



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday, 17 September 2019

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 17 September 2019

The Speaker (The Hon. Jonathan Richard O'Dea) took the chair at 12:00.

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Normally I would not allow a notice of motion as lengthy as that given by the Leader of the Opposition, but in the circumstances I will allow it.

[Later, during the giving of notice of motions]

The SPEAKER: Members will not interject or make comments during the giving of notices of motions.

Bills

RIGHT TO FARM BILL 2019

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Adam Marshall, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (12:17): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This is an historic day for agriculture in New South Wales and Australia. For the very first time a bill to enshrine in law a farmer's right to farm their land, to grow the food and fibre to feed and clothe the people of this State, our nation and, increasingly, the world has been introduced, considered and hopefully will be agreed to by an Australian Parliament. The bill also delivers on a commitment this Government made to our State's farmers in the lead-up to the recent March election to introduce a right to farm bill to support them and the work they do in the strongest possible way.

The Right to Farm Bill 2019 amends the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 and introduces a new Act, the Right to Farm Act 2019, known as "nuisance shield" legislation. This Government is committed to supporting and protecting our farmers who produce the commodities upon which we all rely. This Government is committed to addressing all of the risks posed by unsafe protest activities happening on farms, including risks to farmers, their businesses, their animals, protesters and the public.

It is a priority for this Government to protect our farmers from illegal activities on their farms and in our best interests to protect, enable, support and expand the work of farmers across the State. Strengthening the trespass legislation to support a farmer's right to farm uninhibited by illegal trespass activities and nuisance claims against them by neighbours was a key commitment of this Government, and this bill shows that we are delivering. The scale and importance of agriculture, forestry and fishing to this State cannot be overstated. In 2018-19 those three industries alone directly employed over 85,000 people across the State, with another 85,423 people employed in downstream primary industries such as food manufacturing and the abattoir industry. The overwhelming majority—87 per cent—are employed in rural and regional New South Wales, which is currently in the grips of the worst drought on record.

On the 2017-18 figures the export of primary industry products is worth \$5.4 billion to the New South Wales economy, accounting for more than 11 per cent of New South Wales' exports. The most recent 2017-18 data shows that farmers contribute more than \$13 billion to our State's annual revenue. Without a doubt farmers are the economic backbone of New South Wales. Their work and the employment they provide underpins our rural and regional communities. People in this State enjoy some of the best produce and meat to be found anywhere

in the world. Each meal enjoyed by every single man, woman and child in New South Wales, no matter their dietary choices, is due to the efforts and hard work of our farmers.

Make no mistake, on-farm trespass is increasing and the questioning by vegan vigilantes and other ideologically motivated groups of a farmer's right to undertake lawful activities is also on the rise. Since 2014, according to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, there has been a 27 per cent increase in the number of recorded incidents of trespass on farms and rural properties. The tactics of animal rights groups who trespass on farms are becoming more organised and more aggressive, including illegally installing recording devices, conducting mass on-farm protests, illegally removing stock, and collecting and publishing farm locations and data. These actions are often associated with online denigration, bullying, harassment and intimidation of farmers through social media. It is no wonder that this behaviour has been equated by some in the farming sector as the equivalent of domestic terrorism.

Unlawful disruption by protestors is also very costly for farming businesses. Protestors have developed sophisticated tools such as lock-on devices that require rescue squad-type capability to remove from plant or equipment without harm to person or equipment. This was the case recently in Goulburn where police and rescue services spent hours removing protestors from equipment at an abattoir. The group of nine on-farm trespassers had chained themselves to conveyer belt equipment used in that abattoir. By anyone's consideration, that is an extremely risky activity. Police were forced to crawl over and under equipment. The magistrate clearly noted during sentencing in those cases the danger police placed themselves in while removing the trespassers from the machinery. These activities have the ability to cause serious safety risks on farms.

Farms are one of the most dangerous workplaces in Australia. Any increase, even slightly, to the known risks or any change to the integrity of equipment could be catastrophic for farmers, employees and, indeed, for the trespassers themselves. Equipment on farms and places where animals are processed for the food supply chain is large and complex. Infrastructure is in place on farms to protect handlers from the risks imposed by large livestock or from other safety risks. Farms are also, by their very nature, often isolated with emergency services such as police having to travel large distances to attend those farms should a farm incursion occur.

Some unlawful trespass activity, including where masses of people can invade a farm to protest, exponentially increases the inherent dangers to both the farmer and the protestors themselves. Farm trespass, particularly of the scale and style we have recently experienced, presents multiple risks. Those risks relate to the safety of farmers, farm workers, farming families, emergency personnel, members of the public and farm animals. I have heard of trespass cases in New South Wales where fences have been cut and stock has been released onto public roads. Indeed, they have been well documented. This is dangerous for everyone involved and does nothing to ensure good animal welfare outcomes.

The Government fully supports the right to protest; it is a fundamental tenet of our democracy that we will continue to protect. However, the right to protest does not allow, nor excuse, people breaking the law by trespassing on farms and other primary production facilities. Farms are often isolated and there is little delineation between the farming business and the farming household—the home. I can think of few things more terrifying than to wake in the middle of the night to find groups of people, often dressed in hazardous materials suits with their faces obscured, trespassing on my property. That is the reality our farmers face. Sadly, these activities are having a permanent impact on farmers, physically and mentally.

During the hearings conducted as part of the Legislative Council Select Committee on Landowner Protection from Unauthorised Filming or Surveillance, a farmer who had been the victim of trespass told how his daughter, who had been studying agriculture with the view to pursue her passion for the industry and return to work alongside her father, had turned away from that career path as a result of the actions of protestors, and the bullying and intimidation they suffered after having the private details about their farm and its operation published by the notorious Aussie Farms website.

So threatened do farmers feel, that in just over six weeks since we amended the Biosecurity Regulation 2017 to give any farm or industry with a biosecurity management plan more protection and deterrence from the risks of trespass could cause to on-farm biosecurity, we have seen more than 22,000 free biosecurity signs snapped up by farmers across the State. The signs inform would-be trespassers of the new law. So popular are they, and so much in demand, the Government is now printing another 11,000 as I speak.

We know that farmers cannot mitigate all risks. The very nature of what they do is subject sometimes to uncontrollable factors—which we are seeing at the moment with drought—that neither they nor a government can control. But we can ensure they are not subject to illegal activity or threats. We would not accept people taking it upon themselves to stage home invasions in a residential context just because the people next door opposed a person's profession. We will not let a different standard be applied to farmers just because they are farmers. There is another often-overlooked cost of trespass: By leaving our farmers unprotected, we strip them of their enthusiasm

for their work and drive the next generation off-farm to look for other employment in other professions. The time to act on farm trespass is now.

In addition to amending the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 to address trespass, the bill will introduce new legislation to help protect lawful primary producers from conflict and interference caused by neighbours and other land users. This new law, known as a nuisance shield, is based on Tasmanian legislation—the Primary Industries Activities Protection Act 1995. The nuisance shield provides a defence to common law nuisance claims levelled at farmers for what are normal farming activities—the smells, sounds and realities of their work. It will also stop courts from imposing injunctions on farmers without first considering other options. This is the first step in enshrining a farmer's right to farm their land. I remind the House that farming is done for the benefit of every person in New South Wales, to produce the food that we eat and the clothes that we wear. It is fundamental to every person's life whether they wish to acknowledge that or not.

I turn to the first part of the bill. This is a new standalone piece of legislation that seeks to protect farmers by providing them with a defence against common law nuisance action. It sets out conditions a court must consider before ordering farming activities to cease based on nuisance findings related to agricultural production. Complaints about normal and legal farming practices against primary producers occur all over this State and threaten daily operations. Those complaints are commonly around the incidentals of accepted farming practices such as noise, dust or odour, among others. These are basic realities of farming and the basic realities of living near a primary production operation. It is often the convergence of agricultural and residential land use that drives conflict between landholders—that conflict of urban sprawl onto traditional agricultural land.

A considerable proportion of complaints received by local councils in peri-urban or regional areas regard compliant agricultural practices. Almost all local councils who participated in a survey undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and the University of Technology Sydney over the past three years reported receiving complaints about agricultural practices that met the council's requirements for the operation's legally compliant activity. Farming operations are subject to regulation by the Environment Protection Authority and local councils as well as codes of practice in some industries. As part of their development application consent farmers may also be required to comply with conditions on their operations.

The realities of farming are often not well understood by those who choose to live near farms. The pressures primary producers can face are also varied. Poultry farmers in the Sydney basin are operating under curfews to appease their neighbours despite the curfews not achieving the best animal welfare outcomes in some cases. In other cases neighbours take farmers to court and pursue legal action under the common law tort of nuisance. A legal nuisance occurs when there is a substantial, unreasonable and repeated or ongoing interference with the use or enjoyment of a neighbour's land. This means that even if a farmer is complying with all the conditions imposed upon them by the regulators and are models of best-practice operators they can still face legal action for creating a nuisance and potentially be shut down.

When neighbours make complaints about agricultural activities the farmer must expend time, energy and money to answer the complaints, even when those complaints are completely without merit. The Right to Farm Bill 2019 is a proactive step by the Government that seeks to minimise the likelihood of complaints about normal farming practices ever escalating to litigation. It will protect farmers from having orders imposed upon them by a court finding that their completely lawful activities constitute a nuisance. Such orders could severely disrupt production or impact the viability of the business. If a nuisance is found, the court must not order that an activity be stopped if it can instead issue an order that allows the farmer time to adjust their activities to manage, modify or reduce the nuisance.

The bill is based on Tasmania's Primary Industry Activities Protection Act 1995. That Act has been successfully protecting farmers for almost 25 years in that State with no evidence of a detrimental impact on non-farming landholders or additional regulatory burden. The defence outlined in the Right to Farm Bill 2019 will cover all agricultural activities, including aquaculture and forestry, carried out on land that is being used for the purposes of agriculture for 12 months or more. It will apply when the primary production operation is carried out lawfully and not negligently and on land where the activity is legal. Those conditions ensure that established operators can get on with their job without having to worry about the personal views of their new neighbours.

I turn now to the elements of the bill that address farm trespass under the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901. The bill increases penalties and introduces new trespass offences under the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 to deter and adequately prosecute people who trespass on farms and create risks. The increased penalties and some of the new offences will apply to all trespass—that is on-farm invaders, illegal hunters; all those who trespass illegally on farms. The suite of measures contained in the Right to Farm Bill 2019 means New South Wales will have the toughest penalties for farm trespass in the country for this sort of offence. The penalties proposed will better reflect the severity of the offences and the impact that it has on farmers and primary production activities in this State.

The bill amends section 4B to increase the maximum penalty for the offence of aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands from \$5,500 to \$13,200. It also introduces a term of imprisonment for the offence, with offenders facing up to 12 months in jail. New South Wales is currently the only State without a term of imprisonment for trespass. The bill will change that and will ensure New South Wales has a more effective deterrent to aggressive forms of trespass. The bill further increases the maximum penalty for the offence of aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands to \$22,000, or three years imprisonment, when the aggravating factor that gives rise to the offence includes causing a serious risk to the safety of any person on those lands. This is the highest penalty available under the Act. It reflects the severity of the risk caused by trespassing and interfering with agricultural equipment and infrastructure.

The New South Wales Government recognises that trespassing in a large group is significantly more intimidating and compounds risk to farming families, including children. Biosecurity risks also increase significantly as the number of trespassers rises. Group trespass therefore warrants a harsher penalty. The bill amends section 4B to introduce a new penalty for aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands when the offender is accompanied by two or more persons. The maximum penalty for this conduct will be \$22,000, or three years imprisonment. It will not be necessary for either of the two persons accompanying the offender to also commit the offence of aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands in order for the principal offender to be liable for this higher penalty. With this bill, New South Wales will be the first State to introduce a penalty for trespass conducted in groups.

The bill also introduces a new offence of inciting, directing, counselling, inducing or procuring the commission of the offence of aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands. The maximum penalty for this new offence will be \$11,000, or 12 months imprisonment. This addresses a gap in the legislation for people who incite or direct trespass but do not actually trespass themselves. The bill also adds two new aggravating factors for the offence of aggravated unlawful entry on inclosed lands in section 4B. The first will capture conduct that damages property in the course of unlawful entry on the relevant inclosed lands and could provide a new avenue to prosecute property damage when more serious property damage offences in the Crimes Act 1900 may not be suitable.

The second new aggravating factor will capture wilful or negligent release of livestock and reflects the clear risks to animal welfare, biosecurity and human safety caused by livestock being released by trespassers. For similar reasons, the bill amends section 5 to increase the maximum penalty for the offence of leaving a gate open or interfering with a cattle grid from \$220 to \$1,650 to better reflect the range of risks this action presents if done on a farm. This is a strong and proportionate package of measures that reflects the severity of on-farm trespass and the impact it has on its victims, our hardworking farmers. If supported, the bill will better protect our State's farmers and primary production from the risks caused by aggressive on-farm trespass. It will afford the hardworking farmers of this State the protection they are entitled to and deserve.

Our farmers are doing it tough, as every member of this House knows, and the amendments to the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 and the new Right to Farm Bill 2019 are part of a broader suite of initiatives by the Government. We all know how hard the drought is for all communities and farmers in rural, remote and regional New South Wales. That is why in July 2019 the Government announced an additional \$1.1 billion in drought support. The acts of trespassers can undo the great work that our farmers do every day to protect and maintain the world-class biosecurity regime we have in New South Wales. In July 2019 the Government amended the Biosecurity Regulation 2017 to make it an offence for a person who enters an area where a biosecurity management plan applies to not comply with the measures outlined in the plan—that refers to the over 22,000 signs I spoke about earlier.

In addition, before the end of this calendar year the New South Wales Government will put in place an agriculture commissioner. The NSW Agriculture Commissioner will be an advocate for the best interests of primary producers within government and work with stakeholders to understand other right-to-farm issues. The Government is committed to protecting the interests of farmers right across this State, no matter what they farm or how big or small their operation is. The bill is about protecting our farmers from people who break the law by trespassing and damaging property. It is also about protecting our farmers from complaints against their lawful practices escalating to litigation.

We are very fortunate to live in a country that allows freedom of expression, the right to debate and the ability to hold peaceful demonstrations. I appreciate that we do not all hold the same views in this Parliament or in this State and I fully support the right of everyone to express those views. It is the reason we are in politics here in Parliament debating the important issues that impact on our respective communities. The bill is not about removing the right to protest but the Government will not endorse protesters breaking the law. Recent protests involving on-farm trespass have involved criminal activity.

These activists, these vegan vigilantes—whatever name is attributed to them or that they have attributed to themselves—are intent on shutting down entire industries, no matter the cost to people, property or production, and their tactics reflect that. Mass trespass on farms does not change consumer preferences. Intimidating farming families in the middle of the night does nothing to win hearts and minds. Scaring animals does not improve their welfare. The bill will ensure legislation is adequate, that our farmers and their families right to farm is protected and enshrined in law. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 22 August 2019.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (12:43): At its heart the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 is about making things easier and simpler for the people of New South Wales to deal with their fines. It is not necessarily something we are ever particularly happy to be thinking about but there may be the odd occasion where perhaps people overstay in a metered parking area, unintentionally creep up over the speed limit, or even inadvertently have their photo taken by a red light camera. None of those are occasions that anyone particularly enjoys, but they are realities and there is certainly a need for streamlining the processes for everyone's benefit.

Last sitting week we heard from the member for Canterbury about some of her concerns around the digitisation of some of the processes that are looked at in this bill such as the use of emails or text messages for reminders or delivery of fine notices. There will be more detail from the Minister in his reply, but I thought it was worth mentioning that this is actually about taking steps forward while not leaving anyone behind. There are always other ways of receiving information and support, but there is definitely a need to move towards the future and embrace digital solutions. Yes, safeguards are needed to ensure that there are no breaches of privacy and there are concerns about scams.

But let us be honest, that is the case in every single aspect of our digital lives these days. It does not mean that we need to go back to using carrier pigeons. What it means is that we need to stay vigilant in everything we do—whether that is using online banking, which millions of us do every day, or managing our fines. This is about vigilance for the individual being helped along by the Government. It is something that the Government takes very seriously, but that certainly does not preclude it from taking these much-needed steps forward to make things far better for the vast majority.

The Government is committed to making our services work better for people right across metropolitan, regional and rural New South Wales. This bill is a key example of exactly that. The bill will modernise the Fines Act 1996 and the Road Transport Act 2013 to better reflect how customers want to make nominations in regard to operator onus offences, which is what I want to talk about today. They are parking or driving offences where the fine is automatically issued to the registered owner of the vehicle. Typically, in the case of driving offences someone is caught by a traffic light camera or speed camera. When that happens the registered owner of the vehicle is liable for the offence and the fine unless they nominate another person as the driver at the time.

Road transport legislation obliges the owner to nominate the actual driver in that case. If the owner makes a nomination, the fine and any demerit points then transfer to the nominated person. That ensures that the person who actually committed the offence is the person held liable. In practice it is not uncommon, particularly among families, for the driver to voluntarily nominate themselves but the Fines Act 1996 and Road Transport Act 2013 only recognise nominations made by the owner. When a driver lodges a self-nomination it can cause delays in transferring the penalty notice and the demerit points to the proper person. In the meantime, the wrong person—the owner in this case—may continue to be held responsible for the penalty notice and the demerit points. As members can see, the Act has not kept pace with how customers prefer to deal with those types of fines. I point out that this bill does not change the primary responsibility that any vehicle owner has to nominate the driver responsible for the offence. That will not change.

What will this bill do? In simple terms, it will allow nominations, whether made by the owner or the driver, to now be recognised. The customer will be able to self-nominate using an approved nomination form. The self-nomination will need to have the person's name, address, the date, their date of birth and their driver licence number to ensure the nomination has been made by that person. Essentially this bill will allow self-nominations to be relied upon in the same way that an owner's nomination is currently relied upon. The owner will no longer be liable for the offence, the penalty notice amount or any demerit points. They will also be notified that the penalty notice has been withdrawn.

Where the driver has already paid the penalty notice issued to the owner, they will be issued with a penalty notice that confirms payment and any demerit points for the offence. If the penalty notice has not been paid, the penalty notice issued to the driver will require payment. The normal process for a penalty notice will then proceed. The current offence for making a false nomination will also apply to self-nominations, in the same way that a person can be held liable for falsely nominating another person.

This will ensure that nominations, regardless of who makes them, can be relied upon and that they are not misused as a way for someone to avoid incurring demerit points. We do not want to see that happen in any way, shape or form. This bill supports a commonsense and straightforward change. I am sure it has widespread support, given its ability to make life easier for all concerned. I am pleased that this change, though quite simple, will significantly improve the experience for many customers who are currently dealing with their fines in an antiquated manner. I commend the Minister for the bill and commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (12:49): I, too, make a contribution on the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 and support the words of the shadow Minister in her contribution to the second reading debate on the bill, but bring a perspective from my shadow ministry. In reply to the member for Dubbo, who correctly said that we cannot go backwards but must go forward with having technology options for people to make their lives easier, we must recognise at the same time that so far this year—and we are not through this year yet—across Australia \$95 million has been lost to scams. Of that, \$6.2 million is from false billing and most of that has come from emails and online sources.

So, yes, we do need to create more opportunities for people but we must also be very vigilant that when vulnerable people in the community get these scam emails saying they have to pay fines and the like, they can recognise whether they are legitimate or whether they are a scam. I think the full amount for last year was about \$107 million that was lost to scams, so we must be vigilant. The shadow Minister was correct in raising that as a potential issue, and as parliamentarians we must be vigilant when in introducing new technologies to also ensure that, as the criminal groups often do, we stay one step ahead—they are probably already thinking of new ways to exploit these new ways of doing business.

Today, in my role as shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, I will speak particularly about the impact on Aboriginal people. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody raised concerns about the imprisonment of Aboriginal people for fine default. Automatic imprisonment for fine default has now been abolished in all jurisdictions, and that is certainly a good thing. We must recognise, though, that concerns remain about the hardships caused to Indigenous people by fines and the fines enforcement system. It must be recognised that usually vulnerable groups, whether they be Aboriginal or multicultural, because of where they live or for financial reasons are less likely to be able to access new technologies.

I wonder if any work has been done on whether the introduction of emails and text messages will be of benefit to Aboriginal people in rural and remote New South Wales, given their limited access to such technologies. It is great for those in the big cities, but I am not sure that for Aboriginal people and other communities in regional and remote New South Wales this is the answer to enabling them to be better informed. We know that the hardship caused to Indigenous people includes financial stress, loss of mobility due to driver licence suspension or car registration cancellation, imprisonment for both fine default and secondary reoffending such as unlicensed driving, emotional distress and social exclusion.

According to the NSW Wales Law Reform Commission 2012, over 230 agencies issued fines in New South Wales. According to the New South Wales Office of State Revenue 2017, around three million penalty notices were issued in the 2015-2016 financial year, with a total value of \$713 million—I understand that figure is on the increase. Generally nothing in the bill appears to specifically disadvantage Aboriginal people, but the Aboriginal groups I spoke to indicated to me that it would have been good if the Minister had undertaken consultation with the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, which said they had not been contacted, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Justice Reinvestment NSW.

Whenever we consider bills like this one, particularly bills that affect those disadvantaged communities, we must always guard against inadvertently creating more problems or creating problems that could have been prevented through proper consultation. Reduced access to Aboriginal Legal Service representation in rural and regional New South Wales due to Federal Government funding cuts has made it exceedingly difficult for many Aboriginal people in our community. Unfortunately the 2016 Federal budget locked in an 8 per cent funding cut to Aboriginal legal services, leading to a drop in funding for community legal centres of \$34.8 million between 2017-2018 and 2019-2020. This Parliament should call on the Federal Government to reverse those cuts as a matter of urgency.

Finally, the Government might like to consider—I could not ascertain if it is already in place, so I am happy for the Minister to correct me—the Aboriginal Legal Service's suggestion of setting maximum fines for

individuals. In its submission on the discussion paper that formed part of the Australian Law Reform Commission's inquiry into the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Aboriginal Legal Service wrote:

Infringement-related debt entrenches disadvantage experienced by many ALS clients. ALS recommends that: lower level penalties should be introduced, including suspended infringement notices and written cautions; the number of infringement notices able to be issued at one time should be limited; and total penalties payable by any one person should be limited.

Those suggestions should be considered to understand the impact that fines have on Aboriginal people, particularly the most vulnerable Aboriginal people in regional and remote New South Wales communities. As I said, nothing in the bill appears to specifically disadvantage Aboriginal people. However, I am not sure that the bill provides an advantage for them because they are less likely to use the newer technologies that it promotes. Maybe other reforms could be considered in future legislation, such as limiting the number of fines that can be issued to any one person and some of the other suggestions in the Aboriginal Legal Service's submission. As I mentioned, this Parliament should put pressure on the Federal Government to make sure that Aboriginal legal services are funded properly so that Aboriginal people right across the State can get proper representation and are not further disadvantaged in our legal system.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:57): I speak in support of the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. I thank the Minister for Customer Service for introducing it and acknowledge that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is working to improve customer experience across the State. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Fines Act 1996 by allowing digital technologies to be better utilised by Revenue NSW. The bill also streamlines processes that help people deal with their fines. The bill follows the review of the fines system that the Government initiated in 2018.

I will focus on how the bill simplifies options to dispute a penalty notice after enforcement. When a customer receives a penalty notice they often have the option to dispute their liability for both the penalty notice and the offence itself. Firstly, they can apply for an internal review by Revenue NSW or the agency that issued the penalty. Secondly, they can elect to have the matter dealt with by the court. Thirdly, for certain driving or parking offences, the customer can nominate the person who was the driver at the time as liable for the offence. Currently, a customer's options to dispute liability become very limited after a penalty notice is enforced due to non-payment. Essentially, the customer will have to apply for an annulment of the enforcement order.

The grounds for an annulment are largely confined to situations such as where the customer was unaware of the penalty notice or was hindered from taking action. They do not extend to a situation where the customer may have genuine grounds for disputing the original penalty notice but has missed the current window for seeking review. In such cases, customers are often forced to go to court. The courts have found in favour of the customer in a large proportion of these cases because there have been genuine grounds for contesting liability. I am sure members of this House would agree that this is not an effective use of the courts' valuable time and that there needs to be greater flexibility for the Commissioner of Fines Administration to withdraw an enforcement order, and potentially the original penalty notice, where there are reasonable grounds for doing so.

This bill aims also to significantly simplify and improve the options available to customers disputing a penalty notice after enforcement while reducing the need for customers to go to court. This is a key example of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government working to improve the experience of customers in dealing with government and putting customers at the centre. Under this bill a customer's right to apply for an internal review will be extended to after the penalty notice has been enforced. Currently this right to an internal review expires after the due date of a penalty reminder notice. Further, there will be greater opportunity for disputed penalty notices to be reviewed internally rather than only through the court process. If the penalty notice is withdrawn, the enforcement order also will be withdrawn.

The time limits for making a driver nomination or a court election will remain. But if a customer makes a nomination or court election late, after enforcement, their dispute will be considered as an application for withdrawing the enforcement order. In certain circumstances the enforcement order may be withdrawn, as well as potentially the penalty notice. This will provide greater flexibility and opportunity to administratively resolve disputed penalty notices and reduce the workload of our excellent courts. The annulment process will be limited to an appeal pathway for customers seeking to appeal the commissioner's decision not to withdraw an enforcement order. On appeal, the court may then determine to annul the enforcement order and hear and determine whether the original penalty notice should stand.

As I have said, the evidence has been quite clear. Many of these disputed penalty notices are successfully appealed in court because customers have genuine grounds for not being liable but have missed the window to lodge their dispute. It is important that customers take action to dispute their penalty notices within the required time frames. By doing so they may be able to resolve their penalty notice before it is enforced. They also can be

more certain that their court election or driver nomination will be accepted. However, there also needs to be some flexibility in this process. That is what the bill achieves.

I note the contribution of the staff involved in the preparation of the bill. While congratulating Minister Dominello, I put on the record my thanks to the Roads and Maritime Services staff who worked on the bill: Ann King, Ben Hewitt, Fiona Lam and Julianne Evans. In addition I thank the Minister's staff for their excellent work: Matt Dawson, Olivia Roth and Priya Pagaddinnimath. I must say what a great job they do in the Minister's office. I again congratulate the Minister, who oversaw the delivery of Services NSW. This Government is seeking new and innovative ways in which to assist the people of New South Wales to work with government. I am pleased to support the bill, which will significantly simplify and improve the options available for customers who are seeking to dispute their penalty notices after an enforcement order has been made. I again commend the Minister and staff involved in the formulation of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (13:03): I contribute to the debate on the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. Every day New South Wales law enforcement agencies work hard to keep our roads and communities safe. Part of that work involves the issuing of fines, most often for traffic-related offences. While many think of the issuing of fines as simply a measure to raise money for the State government through technology such as red-light cameras, we need to continue to support the crucial work of keeping our roads safe. In the past 12 months there have been some 360 deaths on our roads—nearly one per day. That is 360 families affected in the most terrible way. In the past year about 11,180 people have been hospitalised as a result of traffic accidents. The issuing of fines and penalty notices is key to reducing the statistics as it penalises the bad and dangerous driving that causes road crash deaths and injuries.

The bill makes the issuing of fines more efficient for law enforcement and attempts to make fines more just and equitable for alleged offenders. It increases the options available for issuing fine notices electronically. It allows penalty reminder notices and enforcement orders as well as the initial notice to be delivered electronically. It allows alleged offenders to seek a review of a fine issued after it has been enforced and it changes language around when an enforcement can be withdrawn. The bill extends the circumstances in which a person may seek a "time to pay" order, removing the requirement that one must be receiving government benefits to do so. It ensures that customers get a refund even if they overpay. It also allows the driver of a vehicle to whom a penalty notice has been issued to self-nominate instead of requiring the vehicle owner to nominate the driver. The changes are intended to lead to greater efficiencies for alleged offenders and for law enforcement.

The reforms build upon changes that were made in the Fines Amendment (Electronic Penalty Notices) Bill 2016, which first allowed electronic notices. At that time it was estimated the change would save law enforcement officials an hour per day and the time they spent manually writing penalty notices could be better spent keeping our communities safe. It is believed the changes will continue to lead to time savings for our law enforcement officers. They also will allow for costs savings, building on the \$1.2 million estimated to be saved by fewer manual penalty notices.

I now turn to the elements of the bill that relate to the electronic service of penalty notices and other documents. The purpose of this section is to modernise the delivery of penalty notices. When the electronic delivery of penalty notices was first introduced, the legislation mandated that the provision of notices be done by email or short messaging service and that the penalty notice itself be in portable document format [PDF]. It further required that penalty reminder notices and fine enforcement orders could not be delivered electronically. As the Minister has stated, changes to legislation will mean customers no longer have to open a bulky PDF file and could possibly opt to have penalty notices delivered by an app.

In debate on the Fines Amendment (Electronic Penalty Notices) Bill 2016, members of the Labor Opposition raised concerns about the safety of data and cybersecurity risks. These are valid concerns. The specific format chosen was intended to help separate genuine penalty notices from scam or phishing attacks. In 2019 the tools needed to create these attacks are even more widely available to organised crime than they were three years ago. It is easy for scammers to create an email or a text message that could appear to be a penalty notice and to harvest data and financial information from those who try to pay what they think is a genuine penalty. Removing the requirement of the fine notice to be delivered as a PDF will make it harder for alleged offenders to tell which notices are real and which are not.

I also question the demand for a penalty notice app. How many people in our community are getting fined so often that they would want to keep an application on their phone for the sole purpose of receiving penalty notices? Further, the changes to allow penalty reminder notices and enforcement orders to be delivered electronically may penalise some alleged offenders unfairly. For example, those who are not good with technology, those who unintentionally provide an incorrect phone number or email address or those who are subject to a data entry error may in the new system completely miss that they have been subject to a fine as they will never receive a physical notice.

I now look at the internal review of penalty notices outlined in the bill. This is an important change for alleged offenders, law enforcement and our courts. It will allow persons subject to penalty notices more time to seek an internal review by Revenue NSW of their penalty notice if they believe it was issued in error, including after the notice has been paid in full or in part and after an enforcement order has been made. Presently, once a fine enforcement order has been issued the only way for customers to challenge the fine is by electing to follow the court process of review. This process can be prohibitively expensive for an alleged offender as they may incur costs for a solicitor or a barrister, they may have to take time off work to attend court and they may end up being liable for further court costs or a larger penalty if the matter is not decided in their favour.

The court process also requires the time and resources of police prosecutors, magistrates and law enforcement officers who may have to take time away from protecting their communities to serve as witnesses. While alleged offenders are entitled to seek justice before a court, it should not be their first and only option simply because of how long ago a penalty was issued. In comparison, the internal review process by Revenue NSW requires alleged offenders to submit an online form or physical letter explaining their circumstances. There is no cost to the alleged offender and the review may lead to the cancellation of a fine or the issuing of a caution. This is a far more accessible and effective system which will allow more alleged offenders to have access. It will also save the time of law enforcement officers and alleged offenders and reduce the strain on our court system.

I now turn to the changes to refunds and reallocation of overpayments and early enforcement arrangements in the bill. Those changes will help offenders with the affordability of their fines. To seek a time to pay order a person must be receiving a government benefit. This means the majority of offenders cannot presently seek a time to pay order. The bill will change that. It also allows a time to pay order to be sought at any time, when at present it can only be done after enough time has passed for an enforcement notice to have been issued. More people will be able to seek additional time to pay their tickets without being penalised and they can do so sooner. This will reduce the number of outstanding fines and make outstanding fines less of a financial burden. The changes to the refunding and reallocation of payments will ensure offenders who overpay their fines—for example, when paying by bank transfer—will get their money back, unless they request the overpayment be reallocated to a different fine.

The final section of the bill relates to nominating persons in charge of a vehicle. Fines issued on the basis of a vehicle—particularly those issued by cameras—are issued to the owner of the vehicle regardless of who is driving. At present the only way to change that issued penalty notice is for the owner of the vehicle to apply to nominate the driver. The driver cannot self-nominate. This leads to inefficiencies both for the alleged offender and for Revenue NSW. It can also sometimes lead to the wrong person being unfairly charged with a fine and given demerit points. Changes allowing drivers to self-nominate will put the legislation in line with what many people already attempt to undertake. The changes made in the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 are important steps in modernising the issuing of fines in New South Wales. Those changes will help support law enforcement in its important work of issuing traffic fines and it will align legislation with the community's expectations around fines. I support the passage of the bill.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (13:13): I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 and I can speak with—

Mr Jamie Parker: Passion.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: —incredible passion, because the bill has given me an opportunity to give an insight into what happened to some constituents of mine recently and into the challenges that they experienced in dealing with fines they received from driving an uninsured vehicle. To cut a long story short, some of the technological challenges that they faced both in understanding the fine and in paying it brought about some significant issues for them. It is wonderful to see a bill before this House that improves people's ability to pay fines, to understand their rights and to understand the issues around penalty notices, reminders and enforcement orders.

The bill is absolutely necessary because it seeks to modernise the Fines Act 1996 and improve customer experience for people dealing with fines whilst retaining strong rules and incentives for people to pay their fines on time, which is incredibly important. Ultimately this means paying fines will be made simpler and easier, using better technology and common sense. Another important part of this legislation is designing processes that put the customer at the centre, which is what the Minister is all about. The Government is committed to making government services across this State work better for the people of New South Wales. Many of the steps for managing a fine are set out in this legislation. The Fines Act 1996 has clearly not kept pace with technology or how citizens want to interact with the fines system. The bill will specifically make changes to better support customers who need a payment plan or help to develop orders to settle their fine.

