



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 18 September 2019

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 18 September 2019

The Speaker (The Hon. Jonathan Richard O'Dea) took the chair at 09:30.

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: I will accept the motion for which the member for Mulgoa is giving notice, but I note that it was on the longer side. Her motion is testing the limits.

Bills

RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 17 September 2019.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (09:46): The Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 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 continuing commitment to have 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 participating 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 threat 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 now be required to attend and provide evidence. The bill serves to improve integrity outcomes and the sustainability of racing. The House should commend this legislation for its potential to safeguard and secure the integrity of the 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. [*Extension of time*]

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, which 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 Park trotting club, a great club that borders my electorate, provides strong economic impetus for the area. This bill will give added confidence to the many trainers, owners and punters who live in my electorate. There is only one horse racing track in my electorate and that hosts the iconic race that almost stops the nation known as the Bong Bong Cup, held at the Bong Bong Picnic Racecourse. I invite all members to come and spend a few days in the highlands. The race will take place on Friday 22 November this year. Those who attend this magnificent event have the option of booking a spot in one of the glorious marquees, including the Taphouse hosted by legendary local beer brewer Ben Twomey.

Other options include car boot picnics, which rival the Melbourne Cup Birdcage for their splendour, and general admission tickets. There is also the establishment of a multimillion dollar equine centre in the Southern Highlands. Preliminary discussions are well underway; I and my wonderful parliamentary colleague the member for Goulburn have spoken to many stakeholders, including having great discussions with Racing NSW. The project can only be strengthened by the Government's commitment to providing and ensuring the utmost integrity for all sectors of the racing industry. In my electorate of Wollondilly, which was impacted in recent years by the proposed ban on greyhound racing, there is a renewed energy towards the greyhound and racing industry in general. There has been a resurgence in activity in the greyhound industry and a number of trainers and owners are now looking forward to the future. They need to trust the regulators and administrators in all sections of the racing industry. Confidence in the overall racing industry is now returning. The bill strengthens community confidence in racing and helps racing authorities ensure a level playing field for all punters. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (09:54): The Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 is an important reform that will bring New South Wales in line with the other State jurisdictions. The provisions in this legislation dealing with the powers of Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales to compel unlicensed persons to attend inquiries and produce documents is long overdue. David Armati authored the *Report on the Powers of Racing NSW over Unlicensed Persons*. He made recommendations to improve the integrity of the racing industry in 2013. Many of the recommendations that he made at the time are being addressed in this bill. The racing industry contributes over \$2 billion to the New South Wales economy annually and employs thousands of people in both metropolitan and regional New South Wales. The industry is, however, reliant on gambling revenue to continue its operations.

If the industry is unable to protect itself from race fixing, doping and other illicit practices there is serious risk that this income will be greatly reduced, threatening the viability of racing in New South Wales. Allegations of race fixing involving both stewards and trainers have been substantiated in both harness and greyhound racing. These incidents are likely to reduce public confidence in the industry, threatening to reduce the viability of the industry. The Australian Institute of Criminology 2015 report *Corruption in Australian Sport* summarised corruption involving thoroughbred racing, harness racing and greyhound racing in New South Wales.

The report cites a 2011 investigation that Harness Racing New South Wales conducted into corrupt conduct of race stewards. The stewards had accepted bribes to not drug test specified horses. Charges were laid against two stewards, two trainers and a driver with all but one pleading guilty. A further eight individuals were charged by Harness Racing New South Wales for their involvement. The report also cites the 2013 case of Mr F, Mr A and New South Wales police officers. Allegations were made that an individual used inside information for betting purposes in the thoroughbred racing industry. He was allegedly assisted in this by serving members of the NSW Police Force. A gambler known as Mr F was accused on multiple occasions of obtaining inside information, including through a collusive relationship with a Victorian jockey.

Worryingly, this case included the possible involvement of New South Wales police officers. The NSW Police Integrity Commission investigated the involvement of two New South Wales police officers in recruiting 17 of their colleagues to act as fronts for Mr F and another gambler known as Mr A. These actions were allegedly undertaken to circumvent bans placed on Mr A and Mr F by a large number of online betting agencies.

As none of the people investigated were licensed persons under the legislation, Racing NSW would not have had the appropriate coercive powers to complete this investigation. Further, the report summarises several known recent instances of alleged corruption involving the New South Wales greyhound racing industry dating back to 2000. These incidents again involved doping animals with various drugs including cocaine, amphetamines and steroids, as well as bribing stewards to ensure that they would not drug test these dogs.

In 2013 an investigation into these allegations heard that the corrupt behaviour around doping extended beyond racing officials and licensed individuals to veterinarians and laboratory staff. Allegations have been made that organised criminal groups, including outlaw motorcycle gangs, were involved in this conspiracy to cheat. Allegations have also been made that these organised criminal groups have attempted to fix races by entering dogs that were known underperformers thus gaining an advantage in the gambling market. These instances of corrupt conduct, criminal activity and race fixing clearly show that racing bodies in New South Wales need strong powers to ensure the integrity of the sport. After examining these and other incidents, current New South Wales racing legislation and other State jurisdictions, David Armati recommends in his report:

1. I recommend that there be legislative change to require persons not licensed by Racing NSW to be compelled to attend an inquiry, answer questions and/or produce [relevant] documents or things.

Secondly, he recommends that judicial oversight be required when compulsion powers are used and when someone is compelled to attend that their evidence must be given in the presence of a legally qualified person and that any evidence given under compulsion cannot be used in an adverse fashion during criminal or civil proceedings. Finally, he recommends that criminal sanctions—both monetary and terms of imprisonment—be applicable for non-compliance with an order to attend an inquiry and produce documents.

Although these recommendations relate to thoroughbred racing they are also applicable to the harness and greyhound racing industries. The first set of amendments in the Racing Amendment Act 2019 are under schedule 1—Amendment of Harness Racing Act 2009 and schedule 2—Amendment of Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 about compelling attendance at special hearings. These amendments will allow Harness Racing New South Wales and Racing NSW to compel unlicensed persons to attend hearings and produce documents. This power will be exercisable only in limited circumstances. Racing bodies can use this power only if they believe that the actions being investigated are a threat to the integrity of racing or public confidence in racing. If they are satisfied that this is true they treat the inquiry as a special inquiry.

Racing bodies will be required to apply to the Supreme Court for the compulsion orders, ensuring judicial checks and balances on their action. Any person compelled to attend a special inquiry must be given the opportunity to obtain legal representation before the inquiry and the person presiding over the inquiry must be assisted by an Australian legal practitioner. Presently, racing bodies can only compel licensed persons to attend hearings. This amendment will allow for thorough investigations to take place, gathering evidence from people who are not directly involved in the racing industry. Previous investigations by the racing controlling bodies have had difficulties uncovering all facts as they have been unable to compel people who gamble on racing—or in some cases veterinarians that treat the animals—to attend and give evidence. Although evidence that is given under compulsion is not admissible to civil and criminal courts, this will provide an important tool to law enforcement and racing agencies as part of their investigations and strategies help stamp out corruption and criminal activities in the sport.

I turn to schedule 3—Amendment of the Betting and Racing Act 1998. Earlier this year prominent Sydney racing identity Damion Flowers was charged for his involvement in multimillion-dollar trafficking and importation of cocaine. Up until that time Mr Flowers had been heavily involved in the New South Wales racing industry, owning shares in more than 50 horses as well as his own racing stable. Persons involved in organised crime have a way of extending their criminal activities to all of their personal and business interests. Publicly we are not aware of links between Mr Flowers' criminal activities, his organised crime associates and his racing interests. However, I would bet that Mr Flowers and his criminal activities extend into the racing industry. An alleged criminal such as Mr Flowers and others like him involved in organised crime need to be banned from involvement in racing in New South Wales.

The Flowers investigation and the others I previously mentioned demonstrate why the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force needs the authority to exclude a person from attending a racecourse during race meetings, as this legislation will provide. These exclusion orders will be made only when the police commissioner is of the opinion that it is necessary and in the public interest to do so. This order will be subject to appeal at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Importantly, provisions in the bill allow the police commissioner to issue an exclusion order without providing reasons to the excluded individual when there is an ongoing investigation. This is an important amendment as it will stop undesirable people from attending race meetings, making it more difficult for them to interfere in the fair running of races. The legislation also ensures that police forces around

Australia are informed about exclusions, making sure that criminals cannot simply move interstate to avoid bans and continue with illicit activities.

The legislation allows for fines of 50 penalty units—currently valued at \$5,500—or one year in jail for criminals who attend a racetrack during a race meeting in contravention of an exclusion order. Although a good starting point, this legislation should be further amended to broaden the exclusion of individuals, not just from attending racetracks but all gambling-related sites, especially casinos. Section 81 of the Casino Control Act 1992 should be amended to ensure that criminals excluded from a casino by the police commissioner are also excluded from all racing and gambling facilities. It is unacceptable to allow criminals, once identified, to simply move the location of their criminal activities to another facility.

I now turn to schedule 4, the amendment of the Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983. This amendment reforms the maximum penalty for failing to comply with a notice requiring attendance at the Racing Appeals Tribunal from \$550—which is totally inadequate—to \$11,000 and six months' imprisonment. This is a necessary change. A penalty of \$550 is relatively minor given the possible seriousness of the need to appear at the tribunal. It is important that the powers given to the Racing Appeals Tribunal are sufficient for the tribunal to conduct full and comprehensive investigations. Provisions in this section of the amendment also allow for administrative and investigative processes of the Racing Appeals Tribunal to be improved.

The reforms in the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 are important to ensure the integrity of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing in New South Wales. It is a shame that it has taken so long for the bill to reach Parliament, given that many of the recommendations informing the bill were made five years ago. The Labor Opposition supports the bill and proposes the addition of an amendment, as mentioned earlier, to allow the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force to exclude designated individuals from all gambling-related facilities as well as racetracks. We must act to stamp out corrupt and criminal activity in all gambling sites and not permit perpetrators to simply adjust their criminal business models in an attempt to avoid the law and law enforcement. I commend the bill and the suggested amendments to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (10:06): I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The bill represents the Government's commitment to a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales with high standards of integrity and public confidence. I note that the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation is in the Chamber and I compliment him on his ongoing endeavours to ensure the punters get a fair deal. That is top of the list here. I do not intend to address all of the reforms proposed in the bill. Instead, I will focus my contribution on the compulsory powers the bill proposes for Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales. Both Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have already had legislative powers to inquire into and investigate any matter relating to racing or harness racing.

Whilst these requirements are centred on licensed or registered race participants, such as trainers, jockeys or drivers bound under the relevant rules of racing, there are times when unlicensed or unregistered racing participants may hold relevant information but are not willing to provide it voluntarily. Any person could effectively be defined as an unlicensed person—examples include racegoers, betters and racing industry licence holders—who surrenders their licence to evade a probe into their activities while licensed, or people who participate, whether at a racecourse or other place, in an activity involving thoroughbreds or harness racing in New South Wales.

Because Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales do not have authority over these unlicensed persons, there is a potential gap in racing controlling bodies' ability to fully investigate matters that may affect racing integrity. This gap in knowledge can have serious implications on the integrity of racing, with the flow-on effects including potentially compromising animal welfare and public confidence that races are fair and competitive. These amendments to the bill will allow Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales, with the approval of the Supreme Court, to compel an unlicensed, unregistered racing participant to attend a racing inquiry to answer questions and/or to produce documents or things in relation to a racing inquiry.

While it is appropriate that the regulator's inquiry powers are enhanced and made sufficient for purpose, it is also important that an individual's rights are properly protected. I am pleased to note that while the bill requires persons to answer all questions put to them at the inquiry, the proposed amendments include clear safeguards on self-incrimination for compelled persons. Specifically there is oversight by the Supreme Court in the racing body's use of these powers and a senior lawyer must be engaged by the racing body to assist in its proceedings and inform the individual of matters concerning self-incrimination.

Any information provided by a compelled person at an inquiry will not be able to be used in any other criminal, civil or disciplinary proceedings against that person. This legislation creates consistency with the position in Victoria, where the regulatory framework for thoroughbred racing allows Racing Victoria to enforce its rules against unlicensed racing participants. It also creates some consistency with the greyhound racing

industry. Following the Government's 2017 reforms of New South Wales greyhound racing, the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 gives the Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission broad investigative and enforcement powers.

These proposed amendments are directed so that Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have the appropriate tools to investigate matters that may threaten the integrity of racing in this State as well as promote consistency and certainty for industry participants. A strong racing industry, free from interference from corruption, will foster public confidence in the industry. As we all know, Australians on the whole like a punt—all of us in this House do, particularly my fellow Nationals colleagues. Race days in many of our rural towns are considered the social event of the year, I might say. I believe the member for Tamworth, the Minister, has frequented and been involved in fashion on the field and sets a very dashing figure indeed.

Mr Kevin Anderson: I've never won though.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Never won—well, there is always room for improvement, I guess. As I said, a strong industry, free from interference and corruption, will foster public confidence. With the advent of online betting and the numerous agencies out there, integrity is paramount. Once again I compliment the Minister and his hardworking team in his office for their ongoing endeavours to assist the industry—not to hamper the industry or bog it down in red tape but to assist the industry in going forward to meet the ever growing market challenges. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (10:12): In speaking on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 reforms I reflect upon the announcement of former Premier Mike Baird in 2017 that the greyhound racing industry would be shut down within 12 months, which sent shockwaves through the Wallsend electorate. The Gardens greyhound track contributes a great deal to the local economy of Wallsend. Greyhound racing enthusiasts include representatives from all walks of life. The announcement endangered their hobby, their social network—the network that the member for Tweed mentioned—their livelihood, their way of life and their jobs.

Through large-scale community action, including a petition I launched which attracted 37,000 signatures in two weeks, we managed to halt that unfair knee jerk decision. Yes, there were bad apples in the industry, I agree—as in any industry—but the industry was making the effort to clean itself out and the people who loved their dogs and raced for fun were caught at the time in the Liberal Government's crosshairs. The entire community was denigrated and attacked for the barbaric and inexcusable actions of a few. We know that these monsters are criminals and should be treated as such, but they were not and never will be representative of the industry as a whole. Even the Government's expensive propaganda campaign at the time was insulting, with a creative brief drafted by the Department of Justice strategic communications director stating:

Take into account the intended audience of the advertisements. A large number of the target group potentially have low levels of literacy.

Now, two years and the resignation of a Premier later, I am glad to see that the Government is making efforts to ensure that the rest of the racing industry is brought into line with the expectations placed on the greyhound racing industry. I acknowledge that the industry's social licence was badly damaged by the revelations in a 2017 edition of *Four Corners*. I acknowledge that reform needed to come. I, and many supporters both internal and external to the industry, welcomed the powers granted to the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission to make sure that the industry complies with the law and community expectations. Steve Noyce, General Manager of the NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers Association, said:

Integrity—

which has been a word that has been used often today and is very important in respect of this bill—

is the not negotiable foundation for the on-going success of the entire racing industry and any steps to further enhance this component are fully supported.

We agree. I applaud the efforts to amend the Harness Racing Act and the Thoroughbred Racing Act to bring into effect the recommendations of the Armati report. As the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation pointed out in the second reading speech:

Under the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 inspectors of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission already have extensive investigation and enforcement powers, including to require any person ... to furnish information or records and to attend a hearing and answer questions.

It is important that Harness Racing New South Wales and Racing NSW are similarly empowered and that people who fail to attend a special inquiry after being compelled are met with the same penalties as those who fail to do so for the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. I note that the Government will be winding up the Tax Reduction Trust Fund. Mr Noyce said:

Whilst we fully understand and appreciate the reasons why the Tax Reduction Fund was established, it is now very appropriate, and a statement of the health of the greyhound industry, that the Fund be wound up which would then place the Greyhound industry in the same position as the other two NSW Racing codes.

