broken. It is not helping the people it is supposed to protect.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:46): A number of private members' statements tonight have touched on workers compensation. I thought it would be appropriate to state that, while acknowledging that a large number of people become injured at work who suffer and should be shown a proper empathy, some of those situations are quite different and some of them are very complex. Although I do not doubt the good faith of those on that side presenting facts, sometimes the situation can be a lot more complex than appears or than might have been presented. Having said that, people should be looked after. The State Government has an appeals system through the State Insurance Regulatory Authority. If an insurer has behaved inappropriately, I encourage those concerned to contact that authority as part of the process.

GOVERNMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:47): Before I commence my private member's statement, I acknowledge the member for Wyong and his efforts in bringing to the attention of the House the Allianz insurance company and similar insurance companies. It is time that the Liberal-Nationals Government started looking after the people of New South Wales instead of being in bed with insurance companies.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: A private member's statement is not a vehicle to make gratuitous comments on someone else's private member's statement.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am more than happy to relate this to my own electorate.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: I ask the member to give her private member's statement and to not take the opportunity to take cheap political shots.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I can absolutely relate this to my own electorate. I have many people who have travel insurance with Allianz, in particular, who have been duded out of their insurance due to the very clever way they were written and who was the underwriter. At the time of taking out these types of insurance policies the majority of people have no idea that they will not be covered for certain things. It is about time that this Government started to take notice of the member for Wyong and others in this House when it comes to insurance.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I was about to rule on the point of order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I have already said it.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): There is an amount of latitude, but I ask the member for Shellharbour to restrict her private member's statement to her own electorate.

Ms ANNA WATSON: In yesterday's *Illawarra Mercury* it was revealed that the security guard who had been paid to sit outside the empty house at Albion Park Rail for at least five months, 24 hours a day, has finally been dismissed. This service came at a cost of \$4,000 a day to Roads and Maritime Services and ultimately to our taxpayers. This means that the Government has effectively wasted more than \$100,000 of taxpayer funds on something that was not only unnecessary but also massively unpopular. The blatant waste of public money

will come as no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to the state of the New South Wales Government.

To put it simply, those opposite just cannot get anything right. First, their proposal to knock down and rebuild two Sydney stadiums, at a cost of \$2.5 billion to New South Wales taxpayer, is nothing short of ludicrous and, I would argue, indefensible. The Government has sold off everything, including the kitchen sink, and now wants the New South Wales public to foot the bill for a blatant vanity project. This comes after it has sold off every piece of public infrastructure that helped to generate revenue for our State. Its short-sighted, money-wasting and warped priorities are costing New South Wales its future.

For starters, let us cast our minds back to the century-long leasing or, to put it more accurately, the sell-off of Port Kembla. This decision will impact the Illawarra for the next 100 years, and in the scheme of things we received just peanuts in return. Next there was the sell-off of our State's poles and wires. Those opposite promised this would keep prices low, when in reality they could not have been more wrong. This was no surprise. When people are given a monopoly, they will take advantage of the market. The Government has tried it also with our hospitals and no doubt will try it with the rest of our State's trains and buses. This really is not a surprising trend.

Across the State, this Government is forcing New South Wales citizens to pay more while they receive less. Those opposite have introduced excessive tolls on our roads; they have watched as electricity prices continue to increase, thanks to the sale of the poles and wires; and they have privatised parts of our transport system. They have decimated our TAFE system with cuts and closures, leaving our local schools and students to suffer whilst maintenance backlogs grow. The Government has cut funding to the State's health care, resulting in a blowout in emergency room wait times and a decline in the working conditions of New South Wales nurses and doctors. Even when it has good intentions the Government finds a way to make sure the people of New South Wales shoulder the cost. I instance the Government's foray into environmentalism—the botched rollout of the Return and Earn scheme.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: The member for Shellharbour is taking liberties that are not appropriate in a private member's statement, which is meant to relate to issues relating to a member's electorate. It is just a grab bag of general criticisms of the Government.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Shellharbour is referring to various issues in her electorate. I will allow her to continue.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Prior to the scheme coming into effect, this Government forced manufacturers to raise the prices of their products by approximately 20¢ per bottle and this price was then passed directly on to consumers. The only way residents can recoup these funds is by driving their bags of recycling to their nearest Return and Earn container, which is not always close and in many cases is not even functioning. If people cannot reclaim these funds, the Government has effectively just placed another tax on our citizens and sold it under the name of environmentalism. Day in and day out, this Government, with its warped priorities and its ability to sweep things under the rug and get away with negligence, not just in the Illawarra but throughout the State, continues to shock me. Those opposite have the contempt to sit across this Chamber and brag about the amount of money the Government has in the bank while it chooses to short-change New South Wales citizens. The Government has introduced hidden taxes and watched as the cost of living has skyrocketed in this State—*[Time expired.]*

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that private members' statements traditionally relate to people and issues in a member's electorate, although I understand the member's passion.