Debate interrupted.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Cathy Foster, the Global Vice President of Public Policy of eBay and Laura Hu, the Head of Government Affairs, Asia Pacific, of eBay, who are guests of the Minister for Finance and Small Business in the other place. I also welcome Mr Christian Martinazzo, a guest of the member for Camden. I welcome Matilda Ayres, a student of the Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus, who is a guest of the member for Summer Hill. I acknowledge Kirsty Donovan from the Ballina electorate office, a guest of the member for Ballina. I acknowledge Aaron Ahola, David Aitken and Kai Koon Ng for Akamai Technologies, guests of the member for Northern Tablelands and the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. Finally, I acknowledge visiting staff from the NSW Electoral Commission. I welcome all visitors to the Legislative Assembly.

Announcements

WESTMINSTER AND BELGIUM TOUR

The SPEAKER: This morning, together with the Government Whip, the member for Ballina, the member for Maroubra, the Clerk and others, I returned from a very worthwhile trip to Belgium and Westminster. It was a very informative and useful trip, which reinforced my concerns for the good standing of this place, as well as the welfare of all members who occupy these benches. On that note, I had a very good conversation with the member for Campbelltown, and I look forward to welcoming him back to this Chamber tomorrow. I anticipate that question time today will be a lively and reasonably robust event. However, I appeal to all members to maintain an appropriate degree of civility. I ask members to assist me by avoiding disorderly behaviour and any potential consequences.

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I advise the House that the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education will answer questions in relation to the portfolios of Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans.

Bills

LAKE MACQUARIE SMELTER SITE (PERPETUAL CARE OF LAND) BILL 2019

Assent

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bill.

Governor

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message regarding the administration of the Government.

Question Time

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:20): My question is directed to the Premier. Why did the Premier appoint John Sidoti to her Cabinet when she knew back in 2017 that he is a multimillion-dollar property developer with serious conflicts of interest?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21): As the Leader of the Opposition would well know, that issue was canvassed some time ago. The Leader of the Opposition would also know that on a number of occasions she forgot to disclose properties. She should remember that she was 18 months late in declaring her Gloucester property to the Parliament. Her Waverton property disclosures—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: If the Premier wants to go down this path it should be through a substantive motion. We will debate it. We will talk about Operation Spicer.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I am taking that as a point of order under Standing Order 73. I do not uphold the point of order at this stage. But I warn all members, first, that there are matters that are before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]—this is not particularly in relation to this

response. I do not want members to unnecessarily or inappropriately transgress or impose on the ICAC's considerations. Secondly, there is a danger that members could get into an inappropriate hurling match of imputations on both sides. I ask members to keep that in mind in the context of Standing Order 73. The Premier may continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was merely making the point that the Leader of the Opposition does not come here with clean hands. Last night I was advised that the ICAC wants to conduct a preliminary investigation. Of course, we all support that. I have accepted the request from the commission for the Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPC] and my secretary to not complete the DPC investigation. As I have said before, the public's confidence in the integrity of government decision-making is absolutely paramount. I also stress that Mr Sidoti has given strong assurances that he has acted appropriately at all times and has complied with the ministerial code of conduct. I also stress that these matters are before the appropriate body and should be allowed to be investigated in the proper way.

BUSHFIRES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:24): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on her recent visits to fire-affected communities across the State?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:24): I thank the member for Clarence. I acknowledge a number of members of Parliament faced very stressful times last week, and some still this week, with the ongoing uncontained bushfires raging in New South Wales—in particular, the member for Clarence. When the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and I visited parts of his electorate, he was not able to join us because he was not able to access the roads to meet us. I appreciate the stress his community experienced, especially around Yamba as well as other places. I note that a number of other colleagues in this place underwent extremely stressful situations in dealing with their communities. The Deputy Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and I had the honour and privilege—I say honour because we visited communities going through the most difficult circumstances.

We first visited the Glen Innes Northern Tablelands Fire Control Centre, where we were joined by Minister Marshall. Superintendent Mark Williams briefed us on the situation with the uncontained fires and we met with mayor Carol Sparks. I acknowledge the mayor of Glen Innes because as we were getting the briefing, her home was in the line of fire. I assume her house was okay but I know that she went through a few stressful hours as the fire front moved very close to her home. We then went to Tenterfield and met with local RFS firefighters in Tenterfield. I thank the mayor, councillor Peter Petty, for his warm welcome. Interestingly, as we approached the evacuation centre many locals came up to us—in fact, in one street one told us about their circumstances. They had lost all their homes but were so grateful for the RFS volunteers and the emergency services that had been provided to them in a very short time.

I acknowledge the residents in Drake—quite isolated communities in the electorate of Lismore. The local member joined us during that visit. In Drake I had a few residents come up to me in tears, saying to me, "Do not let anyone tell you anything apart from how amazing the RFS firefighters are." Hundreds and hundreds of volunteers—in fact, when we got off the plane at Armidale, before we took the chopper out to those more isolated communities, I bumped into firefighters from places such as Forbes, Walgett, Mudgee and Eulomogo, who had already assisted the firefighting efforts and were returning back to their community. This was very early on in the piece, when we had firefighters—volunteers from all across the State—drop tools, drop their jobs, drop their families to go and help others. It was a very humbling thing to experience in action. Some of them still had soot on their faces after fighting the fires and were about to jump on planes to head back home.

I stress the gratefulness to the local communities and local organisations that have all been pitching in to support the efforts. After we visited Drake, we went to Tyringham, where we were joined by Minister Pavey—that area is in close proximity to her community. I relay the experience of firefighter Captain Darren Wykes, whose children got on their quad bikes and were helping the RFS firefighters see the spot fires. Because of the winds and the fast pace at which the fires were spreading, the children were assisting their efforts. This type of community engagement and involvement is really supporting communities dealing with very difficult circumstances.

I suggest to the House that even though we believe the worst of the fires are over, there are still uncontained fires burning away in New South Wales as we speak. There are 50 fires around the State, of which 13 are still uncontained. We also have in our thoughts those many residents who have lost houses, equipment and sheds, stock and facilities. As a government, we provide support to them during the event. Regrettably, in my job you experience many people going through very difficult circumstances, but it is often after all the emergency services personnel have left and the community is left to pick up the pieces that the shock of what has happened actually sets in. In particular, we have made sure that we have sufficient mental health workers. I thank the Family

and Community Services workers and the chaplains who are there on the ground within hours of being asked, flying in from different parts of the State. In fact, regrettably—or fortunately, depending on how you look at it—I bumped into emergency services personnel and chaplains who I bumped into last year at the Tathra bushfires. To see those people redouble their efforts—*[Extension of time]*

I think for all of us it is a sense of pride that 700 firefighters and support personnel have been deployed across New South Wales. That is incredible: 700. We have also made use of 195 appliances, as they call them, and 46 aircraft. I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for ensuring we had the 737 Fireliner, the large air tanker, commissioned recently. It has been put to good use. The air tanker is called the *Marie Bashir* and is the first year the air tanker has been permanently used in New South Wales. This large air tanker can transport 70 firefighters to anywhere in the State. In fact, we supported Queensland in their efforts as well: The air tanker was also deployed to Queensland. This is a good example of ensuring we have the world's best resources to deal with what is going to be a horrific fire season.

I mention in particular some of the communities that have been most affected by the fires and say on behalf of all members in this place that we continue to think about them as they pick up the pieces—whether their community is in Tenterfield, Armidale, Bellingen, Clarence Valley, Glen Innes, Yamba, Inverell, Lithgow, Uralla, Walcha or the South Coast. Our thoughts are with all those communities and we look forward to continuing to support them as they resume and resurrect their lives. My heartfelt thanks go to all of our emergency services workers and all of our volunteers. I also give a big shout-out to the employers. If volunteers work for themselves, they are sacrificing their own businesses or small businesses; but if they work for someone else, they have got very sympathetic bosses who have let them go to fight the fires. I thank everybody who has been involved in this effort: all of our paid and non-paid personnel and our volunteers. I also say to the communities that even though some of the fires have been put out, they are not out of our minds and we are thinking of them constantly.

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:31): My question is directed to the Premier. What steps did she take, as Premier, to manage John Sidoti's conflict of interest as required by her ministerial code of conduct before allowing him to sit in Cabinet?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:32): I have answered this question on the public record a number of times. Of course, it is my absolute expectation that every member of Cabinet and every Parliamentary Secretary, as the ministerial code applies to them, has to comply with the highest levels of probity in relation to disclosures, in relation to conflict of interests, in relation to pecuniary interests. In fact, this responsibility extends not just to Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries but also, in some instances, to all members of Parliament. All of us would expect that would be the case in all circumstances. Certainly Mr Sidoti has indicated that he has complied with all of those measures, but that is a matter now for the ICAC to look at in its preliminary investigation. I stress that from time to time it has been noted that members opposite have been late in declaring things. I say to all members of this place—

Ms Prue Car: It was not about a late declaration. This is about personal financial benefit from government decisions.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you, Commissioner Car.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I was saying, there is a preliminary investigation taking place. All members of this place should respect that and allow it to take its course.

DROUGHT

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:33): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is better preparing New South Wales regional communities for the drought?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:33): I thank the member for Cootamundra for her great question—a member who is not only well loved by her community but who also represents a community that is also feeling the impact of this drought. I will just pick up on the Premier's earlier response. We had the opportunity last week to see some parts of the State that have been ravaged by fires, and I thank those members on the ground—the member for Northern Tablelands, the member for Clarence, the member for Oxley and the member for Lismore, who welcomed us when we arrived. We saw the impact on the community, what the Rural Fire Service volunteers are doing in the RFS and what the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and his commissioner are doing.

I thank them for their response and I point to the way that we have responded to what is going to be a very tough season. In September we are already dealing with 50-plus fires that are continuing to burn in this State. To see the impact on that region was tough, but we know that we are the envy of the world when it comes to the RFS, with 70,000 or more volunteers. This State is the envy of the world when volunteers—men and women—come together to fight for their communities. We have seen that fighting spirit in regional and rural New South Wales over the past couple of weeks.

What struck me when we were in some of the choppers going over that landscape to see the fires and the smoke, was how dry and barren the land is. We know that we are in drought; 97 per cent of the State is in drought. The lack of water has become a serious problem, but it is not until you get up in the air that you see how barren that land is. There is no cover whatsoever across that landscape and trees are dying from the lack of water. We can talk about the severity of this drought, but for those who live it and see the effects every day on farmers, on their families, on their children and on their communities, it has an impact that I do not think people can really understand.

We are lucky today because a bit of rain is falling from the sky. The sight of the rain always fills the soul, but people in regional and rural New South Wales would kill to see the rain fall, to see some of their paddocks get a bit of a green tinge and to see some water in their dams. Drought is going to be a continuing issue that all of us in New South Wales, together, will need to continue to look at as we go forward. I know we can be political in this space and we have been, probably, in the debate around water and water management. We need to take responsibility for the decisions we have made in the past and decisions that we are making today and in the future, but we should not play politics with the future of regional and rural New South Wales, because people in those areas are hurting.

I spent a weekend away in Narrabri, Boggabri, Wee Waa and Moree, but rather than having photo opportunities at the opening of Country Universities Centre, I decided to stay in town for three days and listen and talk to people and have a coffee at the local cafe so that I could understand the impact. The impact is real. We know, and we say, that regional and rural communities are resilient. They are resilient but, goodness gracious, they have been tested by drought. They have been tested by the lack of water and now they are being tested by fire. Their resilience is starting to run out. It is bloody tough out there. It is tough, tough, tough. As members of Parliament we need to understand the plight of regional and rural New South Wales by getting out and about and listening and engaging.

There is no need for fancy announcements. There is no need for cameras to follow us. We need to get out and about, listen and engage, lend an ear when we can and remind the people in those communities that all the elected members of Parliament in Macquarie Street are here to serve our communities in one way or another. This is not just up to the Government. I think members of this Parliament know that this Parliament works best when there is bipartisanship and when we make sure that we find solutions going forward. We have made some significant investments in drought relief—and I acknowledge the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales—but it is not possible without the whole Cabinet, the Premier and the Treasurer. Without the support of the Government and the Treasurer we would not be able to respond.

For example, I can talk about \$1.8 billion going into drought support in subsidies and alleviating levies, fees, truck registration and fixed water rates and Local Land Services fees, and that is great, but we are at a point in the drought where that on-farm support almost means nothing. Why? Because people have de-stocked and there are no crops in the ground. The lack of water will continue to be a problem for those communities. It is great to support local economies by fast-tracking infrastructure but it does not get to the core of the issue, which is the lack of rain, the lack of water and the despair of people in regional and rural New South Wales. That is why it is important to take this moment—as members of Parliament feel the despair and anxiety that regional and rural communities are going through—to think about the future. [*Extension of time*]

Since the election there has been emergency funding of about \$130 million to get bores in the ground and to build pipelines like the pipeline from Malpas Dam to Guyra. Thank goodness for the \$470 million pipeline to Broken Hill, which has staved off a serious situation there. If we think back over the past two and a half years to the drought package and water infrastructure, we will see that close to \$3 billion has gone into regional and rural communities to support them in this time.

We have to get ahead of the curve. We must learn the lessons of this drought. There may have been lessons from the millennium drought that we did not pursue, but we must learn the lessons from this drought—to build more water storage for the future. In 2016 we had floods and rains in this State that saw most of the storage in this State at 100 per cent capacity. Three years on, we are almost stone dry. The reality is that with climate change there will be impacts of longer, drier periods but there will be severe effects when it rains. So we have an opportunity when it rains if we start to build storages—like new dams and the raising of the wall at Wyangala. That will result in increased capacity of 650 gigalitres, which is the equivalent of a new dam. Other examples

include Dungowan Dam, including a pipeline, and Mole River Dam on the Queensland-New South Wales border. They are examples of the projects that we need to get through. We should not be just talking, designing another proposal, doing another environmental impact statement or putting forward another planning proposal. We should be acting in a bipartisan way.

I am reaching out to Parliament today—to the whole of Parliament—and asking that we put ideology and politics aside so that we get on with building dams, fixing weirs and putting pipelines where we need them, and connecting water storages in a way that we have never seen. We need to be ambitious and to go on an unprecedented journey in this State to build water storage. I can already hear the response from those opposite. They are not prepared to be bipartisan. They will continue to play politics with the people of regional New South Wales.

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:41): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. Given the member for Drummoyne's property empire is so close to metro stations at Tallawong and Five Dock, did the Minister tell the Premier about that conflict of interest, as is required by section 16 (1) in the ministerial code of conduct?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (14:41): I have had two weeks off and I have come back but the Labor Party has not changed. There are a couple of things in relation to this. First of all, I comply with my ministerial obligations, and proudly do so, as my colleagues do. I am glad the member has asked about the metro station at Five Dock because I have a document here. During 2009, guess what was going to be at Five Dock? A metro station. This has been talked about as a metro station location for the best part of 10 years. There you go—shock, horror! Ultimately, Mr Sidoti made the declarations in terms of his property on the pecuniary interests document. I have read that too. Ultimately those opposite can make inferences and carry on, but there is one point that I want to make.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I remind the Minister that he has obligations under the ministerial code of conduct as well. The question relates specifically to what he told the Premier in regard to that.

The SPEAKER: I am aware of the question. The Minister is being relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: One thing I have not got is the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser making a ruling against me for a conflict of interest over property.

Ms Jodi McKay: I declared that; he did not disclose it. That is the issue.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser has made a ruling about a conflict. I do not think there are too many people in this place who have had that type of ruling, but guess who has—the member for Strathfield.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I ask that you bring the Minister back to the question, which related to his obligations under the ministerial code of conduct. It is a pretty simple question.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. She is very close to being placed on a call to order. The Minister has concluded his answer.

STATE ECONOMY AND RETAIL SECTOR

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (14:44): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the importance of the retail sector and its jobs to the New South Wales economy?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:44): It is great to be back. My break was not as quiet as I am sure the transport Minister's was. We had our sixth baby.

Mr Ryan Park: You shaved, Dom.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I shaved this morning, actually. I start with giving a big shout-out to the midwives at Ryde and Royal North Shore Hospital. What a great job they do. I ask the health Minister: How good is the food at Royal North Shore? The baby bags that you get that are filled with all those goodies are also great.

[A member interjected.]

I will declare it. I also got a letter from the Premier wishing us very well.

[A member interjected.]

I would have preferred an Aldi bag with a letter from Jodi. Where do I get one of those? Anyway, I will settle for the baby bag. I will declare it this afternoon.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I thank the great member for Goulburn for her question. She knows, as we do, that the economic policies of the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government continue to deliver great dividends to the people of New South Wales. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the largest infrastructure pipeline in the country if not the world, and the strongest budget in Australia. In breaking news, I can reveal that Moody's has today reaffirmed our triple-A credit rating once again. It is a triple-A rating for a triple-A government. Those results do not just happen, they are the direct result of the policies of the Liberal-Nationals. Whether it is asset recycling—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I apologise to the Treasurer for interrupting him. When the Treasurer is making an attack on the Opposition I am allowing a bit more latitude in interjections. When he is speaking seriously about the economy, I do not want to hear interjections. Gratuitous interjections when he is speaking seriously are uncalled for.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I am always serious. I look forward to silence from members opposite. Whether it is asset recycling, the Fiscal Responsibility Act that we enshrined in law when we came to office in 2011 or the tax cuts—all of those policies were shamefully opposed by those opposite. The Coalition believes in lower taxes, less red tape and working with the business community. Initiatives such as our payroll tax cuts, which have been opposed by those opposite, give businesses the confidence to invest and create more jobs, particularly in regional New South Wales. According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data, regional New South Wales has recorded its lowest unemployment rate on record. The regional jobless rate has dropped to 4.8 per cent, which is down from 5.7 per cent a year ago.

Over the past 12 months regional New South Wales added more jobs than the regional areas of Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania combined. To put that in perspective: That is in the middle of a drought. A lot of that can be attributed to the policies of this Government and its record infrastructure investment of \$50 billion since coming to office in 2011. We know who opposed asset recycling that has unlocked the capacity for us to invest in regional New South Wales—the Labor Party.

We know that the Australian economy is facing challenges with the drought, trade wars and global uncertainty. At these points in the economic cycle it is important that both sides of politics move on, do not play politics with the issue and have a bipartisan approach to instil confidence, but at every turn the Labor Party enjoys talking the economy down. They put their political prospects before the prospects of the people of New South Wales. The irony is that while they talk the economy down, it is the Labor Party and its policies that are the biggest handbrakes on the economies of New South Wales and our nation. They want to shut down the mining industry.

Mr Clayton Barr: That is not true, Dom.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: You know it is, member for Cessnock.

Mr Clayton Barr: When are you going to start taking it seriously?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I welcome the member for Strathfield visiting a mine. She would be the first Labor leader to visit a mine in recorded history.

[A member interjected.]

The first since Eddie Obeid. You would have thought after losing an election in March and another election in May that Labor would have learnt its lesson. People might remember the party president Wayne Swan, who the record books—

Mr Clayton Barr: Mark Lennon.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Mark is alright, not Wayne. The history books will judge Wayne as probably the worst Treasurer in this country's history. He came out last week and warned the Labor Party against dropping the tax and spend agenda. Wayne Swan is the biggest asset the Liberal Party has. The more he speaks, the more we win. I give a special shout-out to the retail sector. Retail trade in this State is worth \$8.7 billion, which is a third of the nation. There are thousands of big and small businesses that keep our State ticking over. We also have hardworking retail workers in the cities and regions. My good friend Bernie Smith from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association has had a Road to Damascus conversion. He fought Boxing Day

trade. He has now signed up to it and is backing it. This year he will be outside Myer in Pitt Street Mall on Boxing Day. It is *Weekend at Bernie's*. [Extension of time]

As we know, retail is an important sector. I mention especially Woolworths and Coles. Whilst I have been on leave with the kids I have been heading down to the local shops—not with my plastic bags, with my hessian bags. The weird thing is that we are getting rid of plastic bags but instead we now get plastic Ooshies in plastic bags. I know that Aldi is getting in on the Ooshies as well. Soon it will come out with a little Sam Dastyari, an Ernest Wong, a little boss lady and even a Mr Huang—but he will not be available in stores in Australia. If you find that one it is rare. It is worth about \$100,000 if you get your hands on it.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:52): My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier just lost one Minister to ICAC, two MPs are threatening to quit and three tried to spill her position. Does the Premier admit that her Government is in crisis and she is living on borrowed time?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will not commence her answer until there is silence. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:53): That is a great question from someone who took three months to get elected and whose biggest backer was Kaila Murnain from Sussex Street. I say to those opposite in all seriousness, today in question time we have talked about the Government's efforts in relation to the fires, we have talked about its efforts in relation to infrastructure and services and we have talked about its efforts in relation to supporting all of our communities across New South Wales. That is what our Government was elected to do and that is what we are doing. Opposition members can play their games, they can go to the gutter and do what they like but we are here to govern for the people of New South Wales. We are the party of the workers. We are the party of infrastructure and services. We will keep delivering for the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Monaro to order for the first time. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the second time. I call the member for Bega to order for the first time.

REGIONAL WATER SECURITY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:54): My question is addressed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is continuing to deliver water security across regional New South Wales?

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (14:54): I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. His region is doing it very tough when it comes to water. However, today I got a message from Crown lands CEO Chris Reynolds at Dubbo. He confirmed that they have had 10 or 15 millimetres of rain so far. That is certainly not enough, but for a community that is facing a very difficult situation—with Burrendong Dam at 4.5 per cent—having that relief is very positive. That community knows it is going to need a lot more rain before that water supply is sustainable into the future, but we are working with the council. We have given it \$30 million to find new bore fields throughout the Macquarie area to support Dubbo. We are also funding work to get down to the bottom 21 gigalitres of Burrendong Dam.

Those are the types of works that we are doing. In fact, more than \$130 million has been allocated to country town and water supplies in emergency measures that were sought and achieved through the Expenditure Review Committee process. The Deputy Premier, the Premier, the Treasurer and the Deputy Leader of the Nationals have fought for those towns to have secure funding for as long as possible. I was just looking at my weather app. It is starting to trickle at Tenterfield, a town right at the top of the Great Dividing Range that does not have irrigation and is not on a major river. The Premier mentioned the mayor of Tenterfield, Peter Petty. He is a great fellow. That town has been doing it tough. We have been standing alongside them as they have also been trying to dig more bores to continue the supply into the community.

It is tough out there. There is no doubt about it. Some \$2 million has been allocated to Narromine Shire Council. The Premier visited Coonabarabran where we laid new bores earlier this year. All of those communities have our support. We are struggling through one of the worst droughts on record, despite this delightful bit of rain today. I think there has been 20 millimetres over the Sydney catchment so far. There is also great news in the Shoalhaven with 25 millimetres there. In essence, that justifies the Government's early bringing of that Shoalhaven water into the Sydney catchment to ensure that we can continue. It is city and country together. Our catchments are running dry, our rivers are running dry. That is why it is so important that we do the work to build the dams. I was a bit disappointed in the shadow Minister yesterday. He was criticising our energy for building dams, saying

we need to fix the drought. We can do both. We can fight for our communities today and also plan and build the dams for tomorrow for our next drought. That is what we can do and that is what we are doing.

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: It is important that we do that, whether it is Wyangala Dam, Dungowan Dam or the underground dams we are wanting to build on the Gwydir and Darling rivers.

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: That is a new form of technology that is working overseas and avoids evaporative loss. The great thing is that we have the money, the financial capacity and the support of the Commonwealth Government with the Federal Minister and Leader of the Nationals Michael McCormack working in concert with us. That is what we need to do to build that infrastructure and those dams across regional New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

That does not mean we take our eye off the ball in the current situation—whether it is Bathurst, Orange or Tamworth. Last week I visited Tamworth with the Minister for Finance and Small Business. We are ensuring that we keep the jobs in that community and are working towards a solution for the town supply as well as a river supply downstream to support the incredibly important chicken industry that operates out of that city. That is the work we are doing. It is not a time for politics. I recall a week or so ago that the member for Strathfield focused her politics on her own State missing the precious water flowing into South Australia, which is not in drought—Coorong is full of water that has come from New South Wales—because she might get a vote from the bush.

LAKE MACQUARIE AIR QUALITY

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. Given his support for additional air quality monitoring in Sydney, will the Minister now give consideration to installing independently observed air quality monitors in Lake Macquarie to validate those operated by industry including Eraring Power Station and coalmining operations?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (15:01): I appreciate the question from the member for Lake Macquarie. He is definitely the best member for Lake Macquarie that there ever has been. In fact, he is probably the best bloke in the Parliament—I know it is a low bar sometimes. I thank the member for the work he does on behalf of his community. I am delighted to get a question on air quality today. If there was ever a day that we needed some clear air, it is today.

The short answer to the question is: Absolutely, yes. I will ask my department to come back to me with a full briefing on this issue. Once I have the information I will be happy to come back to the member for Lake Macquarie to explore how we can deliver air quality monitoring stations looking at emissions from the power stations and mines in the area. I am very happy to do that for the member for Lake Macquarie. This will build on the already extensive work that the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the environment department do to monitor and reduce the impacts of air pollution across New South Wales.

It should go without saying that every person in this State should have access to clean air. We know that air pollution is a major cause of respiratory illness and has other health impacts. We want to do everything that we reasonably can to reduce air pollution and protect public health. We know that mines and power stations have an impact on air quality, which is why we have a load-based licensing scheme and regulations in place in this State to protect the public. The EPA licenses mines, power stations and other industrial activities and monitors them to ensure compliance to protect public health in New South Wales. We know that there are many causes of poor air quality in this State. They include industrial activity, vehicle emissions, dust and, of course, hazard reduction and bushfires. I inform the House that we are keeping a close eye on the current bushfires and the impact they are having on air quality. We will keep people informed through updates and public warnings on the EPA website. That work will be ongoing.

The way we monitor air quality in New South Wales is through an air monitoring network that consists of 86 monitoring sites across the State, including 20 stations in the Hunter Valley. It is the largest and most comprehensive air monitoring network in the country—Victoria only has 21 stations, Queensland has 34 and South Australia is a long way behind with 13. The Sydney network currently comprises 18 stations. There are three monitoring stations in the Illawarra, which I know the members in the Illawarra are very happy about. There are six in the lower Hunter and 14 in the upper Hunter. The regional air monitoring network includes seven regional centres: Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Tamworth and North Wagga Wagga, to be exact. The rural network consists of 35 indicative monitoring sites converted from the Community DustWatch network. The Government made some ministerial commitments in 2017 for new air quality monitoring stations which have been established at Parramatta North, Gunnedah, Narrabri—

Ms Kate Washington: Where is the plan? Where is the clean air plan?

Mr MATT KEAN: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Port Stephens. Like many things that it is working on, the Government is absolutely committed to delivering better outcomes for the environment.

Ms Kate Washington: This plan has been in planning for a long time.

Mr MATT KEAN: I have only been in the job for six months tackling some very serious environmental issues. They include opening the new koala hospital in Port Stephens, which everyone else seems grateful for except the member for Port Stephens. We are very committed to delivering for our environment in New South Wales and we will continue to do that, whether it be improving air quality or taking decisive or responsible action when it comes to tackling climate change. Perhaps I can update the House about how we are going to expand the footprint of our national parks in New South Wales. I know the member for Baulkham Hills, who is our resident greenie on this side of the House, has been advocating passionately for a new national park in his electorate. He is joined by the member for Castle Hill and the mayor of The Hills Shire Council, who want to see more protections for our national parks. I will take interjections from the member for Port Stephens any day of the week. We have a great record on the environment. There is so much more I want to say about air quality. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise in the Chamber.

Mr MATT KEAN: It is hard for everyone to contain their excitement about our ambitious plans to improve and protect the environment in New South Wales. I will say for the member for Lake Macquarie that we have new air quality monitoring stations installed in Gunnedah for the benefit of the Northern Tablelands, Armidale, Orange, Rouse Hill, and recently one was installed on the Bradfield Highway. Last week with the Lord Mayor of Sydney, I was delighted to announce a new air monitoring station on top of the Cook and Phillip Park pool. I thank the member for Sydney for his advocacy with regard to this important issue. The City of Sydney has been lobbying the Government on it for some time. I am delighted to have started by delivering this one and I am looking for other opportunities to implement air quality monitoring stations around the CBD.

The New South Wales Annual Air Quality Statement in 2018 showed that air quality in New South Wales was either very good, good or fair. To be exact, it met that criteria for more than 87 per cent of the time in the Sydney regions, for 90 to 94 per cent of the time in the Illawarra and the South West Slopes, for 95 per cent of the time in the upper Hunter and the North West Slopes and for 97 per cent to 98 per cent of the time in all other regions. The Government is obviously committed to delivering better air quality for the citizens of this State. We are committed to reducing air pollution.

We understand the impacts it has on respiratory illnesses and its other human health impacts. We want to ensure that we do everything reasonably possible to protect people in this State. The EPA has a strong regime in place. We monitor that regime. There is a load-based licensing scheme in place. That said, there is always room for improvement. I am committed to working with the member for Lake Macquarie and receive a briefing on where we could put air quality monitoring stations in the Lake Macquarie area for the betterment of his community.

BUSHFIRES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:09): My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the fires across New South Wales and how the Government is supporting those communities affected?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (15:09): I thank the member for Holsworthy, who is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, for her question. I can assure members that the interest she has shown in our emergency services and the welfare of the members of those organisations has been very well received. Over the past week and a half the fires affecting the State have had a ferocity that we have not seen this early in the season ever. In my mind that proves positive that this State needs to be prepared for what could be the worst bushfire season on record. Of course, that has been exacerbated by the fact that we have drought-affected communities who are now doing it doubly tough. Last week, I joined the Premier and Deputy Premier, as they said, together with the members for the electorates of Lismore, Oxley and Northern Tablelands to visit some of the affected areas.

In particular we visited the volunteer firefighters and their communities to identify what exactly has occurred. We heard tragic stories as well as stories of triumph. We also witnessed heartache due to the loss and sacrifice made by people who live in regional New South Wales. Many possessions have been lost and livelihoods eroded. At the same time though I saw communities that excelled in the face of adversity. I will pay tribute to a

man from Drake. The Premier, Deputy Premier and I visited Drake, along with Glen Innes, Tenterfield and Tyringham. In Drake we met a man called Rod—

Ms Kate Washington: Simpson.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Thank you, Rod Simpson. His situation touched all of our hearts. Rod lost his home.

Mr Michael Daley: You touched him so much you forgot his surname.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: The former Leader of the Opposition may not want to hear about the 701 firefighters that are facing adversity and danger—given that he has probably never had to face anything more dangerous than Sussex Street—but I think the people of this State would want to know that the Parliament is paying attention to what has been going on. Rod Simpson lost his home, his horses and the shed in which he cared for injured animals that he rescued and nursed back to good health without any reward or recognition. In losing his home he also lost the means to continue to operate his business. The silver lining was that Rod was able to escape the blaze with his two dogs and his can-do attitude, which showed me how important it is for us to look after each other. On behalf of Government members I place on record our heartfelt sympathies for those who have been affected by these devastating bushfires. I also thank the 701 volunteer firefighters who are putting their lives on the line attacking the 48 bushfires and grass fires, 11 of which are uncontained.

It is important to pause and remember that those 701 firefighters have families. They have jobs and employers who have all made sacrifices in the face of adversity. Members of this House need to continually reflect on what we could do to support them. There are 195 trucks and appliances on the job at the moment; 46 aircraft have been deployed; and, as the Premier said, the *Marie Bashir*—the new large air tanker which is the first one publicly owned in Australia—has dropped 945,000 litres of suppressant over 63 missions since it was commissioned only one month ago. The fire season is upon us and that brings the tragedy of 26 homes that have been destroyed and 13 that have been damaged. We acknowledge the courage and success of our firefighters who to date have celebrated saving 612 homes. I would like to put it into perspective for those who, like me, come from metropolitan electorates and probably cannot understand the size and ferocity of these fires. The Bees Nest fire, which, I think, is in the electorate of Oxley—

Mrs Melinda Pavey: Northern Tablelands, Clarence and Oxley.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Northern Tablelands, Clarence and Oxley, I am reliably informed, actually stretches from Bondi Beach to the Nepean River. Those Sydneysiders who do not get into regional New South Wales very much would understand that that is a large distance. That is the size of the fire that those 701 firefighters are currently facing. [*Extension of time*]

Of course, natural disaster declarations are often a tool that governments can use when it comes to providing extra resources to those who have been victims of fires and so far natural disaster declarations have been declared in Armidale, Bellingen, Clarence Valley, Glen Innes, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha. That will, of course, trigger a whole range of support—financial and otherwise—from both the Commonwealth and the State. Rod Simpson, for example, will be able to get access to some of this assistance. It will include those whose homes and belongings have been damaged, support for affected local councils, concessional interest rates for small businesses and primary producers, as well as freight subsidies and financial grants to not for profits. The disaster welfare assistance line is also taking inquiries from affected people in those areas.

During my visit to Tenterfield I was delighted to join the Premier and Deputy Premier to announce a significant grant to BlazeAid, an organisation providing financial support and therefore infrastructure to the volunteers who are involved in making sure that fences that are damaged are made good as quickly as possible. The Deputy Premier made a point of explaining to me how important it was for those on the land to have secure fencing available to ensure that stock is well managed. Last weekend many members of this House joined over 600 Rural Fire Service units across the State as part of Get Ready Weekend, a weekend that unfortunately came two weeks after our first bushfires commenced. But I was delighted to see that we have been able to encourage people and families to engage with this and ensure that the record investment of \$1.7 billion that our Government is making to our emergency services to ensure that facilities are available is well utilised. I think I can speak on behalf of all members of the Government to place on record our gratitude to our firefighters at this very difficult time.