However, I urge the Government to ensure that the legislation is proclaimed and commences as soon as possible. The racing industry, the community of Wallsend and the rest of New South Wales have waited long enough for the implementation of the Armati report. I return to my comments that are in agreement with those of the member for Wollondilly and the member for Tweed. We talk now about the integrity of the racing fraternity and the racing industry, and that is important. I believe the racing industry had integrity two years ago. It is just a pity that these events have happened.

The member for Wollondilly and the member for Tweed talked about the economic benefits of racing to rural areas, in particular. I certainly know that because if Wallsend had lost The Gardens greyhound track at least \$2 million every year would have been lost to the community. In fact, at least 40 jobs would have gone from the area, not to mention the supplementary jobs associated with food, canteen facilities and those who work on the field or on the track. Racing is important not only for people's enjoyment but also for our local economy. I could foresee a downturn for Wallsend and I am so pleased that did not happen. I encourage the Government to act as soon as possible. I commend the Minister for making sure that this bill was expedited. I commend the bill to the House and say it is about time. I know members of The Gardens at Wallsend will be deeply appreciative of this bill being commenced.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (10:19): I make a contribution to the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill represents the Government's commitment to a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales, with high standards of integrity and public confidence. It is what is needed and it is certainly what the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation is driving for. This Government recognises the importance of the racing industry in a number of ways. Number one is the huge number of jobs it actively supports. Racing drives great economic benefits. We see that each and every day. It really does help with employment right across the State. In my region there are literally hundreds of people involved in the industry: the trainers, the jockeys or strappers on a race day, the stablehands, the track riders, the turf club employees, the greyhound track employees and all the auxiliary providers—and things that we do not necessarily talk about all the time, like feed suppliers.

Many auxiliary providers are supported by the racing industry. This is an industry that really helps support our regions and rural areas right across New South Wales. I was lucky enough to be involved in the Dubbo Gold Cup on Sunday and what a day that was. There were nine races on the day—under picture-perfect skies unfortunately. We would have preferred to see a day like today—everyone would have been pretty happy to see it bucketing down. Nonetheless, the day was absolutely fantastic. A total of \$420,000 in prize money was on offer for the day, including \$100,000 for the cup. It was a day that involved a wide range of people from right across the spectrum. That is what happens in country racing. That is why it is so important. Local business owners, farmers and families all come together for meetings like this. This is what happens at our bush meetings each and every weekend.

I refer to local feature races that are coming up. Derby Day will be in Dubbo in a couple of months. We also have the world-renowned Wellington Boot in autumn, worth \$200,000 and one of the biggest meetings on the calendar. The racing industry has introduced a number of big events over recent years, highlighting the growing nature of racing in this State. We have heard about events like The Everest, which will be held in October. It is billed as the world's richest race on turf with \$14 million in prize money. There is also greyhound racing's Million Dollar Chase, offering more than \$2 million in prize money across the seven-week series with a very strong regional focus. There is a heat of the Million Dollar Chase series happening at Dawson Park this Saturday night. That will be a huge night, featuring not just the dogs but also a performance by country music star Adam Harvey. Dawson Park is one of 14 centres to host meetings in the build-up to the world's richest greyhound race, the \$1 million winner takes all final at Wentworth Park on 18 October. What an event that will be.

These events rely on the integrity of the New South Wales racing industry. It is a reputation we must ensure relevant authorities have the powers to uphold. That is why this bill seeks to protect and preserve our racing industry. Both Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have legislative powers to inquire into and investigate any matter relating to racing or harness racing. While these inquiries are centred on licensed or registered racing participants—including trainers, jockeys and drivers—bound under the relevant rules of racing, there are times when unlicensed or unregistered racing participants may hold relevant information but are not willing to provide it voluntarily.

Because Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales do not have authority over those unlicensed people, there is a concerning potential gap in the ability of racing authorities to investigate matters that could affect racing integrity. That gap in knowledge can have serious implications on the integrity of racing. Flow-on

effects could include potentially compromising animal welfare and public confidence that races are fair and competitive. The amendments in this bill will allow Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales, with the approval of the Supreme Court, to compel any unlicensed or unregistered participants to attend a racing inquiry and answer some questions or produce documents in relation to racing inquiries. But all of that needs to be done in such a way that ensures individuals' rights are properly protected. This bill will address some of the gaps that exist in racing integrity.

When racing stewards are reasonably satisfied that a person has information of relevance to an inquiry and is unwilling to provide that information, they can seek approval from the Supreme Court to exercise compulsion powers. Anyone with information that is crucial to an inquiry will be required to attend and provide that evidence. That is an important step in the right direction. A strong racing industry that is free from any interference and free from any suggestion of corruption certainly will help to foster public confidence in the industry, which will mean it continues to boost economic growth, continues to contribute to the New South Wales job market and continues to create better outcomes for animals and genuine people who operate in the industry. In the past couple of years we have seen a really great resurgence in the greyhound racing industry, harness racing, which is going great guns, and the gallops. As I have mentioned, the economic benefit is great. I commend the Minister for bringing the bill to the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (10:25): My contribution to debate on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 will be brief. At the outset I thank Labor's shadow Minister for racing, Julia Finn, for her extensive work in this area. The intent of this legislation is to improve integrity in thoroughbred racing and harness racing. Improving integrity in racing is important. In my electorate I am proud to have the Canterbury Park Racecourse because it employs a lot of local people and, more importantly, it provides a community connection for people in my electorate and across Sydney, particularly with respect to night racing. As I mentioned, improving integrity in racing is important. The thoroughbred racing industry in New South Wales supports approximately 21,000 full-time equivalent jobs and contributes \$2.6 billion to the economy. The harness racing industry in New South Wales supports approximately 3,500 full-time equivalent jobs and contributes approximately \$420 million to the economy. It is important that integrity in those industries is maintained.

For the racing industry to grow and prosper the public must have confidence in a range of issues. That is the key: The public must have faith and confidence that the racing industry has the right regulations to maintain its integrity. The issues include animal welfare, the effective prohibition of performance-enhancing substances and the exclusion of organised crime groups and other threats to the integrity of the industry. The bill seeks to improve the integrity of racing and enhance public confidence in a number of ways. The bill expands the powers of Harness Racing New South Wales and Racing NSW to compel people to provide information relevant to an inquiry or investigation. This change will give Harness Racing New South Wales and Racing NSW equivalent powers to those of officials involved in greyhound racing. This is an important change because there should be consistent powers of investigation across all racing codes.

Achieving consistency across harness racing, thoroughbred racing and greyhound racing will ensure that no code becomes a weak link where a lack of investigation and enforcement powers create a vulnerability that cheats and organised crime elements can exploit. The bill also will give the Commissioner of Police powers to exclude people from attending racecourses. This is similar to a power provided to the Commissioner of Police under the Casino Control Act, which is part of my responsibilities as shadow Minister. The Casino Control Act already allows the Commissioner of Police to exclude people from attending casinos. It is clearly desirable that the commissioner should have a consistent power to exclude people, who may be involved in money laundering and other criminal activities, from places where such activities might take place. While a 2018 risk assessment report by the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre [AUSTRAC] found the risk of money laundering by on-course bookmakers was low, the report noted:

... the true extent of criminality in the sector is difficult to establish given the low level of criminal intelligence relating to on-course bookmakers' services, as well as the extremely limited lodgement of suspicious matter reports ... and threshold transaction reports ... by the sector.

The report noted that AUSTRAC examined suspicious matter reports made about the on-course betting sector and found that the majority of those reports:

related to suspected money laundering and tax evasion, suggesting a small number of on-course bookmakers are actively involved in low levels of illegal activity.

It is clearly desirable to have consistent regulation to prevent money laundering across industries that involve wagering, whether at a racecourse or a casino. Providing the Commissioner of Police with consistent powers to exclude certain persons is a positive step. We welcome and support that. In his second reading speech on the bill, the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, who is present in the House, stated that the genesis of the bill

was a report by David Armati that was provided to the Government in 2014. The Minister explained the need for the bill in his second reading speech and stated:

I am informed that over the past five years a number of investigations by both Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW have been frustrated by the controlling bodies' inability to compel unlicensed persons to provide relevant information.

That begs the question: Given that the report by David Armati was provided to the Government in 2014 and given the problems the Minister says Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have had in obtaining information over the past five years, why has it taken the Government five years to introduce the bill? We support the bill, but the key is making sure that there is consistency across all the codes. The Government must provide the resources to do that. The Government announced an efficiency dividend across the board in the June budget. While the Opposition supports the bill, it wants to know that adequate resources and information will be provided to ensure that integrity is consistently maintained. I invite the Minister to provide that information in his speech in reply. Will there be efficiency dividend cuts? Will there be sufficient resources allocated to ensure investigations are not frustrated?

We do not want to revisit the issue in this Chamber in six months' time or a year's time or two years' time because of inadequate resources and funding cuts. I support the bill's conferral of power on the police commissioner. I do not understand why the Government has taken five years to introduce the bill. Former Premier Baird botched the ban on greyhound racing by failing to consult the community. He admitted he got it wrong and backflipped on the ban. However, that caused a lot of insecurity in the industry, including for employees in the greyhound, racing and harness racing industries, many of whom were employed casually or part time. As a former representative of workers in the hospitality industry, I know that some people have worked in the industry for 20, 30, 40 or 50 years. They love what they do, but what the Government did a few years ago caused a lot of anxiety and angst amongst the workers in the industry.

This week is Responsible Gambling Awareness Week. There is some information on the government website and a lot of non-government organisations are doing some really good work to help people through counselling. My community message is that I encourage people to check in with their families, friends and colleagues to make sure they are okay. I have concerns about how gambling, particularly online gambling, affects families and people—I know a bill is coming through in this regard. Again I ask the Minister: Will cuts be made to harm minimisation programs and funding for harm minimisation? I support the bill, but I hope the Minister answers my question.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (10:35): I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The racing industry continues to evolve and change its shape. It impacts significantly on our society, which means there is always a need to ensure that legislation and regulation remain fit for purpose. One of those great purposes is to maintain public confidence in the lawfulness and fairness of its operation. The bill represents the Government's commitment to a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales with high standards of integrity and public confidence, given we are talking about an industry worth over \$2 billion per annum. Albury has a substantial racing industry, from thoroughbreds to harness, supplemented by huge participation in equestrian competition and activity.

The Albury Gold Cup is one of the richest horseracing carnivals in regional Australia. In March each year it brings its caravan of industry professionals, quality thoroughbreds and sports tourists to Albury for two days of racing and celebration. A five-time winner of the prestigious Racing NSW award for the most popular country feature race meeting, it provides a huge boost to the local economy with attendance of around 18,000 people consistently. Having said that, we know that in Albury—even on a regional track—we must be vigilant. In 2015 Albury was caught up in the Victorian racing probe for Aquanita. The legislation before the House seeks to clarify and support expanded powers for the authorities.

As has been noted, the purpose of the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 is primarily to give Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales the power to compel an unregistered racing participant to provide information and attend an inquiry to answer questions, and to empower the Commissioner of Police to exclude persons from New South Wales racecourses where it is in the public interest. The importance of this legislation from a cross-border perspective is that it creates consistency with the position in Victoria, where the regulatory framework for thoroughbred racing allows Racing Victoria to enforce its rules against unlicensed racing participants.

From the compulsion powers in this bill I turn now to schedule 5, which amends the Totalizator Act 1997 and its regulation to wind up the Tax Reduction Trust Fund, which will provide for the distribution of greyhound racing share of wagering tax parity revenues directly to Greyhound Racing NSW, which is consistent with the arrangement in place for the other two racing codes. In 2015 this Parliament enacted amendments to racing and wagering legislation to reduce New South Wales wagering tax rates over a five-year period until they were in line

with Victorian rates from July 2020. Revenue from the wagering tax parity reforms has been distributed amongst the three controlling bodies. Payments in respect to thoroughbred and harness racing are made directly by the New South Wales TAB to Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales, respectively.

At the time the fund was established, the future of the greyhound racing industry was uncertain due to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales. Establishment of the fund allowed revenue for the greyhound racing industry to be quarantined and held in trust. In April 2017 the Parliament passed legislation to reform the New South Wales greyhound racing industry, in accordance with recommendations of the Greyhound Industry Reform Panel. Since the introduction of the New South Wales Government's greyhound racing reforms, the balance of the fund has been paid to Greyhound Racing New South Wales on a quarterly basis. To date the wagering tax parity reforms have returned more than \$17 million to the New South Wales greyhound racing industry.

The bill winds up the fund and provides that all payments are made directly to controlling bodies, removing the unnecessary administrative burden to facilitate quarterly transfers from the fund to Greyhound Racing New South Wales. There a number of aspects to the bill and today I have touched on just two. Certainly, as I touched on at the start, the need to create legislation that is consistent across the board with Victoria is important from Albury's perspective, but it is also important to provide a bill that commits to a competitive, sustainable racing industry that provides us with high standards of integrity and public confidence. I support the bill.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:41): I am delighted to make a contribution to the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Most importantly I acknowledge the important role that the racing industry plays in our local communities and local economies. The object of the bill is to permit Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales to use compulsion powers to require persons to provide information for the purposes of a special inquiry, but only where the use of those powers has been authorised by the Supreme Court. I acknowledge the Minister in the House today, but I particularly acknowledge my colleague shadow Minister Julia Finn for her good work of researching during the process of the bill. She has a real passion for the racing industry, whether it is out in Campbelltown at Menangle Park, at Randwick, at Canterbury or Dubbo—no matter where you go, the shadow Minister for racing is there flying the flag.

This side of the House has a long and good history of supporting the racing industry because we know that it plays a vital role in our communities, particularly through rural and regional New South Wales and our local economies. That has always been the case and it will always be the case. The five years to bring the bill to fruition has been referred to. It would be remiss of me not to reflect on the Government's poor history of supporting the racing industry. The Liberal-Nationals sent shockwaves through the racing industry with the debacle that was created by the shutdown of the greyhound industry and, most importantly, through communities and the adverse effects it had on local economies, which are, frankly, still recovering. We saw a backflip—a correction—from the Government on that, but finally we are seeing the industry begin to recover. I do not credit the Government for that. I credit the industry, the workers and the businesses that support that industry to ensure that it continues to thrive as it should.

There are a number of reasons I am happy to make a contribution to the bill and it is not just because I was born on Melbourne Cup Day, when Gala Supreme got up. The first dollar I ever earned was collecting tin and aluminium cans at the Dubbo dogs, something my brothers and I all did and are very proud of. It was our favourite Saturday afternoon activity to shoot down there with dad and watch the dogs run around the track, with a KB Lager tinny and maybe a sausage sandwich or something like that.

Mr Kevin Anderson: I hope you were over 18.

Mr GREG WARREN: No, I didn't have it; dad did. I left that until later. I am still catching up. I am making up for lost ground.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Did you take a few rabbits with you?

Mr GREG WARREN: No, no. When I talk about the contribution of the racing industry I am not only taking about local communities and the contribution to those communities' economies. You only need to look at the philanthropy that many in the racing industry provide. My friend the member for Camden, who frequents Menangle, would have seen the good work that Harness Racing New South Wales does out in my electorate for organisations such as Society 389, St Vincent de Paul, the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation and many others. It steps up to the plate and supports the local community organisations that support so many other people in our communities.

I know the member for Camden is a passionate supporter of that because we often attend those events together. We enjoy watching the trots run around, occasionally sitting in the back or putting a sash over a horse.

The productivity that comes from the industry for both of our communities, our region and, indeed, our great State is immeasurable. Those organisations would not have the support that they require if the racing industry did not stand up and provide it. It is not just about having a bit of a punt, going there and enjoying some time with friends and family: It is about supporting our communities. That is ultimately what we need to focus on when we think about the racing industry. If you do not like to have a punt, you still know that you are supporting a good industry that supports some really good initiatives throughout all of our communities.