ORANGE ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (18:52): I bring to the attention of the House two significant bushfires that broke out in the Orange electorate this past weekend. Following a lightning strike at Belerada Creek at Gowan on the evening of Saturday 9 February 2018, a fire broke out that quickly spread across private rural property. The fire was fuelled by dry grasses and native scrub, although local Rural Fire Service brigades were quick to respond following the report from a witness. In the days that followed, the fire was contained by the combined resources of constant helicopter water bombing, more than 40 Rural Fire Service field personnel and several dozen heavy plant equipment. The combined effort to suppress the fire, creating lines of containment and professional coordination of resources, led to the area being limited to 1,290 hectares, with minimal damage to structures and no reported loss of livestock.

Fortunately, the Belerada Creek fire is now under control, thanks to the rapid response by the Rural Fire Service and assisting services, which supported a sustained fight around the clock. Firefighting, whether performed in a professional or volunteer capacity, is a hazardous undertaking. Conditions in a bushfire area are unpredictable and dangerous. Our firefighters who venture toward the fire are placing their lives on the line.

Unfortunately, a firefighter was injured at the Gowan fire and was airlifted for medical treatment. I wish her a speedy recovery.

Another fire was reported shortly before noon on Sunday 10 February 2018. The fire originated in the lee of Mount Canobolas, the magnificent and dominating geographical feature overlooking the city of Orange. The cause of the fire is not yet known, but it spread quickly because of the significant fuel in the national park. A number of Rural Fire Service [RFS] ground crews from nearby brigades responded swiftly. The fire was challenging and firefighters had to combat a blaze across the steep slopes of the native bush covered mountain. Crews were deployed to protect critical communications infrastructure at the summit. However, the RFS was successful in repelling the advancing fire, thus saving the structures.

Rapid deployment of aerial firefighting resources was crucial to limiting the spread of the Mount Canobolas fire. The NSW Rural Fire Service's DC-10 air tanker delivered numerous large volume drops of fire suppressant, having to refill between drops at Richmond airport. Helicopters continuously delivered buckets of water, which were rapidly replenished from nearby Lake Canobolas and other groundwater reservoirs, to douse the fires. Bulldozers, graders and other plant equipment were provided by Cadia-Ridgeway Mine, the Forestry Corporation of NSW, and Cabonne Council and Orange City Council to create containment lines. Almost 200 firefighters from across the State joined the force to combat the Mount Canobolas fire. They included personnel from the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. Crews and equipment were also provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

A number of houses, structures, vineyards, orchards, pine plantations and other valuable property were successfully protected by the many firefighters who deployed to the fireground and remained on the line in the days that followed. Back-burning over an area of approximately 500 hectares was conducted to contain the spread of the fire ahead of yesterday's anticipated high winds. The initiative proved successful, and I can report to the House that the Mount Canobolas fire is now under control. The area subject to damage by that fire was 1,671 hectares, consisting of private property, national park areas and State forests.

When I became aware of these significant bushfires last weekend, I visited the evacuation and staging point for the Mount Canobolas bushfire, which was first situated at Nashdale Hall. I was amazed to discover the significant number of those from my community who answered the call to fight the bushfire. Without any hesitation, those brave volunteers drove towards the danger to protect life and property. My amazement was not limited to witnessing those brave volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel heading towards the inferno; I was equally amazed by the spirit of the broader community, whose selflessness left me speechless. A constant stream of people arrived to deliver food, water and equipment to care and to cater for the vast number of volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel. Those volunteers dropped everything, putting their lives on hold to protect and care for others. I thank the community, which united to fight the fire and to care for and support those who were fighting the fire.

I acknowledge NSW Rural Fire Service Zone Manager David Hoadley, who was and remains the incident controller for both the Belerada Creek and Mount Canobolas fires. David is a highly experienced officer whom anyone would want directing the necessary resources in combating bushfires. David was ably assisted by deputy controllers Brett Bowden and John Kjoller, who have both seen their fair share of fires over many years in the Rural Fire Service and provide essential support to David's command. I also acknowledge the generosity of the rapid relief team and other volunteers who provided sustenance to the weary crews who retreated from the line to replenish their energy. From the bottom of my heart, I thank everyone who fought the fire to protect life and property in our community.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I hope that the member for Shellharbour and other members have listened to the private member's statement delivered by the member for Orange. If they have, they will know how a statement should be made. That is how it should be done.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:58 until
Tuesday 6 March 2018 at 12:00.**