*Documents***PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER****Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with clause 6 of the resolution of the House relating to the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser, I table a copy of correspondence from the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser enclosing advice provided to the Hon. Pru Goward, former Minister, dated 3 September 2019.

AUDITOR-GENERAL**Reports**

The CLERK: In accordance with section 38E of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Performance Audit Report entitled *Mental health service planning for Aboriginal people in New South Wales*, dated 29 August 2019, received out of session on 29 August 2019 and authorised to be printed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**Reports**

The CLERK: In accordance with section 242 of the Law enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, I announce receipt of the report pursuant to section 234 (3) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 by the Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission on *Covert Search Warrants* for the period ending 28 May 2019, dated August 2019, received out of session on 27 August 2019 and authorised to be printed.

NATIONAL RAIL SAFETY REGULATOR**Reports**

The CLERK: In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the report of the National Rail Safety Regulator entitled *Implementation of the NSW Government's response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Rail Accident Reporting period: April 2018—March 2019*, received out of session on 28 August 2019 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY****Government Response**

The CLERK: I announce receipt of the government response to Report 2/56 of the Committee on Law and Safety entitled *The adequacy of youth diversionary programs in NSW*, received out of session on 28 August 2019 and authorised to be printed.

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**Government Response**

The CLERK: I announce receipt of the Government response to report 2/56 of the Committee on Community Services entitled *Support for new parents and babies in New South Wales*.

*Committees***LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Reports**

Ms FELICITY WILSON: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 4/57*, dated 17 September 2019. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FELICITY WILSON: I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding *Legislation Review Digest No. 3/57*.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

The SPEAKER: I announce that the following petition signed by more than 10,000 persons was lodged for presentation:

Coffs Harbour Local Government Precinct

Petition requesting the Government to direct Coffs Harbour City Council to pause the development of the Coffs Harbour local government precinct until further community consultation, received from **Mr Gurmesh Singh**.

The SPEAKER: I set down discussion on the petition as an order of the day for a future day.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The CLERK: I announce that the following Ministers have lodged responses to petitions:

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Wyong Public Hospital—lodged 30 July 2019 (Mr David Mehan)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Canterbury Hospital—lodged 31 July 2019 (Ms Sophie Cotsis)

The Hon. Melinda Pavey—Finley War Memorial Hall School of Arts—lodged 31 July 2019 (Mrs Helen Dalton)

The Hon. Shelley Hancock—Youth Skateboard Facility—lodged 30 July 2019 (Mrs Gabrielle Upton)

The Hon. Gareth Ward—Foster Care Services—lodged 31 July 2019 (Ms Jo Haylen)

*Bills***FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2019****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (15:20): I am delighted to pick up where I left off regarding the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 and the necessity to modernise the Fines Act 1996 to improve the customer experience for people dealing with their fines whilst retaining strong rules and incentives for people to pay their fines on time. The bill makes a number of changes to the Act including to better support customers who need a payment plan or work and development order to settle their fine; more effectively manage overpaid fine amounts; make it easier for customers to nominate themselves as the responsible driver for camera and traffic light fines; make the fine review process simpler, fairer and easier to understand, reducing the need for matters to be resolved in court; and support engagement with customers through digital channels.

I turn to the importance of self-nomination for operator-onus offences. For certain offences such as camera-record speeding and red light offences, the registered operator is deemed to have committed the offence unless they nominate another person as being in charge of the vehicle at that point in time. These are known as operator-onus offences. Often a person such as a family member of the registered operator will seek to nominate themselves as being in charge of the vehicle at that time. We can all understand why this would happen from time to time. However, the legislation currently recognises only nominations made by the registered operator.

This can delay finalisation of the penalty notice and even result in the wrong person being held responsible for the fine and receiving demerit points. If a self-nomination is accepted, Revenue NSW must still issue a penalty notice to the person responsible for the demerit points to be correctly applied. The penalty notice requires the person to pay even if the fine has been paid already. We can all understand the frustration there. This bill will establish a simpler process for self-nomination. A customer will be able to self-nominate using an approved nomination form that will constitute a voluntary admission of liability for the offence, which is an eminently sensible development.

The registered operator will cease to be liable for the offence and the penalty notice amount. Where the customer self-nominates and pays the penalty notice in full, Revenue NSW will issue a penalty notice to them, confirming full payment and any demerit points for the offence. A confirmation penalty notice would still be a penalty notice for other purposes, including the right to apply for a review, to court elect and to record demerit points. Where the customer self-nominates but does not pay the penalty notice in full, they will be issued with a penalty notice requiring payment. In both cases Revenue NSW will notify the registered operator that the penalty notice issued to them is withdrawn. There are also offences for making a false nomination or providing false details of the nominated person. The bill will amend offence provisions to account for the possibility that a person may make a false self-nomination.

The bill has a number of very welcome changes and developments, but I will touch upon what would occur and what happens with overpaid fine amounts. At any given time Revenue NSW has around 3,000 fine overpayments where the amount could be paid to another fine. For example, overpayments can occur when a customer sets up regular payments in respect of a fine but forgets to stop them, even after the fine has been fully paid. Revenue NSW often will refund overpayment to a customer, but, frustratingly for customers, this is not always possible. Currently overpayments of enforced fines can be reallocated towards other enforced fines of the customer. Reallocating an overpayment can help to stop additional penalties and interest that may be accruing to another unpaid fine. It can also reduce unnecessary money transfers and administration, as overpayments that are refunded to a customer often are transferred back to Revenue NSW to pay off another fine.

Revenue NSW must notify the customer of the reallocation and the customer may ask for the reallocation to be refunded. However, only overpayment of enforced fines can be reallocated and only towards another enforced fine. Overpayments of penalty notices cannot be reallocated and overpayments also cannot be reallocated towards penalty notices that have not yet been enforced. This bill will give Revenue NSW a general power to refund overpayments and also will allow overpayments of penalty notices and enforced fines to be reallocated towards unpaid penalty notices of a particular customer. Importantly, the bill does not change the requirement for Revenue NSW to notify the customer of the reallocation or the customer's rights to have reallocations refunded to them.

The bill will also introduce a new protection, which is that an overpayment cannot be reallocated if at any time of overpayment the customer was a low income earner. This will be established by reference to whether the customer is in receipt of certain government benefits. The only exception to this protection is where the customer requests the allocation. These changes will make the administration of overpaid fine amounts more efficient for both customers and Revenue NSW while ensuring that customers are not adversely impacted. The other important element of the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 is the question of what will change for how penalty notices, reminders and enforcement orders are served. The Government is committed to making provision for more government transactions to be undertaken online and to providing better digital government services.

The Fines Act 1996 already allows service of notices by electronic means if the customer has voluntarily provided their phone number or email address. This amending bill will expand the way in which penalty notices, reminders and enforcement orders can be electronically issued. Obviously, that will be a welcome development by customers, and will make it more convenient and secure for people to do transactions. Firstly, the bill broadens the methods of electronic service beyond telephone numbers and email addresses to include an online notification system approved by the commissioner. This modernises and also futureproofs the legislation to account for new technologies through which to engage with customers—for example, through the secure Service NSW account or mobile app. That goes to the heart of this amending bill.

When we consider all the good work the Minister has done, we can add this bill's measures to the digitisation of our Government information and service portals that provide seamless customer experiences. I am sure all members of this House have been to their local Service NSW and can confirm that it is a great demonstration of investment across the State. The Fines Amendment Bill 2019 is fantastic. I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you have not fined me for referring to you earlier as Madam Temporary Speaker and I thank you very much. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mrs Leslie Williams): I thank the member for Manly and note his comments.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (15:28:4): The Fines Amendment Bill 2019 seeks to simplify and streamline the process by which residents of New South Wales are notified of—and can appeal against—a fine or enforcement notice. It seeks to do so by keeping up with technology and enabling Revenue NSW to use new electronic channels to let people know when they have been issued a fine. For the first time drivers responsible for fines when a vehicle is in the ownership of another person are able to self-nominate. The bill also creates a general power to refund a payment, ensuring that overpayments made by low income residents cannot be used to pay down other fines unless they request Revenue NSW to do so. Finally, the bill increases the powers of the Commissioner of Fines Administration to determine appeals of fines and enforcement orders, which the Government argues will reduce pressure on local courts.

I will address a few key provisions in the bill. According to the open datasets published by Revenue NSW, since 2012 over 19 million penalty notices were issued in New South Wales, representing over \$4.6 billion in revenue. Those numbers are mind-boggling, but the fact is that even the smallest fine can make or break people who are struggling from pay cheque to pay cheque. While New South Wales provides options for those unable to pay fines that include work and development orders and payment plans, unpaid fines can still send a person into a spiral of debt and potential destitution. We need to ensure that these options are widely available

and that vulnerable members of the community know how to access them. While I support the bill, I want to raise concerns about those in our community who continue to be left behind by the bill and our fines system.

Last week a constituent visited my office looking to withdraw his superannuation funds early. He explained he had lost his job and was finding it hard to get by on Newstart. He is behind in paying his rent and facing eviction. His former boss was withholding his last month's pay and he was trying to tide himself over while the Fair Work Commission helped him recover what he is owed. Among his papers my staff noticed he also had an overdue notice for a fine, which he explained he just had not had time to deal with. He was fined for not wearing a helmet as he rode a bike out of his driveway and for other related infringements. Fair cop, he thought, and he was willing to pay the fine. But then he lost his job. The fine went to an enforcement order. He organised a payment plan, but fell behind on that, too, and now owes over \$800.

Given everything he is up against, this fine just kept slipping down the list of priorities. He would have to leave it until he had sorted out his rent, his back pay and where he would get money to pay for food. My staff helped him to start the process of applying for a work and development order, and when he left our office he had one fewer issue to deal with. But fines can become much more than just another item on a to-do list: They can become like a ticking time bomb. Unpaid fines can lead to catastrophic financial or legal consequences for people all across New South Wales. One of the key reasons a person's fine can quickly get out of hand is that they do not know that they have it in the first place. The bill seeks to remedy that by expanding the electronic channels that Revenue NSW can use to notify people of that fine.

With the days of snail mail clearly being numbered, it makes sense that residents should be able to be notified about their fines through emails, apps and text messages. It is unacceptable that residents are not properly informed about their fines or that valid fines are being left unpaid because of mail returned to Service NSW. However, I echo concerns raised by stakeholders that there should be a backup provision in the bill to ensure that electronic communications are not the only way that residents are notified of their fines. Vulnerable communities are often those with reduced access to internet and mobile technologies. The 2016 census reports that fewer Indigenous Australians have access to technologies including the internet, laptops and mobile phones, with 72 per cent of Indigenous people connected compared to 84 per cent of the wider population. There is a digital divide, with phone and internet services often the first to go for vulnerable people who struggle to cope with financial pressures.

The constituent who visited my office explained he had forgotten about the fine partly because he had had to cancel his phone and internet service, and had not received calls from Revenue NSW reminding him that he was behind on his payment plan. In response to the legislation, Community Legal Centres NSW writes that notifying people of fines by SMS or email will likely benefit people who regularly use a single email or mobile number, and states: However, it may negatively impact people experiencing economic hardship and discrimination, including older people, people who are homeless, victims of domestic and family violence, and people with mental illness, who may not regularly access or check their electronic notifications, or who may have difficulty accessing or understanding them. Community Legal Centres also raised the fact that finding fine notifications on web browsers, on phones or via apps may be more difficult for people with reduced access to computers or who face general accessibility barriers to technology. I seek the Minister's response to those concerns.

Schedule 1 [59] to the bill enables the commissioner to reallocate funds from overpayments towards other fines owed. According to the Minister for Customer Service's second reading speech this is already current practice. However, the bill goes further and ensures that when a resident is in receipt of a Centrelink benefit, express permission will be needed to reallocate funds. Stakeholders have again raised concerns with this and pointed out that many vulnerable communities are ineligible for Centrelink payments, including the homeless, refugees, and victims of domestic and family violence. Stakeholders have argued that overpayments should never be applied to other outstanding fines without the person's consent. Again, I seek the Minister's response to those concerns.

The bill broadens the circumstances in which the commissioner can review fines and enforcement orders, meaning residents will have more options to ask for their fines to be reviewed outside of local courts. This is a good thing, as it provides greater flexibility to residents who may find out about their fines late or who uncover further evidence to contest their fines. Revenue NSW will now be able to review fines once they become enforcement orders, which the Government argues will reduce pressure on our local courts. Similarly, residents can apply for payment plans or work and development orders at any stage after a fine is issued—as opposed to the current system where they have to wait for the penalty notice to be enforced. This alone would have had a significant impact for the constituent who visited my office. In order to apply for a payment plan he had to wait for an enforcement order to be made, by which time hundreds of extra dollars had been added to what he owed.

This is cruel, punitive and unnecessary, and I welcome the change. However, I note the concerns of Community Legal Centres that this reform should not come at the cost of local courts being able to issue annulments of fines. The Fines Amendment Bill 2019 promises to streamline the process by which residents are notified of fines and how they pay, manage or contest fines. That is a good thing. I support the bill as a step forward in giving vulnerable people greater control over their fines. Embracing technology and providing greater flexibility in how people manage their fines is admirable, but we have to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place so that no-one is left behind by the system.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:36): I speak in support of the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. I thank the Minister for Customer Service, Victor Dominello, for introducing the bill, which updates our fines system to cater for the modern age. To accomplish this, the bill makes necessary changes to the Fines Act 1996 that improve the way that fines are issued, payed, and disputed. This Government prioritises convenience and efficiency, and it is committed to minimising the process of paying fines. Receiving a fine is far from a pleasant experience—or so I am told—but the process of paying should at least cause minimal confusion to customers. People in my electorate who are confused by the process of paying a fine often come to the Holsworthy electorate office seeking assistance. I know all of my colleagues have had similar experiences. The changes proposed by the Fines Amendment Bill will simplify the procedure of addressing penalties and transacting with the Government. This bill is designed to modernise the way fines are paid, to keep up with an increasingly digitised era.

Transactions are constantly made electronically, and transacting with government agencies should be no exception. We want the people of New South Wales to be able to make use of technology to pay their fines. The current legislation allows for electronic penalty notices. However, the bill also expands the process of electronic delivery of penalty notices. This bill would see that people are promptly notified of penalties through a text, email or other notification. That notification would have a link to the person's secure digital mailbox to view and deal with their fine. If that penalty notice was not responded to, it would be sent in another authorised way, like through the mail. These reforms enhance communication between the Government and customers regarding penalties. The reforms also ensure that everyone is well informed, able to act and able to avoid the late penalties that would be added if there was a lack of response under the current system.

We all have different preferences for how we want to receive communication, particularly from the Government. We have young people and older people, the tech savvy and the electronically illiterate, those who are often on the road and homebodies eager to check their email or their mailboxes. If you are like me, you have a letterbox full of very hungry snails so mail is not necessarily a great way to go. We need to ensure that the Government communicates and can transact with all these people. Communicating with customers in the way that they prefer—electronic or otherwise—will increase the efficiency and productivity of our fines system. More electronic communication with customers will ensure that customers are notified earlier of penalty notices and do not incur additional fees. This measure also helps avoid the progression of fines to the enforcement stage, which is better for the customer. This bill is about making the process of paying a fine simpler, clearer and quicker. As the common means of communication and transaction evolve, legislation should also evolve to cater for the changing conditions. Providing the option for transactions between customers and the Government to be more electronically based is an appropriate and obvious reform for the modern age.

Another way this bill will improve the way New South Wales deals with fines is through amendments to how liability for an offence is identified. Under the current legislation a person cannot nominate themselves as liable for an offence. This can happen when the registered owner of a vehicle incurs a penalty, but the person driving during the incident was someone else. Current legislation would require that the owner nominate the liable party and does not anticipate the possibility that the responsible party might nominate themselves. The bill seeks to rectify this oversight. It is often the case that the responsible person comes forward and takes responsibility for the offence. This self-admission is not yet recognised as valid by our legislation, and so it is in need of reform. Without self-admission of liability for those offences, we have consistently seen delays in the finalisation of fines as well as penalties inflicted on innocent parties.

Under the Fines Amendment Bill, self-admission would be recognised as valid and the fine would be issued to the responsible person. The registered owner of the vehicle would subsequently be notified that they are no longer liable for the offence. For example, if a woman was using her father's car and parked illegally on the street, she could nominate herself as the party responsible. That is an example of a recent issue we have assisted with in our office. The woman's father would be notified that the penalty against him could be waived and redirected to his daughter. This is a highly needed change to the Fines Act 1996.

The bill also makes other relevant amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to recognise self-nominations. Under these amendments, failing to provide a statutory declaration when required in relation to a nomination of the person who was in charge of a vehicle at the time of an incident would become a penalty

notice offence. These are essentially commonsense amendments that make the process of paying fines easier for the people of New South Wales. The Fines Amendment Bill revises the approach to overpayments made to Revenue NSW. Often a situation occurs whereby a customer sets up a regular bank transfer to pay back a fine. If the customer forgets to stop the regular transfer of money from their bank account after the fine has been paid off, this can result in overpayments. Generally what happens with overpayments under the current legislation is that the money is allocated towards other outstanding fines.

The bill seeks to revise multiple components of the legislation in relation to overpayments. Firstly, this bill expands the application of reallocations to also cover the cost of penalty notices. This would mean that overpayments can go towards reducing a customer's overall fines debt without impeding on their right to request a refund. However, for low-income customers and customers on government benefits the reallocation of their overpayments cannot be performed unless requested. This ensures that customers who are likely to be under financial stress are not placed under even more stress through the automatic reallocation of overpayments. For customers who need more time to pay off their fines, payment plans are available after a fine has been issued. This bill would implement practical reforms to make sure we are delivering for the people of New South Wales.

The final aspect of the bill pertains to how penalty disputes are handled. The bill provides a number of ways that customers can dispute a penalty notice. There are existing time limits in place for raising a dispute, which ensure that fines are dealt with in an expedient manner. However, the bill grants more flexibility by allowing customers to dispute a penalty notice at any stage of the penalty notice and fine enforcement life cycle. The bill broadens the ability of Revenue NSW to withdraw an enforcement order, which enables more matters to be settled simply and efficiently. It is anticipated that this will result in the removal of more than 1,000 matters per annum from the Local Court, which will lead to the faster resolution of disputes. This bill will mean that more matters are settled administratively. It will take pressure off the Local Court and, therefore, will be better for everyone involved.

These reforms to the fines system in New South Wales are much needed. I am confident that the amendments proposed in the bill will ensure that customers will receive quality service and will be able to manage and respond to their fines in a simple and timely manner. Where there is progress to be made this Government is ready to enact reform. Our fines system was in need of change and that is why I am speaking in support of this bill. The bill will have a real and positive impact on the people of New South Wales by simplifying the way fines are issued, paid and disputed. I reiterate that the New South Wales Government is committed to making the fines system simpler and easier for customers. The bill delivers on that commitment by supporting more customers to pay off their fines and simplifying the way in which enforcement orders are administered. I again thank for their efforts the Minister for Customer Service, the Hon. Victor Dominello, his team and all the others who contributed to the bill to improve the fines system in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:45): The New South Wales Government is committed to improving services for the people of this State. The Fines Amendment Bill 2019 will modernise the Fines Act 1996 and the Road Transport Act 2013 to make it easier and simpler for the people of this State to deal with their fines. No-one enjoys paying fines but it is important to note that they are an important law enforcement tool. This bill is about making it easier and simpler for people to deal with their fines. The use of electronic communications is an important step towards making it easier for people to do so. I draw the House's attention to another change that will greatly streamline current processes in Revenue NSW and make it easier for our customers.

At any given time Revenue NSW has around 3,000 fine overpayments where the amount could be paid to another fine. That occurs when the customer, for whatever reason, pays more than the amount required and also has another unpaid fine. A common example is a customer who sets up a regular bank transfer to pay off a fine in instalments. When the fine is fully paid off, if the customer forgets to stop their regular transfers Revenue NSW continues to receive payments. In most cases Revenue NSW refunds the overpaid money to the customer but sometimes Revenue NSW is not able to refund the money because of the way in which the customer has set up their payments. Currently the Fines Act 1996 allows Revenue NSW to reallocate an overpaid fine amount to another overdue fine of the same customer. This can help to stop additional penalties or interest being applied to that overdue fine. Under the bill, a customer can ask Revenue NSW to refund the overpaid amount even after it has been reallocated.

The bill makes three important changes to improve the management of overpaid fines. Firstly, the bill introduces a general provision that enables Revenue NSW to refund an overpaid fine amount to the customer. The Act is currently silent on this. Secondly, the bill expands which payments can be reallocated and to which fines. Currently only an overpayment to a fine that has been enforced can be reallocated and then only to another unpaid enforced fine. This bill will enable any overpayment of a fine, whether enforced or not, to be reallocated. The bill

also will allow the overpayment to be reallocated to any other unpaid fine of the customer, whether enforced or not.

Lastly, the bill establishes an important protection for our customers. It provides that an overpayment cannot be reallocated when the customer is a recipient of certain government benefits, that is, unless the customer asks for the reallocation to be made. This ensures that those customers most likely to be in financial stress are not adversely impacted by the reallocation process. This Government understands that for those customers any extra amount may be greatly needed to help them make ends meet. These changes will reduce the number of overpayments currently unused and un-refunded and will reallocate them towards helping the customer pay off their other fines. Importantly, customers will continue to have choice. Customers must be notified of any reallocation and they can ask for it to be refunded back to them. The bill does not change that.

The customer's right to dispute a fine remains, even if it is fully paid off by a reallocation. The time limits for exercising those dispute rights are reset to start from the date of reallocation. In fact, this bill goes further and expressly protects those customers who are on low incomes and who may be reliant on being refunded an overpayment to meet other financial obligations. The Government recognises the importance of such protections, even when a more efficient process of managing overpayments is, by and large, likely to benefit most customers. These reforms make important improvements to the fines system while maintaining customers' rights and choices. I thank the Minister for Customer Service, the Hon. Victor Dominello, and his staff for their work on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:50): The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government is constantly striving to improve the ways in which people interact with government services. The Fines Amendment Bill 2019, by amending the Fines Act 1996, will not only increase administrative efficiency in New South Wales but will also continue the Government's practice of streamlining and simplifying processes like paying a fine. I note that the Government is improving customer service in my electorate of North Shore with the commitment of a new Service NSW centre in North Sydney. I know the importance of providing accessible services to the community and I was proud to announce along with the Minister for Customer Service that my electorate will be receiving a Service NSW centre in the future. My community knows the benefits that Service NSW centres provide. Locals like Ian Curdie and Robert Stitt, AO, from Lavender Bay precinct have been particularly strong advocates for Service NSW centre in North Sydney and I am proud this Government has committed to delivering for them, for my electorate and for communities all across New South Wales.

The Government is committed to making government work better for our communities by placing customer service at the heart of its policies. The bill provides for better utilisation of digital technologies to streamline processes. This shows once again that this Government is a government of the future. We know that technology has the ability to transform the ways in which people engage with government. That is why this bill not only enables us to digitally alert customers of fines but also allows government to continue to harness the power of technology in order to improve the electronic service of penalty notices and associated documents well into the future.

The bill allows overpaid fine amounts to be refunded or reallocated towards a customer's unpaid penalty notices or enforced fines unless that person is a low-income earner. Some people may be paying off multiple fines simultaneously. At any given time Revenue NSW has approximately 3,000 fine overpayments where the amount could be paid to another fine. This bill makes it easier to pay off multiple fines at once by allowing overpayments to be either refunded to the customer or reallocated to the payment of one of their other fines. Expanding customer access to voluntary enforcement of fines will allow people to enter into a payment plan or a work and development order without incurring additional penalties.

The bill makes the payment of fines quicker, easier and more efficient. However, we know that due to financial circumstances sometimes, no matter how quick and simple our services are, paying a fine may not be easy for some people. That is why this bill will enact changes to better support customers who need a payment plan or work and development order to settle their fine. Expanding access to voluntary enforcement will ensure that people who need the support of payment plans will be able to access them without facing undue costs in what is already a financially strained time. There is nothing worse in a stressful financial situation than receiving conflicting or confusing information about a fine. This bill prevents such occurrences by removing the requirement for Revenue NSW to issue a fine enforcement order when it is being voluntarily enforced.

The bill also allows customers to nominate themselves as the driver responsible for an offence rather than only the registered vehicle owner being able to nominate another driver. That is another benefit of this bill. Many families have only one car that is shared by a number of people within the household. My family has only one car and we try to minimise its use as much as possible by using our wonderful local public transport system. This bill exemplifies the Government's trust in the people of New South Wales by enabling those who are not the registered vehicle owner to nominate themselves for a driving offence rather than requiring the vehicle owner to enact that

nomination. By amending the Fines Act 1996 and the Road Transport Act 2013 to enable self-nomination as the responsible driver, the Government is taking yet another step to simplify and improve customer experience.

The bill expands options for penalty notices to be disputed and withdrawn after enforcement has commenced. The bill also streamlines and modernises the options for disputing an enforced penalty notice. This will reduce the need for customers to go to court and will enable customers to apply for an internal review even after a penalty notice is enforced. This makes the dispute pathway more flexible and provides opportunities for more disputed penalty notices to be resolved administratively, thereby reducing the workload of courts across New South Wales. Like other members of this place, I often hear from constituents about penalty notices they have received and the avenues they want to go down to dispute a penalty notice or to ensure that their concerns are best represented. These very sensible reforms by the Minister for Customer Service will make a significant difference to my constituents in the electorate of North Shore and to people across New South Wales.

I turn to the processes that the New South Wales Government has followed before introducing the bill. In 2018 the Government commenced a review of various aspects of the fines system. Through that process a number of opportunities for improvement were identified. They included reductions in parking fines, which have already been implemented, and legislative reforms to improve the customer experience in relation to fines. The legislative changes that are the subject of this bill directly support the Government's priority to make government work better for the people of New South Wales by putting the customer at the centre. As members know, the Fines Act 1996 governs the administration and enforcement of court fines and penalty notices. A range of proposed reforms to the Act are incorporated in the bill. I could go through them but I am sure the Minister in his reply will inform the House of the details of the bill.

As I said earlier, the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 is a sensible bill that makes administrative and efficiency changes. It streamlines and simplifies processes, such as the payment of fines. I thank the Minister for Customer Service for introducing this bill. I note also that my electorate looks forward to the opening of the new Service NSW centre in North Sydney. I know that the Minister for Customer Service will be at the opening to support this new initiative for my constituents in the electorate of North Shore. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (15:57): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. I reiterate that this Government is committed to making it easier for the people of New South Wales to deal with government departments. This bill helps to achieve that commitment. People may not like to receive a fine but the Government will do its best to make it easier to deal with a fine than it has been in the past. These reforms will improve outdated and inefficient provisions that do not meet the standards that we expect of a modern customer-centric fines system. The amendments in the bill in conjunction with better government digital services will support a key Government objective of increasing electronic transactions. Customers will be able to take advantage of improvements in electronic communication in order to deal with their fines quickly and with a minimum of fuss.

The bill recognises self-nominations for penalty notices, which will help overcome delays to the resolution of a fine, as the existing system allows only for nomination by the owner of the vehicle. Sometimes a customer will inadvertently overpay a fine. Currently overpayments may be reallocated towards certain other unpaid fines. Under the bill there will be a broader range of fines to which overpayments can be reallocated. The bill also adds protection for low-income earners by ensuring that overpayments cannot be reallocated unless the person specifically requests reallocation. That strikes an important balance between efficiently managing overpayments and acknowledging that customers, especially those most likely to be in financial stress, have a right to actively decide whether their overpayment should be reallocated.

Another aspect of the bill that makes it easier for customers to deal with fines is increased access to voluntary enforcement. Rather than forcing a customer to wait until a fine has been enforced to access payment plans and other options, the bill allows a customer the option of a payment plan at any time after a fine has been issued. That will save the customer additional enforcement costs and will result in more fines being paid off earlier. Finally, the bill improves the process of disputing a penalty notice after an enforcement order has been made. After enforcement customers will still be able to apply for an internal review of the decision to issue the penalty notice. The grounds for withdrawing an enforcement order will be broadened to include grounds that dispute liability, such as where a customer makes a late court election or driver nomination for an operator onus offence. This is shifting from a cumbersome and expensive process to a simpler, more flexible one.

I now turn to the issues raised in debate on the bill. The member for Canterbury indicated that Labor will not oppose the bill, and I thank the member for her contribution. I firstly address general observations that she made. As the member recognises, the penalty notice system provides a simple and effective way to deal with offences outside of the court system. However, the New South Wales Government is also mindful of the potentially adverse impact that the system may have on people who are vulnerable. Often those people are on low

or fixed incomes and even a small fine can have a significant financial impact. Unpaid fines can then accumulate and accrue additional enforcement costs.

The penalty notice system has a number of mechanisms in place to assist people who are vulnerable or in financial stress. If customers are unable to pay a fine due to serious financial hardship or medical or other personal problems, they can apply for a payment plan to pay off their fine by instalment. The bill will expand that option to more customers. They may be able to apply for a work and development order, which allows them to pay off or reduce their fines by doing unpaid work, undertaking a course or undertaking treatment, or finally they may be able to apply to have their debt written off.

If customers are not granted one of those options, they can appeal the decision to the Hardship Review Board. The board can then direct Revenue NSW to allow a customer a payment plan, to defer payment, to write off the debt or to allow a work and development order. The New South Wales Government is conscious of the potentially significant impact that fines can have on some people. For example, in 2017 amendments were made to ensure that fine enforcement actions such as suspending a person's driver licence did not inadvertently have a disproportionate impact on customers in regional or remote areas who rely on driving to get to work and to visit family and friends. Those areas often have a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who are already over-represented as fine recipients.

The member for Canterbury asked for economic modelling of the bill's impact on revenue. I assure the House that the reforms in the bill are not driven by revenue considerations. They are about making it easier and simpler for people to deal with their fines. I note that the bill is also designed to avoid fines escalating to the enforcement stage—for example, through expanding the "time to pay" arrangements—and we could see a reduction in the additional enforcement costs that would otherwise flow to the State. So there may be revenue impact either way but overall we expect the impact to be negligible. The key point is that the bill is not about revenue. It is about the customer experience, making it easier for customers and saving customers enforcement costs.

The final general query raised by the member for Canterbury related to consultation. The reforms in the bill arose out of a project in 2017-18 to improve the penalty notice system in New South Wales. The project was led by a steering committee of government and non-government bodies. Two community organisations, Youth Off The Streets and the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, were represented on the committee. The New South Wales Council of Social Services, the Law Society of New South Wales and the NSW Legal Assistance Forum also were consulted. Last week I met with Community Legal Centres NSW to discuss their observations on the bill. I thank them for their interest and feedback on this bill. I will now address the issues raised by them and the member for Canterbury on specific elements.

At present penalty notices and associated documents can only be sent electronically by email or text message—that is, the document must be in the email or text or attached to it. The bill broadens the electronic service of penalty notices and associated documents to make available the kind of service that is available to people who pay utilities bills where a person is notified of a bill and then views it by logging onto a secure portal. As with the existing provisions for electronic service, a person must voluntarily agree to the use of this service. The bill provides for the electronic service through an online system that allows customers to securely access and view the document—for example, through the Service NSW mobile app or a customer's MyServiceNSW account, which can be accessed through the Service NSW website. The bill enables a document to be served by sending the customer a penalty notification. For example, a customer could receive a short email, mobile text message or app notification alerting them that they have received a penalty notice and how they can access it.

The member for Canterbury alluded to concerns raised by the Community Legal Centres NSW that those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged may have difficulty receiving and accessing documents sent electronically. That is why I want to stress that electronic service will continue to be used only on an opt-in basis where a customer has consented. This is about giving customers more choice and convenience to suit their preferences. There may be customers who prefer electronic service as it is easier and more secure for them—for example, their living circumstances may mean that they do not have a private mailbox or a fixed address for notices to be posted to. On the other hand, customers who prefer to receive documents in paper will be able to continue to do so. A customer who has consented to electronic service can later withdraw their consent and switch back to service by post. In implementing these electronic service systems, we will work hard to make sure customers make informed decisions and choose a method of service that is right for them.

The member for Canterbury suggested that the proposed additional methods of electronic service may be vulnerable to scams. I want to reassure the House that the New South Wales Government is working across agencies and jurisdictions to protect people against scams that impersonate government agencies. Revenue NSW and other agencies regularly use their communication channels to warn and educate the community about such scams, what they look like and how to report them. Law enforcement and cybersecurity agencies work behind the

scenes to combat the criminals creating the scams. The expansion of electronic services is, in fact, an opportunity to improve security and combat these scams. For example, a customer could opt in to receive their notices through the Service NSW app. If they receive a suspicious email or mobile text messaging asking for a fine to be paid, the customer could easily check whether this is legitimate by logging onto their Service NSW app on their mobile phone and checking their notices.

Scam emails and mobile text messages can be made to appear legitimate but those types of fraud become much more difficult when a customer can easily view and verify their penalty notices through a secure and direct online system, such as their logged-on Service NSW app or account. Many businesses such as banks, utilities and phone companies encourage their customers to view their statements and make payments through the business's mobile app or by logging onto their account on the business's website. The bill modernises the legislation to keep up with technology and to allow methods of electronic service that can be more secure and convenient. But ultimately this will only be used with the customer's consent.