I cannot speak highly enough of Club Menangle, Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales and the good work they do. In my electorate Club Menangle has moved from Harold Park. At the time, whilst it was not necessarily controversial, people around Harold Park were in two minds about the move. But we have seen the club prosper, grow and thrive out at Menangle. The community is all the better for it and racing is all the better for it. The club has some big and exciting plans for the future of Menangle. It is a fantastic outcome that the club continues to flourish and that the community continues to grow.

The reality is that the expansion of harness racing in New South Wales is at the heart of Menangle, its rightful place. You only need to go to the Miracle Mile to see the great race as the trotters pelt around. You will see the smiles on the faces of the families and you will see the community embrace what is the biggest harness race in this nation. I also acknowledge all of the workers in the racing industry. Whether they are trainers, drivers or one of another raft of workers, they all work very hard. On this side of the House we know that workers are the backbone of every industry, including the gaming industry. When you support the gaming industry you support the workers and you support communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (10:48): I speak in support of the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I congratulate the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation on introducing this bill. History will show that Minister Anderson is the best racing Minister that the State has ever had. It is a great time for the racing industry in New South Wales.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Myall Lakes has the call.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Racing, in all of its forms, plays an important role right across regional New South Wales. The number of jobs that the industry supplies in regional New South Wales is significant. It brings in over \$3 billion. That is a lot of money for regional New South Wales. This bill seeks to ensure that we have an honest and fair racing system in New South Wales that works for all involved in the industry, including the community, the punters and the people who enjoy racing.

The Myall Lakes electorate has two thoroughbred racecourses, one at Taree and one at Tuncurry, and a greyhound track in Taree. For many years I enjoyed being on the trust of the Taree Racecourse and seeing the advances in that course over the years. Some years ago, while I was on the trust, the racecourse was selected to be one of the six New South Wales registered training courses and, as a result, significant money was put into the course to ensure that it was an elite course for racing and for the training of horses in the industry. As a result of that, more trainers moved into the area and, therefore, contribute to the economy.

The Tuncurry course is very interesting. Not too many racecourses are privately owned, but this course is owned by the Tuncurry-Forster Jockey Club. The course has evolved from being virtually nothing at all to being quite a significant course. From having no TAB meetings it now has several TAB meetings. It is a beautiful course in an idyllic location—evidence of that is the hundreds of thousands of people who go to the Forster Tuncurry area to enjoy the amenity of the area and they go to the races there. There have certainly been some great days at the Tuncurry racecourse.

The greyhound racing course at Taree has some very dedicated people who love their industry and love their dogs. Because the racecourse is in Taree a significant number of breeders and trainers of greyhounds live in the area. I congratulate the Taree Greyhound Club. Not only does it look after its course but its volunteers help run the greyhound meetings at Wyong and they go up to Kempsey and help run the course there. The people at the Taree Greyhound Club do a fantastic job looking after the industry.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The member for Port Stephens is one of the rudest people. She interjects and shows no courtesy or manners at all.

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I feel sorry for the people of Port Stephens to have a member like that representing them. She should know better. The greyhound track at Taree is a grass track and the layout of the course needs some adjustment to improve the safety of dogs and the industry. I am hoping that the club is putting together an application to apply for government funding. When the decision was made to continue with the

greyhound racing industry this Government put money on the table—\$40 million—to help that industry, and that money is going out now. I know that recently the member for Clarence had the happy occasion to announce \$4.6 million for that track, and I know many other tracks will receive funding as well.

As I said, this legislation is about ensuring that we have an honest and fair racing system. The objects of the bill are to amend the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 and the Harness Racing Act 2009 to permit Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales to compel persons to provide information for the purposes of a special inquiry, but only where the use of the powers has been authorised by the Supreme Court; to provide an explicit power for Racing NSW to make rules in relation to horseracing; to amend the Betting and Racing Act 1998 to permit the Commissioner of Police to make an order excluding a person from racecourses during race meetings if it is in the public interest to do so; and to expand the circumstances in which a qualified person may be appointed to act as the Racing Appeals Tribunal and to allow the tribunal to appoint expert assessors to assist the tribunal in particular proceedings.

Further objects of the bill are to increase the maximum penalty for failing to comply with a notice requiring attendance before the tribunal from \$550 to \$11,000 or imprisonment for six months, or both; to allow the tribunal to make use of the services of the staff of any racing controlling body, being Racing NSW, Harness Racing New South Wales, the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission and Greyhound Racing New South Wales; to permit the electronic service of documents under the Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983; and to wind up the Tax Reduction Trust Fund and to pay any money standing to the credit of the fund to Greyhound Racing New South Wales. They are the objects of the bill. The Taree Greyhound Racing Association is so appreciative of the support that this Government and I, as the local member, have been able to give that it has named races after me a number of times. It is certainly supportive of what the Government is doing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is already on a call to order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Unlike the people down at Port Stephens, who are constantly ringing my office and complaining about their member's lack of action. In his second reading speech, the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, Kevin Anderson, told the House that the bill:

... significantly enhances regulation of thoroughbred and harness racing in New South Wales. Through the bill, the Government will continue its support for a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales, with high standards of integrity.

The bill empowers Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales to compel unlicensed persons to attend special inquiries and provide relevant information where authorisation has been obtained from the Supreme Court. The Minister told the House that unlicensed and unregistered persons include racegoers, bettors, suppliers of unapproved or prohibited substances, industry licence holders who hand in their licence to avoid disciplinary action and organised crime figures. He further stated that there are many threats to the integrity of the racing industry and that the compulsion powers are necessary to investigate them. He went on to say:

Threats to racing integrity come in many forms, ranging from breaches of riding and driving rules to serious issues such as the systemic use of performance-enhancing substances and criminal interference in betting activities and race fixing. These matters can negatively affect industry growth, public confidence in the industry, animal welfare and wagering revenue. ... However, the lack of authority for racing stewards to question unlicensed industry participants has the potential to undermine the controlling bodies' ability to fully investigate threats to racing integrity. In recent years, persons relevant to investigations but not licensed by racing authorities have refused to cooperate with stewards inquiries. ... over the past five years a number of investigations by both Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW have been frustrated by the controlling bodies' inability to compel unlicensed persons to provide relevant information.

The bill also amends the Betting and Racing Act 1998 to permit the Commissioner of Police to make an order excluding a person from racecourses during race meetings if he or she is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so in the public interest. Regarding those powers, the Minister told the House:

A further gap in the integrity controls for New South Wales racing is the inability of the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force to exercise powers to exclude persons from attending the State's racecourses in a manner similar to powers in respect of casinos pursuant to the Casino Control Act 1992. ... The extension of the commissioner's exclusion powers to New South Wales racecourses would add another layer of protection to the State's racing industry, including by reducing opportunities for organised crime figures to exploit the industry for the purposes of certain criminal activities, such as money laundering.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (10:58): I make a brief contribution to the second reading debate on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. At the outset I congratulate Minister Anderson on this excellent piece of legislation. The Minister has thrown himself into this job heart and soul. It is great to see that the Minister has been in the Chamber for the entire duration of this debate. I thank him for his diligence and for all of the work that he has put into it, along with that of his team. The Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 comprises some proposed reforms that include compulsion powers, which will empower Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales to compel an unregistered person—e.g. a bettor—to attend a racing inquiry or hearing and/or

produce documents or things of that like and also subject them to a Supreme Court use of authorisation. In addition, for consistency, the bill updates the penalties available when a registered person fails to attend a tribunal hearing and provides new penalties under the compulsion power reforms for unregistered persons. It also allows a tribunal to appoint an appropriate expert assessor to assist with the proceedings when required and with updated procedures.

I note the excellent contributions from members on this side of the Chamber—the member for Wollondilly, the member for Tweed, the member for Dubbo, the member for Albury and the member for Myall Lakes. I also acknowledge the contributions of those on the other side, who are not opposing the bill. I was interested in the comments of the member for Myall Lakes, who spoke about the \$3 billion worth of investment that racing brings to New South Wales. The Central Coast—which although close to Sydney is a regional area—has two outstanding racing facilities. One is the well-known Wyong racecourse—and I acknowledge David Jewell, CEO of the Wyong Race Club—and the other is the former Gosford race club, which has been rebranded The Entertainment Grounds, a truly outstanding facility. The CEO is Daniel Lacey and the vice chairman is Michael Griffiths. Michael lives in the electorate of Terrigal and also happens to be the president of the P&C at Copacabana Public School and he owns and operates South End Social in Gosford. This man gives back to his community through his links to The Entertainment Grounds. I pay tribute to Daniel and Michael for their contributions. The Gosford racing club has morphed into a fantastic facility.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Has it?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Absolutely. It is an outstanding facility. This brings me to schedule 3 to the bill, which amends the Betting and Racing Act 1998 No. 114. Schedule 3 inserts proposed division 3 into part 2 of the Betting and Racing Act 1998. It provides for the exclusion by the Commissioner of Police—Mick Fuller, an outstanding gentleman indeed—of persons from racecourses. The proposed division comprises the proposed sections 15A to 15D. Proposed section 15A contains the definitions used in the proposed division. I am particularly interested in proposed section 15B, which authorises the Commissioner of Police to make an exclusion order which excludes a person from racecourses during a race meeting. The commissioner can make an exclusion order only if the commissioner is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so in the public interest. The commissioner is to give notice of the making of the order to Racing NSW, Harness Racing New South Wales and other Australian police forces. That is an important factor.

I draw the House's attention to these provisions because The Entertainment Grounds has gone from being a traditional racecourse to an entertainment ground in a family-friendly environment. I grew up around racehorses. My father had an owner-trainer licence and I spent a lot of time at Globe Derby Park and Morphettville racecourses in South Australia. As a young person it was a good activity for me to take part in with other young people whose parents were involved in horseracing. There has been a growth, especially on the Central Coast, of young people finding other outlets for entertainment and The Entertainments Grounds at Gosford is one of those outlets. Traditional races are held at The Entertainment Grounds, including the incredible Gosford Cup, which I have had the privilege of promoting. It is a wonderful event that is attended by thousands of people from across the Central Coast. The Entertainment Grounds also holds twilight meetings and a New Year's Eve meeting. Families and people of all ages across the Central Coast come along not just for the racing but also for the public interaction.

The racing industry has reinvented itself to make it a family-friendly environment. That is no more evident than at The Entertainment Grounds and the excellent Wyong racecourse on the Central Coast. These two facilities are at the forefront of engaging with the community. The Entertainment Grounds is also used as a marketplace on weekends. The markets are incredibly popular, with hundreds of people turning up to utilise the markets. The Entertainment Grounds also has hosted numerous conferences, music festivals and concerts. Racing is benefiting from its own evolution and the very responsible actions of industry leaders, such as Daniel Lacey, David Jewell and Michael Griffiths, who are at the forefront of making great contributions to our communities through the racing industry.

The amendment in proposed section 15B, which authorises the commissioner to make those exclusions, ensures that antisocial behaviour is not acceptable in these facilities, which are family friendly and are attended by people of all ages. I commend the Minister and his team for that amendment. Proposed section 15C creates an offence with a maximum penalty of 12 months' imprisonment or a fine of \$5,500 or both if a person who is subject to an order enters or remains on a racecourse at any time during which a race meeting is being held at the racecourse. The Government is making it perfectly clear that it does not tolerate antisocial, recalcitrant behaviour at these family-friendly venues. As someone who attended race meetings as a young person, I understand that people should be able to go to these venues in the comfort and safety of a family-friendly environment. This legislation ensures that people can do exactly that.

I again commend the Minister because this is very smart legislation. I also want to mention the stakeholder engagement in this bill. It is important that there is stakeholder engagement in legislation that is

brought to this place. I commend the Minister for the extensive consultation with Commissioner Mick Fuller and the NSW Police Force. The Office of Racing also consulted with Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales. In the preparation of this bill, the necessary consultation took place. People who attend The Entertainment Grounds and Wyong racecourse can rest comfortably in the knowledge that this Government is ensuring that legislation is in place to stop antisocial behaviour and to make these facilities a safe and fun place for them to go and enjoy a day or an evening on the Central Coast. I thank the Minister and I acknowledge his staff, chief of staff Gavin Melvin and senior adviser Emma Dowsett, who together with the Minister were instrumental in putting this legislation together. It is a team effort and I congratulate all of them on this very good piece of legislation, one that I have been proud to speak on. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (11:06): I would like to lay odds at 10 to one that this legislation will pass through the House. Racing is part of the Australian psyche. The Melbourne Cup is the race that stops the nation and has been part of our culture for well over 150 years. I am pleased to support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The Melbourne Cup was on display at the art gallery in Grafton a week or so ago. It is a magnificent, 3.2 kilogram, 18 carat gold cup, which has taken the same shape since 1919. In fact, the 1919 Melbourne Cup was also on display at the art gallery in Grafton.

Racing is an important part of the culture of regional New South Wales. It is particularly important to the culture of the community in the Clarence Valley. The Grafton Cup is a wonderful cup and a wonderful race. The two-week carnival is held in July, with races run basically every day. The Ramornie Handicap is on the Wednesday, followed by the Grafton Cup on the Thursday. Half-day holidays are declared and the whole community as well as people from all over the State turn up to this event. Bob Hawke attended the Grafton Cup one year, as did John Singleton and Mike Willesee. Five Melbourne Cup winners have come from the Clarence Valley, such is the importance of racing in the area. The events are family-friendly, with families having a picnic and enjoying the beautiful weather in July in the Northern Rivers, which is generally sunny and temperate. It is great to go to the races and watch live racing in a wonderful family atmosphere.

Immediately next door to the jockey club is the Grafton Greyhound Racing Club. John Corrigan is chair of the club. Only a week or so ago I was pleased to announce a \$4.6 million grant to upgrade the track and facilities of the Grafton Greyhound Racing Club. Thank you very much to the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation. Racing is an important part of the Clarence Valley, with the jockey club on one side of the field and the greyhound club on the other side of the paddock. They work in unison and collaboration during the Grafton Racing Carnival. I commend the chair of the Clarence Valley Jockey Club, Graeme Green, and the board for doing a fantastic job in bringing meetings to Grafton. The meetings are well patronised and very safe. This legislation will make those events even safer.

I thank the Minister for introducing this legislation, which will continue to ensure that racing in the regions is family friendly. These events are safe, they are monitored and they bring enjoyment not only to the patrons who attend but also to the owners, trainers and jockeys. This wonderful industry brings revenue into our regional communities. I congratulate the Minister on bringing this legislation to the House and I support the bill.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (11:11): It is with great pleasure that I make a contribution in support of the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. As the member for Upper Hunter and a resident of Scone, the horse capital of Australia, I have a strong interest in maintaining a strong racing and thoroughbred breeding industry in the Upper Hunter. In fact, Scone in the Upper Hunter is second only to Kentucky in the world of thoroughbred breeding. The thoroughbred breeding industry and the farms around the Upper Hunter are critical to the success of the racing industry. One relies completely and utterly on the other for success. I congratulate the Minister on bringing this bill to the House because integrity in the racing industry and the powers to maintain that integrity are important to many people throughout the industry.

From time to time we hear fabulous rags-to-riches stories about the breeding and racing of thoroughbreds where people make a yearling purchase, either directly or through syndication, and buy a horse that others have overlooked. Everyone thinks the horse has no chance whatsoever of doing any good on the track but then it turns out to be a wonderful horse. From there, people get involved in the whole process of breeding and racing and they get hooked well and truly, for all the right reasons, on the excitement and professionalism of racing. In my time living in Scone for over 30 years—and industry heads I have spoken to agree with me—I have seen the thoroughbred breeding industry in the Upper Hunter go from a relative hobby to a sophisticated, complicated and professional industry that generates billions of dollars for the New South Wales economy and hundreds of millions of dollars for the local economies within the Upper Hunter.