The bill also streamlines processes for customers to dispute liability of a penalty notice, even after enforcement. Currently the dispute options are limited to seeking an annulment, which is only allowed on strict grounds. The member for Canterbury asked about the basis for indicating that the reforms would result in a reduction of approximately 1,000 matters being referred to the Local Court when disputing a penalty notice. This estimate is based on an expected significant reduction in annulment applications that are refused under the current provisions and then appealed successfully to the Local Court on the grounds that the fine recipient was not responsible for the offence or otherwise should not have been issued with a penalty notice. Under the new provisions, the Commissioner of Fines Administration will be able to withdraw the enforcement order in these circumstances.

In addition, combined with other amendments making it easier for people to enter into a payment plan, the reforms are expected to reduce the number of matters that are disputed and not resolved until they are escalated to the Local Court. As I indicated in my second reading speech, the current provisions give the commissioner limited scope to withdraw an enforcement order even where the customer has legitimate grounds for disputing the original penalty notice. Consequently, many matters that could have been resolved between the customer and the commissioner needlessly end up in the Local Court. The bill addresses this problem in two ways. Firstly, it simplifies the provisions so that annulment applications to the commissioner become applications to withdraw the enforcement order. The terms "withdrawal" and "annulment" will essentially mean the same thing—cancelling the enforcement order. But "withdrawal" will refer to the action by the commissioner whilst "annulment" will refer to the same action undertaken by the Local Court. Secondly, the bill expands the grounds upon which the commissioner may withdraw a fine enforcement order.

I note the concerns raised that the reforms may limit a person's right to apply to the Local Court for an annulment. The bill does not affect this right at all. Just as occurs now, the Local Court may annul the enforcement order if the commissioner has declined a customer's application and the customer appeals. The difference is that because the bill increases the commissioner's capacity to resolve a fine enforcement order in favour of the customer, the need for a matter to be appealed to the Local Court will be reduced. The impact of these changes will be monitored. As always, Revenue NSW will be guided closely by customer feedback about these processes, not only in reducing the need to go to court but also in providing adequate avenues for review of a penalty notice.

I note also the concerns raised by the member for Canterbury about the reallocation of overpayments. The bill seeks to improve the current administration of overpayments while safeguarding customers who are most likely to be in financial hardship and in need of a refund of their overpayment. The bill identifies such customers as persons in receipt of a government benefit approved by the Commissioner of Fines Administration or a class of persons prescribed by the regulation. This is consistent with how other provisions of the Fines Act 1996 currently identify customers in financial hardship. This definition also gives flexibility for the protection to be extended if necessary to cover other people for which reallocation may not be appropriate. Importantly, any customer, whether they are covered by this protection or not, will have a right to request that an overpayment be refunded. This bill does not remove the obligation on Revenue NSW to notify a customer when an overpayment has been reallocated and their right to request a refund.

Lastly, I am pleased to confirm that a customer who agrees to a work and development order or a payment plan is still able to later obtain an internal review or dispute the fine in court. In fact, the bill will allow a customer to seek an internal review of the penalty notice at any time. Customers will also be able to dispute the fine in court through the expanded provisions for withdrawing a penalty notice enforcement order. As I said when I first introduced the bill, these reforms are about modernising the fines system to make it easier and simpler for customers to deal with their fines—whether that means how they receive their fine, pay off their fine or dispute their liability. I thank the member for Wyong, the member for Prospect, the member for Summer Hill, the member

for Canterbury, the member for Dubbo, the member for Gosford, the member for Manly, the member for Terrigal and the member for North Shore for their contributions to the debate. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Ms Sophie Cotsis.

Consideration in Detail

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:16): By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2019-032C in globo:

No. 1 Unlawful disclosure of personal information

Page 3, Schedule 1[1]. Insert after line 4:

personal information has the same meaning as in the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

No. 2 Unlawful disclosure of personal information

Page 11, Schedule 1. Insert after line 33:

[59] Sections 117A(4) and 117B(2)

Omit the subsections.

[60] Section 117C

Insert after section 117B:

117C Unlawful disclosure of personal information

If the Commissioner becomes aware of an unlawful disclosure of personal information about an individual that is held by the Commissioner, the Commissioner must, as soon as practicable after becoming aware of it, notify the individual of the disclosure.

The amendments do two things: First, they move the definition of personal information found in sections 117A and 117B of the Fines Act 1996 to section 4 of the Fines Act 1996. This is a change that was recommended to avoid the repetition of this definition in three different sections of the Act. I will come to the substance of this amendment. I acknowledge the Minister for dealing with some of the issues I raised during the debate, particularly in relation to the serious and concerning issues that the Community Legal Centre raised with us. I am glad the Minister is listening and will take them on board. We will hold him to that. The Opposition supports this bill, as we stated during the debate. The concern we have is about privacy and personal information.

The second amendment is to insert a new section 117C into the Fines Act. The new section 117C provides that if the Commissioner of Fines Administration becomes aware of an unlawful disclosure of personal information about an individual that is held by the commissioner, the commissioner must, as soon as practicable after becoming aware of it, notify the individual of the disclosure. Section 117A of the Fines Act sets out the entities that the Commissioner of Fines Administration is authorised to provide personal information to. Section 117B provides that a person who discloses personal information in a manner which is not authorised by law commits an offence and is liable to a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units, or \$11,000.

The new section that the Labor Opposition is proposing is drafted to address a deficiency in the current law. I will talk about the leaking of private information of the former Labor leader, Michael Daley. While the Fines Act contains an offence if personal information is disclosed unlawfully there is no power or requirement for the commissioner to notify a person that their information has been unlawfully disclosed. There may be some question as to whether this is connected to the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. We believe that it is. The overall aim of the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 is to encourage more people to contest their fines by seeking internal reviews and requesting the commissioner to withdraw penalty notice enforcement orders.

Put another way, the intent of the bill is that people will share personal information with the commissioner in order to deal with penalty notices and enforcement orders. That personal information may include details of a medical condition, illness, injury or mental health condition that might justify the withdrawal of a penalty notice enforcement order. In order for the bill to work it is necessary for people to have faith that their personal information will be protected. In order to gain and maintain that trust people should expect that if a violation of a person's privacy occurs they will be told about the violation so they can take whatever action might be available to protect themselves.

Currently the people of New South Wales do not have faith or confidence in the process. Unfortunately, this Minister holds all our data and all our private information. We saw what happened a few months ago with the leaking of information to attack a political opponent. It was a disgrace. It was shameful, wrong and shift. Nobody has admitted to it. It was absolutely wrong. The Minister had an opportunity last week during budget estimates to apologise and to set the record straight. Unfortunately, an apology was not forthcoming. This issue has been ventilated in the media, including in articles written in *The Australian* newspaper. There have been referrals to various authorities but my concern is about people's personal information.

If there is a vendetta, this Minister's office or another Minister's office may seek to disclose information for political pointscoring. That is not right. It is absolutely wrong. That is why this amendment is very important. I urge the crossbench, the Government and the Minister to support it. There is a gap in the legislation and that is why we are proposing a new section 117C. *The Australian* newspaper's political editor, Andrew Clennell, has ventilated and detailed the issues at length with respect to these disclosures. The Hon. Penny Sharpe made a Government Information (Public Access) Act request. I will read a note from Revenue NSW official Katrina Morgan to her superior, Jane Dudley, on 14 November last year. It states:

13/11/2018 — telephone discussion with Gabrielle Hendry DLO (departmental liaison officer for Mr Dominello). During the conversation, Gabrielle advised that the Minister's office had ... identified that Michael Daley (who had recently replaced Luke Foley as leader of the Opposition) contacted the MP hotline about his own speeding fine. Gabrielle advised that the Minister's office were determining whether to use this information against Mr Daley ...

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: My point of order is on relevance. The Opposition spokesperson is moving entirely away from the scope of the bill. I ask you to bring her back to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is broadly speaking about personal information, which I understand is what the amendment is about. However, I ask her to return to addressing the content of the bill and her amendments.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: This is entirely relevant to the Fines Amendment Bill 2019. This is about people's information and the misuse of that information by government. I have every right to represent those people whose information has not been—

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr Anthony Roberts: The member is now conducting a personal attack on the Minister.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: No, I am not. I will put it in a substantive motion. I am not making a personal attack on the Minister.

Mr Anthony Roberts: I ask that you direct her back to the leave of the amendments.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury will return to addressing the amendments.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: I did not make any personal attack on the Minister for Customer Service. I did not mention the Minister by name and I will refer to him by his right title. Maybe the Government has got glass-jaw-itis. However, let me say this: This was a fundamental attack against the Leader of the Opposition. Information was used by the Government for political pointscoring. It was shift and shameless. That is why the amendment should be supported—so if people's information is unlawfully breached the commissioner then has the right to contact those people to advise them of the breach. That is what the amendment is about. It is very simple and it fixes a gap in the Fines Amendment Bill.

I will read from some of the information received in the Government Information (Public Access) Act request. It is really important. Private information should not be used by ministerial staff or government advisers. We trust government. The Government has announced in the budget that it is going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars digitising our information. It has access to a lot of people's information. That is why the amendment is very important. I do not understand why the Government is not supporting it. The now head of Revenue NSW and Commissioner of Fines Administration Mr Stephen Brady wrote to NSW Privacy Commissioner Samantha Gavel shortly after the breach. He said that he had an assurance from Mr Dominello's chief of staff that the document on the representations by MPs for motorists had been deleted. The letter states:

I write to notify you of a data breach concerning Revenue NSW which took place on 14 June 2018.

...

The breach followed a request from the office of the Minister for Finance, Services and Property for a list of members of Parliament who had made representations in relation to certain driving offences in 2017-18.

...

That additional information included details of each of the offences on which the requested information was based, including personal information which Revenue NSW was not authorised to release.

...

In accordance with the Information and Privacy Commission's *Data Breach Guidance* (May 2018) Revenue NSW acted to contain the breach ...

...

On 14 November 2018 the Commissioner of Fines Administration spoke to the chief of staff of the Minister's office about the data breach. The chief of staff advised that the information contained in the attachment had not been disclosed to any person outside the Minister's office and would be destroyed. The destruction of the information was confirmed in writing on 19 November 2018.

There is of course more information that I would like to put on the record. However, what concerns me is that when you read all this information—not only in the media but also in the GIPAA request—you understand the seriousness of disclosing this data. It is very serious and the Government should take it very seriously. That is why the amendment is needed. The Commissioner of Fines Administration and other public servants recognised that a privacy breach had occurred. While they notified the Information and Privacy Commission, no notification has been given to the people whose data was breached. The issue was considered in detail at a recent budget estimates hearing on 3 September. On page 52 of the transcript there is an exchange between the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and the commissioner, Mr Brady.

As I am running out of time, I ask people to read the exchange. Clearly this was very wrong. People still do not know that their information has been leaked. The Opposition shares the concern that Mr Brady raised at budget estimates. We believe that this amendment will help to restore trust and faith in the processes of government in holding this information. Unfortunately, that trust has been eroded. The cheap political stunt to get at a political foe was wrong. I can hear sighs from across the Chamber. If members opposite have got good policies they can take them to the election and run their campaign with dignity and respect. Of course there is going to be politics. Of course there will be name-calling and attacks. However, using private personal information to attack a political foe—a political leader, at that—was shameful and wrong.

Mr David Elliott: He wasn't a leader, he was a racist.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Why don't you put that in a motion? We are happy to debate you.

Mr David Elliott: It has already been said by your side.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: No, it has not. I call for members to support this amendment. It is sensible. People should know how their information is used and who is using it and not worry that their personal information will be leaked for political gain.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (16:32): I thank the member for her contribution. The Government opposes the amendments put forward by the Opposition. How data breaches are dealt with is currently done in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Information and Privacy Commission NSW. Those guidelines require an agency to assess the nature and scope of the breach to determine whether persons need to be notified. It is appropriate that disclosures of personal information continue to be dealt with under those guidelines, rather than mandating that a person be notified of every instance of disclosure, as this may unnecessarily cause distress or harm to the persons concerned.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2019-032C be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes42
Noes47
Majority.....5

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Barr, Mr C
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Dib, Mr J
Finn, Ms J
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
McDermott, Dr H

Atalla, Mr E
Butler, Mr R
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Donato, Mr P
Harris, Mr D
Hoenig, Mr R
Leong, Ms J
McGirr, Dr J

Bali, Mr S
Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dalton, Mrs H
Doyle, Ms T
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Lynch, Mr P
McKay, Ms J

AYES

Mehan, Mr D (teller)
O'Neill, Dr M
Piper, Mr G
Smith, Ms T.F.
Washington, Ms K

Mihailuk, Ms T
Park, Mr R
Saffin, Ms J
Tesch, Ms L
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Minns, Mr C
Parker, Mr J
Scully, Mr P
Voltz, Ms L
Zangari, Mr G

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Gibbons, Ms M
Hancock, Mrs S
Johnsen, Mr M
Lindsay, Ms W
Pavey, Mrs M
Preston, Ms R
Saunders, Mr D
Singh, Mr G
Stokes, Mr R
Tuckerman, Mrs W
Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S
Constance, Mr A
Crouch, Mr A (teller)
Elliott, Mr D
Griffin, Mr J
Hazzard, Mr B
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Perrottet, Mr D
Provest, Mr G
Sidgreaves, Mr P
Smith, Mr N
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Wilson, Ms F

Barilaro, Mr J
Clancy, Mr J
Cooke, Ms S (teller)
Davies, Mrs T
Evans, Mr L.J.
Gulaptis, Mr C
Henskens, Mr A
Lee, Dr G
O'Dea, Mr J
Petinos, Ms E
Roberts, Mr A
Sidoti, Mr J
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

Amendments negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that clauses 1 and 2 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.**Third Reading**

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.**RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 7 August 2019.**

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:44): It is with great pleasure that I lead the Opposition's response to the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The Opposition does not oppose this bill, which is an important step in improving the integrity of the thoroughbred and harness racing industries in New South Wales. However, the bill has been a long time coming and many would argue that it is well overdue, especially as it is designed to improve the integrity of these industries—an important issue for the racing industries. Key elements of the reforms were flagged as part of the review undertaken by David Armati of the New South Wales Racing Appeals Tribunal in 2014. That is five years ago. A review commissioned by this Government and the then Minister, George Souris, highlighted major shortcomings in the capacity of stewards' inquiries to interview all persons of interest and key witnesses. I congratulate the Government on finally managing to bring these changes to fruition after Mr Armati made his recommendations all those years ago.

The bill amends five pieces of legislation and one regulation—the Harness Racing Act 2009, the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996, the Betting and Racing Act 1998, the Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983, the Totalizator Act 1997 and the Totalizator Regulation 2012. Amendments to these statutory instruments are designed to improve the integrity of the racing industry and also to bring regulation and oversight of the racing

industry into line with the regulation of casinos and the greyhound industry, and regulation of racing in other States and Territories across Australia. The bill also allows the greyhound industry's share of wagering tax parity reforms to flow direct to Greyhound Racing NSW. This is the final stage of the greyhound racing reforms.

In order to deliver these improvements to the integrity and regulation of the racing industries, while in parallel ensuring a sustainable racing industry, the bill delivers several key elements. Firstly, the bill provides Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW with powers to compel unlicensed persons to attend inquiries and produce documents, subject to approval from the Supreme Court. Secondly, the bill allows the Commissioner of Police to exclude persons from racecourses. This power is intended to be similar to the powers currently in place allowing persons to be excluded from casinos in New South Wales. Thirdly, the bill facilitates the Racing Appeals Tribunal to manage the caseload more efficiently. It also allows the tribunal to receive advice from experts when considering appeals and making decisions.

Fourthly, the bill updates the penalties for failing to appear at a Racing Appeals Tribunal hearing. Fifthly, it codified the powers of Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW by codifying their respective rules. Finally, the bill dissolves the tax reduction trust fund to allow the greyhound industry to get its share of wagering tax parity reforms flowing directly to it. This is the final stage of the greyhound racing reform. The racing industry brings almost \$3.5 billion to the New South Wales economy and delivers more than 25,000 full-time equivalent jobs. In addition to the economic importance of this industry and its incredible importance as an employer of so many people, especially in rural and regional areas right across New South Wales, it is also an industry that plays an important role in the cultural development of New South Wales for so many race watchers, racegoers and punters.

According to Racing NSW, over the past five years the racing industry has seen tremendous growth in the amount of money flowing through the industry. It is seen the introduction of The Everest, the world's richest turf race, carrying prize money of \$14 million. There has also been year-on-year growth in racing wagering sales over that time. Prize money and returns to owners' revenue has also increased, from just over \$192 million in 2014 to almost \$254 million in the past financial year, which is an increase of \$61.5 million. On top of that, New South Wales has increased the number of races it runs by over 120 on 2014 numbers. At the same time, the past five years have seen significant growth in online betting and massive changes across the racing industry.

That is an enormous growth and deserves to be supported by improvements in the integrity of racing. It is imperative that we continue to provide a supportive environment for this important industry and it is essential that we work with the industry to ensure that it is an industry of the highest integrity. That is why I am concerned it has taken the Government so long to implement these important reforms aimed at strengthening the integrity of the industry, reforms supported by thoroughbred racing and harness racing. I call on the Minister to commit to proclaiming and commencing the legislation in a speedy manner to prevent any further delays.

While stakeholders have indicated that the reforms contained in the bill are sensible, they have expressed disappointment at the delay in implementing these reforms. One area of concern that I have with the bill relates to the compulsion to appear and the power to compel the provision of documents. I understand that these compulsion powers are similar to those currently held by other bodies in New South Wales, such as the ICAC and the Ombudsman. I believe that these powers are appropriate and necessary to improve the integrity of the industry. I understand that the powers have been balanced appropriately. In order to prevent the potential for self-incrimination when producing documents, this has been limited as those same documents cannot be used in other fora, such as courts and other jurisdictions. This is similar to the current situation with the ICAC's powers to compel the production of documents.

Similarly, the exclusion powers are essentially the same as those powers to exclude any persons from a casino in New South Wales. While the two systems will operate in a similar manner, they will operate independently. For instance, if a person is excluded from a casino, they are not automatically excluded from a racecourse and vice versa. However, it would be sensible for the Government to ensure that if a person is excluded from a racecourse or a casino for reasons likely to affect the integrity of both industries, then it should be a requirement that the excluding industry inform the other industry of the exclusion so that the second industry can make a decision as to whether that exclusion should apply to both industries. This will prevent excluded persons from shifting criminal enterprises from one industry to another. The Government's checks and balances of the Supreme Court being involved in the exclusion process will ensure that exclusions are applied appropriately.

The Minister has indicated to the House that the bill would not impact on the budget, as it is intended to improve the powers of regulatory agencies, and streamline the racing tribunal's operations and ability to investigate matters. While I understand this intention to improve the operation of the tribunal and relevant regulatory agencies, I do have some concerns that it will be the racecourses themselves that will be left with the task of ensuring that excluded persons are identified and actually prevented from entering racecourses on race days. This is likely to require additional security at small regional racecourses. While the industry has indicated

that it does not expect many persons to be excluded, this is yet to be seen, and even a small number of excluded persons will present an additional security task.

We cannot assume that an excluded person would never attempt to enter a racecourse. I recently read the new book by Peter Hoysted and Pat Sheil entitled *The Fine Cotton Fiasco*, which is the definitive history of the worst incident in history of racing in this country. Hayden Haitana, Fine Cotton's infamous trainer, received a lifetime ban across Australia, which was overturned after 27 years. He admits that he visited several racecourses during that time and sometimes he was recognised, but he was never excluded. This is somebody who was on *60 Minutes*, drunk, talking about his involvement in fixing the most famous fixed race in the history of this country yet he still managed to get into some racecourses over that 27 years. So we cannot assume that everybody who has ever been excluded from a racecourse will be prevented from entering. We also cannot assume that it will not cost those race clubs or the racing industries additional costs in terms of maintaining security at those premises to make sure that does not happen.

These are very sensible reforms and they are supported by the industry. They are certainly not opposed by the Opposition and they need to be implemented as soon as possible. With the massive growth that racing has enjoyed in New South Wales over the past five years we need to keep pace by making sure that racing is conducted with the utmost integrity. We need to do that by implementing these reforms as soon as possible. They were proposed five years ago as recommendations coming out of David Armati's report. They are incredibly important and there has been no good reason for this five-year delay. If we want to see racing continue to thrive in New South Wales, especially as New South Wales now has the world's richest race that will be run in a few weeks, we need to support that by having the highest integrity in the industry. I urge the Government to implement these reforms as soon as possible if this bill is adopted.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:53): I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 that will amend the Thoroughbred Racing Act and the Harness Racing Act to provide a statutory authority to compel unlicensed persons to attend special inquiries about matters that threaten to undermine the integrity of, or public confidence in, racing. The proposed approach is part of the Government's continued commitment to a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales. With the highest standards of integrity, ultimately these reforms will support the long-term viability of the racing industry. They strengthen community confidence in the racing regulatory bodies, Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales, and ensure they have the right tools with which to investigate nefarious activities and fully investigate integrity threats to racing.

Securing the integrity of racing is of paramount concern to the industry. The wider public demands certainty that horses and industry participants are competing on a level playing field. Without integrity, the average punter cannot be certain that a race result is legitimate. Uncertainty about the integrity of racing undermines the industry's economic viability and the jobs that the industry sustains across the State because punters are less likely to continue betting. New South Wales racing stewards are second to none. The integrity measures and technology available to our stewards set the benchmark for the regulation of racing. Racing NSW's Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory conducts testing on thousands of performance enhancing substances in thoroughbred horses and is leading the world in the development of a biological passport. The performance of this laboratory, which is wholly owned by Racing NSW, demonstrates the desire of racing regulators to ensure the integrity of the industry and filter out cheats.

Threats to the integrity of racing come in many forms ranging from breaches of riding and driving rules to serious issues, such as the systematic use of performance enhancing substances and criminal interference in betting activities and race fixing. Those matters can negatively affect the industry's growth, public confidence in the industry, animal welfare and wagering revenue. The lack of clear authority for racing authorities to question unlicensed persons in the racing industry limits their ability to fully investigate threats to racing's integrity. Unlicensed persons may be on the periphery of an investigation, but hold information that can establish critical facts about an identified threats to the integrity of racing. However, racing authorities currently need to rely on those persons voluntarily providing information to assist with their inquiries. While New South Wales racing controlling bodies have powers to warn off uncooperative persons from attending the State's racecourses, a fact-finding investigation would be incomplete, presenting an ongoing integrity risk to the racing industry.

This bill will address that gap in racing integrity. When racing stewards are reasonably satisfied that a person has information that is relevant to an inquiry and that person is willing to provide that information, they can seek approval from the Supreme Court to exercise compulsory powers. Anyone with information that is crucial to an inquiry will be required to attend and provide evidence. This bill serves to improve integrity outcomes and the sustainability of racing. This House should commend this legislation for its potential to safeguard and secure the integrity of the New South Wales racing industry into the future. Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have gone to great lengths over the past decade to innovate and grow the industry across the State with new

races and events to grow the sport, such as the recent announcement that both The Everest and the Million Dollar Chase will be held on the same weekend in October, making Sydney a must-attend destination for racing fans.

Racing participants in country and regional areas also have benefited immensely from the increased prize money that will allow trainers outside the metropolitan area to thrive. In thoroughbred racing, country prize money will top \$81 million next season with the cups at Coffs Harbour and Muswellbrook going up to \$150,000 and the Taree Cup, Dubbo Cup and Snake Gully Cup at Gundagai to be worth \$100,000. These progressive initiatives create employment opportunities across New South Wales, with the industry continuing to generate more than \$3.3 billion in economic activity each year, thereby boosting the New South Wales economy. Racing is more than just an event in regional communities. It is part of our culture, and that is why the regulators continue to explore new ways to make racing as enjoyable and accessible as possible for the community. The regulators invest significant resources each year in integrity measures to ensure a level playing field for participants and punters. The Menangle trotting club, which borders my electorate, provides strong economic impetus for the area. This bill will give added confidence for the many trainers, owners and punters who live in my electorate.

Debate interrupted.

Public Interest Debate

BUSHFIRES

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes northern New South Wales is currently facing severe fire conditions.
- (2) Acknowledges the efforts of hundreds of firefighters and support personnel across New South Wales who have worked tirelessly to fight these fires and support the communities affected.

I will begin by recognising the work that our firefighters have been doing across the State over the past week. We are in the midst of the worst drought on record in New South Wales. The irony is that at Dorrigo, where we have an emergency evacuation centre, light rain has fallen which, after two weeks of effort, will bring some relief to our firefighters and our communities. Drought conditions make fires more likely as they dry out fuel and increase heat—two of the three elements needed for fires. Approximately 600 firefighters per day have been deployed across New South Wales. Today the Premier highlighted that many of those firefighters have come from regional communities and cities in New South Wales to support our regional communities. An additional 2,000 NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers have been deployed and have put their lives on the line for our communities. Without our men and women on the ground, towns like Tenterfield, Armidale, Yamba and my community of Dorrigo would be in a dire state.

As of this morning 48 bush and grass fires across the State continue to burn and devastate our communities. Despite the enormous efforts of our firefighters and volunteers, 13 of those fires remain uncontained. At the moment all of those fires remain at advice level, which means that although there is no immediate danger those fires could change at any time and we are staying alert. From what we know so far, 26 homes have been destroyed and 13 have been damaged. I also know of at least a few humpies and a caravan in and near my electorate where people's lives have been impacted. However, 612 homes in the direct area have been saved. There have also been six facilities destroyed, two damaged and 51 saved. The fires have destroyed 77 outbuildings with 50 damaged. Overall 545 outbuildings have been saved.

The NSW Rural Fire Service building impact assessment teams are continuing to assess properties and communities impacted by these fires. A total of 16 homes have been destroyed at the Long Gully Road fire near Drake. However, this number may change as the fire continues to burn. Crews have been unable to complete their assessment. At this fire, more than 170 other homes in the direct area of the fire have been saved. Seven homes were destroyed at the Bees Nest fire near Armidale—a fire that has burnt and razed 93,000 hectares of this State including the mighty Guy Fawkes River National Park and approximately 30,000 hectares of private land. I have to say it is soul destroying to see photographs posted by farmers showing their burnt and charred stock, let alone the photographs we have not seen and do not have access to of wild animals within our national parks.

I note that the member for Clarence is in the Chamber. Two homes were destroyed in the Shark Creek bushfire near Yamba in his electorate. That area is notorious for its natural vegetation, and its bush and hedges are known to our national parks and to the communities on that coastal front. It burns very sharply and fiercely. There was great concern on the day of that fire. I know the member for Lismore was at Tenterfield and she would be very well aware of that home at Mount MacKenzie Road bush. I acknowledge the Premier's comments on Mayor Peter Petty, who is a character for one and all. He gave me some honest feedback the other day when I saw him. It was after the fires had been through that weekend and Tenterfield had been at risk. He said that obviously a lot of lessons had been learned in the March fires and he was pleased that communication had improved; they

were very supportive. I was able to relay that feedback to Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons when he was at Tyringham with me and also to the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the relevant Minister.

It is incredible. On that first Sunday I raced up to the Dorriggo evacuation centre. I learned online that it had been opened and also that there was to be a public meeting at Tyringham. While that town is represented by the member for Clarence, we share the nearby border and I am sure that some of my constituents are members of the Tyringham bushfire brigade. Borders do not really matter, and the member for Clarence is very pleased with the support that the Premier and the Deputy Premier announced. I saw the exhaustion of Darren Weeks, who the Premier mentioned, and his son. Darren's children were there and his oldest son, Jack, got onto his motorbike to check out spot fires and send information to the team on the weekend before last—when things were particularly tough. He spent six days on the fire ground.

I saw the women who were catering, supporting and doing what they could. We took a couple of urns to them so that they could have more hot water—which they will not need next time because they will have a new hot water service as part of the Government's \$20,000 announcement. Every fire we face is terrible. I sincerely thank and acknowledge everyone on the Dorriggo Plateau, at Ebor, at Tyringham, in the Upper Nymboida River region, at Bostobrick and in the Deervale RFS brigade for their spirit, effort and selflessness. As I was going through some of the messages on Facebook I noted the overwhelming positivity and the disbelief of those whose properties were saved by the graciousness and decency of the volunteers. Sam Ayling wrote:

I can't fathom where you find the grit and courage to leave your families and put yourselves in danger for others, some of whom you've never met.

You helped save our property by holding the front back, you and your crews kept an eye on my husband who was up for several days watching for embers, and then you went on fighting a massive front in difficult conditions.

To say I'm grateful is the deepest understatement. ... THANK YOU

Beaumont's Produce at Dorriggo is sending out fodder and coordinating help. This is the community country spirit that comes alive. To everyone involved in keeping us safe, I thank you.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:07): I speak in strong support of Minister Pavey's motion and I thank her for putting the topic before the House. I will restate it, as it is worth restating. The Minister for Water, Property and Housing moved that we note that "northern New South Wales is currently facing severe fire conditions". Some of us local members, like the member for Clarence, the member for Oxley or the member for Northern Tablelands, have experienced those conditions firsthand. We know what it is like, but we cannot know what it is like to be out there as a firefighter unless we are one. This House also acknowledges the efforts of hundreds of firefighters and support personnel deployed across New South Wales who have worked tirelessly to fight these fires and support the communities affected. Indeed, they are still doing that.

At the outset I join my colleagues like the member for Oxley and the others who will speak, by putting on record my deep gratitude to long-term Rural Fire Service firefighter Mr Neville Smith, who was seriously injured fighting the fires at Tenterfield. I know that every member in this place will join me in expressing our deep gratitude, concern, thanks and prayers to Mr Smith and his family. All of us stand ready to help. Of the 701 firefighters deployed, I swear I saw most of them in the Tenterfield shire; I am sure other members saw them around their shires as well. They are civic-minded good citizens who seek to serve our community. They not only keep us safe, but they also keep our animals, stock and properties safe. I note that between the Long Gully fires in Drake and the Tenterfield fires 16 homes have gone so far, plus a whole lot of outbuildings and equipment that people need on their properties. However, it is a moving feast at the moment.

I read that at this stage the fires are contained, but alive and the Bruxner Highway remains closed as of a few hours ago. That takes me through my electorate up to Tenterfield and Drake. I am also advised that quite a few animals have been injured, as well as wildlife. I will talk to all of these issues at another time in this place, including the water and the drought. I will note that the spring fires have come early and in the worst drought on record, but today we are here to acknowledge, thank and honour all our rural firefighters. I thank the Rural Fire Service, the Fire and Rescue brigades, the police, the Family and Community Services workers, the chaplains, the Salvation Army, the Country Women's Association, the farmers and landholders who join in the firefighting efforts, and also Essential Energy, which was on duty 24/7 in my area. I saw Essential Energy workers replacing poles and I have stayed in touch on that issue all of the time.

When the first fire broke out I was in the Telegraph Hotel in Tenterfield with a local character, John Landers, called Dodge. He was in Fire and Rescue for a long time and now runs efforts for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. I was in Tenterfield for an event in support of that service and we had gone to the pub for lunch when the fire brigades went by. We walked outside to see what was going on, but I cannot repeat what Dodge said when we saw that the fires had started in Tenterfield. Thank God the smoke was blowing a certain

way, because they were right on the edge of town. It was all hands on deck, including Mayor Peter Petty and Tenterfield Shire Council CEO Terry Dodds.

The fires ramped up on Friday, disaster was declared on Saturday and an evacuation centre was opened that night. I cannot complain about that. I thank everybody who stayed in touch with me, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, but also Minister Elliot and Minister Ward—who was ringing me constantly. I also thank Minister Pavey, who rang me on the Friday. She got on to my office. I thank her for her call and for everybody else who has stayed in touch with me the whole time so that I was better able to help. I give a big shout-out to all of our wonderful firefighters. Thank you.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (17:12): I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Oxley. I thank her for moving it and for acknowledging not only the adverse conditions that we are experiencing in regional New South Wales, but also the heroism and bravery shown by the Rural Fire Service, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests and the ordinary landholders who are not members of any of those organisations, but who have still put themselves in danger to protect not only their properties but also those of their neighbours and people further afield. My electorate of Northern Tablelands includes the epicentre of where the Bees Nest fire started, near the small community of Ebor. It started burning on Friday 6 September in the Guy Fawkes River National Park and as we participate in this discussion it is still burning today.

It has now burnt out an area of more than 90,000 hectares, which is massive, and sadly seven homes have been lost. On its ignition, the fire was fanned by very strong westerly winds, high temperatures and a massive dry fuel load—a result of the ongoing drought. The blaze moved incredibly quickly, destroying both farms and bushland. Indeed, a number of local Rural Fire Service volunteers and farmers—some of whom have been on that land for three generations and have fought many bushfires, as their properties bound Guy Fawkes River National Park—told me they had never seen anything like it in terms of speed and ferocity. Over that weekend I had the fortune of attending a number of meetings that the Rural Fire Service held with Local Land Services [LLS] in Ebor to brief the community on what was happening, the hazardous conditions, what people should expect in the coming days and how to prepare for a worst-case situation. We always prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Thankfully up until this point the winds have not changed and those fires have not pushed back towards the Ebor community.

As I said at the outset and as other members have said, I want to put on record my sincere appreciation and the high regard I have for our Rural Fire Service personnel, both paid staff and volunteers, and the staff and volunteers of the other services involved, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW State Forests. Over the past 10 days or so they have all mucked in and put in a real team effort in some very ordinary and rugged terrain and catastrophic conditions. I acknowledge also all of the crews that have been servicing the aerial firefighting, the helicopter bombing operations and the fixed-wing bombing operations. A lot of that work—the aerial firefighting and the reloading of those aircraft—has been based on the western side of the fire out of Armidale Airport. I thank all of the staff and individuals involved in that.