The industry comprises investors, farm owners and staff who work on the farms. It is very important that we maintain integrity and professionalism within the industry for these farms to survive. A few years ago John Messara, the owner of Arrowfield Stud, told me that his farm of 2,000 acres employs around 80 people. In this current time of drought and difficulty in generating agricultural income, the thoroughbred breeding industry

is very important to the local economy of Scone because it employs so many people and generates so much income, a significant amount of which is spent within the local economy. There are farriers, feed merchants, fencers, farm workers—

Mr Geoff Provost: Horse massagers.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: —and horse massagers as well. There are the people who handle the farming, thoroughbred breeding and training aspects of the properties and on the racing side there are the strappers, the jockeys and the people who ride track work. Recently when I met with Heath Courtney, CEO of the Scone Race Club, he told me there is a problem in getting track riders. There is now so much demand that young kids who can ride a horse and have an interest in the thoroughbred and racing industry can earn themselves \$1,000 a week by doing a bit of track riding before they go to school. There is so much opportunity in the depth and breadth of activities for many people to be employed within the racing and thoroughbred industry. Major investments are planned. Major investments over the years, such as the investment in the Scone Racecourse 25 years ago, have made it the premier country racetrack in Australia. In May each year the Scone Racecourse hosts the premier country race meet in Australia, the Scone Cup.

Mr Geoff Provost: What about the Bong Bong races?

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: The Bong Bong races are terrific and a wonderful social event. However, the money and activity generated by the Scone Cup are enormous. The Muswellbrook Race Club also is attracting major investment. Over the coming years we will see capital upgrades and improvements to the Scone Racecourse which will generate training opportunities for people to enter the industry and to stay in the industry. I hope that the TAFE college in Scone, which specialises in equine and agricultural courses, will play a strong part in that training. The facilities that are planned at the racecourse will generate significant capital investment in the order of a minimum of \$20 million.

Also the University of Newcastle is planning to build a research facility and conduct other activities out of that precinct and has indicated that it would like to invest somewhere between \$80 million and \$90 million over the next 10 years. The investment that has gone and will go into the Upper Hunter racing and thoroughbred breeding industry is enormous. I fully support this bill, which will provide the industry with all the powers it needs to maintain the highest levels of integrity. This bill is important to people's livelihoods as well as to the future social and business aspects of the racing and thoroughbred breeding industry and all that it brings to New South Wales, in particular the Upper Hunter. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (11:19): In reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, particularly the members representing the electorates of Granville, Wollondilly, Prospect, Tweed, Wallsend, Dubbo, Canterbury, Albury, Campbelltown, Myall Lakes, Terrigal, Clarence and the Upper Hunter. As previously stated, the bill is an important step towards strengthening the integrity of the racing industry. The Government continues to support a competitive and sustainable racing industry in New South Wales through high standards of integrity. The bill helps to achieve this by empowering racing authorities and the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force with a greater level of control over matters that pose a threat to the integrity of racing.

I will now respond briefly to points made by honourable members. In relation to delay in introducing the reforms, implementation of these recommendations was delayed due to a number of factors, including the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales and the machinery of government changes to the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing. In 2018 the Office of Racing prepared a discussion paper and led targeted consultations with relevant New South Wales and interstate racing authorities and government counterparts to inform the development of an appropriate implementation model and policy rationale.

In relation to efficiency dividends, racing controlling bodies are financed out of wagering revenue and are therefore not part of the Government's efficiency dividends. Accordingly, the racing codes will provide any extra resources as required. In relation to the commencement of the legislative provisions, commencement by proclamation is both practical and responsible given the administrative work to be undertaken by a number of government agencies and other organisations to effectively implement the initiatives in the bill. For example, it is necessary to develop appropriate operating procedures and protocols in relation to exclusion orders. The Office of Racing has convened an initial meeting with representatives of the NSW Police Force and racing bodies to commence this process.

Regarding the ability of casino and racing industries to notify each other in relation to exclusion orders in respective industries, it is noted that the authority to issue an exclusion order under the amended Betting and Racing Act 1998 is a matter for the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force. The bill provides that the

commissioner may only issue an exclusion order if the commissioner is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so in the public interest. As to the ability of clubs to enforce exclusion orders, racing clubs already take steps to prevent people who have been warned off under the relevant rules of the racing codes from attending racecourses. It is expected that racing clubs will take similar actions in relation to persons who are subject to exclusion orders.

The bill introduces a means by which Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales can compel unlicensed persons to give evidence at an inquiry and produce documents of things, ensuring that the controlling bodies can exhaustively investigate threats to racing integrity. The bill balances these powers with appropriate safeguards, including Supreme Court oversight in the exercise of compulsion powers. Some members have questioned why the compulsion powers are being introduced. The answer is straightforward. These measures will ensure that Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales have the powers they need to effectively investigate integrity issues. Unlicensed persons may be on the periphery of an investigation but hold information that could establish critical facts about an identified threat to the integrity of racing.

While the New South Wales racing controlling bodies have the powers to warn off persons from attending the State's racecourses, the fact-finding investigation will be incomplete, which presents an ongoing integrity risk to the racing industry. Compulsion powers, as recommended by the Armati report, make sure that inquiries conducted by our racing bodies have the best chance of gathering fulsome information about racing integrity matters. The bill also empowers the NSW Commissioner of Police to issue an order to any person excluding them from racecourses in New South Wales. Extending the commissioner's powers of exclusion to New South Wales racecourses adds another layer of protection to the State's racing industry by reducing opportunities for organised crime figures to exploit the industry for the purposes of certain criminal activities, such as money laundering.

The bill ensures consistency with penalties for noncompliance with the new compulsion powers by increasing the maximum penalty for failing to appear before the Racing Appeals Tribunal. The bill also provides greater flexibility for the tribunal to distribute cases and allow modern methods of service of documents. Other administrative changes will mean that greyhound racing's share of wagering tax parity is paid directly to Greyhound Racing NSW rather than via the Tax Reduction Trust Fund. This measure will remove the unnecessary administrative burden to facilitate quarterly transfers from the fund to Greyhound Racing NSW. The proposed changes will further improve integrity in the racing industry and increase certainty and public confidence in racing. 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.

Third Reading

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 20 August 2019.

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (11:27): I lead for the Opposition in response to the Children's Guardian Bill 2019, representing in this place the Hon. Penny Sharpe, who is Labor's shadow Minister responsible for this area. The Children's Guardian Bill brings the powers of the Children's Guardian into one consolidated Act, as we heard from the Minister. The Minister has stated that the bill is also part of the ongoing implementation of the New South Wales response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Labor does not oppose the bill. However, it does have questions it would like to be addressed by the Minister in reply, which I will speak to later.

The bill transfers the responsibility of the Ombudsman under the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, known officially as the Official Community Visitor scheme, to the Children's Guardian. The Official Community Visitor scheme provides a framework for autonomous statutory Official Visitors to visit children, young people, people with disabilities and people living in licensed boarding houses. Oversight of this scheme will be transferred to the Children's Guardian but only for children. The Opposition notes that the Official Community Visitor program for adults with disability sits with the NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner. The bill also transfers functions for the reportable conduct scheme from the Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Reportable conduct requires heads of government and some non-government entities to notify the Children's Guardian of any reportable allegation or conviction against its employees involving a child. The Children's Guardian is required to monitor the investigation and handling of those allegations. The bill also makes changes to the reportable conduct scheme arising out of the royal commission and is part of the process that seeks to try to harmonise reportable conduct schemes across States. The bill extends the reportable conduct scheme to cover the outside work conduct of employees of public authorities—including local councils—who are required to hold or do hold a Working With Children Check.

Volunteers in public authorities who deliver services to children will also have their outside work conduct covered. The bill extends the scheme to cover the inside and outside work of contractors and subcontractors of all entities if they hold or should hold a Working With Children Check. The bill extends the scheme to consistently cover religious bodies, which will come within the scheme from 30 January 2020. Any person in a religious body who holds or is required to hold a Working With Children Check will come within the scheme's scope. The bill imposes a statutory obligation on agencies to investigate allegations of reportable conduct and allows administrative review of Children's Guardian-initiated investigation decisions by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The bill also implements recommendations from the royal commission that deal with mandatory reporting.

The Opposition does not oppose these changes. However, we seek assurances that additional independent functions are given to the Children's Guardian. It is imperative that this statutory body is adequately resourced. We also seek further information from the Minister on some issues. Given this is the first time that the Children's Guardian will be provided for in a consolidated Act, are the key functions of the Working With Children Check left out of the bill? Can the Minister assure the House that there are not future plans to move the Working With Children Check into another agency? Another issue the Opposition wishes to raise is whether removing the reportable conduct scheme from the Ombudsman also removes Parliament's oversight of that system via the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission.

Is it the Minister's intention that there no longer be any parliamentary oversight of the reportable conduct scheme? Is the Minister willing to include the Children's Guardian Act—should it be passed—into the terms of reference of the Committee on Children and Young People? If not, will the Minister consider an amendment to ensure this oversight? The final issue we wish to raise is the need for fierce independence when it comes to reportable conduct and the role of the Children's Guardian. The Ombudsman is clearly independent, the Children's Guardian less so. It is also very unclear from the recent machinery of government changes just where exactly the Children's Guardian will sit. We ask for a commitment from the Minister to ensure the independence of the Children's Guardian in all aspects of its work.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (11:32): I congratulate the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services on the introduction of the Children's Guardian Bill 2019, an important piece of legislation. The Government has an ongoing commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community: our children. The bill will strengthen the role of the Children's Guardian, the independent regulator that creates safe places for children. The bill consolidates the powers and functions of the Children's Guardian into one Act. The office was established under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to promote the interests and rights of children and young people living in out-of-home care. In 2013 legislative changes expanded the role of the office to be an independent government agency that works to protect children by promoting and regulating quality child-safe organisations and services. The bill is a further step in the process and clearly recognises the independent statutory functions of the Children's Guardian.

The existing powers, functions and responsibilities of the Children's Guardian are across a number of pieces of legislation. The Children's Guardian's current functions include adoption accreditation powers under the Adoption Act 2000 and out-of-home care and children's employment functions under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The Children's Guardian Bill consolidates those powers. The bill also includes new functions relating to the administration of the official visitor scheme as it relates to children and the reportable conduct scheme, which are being transferred from the Ombudsman Act 1974 and the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993. The new Children's Guardian Bill will clearly recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian and its independent statutory functions.

The bill's object is key. The Children's Guardian protects children by promoting and regulating the quality of organisations and people providing services to children. Under these reforms the Children's Guardian will continue undertaking the important work of keeping the wellbeing and safety of children and young people at the heart of all efforts to promote and regulate the quality of child-safe organisations, services and people. The bill will also continue the implementation of the New South Wales Government response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. For example, the bill includes a legislative lever to establish a new residential care workers register. This will provide a mechanism for out-of-home residential care providers

to exchange information about the safety and suitability of residential care workers prior to making a decision whether to engage a person.

The transfer of the reportable conduct scheme and the official visitor scheme as it relates to children are also in line with suggestions from the royal commission. Further, the bill clarifies the definitions applying to the reportable conduct scheme as suggested by the royal commission and extends its coverage to religious bodies. It also provides targeted amendments to the reportable conduct scheme to apply to persons who deliver child-related services to ensure consistency of coverage and it makes discrete further changes to recognise the expanded regulatory role. The consolidation of the Children's Guardian functions in one piece of legislation makes perfect sense. Many of these amendments have been suggested by the royal commission after careful deliberation. It is important to take sustained and determined action to ensure that our communities and institutions are safe for children. The bill recognises the important role of the Children's Guardian in that process. I offer my unqualified support for the bill.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (11:37): As a member of the parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People I note the Minister's view that the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 is aimed at protecting the safety and wellbeing of children by creating a new Act that consolidates the Children's Guardian powers, functions and responsibilities into one piece of legislation. I support any legislation that will strengthen and streamline laws to protect our children. I am sure every person in this place feels strongly about the protection of children. A child's safety is paramount. I am sure that all members want to make sure that we do everything in our power to give young people the best possible start in life.

The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian was established under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to promote the interests and rights of children and young people living in out-of-home care. In 2013 legislative changes expanded the role of the office to be an independent government agency that works to protect children by promoting and regulating quality child-safe organisations and services. The key aspects of the Children's Guardian Bill include moving into a standalone bill the functions of the Children's Guardian involving adoption, children's employment, and responsibilities regarding accreditation, monitoring and registration of out-of-home care. It also transfers from the Ombudsman to the Office of the Children's Guardian the responsibility for the official visitor scheme in relation to children and functions for the reportable conduct scheme.

The bill makes changes to the reportable conduct scheme consistent with royal commission recommendations to harmonise reportable conduct schemes nationally. The bill extends the reportable conduct scheme to cover the outside work conduct of employees of public authorities—including local councils—who are required to hold or do hold a Working With Children Check. Volunteers in public authorities who deliver services to children will also have their outside work conduct covered. The bill also extends the scheme to cover the inside and outside work of contractors and subcontractors of all entities if they hold or should hold a Working With Children Check. The bill extends the reportable conduct scheme to cover the outside work conduct of employees of public authorities, including local councils, who are required to or do hold a Working With Children Check. Volunteers in public authorities who deliver services to children will also have their outside work conduct covered.

The amendments also extend the scheme to cover the inside and outside work of contractors and subcontractors of all entities if they hold or should hold a Working With Children Check. The bill also extends the reportable conduct scheme to consistently cover religious bodies and it imposes a statutory obligation on agencies to investigate allegations of reportable conduct, prescribing a notification time frame of seven days and 30 days. I contribute to the debate on the bill particularly due to my role as a member of the Joint Committee on Children and Young People. The committee provides an oversight role for both the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Children's Guardian in relation to the guardian's Working With Children Check functions. The functions of the committee are currently legislated as being:

- (b) to monitor and review the exercise by the Children's Guardian of functions under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012,
- (c) to report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comments as it thinks fit, on any matter relating to the exercise of the Children's Guardian's functions under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, to which, in the opinion of the Joint Committee, the attention of Parliament should be directed ...

The legislation currently reads:

- (2) Nothing in this Part authorises the Parliamentary Joint Committee to investigate a matter relating to particular conduct.

Schedule 5 to the bill further clarifies what the joint committee can and cannot investigate. The bill states:

Nothing in this Part authorises the Parliamentary Joint Committee—

- (a) to investigate a matter relating to particular conduct, including conduct under Part 4 of the Children's Guardian Act 2019, or

- (b) to review a decision to investigate, not to investigate or to discontinue investigation of a particular matter, or
- (c) to review the findings, recommendations or other decisions of the Children's Guardian in relation to a particular matter.

I bring that clarification to the attention of members and also wish to have it noted on *Hansard*, because occasionally committee members receive representations from members of the community who want the committee to take an investigative role into decisions made by the Children's Guardian. The bill makes it clear that the committee does not have authority to undertake an investigation or review a decision of the Children's Guardian. This remains the purview of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I am certainly of the view that it is right that the Joint Committee on Children and Young People, at least in its current form, should not get into determining the merits of a particular decision of the Children's Guardian. The clarification that the bill provides in relation to the committee is sensible and proper. The bill is aimed at improving the independence of the Children's Guardian regulatory role to ensure that the protection of our children from abuse is a priority. Overall it is a sensible and worthwhile bill and as such I will not oppose it.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (11:43): I support the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I congratulate the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services on its introduction. I thank his ministerial and departmental staff for their assistance and I know they can see the changes that it will bring. It is a pleasure to work with the Minister as his Parliamentary Secretary, and I look forward to continue delivering important initiatives and reforms in this space with him. I am happy to see the bill has been consulted on widely. The Children's Guardian has met with members of the Joint Committee on Children and Young People, Family and Community Services, NSW Health, the NSW Ombudsman, the NSW Department of Education, the Office of Local Government, the NSW Police Force and the Advocate for Children and Young People to consult on the draft bill.