I acknowledge the Premier, the emergency services Minister and the Deputy Premier who last week made the trip up to see those fires and visit the farmers and Rural Fire Service volunteers. I know that their visit was appreciated. As the member for Lismore acknowledged, tears were shed and jokes were cracked. It is amazing how people react in conditions like these. Their visit was certainly appreciated and it was great to see the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, Shane Fitzsimmons, out in the field as well. As the Minister responsible for Local Land Services, I finish by acknowledging Local Land Services and the speed with which the LLS responded to the emergency situation.

The LLS set up emergency fodder and water supplies at Tenterfield, Ebor and Dorriggo. It made hay and water available to farmers who needed it for their stock. At Ebor alone more than 700 to 800 kilogram bales of hay have been sourced from Victoria and distributed to farmers. There have been numerous water-carting operations to farms. We still do not know the final toll of the devastation. There have been hundreds of kilometres of boundary fencing lost, 133 private landholders have been impacted by the Bees Nest fire alone and more than 100 livestock animals, predominantly cattle, have been confirmed as deceased as a result of these fires. It will be a long rebuilding process but the Government will support those affected and I will do everything I can as the local member to do the same.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:18): I am pleased that the Government has brought to the attention of the House an important matter for today's public interest debate and to hear Government members' gratitude for the efforts of our firefighters and emergency services workers. But as is often the case, I am concerned that Government members have come into the Chamber and said something quick and easy in support of our community but then have walked out, put their ministerial hats back on and refused to adequately fund essential

public services that people rely upon, particularly those living in the bush who are facing a severe drought and a bad bushfire season.

I pay tribute to our emergency services workers, including the professional firefighters and the army of volunteers in the Rural Fire Service [RFS]. I acknowledge the ancillary work and support of other service agencies during these crises, including police, paramedics, the National Park and Wildlife Service, State Forests, the Volunteer Rescue Association and the State Emergency Service, who also swing in to support the community during these catastrophes. We should recognise too that volunteer firefighting crews from across the State are being despatched to fires in Queensland and northern New South Wales. Locally, my Blue Mountains RFS crews have been heading to the north of our State to help with efforts to contain the bushfires near Tenterfield, Yamba and Armidale. I also note that in addition to the catastrophe unfolding in the north of our State, areas in the Central West are grappling with fire incidences. Thankfully a fire near Lithgow was brought under control.

Our devoted and hardworking professional firefighters and volunteers can only serve and assist our communities as well as they are served and assisted by the State Government. It would therefore be remiss of me to gloss over the fact that in the recent budget the New South Wales Government cut nearly \$13 million from the operational budget of Fire and Rescue NSW. That cut is bureaucratic longhand for staffing allocations. This is an attack on the frontline capacity of our professional firefighters, despite an assurance from the Minister during budget estimates that frontline firefighters were immune from his Government's relentless attacks on public sector workers.

We know the Government will have to reduce the safe and effective crewing numbers on firefighting appliances in order to meet its multimillion-dollar budget cuts. The Government also has cut nearly \$27 million from the operational budget of the Rural Fire Service and almost \$80 million from the capital budgets of Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service combined. That will have an impact on the front line. The Government claims it is "cutting the fat" from these public service agencies but in my estimation it is hacking away at the muscle of our firefighting and emergency services. These fires are starting earlier each year and we are fast running out of water in many rural towns. The RFS brigades are being told to engage in dry firefighting techniques to save crucial water reserves across rural New South Wales.

Unfortunately, it is the very representatives who deny the science of climate change who also represent areas of our State that are bearing the brunt of the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. There is a very real cost and a very human face to the policies and decisions that the Government makes in this Parliament or across the road in its ministerial suites on Martin Place. We should not kid ourselves that we operate in a vacuum. Our rivers and dams are running dry because of a deadly combination of the Government's mismanagement and the effects of human-induced climate change. We need to better equip and better plan for a bushfire season that will continue to begin earlier or will become more unpredictable or will be interrupted by other extreme weather events.

In order to do so we need public services like Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service to be adequately funded and not have their budgets cut. We need to be assured there will be adequate frontline staff to respond to multiple bushfire emergencies across our State while also ensuring there are equipment and facilities available for these people to do their jobs. I take this opportunity to call on the Minister and The Nationals members in this place to stand up for their rural and regional communities, to demand better services for the bush and to reverse the funding cuts that this Government has pushed through to the emergency services agencies it claims to support. I thank and honour our mighty firefighters.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The member for Bega will be seated.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:23): I thought this was a public interest debate about looking after our fire-ravaged communities and supporting the efforts of the Rural Fire Service [RFS]. That is exactly what we do.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Clarence.

Ms Trish Doyle: They shouted over the top of me, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: That is because you were not on message.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I did call Government members to order. I am fair. I will remove members under Standing Order 249A if they do not come to order.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Despite what those on the other side say, we do believe in climate change.

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

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: If ever there was an example of climate change, when the Bees Nest fire was raging last Monday week—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Deputy Premier that he is already on a call to order. I warn the member for Canterbury that although she is not on a call to order she will be soon if she continues to interject. The member for Clarence has the call. I will stop the clock if there are any further interjections.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: This is a country of extremes. We only have to go to Dorothea McKellar's *My Country* to describe times like this. I will quote some of the lines that say what I think:

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.

That describes this country. I am sure that when Dorothea McKellar wrote that poem she was not thinking about 50-odd bushfires raging across the country. When the Bees Nest fire was raging through those communities and up at Ebor last Monday when there was a fire raging out of control, at the same time it was snowing. That is a pretty good example of the extreme weather we are experiencing at the moment. The firefighters were working under extreme duress and did an incredible job saving communities, houses and property. That is what they choose to do for their communities. They do not get paid to do it, and we acknowledge that.

In my electorate a number of fires posed a serious risk to a number of communities. The Shark Creek fire, which burnt something like 11,000 hectares and is now under control, threatened the communities of Gulmarrad, Angourie, Yamba and Wooloweyah. Some of those communities had to be evacuated because the fire was right on their doorstep. I know that for a fact because I drove down to Angourie last Sunday and I saw how close the fire came to those houses and properties. In fact, it burned right down to Spooky Beach. The RFS deployed the Boeing 737 plane. For the benefit of the member for Blue Mountains, this Government purchased the 737 for the RFS to use for fire retarding purposes, and that is exactly what it did. It laid down a fire retardant firebreak which protected the village of Angourie. Thanks to the 737 and, of course, the work of all the RFS volunteers that village was saved.

Last Monday I saw at Gulmarrad the fire brigade volunteers getting their instructions for the day. There were teams from all over the Clarence Valley. I thank them and the community thanks them. Their wonderful efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Another fire at Ewingar, Drake and Tabulam—which also bound other electorates—burnt 61,000 hectares. That threat has eased but houses were lost. Residents were and still are urged to follow their bushfire survival plan because conditions can change very quickly. Another fire at Ramornie which burnt 14,000 hectares is currently being controlled. As previous speakers have mentioned, 48 fires are currently raging across the State, 13 of which remain uncontained. Whilst we have had some rain throughout the State which helps, it will not ease conditions for all the bushfire areas. We have to provide support to those communities that have been ravaged by fire. We acknowledge the work and efforts of our mighty RFS volunteers and all other emergency services personnel, who have worked very hard to save our communities because they love the community they live in.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (17:28): I speak in debate on the motion moved by the member for Oxley. All 93 members in this Chamber thank with hand on heart all the wonderful volunteers and emergency services workers who go out to fight fires. While other people are running out, they are running in. One of the things that we do in this place is debate. As this is a public interest debate, I will say one thing: Cuts to emergency services hurt communities, they hurt volunteers and they hurt workers. We need to be frank and honest about that.

When we look at the budget handed down by the Government this year and the budget papers we see the massive cuts in the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. The budget papers do not lie. We all say that we support our emergency services workers and that we want our communities to be well looked after. A responsible and active government would not put someone into battle without the right artillery and ammunition. Yet this Government comes into the Chamber and says, "We really do care for our communities, we care for our volunteers, we care for everybody. But at the end of the day it is all about money and we are going to pull funding away from Fire and Rescue NSW as well as the Rural Fire Service."

The budget speaks for itself. I am not going to say that everything is rosy and great because at any point a fire can turn at the drop of a hat without modern technology picking up on the wind direction in that split second. At that moment if the emergency services workers and volunteers do not have up-to-date breathing apparatus and appliances, we as a State are putting them in great danger. None of us wants to be responsible for that. Let me cut to the chase; I will not sugar-coat it. Sometimes this Government put its priorities in the wrong basket. The

Government cannot come in here and say how wonderful it is because it is doing X, Y and Z. As the member for Oxley and the member for Northern Tablelands know full well in their communities, the bottom line—

Mrs Melinda Pavey: You are going to get fact-checked.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: It is not about fact-checking. The budget that the Government handed down this year for Fire and Rescue NSW speaks for itself. The Government cut it. With trucks breaking down and breathing apparatus not working, it is a massive problem. The volunteers who are putting their lives on the line are leaving their own properties and families and going hundreds of kilometres down the road to look after their fellow brothers and sisters. They are showing the intrinsic Anzac spirit that is instilled in every one of us as an Aussie but they are putting their own lives at great risk.

The Government needs to step up when it comes to resourcing emergency services—Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and the State Emergency Services—because, by golly, as soon as those fires come up, heaven forbid, weeks down the track there will be floods. We have to be prepared for that and ensure that the vehicles and vessels are working and at the disposal of those emergency services workers and volunteers. We cannot just debate a motion and say, "We thank them, we thank them, we thank them. Thank God no-one has lost their lives." Let us put it on the table. Our emergency services have to be well resourced and well trained. If the Government is not getting it right here, what hope do we give these people?

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: What do you call that?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The member for Clarence is holding up a mobile phone showing a tanker going through.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Does the member for Clarence want to table his mobile phone?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I ask the Minister: Where are the Black Hawk helicopters that the Government promised to fight fires? I want a response from the Minister. Where are those Black Hawk helicopters that the Government promised two years ago? Will they be fighting these fires? We are going to have the mother of all scenarios this year. With the driest winter and drought conditions that we have had, it is the perfect storm. We are seeing it now in September. Let us hope and pray. At the moment under this Government all we have is simple prayers.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (17:33): If we ever needed evidence as to why a member got demoted from the Opposition bench that bloke just gave it. How good was he? One of the best! Listen to them all squawking like seagulls.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I point out to those opposite that if we buy a plane like a Boeing 737 in a financial year it may be reflected in the capital costs the next year. The bottom line is that the members opposite do not know how emergency services are funded. We can predict that emergencies might happen over the course of a year but I would imagine that this year, when there will be extraordinary fire conditions, there will be a lot of fires. Section 44 fires will be declared and the Rural Fire Service [RFS] will be fully reimbursed and funded for those emergencies. That is how the budget for the Rural Fire Service works.

What is funny is that the member for Blue Mountains used to be an employee of Phil Koperberg. I had hoped that the lights would go on and that it would be recognised that the Government had increased the budget by 17.9 per cent. That says it all. The Government professionally supports our volunteers, who do an incredible job. I cannot believe that in the middle of a fire emergency those opposite would argue and make silly, ridiculous remarks about the RFS and the volunteers. There are people out there feeling very nervous about what is going on. Last year in the Bega Valley we lost a lot of homes. Now, whenever there is a fire nearby the community is greatly affected. There was a very big grass fire in the Bega Valley on 7 September. Again, everyone rushed to the aid of local property owners.

The sad reality is that as we head into this year's fire season the state of play is apparent to anyone who walks through the scrub. It is an absolute powder keg out there. It is terrible. We have to manage everything, including where water can be sourced to fight fires in the next few months. It is nice that it is raining a bit in parts of the State as I speak but, without doubt, this is going to be one of the worst fire seasons this State has ever faced. I acknowledge the sensible contribution to this debate made by the member for Lismore. The member for Blue Mountains should know better than anyone the effect that fires can have on communities and that we need to work together in a bipartisan way to support our volunteers and our professional staff, who are also part of these communities. These people typically forgo protecting their own properties to protect their neighbours' properties, the properties of local community members.

Those opposite have come into this Chamber on the eve of the fire season—which has started early because of the drought—and have argued that we have made cuts to the RFS and that the RFS will not be supported. The funding arrangements around the RFS are made on a case-by-case basis courtesy of the fire emergencies that happen. It is really silly politics. I point out also that with these natural disasters continuing people need to make sure now that their homes are cleaned up and that their planning is underway. A lot of work is happening right now through the RFS and local government so that communities are fire ready and fire aware and the communities are holding working bees. That effort has to be increased. It is also important for every person who lives near bushland to be aware of their evacuation points and what could happen given the speed of these fires. The fires we have been seeing are moving at speeds that no-one has predicted. We need to support our communities and the RFS without playing politics.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (17:38): In reply: It is my privilege to speak in reply on this very important public interest debate. I acknowledge the contributions of the members of Parliament on both sides. It has been an intense couple of weeks for our communities and, as the member for Bega has just pointed out, this is just the beginning of what is going to be a long, hot summer. If there is one upside it is that around Drake, Ebor, Dundurrabin and Tyringham there has been some very strong hazard reduction. That is a positive way of looking at it. Those communities will not face the threats that other communities across New South Wales will be facing.

I acknowledge in particular the contribution of the member for Clarence, who spoke about the coastal peaks and how quickly a fire can move towards Yamba and Brooms Head. There were real concerns about many of the coastal emus, a unique species that could have been impacted. The member for Blue Mountains brought politics into the debate. She should be aware that the Boeing 737 inflated the capital cost of the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] budget. One of those planes is not bought every year. The year after a plane is bought the capital expenditure comes down. That is a most important part of this debate. Since the time the member for Blue Mountains worked for Phil Koperberg and as a staffer in a previous government, this Government has increased the budget of the RFS by nearly 20 per cent.

This Government supports its firefighters and volunteers and supports providing them with the very best equipment. We have seen that very best equipment on the firegrounds. Trucks from many regions and cities have come to help the communities fight the fires. That is a fact and the efforts and the energy of the volunteers should not be politicised. Their bosses have allowed them to continue their volunteer work. Some of the volunteers own their own small business. A lot of the volunteers who live locally are farmers. Their volunteering is an investment in their properties and in their communities. We have seen in the most profound way communities coming together and working day and night to protect their farms and their properties. The message I got from those volunteer RFS firefighters is that they have unique knowledge. They know where fires have burned previously and they know the areas that are most at risk. We will learn the lessons of these fires to ensure that communication at all times is at its best. All I can say is thank God for the Rural Fire Service!

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Private Members' Statements

PLASTIC FREE CRONULLA

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (17:43): I am delighted to let the House know about the Plastic Free Cronulla initiative of the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce, supported by the Surfrider Foundation Cronulla, Sutherland Shire Council, the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* newspaper, Kiss Marketing Agency, Shire Talk and the shire awards. I congratulate the whole chamber of commerce executive and helpers, particularly Mark Aprilovic and Annette Tasker, on this exciting initiative. I congratulate members of the Surfrider Foundation Cronulla on their great assistance, in particular Andy Britton, Joe Glendinning, Matt Griggs and Tony Wales. The whole aim of this initiative is to help Cronulla to be the first community in Sydney to be single-use plastic free. What better place to have this initiative than a beautiful beachside location. The initiative's aim is to educate and encourage businesses to minimise their use of single-use plastics to keep our oceans clean and to meet the growing demands of consumers. We all know that single-use plastic items often end up in the ocean, threatening maritime life and the future of our world as we know it.

Every year around the world eight million tonnes of plastic are dumped into our oceans and marine life is swallowing more plastic than ever. It is said that plastic rubbish will outweigh fish in the oceans by 2050 unless there is drastic action taken to recycle material. The Cronulla Chamber of Commerce has been involved in many initiatives as part of Plastic Free Cronulla. One was to partner with the Cronulla Spring Festival which ran on

31 August and 1 September. The festival saw 40,000 visitors attend and more than 120 of the 140 stallholders went plastic free, which is estimated to have saved 1.5 tonnes of plastic going to landfill. On 19 October the efforts of the chamber of commerce will be complemented by an annual clean-up event which will be organised by H2coco and Surfing NSW.

The efforts do not stop there. The Cronulla Chamber of Commerce will hold a Plastic Free Expo on 21 and 22 October. This expo will showcase plastic free alternatives to business. The event will be held at Rydges Cronulla Beach and it will help business owners in the community find solutions to the plastic problem. There will be keynote speakers, food, music and plastic free solutions for offices, cafes and home. There is also an important initiative accrediting businesses as "plastic free champions". This accreditation will promote businesses to the community that do not use single-use plastic items such as plastic straws, plastic shopping bags, plastic cutlery, plastic cups and plastic takeaway containers. They will be given a certificate to show they are a plastic free champion, which they can proudly display in their business.

Those who cannot quite achieve an entirely plastic-free business can be promoted as "plastic free warriors" by making simple changes in their business practices and sharing it with the community. An example given is that an accounting firm could use crockery and cutlery when having takeaway meals at the office instead of using plastic ones. All information about the Plastic Free Cronulla Initiative can be found at the website www.plasticfreecronulla.com.au. This is a great initiative and one I am excited about for our beautiful beachside location. It complements the Government's container deposit scheme, which I am pleased to advise the House now has passed a major milestone of over 2.3 billion drink containers that have been recycled thanks to the efforts of hundreds of thousands of individuals and families across the State.

I acknowledge the former environment Minister, the member for Vacluse, who is present in the Chamber. It was an initiative that I was excited to be involved with as environment Minister. Approximately half the adult population of New South Wales has participated in this scheme. I congratulate the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce and its supporters. They have shown you do not have to be a bunch of rabid greenies to be involved in environmental initiatives. This is a mainstream activity that is good for business not just the environment and that is why the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce is so actively involved. I look forward to ridding Cronulla of single-use plastic and making Cronulla plastic free.

ABU AHMAD BUTCHERY

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (17:47): Small and family businesses are the lifeblood of our communities, our suburbs, our industry and our economy. I am proud of the heritage and entrepreneurial culture embedded within the culturally and linguistically diverse communities of western Sydney, and especially in my electorate of Lakemba. As those of the Jewish faith must have kosher products, Muslims must have halal products. In its simplest form, that means meat has to be prepared in a certain way. As a kid, I grew up with a limited supply and variety of meat options but today it is very different. There are many butchers across Sydney who supply halal meat, including a local Punchbowl butchery that I frequent. I congratulate Abu Ahmad Butchery for winning the Canterbury Bankstown 2019 Local Business Awards and for being a vital part of the engine room of the economy.

There are 2.2 million small businesses in Australia employing 4.8 million people. They are 97 per cent of all business in the country and employ 44 per cent of the business workforce. Abu Ahmad Butchery is one of those businesses and has a story that deserves to be celebrated. Abu Ahmad is a renowned local butcher located in the heart of Punchbowl who has been delivering premium halal products to Australians for over 20 years. Abu Ahmad comes from a long line of family butchers, which extends back to his country of origin, Lebanon. Arriving in Australia in 1985, it was nine years before Abu Ahmad launched the Fettayleh legacy opening a small family butcher that offered traditional meat cuts, Lebanese speciality mixes and the traditional Australian sausage.

At that time specialty halal meat with its spices was hard to come by. If you have ever tasted a Lebanese barbeque you know how tasty it is, especially if cooked on coals. As a family business, Jamal's son Ahmad joined the Abu Ahmad Butchery as an apprentice butcher in the late 1990s, where he developed a passion, understanding and respect for the meat, variety of meat cuts, and the needs and desires of his customers. Ahmad continued to develop and broaden his involvement in the meat production industry by opening a second retail butchery store in Liverpool. As an aside, I note Jamal's two sons were students at Punchbowl Boys High School, my former school.

What began as a family business has, over the years, become an international brand, with the Fettayleh product entering major supermarkets including Coles, Woolworths and Costco and exports to parts of the Middle East, Singapore and Hong Kong. Realising there was a gap in the halal wholesale market and that halal suppliers at the time were charging a premium for supplying the same meat, Ahmad had a vision that he quickly turned into a reality. His vision was to become Australia's best-known halal wholesaler, providing genuine halal products to all Australians by adhering to the strict standards of stringent halal certification boards in Australia, but without

the high prices usually associated with halal meat. They have perfected the art of small goods and have replaced pork in products with beef, lamb and chicken. Growing up, I admired people who could eat devon. I could not have devon, mortadella or salami as a kid.

Ms Janelle Saffin: Devon and tomato sauce.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Devon and tomato sauce was not an experience I had as a child. My kids get into it now.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You aren't missing much.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I know, but I missed it. Who wanted a falafel sandwich when you could have devon and tomato sauce? In 2007 Ahmad and Mohamad, with the help of their father, made this dream a reality when they opened their first warehouse in Strathfield South. Moving to a larger site in Milperra, and with another warehouse opening soon, I cannot think of a more deserving family to acknowledge for their hard work. Today I am not just recognising Abu Ahmad and sons for this deserving award, but I also acknowledge their service to the community. In a time where efforts are easily absorbed by the chaos of recurring routines and schedules this family butcher has led the way with continued support of community events. They never say no to providing sausages for the local charity sausage sizzles and community festivals. They donate meat for causes and recently during Ramadan donated meat to feed the less fortunate who needed to break their fast at the mosque. For 30 nights, they donated meat for people to break their fast with good food.

Among other numerous awards, Abu Ahmad, Ahmad and Mohamed recently won the Sydney Royal Easter Show championship for their fine cured meat, basterma—which I am told is different from pastrami—and the local business award for Fettaileh meats. I can attest to their delicious barbequed beef ribs. As a local member of Parliament, there is a great deal I am proud of, including the number of young people they give employment opportunities to. Many people, regardless of whether they live locally or eat the halal meat because they have to, choose to shop there. A number of my friends shop there because they realise that the meat is good and has interesting tastes. I congratulate this family on building a successful family business and for the great work they do in supporting those less fortunate within the community.

BATHURST BULLET TRAIN SERVICES

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (17:52): It gives me pleasure to talk in this Chamber about services being delivered in my community and the difference it will make to the wider community. I will talk today about the second Bathurst Bullet. This is a critical transport link for our community. It provides a daily service from the Central West to Central Station each day. From the start of this week we saw an additional service introduced into the community. It is an exciting service for those in the bush and means access from the bush to the city is a lot more convenient. In 2011 we made an election commitment that we would have a train service delivered in the community. We were without a train service for two decades. For two decades people said it would not happen and there were reasons it was not possible.

However, in 2012 we made a commitment that we would deliver a train service to the community. Seven years later that service has been servicing the wider community—not only the township of Bathurst but also Lithgow, the surrounding towns and villages and in between. It has serviced people of all ages. It has provided a daily trip for people who just want to go to Sydney and back for the day. It has serviced people who have had medical appointments. It has serviced people who want to use it for recreational activities. It might even be for people who want to use it to go and catch up with family and friends. It has also been very popular among school groups and community groups.

Because of the popularity of the first train service over the past seven years, we have seen great patronage. There was a call from the community for an additional carriage. However, I was able to lobby the previous Minister about the need for an additional service. Before the 2019 election we made a commitment that we would deliver a second train service. It has been named the Bathurst Bullet No. 2. We have done the hard work in looking at how it could be scheduled onto the daily network, the recruitment of the drivers and where we would install the Opal card readers. On Monday it made its maiden voyage. The service is about creating options. The service is about creating more opportunities for people living in the Central West.

Yesterday when I arrived at the train station it was fitted out with balloons and streamers. There was such a fanfare. Country people get excited about train services like this. In places where you see them each and every day you do not see the same level of excitement. I was able to catch the first train. I got off at Tarana because that was going to be one of the new stops introduced with both services. At Tarana I waited for an hour and a half for that second train to come through. The excitement of that community, which only has a very small population, saw hundreds of people turn up at seven o'clock in the morning—the train was not arriving until 8.07. They put on a bit of a party for the community. They had the barbecue, the bacon-and-egg rolls; they had the band playing.

The community itself was appreciative of the Government for delivering services like these. The Opal card reader ensures a community like Tarana has got access to transport services.

We went down the road for the very first time and picked up passengers at Rydal. We went through to Lithgow and then all the way through to Central. To be able to be on that train and deliver the cupcakes for the people who were a part of that inaugural trip was very important. I congratulate Annie Cook, Greg Dargan, John Hollis and Elizabeth Ross on the work they have done in lobbying over the years, not only for the previous service but also the additional service that we have got. It is the stories you listen to that make you understand why it is important—the stories of people using the service for the first time, the people who travelled from Cowra to get on the train, the people who were going to catch up with their friends and family. It all makes it worthwhile. The Government is delivering in that way.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time.

WALLSEND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (17:58): Thursday 12 September was R U OK? Day. It aims to raise awareness of mental health problems and combat suicide. It is a chance for us to reach out to people in our lives and ask them, "Are you okay?" Mental health problems can be hard to deal with but they are especially hard if you have been going through them alone. That is why it is important to let people know we care, that they do not have to do it alone and we want to help. I congratulate R U OK? champion and chairman Michael Connaghan and the board for running such a successful initiative. Unfortunately, many in the Wallsend electorate feel that the local mental health services are not adequate. A number of my constituents have come forward to tell their stories. Amber is an incredibly intelligent, hardworking woman with a great young family. She battles with mental health problems. Earlier this year she was hospitalised at the Calvary Mater. She reported that staff were overworked and the facilities were run down. Amber stated:

Patients had to wear ear plugs to be able to sleep over the noise of the doors, which open every few minutes non-stop. They were handed out by staff when you arrived. People are supposed to be resting to recuperate!

She reported that she could not get the care and support she needed there, despite the best efforts of the hardworking mental health professionals. Thankfully, Amber's mental health has improved recently but she knows that another downturn will mean a return to hospital. Nat has been suffering from severe depression and anxiety for most her life. She self-medicated with alcohol and has struggled to keep her drinking under control. Nat recently went to the Mater for a drug and alcohol appointment. Nat took the initiative looking to improve her mental health and physical wellbeing. Despite the severity of her issue the doctor she saw told her to go cold turkey and just take up jogging. This advice was given to someone who cannot even get herself out the door. Nat has not let this bad experience deter her. She will be going back to the Mater to see a different doctor.

Bella was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in her twenties. She told me that she attended the emergency room at the local hospital three times while in severe manic states—twice before her diagnosis and once afterwards. The first time the doctor told her she had anxiety and should stop reading women's magazines. He wrote off her mental health episode as stress about the HSC. The second time she was handed olanzapine and told to attend the mental health unit at James Fletcher Hospital the next day. Bella reports that she was not told about the medication before being prescribed it and the ongoing issues related to that. Eventually she was able to see a private psychiatrist and was improving. She had another episode while that doctor was away and presented to the Mater, manic and concerned she was suffering from lithium poisoning. The public psychiatrist she saw there was dismissive of her usual doctor's treatment regime, which was developed to balance symptom management and potential damage to her kidneys. Bella stated:

That particular psychiatrist just wanted to go to the easiest route of controlling something wrong with me. I pay my psychiatrist not just because he's great but because he treated me like a human being.

The people of Wallsend deserve accessible, well-maintained public health care. While support from friends, family and loved ones is crucial, it cannot be all they rely on. "Are you okay?" is only the beginning of a conversation. It is up to us to make sure that if they answer "No" we give them extra help.

ILLAWARRA BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (18:03): As members of the House know, my first job was stacking shelves in my mum and dad's small business in Gerringong. Small business is the lifeblood of regional communities. The Kiama electorate and the Illawarra and South Coast region is home to some outstanding local businesses that are driving innovation, whether it be at the University of Wollongong Innovation Campus or providing opportunities to young people for work and growing our economy. The Illawarra Business Awards is an event I always look forward to supporting. I congratulate the following Finalists in the 2019 IMB Bank Illawarra Business Awards. In the category of

Excellence in Business, the finalists are: Dapto Leagues Club, FinoComp, GJ Gardner Homes Shoalhaven, RMB Lawyers, Symbio Wildlife Park and The Disability Trust. In the category of Excellence in Customer Service, the finalists are: the City Beach Function Centre, Dapto Leagues Club, Kwik Kopy Wollongong, RMB Lawyers and Symbio Wildlife Park.

For Excellence in Export, the finalists are: Aceit Sportswear, FinoComp and South32 Illawarra Coal. For Excellence in Illawarra Tourism, the finalists are: Crooked River Wines, Stand Up Paddle Boarding Shellharbour, Symbio Wildlife Park and Innovation Illawarra. For Excellence in Innovation, the finalists are: Alpha Veterinary Technology Solutions, IRT Group, itree, Nowchem and RMB Lawyers. For Excellence in Micro Business, the finalists include i-induct, Jervis Bay Landscapes, Mt Hay Retreat, Parents Guide Illawarra, Stand Up Paddle Boarding Shellharbour and Switched on Mechanical & Tyres. For Excellence in Retail and Hospitality, the finalists are Cupitt's Winery and Sage Hotel Wollongong. For Excellence in Small Business, the finalists are: Buckaroo Leatherworks, Devika, J&T Dale Plumbing and Verb Syndicate.

For Excellence in Social Enterprise, the finalists are: The Flagstaff Group, Brewing Up a Storm, an enterprise of Greenacres Disability Services, and Trusted Travel. For Excellence in Sustainability, the finalists are: Cupitt's Winery, Dapto Leagues Club, Green Connect and Switched on Mechanical & Tyres. For Excellence in Workplace Inclusion, the finalists are The Flagstaff Group and Green Connect. I note that Family and Community Services is sponsoring that award. For Outstanding Business Leader, the finalists are: my good friend Chance Hanlon from Hanlon Windows, David Hiscox from Dapto Leagues Club, John Lamont from Nowchem, Kylie Flament from Green Connect, Matthew Radnidge from Symbio Wildlife Park, and Trevor Molenaar from Molenaar + Mcneice. For Outstanding Employer of Choice, the finalists are: FinoComp, GJ Gardener Homes Shoalhaven, Mercer Administration Services, and The Disability Trust.

For Outstanding Young Employee, the finalists are: Ashleigh Barry from Kells Lawyers, Kay-Lea Edmestone from Quest Nowra, and Steve Hopkins from The Flagstaff Group. For Outstanding Young Entrepreneur, the finalists are Christopher Murphy from All Care Health Services Group, Elspeth Finney from Shoalhaven Family Law, Ken Kencevski from Devika, and Nadia Thompson from Picnic by the Sea. For Start Up Superstar the finalists are: All Care Health Services Group, Dr Olga Lavallo & Associates, ProAdmin Solutions and Shoalhaven Family Law. For Wollongong City Centre Business Excellence, the finalists are Easy Agile and Glass Alley. The local chamber of commerce finalists are: The Port Kembla Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kiama and District Business Chamber and Corrimal Chamber of Commerce—no points for guessing who I will be hoping wins that award.

The IMB Bank Illawarra Business Awards are a celebration of excellence in business and recognise the achievements of business professionals across the region. Entries are assessed by a panel of judges, including Warwick Shanks from KPMG. These judges have now decided upon a total of 69 across 17 award categories, who will be joined by 11 aligned award winners from last month's Shoalhaven Business Awards. I pay a specific tribute to Adam Zarth, the CEO of the Illawarra Business Chamber, who does a tremendous job advocating for Illawarra business across a range of issues. I should not let the opportunity go past without commending his specific advocacy on the issue of payroll tax changes—something the Government listened to and has implemented across the budget to provide payroll tax relief, particularly to small business. I also take the opportunity to commend Chris Lamont, who went on from the Illawarra Business Chamber to work at the NSW Business Chamber. I understand Mr Lamont will be leaving the NSW Business Chamber for other opportunities interstate but I take the opportunity to pay him particular credit as well.

The winners will be announced at the gala awards ceremony on 18 October at the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong, which I will also be attending and assisting in presenting the awards. Winners of the 12 aligned categories will represent the Illawarra at the NSW Business Chamber Awards later in the year. Our local business chamber across the Shoalhaven and Illawarra does a fantastic job and I attend these events regularly, as I know local members do, right across the State. I am proud of all the business chambers and all my businesses in the area. No matter whether you are a finalist, a winner or a participant, well done and good luck.

MEMBER FOR MONARO SERVICE AWARDS

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (18:08): Every year for the past eight years since I was elected in 2011 I acknowledge community groups and individuals in the community that go over and above in servicing and supporting their community by presenting the Member for Monaro Service Awards. It can be a community group or individual. They do not do it for fame or fortune, for reward or recognition; they do it because they absolutely love the place where they live. Often they are the safety net that looks after the most vulnerable in the community and they do it constantly. Many of these volunteers wear more than one hat.

I will read out the names of those who received a Monaro Service Award this year in the last round. These are the people whom I have had the pleasure to come across as the local member. They are often nominated by the community, by the groups they are connected to, and often they are the people that I, as the local member, have identified in the community, understanding that these individuals play an important role in partnering with the Government and the community to ensure that the towns and villages in our electorate and the cities we live in are better places. They do it not for any level of reward. They do not do it for acknowledgement, but I think it is important that we single out volunteers and individuals who go over and above in our community. They become ambassadors for the next generation of young people so that hopefully they also have that spirit of volunteering and generosity, which is so important to the future of our regions, especially in regional and rural New South Wales.