One of the main functions of the bill is to create a new Act for the Children's Guardian. It will allow for New South Wales to continue putting into place responses to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by providing the Children's Guardian with key abilities, functions and responsibilities. Additionally, it will allow for the Government's decision to transfer the New South Wales reportable conduct framework and the Official Community Visitors scheme from the Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian. It will also provide independent oversight of responses to child abuse and neglect by delivering important responses and improvements to the scheme.

We need a robust child protection framework and the amendments in the bill seek to ensure that occurs to address any gaps in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in this State. This is to ensure that New South Wales has one of the most rigorous and most compelling sets of rules in relation to protecting children. It is a topic that this Government takes extremely seriously and this represents an important step in its continuous enhancement of the New South Wales Care and Protection Practice Framework.

The bill has five key elements. Firstly, as I discussed, it creates a new Act consolidating the Children's Guardian key powers, functions and responsibilities in one Act. It removes the Children's Guardian's adoption functions from the Adoption Act 2000, and the Children's Guardian children employment functions and its responsibilities regarding accreditation, monitoring and registration of out-of-home care from the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. Additionally, it will establish the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian, provide clarity for the sector and clearly recognise the Children's Guardian as an independent statutory office. All children in New South Wales have a right to live, grow and learn in safety. As a community we all have a responsibility to make that a reality for our children, and as a government we are committed to ensuring that the New South Wales child protection framework continues to evolve to facilitate this.

These reforms deliver on that commitment and ensure that gaps in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children are addressed. The wideranging reforms envisaged by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse demand sustained and determined action to ensure that our communities and institutions are safe for children. The Government closely considered each recommendation and observation of the royal commission. It is vital that we get this right for New South Wales. The existing New South Wales reportable conduct scheme under the Ombudsman has been in place for over two decades. It is important that our frameworks, however robust, continue to evolve and improve and address gaps as they come to light.

The royal commission noted the benefits of ensuring that the agency responsible for implementing the Child Safe Standards and that administers the Working With Children Check also has oversight of the reportable conduct scheme. The bill implements the royal commissioner's suggestions. The Children's Guardian already does important work to keep children safe. The transfer of the reportable conduct scheme from the Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian will result in greater integration and streamlining of oversight arrangements for safeguarding children in New South Wales, it will remove the duplication in reporting and it will deliver a more cohesive approach to child protection.

The amendments in the bill will not only facilitate the transfer of the scheme and implementation of the suggestions of the royal commission but also show New South Wales responding to existing loopholes and futureproofing the scheme to cover the outside work conduct of people if they engage in child-related work. The bill targets and extends the reportable conduct scheme to those in child-related work. This will mitigate risk to children by ensuring that the scheme covers: The inside and outside work conduct of employees of public authorities, such as local councils, if they engage in child-related work; the inside and outside work conduct of contractors and subcontractors of any entity if they engage in child-related work; and consistently cover the heads of religious bodies or persons in that entity engaged in child-related work at that religious body.

The amendments will also clarify the definitions of what constitutes reportable conduct in legislation and tighten the notification requirements to now require the head of an entity to inform the Children's Guardian within seven days of becoming aware of an allegation, rather than 30 days. The royal commission conducted 30 case studies on religious institutions. They revealed overwhelmingly that many religious leaders knew of allegations of child sexual abuse yet failed to take effective action. During the royal commission religious leaders and institutions across Australia acknowledged that children suffered sexual abuse while in their care. Many also accepted that their responses to this abuse were inadequate. This is unacceptable. Currently, only a small number of religious bodies come under the reportable conduct scheme. These amendments will be a major step forward in protecting children who spend time in religious and faith-based institutions.

This bill strengthens the scheme by bringing in religious bodies to consistently apply to ministers, rabbis and other religious leaders and anyone in a religious body who is required to hold, or does hold, a Working With Children Check. If a reportable conduct allegation is made against these persons then the new law is clear. The entity will need to investigate that allegation and notify the Office of the Children's Guardian, which will oversee that investigation to ensure it is transparent and accountable.

The royal commission highlighted the systemic failures of institutions in both protecting children and responding to allegations of child abuse. This Government is committed to ensuring a consistent and systemic level of oversight regarding employee conduct in organisations providing care and services to children and young people. These reforms deliver on that commitment and continue the implementation of the New South Wales Government response to the royal commission. Once again I thank the Minister, his ministerial advisers and his departmental advisers for bringing together this bill and acting in such a fast yet thorough way to continue to ensure that children and young people are safe and protected. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson): I wish the member for Holsworthy a happy birthday today. I welcome to the gallery students from year 11 at the Australian International Academy who are attending a legal studies program conducted by Parliamentary Education. I thank the staff of Parliamentary Education for all their work.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (11:50): I acknowledge, as did the shadow Minister, that the Opposition does not oppose the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I recognise that these are important reforms that will continue to put in place the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I acknowledge that any improvements in this area are to be welcomed and I know that the Minister is committed to improving the system. I spent my career as a primary school teacher and principal and as such was a mandatory reporter. Therefore, I understand the responsibilities involved in that. I have seen the system develop over a number of years. Hopefully now the system is able to better look after the interests of young people.

In my contribution today in my role as shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty I will turn to how the legislation specifically addresses the needs of the Aboriginal community in New South Wales. I note that in February this year the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat [AbSec] put out a report into how the New South Wales Government was performing in the area of child protection and out-of-home care. Unfortunately, the Government scored poorly in the report from AbSec. The statistics at that time showed that 18,200 Aboriginal children were reported at risk of significant harm, an increase of 6.7 per cent; 5,580 Aboriginal children were receiving intensive family support, a fall of 3 per cent; 256 Aboriginal children returned home, a decrease of 3 per cent; 7,156 Aboriginal children were in out-of-home care, an increase of 2.6 per cent; 39.2 per cent of Aboriginal children were placed with Aboriginal family or kin, a fall of 0.9 per cent; and 1,058 Aboriginal children entered out-of-home care, a decrease of 19.7 per cent.

Paul Gray, the acting Chief Executive Officer at the time, acknowledged that fewer Aboriginal children entered care in 2017, something he welcomed, but said that greater clarity and transparency were needed to understand what was behind the reduction. He said that overall the findings were worrying and needed to be considered and assessed, as a lot of work was still needed to address the gaps in the system. I believe what is missing from the bill, but hopefully may be in the structure of the way the Office of the Children's Guardian moves forward, is the appointment of a deputy commissioner with a focus on Aboriginal children. The Ombudsman's

office has a deputy ombudsman responsible for analysing Aboriginal issues. As part of his role he assesses the progress of OCHRE.

In such an important area as this, where Aboriginal children particularly are overrepresented in the system, a specific unit responsible for ensuring culturally appropriate strategies to address the myriad issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families is an essential part of this office. Having a deputy commissioner whose role it is to focus on specific issues confronting Aboriginal families would greatly improve the system. While the system is changing and the memorandum of understanding is trying to place young Aboriginal children with kin or people of culture, it has not necessarily permeated through all the services.

Under the bill the Office of the Children's Guardian will assume the role of overseeing all the organisations, including not-for-profit organisations—a lot of out-of-home care is being moved to the not-for-profit sector—and so it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that the structure of such bills acknowledges issues around Aboriginal people in New South Wales. It is a missed opportunity that this is not specifically outlined in the bill but is more of a general overview. That is not to say that within the structures there is not an Aboriginal perspective; I do not say that at all, but often in crucial legislation Aboriginals and the issues they face are not specifically mentioned. We assume it will happen but as a Parliament we are not specifying that it must happen.

I hope the Minister clarifies another issue which the previous speaker raised and about which I am still not 100 per cent clear. With the transfer of the complaints function from the Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian, which also is responsible for accrediting organisations, is there a potential conflict as people may consider that complaints are not being independently reviewed because it is the same organisation? I am just not 100 per cent clear on the delineation when it is the same organisation doing accreditation and monitoring and also addressing the complaints. Previously people could go to the Ombudsman's office, make a complaint and ask for the matter to be considered independently. There may be some conflict, although I am not 100 per cent sure. Therefore, I seek some clarification that this is not an issue. Overall, I support the bill but down the track I hope that in the offices of both the children's commissioner and the Children's Guardian specific positions are created that can work directly with out-of-home care for the Aboriginal community.

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:59): I support the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I congratulate the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services on the introduction of this important piece of legislation. I take this opportunity to thank his staff for the important work they have done in preparation of this legislation. This Government has an ongoing commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community, our children. This bill will strengthen the role of the Children's Guardian, who is the independent regulator creating safe places for children. This bill consolidates the powers and functions of the Children's Guardian into one Act. The office was established under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to promote the interests and rights of children and young people living in out-of-home care.

In 2013, legislative changes expanded the role of the office to be an independent government agency that works to protect children by promoting and regulating quality child-safe organisations and services. This bill is a further step in the process and clearly recognises the independent statutory functions of the Children's Guardian. The existing powers, functions and responsibilities of the Children's Guardian are across a number of pieces of legislation. The Children's Guardian's current functions include adoption accreditation powers under the Adoption Act 2000 and out-of-home care and children's employment functions under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

The Children's Guardian Bill consolidates these powers. The bill also includes the new functions relating to the administration of the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Visitor Scheme as they relate to children who are being transferred from the Ombudsman Act 1974 and the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993. The creation of a new Children's Guardian Bill will clearly recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian and its independent statutory functions. The bill's object is key: The Children's Guardian protects children by promoting and regulating the quality of organisations and people providing services to children. Under these reforms the Children's Guardian will continue undertaking the important work of keeping the wellbeing and safety of children and young people at the heart of all efforts to promote and regulate the quality of child-safe organisations' services and people—a role that is indeed paramount.

The bill also will continue the implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. For example, the bill includes a legislative lever to establish a new residential care workers register. This will provide a mechanism for out-of-home residential care providers to exchange information about the safety and suitability of residential care workers prior to making a decision whether to engage a person. The transfers of the reportable conduct scheme, and the Official Community Visitor scheme as it relates to children, are also in line with suggestions from the royal commission. Further, the bill clarifies the definitions applying to the reportable conduct scheme as suggested by the royal commission and

extends its coverage to religious bodies. It also provides targeted amendments to the reportable conduct scheme to apply to persons who deliver child-related services. It will ensure consistency of coverage and will make discrete further changes to recognise the expanded regulatory role.

The bill also targets those in child-related work through the reportable conduct scheme. This is done by extending the scheme to cover the inside and outside work conduct of employees of public authorities, such as local councils, if they engage in child-related work. It also covers the inside and outside work of contractors and subcontractors of any entity if they engage in child-related work. For example, the bill will bring in a swimming instructor contractor but exclude a tree lopper contractor who has no contact with children. The bill will specifically cover the heads of religious bodies or persons in that entity who are engaged in child-related work at that religious institution.

The consolidation of the Children's Guardian's functions in one piece of legislation makes perfect sense. Further, many of the amendments have been suggested by the royal commission after careful deliberation. It is important to have sustained and determined action to ensure that our communities and institutions are safe for children. This bill recognises the Children's Guardian's important role in that process and, more importantly, recognises that our children are some of the most vulnerable people in our community and require all of our protection. With all that I have stated in mind, I offer my unqualified support for the bill.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:05): On behalf of The Greens in the Legislative Assembly I participate in debate on the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 and indicate our support for the bill. My colleague Mr David Shoebridge in the other place has carriage of the bill and will be dealing with concerns with the bill as well as moving some amendments. The Greens are particularly interested in reportable conduct. We welcome its expansion and the Children's Guardian having complete oversight, but it is very complicated. We know that time is so important when it comes to mandatory reporting and reportable conduct of people working with children. The Greens will be moving an amendment to require an annual report to Parliament on the operation of the reportable conduct scheme to facilitate appropriate oversight and scrutiny of that critical function. In particular, I will be interested in the time frames when staff are stood down and contact is made with any person who is the subject of an allegation of misconduct or child sexual assault. The Greens see that as a very critical aspect of this legislation.

The bill seeks to codify and expand the functions of the Children's Guardian particularly as they pertain to oversight of the reportable conduct scheme. The bill will create a new Children's Guardian Act that will establish the Office of the Children's Guardian with the objective of providing for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and specifically will protect them from child sexual abuse. The Greens welcome this measure. The bill transfers both the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Community Visitor scheme from the NSW Ombudsman to the Children's Guardian. The bill also expands the scope of the reportable conduct scheme to include contractors and subcontractors delivering services to children, and to cover religious bodies.

In the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and assault, the covering of religious bodies in this bill could not come soon enough for The Greens. It is absolutely reprehensible that the heads of religious institutions and people in senior positions were aware of that type of conduct and behaviour and let it go. The bill also creates new provisions to protect mandatory reporters from all civil and criminal liability. Notifications will be required in seven days rather than 30 days. The current 30-day requirement is quite disturbing to me as a teacher and someone who has worked with children most of their professional career.

I will focus on the reportable conduct scheme. Under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, which currently separates reporting requirements under each framework, gaps have occurred and in that respect The Greens agree with the Minister and all stakeholders who contributed to the development of this bill. The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act now will require a reporting body to notify the Children's Guardian when a person employed in child-related work has engaged in conduct referred to in item [1] subclause 2 of schedule 1 to that Act. The notification relates to any sexual offence committed against, with, or in the presence of a child.

By January 2020 the majority of reporting bodies under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act are intended to come within the reportable conduct scheme, in particular religious bodies. To reduce duplication in reporting requirements, the bill will collapse previous reporting requirements under the Act and remove reporting requirements under that Act once all entities from that framework come within the reportable conduct scheme. Because there will be a transition period, The Greens emphasise that there will need to be a review of this legislation and a report as soon as possible to measure its effectiveness.

Under the existing scheme entities must notify the Ombudsman "as soon as practical". We agree with the Minister that that provision has been open to interpretation and needs to change. It was to be provided within 30 days. This bill creates a two-stage notification requirement. The head of an entity is required to notify the

Children's Guardian within seven working days of them becoming aware of the allegation or conviction. They are then required to provide a 30-day report on the investigation or an interim report. Again, we want to know how that will operate in the real world, because we are talking about children. This change seeks to mitigate the risk that an employee could continue to have contact with children for up to a month even though they may present an ongoing risk to children. One of the questions we will be raising in the other place is what authority the Children's Guardian will have to enforce that provision or make sure that an institution has stood down an employee, and to consider what steps the institution has taken to not just minimise but absolutely eliminate any further risks to a child.

We welcome the strengthening of the scheme through the penalty units and we agree with the Government that it is not acceptable for the head of any entity to be aware of a risk to children and not advise the Children's Guardian. On the whole, we think this is a sensible bill that seeks to implement a number of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We note that there are omissions in the scheme and we are not exactly sure about who is covered by the guardian. We look forward to seeking more clarification around that issue in the other place. For example, whilst the Children's Guardian has oversight of out-of-home care and adoption in New South Wales, this oversight focuses on the compliance of institutions offering services and does not extend to critical engagement with the problems we have with the current system of child removals and forced adoptions under the December 2018 laws.

I share the concerns raised by the member for Wyong around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in particular. I also welcome in principle his suggestion of a deputy guardian with specific oversight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It would be very appropriate for that deputy guardian to be an Aboriginal person, because the institutional removal of children is still a very live and disturbing issue. The program also does not cover children in prison, with the Inspector of Custodial Services maintaining that responsibility. The Greens would like the Children's Guardian to have oversight of children in prison. Also, neither of those bodies seems to have coverage of children in immigration detention centres. I note that this issue has also been raised in the Australian Parliament. Who speaks for those children? From what we hear about what goes on in detention centres, this is a very real factor. Why would we not extend the oversight of the Children's Guardian to those children?

We support the expansion of the scheme, particularly where it ensures that all relevant persons and institutions—including religious leaders, contractors and subcontractors—are covered. But we want to know how this is going to work on the ground. It is all well and good to say that we will review the bill, but we are talking about the impact on children and their lives forever. We want to know the implementation time frame. As I said, we will be moving an amendment in the other place to require an annual report to Parliament on the operation of the reportable conduct parts of the scheme. That will enable appropriate oversight and scrutiny of that critical function and will make sure that this bill is fit for purpose. But The Greens members do support the bill and we congratulate the Minister on his work.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (12:13): I speak on the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. There is no area of public policy more important than the care and protection of the children of New South Wales, which the bill deals with. As an overview, the bill continues the work of the Office of the Children's Guardian and consolidates the powers and functions of the Children's Guardian into one Act. In any area of important public policy it is highly desirable that all relevant legislation be consolidated into one bill, which this bill does. The bill sets out the powers of the Children's Guardian in relation to out-of-home care, adoption, children's employment, reportable conduct and Official Community Visitors. The bill also transfers the oversight functions of the Official Community Visitors scheme, which relates to children, from the Ombudsman to the Children's Guardian. The scheme enables independent appointees to visit and report on out-of-home care services for children.

The bill also transfers from the Ombudsman to the Children's Guardian oversight of the reportable conduct scheme, which deals with the reporting, monitoring and investigating of allegations of reportable conduct, which can unfortunately include allegations of sexual misconduct, ill treatment and neglect against children in certain government and non-government entities. The bill also continues the New South Wales Government's implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by strengthening the reportable conduct scheme through statutory definitions and the extension of the scheme to religious bodies, contractors and subcontractors who hold or are required to hold a Working With Children Check. The provision includes persons in religious ministry, those providing religious-based activities to children and registered psychologists as mandatory reporters. It also provides additional protections for mandatory reporters who make a good-faith report to a particular institution that a child is at risk of significant harm.

The bill creates the legislative lever for the establishment of a residential care workers register, which will provide a mechanism for out-of-home residential care providers to engage with information about the safety and suitability of residential care workers prior to making a decision about whether to engage a person. The bill

achieves those objectives in the following ways. Part 3 of the bill sets out a very clear enunciation of the objections and principles of the bill. Clause 6 states:

The main object of this Act is to protect children by providing for the role and functions of the office of the Children's Guardian, including—

- (a) promoting the quality of organisations and persons providing services to children, and
- (b) regulating those organisations and persons in providing those services

Clause 7 of the bill provides for a paramount consideration. That phrase is used elsewhere within the bill. It states:

The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children, including protecting children from child abuse, is the paramount consideration in decision-making under this Act and the regulations and in the operation of this Act and the regulations generally.

Clause 8 of the bill sets out relevant guiding principles in administering the Act and regulations, which are of assistance to those implementing both the bill and its regulations. I will skip to part 8 of the bill, which includes the mechanisms by which the important statutory office of the Children's Guardian is defined. Clause 112 establishes the Office of the Children's Guardian and requires that the appointment of the Children's Guardian be made by the Governor. Under clause 113 the term of office is to be a period of not more than five years. The period will be stated in the instrument of appointment, although a Children's Guardian will be eligible for reappointment. Under clause 113 there is a maximum term of not more than two terms in office.

It is a full-time statutory office under clause 114 of the bill. Certain other mechanisms are stated in division 1 of part 8 of the bill. Division 2, importantly, deals with the certain circumstances in which the Children's Guardian may vacate their statutory office. Clause 119 provides for removal of the Children's Guardian upon the address of both Houses of Parliament. Other officers of assistance to the Children's Guardian, such as the Deputy Children's Guardian, are created under division 4 of part 8. There are other various mechanical provisions in relation to those subsidiary officers. Clause 125 states that the functions of the Children's Guardian are:

- (a) to exercise functions relating to persons engaged in child-related work, including working with children check clearances, under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012,
- (b) to promote the best interests of all children in out-of-home care,
- (c) to ensure the rights of all children in out-of-home care are safeguarded and promoted,
- (d) to establish a register for the purpose of the authorisation of individuals as authorised carers, and to maintain that register,
- (e) to accredit designated agencies and to monitor the carrying out of the agencies' responsibilities under this Act, the regulations, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and the regulations under that Act,
- (f) to register organisations that provide or arrange voluntary out-of-home care ...

And so on. Clause 126 sets out restrictions on the functions of the Children's Guardian and clause 127 provides for the appointment of advisory committees. Clause 130 sets out the circumstances in which the Children's Guardian may delegate his or her functions. Clause 131 provides for the referral of matters to police and other investigative agencies, which, unfortunately, in certain circumstances is necessary and important for the protection of children. Clause 132 contains various protections from liability, which are quite appropriate given the nature of the officeholder.

Part 4 of the bill includes detailed provisions regarding reportable conduct as it relates to one of the important functions to be performed by the Children's Guardian. Part 5 of the bill provides for the regulation of out-of-home care by the Children's Guardian. In part 6, provisions relating to child employment are set out. Part 7 deals with matters relating to adoption. The bill is a detailed and comprehensive piece of legislation that operates in a very important area of public policy. I congratulate the Minister for bringing to the Parliament such an important consolidation, which will better protect and care for the children of this State. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (12:24): I speak in debate on the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I make clear, as have other members of the Opposition, that we will not oppose the bill. Elements of the bill clearly are worthy of support and I, too, congratulate the Minister on his efforts to ensure that some of the issues that stakeholders have raised in the past 18 months have been taken into account with this legislation. I do, however, have a couple of issues that I will raise in my speech. The bill seeks to move the Children's Guardian's adoption functions from the Adoption Act 2000 and its child employment functions and responsibilities for accreditation, monitoring and registration of out-of-home care from the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. It will consolidate those functions and responsibilities into one Act that recognises the Children's Guardian as an independent statutory office.

The bill also makes subsequent consequential amendments to the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 and the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012. Importantly, as

has been mentioned, the bill will transfer the State's reportable conduct scheme from the NSW Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian, reflecting in part the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to ensure religious bodies, for example, are covered by the reportable conduct scheme. I note that the Office of the Children's Guardian received increased funding in the 2019-20 budget. In his speech in reply, the Minister may advise the House how that additional funding will support the reportable conduct scheme, how it will support additional staffing, and whether staff are being transferred from the NSW Ombudsman's office into the Children's Guardian office—

Mr Gareth Ward: Yes, they are.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: —who previously have worked in this area of investigation. I take it that the Public Service Association, for example—the representative body of many of those staff members—has also been consulted, as have the staff themselves. I raise in particular a couple of issues. I praise the member for Londonderry, representing the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services. I also praise the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services for highlighting the need for a proper reporting structure to the Joint Standing Committee on Children and Young People. That is a very worthy consideration and amendment that the upper House should consider and the Minister should consider in his speech in reply. I note that the bill states that:

The Children's Guardian must advise the following persons of the finding or determination, the recommendation and the reasons—

- (a) the Minister,
- (b) the head of the relevant entity,
- (c) if the finding or determination has been made about a person employed in, or by, a government sector agency within the meaning of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013—the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet,
- (d) the employee the subject of the finding or determination. All of those investigations, particularly those that are led by the Children's Guardian instead of the NSW Ombudsman, should not just be contained in an annual report that is provided to Parliament; there also should be an opportunity for the joint standing committee to peruse the outcome of those investigations without in any way impacting upon issues of privacy. The committee can undertake its perusal in camera. That would be a worthy amendment to this legislation that the Minister should consider. It would be worthwhile for the Parliament to have better oversight of the outcome of investigations and the final recommendations, and of how the respective agencies or organisations adhere to the recommendations made by the Children's Guardian. I praise the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services and her representative in this House for highlighting the need to ensure that there is a role for the joint standing committee other than its current role regarding Working With Children Checks information or general information that is often provided to that committee. I believe a clearer opportunity for that committee to peruse the final outcome of these investigations would assist in ensuring that we have a better and more robust child protection system in New South Wales.

I recall having a meeting in August last year with Steve Kinmond, then the Deputy Ombudsman. At that meeting the Deputy Ombudsman advised me that the Government was considering moving the reportable conduct scheme from the Ombudsman's office to the Children's Guardian. That was part of his consultations with various organisations, including with me in my capacity as the then shadow Minister for Family and Community Services. At that time I raised with Mr Kinmond that I had severe reservations about whether the Children's Guardian was as independent as the Ombudsman is.

That is why I am very pleased that this legislation ensures that the Children's Guardian will be an independent statutory body and that the Office of the Children's Guardian can only be removed in the same manner as an Ombudsman can be removed—that is, by the two Houses of Parliament. This is similar to the process for the removal of a judicial officer. That gives some assurances to the Opposition and to members of this House that the Children's Guardian will be an independent body. NSW Ombudsman Michael Barnes also raised these issues in a media release dated 18 October 2018 when he said:

I support the Royal Commission's view that the oversight body for the reportable conduct scheme should also be responsible for monitoring and enforcing Child Safe Standards.

He went on:

Transferring the reportable conduct function to the Children's Guardian will result in greater integration and streamlining of oversight arrangements for safeguarding children in this state and will remove the duplication that occurs under the current arrangements.

I ask that the Minister address, in his reply, the matter that the Ombudsman has raised. He believed that some duplication might have occurred under the current arrangements. I did not think that that was the case, but I ask the Minister to clarify that. The Ombudsman also stated in the media release:

The independence of the Children's Guardian needs to be strengthened to ensure that office has the independence that was essential to the scheme working so well in this office.

I reiterate that clearly this legislation addresses those concerns with respect to ensuring that the Children's Guardian will be an independent body that cannot, in any way, be influenced by a Minister or by a government. I note that in the recommendations in volume 7 the royal commission highlighted the need for independent oversight in addressing some problems with institutional complaint handling, such as conflicts of interest, which can arise when institutions investigate their own staff and volunteers. It said:

Independent oversight can assure the public that the institutions entrusted to care for children cannot minimise or ignore complaints, and that the leaders and employees of these institutions cannot operate with impunity.

Recommendation 7.9 of the royal commission stated:

State and territory governments should establish nationally consistent legislative schemes (reportable conduct schemes), based on the approach adopted in New South Wales, which oblige heads of institutions to notify an oversight body of any reportable allegation, conduct or conviction involving any of the institution's employees.

The reforms should bring the reportable conduct scheme under one independent statutory body that is not reportable to the Minister. There is another matter that I ask the Minister to clarify, although I think the Legislative Council should consider putting some framework around this. I move to part 10 of the bill, which contains provisions for administrative review. In his second reading speech the Minister indicated, for the first time, that the Children's Guardian-led investigations—the investigations that the Ombudsman would have undertaken under the previous arrangements—will now be subject to administrative review. This is new, and I think that we should have some provision in place to examine the possible impact on the Children's Guardian of potentially long and protracted court cases and legal matters. [*Extension of time*]

I would not want to see the Children's Guardian bogged down with unnecessary, lengthy, costly legal disputes with respect to the recommendations that it has made as a result of its investigations. By the time the Children's Guardian investigates—I think the Minister knows this—the matters are quite serious and the implementation of recommendations are critical. If individuals are given an opportunity to make applications to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], resulting in delays in implementing the recommendations of those investigations, and those outcomes are potentially overturned, that will be a serious issue. As members of this House know, people cannot appeal to NCAT about the Ombudsman's final investigations with regard to reportable conduct schemes: They can only make application to the Supreme Court under section 35B of the Ombudsman Act if they question the jurisdiction itself. Other than seeking an internal review, there is no opportunity for an NCAT review.

I was not aware of this change. It was not raised with me when I was consulted about this matter. I do not know if it was the result of further consultations with other institutions and organisations that sought this right of review, but it could be an issue. The matter should be reviewed and perhaps the Act should be amended to limit the ability for the review process or some process should be put in place to review this provision—whether it be in 12 months or two years—to ensure closer examination of whether these appeals impact upon the work of the Children's Guardian.

On 12 September 2018 I attended a Child Safety Standing Committee for Survivor and Faith Groups held by NSW Ombudsman Steve Kinmond. I acknowledge that the purpose of that committee was to bring the religious bodies on side, and to seek their support and understanding that the reportable conduct scheme would be extended to cover their institutions. The religious bodies that were in attendance were very much in support. I welcome their support and their understanding that they must be part of the reportable conduct scheme. I make it clear that I do not oppose this legislation, but I ask the Minister to clarify the concerns that I have raised.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:39): I support the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I congratulate the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services on bringing this bill to the House. In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Government committed to a number of important reforms to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and improve treatment and support for survivors of child sexual abuse. The bill continues progress on key commitments made by the New South Wales Government to implement its response to the royal commission's recommendations. It makes significant strides in ensuring that the past failures of institutions that were supposed to care for children do not happen again—today or in the future.

The New South Wales Government said in its response to the royal commission that it would consider including all registered psychologists and people in religious ministry in the mandatory reporting scheme. True to its word, the New South Wales Government has acted on this. The bill will make mandatory reporters of all registered psychologists, persons in religious ministry or persons providing religion-based activities to children. These groups will be required to make a report if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm. Along with amendments that expand the mandatory reporting scheme, the bill contains important

protections for reporters, adding to the existing protections found in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

The royal commission found that in the absence of legal obligations, many institutions and their staff do not report abuse to the relevant authorities. This is to the detriment of the children in their care. New South Wales has a strong child protection mandatory reporting scheme contained in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This Government is committed to making the mandatory reporting scheme even stronger. The royal commission recommended expanding the mandatory reporting scheme to achieve national consistency in reporter groups. For New South Wales this means expanding the mandatory reporting scheme to include people in religious ministry and all registered psychologists. Our mandatory reporting scheme already captured the other groups of individuals who were identified by the royal commission, such as out-of-home care workers, early childhood workers and school counsellors.

Currently in New South Wales registered psychologists who provide services to children are already mandatory reporters, but registered psychologists who do not provide services to children are not. Some people in religious ministry are also captured in the current New South Wales mandatory reporting scheme when they work in a professional or paid capacity in services listed in the legislation such as health care, welfare, education, residential services, law enforcement, children's services or disability services that are delivered wholly or partly to children. For example, a priest who is a paid teacher at a school is currently a mandatory reporter. The bill contains important amendments that strengthen the mandatory reporting scheme by ensuring that members of these expanded groups are required by law to report suspected abuse. These reforms are critical to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse, and ensuring the safety of children within our institutions and our community.

The royal commission also found that protections for reporters of child sexual abuse varied throughout Australian jurisdictions. A lack of reporter protections can act as a barrier to reporting. The bill expands the existing protections for reporters to remove this barrier and includes specific protections for reporters making a report in good faith against civil liability, criminal liability or retribution. These protections will be broadened to apply to reports or complaints made about child abuse to any institution engaging in child-related work. I am confident that these amendments will give potential reporters the confidence and necessary encouragement to come forward to report suspected child abuse. These initiatives will build on the work that is already underway and the significant progress that New South Wales has already made in response to the findings and recommendations of the royal commission. The New South Wales Government will release the second annual report on its progress in response to the royal commission's recommendations later this year. This report will demonstrate that this Government is taking seriously its commitment to implement its response to the royal commission's recommendations.