Often, it is these volunteers who put people back together, keep families and the community together in times of difficulty—as we are experiencing at the moment during one of the toughest droughts in recorded history, and as parts of the State are on fire, and of course the toughness that we endure in regional and rural New South Wales. The list of recipients this year—and they are all deserving—includes: John Talbot, for his service to Meals on Wheels and the Jerrabomberra Tennis Club; Stephen Geoghegan, who has dedicated himself to Lake George Men's Shed; Jane Jones and Victoria Thivvy, for fundraising efforts to assist people with multiple sclerosis; Laurel Rosin, for her work with Meals on Wheels, wildlife rescue and Queanbeyan West Public School; Gary Harb, for his commitment to Bungendore community groups, and there are a variety; and Roza Tomeski, for her dedication and commitment to Queanbeyan, particularly through community radio.

Further recipients include: Kylie Johnson, for commitment to Bungendore Scouts and community soccer; Megan Scott, for her service to the Anglican Parish of Bungendore; Mae Grant, for her commitment to ensuring women's basketball remains in Queanbeyan; Craig Kellar, for dedication to ensuring children have the best opportunity to play sport, and his continuing support of those community groups; Karrina Ugov, for passionate commitment to the 1st Bungendore Scouts; Gorriony Kite, for service to Braidwood Bowling Club and residents of the Braidwood Multi Purpose Service; Kelly Romney, for service to the Michelago community through volunteering and fundraising; Bob Robertson, for service to the agricultural show movement in New South Wales, and of course in Bungendore; Maree Harriden, for service and dedication to a number of different Queanbeyan organisations, an absolute champion and a volunteer member of our community; and William Harriden, for continued dedication to the Queanbeyan community through his volunteer work.

Two groups that stood out were Braidwood and District Historical Society, for its commitment and passion to the history of Braidwood; and Women of Queanbeyan Calendar, for their dedication and commitment to supporting and raising funds for Rise Above. I understand they have almost hit \$70,000 in donations and fundraising. Further award recipients included: Terrence Chalk, for his service to the annual Jindabyne Lions Club Art Show; Casey Clarke, for her dedication to the Cooma Community through the P&C and local sporting clubs; Barbara Fernance and Lisa McGowan, for their commitment to dance across the Monaro; Aldolf Franco, for his consistent commitment to emergency services, including Marine Rescue NSW, RFS and SES; Peter Graham, for his dedication to the Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue; Deidre Clarke, for her service to the Cooma business community; and Geoffrey Simpson, for his service to the business community in Cooma.

Peter Topalovic received an award for his commitment to snow sport advancement in the Monaro; Larry Wallace, for his dedication to progressing working dog events around the Monaro; Teyarnea Griffis, for raising awareness of mental health and assisting in empowering people to speak out; Trudi Marrapodi, for advocating for people with a disability; Noel Buckland, for his service to the Dalgety community, particularly through the show society and the fire brigade; Dr Geoffrey Cocker, for his support of health care; and Meagan Power, Lake Light Sculpture, Nimmitabel Show Society and Cooma Monaro Historic Automobile Club. Our communities are richer because of these community groups and individuals.

CHILD PROTECTION FOUNDATION

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (18:13): The Child Protection Foundation was established in 2007 by Bruce and Kerry Fozzard, who reside in the electorate of East Hills—in fact, on the street where I grew up. The Child Protection Foundation provides education and information services to alert children and adults to the real dangers of child abuse and to show children how to defend themselves in dangerous situations. Bruce and Kerry Fozzard were inspired to form the Child Protection Foundation following their firsthand experience of child abuse in the late 1990s when they discovered that a child they knew well was being seriously abused. The child's shattered family received very little support at the time. They struggled through the emotional cauldron that child abuse creates, feeling powerless and alone. After seeing the agony this family endured, Bruce and Kerry decided to empower parents and children by doing something to make a difference in the fight against child abuse. They took a stand and began the process of establishing and registering the Child Protection Foundation. They quickly realised this work was not a small undertaking.

As directors of the foundation, Bruce and Kerry have vowed to spread their message about child abuse throughout the community, alert children to the dangers they can face at any time—from family members and friends to strangers—and assist families who endure the unbelievably traumatic effects of child abuse. The Child Protection Foundation has stated that official statistics show that every year in Australia there are at least 320,000 reported incidents of child abuse, of which 56,000—or 37 per cent—are substantiated and, sadly, the rate is still climbing. These are damning and horrendous statistics. Even worse, experts in the field believe the number of unreported cases is even higher.

The Child Protection Foundation has produced approved video resources for students and teachers in both the public and private school systems. The Child Protection Foundation holds two major fundraising events every year. The first is a Black Tie Masquerade Ball, now celebrating its eighth year. It is a very formal event that attracts well over 100 supporters of the Child Protection Foundation every year, from politicians to entertainers. The entertainment this year included Tony Mitchell from Sherbet, who was heading up the Straw Dogs, and the guest speaker was Rick Grossman, the bass player in the Hoodoo Gurus. Rick incidentally has the rare distinction of being a member of two bands inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame: the Hoodoo Gurus and the Divinyls.

His story was that of the Divinyls and the Hoodoo Gurus, nights of playing the Australian pub scene and importantly a story relevant to the night, where in his youth he had hidden a local friend of his under his bed for a week because he knew he was being beaten up at home. After the police had visited his home for the second time, he reluctantly relinquished his mate from the capture of dust bunnies under his bed only when the police had assured him that his friend would not be going home but to somewhere safer. The Child Protection Foundation also runs a family barefoot bowls day during Child Protection Week, and I was fortunate to attend the tenth anniversary of that event. This was a lot less formal. There were jumping castles and fairy floss for the kids and lots of chocolate wheel prizes for the adults, as well as a great game of barefoot bowls.

I was very happy to have Minister Gareth Ward with me at that event as we were both very excited to meet the very special guest for that day—Humphrey B. Bear. Humphrey had flown in from the Gold Coast to be a part of this fantastic event and to support Bruce and Kerry in the great work they do. To the entire Child Protection Foundation team, I say thank you for all the work they do. I look forward to supporting their initiatives in the future.

ESSENTIAL ENERGY POWER POLES

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:17): I speak about the practice of gifting power poles by Essential Energy. Recently I became apprised of the practice of gifting power poles to landholders, mainly farmers. A local landholder farmer came to see me to tell me that he had found a pole on his property with a sign attached to with the letters "PP", meaning private pole. This was followed by a letter from Essential Energy saying that he had been gifted the pole and, as the pole was condemned, he had a certain amount of time to fix it. He was further informed that he needed to get it fixed by an accredited person. He made further inquiries and found out that the cost to fix his gifted power pole—which he did not know he owned and which was now condemned—would be over \$6,000.

My constituent and others who have come forward were surprised to find out that they are the proud owners of these power poles, they have to keep them in pristine condition—we understand that power poles must be in pristine condition—pay to fix them and, if they do not, their power will be cut off. Another person who I thought was my constituent has this problem. She in fact resides in the electorate of Clarence. The member for Clarence and I do a local radio program that covers both our areas. People ring in and that is how I talked to this person. She, too, said she was stunned to find out she had been gifted her power pole that also had been condemned. She found the sign on it but had to fix it pronto or her power would be cut off. She was told she had 30 days to respond and 60 days to fix the power pole, with the cost being about \$2,800. She said she simply cannot afford that as she does not have the money.

I did some digging and found out the following. In the past, Essential Energy said they allowed owners of private electricity network assets within its distribution area, generally farmers, with privately owned overhead low-voltage powerlines generous time frames for defect rectification. They had undertaken that work previously at their own expense to manage potential safety risks, particularly in circumstances where there has been confusion over asset ownership. I did some more digging—Essential Energy also told me—and discovered that changes to the Electricity Supply Act 1995, by an amendment of the Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management) Regulation 2014 and again in 2018, means that poles on private property are deemed to have been privately owned for a long time but since 2018 a financial decision meant they are now enforcing that regulatory framework.

I was quite surprised. I was opposed to the privatisation of the poles and powerlines but I am now finding out more about the impact. I was told that under the Australian Energy Regulator ring-fencing guidelines applicable since January 2018 customers have to engage appropriately qualified electricians to undertake this type

of rectification work. I understand anyone doing that work needs to be up to speed, but power poles are essential services. The Nationals often wonder why they are losing support in some country electorates. Practices like gifting farmers power poles that they did not know they owned, then condemning those poles and requiring farmers to fix them within a certain time frame or their power will be cut off—without agreement about at what point the condition deteriorated and it became their issue—is one such reason.

HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE MY COMMUNITY PROJECT

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (18:22): I was delighted recently to announce the successful recipients of the My Community Project program for the Holsworthy electorate. Our local community will receive over \$300,000 to be invested into projects, including \$129,000 for Newbridge Heights Public School, \$93,360 for Chipping Norton Public School and \$80,000 to the Moorebank Community of Schools. The My Community Project was made possible by the NSW Generations Fund and this year \$24.4 million was made available for eligible projects put forward by citizens and voted for by the local community. The NSW Generations Fund is a sovereign fund. It helps to keep the State's debt at a sustainable level while sharing the benefit of its returns with the people of New South Wales by funding community projects.

This is an innovative and exciting program that has placed decision-making in the hands of the community. Members weigh in on their top picks in the region and all people need to do to vote is use their Medicare card and a free MyServiceNSW account. Alternatively, residents could also pop down to the local Service NSW centre such as the one at the Liverpool Mega Centre on Orange Grove Road, Liverpool, where friendly staff were able to help residents cast their vote. This is a great example of grassroots democracy in action. We asked people to think about what the community needs, develop those ideas with a sponsor such as the council or a registered charity and tell us how that funding could turn that concept into a reality.

As I just said, three local community organisations received funding through this program. I draw attention to how the funding will be spent by each of them. Newbridge Heights Public School will receive \$129,000 to build a new playground. This playground will create many different learning opportunities for the children to explore and to build a physical strength and agility through play. The playground will include rubber softfall and a permanent shade structure, which means that students will be able to enjoy the structure all year round, even on very hot summer days. A play gym of this calibre will allow children to burn off that excess lunchtime energy so that they can focus in class after a proper break.

Last week it was wonderful to catch up with principal Irene Faros and P&C members Melissa and Kathy to view the site where this playground will be constructed. At the moment it really is just a dirt patch that could be so much better utilised by this funding. The group has great vision. I think the plans look amazing. I look forward to the project coming to fruition. The Moorebank Community of Schools will be receiving \$80,000 for parents to learn how to assist adolescents who may be experiencing a mental health problem. The Moorebank Community of Schools includes Moorebank High School, Chipping Norton Public School, Nuwarra Public School and Newbridge Heights Public School. The project will help to enable parents feel more confident when supporting the mental health of their adolescent children. It aims to assist parents to create common ground to discuss mental health issues and to help destigmatise the experience of mental health problems, which is something often discussed in this House. The project also aims to enhance the mental health of adolescents in our community.

The Mental Health First Aid course will be conducted over four sessions of 3½ hours duration at Moorebank High School in the evenings to make the course as accessible as possible to parents from the community of schools. A trainer will be engaged through Mental Health First Aid Australia and coordinated by the high school. The course will run four times over 12 months. This will be a really important program for my electorate, focusing on an issue that needs so much attention paid to it. I congratulate the Moorebank Community of Schools, and particularly Moorebank High School, on the thought and effort that has gone into this program. I look forward to hearing about the results of it.

Chipping Norton Public School will be receiving \$98,360 for a playground and a learning area. This project will support the school's 350 students, the community playgroup, the community churches and cultural groups, the children enrolled in before- and after-school care and in holiday care and members of the wider community. That is because this school, particularly, is one that opens its doors during school holidays so that everybody can access its facilities. It will be a healthy outlet for everyone to engage in physical activity and increase fitness, movement and wellbeing. Last week at the school it was a wonderful experience to meet with the school's energetic and passionate principal, Shelley Diamond, and the P&C representative, Cynthia, so that they could walk me through their plans. I look forward to seeing their hard work come to fruition and I cannot wait to see the students playing on their new playground very soon. Once again, I congratulate all the recipients and wish them the best of luck. I look forward to seeing it all built.

HUNTER AND CENTRAL COAST HOSPITALS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:27): I wish to discuss the crisis currently engulfing our hospitals in the Hunter and on the Central Coast. Under the Berejiklian Government, wait times for emergency departments and elective surgery have exploded and the people of Swansea are feeling the strain of our region's under-resourced hospitals. There has been a staggering 17 per cent increase in presentations at the Belmont Hospital emergency department, a 12.5 per cent increase in presentations to the Wyong Hospital emergency department and a 7.1 per cent increase in presentations to the John Hunter Hospital emergency department. Just 73 per cent of emergency department patients are being seen within the benchmark time of four hours and, of those patients who presented at the John Hunter Hospital emergency department—which is the largest in the Hunter region—only 71.4 per cent started treatment within the clinically recommended time. This is a decrease of roughly 6 per cent from the same time last year. Only around 60 per cent of patients left the John Hunter Hospital emergency department within the four-hour benchmark. That is not good enough, but it is not the worst of it.

The state of outpatient services within the region is even more dire. Wait times for some outpatient services are as long as three years. That is a disgrace. It demonstrates the crisis that now engulfs the State's health system on this Government's watch. However, I must say I was not shocked at the level of outpatient wait times and the reason is that I consistently hear from the Swansea community and my constituents that they are waiting far too long to have vital surgery performed or to even see a specialist to begin with. What is even worse is that the Berejiklian Government is trying to conceal the truly alarming wait times that most outpatients now encounter. What is not reported in the statistics is that patients need to first be assessed in a hospital outpatient clinic before they can be placed on the official waiting list for surgery, which in itself can sometimes take up to months. Therefore, the true number of people in need of surgery is not shown.

In 2017 there were 12,644 people were waiting to see a specialist at John Hunter Hospital and in 2018 this number increased to 13,414. These are the people the Government is ignoring. The median wait times faced by those waiting to see a specialist range from 36 days to nearly a staggering five months—and that is before they are even added to the official waiting list for surgery. The wait times for some patients to see an ear, nose and throat specialist—wait for it—is three years. How can the Premier in good conscience tell the people of New South Wales that her Government has a strong track record on health when some of our most vulnerable people are waiting three years to see a specialist? I know of a young child who was waiting an extraordinary length of time and was diagnosed as having a speech impediment. That was because he could not get in to see an ear, nose and throat specialist and have grommets inserted, which is considered to be a very run-of-the-mill operation.

The excessive wait times are sadly not just limited to ear, nose and throat specialists though. Those waiting to see an orthopaedic specialist at John Hunter Hospital are waiting as long as—are you ready?—985 days, which is over 2½ years. It is not just the Labor Party that is concerned about the current crisis engulfing the health system in the Hunter and the Central Coast. In the *Newcastle Herald* local GPs have described the outpatient services at John Hunter Hospital as "overrun". That is not only because of rising patient numbers but also because of very long wait times and, as we of course know, doctor shortages. John Hunter Hospital has recently added three additional ear, nose and throat specialists but it is in desperate need of additional staff to meet the community's needs.

Prior to the election, the Premier promised the people of New South Wales an additional 5,000 nurses, 1,000 doctors and more than 2,000 other health professionals to ensure that patients get the best possible care. I have a very simple question for the Premier: Where are they? We are not seeing them on the ground in our area and in our regions that need them. The people of the Hunter and the Central Coast are waiting for enough nurses, doctors and health professionals to keep our communities healthy. Our health system is broken and that is just not good enough.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:32): I remind the member for Swansea that this Government has invested a record amount in health infrastructure and health services. In fact, it is the biggest single investment in health infrastructure in the State's history. The Government is absolutely committed to supporting families and citizens right across New South Wales by ensuring that hospitals are built, hospitals are resourced, waiting times are driven down and families are looked after when they enter the hospital system.

No amount of scaremongering by the member for Swansea will take away from the fact that under this Government there has been greater investment in health services than under any other government in the history of the State. I am proud to be associated with this Government. I accept that the member for Swansea has raised some issues concerning some citizens. I will take those up with the health Minister and draw them to his attention. But again I say that no amount of scaremongering takes away from the fact that this Government is investing

record amounts in health services and health infrastructure, which is transforming the patient experience for all citizens in this State.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE AERIAL FLEET

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:33): With the safety of my constituents and all things Hawkesbury a great priority, I am delighted that a new multimillion-dollar 737 Large Air Tanker—which is known as the LAT—will be permanently based in New South Wales to assist in the fighting of fires. The LAT has a cruising speed of 850 kilometres per hour and can drop 15,000 litres of fire suppressant. It can also carry 72 firefighters. The LAT is named after the former Governor of New South Wales, Professor the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO. On 4 August this year Minister for Police and Emergency Services David Elliott and I were graced with Professor Bashir's presence as she unveiled the LAT. The *Marie Bashir* LAT will call the Richmond Royal Australian Air Force base its permanent home. The LAT is part of a \$26.3 million firefighting package, which also includes two smaller air jets to be unveiled later this year. This means more protection for people, property and the bush and it is delivered courtesy of the Berejiklian Government.

I was pleased to find out the LAT would be named after the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir. There is no person more deserving of this honour than her. Marie was our first female Governor and the first Governor of Lebanese descent of any Australian State. She is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and titles, recognising the great work she has done in a variety of fields. Her work ethic, community spirit and efforts in helping those who require assistance is reflective of the traits we see in the volunteers and employees that comprise our NSW Rural Fire Service, so it is not only right to name the LAT after her—it is very fitting. With the bushfire season upon us, I take this opportunity to recognise and thank the NSW Rural Fire Service, its volunteers and its paid staff who fulfil senior operational management and administrative roles.

With our State's strong values of mateship and helping one another, it is no surprise that NSW RFS is the world's largest volunteer fire service, with over 74,000 volunteer members organised into 2,029 local units and supported by over 800 paid staff in senior operational management and administrative roles. The RFS provides fire and emergency services and attends a range of incidents and performs a range of activities, including fighting fires, cleaning up storm damage, undertaking search and rescue, attending motor vehicle accidents, conducting community education and carrying out bushfire mitigation. We should not forget that our Rural Fire Service volunteers put their lives, safety and health on the line to protect other people, property and livestock. In particular, I recognise and thank the Hawkesbury district of NSW RFS for giving its blood, sweat and tears to protect our community.

In recent days it has been focused on hazard reduction burns that will assist in the protection of a number of communities across the Hawkesbury electorate. These follow hazard reduction burns that were conducted in prior months. The work of the Hawkesbury district Rural Fire Service does not go unnoticed and is very much appreciated by my community and by me. Right now, 48 fires are burning around New South Wales and 13 of them are uncontained. Volunteers have rotated around the State to protect our communities, putting their own lives at risk and sometimes at the expense of losing their own home. The drought has exacerbated the ground fuel and many rural areas are vulnerable to the threat of bushfire. I thank our volunteer firefighters and the support teams that give hope, comfort and protection to those who sometimes walk away with nothing left but memories.

GRACE'S PLACE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:37): On Saturday 7 September I joined our local community to celebrate a very special day for the Homicide Victims' Support Group and for our local community—the sod-turning ceremony for Grace's Place. After many years of advocacy for the loved ones left behind as a result of homicide, Grace's Place is a step closer to becoming a reality. Grace's Place will serve as a safe space for all, offering a healing and comforting environment for children and young adults as they continue in life following homicide committed against a loved one. It was incredibly moving to see hundreds of supporters gather on the day to witness the historic sod turning at Doonside. Federal, State and local government representatives, New South Wales police officers, Police Legacy, Rotary members, community groups, media and, most importantly, the families of victims all banded together as one to mark the very special occasion.

It was a day for celebration that brought people together from far and wide. This momentous time was accompanied by a variety of fun activities for the whole family, including rides, a barbecue, food stalls and entertainment for people of all ages. I extend a special thankyou to all the local volunteers who assisted with the running of the sod-turning event. Grace's Place will be the world's first residential trauma recovery centre, containing facilities that will be second to none. It will be operated by the Homicide Victims' Support Group. In addition to therapeutic services, Grace's Place will also provide education, peer support group programs, mental health intervention and training for those who work in the area of grief, trauma and homicide.

The facility will operate at no cost to family members of homicide victims, as all funding for the ongoing operations of the facility will be met through fundraising events and the generous support of business and community members who truly understand the tremendous benefits that Grace's Place will bring to the wider community. Grace's Place has been named in honour of Mrs Grace Lynch, the mother of Anita Cobby and one of the co-founders of the Homicide Victims' Support Group. Grace formed the group in 1993 alongside her husband, Garry Cobby, and Peter and Christine Simpson, the parents of Ebony Simpson. Since its inception, the Homicide Victims' Support Group has done a tremendous job providing invaluable support to those in need. I have no doubt that the ongoing dedication and legacy of the Homicide Victims' Support Group will serve as a strong foundation for Grace's Place to best serve the community well into the future. We all know that Grace is looking over all involved and blessing them as they work towards the construction of Grace's Place.

I personally acknowledge and thank patron Kathryn Szyska and her family and the Cusumano family, the Simpson family, the Taylor family and the many other families who have contributed to bringing this project to fruition. I also extend my sincerest thanks to committed ambassadors Simon Bouda and Detective Chief Inspector Gary Raymond, APM, OAM, for their ongoing advocacy and hard work. I give a special mention to the wonderful management team at Grace's Place, which consists of Jeffrey Sahyoun, Angelo Cusumano, Jane Chapman, Tony Barden, Michael Trinh, Shane Govender, Sam Ayache and Sandy Benson.

On behalf of the Fairfield electorate, I extend our sincerest gratitude to the Homicide Victims' Support Group for its ongoing dedication and commitment towards making the world a better place. Many lives are that much better because of its tireless work and dedication, its ongoing efforts and its continued support, especially when those who are most vulnerable need support the most. Last but certainly by no means least, it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge and commend the great work of the executive director of the Homicide Victims' Support Group, Ms Martha Jabbour. She has been a guardian angel and has touched the lives of so many people in a positive way. Martha is an inspiration to all and the outstanding turnout on the day of people from far and wide truly serves as a testament to her work and advocacy for the families of homicide victims.

WARIALDA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:42): Sadly, in recent times there has been little to celebrate across rural and regional New South Wales, particularly for the residents of Gwydir shire. The region is well and truly into its third year of this crippling drought and people are sick of it. This highly productive cropping and grazing district is absolutely parched—dry to its core. The average rainfall for Warialda is 686 millimetres per year. However, only 153.8 millimetres of rain has registered in the town's gauge so far this year.

Earlier this month, on 4 September, something truly spectacular happened that put a smile on the dial of even the shire's weariest farmers. Warialda Public School, against all odds, pulled off the miraculous achievement of becoming the Primary Schools Sports Association New South Wales under-13 State rugby union champions. To put that into perspective, Warialda Public School has a student population of under 200 students—199, to be exact. To take out the title, it had to defeat Valentine Public School from Lake Macquarie, with a student population of 564, in the semifinal and then defeat Orange Public School, with a population of 702 students, in the final. Not only are they now the New South Wales champions—the first time they have ever achieved that—but also they are only the third team from a school outside Sydney in the past 70 years to win the coveted title.

The story of their great victory reads like the very best sporting fairytale finish. After travelling nine hours to Sydney to play in the semifinal, things did not start well. Warialda was down 14-0 at half-time against a very strong Valentine Public School—that was until they received a very special visit from one of their fellow students. Darcy Mitchell was tragically injured in a farming accident earlier this year and has been receiving treatment at John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle. Darcy, along with his parents, caught the train to Sydney at 5.30 in the morning to cheer on his mates—the team he should have been a part of if it was not for his accident. It was the first time the boys had seen Darcy since his accident and his appearance lifted them on the field. They went on to win that match 28-26 in an absolute thriller that went down to the wire—two tries to Thomas Bell, one try and four conversions to Os van Velthuisen and a try to Sam Hall.

The final against Orange Public School was also a nailbiter. However, tries to Lachlan Hawkins, Tom Bell and Os van Velthuisen saw Warialda snatch the title 17-7 and bring home the bacon for Warialda. It was an astounding effort. I will now read through quickly the names of all the boys in that team: Os van Velthuisen, Sam Hall, Myles Beel, Flynn Kirkby, Jack Kent, Nicholas Cook, Cruz Dawson, Will Reardon, Rocco Hall, Nicholas Moodie, Thomas Bell, Harry Barwick, Darcy Jones, Vashtan Gallen, Riley Irwin, Lachlan Hawkins and an injured Darcy Mitchell on the sideline. And you do not have a team without the support of the water boys: Clayton Schoupp and Cooper Cory.

Behind every great side is an inspirational coach; none could be more worthy of the title of super coach and this victory than the school's principal himself, Dan van Velthuisen. Over the period of this drought Dan has been a pillar of strength in the community, supporting the students and their parents through this devastating period. I note that following the win Dan made the nine-hour drive straight back home after the game to be at work at 8.30 a.m. the very next day, such is his professionalism and commitment. In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* Dan summed up the true spirit of the people of Warialda. He said:

Our kids are a tough bunch, they fought hard. They were under a lot of pressure but we had a lot of support that helped us get over the line.

Some people have been critical that people in the city do not truly understand the impact this drought is having on those living in the bush. That is something that cannot be said of the students of North Rocks Public School, located in The Hills district in the electorate of Baulkham Hills. Over the past year, students from North Rocks have visited Warialda to deliver care packages to families. On the big day of the grand final some 60 students from North Rocks arrived by bus to cheer their country colleagues on, even though they were not even in the competition. The metropolitan media attention this story has received is incredibly well deserved and I thank the various outlets for taking the time to share this success story. It is one beacon of hope, light and goodness in this wretched drought. The win is truly one for the history books and something these youngsters will never forget. It was a pleasure to meet them the other day. Congratulations to Warialda Public School.

GARRAWARRA CENTRE FOR AGED CARE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (18:47): I inform the House of the rich history of what is known today as Garrawarra Centre for Aged Care, which has now been operating for over a century and was recently in the media. Following the introduction of tuberculosis to Australia, the Hospital for Consumptives was established to treat tuberculosis sufferers in 1909. The first intake of 230 patients was male only; however, in 1912 an additional 120 beds were opened to accommodate women. The name Waterfall State Sanatorium was adopted in 1913 to effectively reflect the function of the institution. Patients were usually sent against their will. Their stay at the sanatorium was usually for an extended period—isolating them from their family, friends and the opposite sex. Patient's treatment included exposure to fresh air, fresh food, rest and an exercise program. The most advanced cases were referred to Waterfall; however, Superintendent W. H. Palmer believed this undermined other patients who could benefit from the treatment.

The hospital continued to expand and extensions were undertaken to better accommodate patients. By 1919 it was the largest sanatorium in New South Wales, caring for a total of 788 patients, including 565 males and 223 females. The hospital operated as a self-sufficient facility, extending its agricultural areas to return a profit through pig farming. Superintendent Palmer's last annual report reiterated his concerns and recommendations from previous reports over a span of 30 years. It stated the need to focus on hopeful patients and highlighted the risks and dangers of not dealing with the disease in its infancy.

From 1921 to 1930 there was a steady decline in deaths. However, in the mid-1930s Waterfall continued to receive advanced chronic cases—those dying and unable to be treated at Randwick. Patients who began to recover from the disease could be employed at the sanatorium to work at the carpentry shop or in the garden where vegetables were grown. The Commonwealth became increasingly involved in the fight against tuberculosis in 1946, and by 1948 the Commonwealth Tuberculosis Act was introduced—supporting Superintendent Palmer's theory. After many grim years, cases of tuberculosis declined as a result of early diagnosis and advancements in antibiotics and thoracic surgery.

In 1958 the need for the facility was no longer warranted and it closed due to a dramatic reduction in patient numbers. The existing patients were transferred to the Randwick check hospital and under the Commonwealth program many patients were treated at home and as outpatients at clinics. Many of the patients who succumbed to the disease are buried at the cemetery, which was established at the time the hospital was initially opened. The graveyard is no longer accessible as the area is now overgrown. Then State member for Bulli Rex Jackson strongly advocated for the establishment of a hospital for the aged and chronically ill. However, there was major conflict at the time when numerous departments had a keen interest in the site too.

At the time a home for delinquent boys or a jail was seriously considered by the State Government. However, following then Minister for Health Billy Sheahan's visit to the site unannounced, he backed Jackson's proposal to Cabinet and in 1958 the Garrawarra Hospital opened. The name "Garrawarra" stems from the Aboriginal word "gara", as there was a farm bordering the park known as the Gara Estate, and the word "warra", after the regional name of Illawarra. The centre now specialises in dementia, rehabilitation, respite and day care service. The name Garrawarra Centre for Aged Care was later adopted to effectively represent the multipurpose role of aged care.

I recently had the opportunity to visit the centre to welcome the arrival of their new bus—after securing \$177,000 for its purchase, along with a new electrocardiography machine and stand, two bariatric beds and a point-of-care blood-testing machine. Earlier this year, during discussions with staff, the need for some additional equipment was brought to my attention. I thank the Minister for Health for releasing the funds as it will assist staff to undertake their roles more efficiently and continue to provide wonderful care for the residents at the centre. The bus will also enhance the residents' quality of life. I acknowledge the difficult work that employees at the centre undertake day by day and I commend them all for the outstanding job they all do.

NEWCASTLE SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (18:52): A few days ago I met a man by the name of Troy. He is 54 years of age. He has a wife, sister, son and cousins and is a scientific glassblower by trade. The two things that he loves more than anything in this world are his dogs, Bella and Jackie. Twelve years ago he had to give up work when he injured his back. Three months ago he had a heart attack. He is also homeless. I first heard of Troy's situation when he approached my office to seek help. He is not well. For the best part of six years he has been sleeping in his car. For the entirety of that six years he has been on the waiting list for social housing. Last week, with the shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness, I was privileged to meet Troy as he courageously told his story to the media.

Troy spoke of the cold nights, of missed showers, of searching for toilets, of skipped meals, of isolation, of depression, of fear. "I feel ashamed", he told the media, "humiliated. I feel like I've done something wrong." When the microphones were off Troy said that these stories needed to be told so that everyone knows what is really happening. He is right. What is really happening is a statewide waiting list of more than 50,000 people in need of social housing—just in the Newcastle allocation zone there are 1,200. These people can be waiting anywhere between five years and 10 years for a two- or three-bedroom dwelling. The wait for a four-bedroom dwelling balloons out past 10 years. There is not enough property, yet in the past four years the Government has sold off \$15 million worth of social housing properties in Newcastle—specifically at Stockton and Bar Beach—without spending a single cent to replace them.

The Government likes to say it is working to end homelessness but actions speak louder than words; its actions prove that what it is really doing is little more than paying lip service. The Social and Affordable Housing Fund is promising 792 new dwellings across the Hunter, Central Coast and New England. However, that does not even touch the sides of what is needed. We have 1,200 people waiting in Newcastle and another 1,100 are waiting throughout the Lower Hunter. That is 2,300 people, without even considering the Central Coast, the Upper Hunter or the entire New England area. So 792 new dwellings is not only a drop in the ocean; it is a kick in the guts to the people who have spent years trying to find a home.

It is the Premier's plan to halve street homelessness by 2025. But homelessness is not just about sleeping on the streets. In fact, the latest census data shows that street homelessness accounts for only 7 per cent of all homeless people in New South Wales—almost 2,600 people. Do not get me wrong, it would be wonderful to get 1,300 people off the streets and into stable accommodation, but what about the other 93 per cent, or 34,500 people, who are staying with friends and family, couch surfing or sleeping in their cars? Homelessness is on the rise. In my electorate alone, homelessness has increased by a mammoth 12.6 per cent since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power in 2011, and what is happening in Newcastle is typical of what is happening around the State. The census data also shows that in that same period homelessness in New South Wales has increased by an unbelievable 37 per cent.

Since this Government came to power things have not gotten better, they have gotten worse. The Government has failed to invest in social housing. It is great to say it has established the Social and Affordable Housing Fund and it is going to halve street homelessness, but that is all this Government is doing—saying it. Actions speak louder than words and the numbers in Newcastle do not lie. The Government has spent eight long years flogging off anything that is not nailed down, including \$15 million worth of Newcastle's social housing stock, while local families are languishing in housing instability. When the Premier gets into her warm bed tonight, in clean pyjamas after a hot shower and meal from her own fridge, I want her to think of Troy sleeping in his car with two dogs. I want her to think of the 1,200 other people in Newcastle this evening without a permanent roof over their heads. I want the Government to put more money into increasing Newcastle's social housing stock. Do not say it, do it!

COFFS HARBOUR BYPASS

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:58): When I was studying in Sydney I used to dread the late evening drive from Sydney home to Coffs Harbour. The road was treacherous—a single winding road for much of the drive, with the most dangerous part towards the end as fatigued set in. The highway upgrade of the dual carriageway between Hexham and Coffs Harbour, and the upgrade from Coffs Harbour north to the

Queensland border, is due to be completed next year. The Coffs Harbour Bypass is the next piece of the highway to be upgraded. Looking back at its history, it was talked about for decades and in 2004 the route was locked in. However, it presents many challenges and the first is topography. It is one of the few places where the Great Dividing Range meets the ocean and there is now a built-up area close to the route.

Just over a week ago the Coffs Harbour Bypass Environmental Impact Statement [EIS] was launched. The 14-kilometre bypass will get people across this beautiful region home sooner and safer. It will save motorists 10 to 12 minutes of travel time, bypass 12 sets of traffic lights and remove up to 12,000 vehicles a day from the Coffs Harbour CBD. The release of the EIS is the next step in the process and I am excited to see planning for this critical project progressing. On Wednesday 11 September the EIS for the refined design went on public exhibition. It features three proper tunnels—190 metres at Roberts Hill, 350 metres at Shepherds Lane and 450 metres at Gatelys Road. This has resulted in a much lower gradient than an earlier design. It will allow the bypass route to sit lower in the hill. The ascents and descents will be flatter. It will also mean less noise and allow the use of low-noise pavement.