The bill seeks to make sure that New South Wales's child protection system continues to evolve to address any gaps in protecting the safety and wellbeing of our children. It represents the Government's commitment to continuous improvement of New South Wales child protection system. As deputy chair of the Committee on Children and Young People, I support the elements of this bill, which bring together all the different protections for children under the proposed Children's Guardian Act 2019. In my own community we have a number of organisations that do a lot to support children in our community. I have spoken previously about organisations like Taldumande Youth Services and Phoenix House. I commend such organisations for the work they do for our young people. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:44): As a former chair of the Committee on Children and Young People, I support the Children's Guardian Bill 2019, which will continue to implement the New South Wales Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, transfer the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Community Visitor scheme, provide a targeted expansion of persons who deliver child-related services, ensure consistency of coverage, make further changes and create the new Children's Guardian Bill 2019 in recognition of the Children's Guardian's expanded regulatory role. The bill, as we have heard, goes a long way. I commend Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services Gareth Ward for his work in this space in the past six months.

The bill will target the reportable conduct scheme on those who conduct child-related work by extending the scheme to cover the inside and outside work conduct of employees, contractors and subcontractors of public authorities and by consistently covering the heads of religious bodies or persons in an entity engaged in child-related work at a religious body. The bill also clarifies the definitions in the legislation, as suggested by the royal commission, and tightens the notification requirements to require the head of an entity to inform the Children's Guardian within seven days of becoming aware of an allegation rather than within 30 days. It also creates a new Children's Guardian Act, which brings across relevant legislation, as the member for North Shore mentioned, from the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and the Adoption Act 2000 to

recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian and the independent statutory functions. I again commend the Minister for bringing this bill to the House and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate interrupted.

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:47): As Chair: I address the House regarding the Legislation Review Committee's fourth digest for this Parliament entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 4/57*, tabled on 17 September. In this digest the committee examined and commented on four bills introduced in the last sitting week, and identified issues in six regulations. I draw to the attention of the House some of the issues raised. The Children's Guardian Bill 2019 creates a new Act to consolidate key powers, functions and responsibilities regarding the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children. The bill raised a number of issues on which the committee commented. For example, the bill exempts the Children's Guardian, in certain circumstances, from the requirement to notify an employee that an investigation or determination is being carried out in relation to his or her conduct. The committee noted that this impacts the right of affected persons to be treated with procedural fairness. However, as the exemptions apply only when notification may compromise an investigation or put a person's health or safety at serious risk, the committee made no further comment.

The bill also grants the Children's Guardian or an appointed officer broad powers of search and entry. These powers allow for entry without a warrant in a number of circumstances, including for a reportable conduct investigation, and may thereby impact on privacy rights and the right to be free from arbitrary interference. The committee noted that the purpose of entry under the bill is to facilitate investigations and accreditation, and to monitor compliance, the powers must be exercised with as little inconvenience and damage as possible, and made no further comment.

The Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 amends various Acts relating to courts, crime and juvenile justice. Again, the committee comments on various issues raised by the bill. For example, a proposed amendment to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 would allow the Secretary of the Department of Justice, at his or her discretion, to tell the victim of a juvenile offender the general area of that offender's residence following his or her discharge from detention. The committee noted that the bill thereby provides the secretary with a wide and ill-defined power that affects privacy rights. However, given that the provisions would not allow the release of the offender's exact address, only general location, and the victims' rights objectives of this amendment, the committee made no further comment.

I turn now to one of the regulations on which the committee reported. The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Regulation 2019 allows a number of exemptions from the usual requirements of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, such as exempting local councils from certain privacy requirements where they use CCTV cameras in public areas. The committee noted that it generally prefers matters that affect personal rights such as privacy to be included in primary rather than subordinate legislation. This allows for a greater level of parliamentary oversight of provisions.

Lastly I turn to the Biosecurity Amendment (Biosecurity Management Plans) Regulation 2019, which recognises biosecurity management plans and makes compliance with those plans mandatory. Biosecurity management plans may apply where a commercial or educational activity is carried out for intensive or extensive agriculture or horticulture, or to process agricultural or horticultural products. The plan is aimed to minimise the risk of a biosecurity impact caused by persons entering or carrying out activities at the relevant place, such as introducing a disease or pest. The committee noted that the plans may be prepared by the person conducting the commercial or educational activity of the place; that is, the regulation incorporates standards of external entities.

There is no requirement for such standards to be tabled in the Parliament and subject to disallowance under the Interpretation Act 1987. Further, failure to comply with such a plan can attract significant maximum monetary penalties. However, the committee acknowledged that the regulation provides some safeguards. For example, the measures in a plan must be reasonable, and a person is not required to comply with a plan unless notices are conspicuously posted at the entrances to the area over which the plan applies. In the circumstances the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on the fourth digest. I thank the committee secretariat and the committee members for their work. I encourage everyone to read the full digest, which is available on the committee's webpage. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:51): Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the fourth digest of the Legislation Review Committee dated 17 September. In the digest we report on our considerations. The committee considered four bills and six regulations, and commented on all of them. As an example of the committee's work in relation to regulations, I remind the House that the committee will consider all regulations while they are subject to disallowance by resolution of either or both Houses of Parliament. In relation to the regulations that the committee considered, I draw the House's attention to the Biosecurity Amendment (Biosecurity Management Plans) Regulation 2019. In commenting on this regulation the committee noted that it contained matters that should be included in primary legislation. The committee noted that the regulation amends the Biosecurity Regulation 2017 to recognise biosecurity management plans and to make compliance with those plans a mandatory measure.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 provides a significant maximum penalty for failing to comply with mandatory measures. For individuals that can be a fine of up to \$220,000. The committee noted that these provisions expand the circumstances under which individuals and corporations may be subject to significant penalties and should be included in primary rather than subordinate legislation to foster an appropriate level of parliamentary oversight. The committee referred the regulation to Parliament for its consideration. I also note that the last time I spoke on the committee's deliberations I referred to the findings and recommendations of a report prepared by the committee for the last Parliament, the Fifty-Sixth Parliament. With the leave of the House I will incorporate the findings and recommendations of Legislation Review Committee Report No. 1/56 *Inquiry into the operation of the Legislation Review Act 1987* in the *Hansard*.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I understand it is not custom or practice for this particular information to be incorporated into *Hansard*. However, in accordance with Standing Order 271, on this occasion I will allow it.

Operation of the Legislation Review Act 1987

Findings and recommendations

Finding 1.....16

The Committee considers that it would assist the scrutiny process for the Committee to determine the rights and liberties it will review bills and regulations against and inform the Parliament of these at the start of each Session.

Recommendation 1.....23

The Committee recommends that the Houses give consideration to amending their respective Standing Orders to require the Member with carriage of a bill to address any matters identified by the Legislation Review Committee during debate on the bill.

Recommendation 2.....23

The Committee recommends, in the event Recommendation 1 is not adopted by the Houses, that the NSW Government implement a practice of requiring Ministers with carriage of a bill to address any matters identified by the Legislation Review Committee during debate on the bill.

Recommendation 3.....27

The Committee recommends that, for bills where the Houses determine to proceed without the five day adjournment period, the NSW Government implement a practice of outlining in the Second Reading Speech the bill's impact on personal rights and liberties with reference to the rights and liberties determined by the Committee.

Recommendation 4.....29

The Committee recommends that the NSW Government consider amending the Legislation Review Act 1987 to establish a joint Committee to examine subordinate legislation, taking into account the recent practice of the NSW Legislative Council Regulation Committee.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: I reported that the committee had received a letter from the Premier asking for its view on the reports and its recommendations. The committee responded on 21 August:

At a meeting held yesterday, the current Committee resolved to endorse the findings and four recommendations contained in the report, and to seek the Government response to recommendations 2 to 4.

The committee waits on the Government's response. I look forward to receiving a positive response from the Government on the matter. The recommendations in that report will aid the scrutiny of bills before the House. The committee is hopeful that the Government will give it a favourable response. Again, I note my appreciation to the secretariat that supports the committee. I commend the digest to the House.

Report noted.

*Members***MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE****Reference**

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I report the following message from the Legislation Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Thursday 12 September 2019, the Hon John Sidoti MP, Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans, appeared before Portfolio Committee No 5 as part of its inquiry into Budget Estimates 2019-2020; and
 - (b) during the course of the hearing Minister Sidoti was extensively asked:
 - (i) whether he was truthful in his returns submitted for inclusion in the Pecuniary Interests Register pursuant to the Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983, particularly in relation to properties he and, or his family, had an interest in at Rouse Hill and Five Dock,
 - (ii) whether his private interests conflicted with his public duties as a Member of Parliament, Parliamentary Secretary and Minister, particularly in relation to properties he and, or his family, had an interest in at Rouse Hill and Five Dock,
 - (iii) if confidential information about land use planning and zoning was made available to Mr Sidoti whilst he served as Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, and
 - (iv) whether or not he abided by his obligations under the Ministerial Code of Conduct.
- (2) That under section 73 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, this House refers to the Independent Commission Against Corruption for investigation and report:
 - (a) the issues raised in the Budget Estimates inquiry hearing for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans on 12 September 2019;
 - (b) whether or not the pecuniary interest disclosure regime, the Code of Conduct for Members, and the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct are sufficient to ensure that a Member of Parliament's private interests and public duty do not conflict and do not present an unacceptable perception of a conflict of interest in the mind of the public; and
 - (c) whether or not any reforms are required to ensure public confidence is maintained in the conflict of interest arrangements for Members of Parliament.
- (3) That a message be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly informing it that the Legislative Council has this day agreed to the resolution, and according to section 73 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, requesting that the Legislative Assembly pass a similar resolution.

Legislative Council
18 September 2019

John Ajaka
President

I set down consideration of the message for a later hour of the sitting.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm welcome to the student leaders, parents and teachers from Meadowbank Public School, Kent Road Public School, West Ryde Public School, Melrose Park Public School and Ermington Public School, all guests of the Minister for Customer Service and member for Ryde. I welcome also my own guests to the Chamber, in particular, Sarah Ingram from my Davidson electorate office and her son Tom. I welcome Odette Trigger, guest of the Deputy Speaker and member for Port Macquarie, and her mentoree from the University of Sydney's Faculty of Health Sciences Leadership Mentoring Program.

I welcome students visiting from Parramatta High School and Redeemer Baptist School, who are watching from the Macquarie Room and who are guests of the member for Parramatta. I acknowledge the Grandviews Ladies Probus group, guests of the Assistant Speaker and member for Oatley. I acknowledge also the Mayor of Shellharbour, Marianne Saliba, and Les Dawes, Anita Teesdale and John Davey, guests of the member for Shellharbour. I welcome the student leaders from Wyoming Public School who are visiting Parliament today, along with their teacher Ms Carly Dufficy and Central Coast councillor Lisa Matthews, guests of the member for

The Entrance. I acknowledge visitors from the Newtown electorate, guests of the member for Newtown. I welcome all visitors to the Chamber.

Members

MEMBER FOR HOLSWORTHY

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge that today is the birthday of the member for Holsworthy. Happy birthday.

HIS EXCELLENCY DR GONDANE, HIGH COMMISSIONER OF INDIA

The SPEAKER: Earlier today I had the pleasure of meeting with His Excellency Dr Gondane, the High Commissioner of India; Mr Gupta, the Consul-General of India; and Mr Appar, Consul of India. While they were not able to attend question time they wanted me to pass on their appreciation, particularly the High Commissioner, who will be leaving his post shortly. He spoke highly of the previous Speaker, Shelley Hancock, as well as a number of Ministers who had warmly welcomed him in recent years. He also passed on his appreciation to the Parliament for its role in strengthening Indian-Australian relations. I too want to acknowledge the important work that he has done while he has been here in Australia in strengthening the relationship between the countries. It was a privilege to His Excellency, the Consul-General and the Consul.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

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

Question Time

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:25): My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm reports that the member for Drummoyne, Mr John Sidoti, will continue to receive his \$265,000 ministerial salary and his ministerial driver and government car while being investigated by ICAC?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:25): I will say to the Leader of the Opposition's question that, firstly, obviously any wrongdoing is yet to be proven. Secondly, I note the way in which Labor treated a number of its members of Parliament who were alleged to have conducted criminal activity, yet they still received full pay and sat in this place until the general election. It is always one rule for the Labor Party and a different rule for everybody else. I advise the House that the member for Drummoyne has voluntarily forfeited the use of his car and is driving himself to work. That is something he took upon himself. I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to this.

Ms Kate Washington: Is he going to give up his salary as well?

Mr Anthony Roberts: That is another question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Exactly. Ask the next question. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has had a lot to say about this matter but we still have not heard why it took her 18 months to declare her Gloucester property to the Parliament. We have not heard why.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Could the clock be stopped?

The SPEAKER: I will not stop the clock at the moment.

Ms Kate Washington: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. If the Premier wants to cast aspersions on the Leader of the Opposition she must do so by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: I will hear further from the Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: She has not explained why it took her 18 months to declare her property. She has not explained why a Waverton property she owned had inconsistent disclosures from year to year. She has not explained why—

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Yasmin Catley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. This is taxpayer money we are talking about that the Minister is receiving and the Premier needs to answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition needs to explain why it took her 18 months to declare the Gloucester property, why from year to year—

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Lynda Voltz: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. The member is making an allegation—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am finding it hard to hear.

Ms Lynda Voltz: My point of order is under Standing Order 73, improper motives against a member in this Chamber. The Premier should raise this matter by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: I am listening very carefully to the Premier. At the moment I do not think she is going that far, but she is getting close.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Given the question I have been asked, the Leader of the Opposition still has not advised this place why she neglected to tell the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser about her own property interests in close proximity to a stack on the WestConnex project.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I would like to table the ethics advice that I received. I did seek ethics advice.

The SPEAKER: It is not appropriate to do that.

Ms Jodi McKay: The Premier has made certain accusations. I table the ethics advice provided to me by the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Jodi McKay: I did the right thing and I sought advice, which is not what Minister Sidoti has done.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will cease. It is not appropriate to attempt to table any papers now. At some stage if the Leader of the Opposition wants to make a personal explanation I am happy to entertain that. It is not appropriate to do that now.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition has asked me a question and she will not let me answer it. In fact, it was only after the ethics adviser—

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Yasmin Catley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Premier is not being relevant. We know that. She is not being relevant to the question. I ask that she be brought back to the question, which is in relation to the Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans still receiving \$265,000 of taxpayer money.

The SPEAKER: I am satisfied that the Premier has addressed the question in large part at the beginning of her answer. I am happy to hear further in the current vein, but I will ask her shortly to come back to the relevance of the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. I hope I have further opportunity in question time to address those matters I was discussing. In relation to the private member's bill the Leader of the Opposition announced today, I want to know whether it applies to the shadow Cabinet because there are a number of property owners in the shadow Cabinet. In fact—

Ms Jodi McKay: It is not about the owner. It's about the property developer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition says it is about property developers. She put in a development application [DA] on one of her properties. Does that mean—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time. He is lucky he is on only one call to order. I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the first time. I call the member for Bega to order for the first time. Members' behaviour is getting out of hand. The House will come to order. I will ask the Premier to continue her answer. The clock is ticking, intentionally. The Premier will return to the leave of the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate it. I will say that the Labor Party has demonstrated through what has been revealed in ICAC in the last few weeks that its house in Sussex Street is broken, it is burning down. They have not learned from the past and what they are doing, as usual, is having one rule for them and one rule for everybody else.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Has the Premier concluded her answer?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

ILLEGAL DONATIONS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (14:32): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is acting to restore the public's confidence in the integrity of political donations?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:33): I wouldn't be laughing if I were you.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Auburn to order for the first time. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. The Premier has not even started her response. It is not appropriate.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Terrigal for his question. I know that all of us on this side of the House care about the integrity of our democracy and the integrity of the political process. The New South Wales Government will always take action to strengthen the public's confidence in the integrity of political donations. Despite having the strongest donations regime in the country in New South Wales, it has become obvious through the recent revelations at ICAC that some continue to defy the law. In fact, the revelations strike at the heart of how one of the major political parties in this State conducts its affairs. Sussex Street knows what the laws are—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sussex Street knew what the laws were and it just chose to flout them. For any democracy to be fair and robust, political parties must respect and abide by the rules.