It will protect the Indigenous heritage of the area and 300 hectares of natural habitat will be protected through biodiversity offsets. It will also protect the aesthetic value of the Coffs Coast basin. The decision to include three tunnels was arrived at after much investigation and is a direct result of consultation carried out with the community during the display of a different concept design last year. The community's feedback has also resulted in changes designed to reduce traffic noise, improve freight efficiency and minimise impacts on properties. This massive project will create about 12,000 direct and indirect jobs over its duration, as well as develop skills in the local community with subsequent boosts to regional economies. I was very proud to make the announcement, fulfilling our election commitment, with Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Paul Toole, my Federal colleague, Pat Conaghan, and Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack.

Once complete, the bypass will remove thousands of vehicles from the centre of town. This will make Coffs an even better place to live, work and visit. The Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] project team will hold a number of community information events on the revised EIS, with the project display office open throughout the exhibition period. A website portal and innovative noise tool has been developed for the project and will launch to coincide with the display of the EIS on 11 September. The RMS team is also to be commended on the work they have done with helping Coffs Harbour residents understand the impacts of this bypass.

They have created artist impressions of the bypass route with sliders to compare the before and after vistas. A calibrated noise model, which approximates the noise impacts of the bypass, is another tool that residents can use to completely understand the impacts. Submissions are invited on the EIS by Sunday 27 October. They should be sent to the NSW Department of Planning Infrastructure and Environment. Early construction work is expected to start in 2020 and the project is expected to take about four to five years to complete. I thank the community for their patience. I thank also the relevant Ministers—Paul Toole, Andrew Constance and Melinda Pavey—and my predecessor, Andrew Fraser, who all worked very hard to deliver this crucial piece of infrastructure for Coffs Harbour.

SCENIC HILLS CEMETERY

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:02): The constituents in my electorate are tenacious. They have withstood blow upon blow of unfair policy decisions—like the disastrous train timetable, rampant overdevelopment and the lack of lifts at Macquarie Fields station, in contradiction to departmental evidence clearly stating that it was higher on the priority list than other funded stations that just so happen to be located in Liberal-held seats. But despite our needs being constantly ignored by this Government, they refuse to be silent. The Government should take note. We will not stop fighting for the protection of Scenic Hills and we will not be silent about its hypocrisy.

Only last week the member for Mulgoa spoke in this Chamber celebrating the fact that a cemetery proposal for Wallacia had been rejected by the Independent Planning Commission. She lauded the fact that the voices of her community had been heard loud and clear—they did not want the cemetery, it was rejected. The residents in my electorate rightfully think their voices do not matter to this Government. We too put up an immense fight against the proposed development for Varroville, we called for the protection of Scenic Hills, we wrote submissions and we attended public meetings. We desperately tried to get two successive heritage Ministers to do their job to protect the land around Varroville Homestead. Our voices fell on deaf ears while the voices of the Wallacia community were heard.

This is not the first example of double standards. Last year the Liberal-Nationals Government coughed up more than \$27 million to buy the historic Fernhill Estate at Mulgoa for community green open space. That site had been canvassed by the Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Trust for a massive new Crown cemetery. It begs the question: What about Varroville and protecting the Scenic Hills for future generations in my local

community? Why does green open space in Mulgoa deserve protection any more than green open space in Varroville? Let us recap: A proposed Penrith cemetery, in a Liberal-held electorate, is halted. Meanwhile, a proposal for a 136,000-plot cemetery in the Scenic Hills, in a Labor electorate, is approved. Land touted for a cemetery in Mulgoa is bought by the Liberal-Nationals Government to protect green open space. Meanwhile, the Scenic Hills are sacrificed for the benefit of developers.

This Liberal-Nationals Government and its processes just stink. It is one rule for the Liberals, another rule for the rest of us. Our community has had enough of these dreadful double standards. Speaking of rules, if two successive heritage Ministers had adhered to the rules, my community may not be in this mess. For nearly two years, two heritage Ministers have breached the Heritage Act. They failed to decide whether to accept a Heritage Council's recommendation to protect land surrounding Varroville Homestead. Such a decision could have made the Scenic Hills cemetery development untenable. Let me be clear: The Heritage Act states that a Minister must decide on a heritage listing within 14 days of receiving a recommendation from the Heritage Council. That recommendation was made on 28 September 2017. The 14 days prescribed in the legislation have well and truly lapsed. If the heritage listing had been approved by either Minister, the cemetery development application would have been subjected to more intensive scrutiny under the Heritage Act. Instead, two Ministers sat on their hands and now the overdevelopment floodgates have been opened in the Scenic Hills.

My good friend the Federal member for Macarthur recently spoke in the Federal Parliament of this appalling decision to approve the cemetery. He rightfully called out this Liberal-Nationals Government for taking its orders from property developers and vested interests. I applaud my Federal counterpart for sticking up for our local community and for condemning the cemetery's approval. I vehemently reject the argument that the cemetery is in the public interest. The only interest the cemetery will serve is the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, aided and abetted by a developer-driven Liberal-Nationals Government and this appalling decision masquerading as crematoria policy. In reality, the green light for this controversial cemetery is another example of the Government putting developers first.

Local residents expected this Government to protect the Scenic Hills, which has major heritage significance and provides valuable open space for our growing community. Instead, this disastrous decision to approve the cemetery will set in motion a devastating domino effect of new development applications. The green, rolling hills are set to be further swallowed up by an extensive road network, function centre and cafes. The insidious incremental nature of this development will forever destroy the Scenic Hills, not enhance it. We have this Liberal-Nationals Government's hypocrisy to thank for the destruction of the Scenic Hills.

BYRON BAY BYPASS

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:07): I refer to stage one of the construction of the hotly contested Butler Street Bypass in Byron Bay that has commenced in my electorate. The community continues to be at odds with Byron Shire Council on the social and ecological impacts of this project. I state at the outset that we are a community that needs travel solutions along Ewingsdale Road. Ewingsdale Road is fraught with congestion and is an absolute bottleneck. Trying to get into Byron Bay along Ewingsdale Road is a bit like being in a fish trap. We need \$30 million investment in Ewingsdale Road out near the new hospital—I will bring that matter to this Chamber on another occasion.

This is a cautionary tale about biodiversity offsets. The member for Coffs Harbour spoke with confidence about biodiversity offsets for the 14-kilometre bypass at Coffs Harbour. Obviously if the Butler Street bypass was 14 kilometres I might talk about it differently, but it is not. Byron Bay is a biodiversity hotspot. This is a very cautionary tale. If any part of a process is flawed, what ends up happening is irreversible. My community saw incorrect survey assessment during the environmental impact statement stage—lowland rainforest and the primary habitat of the Mitchell's rainforest snail were not identified.

It is my view and that of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW and a number of very reputable ecologists that what went to the department of heritage and environment was incorrect. The Office of Environment and Heritage has taken that on face value but it has been misled—there is primary habitat in that area that will now not be legally offset. The Greens do not believe in biodiversity offset. We see it as ludicrous and an extinction model. A critically endangered species cannot be offset, and that is exactly what has happened in Byron Bay. Had primary lowland rainforest and the primary habitat of the Mitchell's rainforest snail been identified there is no way the bypass would have been approved.

I continue to be concerned about the immediate and long-term environmental impacts this project will have. The fact that the Office of Environment and Heritage has not picked up on the flaws, despite numerous representations by many different stakeholders, is very concerning. What is happening elsewhere around the State? When the member for Coffs Harbour speaks about such a huge area that will be offset, The Greens will look at it very carefully. Byron Shire Council has attempted to compensate for the overall ecological impacts but

based on it being an incorrect assessment. After pointing out the flaws in the original assessments, Byron Shire Council has belatedly given an undertaking to self-refer to the Department of Planning and Environment. I fear that that is too little, too late and we have missed legally protecting a critically endangered species.

Why should a community such as Byron shire, which is so congested and in desperate need of real travel solutions, on the one hand have an offer of infrastructure—a kind of "take it because we are desperate" attitude—and on the other hand have a very serious environmental outcome? I have called for an independent small-scale flora survey of the area to facilitate a better understanding of the offsetting impacts from the bypass construction. Another side issue that was very disappointing was that the Arakwal people, who are now native title owners of that area, were guaranteed jobs for their support of the bypass. Only one part-time position has been forthcoming, which is another reason to criticise this project.

I have received comments from people in authority along the lines of "It's not that much land" or "It's only a few snails". It is incredibly disappointing in a biodiversity hotspot such as we are blessed to be the guardians of in Byron Bay shire, and in a time of daily extinction of species, to hear the "ends justifies the means" attitude. Australia is in the midst of an extinction crisis, ranking number two in the world for species loss. At this point in our history destruction of an area of primary habitat for a critically endangered species is not acceptable under any circumstances.

TASTE OF TARALGA FESTIVAL

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:13): I bring to the attention of the House the upcoming 200-year anniversary of the first Europeans to pass through the area now known as Taralga. Located 44 kilometres from Goulburn, Taralga is a small country town in the Goulburn electorate with enormous character. As well as some lovely heritage buildings, a sports club with lawn bowling greens and tennis courts, the town also hosts the annual Australia Day Rodeo. The Taralga Tigers Rugby Club always attracts big crowds during its local games and, even though they recently lost their grand final, they played well and did not go down without a fight. On the upcoming October long weekend the local township will celebrate 200 years since Charles Throsby first came through Taralga, in search of a new stock route to Bathurst. The people of Taralga are celebrating the bicentenary of this significant event with a Taste of Taralga Festival.

The festival is expected to draw a large crowd, with the local showgrounds available for camping during the event. In 17 days the town will come alive with a multitude of events, including a street parade, a Saturday night dance, a country fair with lots of games and activities for all ages, a showcase of local talents, live music, camp ovens, barbeques, displays from the historical society, a classic car muster and so much more. Without a doubt, it is the people of Taralga who make it a great place to both live and visit. Every time I visit I am made to feel welcome with good old-fashioned country hospitality. The rich heritage of the area means there is lots to see and do, with more than 50 local organisations and businesses involved.

I thank all the 200 committee members and local volunteers who have put together such an awesome program of events. It is not an easy feat. I congratulate everyone involved in the extensive planning and coordinating of the weekend, which commenced in June last year. I make particular mention of Peter Davies, Graham Lambert, Karina Rees, Michael Chalker, Colin Chalker, Max Keith, Sandra Keith, Robert Handley, Andrew Moore, Brian Corby, Bronwyn Sullivan, Cristy O'Sullivan and Martha Grahame. I thank them for their efforts and commitment to their local township.

I am often asked what the average person can do to support our farmers and rural communities affected by the worsening drought. My reply is to visit those communities, and the Taste of Taralga Festival is a perfect opportunity to show support for this wonderful community. By attending rural events you are supporting local businesses and their families. Not only will you be supporting a community that is doing it tough, but also you will be guaranteed a good time while doing so. It sounds like a win-win to me. I congratulate the Taralga community, and look forward to attending the festival and celebrating this significant occasion.

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER PAY EQUITY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:16): I call on the Government to address the New South Wales public school teachers' salary inconsistencies, which are undermining the recruitment and retention of our most experienced and dedicated educators. I have had so many representations from teachers in my electorate on this issue. It is concerning to me, to teachers and to my community that public school teachers who were first employed in 2014 and 2015 are financially disadvantaged compared with teachers employed after 1 January 2016. This disparity has arisen through the replacement of the Crown Employees (Teachers in Schools and Related Employees) Salaries and Conditions Award. The award moved salary determination from the old step-based pay scale across to the new band or standards-based remuneration scale.

The wage discrepancy that has come to light since the 2014 award negotiations is an unfortunate and unintended result of that process. In plain terms, a teacher who started in 2013 or 2014 would have earned about \$44,000 less than those employed after January 2016. The disparity favours the more recent and less experienced graduates. It is not a reflection of teaching standards, it does not indicate the accreditation of the 2016 cohort of teachers and it is not a consequence of standards-based pay. It is the unfortunate and unintended result of a changing system. On that basis, I call on the Government and encourage the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to take a leaf from the Catholic education system's book. Its teachers were in the same boat as our public school teachers, but it found ways to set things right.

In contrast, the New South Wales Government's response to date has been to promise our teachers that no-one will go backwards as a result of this new structure. It does this while acknowledging that it is possible for a new teacher operating under the new award structure to reach a higher salary during a shorter period. The teachers affected definitely feel that they are going backwards. We hear a lot about the importance of values in our public school system. Our public schools need to be places where fairness and equity are core values. Just as students and families deserve equity in access to quality education, our teachers deserve just remuneration for the tremendous work they do.

As it stands, the situation is clearly unjust. It is deeply affecting morale among some of our more experienced teachers, some of whom are actively mentoring and providing guidance and support to those whose pay packets outstrip their own. They are being underpaid compared with their colleagues who have the same qualifications and less experience. How can this be anything other than "going backwards", as they watch their colleagues go ever further ahead? This issue has given rise to significant frustration and were it not for our teachers' utmost professionalism it would risk undermining collaborative professional relationships. I have held a number of meetings with teachers in my electorate and I know they have raised this problem with the Government. They are deeply disappointed that the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government has not yet stepped up to address the matter. If it is an unintended consequence, the Government should have acted to fix it before now.

I note that the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning has assured teachers that the Government will address the issue, but there is no clear pathway on how it will do so. The NSW Teachers Federation has estimated that it would cost the Government between \$25 million and \$27 million to fix these transitional anomalies. Moving forward, I ask the Government to consider that. In 2017 the Catholic education system's resolution to this issue was to amend its agreement to allow for teachers who began teaching in 2014 or 2015 to progress directly to the standards-based remuneration system.

The new agreement guarantees that teachers who started before 2014 will be no worse off than they would have been on previous agreements and ensures that teachers are paid at a highly accomplished rate in the first pay period following the appropriate level of accreditation. Under these changes, for teachers who started working in 2014 or 2015, there is a period of six years when they would be thousands of dollars better off each year teaching in a Catholic school. That is a disgrace. It creates a very real incentive for public school teachers who gain a higher level of teacher accreditation before completing the Department of Education's service requirement to seek employment outside the public sector.

Teachers' workloads are increasing and they are working in classrooms that are often poorly maintained, cramped and do not have air conditioning. Last week we learnt that they are even working in schools that have friable asbestos in the buildings. Teachers who are educating our diverse community of students with special needs are under-resourced. Why would they stay? I ask the House: In which other public sector role would it be acceptable for an equally credentialed but more experienced employee to earn less than a junior colleague? I believe the answer is none. I support New South Wales teachers in their efforts to have this situation rectified and I call on the Government to put things right.

AUSTRALIAN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:21): As I have mentioned a number of times in this House, the electorate of Prospect has a vibrant, active and growing Australian Armenian community, which contributes significantly to our multicultural society where we live in harmony and tolerance. I have also spoken previously about issues associated with the genocide and persecution of the ethnic Armenian community during the times of the Ottoman Turks, the Azerbaijan dictatorship, and the evil known as Daesh in northern Iraq and Syria. Recently a group of members of the Armenian Youth Federation of Australia who live in the electorate of Prospect and other neighbouring electorates in western Sydney held a silent protest at the Azerbaijan embassy in Canberra to remind Baku that Armenians have not forgotten the injustices associated with the murder of Lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan in 2004.

The story behind this protest shows that discrimination and violence towards ethnic Armenians continue even today. On 19 February 2004, with an axe in hand, the then Azerbaijan Army Captain Ramil Sahib Safarov

brutally delivered 16 blows to the sleeping body of Armenian Army Lieutenant Gurgun Margaryan to the extent of near decapitation when both officers were attending a Partnership for Peace program in Hungary. After this first murder Safarov attempted to murder a second Armenian officer attending the program, but was prevented from doing so and arrested by Hungarian law enforcement. On 13 April 2006 a Hungarian court sentenced Safarov to life imprisonment without a right to appeal for 30 years. In his judgement presiding Judge Andras Vaskuti said, "Safarov had no remorse for the premediated nature and brutality of his crime The murder of a sleeping man in peace time is always a crime and cannot be an act of heroism."

At the time of the murder many officials in Azerbaijan publicly praised Safarov's actions. The Azerbaijan dictatorship also continued to foster Armenophobia in its rhetoric and propaganda. Most striking is that in a nation with a documented history of widespread and ongoing human rights abuses directed towards minorities and political opponents, the Azerbaijan Commissioner for Human Rights, Elmira Suleymanova, declared that Safarov's punishment was far too harsh and that, "Safarov must become an example of patriotism for the Azerbaijani youth."

On 31 August 2012, after serving only eight years of his life sentence, a negotiated diplomatic deal between the governments of Azerbaijan and Hungary saw Safarov extradited to Azerbaijan, where upon arrival he was greeted by President Aliyev. During the negotiations for Safarov's extradition, President Aliyev had assured the Hungarian Government, the Armenian Government and representatives of the European Union that Safarov would serve the remainder of his sentence in prison. Instead, the convicted murderer was immediately issued a pardon and gifted a full military parade. He was declared a national hero before being promoted to the rank of major and rewarded with an apartment and, ironically, eight years of back pay.

I join my Armenian community in calling on the New South Wales Government to join with the United Nations, the European Union and the governments of Hungary, the United States, the Russian Federation and France in condemning the pardon, and President Aliyev's disregard for international criminal law and convention, and even Azerbaijan's own criminal code, which states that prisoners serving a life sentence for capital crimes can only be released after having served a minimum period of 25 years. That event was not the first time the Azerbaijan dictatorship had acted in such a way towards ethnic Armenians, but it will always demonstrate the character of that Government.

To those who support Safarov, I say that murder of innocents is not and never will be an example of patriotism. This is the very attitude that has fostered Armenophobia in Azerbaijan—a state-nurtured racism towards Armenians that convinces Azerbaijanis to act with such hatred toward ethnic Armenian men, women and children, especially in the Republic of Artsakh. That is why the Azerbaijani dictatorship's demand to bring the Republic of Artsakh under its control, including the fledgling democracy of 150,000 Armenian citizens, must be resisted by the international community. The international community must join with the State of New South Wales in recognising the Republic of Artsakh and recognising that the people of Artsakh deserve the right to self-determination, and the right to live in peace and security on their ancestral homeland. I look forward to continuing to work with the Armenian community to make this inspiration a reality.

Community Recognition Statements

ROTARY CLUB OF HURSTVILLE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:26): I inform the House of the eightieth anniversary of the Rotary Club of Hurstville. Hurstville Rotary was chartered on 2 September 1939, and since then it has been tackling a broad range of issues facing our community. The club's focus is community involvement, working with the public to produce hands-on solutions and create lasting change. It has a loyal volunteer base and there are now over 1.2 million members of Rotary International. Some of Hurstville Rotary's recent projects include road safety programs for school kids, supplying beanies to service men and women, sponsoring the St George Men's Shed and fundraising for the cardiac unit and CTG machine at St George Hospital. On 2 September I was lucky enough to join Hurstville Rotary to celebrate its anniversary with a Diamonds and Pearls Evening at Club Central Hurstville. We were treated to a colourful night of dancing and entertainment. I thank all the organisers of the club's anniversary celebration and, in particular, Marion Smith and President Jan Gartrell. Congratulations to Hurstville Rotary.

TOOHEYS BREWERY

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:27): I congratulate Tooheys Brewery on its 150th anniversary celebration. The brewery began on 7 September 1869 when two brothers, John and James Toohey, obtained their brewing licence and began production at the first Tooheys Brewery in Darling Harbour. The Tooheys operation soon outgrew Darling Harbour, expanding into Surry Hills before a major move in 1955 to its current purpose-built brewing facilities in Lidcombe in the electorate of Auburn. The brewery is an important institution in the Auburn

electorate, where there is still a thriving manufacturing industry. Currently, nearly 150 people are employed at the brewery and all Tooheys beer for the New South Wales market is created on site. I know everyone in the Chamber is keen to keep supporting New South Wales manufacturing, and I look forward to seeing our parliamentary dining rooms and bars serving New South Wales manufactured beers, including "the beer we drink round here".

CINCOTTA DISCOUNT CHEMIST, REVESBY

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:28): On Saturday 24 August I was thrilled to cut the ribbon for the reopening of Cincotta Discount Chemist at Revesby with the owner, Trinh Nguyen, and his daughters, Tu and Tram. It was a great day, with many locals coming out to support this long-established local business that has been serving my local community since 2005. Children had the opportunity to have their faces painted and there were some great bargains to be had, with many specials provided by the Nguyen family and their friendly staff who were on hand to make the event a special one for all those who attended. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and Cincotta Discount Chemist is a stellar example of hardworking families who have a smart heart. Not only do they run a successful business; they also care for the community in which they work and trade. I congratulate the Nguyen family on the reopening at their new premises in Revesby.

HOLROYD COMBINED CHURCHES

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:29): It was a pleasure to attend Holroyd Combined Churches Community Prayer Dinner. The Catholic Bishop of Parramatta, Vincent Long Van Nguyen, spoke to attendees about his experience as a refugee, and how we can play a pivotal role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Faith leaders and churches in Holroyd play a very important role in helping refugees and recent immigrants settle and build networks in our community. I thank Reverend Bob Dennis, Elizabeth Rensford and Father Paul Marshall for opening the dinner with prayer; and Brian Rensford from Holroyd New Life Church, primary schools special religious education coordinator Gai Campbell, NSW Police Fore Chaplain David Riethmuller, and Gideon Jesudoss from the Grace New Life Church for their insightful community prayers. Bishop Vincent's words that evening reminded me of the words of the Prophet Isaiah—chapter 16, verses 3 and 4—and our duty towards refugees in our community:

"Help us," they cry. "Defend us against our enemies. Protect us from their relentless attack. Do not betray us now that we have escaped. Let our refugees stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is passed."

May the Lord bless our Holroyd faith community.

WEST WYALONG HIGH SCHOOL

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:30): I recognise the efforts of two teams from West Wyalong High School that recently competed in the national aerobic championships on the Gold Coast. The two teams demonstrated their skills at the national level, taking home a bronze medal for one team and an achievement of eighth place for the other. The efforts of those teams are testament to the spirit of youth in the bush and I am very proud to have had the opportunity to recognise their achievement. Their coaches, Miss Astley and Sherrie Clemson, quite rightly deserve a big shout-out for their part in the success of those student teams. Well done to them all.

HUNTER SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (19:31): I congratulate the boys' and girls' soccer teams from Hunter Sports High School, who recently competed in the Bill Turner Cup and Bill Turner Trophy competitions. The competitions began in March and culminated in the finals played at Speers Point in early September. Around 850 school teams from New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Victoria participated in this year's competitions, with the event being one of the largest team sports competitions in the world. I was pleased to be at the commencement of the finals and I was very proud that both Hunter Sports High School teams made it through to the semifinals. The girls' team went on to the grand final, finishing runner-up, while the boys finished in third place overall—an outstanding achievement. Well done to both teams for a mammoth effort. I look forward to watching them again next year.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE MID NORTH COAST

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:32): They are battle hardened and exhausted—they are the extraordinary men and women of the NSW Rural Fire Service Mid North Coast, helping fight massive blazes in northern New South Wales. Our local crews are currently engaging the Bees Nest fire west of Dorrigo, which has now burnt out 93,792 hectares. Local firefighters also took on the Shark Creek 2 fire in the Angourie area. I applaud the leadership of fire control officer Superintendent Sean McArdle, 2IC Rachael Eggins, district officer of operations Inspector Michael Brougham, district officer of membership Darryal Luxford, district assistant Jason Booth, district assistant Bradley Bevitt, administration officer Maree Coonan, Group Captain Walter Gately,

Group Captain Neville Woodward, Group Captain Keith Driver, Deputy Group Captain Rob Cox, Deputy Group Captain Graeme Felton, Group Captain Clifford Last, Group Captain John Worrall, Deputy Group Captain Graeme Stockton and Deputy Group Captain Graham Martindale.

UMINA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:33): I congratulate the Umina Surf Life Saving Club on being awarded the NSW Surf Club of the Year award. This is the result of tireless efforts from volunteers over many years, as well as the club's work to grow its membership through the Does the Cap Fit campaign. The Umina club was also awarded NSW Patrol of the Year and local Kai Darwin was recognised as the Youth Lifesaver of the Year. The awards represent a resounding endorsement of the work that this excellent organisation does in fostering a strong coastal community and keeping all of us safe in the water. I thank president Stephen Scahill and all the volunteers for their essential work in making the beach a safer and more enjoyable place for activities carried out by coasties in my electorate. I would also like to encourage everyone in our community to be vigilant about swimming safety as we head into the 2019 beach season. Do not forget to join the proud lifesavers at the Central Coast Twist on the October long weekend.

LIONS CLUB OF GOULBURN CITY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:34): Today I recognise the Lions Club of Goulburn City, which recently celebrated its forty-fifth anniversary and has taken stock of its contributions to our community. In the past year the club has spent 2,982 hours in service. Over the past five years it has raised in excess of \$260,000. This time and money have funded a variety of local projects including, but not limited to, the Goulburn Base Hospital, Goulburn public schools, Convoy for Kids, the eisteddfod, Make a Wish, Mulwaree Council cultural exchange, Can Assist fuel vouchers and Christmas hampers for those who need them. The amazing efforts and many hours spent by these volunteers are quite significant, and I would like to publicly congratulate all those involved.

ROSALIE TAGGART

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (19:35): I congratulate Hamilton resident Rosalie Taggart, who was named the Hunter's Adult Volunteer of the Year in a ceremony on Friday. For 15 years Rosalie has volunteered with the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation, where she has held committee positions including president and vice president, and is currently the treasurer. The not-for-profit foundation supports women and men who have been diagnosed with or treated for breast cancer in the Hunter region, as well as their families. The foundation's work includes transporting patients to treatment, undertaking house cleaning and providing comfort cushions to be used after breast surgery. As well as being a member of the management committee, amongst many other jobs Rosalie has driven patients to and from medical appointments, been a creator and manager for most of the foundation's promotional products, and always attends events to ensure they run smoothly. Volunteers are the backbone of our community, and Rosalie has contributed positively to thousands of lives. When people are facing some of their toughest times, Rosalie has been there to make things better. Congratulations, Rosalie.

MID NORTH COAST REGIONAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:36): I recognise the winners of the NSW Business Chamber 2019 Mid North Coast Regional Business Awards held in Port Macquarie last Friday. Congratulations to John Cassegrain and Alex Cassegrain, and all of the team at Cassegrain Wines, which was named Regional Business of the Year. The company is recognised for its international wine exports and is a key contributor to our local economy. Budding florist Kayla Fuller of Touchwood Flowers won Outstanding Young Employee, while mbc Recruitment was named Outstanding Employer of Choice.

First State Allstars also has something to cheer about, after taking out the competition in the Start Up Superstar category for helping Port Macquarie embrace the fastest-growing sport in the world, already having 350 registered cheerleaders. Port Macquarie's beloved Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail added another well-deserved trophy to the cabinet, with Margret Meagher and her lovely colourful friends bestowed the honour of Excellence in Innovation. Congratulations to all the awards winners. As a community, Port Macquarie has much to celebrate and to be proud of when it comes to business in the electorate.

DULCIE DAL MOLIN

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (19:37): Recently one of Port Kembla's greatest residents and fiercest advocates was awarded life membership of the very organisation she helped to form many years ago. Dulcie Dal Molin was born and raised in Port Kembla. I affectionately refer to her as the Mayor of Port Kembla, as she is always pushing to get more done for Port Kembla to be improved. She is a most worthy recipient of life membership of the Red Point Artists Association, which she helped to form in 2008 and which has become a focal

point for creative expression and community activity in Port Kembla. It has helped to bring more life to Wentworth Street.

But, as is often the case with people involved in our community, this is not Dulcie's only contribution. She was involved in the Port Kembla Scouts Association for years, was president of the Kiama Shellharbour Photographic Society for 13 years and was a member of the management committee for 20 years. She was instrumental in bringing back the Port Kembla billycart derby and, all the while, has kept up her own artistic endeavours. In fact, I have one of her works hanging in my office. Dulcie's commitment to Port Kembla is based on a genuine love of community. She has dedicated herself to her community and it is the better for it.

PAULINE WRIGHT

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:38): I acknowledge Pauline Wright, a lawyer who lives at Avoca Beach in my electorate of Terrigal. Pauline has claimed the prestigious title of Woman Lawyer of the Year—recognition for her commitment to legal aid, access to justice and the rule of law. Pauline has worked for decades in the legal profession, including 20 years on the Central Coast. She is the principal of her firm, PJ Donnellan & Co Solicitors, which is based at Gosford. She served as president of the Law Society in 2017, is the current treasurer of the Law Council of Australia, and is 2019 president of the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties. Pauline has also made significant contributions to the local area. She is the vice president of the 5 Lands Walk committee, working with Con Ryan and a whole team of people to make this annual event such an enormous success. I congratulate Pauline on the very well-deserved honour of being Woman Lawyer of the Year.

WYONG DISTRICT TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (19:39): Congratulations to Wyong District Tennis Association on its 100th birthday. Wyong District Tennis Association began in 1919, when Les Warner organised the construction of two loam courts on his property now known as Baker Park. During the Second World War the courts became overgrown and were restored in 1947, coinciding with the formation of Wyong District Tennis Association. After an agreement with Wyong Shire Council, the land was made available to the association in 1978 for the construction of tennis courts and a licensed club to support the maintenance and future upgrades of the tennis facility. In 2009 the then Wyong council took possession of the courts. In 2012 a meeting was held that resolved to reform the Wyong District Tennis Association and for Wyong Shire Council to make available the courts to the tennis community and enable the association to resume the management of the courts. Congratulations to Wyong District Tennis Association on its 100th birthday. I wish the association many wonderful sporting years to come.

CRAIG SHANAHAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:40): Craig Shanahan from St Clair is rising above the enormous challenges life has thrown at him. Craig was diagnosed with childhood cancer at the age of two, and lost the vision in his left eye by the time he was three years old. But this did not interfere with his love for cooking. He went on to study commercial cookery at TAFE NSW, and worked as a qualified chef for a number of years. After a few years he was training to be a sous-chef when he began feeling tired and getting headaches. He was diagnosed with a brain tumour the size of a mango. While treatment was a success, Craig lost the vision in his other eye. But Craig did not let go of his dream to open a cafe. After he completed a touch-typing course with Vision Australia he returned to TAFE to complete his Advanced Diploma in Hospitality Management. Now aged 27, Craig has just registered the name of his cafe—The Blind Chef Cafe and Dessert Bar. I look forward to enjoying a coffee and dessert at his new cafe when it opens later in the year. Well done, Craig, you are an inspiration to all of us.

HELEN TUYL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:41): I pay tribute to the fabulous Maitland music teacher Helen Tuyl, and congratulate her on receiving the TMB Teacher Recognition Award at Sydney's Festival of Instrumental Music. The festival, which was held at the Sydney Opera House, involved around 4,500 public school students from around New South Wales. Among them were children from Millers Forest and Gillieston public schools performing three songs on their recorders, which they had spent six months learning with their dear Ms Tuyl. During her 40-year career Helen has ignited a passion for music in thousands of Maitland children, including her own three lovely daughters, Steph, Lara and Annie, who have entertained so many people over the years as part of their ensemble group, Dolce. There is no doubt that Helen's strong passion has led to such great outcomes for her students. I congratulate her on the receipt of the award and thank her for all the hours of enjoyment she has given to the children of Maitland, their parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles and me.

MIRANDA ELECTORATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:42): I acknowledge the recipients of the recently held Vocational Education and Training [VET] Excellence Awards, which recognise and acknowledge the outstanding commitment and achievements of students, teachers and employers participating in the VET Workplace Learning Program. Award-winning students, who have shown excellence, commitment and passion in their chosen industry area of study, include Michaela Diamond of Endeavour Sports High School, Jamie Cox of Sylvania High School and Matthew Woo of The Jannali High School for Hospitality.

From TAFE NSW, Sutherland College—GyMEA, Blake Shearsby received an award for construction and James Wray for electrotechnology, whilst Joshua Simmons of GyMEA Technology High School received his award for information and digital technology. Kevin Kean of TAFE NSW, Sutherland College—GyMEA also received a VET Teachers award for commitment to excellence in VET delivery, whilst Miranda RSL received an award as a host employer, for giving so generously its time and expertise to support the students in their studies. I congratulate all of the students on their achievements, and commend Kevin Kean and Miranda RSL for the commitment and support they provide them in achieving such fantastic results.

BLUGLASS

Ms LYNDa VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:43): I congratulate BluGlass on the opening of the new Paul Dunnigan Laboratories at its state-of-the-art facility at Silverwater. BluGlass invested \$6 million in the new laboratories to expand its product development out of its Silverwater base. The expansion will assist it in the commercialisation of remote plasma chemical vapour deposition. This technology plays an important role in the manufacture of high brightness LEDs, microLEDs and power electronics by helping to lower the cost and make the process more environmentally sustainable. I was privileged to join with BluGlass staff, investors and local and Federal colleagues at the official opening in August. Congratulations to chairman William Johnson and managing director Giles Bourne on their fantastic investment in Australian skills and technology and creating jobs of the future in Silverwater.

NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL BUSHCARE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:44): I acknowledge North Sydney Council's volunteer Bushcare group for its outstanding commitment to Landcare. This year marks 20 years of the Building Bridges to Boorowa program, which is fostering the kind of city-country connectedness that is crucial to ensuring rural communities thrive across the State. Planting native trees, shrubs and grasses, Building Bridges to Boorowa is not only providing crucial wildlife habitat but is also providing shelter for stock, reducing soil salinity, run-off and erosion and supporting riparian corridors.

It is not just the passion for creating sustainable, thriving landscapes or the immense feeling of accomplishment that keeps longtime volunteers Brenda Park and John Brewer coming back each year. It is the warm Boorowa hospitality and the love of the land that makes it a unique program. I had a great time planting alongside fellow volunteers Liz Powell, Michel Roure, Ian Clarke, Richard Ward, Susanna Cheng, Melinda Rippe, Hilary Walker and David Bell. I thank Andrew Scott from North Sydney Bushcare for his coordination of the program and commend the member for Goulburn for her ongoing support for Landcare in our electorates.

OPPORTUNITY COLLECTIVE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:45): In 2019 only 23 per cent of directors in ASX companies are women. This must change. Today in the New South Wales Parliament I say congratulations and a massive thank you to Suzy Miller, the board and the amazing team of mentors and mentees who are part of the Opportunity Collective. The Opportunity Collective is passionate about creating hope and helping others see the opportunities that are within and around them. Suzy is a ripper human who dreamt up the Opportunity Collective and its fabulous career women mentoring program with a view to increasing women's economic development and supporting women moving up the ladder in business in regional Australia.

I encourage both government and non-government organisations across the Central Coast and the Hunter, such as Worksafe NSW, Central Coast Local Area Health District, Service NSW, Gosford Private Hospital, Mingara, Central Coast Council, City of Newcastle, Maitland City Council and all other businesses, to support their employees to become involved in this great initiative. The Opportunity Collective is a catalyst for change for women, young people, Aboriginal Australians and people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It promotes successful careers for them as senior leaders and recognition, promotion and equal pay for their work in regional Australia.

COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:46): I congratulate the students of Cowra High School, Cowra Public School and Holmwood Public School who are among 32 western New South Wales schools who have been selected for this year's Schools Spectacular. Students from Cowra High School have been selected to take part in Aboriginal and combined dance while students from Cowra Public School will be in the combined dance ensembles as well as the combined choir alongside students from Holmwood Public School. I recognise the efforts of the students who have been selected for this honour and the support that they have received from teachers and families. Congratulations again and well done to the schools for supporting these students in their creative endeavours.

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY SOCIETY

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (19:47): This year the Newcastle Art Gallery Society is celebrating 50 years of enriching Newcastle's cultural scene. Since 1969 the society has supported Newcastle Art Gallery's mission to present high-quality exhibitions, public programs and events that connect communities and develop passion and curiosity for visual arts. Through hosting events, the society raises funds that assist the gallery to expand their collection. They also run a membership program that enables admission to special events, tours and lectures. Newcastle has a highly engaged community of artists and art lovers who contribute enormous social and cultural capital to the city, fostering inclusion and community spirit. I thank Prue Viggers, Helen De Bruyn, Gael Davies, Peter Blythe, Helen Dark and the great Newcastle Art Gallery Society for their commitment to our gallery. Their work has undoubtedly enhanced the vibrancy of visual arts in our city.

RED ROCK HERITAGE PICNIC DAY

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:48): Red Rock is one of the Coffs Coast's sparkling jewels. Families turned out in force at the Red Rock Heritage Picnic Day on 15 September to celebrate 85 years as a hamlet, the gazetting of the Red Rock reserves. The activities focused on the historical aspects of life at Red Rock and its spectacular natural heritage. Among the highlights were a historical display of *Life at Red Rock* at Lynch Cottage, together with guided walking tours of historical Red Rock; Uncle Mark Flanders' Indigenous cultural tour; a live local band; craft workshops; face painting; birdwatching; kayaking; a treasure hunt; yoga; and a photo and art display in the community hall. The day was proudly presented by the Red Rock Preservation Association and the people of Red Rock. I congratulate the organisers: overall event coordinator Rose Treilibs, Red Rock Preservation Association secretary; historical display coordinator Sue Hardmann, treasurer of collection of Red Rock history group; and events manager Di Haddon, local Lions Club treasurer and Red Rock community member.

MAGISTRATE KEVIN HOCKEY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:49): I congratulate Dubbo solicitor Kevin Hockey, who was recently announced as one of eight new magistrates to join the circuit in New South Wales. Kevin has been one of Dubbo's top legal eagles for quite some time. For many years he operated his own firm, specialising in criminal and family law, conveyancing, personal injury and general litigation. He also spent time as a police prosecutor. Interestingly, prior to his venture into the legal world he was a motor mechanic. He is a great example of someone who has followed his dreams and aspirations and not had his life determined by a piece of paper with a certain qualification on it. My friend and colleague the Attorney General recently announced Kevin's appointment as a magistrate. Dubbo's loss will be Sydney's gain, as he will begin his new career in the city before relocating to a regional or suburban court. Congratulations to Kevin on this amazing achievement and best of luck to both him and his family for the future.

EAST MAITLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:50): In times of distress, many of us have found ourselves desperate for a few moments of privacy and solitude. In our schools students in despair often make a beeline for that one sacred sanctum, the bathrooms. Sadly, research shows that this is the very place where bullying and intimidation can be rife. In a climate where youth mental health and anti-bullying campaigns are paramount, it is greatly concerning that young people are at risk of encountering damaging behaviours when they are at their most fragile. East Maitland Public School, with the generous help of East Maitland Lions Club, has recently completed a mental health project where the school bathrooms have been reimaged as a more inviting and welcoming space; a space with positive affirmations, bold colours and clean and working facilities; a space where the contact information for children's support services and crisis help lines are on display. I congratulate East Maitland Public School P&C vice president Kylee Holwell on her vision and coordination of the project, and I also give heartfelt thanks to the Lions Club of East Maitland, which funded the project and provided volunteer painters.

LUGARNO PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:51): On 3 August I had the pleasure of attending the "Say no to single-use plastic" campaign launched by the Lugarno Progress Association. The association launched its campaign with giveaways and raffles and there was an artwork showcase in partnership with Lugarno Public School, where students submitted works along the theme of "Say no to single-use plastics". The association handed out re-usable drink bottles and reusable shopping bags and spoke of the detriment associated with single-use plastics and the effect that this waste can have on the environment, particularly on our local waterways. It was pleasing to see the support for this event from the Georges River Council and local shop owners who have committed to making some environmentally conscious choices in their businesses. I thank Michael Springs and the Lugarno Progress Association for their awareness campaign about the changes the community can make to reduce single-use plastic.

WADALBA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (19:52): Congratulations to Wadalba Community School under-16s rugby league team for competing in the New South Wales All Schools rugby league competition. Wadalba Community School rugby league team successfully won the Central Coast regional final, winning their place in the State final held at West Sydney. On the State final day Wadalba Community School competed against St Joseph's College, Banora Point. They played very well but were defeated 10-4. It was a great effort from Wadalba Community School rugby league team to place second in New South Wales. Congratulations to each team player representing the area of Wadalba. You should be proud of your efforts.

ST JOSEPH'S REGIONAL COLLEGE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:53): I recognise students of St Joseph's Regional College on their recent win at the illuminate:nextgen competition, which challenged students to find solutions for issues young people face living in regional communities. Holly Coles, Lenia Collier, Noah Merkus, Piper Seale and Blake Stainforth's winning idea, Y-Link, recognised that young people need additional transport options to stay living, working and studying in regional communities such as Port Macquarie. The group's plan included a bus service on weekends and after hours so that youth could easily travel for sport, work and more.

Their winning plan included an app that outlines routes and timetables together with the ability to pay bus fares directly through the app. The runner-up team's business idea was Flip to Hip. The team of Alex Byrne, Matt Gleeson, Tim Kobelke and Luka Marshall encouraged business and the community to embrace being environmentally friendly. The team designed environmentally friendly coffee cups with bold prints with a message to the consumer to recycle so that the coffee cups no longer ended up in landfill. I commend these leaders of the future for their commitment to finding ways to make our community a better place to live, work and play.

AUBURN ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:53): I recognise a number of significant education achievers in my electorate of Auburn. At the recent Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence Auburn North Public School, Granville East Public School and Birrong Girls High School were recognised with the Secretary's School Achievement Award for their efforts to create a sustainable learning environment. Auburn North also received the Secretary's Award for Outstanding School Initiative. Congratulations to Sarah Al Helfy from Birrong Girls High School, who received the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement. The award recognises year 12 students who excel across academic achievement, sport, cultural, community and leadership. I am also proud to congratulate Louise Reynolds from Granville East Public School, who received the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Renee George, who received the Secretary's Award for Excellent Service. These students, staff and schools are a wonderful example of educational achievement in Auburn and western Sydney.

AMELIA KAY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:54): I acknowledge Amelia McKay, a year 4 student of Green Point Christian College in my electorate of Terrigal. Amelia is a recipient of a Write On 2019 literary prize. Write On is an annual competition open to all New South Wales primary students from years 1 to 6. This year's participants were asked to compose an imaginative text of 500 words based on a stimulus picture. For her piece of creative writing Amelia received a Gold Award in the stage two category, one of only six awards in the entire State. This is an incredible achievement and I congratulate her and the fantastic teachers at Green Point Christian College. Amelia had her award presented to her by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, at a ceremony at the State Library. Congratulations to Amelia McKay from Green Point Christian College.

DUNBAR WAY, NORTH GOSFORD

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:55): A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of having a fabulous afternoon tea with the residents of Dunbar Way in North Gosford. Dunbar Way is a local social housing complex managed by Pacific Link. It is home to some resilient people who are facing complex issues in their lives. The connector was coffee and Tim Tams. It was great to meet Greg and hear about how he had worked as a builder during the construction of the very units he now calls home on Dunbar Way. Ash and Naomi have been running a women's group each week for the residents in the community room. They told me how numbers were slowly growing as residents felt more comfortable to join in. Acting CEO of Pacific Link Ian Lynch also joined us and was pleasantly surprised by the turnout. He felt that it was a great opportunity to build relationships and extended his full support for any future events of a similar nature. Thank you to all the residents who came along and shared a cuppa and a story and thanks to Pacific Link for letting us try something new to reach out to our local community.

KACHAN SCHOOL OF TUMBLING AND PERFORMANCE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:56): Congratulations to Glenmore Park resident Ethan McGuinness and St Clair resident Hayley Sepping, who were two of several local gymnasts from the Kachan School of Tumbling and Performance to successfully compete at the recent Australian National Championships. Ethan McGuinness out tumbled his fellow training partners to take gold in the senior international tumbling title. Also bringing home gold was Hayley, who finished first in both trampoline and synchronised trampoline. She also won silver in double mini trampoline. Congratulations to Ethan, Hayley and all the other winners at Kachan School of Tumbling and Performance.

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:56): I recognise the remarkable service of the volunteers of the Royal North Shore Hospital. With more than 60 different volunteer programs operating in the hospital, there is an enormous number of dedicated individuals donating their time to improve the lives of patients and their families. I was honoured to meet with a handful of these volunteers at an appreciation morning tea to acknowledge their contribution. I commend Arthur Moreland, who has been volunteering at the hospital for over 54 years and Jane Whittaker, a volunteer of 34 years. Sharon Frazer, another dedicated volunteer, signed up after recovering in Royal North Shore Hospital as a patient, having experienced firsthand the positive impact of the volunteers. I also recognise Ian Grose who volunteers in the P.A.R.T.Y Program for students aged 15 to 25 years, which allows them to see firsthand the consequences of risk-taking behaviours in everyday life. I thank Yvette Geczy, Valerie Weekes, Nicola Periera, Hannah Denyer-Simmons, Tom Limburg, Graham Whittaker, Wendy Morton and all the Royal North Shore Hospital volunteers—about 600 of them—for their dedication and generous commitment to the community.

EID AL-ADHA

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—I had the honour of joining our local Muslim community in Minto for Eid Al-Adha celebrations organised by the Bangladeshi Australian Muslim Welfare Society. Eid Al-Adha, also known as the "Festival of the Sacrifice", is one of the holiest Islamic holidays celebrated worldwide each year. It is an opportunity for people of Islamic faith to come together in prayer, share food, exchange gifts, and gather with family and friends. One tradition is the sacrifice of an animal for food to distribute among the faithful, family and friends, and the poor. This offering is an opportunity to remember our common humanity and the importance of helping others. It is a selfless act and one that espouses our shared values of generosity, compassion and goodwill to others. As the member for Macquarie Fields, I am proud and privileged to represent people of many different faiths and cultures. I am a firm believer that there is more that unites us than divides us. I thank the Muslim community for their warm welcome. May our common goals and shared humanity continue to strengthen our nation for the future.

ORANGE PURLERS

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise The Orange Purlers, a group who have been gathering for more than a decade to knit and crochet a variety of items which they donate to a number of local and international organisations. The many members who constitute this group of knitters gather each week at the Orange City Library, where they knit blankets, wraps and other woollen wearables that they donate to local organisations including the Lyndon Women's Program, Ronald McDonald House, Orange Aboriginal Medical Service, Housing Plus, Mission Australia's Benjamin Grove Aged Care facility and the homeless.

The Orange Purlers also donate the knitted items to the registered charity Wrap with Love, which distributes their woollen creations throughout Australia and abroad to countries experiencing poverty, natural disaster and devastation of war. Since 2011 The Orange Purlers have produced and donated 3,139 woollen wraps, of which 428 have been knitted this year. The members also benefit from sharing their skills and socialising over

morning tea as they ply their craft to producing knitted wearables and wraps for those in need. I commend The Orange Purlers on their many years of community spirit and benevolence, which positively impacts people across the world.

PENRITH VALLEY SPORTS FOUNDATION

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—Congratulations to Bridie Murphy from Glenmore Park who was awarded the Penrith Valley Sports Foundation Junior Sportsperson Award for the month of May for her development and skill in Softball. At the age of 5 Bridie was playing softball, and over the last ten years has excelled, being selected in the 2019 Australian U17's Diamond Squad to tour the USA in June/July. She has shown incredible hard work and commitment to her training as she trains multiple times a week to improve on a range of skills. She currently plays for local club Glenmore Phantoms, where her skill was recognised by this award. Bridie hopes by continuing to improve on her skills she will eventually have the opportunity to play for the 2020 Australian Junior Spirit Team at the Junior World-Cup. Her long-term goal is to gain a scholarship to study and play softball in the US College System. Congratulations Bridie on this achievement and all the best for your future endeavours!

MITCHELL BROWN

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise the accomplishments of Taree's Mitchell Brown. Mitchell, a year 12 student of Taree High School has this year performed for the second time with the NSW Department of Education State Wind Band at the Sydney Opera House. It was a great honour for Mitchell to be selected, but after an audition on the first day Mitchell impressed conductor Stephen Williams who selected Mitchell to play first clarinet chair, concert master and soloist for their performance. It's been a big year for Mitchell who also received the Roma Liggins Perpetual Scholarship for piano and instrumental at the Taree and District Eisteddfod, toured with the Hunter Wind Ensemble who were also awarded B Grade Champions at the National Eisteddfod in Canberra. I know how proud Mitchell and his family are of his achievements and I know there will be many more to come.

POOR CLARE SISTERS

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—For 135 years the Poor Clare Sisters have shaped and enriched the lives of a great many people both within the suburb of Waverley, the broader electorate of Coogee and beyond. In November 1883 six Poor Clare Sisters made their final farewells in Dublin arriving in Sydney on 23rd November 1883. The foundation stone for St Clare's School was laid in December 1883 and for over one hundred years, the Sisters continued to offer quality education within a gentle spiritual Franciscan environment, producing over the years many thousands of strong and decent women. Their service in the context of education is only a small part of their story. It is impossible to measure how many people have benefited from their friendship as well as their caring and support for the aged, the grieving, the lonely, the needy and the lost. This month, the Sisters moved to their new home in North Richmond. Their vision for the new Monastery is to provide a place of peace and solace for everyone, away from the hectic pace of life. I have no doubt that they will succeed. I thank them for their service.

DRUM LINE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise the talented musical students from St Agnes Parish School for their recent win at the National Percussion Eisteddfod. For the third year in a row the St Agnes Schools Drum Line squad have been victorious in claiming the National Championships competition in Sydney, beating some of the finest student musicians in the country. Coordinator Mark Spencer acknowledged the results of the children as exceeding all expectations demonstrating the depth and calibre of talent in Port Macquarie and indeed in regional New South Wales.

Winning first and second place in the "Open Tenor Solos" category was Harry Amon and Nicholas Murray from St Joseph's Regional College. Harry also placed second in the "Open Snare" and "Open Drum Set Solo", with Isaac Clarke claiming third from Mackillop College. Nathan Brumby and Michael Nixon from Mackillop College also performed strongly in this section and are to be commended for their efforts. To his credit Michael Nixon from Mackillop College picked up the Highly Commended in both the Intermediate Concert Snare Drum Solo and the Junior High Drum Set Solo. I congratulate all the winners who performed superbly to receive top honours and deserved recognition.

SPRING INTO CORRIMAL

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)—Corrimal is the heart of my Electorate and this year's Spring into Corrimal Festival was the largest in the Festivals History with around 60,000 people attending the event on Sunday 8th September. The Annual event is a one day free family event organised by the Corrimal Chamber of Commerce.

It brings the community together so people can come onto the street to meet family and friends for a day of fun, cultural diversity and free entertainment. Over 270 market stalls and a grand parade makes Spring into Corrimal a great day for the people in my electorate. I would like to congratulate the Corrimal Chamber of Commerce for a fantastic job in bringing the day together and giving a unique marketing opportunity for local businesses. I would also like to thank the dedicated volunteers led by Paul Boulwood who ensure the day runs smoothly and is full of fun for the whole family.

SENIOR CONSTABLE WAYNE GOUGH

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—After thirty-one years of loyal service to the community, Wallsend electorate local Wayne Gough retired from the NSW Police Force on 29 August. Senior Constable Gough was described by the Newcastle City Police District as a much loved and long serving officer. Senior Constable Gough served his entire career in the Hunter Region after joining the NSW Police Force as a trainee in 1987, and is the recipient of the National Medal, National Police Medal and the NSW Police Force long service medal. His service to the community has become a multi-generational affair: both of his sons are also serving NSW Police Officers, and both have achieved the rank of Senior Constable. I want to join with the Newcastle City Police District in wishing him all the best in retirement, and I would like to add my thanks to him for his commitment, dedication, honour and integrity. He provided an extraordinary service to the community over the past thirty-one years.

NINA FUNNELL

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—I congratulate Nina Funnell on being named Journalist of the Year at the Women in Media Awards. This is a much-deserved recognition of Nina's body of work, but also acknowledges the experience of survivors of sexual assault, harassment and rape, including those in the Summer Hill electorate. I first met Nina in 2017 following the findings of the Australian Human Rights Commission report into sexual assault and harassment on university campuses, and was immediately impressed and inspired. As both a journalist and the Co-Director of End Rape on Campus, Nina has been a tireless advocate on this important issue.

Her most recent project, the #LetHerSpeak campaign, aims to reform the Tasmanian and Northern Territory gag laws which prevents survivors of sexual assault from being able to use their name in the media to tell their story. As part of the campaign Nina profiled 14 survivors of sexual assault from jurisdictions with gag orders to highlight the importance of having survivors' voices as part of a national discussion. On behalf of the entire Inner West Community, I warmly thank Nina for her commitment, passion and professionalism, and extend our congratulations on this much-deserved recognition.

BALLINA RSL CENTENARY

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—This year the Ballina RSL Sub-branch marks its centenary of supporting veterans and their families in the Ballina community. The Ballina Sub-Branch manages many services for our community. They provide employment support to younger veterans, run commemorative events that acknowledge significant days for veterans and run a military museum that raises money for Legacy. On October 12 they will host a formal dinner to mark the centenary. The dinner will provide an opportunity for the broader community to celebrate the support the RSL has given to veterans and ex-service people for 100 years. Further celebrations will look at how the organisation can best help veterans into the future and shape the direction of this vital community organisation. I acknowledge the work of the sub-branch president Dick Wills and the centenary organising committee and congratulate the Ballina RSL Sub-Branch on their one hundred years of important service in our community.

LAKE MACQUARIE U3A

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—On August 1st, I welcomed Jill Hall, the former State Member for Swansea and Federal Member for Shortland, and members of the East Lake Macquarie U3A here to Parliament. U3A, or University of the Third Age, is an international, not-for-profit, self-help organisation that provides learning opportunities for retired and semi-retired mature-aged people. The East Lake Macquarie U3A offers a wide range of courses including languages, health and fitness, craft, music, dance and of course, politics. Following a tour of Parliament House, I enjoyed a delightful lunch with 12 members of the group and they were then welcomed by the Speaker at Question Time. I believe they relished the lively debates that the MPs engaged in on that day. Thank you Jill for taking the time out of your busy schedule to pass on your political knowledge and experience to the U3A students of Lake Macquarie.

TRIBUTE TO LEONARDO NOSATTI

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate Leonardo Nosatti of Como on having his work included in the 2018 HSC Young Writers Showcase anthology. Leonardo's critical essay draws from the past and present to recast characters from 1920s literary classics in modern day society, imagining their use of social media as a way to discuss the concept of manifold self. His essay is one of 18 pieces included in the anthology, which is a collection of the best English Extension 2 writing from the HSC class of 2018. Launched last month at the State Library of NSW and published by the NSW Education Standards Authority, inclusion in the anthology means that Leonardo is officially a published author, less than a year after finishing high school. I congratulate Leonardo on this fantastic achievement, and commend the hard work and dedication that went into the cultivation of his English Extension 2 submission. I have no doubt that Leonardo will continue to achieve throughout his tertiary studies, and extend my best wishes for his future endeavours.

OXFORD LAW GROUP GRAND OPENING

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—On Saturday 7th September 2019 I had the great pleasure of attending the Grand Opening of the Oxford Law Group at 2A William Street, Fairfield. The Oxford Law Group was inceptioned by Ms Kate Hoang, a local solicitor who has the passion and desire to advocate for those in need, especially the most vulnerable in our society. The Hoang Family are a fantastic example of a true local success story. Their hard work and commitment to the community over the years is reflected not only in the establishment and support for their new law firm, but in their countless hours of volunteer work with the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter. Congratulations Kate and the entire Hoang Family on a very successful Grand Opening of Oxford Law Group in William Street Fairfield. On behalf of the Fairfield Electorate, I would like to thank you and your family for your ongoing commitment to the delivery of invaluable services to our community and I wish you every success now and into the future.

URUGUAYAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise Uruguayan Independence Day. An Independence Day event was commemorated on Saturday 24 August this year at the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club which is located in the suburb of Hinchinbrook within the electorate I represent. In addition to myself, those present at the event included the Uruguayan Ambassador to Australia Her Excellency Victoria Francolino as well as Consul General Conrado Silveira. The Club itself was formed about 45 years ago. It originally met in a house with small beginnings but now for many years has operated from its quite substantial present location. I congratulate the Club officials and volunteers for the work they did for the Independence Day celebrations and more generally for the work they do for the Club. The Club plays a significant role in our multicultural community and particularly amongst Latin Americans. Commemorating events significant to a country of origin is a notable part of multicultural Sydney. It's always a pleasure to be at the Club and to attend Independence Day Events.

CHRIST CHURCH LAVENDER BAY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker I recognise the congregation of Christ Church Lavender Bay, who recently celebrated 150 years since commencing the construction of their church in my electorate of North Shore. Christ Church Lavender Bay has a long history of service in our community which continues today. Whether it's their annual winter food drive for those in need, or speaking out against domestic violence, the Christ Church Lavender Bay congregation and clergy continue to be inspired by faith to serve their community. I was pleased to join Reverend Lachlan Edwards, Wardens Richard Neal, Philippa Armfield, and Christine Ecob along with the local congregation to celebrate this momentous anniversary with a re-enactment of the steamer journey taken by members of the early congregation, clergy and government representatives, when the building's foundation stone was laid on the 25th of August 1869. The early congregation has a long history of serving their community, having generously raised the funds to build the church on their own. This generosity continues today in our community and reminds us of the important role pastoral support can play in people's lives. I congratulate Christ Church Lavender Bay.

VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I rise to commemorate World Refugee Day held on 20 June 2019. In particular I acknowledge the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter (VCA), who marked this occasion with a candlelight vigil at The Boat People Monument in Bankstown. I would like to acknowledge the President of VCA NSW Mr Paul Nguyen and the executive for organising this important event. I am very pleased that while I was Mayor of Bankstown the Council committed to building The Boat People Monument at Saigon Place, to recognise and celebrate the contribution Vietnamese-Australians have made in shaping the Bankstown community. The monument was built in partnership with VCA and honours our local Vietnamese community by commemorating the sacrifices and hardships of thousands of Vietnamese people who lost their

lives in the pursuit of freedom, democracy and human rights. The settlement of Vietnamese people in Australia has been a success story not only for the Vietnamese community but for the community at large. I commend VCA for its efforts in providing valuable support to our thriving Vietnamese community.

ONAM CELEBRATIONS

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education)—I was lucky enough to attend the 2019 Onam Celebrations, hosted by the Sydney Malayalee Association. Onam is the biggest and the most important festival of the state of Kerala. It is a harvest festival celebrated by people of all communities in Kerala, lasting four to ten days. It boasts elaborate feasts, song and dance entertainment, activities, and other extravagant celebrations that capture the culture and diversity of the state of Kerala. The Sydney Malayalee Association represents a large number of active members across Sydney. The Association itself, is an active member of the United Indian Association (UIA) that acts as a major networking channel between the Indian communities in Sydney, various organisations and government bodies in Australia. One of the main features of Onam celebrations are cultural programs reminiscent of Kerala's own rich cultural and artistic life both present and past. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Sydney Malayalee Association, President of the Association Joseph Kachappilly, as well as all members and volunteers involved for their impressive work in organising the event, as well as extending their invitation to a truly unforgettable night, on the scene.

LOU'S PLACE TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I wish to put on record 20 years of community effort helping vulnerable women at Lou's Place women's refuge. Lou's Place provides a safe place, with no judgement and a special warmth and non-institutional approach, including home cooked meals, empathic case management and enjoyable activities that build community, skills and self-confidence. Four friends got together 20 years ago to help other women who had not been as fortunate as them; many others have come on board along the way. Over 20 years, volunteers have cooked and served over 127,000 lunches, led over 10,000 activities and raised money from community events, like the annual Lou's Closet clothing sale. Case managers have worked with nearly 69,000 women in need. I am proud to represent this electorate where such wonderful community spirit and care flourishes. I share the hope that Lou's Place will continue to make a real difference to women in crisis for many more years.

MURWILLUMBAH MUSTANGS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—On Saturday, 27 July 2019, the Murwillumbah Mustangs hosted its annual Charity Cup Day in support of Give Me 5 for Kids. It is a national fundraiser, supporting and raising funds for local children's hospital wards across regional Australia. The Cup Day was a huge success, raising close to \$12,036 for the charity, with the raffle alone raised more than \$2,000, all from donated items. The Murwillumbah Mustangs is a local Rugby League team, competing at the Northern Rivers Regional Rugby League (NRRRL). While the Mustangs may have gone down to its local rival, the Cudgen Hornet, the Cup Day was thoroughly enjoyed by 2,000 people. Thank you for your generous support.

I acknowledge and thank Colts Junior Rugby League Club and its President Mr Daniel Gray for a great set of junior games. To the sponsors, including the Courthouse Hotel, O'Brien Plumbing, Onsite Fastenings, Pottsville Tavern, Specialised Chicken, Harding's Earthmoving, Ladbroke's and Iron Jack, I thank you. I congratulate Murwillumbah Mustangs President, Mr Nigel Lofts, his committee members and supporters for hosting the Cup Day and raising much-needed money to support Give Me 5 for Kids. Congratulations and thank you for your fantastic effort!

KURNELL RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—I acknowledge the tremendous selfless hard work, dedication and courage shown by Kurnell Rural Fire Service volunteers, who have travelled recently to northern NSW to contain devastating bushfires. I thank in particular Adam Sorensen, Cinan Fitzgerald, Mark Kouzmenko, Colin Moore, Andrew Green, Scott Goodhew and Thomas Tsiamis. We are so lucky to have volunteers of this calibre who not only protect lives and property in the Sutherland Shire, but far afield in regional NSW.

ST JOHNS BALMAIN

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I recognise a fantastic community event, the Climate Action for Peace held at St Johns church in my electorate of Balmain. This event is part of a global observance of the UN International Day of Peace which this year will draw attention to the importance of combatting climate change as a way to protect and promote peace throughout the world. St Johns have put together a great program which includes a peace service, talks from local climate and community organisations and seedling planting. All

proceeds from the day will go to the UNICEF Asia Floods relief campaign. I want to acknowledge the work of St John's Balmain in putting this event together, especially Tracey Brooks and Rev Peter Yeats. I also want to acknowledge all the organisations who are talking part including Asylum Seekers Centre, Mort Bay Community Garden and Spring Street Singers, as well as the many volunteers who will be helping on the day. Thank you to St Johns Balmain for your commitment to climate action and community. Climate Action for Peace is on 21 September, I encourage all Members to go along!

CAMDEN-WOLLONDILLY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—On Saturday 17th August I attended the Camden/Wollondilly Domestic Violence Awareness Day event. Purple balloons could be seen from all entrances to the Narellan Sports Hub. The event was attended by 2300 netballers. The day was a success via the outstanding community interest, support and donations made on the day. I congratulate Camden-Wollondilly Domestic Violence Committee and the Camden Police Area Command for putting on this event \$4000 was raised and donated to the Camden Wollondilly Domestic Violence committee.

VIETNAM VETERANS EVENTS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services)—On Sunday 18th August, I joined with the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW) Inc Shoalhaven Sub-Branch for a Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Service in Walsh Memorial Park in Bomaderry. I acknowledge Captain Matthew Sutcliffe from Salvation Army, Commodore Vince di Pietro RAN (Retired) who gave the Address and President and Life Member of the Association Mr Clyde Poulton. Former Commander of the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm, Commodore Vince Di Pietro talked about how, as a young flyer, he was mentored by many of the navy helicopter pilots from HMAS Albatross who had served in Vietnam. This year marked the 53rd anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. It was also an honour for me to then attend a very moving Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Service in Kangaroo Valley on 18th August.

MOOREBANK SQUADRON OF THE AUSTRALIAN AIR LEAGUE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—I'd like to recognise an outstanding organisation within my electorate, the Moorebank squadron of the Australian Air League. The Australian Air League is an organisation that enables youth with an interest in aviation to learn more about the field. The organisation can provide pathways for children aged 8 and upwards to develop a career in aviation. I would particularly like to congratulate the Moorebank squadron of the Australian Air League, who have recently taken out the title of "Most Outstanding Squadron of the Year" for the third successive year. I also congratulate squadron member Benedict Evans, who was awarded a flying scholarship from the RAAF Association, and Squadron Sergeant Lachlan Hyde, who received his 10 year general service medal. I commend the exemplary Moorebank Squadron on their success and wish them the best of luck in hopefully achieving a fourth straight win next year.

HUNTER VOLUNTEERS

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—I wish to acknowledge several Novocastrians who were recognised at the 2019 Hunter Volunteer Awards. The awards celebrate volunteers from all walks of life, and thanks them for their contributions to our communities. In the Young Volunteer of the Year category Hamilton South's Elsie Crockett was awarded for her work with St John Ambulance. Newcastle's Roland Bannister, Maryville's Jean Bridges, Mayfield East's Kathryn Pitkin AM and Hamilton's Angela Di Santo were all noted for their work with the National Trust-listed Miss Porter's House. Amongst many volunteers recognised for their dedication to Scouts Australia were Newcastle's Lisa Worthington, Merewether's John Price and Mayfield's Darryl Manion. John Rodger, of Newcastle, and William Craven-Sands, of Tighes Hill, have both given their time to Primary Ethics classes, while Dennis Bradford, of Mayfield, was recognised for his dedication to the Calvary Mater Hospital. Stockton's Greg Pugh has volunteered with Sailors with disabilities, and Hamilton's John McLeod was acknowledged for his work with Rowing NSW. Thank you, and well done to all. Your contributions have made our city a much brighter place to live.

KAVANAGH INDUSTRIES FACTORY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Kavanagh Industries is an innovative local manufacturer of duct work and related products. They supply the duct work for many major projects including the Western Sydney Stadium in Parramatta and the Barangaroo Towers. It was an absolute pleasure to be given a tour of their Smithfield factories by Craig Brewin and meet some of the workforce. I was joined by Deputy Opposition Leader Yasmin Catley MP and Peter Groeneveld from the Cumberland Business Chamber. Kavanagh Industries proudly uses Australian sourced steel and has built partnerships with other local manufacturers and installers. It is manufactures including Kavanagh Industries who buy products from companies like BlueScope steel ensuring that Australian manufactures and workers are used all along the supply chain. By supporting our local

manufacturers we support the entire manufacturing supply chain in Australia. The Prospect electorate is home to the largest manufacturing park in Australia, it is innovative local companies like Kavanagh Industries that drive our local economy. I want to thank and congratulate Aidan Kavanagh and his family for making a truly Australian Product.

JACK SARGEANT

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—I would like to pay tribute to 10 year old Jack Sargeant who has raised over \$7,000 by riding his BMX. Jack, who suffers from a rare blood disorder called Diamond-Blackfan Anaemia, decided to raise money by riding 10km on his local BMX track. Despite the set-back of a broken leg earlier this year, Jack has been training hard for his fundraising event. He has done an amazing job and raised \$7,400 so far. All the money raised will go towards the Captain Courageous Foundation which has established The Australian Diamond Blackfan Anaemia Program—the first research initiative of its kind. They have already made break throughs in the treatment of the condition, including a possible new medication. Congratulations Jack you are an impressive young man and I congratulate you on not only completing the 10kms but also raising money for this important cause.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:58 until
Wednesday 18 September 2019 at 09:30.**