The SPEAKER: If members continue to interject, I will put them on calls to order. The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We know that public trust has been breached when it comes to donations.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The matters that have been the subject of much commentary in recent weeks occurred four or five years ago and we are yet to understand the extent of those activities in the period since.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The New South Wales Government is now taking strong action to protect further the political integrity of our democracy. Cash donations above \$100 will be banned under legislation our Government will be bringing to Parliament by the end of the year. Whilst much has been said about those bags of cash at Sussex Street—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Whilst a lot has been said about the revelation of cash donations in recent inquiries, not only does that go to the heart of integrity of individuals, it also goes to the heart of integrity of democracy in New South Wales. We look forward to Labor supporting these reforms that we will be introducing. The simple reform will mean an end to poor accounting practices and untraceable donations and the anonymous cash that has the potential to mar our political system will no longer be allowed to be accepted. Given the wide and easy availability of things such as electronic funds transfer systems, there are no good reasons for donations to be hiding the true source. Any donation above \$100 to a political party in New South Wales cannot be in cash.

Currently we know that there are caps on donations for single donors and we also know the caps for parties in relation to election funding. But the Government wants to stress that given what we have witnessed, given the revelations, it is entirely appropriate that we take this course of action, and I call upon those opposite to support this important reform. I also want to stress in a rather concerned way that yesterday it was revealed that

the member for Kogarah directly received donations from Mr Wong. I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition whether she has asked him—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order is Standing Order 73. Clearly the Premier is using a personal reflection for an improper motive. That is inconsistent with the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: I am happy to hear further from the Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The issues I raise are entirely appropriate because we are introducing laws to prevent cash donations that hide the original source of the donor. As to what was revealed yesterday, I want the Leader of the Opposition to explain to this place whether she has asked the member for Kogarah about those donations.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. There is no breach of Standing Order 73 at this stage. If it is the same point of order, the Premier has not breached that standing order. Does the member have a different standing order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: Yes. It is Standing Order 129 because the Premier should be talking about what she is going to introduce, not making reflections about other members in this place.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has been overwhelmingly relevant throughout her whole answer. I am happy for her to make concluding statements.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am simply suggesting that given it was revealed yesterday—

Mr Chris Minns: What have I done? Say it outside the House.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Speaker, they are very touchy.

The SPEAKER: I will grant an extension, but I will ask the Premier to be careful. While there has been no breach of a standing order, and I am conscious that we do not want to go there. The member for Kogarah is, with some degree of justification, listening to what is being said, as am I.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am simply highlighting to the House something that was put on the public record yesterday.

Mr Anoulack Chanthivong: There was no allegation made.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Exactly. All I am saying—

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Point of order: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I am happy to hear the point of order.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: This is very, very serious.

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Ms Sophie Cotsis: It is Standing Order 73. If the Premier has any allegations or wants to move a substantive motion she can do that or she can walk out there and make the allegation.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I make it clear to the Premier and all members that I am listening very carefully. There has been no breach of Standing Order 73. I ask the member for Kogarah to keep quiet as well. I will do the job of administering the House. If members have a concern when something is raised I will listen to it, but not in anticipation of something possibly being said. Nothing has been said to breach Standing Order 73. I will ask the Premier to continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know why they do not want me to repeat what was on the public record yesterday.

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order: Mr Speaker—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They won't even let me get it out.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Lynda Voltz: The Premier is answering a question in regards to cash donations. Unless she is implying—

The SPEAKER: What is the standing order?

Ms Lynda Voltz: —that the member for Kogarah was receiving cash donations, it is not relevant to what she is speaking about at the moment.

The SPEAKER: The Premier is speaking in relation to donations and I am satisfied she is being relevant. As I said, I am listening very carefully and I ask the Premier to continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am simply making the point that yesterday on the public record it was stated that the member for Kogarah had received donations from—

Mr Chris Minns: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Chris Minns: My point of order is Standing Order 129. This is a grubby insinuation. The ICAC has made no allegation. A witness has made an allegation. This is an outrageous abuse of parliamentary privilege and the Premier will not repeat it outside this House.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kogarah will stop now. If the member for Kogarah wishes to make a personal explanation later—

[*Interruption*]

Opposition members will be quiet. I do not believe it is necessary at this stage, but if the member for Kogarah wishes to make a personal explanation he has an opportunity later to seek to do so. Taking a point of order on the floor of the House during question time is not the appropriate time to provide an explanation. The Premier has not breached Standing Order 73. I am listening very carefully and I am more than prepared to protect the member's interests as a member of this House if Standing Order 73 is breached. It has not been breached and I will ask the Premier to continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Speaker—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: To the point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. Is this a different point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: It is to the point of order.

The SPEAKER: I have just ruled on the point of order.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I am reflecting.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to hear a reflection.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: It is the second time that you, Mr Speaker, have said today to a member on this side of the House that they have leave to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: No, I did not say they have leave to make a personal explanation.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: No, that they can seek leave to make a personal explanation later if they take offence.

The SPEAKER: No, I did not say that.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I would suggest that the fact that members on this side of the House are being forced to do that as the only option they can take because of your ruling on Standing Order 73 is a reflection on that ruling.

The SPEAKER: For the benefit of members, I will clarify that I just said to the member for Kogarah that I do not believe he has cause to make a personal explanation. I make it very clear both to him and the Leader of the Opposition that now is not the time to make a personal explanation. In my opinion, they were both attempting to do so under veil of a point of order. I will not hear further from the member for Maitland.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Why not?

The SPEAKER: Because I have just made very clear my ruling on that. I am being very careful.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Mr Speaker, I am just trying to clarify because I do not think you could hear me, members were speaking so loudly.

The SPEAKER: I could hear absolutely what you were saying. Now is not the time to be questioning me. I will be happy to speak with any member of the House after question time to have those conversations. However, now is not the time to do so or to attempt to make a personal explanation. I have been clear: I do not want to hear any more disruptive personal explanations or points of order unless they are warranted. At the moment they are not warranted. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to make clear that if members look at my record in this place, I would never, ever cast aspersions on any member of Parliament that were not proven.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: However, there is nothing wrong with repeating what is on the public record. I do not understand why the member for Kogarah or why the Leader of the Opposition object to my repeating what is on the public record.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Greg Warren: I draw your attention to Standing Order 73. In the Premier's own concession, she said, "I make the point"—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard enough on that point of order. I have ruled on Standing Order 73. I will take it as a standing point of order that Opposition members are concerned about Standing Order 73. However, I will be vigilant to ensure that it is not breached for the next minute.

Mr Greg Warren: Further to your ruling, Mr Speaker, I am merely making the point that the Premier in her own concession said she is suggesting and making the point. That is a direct correlation to making a personal reflection and an imputation against a member of this House.

The SPEAKER: I do not accept that. The member for Campbelltown will resume his seat. This answer is taking far too long because members are repeatedly taking points of order that I have to rule on repeatedly in the same way. Members will not take further points of order under Standing Order 73. I have given an undertaking to listen very carefully and to protect the interests of members who, not unreasonably, expect their interests to be upheld. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure I will have further opportunity in question time to address this matter, but I make this point: Why is it that nobody in this place is allowed to repeat what is already public? It is a question of fact. If members opposite are concerned about what it might imply, that is a matter for them. All I am doing is repeating a statement of fact that yesterday it was revealed—

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms Lynda Voltz: I take two points of order, one under Standing Order 129 and one under Standing Order 74. The Premier is merely trying to provoke a response from Opposition members to cover up for the failings of her Minister. The other point relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. Every single member of this House gets donations.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to hear a speech.

Ms Lynda Voltz: One person who took a donation is not relevant to the change to the donation laws that the Premier is talking about. If she wants to talk about donation laws, she can talk about them. But just saying the name of a member on the Opposition side of the Chamber in a completely irrelevant way is not relevant to the question she has been asked.

The SPEAKER: I again make it clear that the Premier is being relevant. She is speaking about donations and the question was very much about donations. I do not believe the Premier is transgressing Standing Order 74 either. The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Two things have become fairly apparent.

The SPEAKER: The member for Auburn has been given a pretty good go. If she continues to interject, she will be called to order for a third time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: First, the Labor Party has learned nothing from what has occurred in the past. Second, Labor members have one rule for themselves and another rule for everybody else.

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

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:50): My question is directed to Minister John Sidoti, the member for Drummoyne. Did the Premier ever issue him with a ruling on his conflicts of interest before allowing him to sit in Cabinet?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent.

Ms Jodi McKay: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: I am not asking for a further contribution at this stage. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I made it clear at the beginning of question time that there was an alternative ministerial arrangement in place. I therefore seek that the question be ruled out of order.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 126. The member for Drummoyne has got a commission and is being paid as a Minister. Under Standing Order 126, the Opposition is allowed to ask Ministers of the Crown questions relating to public affairs. He should answer the question or not take the salary and remove his commission.

The SPEAKER: Earlier today a ministerial arrangement was announced indicating that questions addressed to the sports Minister would be answered by the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education. I will seek further guidance.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am happy to take the question as Leader of the House.

Ms Jodi McKay: You can't take the question. It wasn't asked of you.

The SPEAKER: My interpretation of the ministerial arrangement that was announced earlier today is that questions addressed to the sports Minister will be taken by the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education.

Mr Ryan Park: That is not correct.

Ms Jodi McKay: It was directly in relation to his portfolios only.

The SPEAKER: That ministerial arrangement was indicated on behalf of the Premier. I am happy to seek further guidance from the Premier on whether that is still her arrangement.

Mr Ryan Park: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Opposition members will resume their seats. I am speaking. I will not take points of order. The ministerial arrangement that was indicated earlier today was that, on behalf of the Premier, members and I were informed that the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education would answer questions in relation to the portfolios of Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. I am seeking further guidance from the Premier on what her intention is. The Premier is referring me to the Leader of the House. I will hear further from him. In a moment I am happy to give Opposition members an opportunity to speak. Members will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Given that the good member refuses to answer the question, I am going to now take the question.

Mr Ryan Park: You can't take the question. No-one is asking you the question, mate.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Guess what? I can.

The SPEAKER: I am happy to hear further comments on the matter, but at this stage I will give an indicative ruling based on the advice of the Clerk. The question asked did not directly relate to a portfolio responsibility. If the question concerns public affairs then I am happy to seek an indication from the Minister about whether he wishes to respond. If the question is about a personal matter then it is arguably out of order. I will ask the member for Drummoyne if he wishes to respond to that question.

Mr John Sidoti: I am happy to respond to the question.

The SPEAKER: I am happy for the Minister to answer the question.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans) (14:55): My answer is that while the ICAC is conducting its preliminary investigation I am not making any further comment.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The question has been answered. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Ryan Park: It is Standing Order 126. Get rid of the salary and get rid of the commission, mate.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is enough. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:56): 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 supporting the communities of northern New South Wales during the drought?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:56): I thank the member for Clarence for his question. During a recent trip to Grafton we had a great day when we got the opportunity to open up a brand-new Country Universities Centre [CUC]. The New South Wales Government target—with the joint funding of the State and Federal governments—was to get 45 students within seven months. I can update the House that we have got 70 students in 5½ weeks. Who says that this innovative model that empowers young people to remain in regional and rural New South Wales and gain access to education—in this case tertiary education—through a Country Universities Centre is not a policy that we should be proud of?

I acknowledge the work of the local member, who advocated for Grafton to be part of the rollout of that program. There is a number of CUCs across the State, with more to come through the continued investment of the New South Wales Government and some joint funding from the Federal Government. It is very important. If we want a future for regional and rural New South Wales we need to keep our kids there. They are the future leaders in our communities, the future leaders in business and the future political leaders. Hopefully they will get to occupy the benches in this Chamber to make sure that the voice of regional and rural New South Wales is heard loud and clear so that governments of today and into the future will continue to deliver for their areas. Our kids are our greatest asset. If you are going to invest in anything, invest in education. We are doing that, and I congratulate the local member.

One of the lucky parts of my job as the Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, the Leader of The Nationals and the Deputy Premier is the opportunity I have to travel to every corner of this great State and meet some fantastic communities. When you think about the fact that regional New South Wales is home to 2.5 million people it shows that we are a large part of this great State. In fact, I would argue that it is the engine room. Regional New South Wales is where the mines are, it is where the power stations are, it is where our food and fibre is grown and it is where industry comes alive. Jobs keep the economy ticking over and regional New South Wales plays an important role in that. Yesterday I touched on a recent trip I took to a part of the north-west of the State that is really feeling the pain of the drought. I popped into Moree, where I had the opportunity, along with the great local member, to make a significant announcement of about \$3.4 million for a new industrial precinct that will attract new industries to diversify the local economy.

There is no greater time to talk about diversifying local communities than in the middle of our worst drought. We know that the impact of the drought is hurting our regional and local communities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data over the past 12 months shows that there has been jobs growth in regional and rural New South Wales to the tune of 35,000 extra jobs. Imagine that, but we know that we have lost thousands of jobs because of the drought and its impact on the agricultural sector. The announcement shows that the Government is investing in partnering with communities and local government. In this case our investment in a new precinct to diversify the economy will create jobs. The greatest investment we can make in the regions is jobs creation, not just for today but also for the future. That is what the precinct is all about.

As I said yesterday, I also had the opportunity to travel to Narrabri. I spent three days in the region, connecting to the community and meeting with the local council. Narrabri Shire Council is one of the best councils in the State because it has a vision and a plan for the future of Narrabri. It is not always about Santos and its coal seam gas proposal. We know the Inland Rail is coming through Narrabri, which gives the community an opportunity to build a new precinct that will diversify the economy and attract different industries and businesses. I had the honour and privilege of launching what will be called an inland port that will be based in Narrabri and attract new investment and businesses.

Again, I commend the local council for its vision. I remember that the idea was pitched to me in 2017, when I was the Minister for Small Business, as an opportunity that could come off the back of the Inland Rail. As I said before, the Inland Rail is the spine through the centre of New South Wales. There is an opportunity for us to tap into it through branch lines and, in this case, a new precinct in Narrabri. It is no different to what is happening with the inland port in Parkes, where we are now seeing some multinationals. We have set up shop there and we are attracting new businesses. There are some great announcements to come for Parkes. That is how we will continue to share the prosperity that we are seeing as a State with regional and rural New South Wales. During the trip I also had the opportunity to see some of the investments that the Government has made through the Stronger Country Communities Fund, which supports local projects at a local level and allows councils to deliver in line with community expectations. [*Extension of time*]

The exciting part of the Stronger Country Communities Fund is that in excess of 1,200 projects are on the roll across the State. Over the next four years we will have the opportunity to cut many, many ribbons. In Narrabri there is an investment of around \$750,000 for a new cycling track around the town's river system. That will create another amenity for people in their community. There is nothing more important than bringing communities together in times of drought, when people are doing it tough. It was no different when we went to Wee Waa and spent a couple of hours at a community barbeque. We got to visit the local museum, which was exciting. We also officially opened Dangar Park. The Government invested \$330,000 for a new playground and park for that community to come together.

It does not matter where we go in regional and rural New South Wales, the policy position of this Government over the past 2½ to three years through the Regional Growth Fund is starting to play out. There are new amenities, new infrastructure and new investments in local economies to create jobs. It is no different to the \$170 million that we have fast-tracked to make sure that we see continued investment. Part of our drought package is to bring forward those infrastructure projects so that we can support our regional communities in times of drought. We need to make sure that we diversify those economies and create jobs for local suppliers, tradies and others.

The Government is supporting farmers through a \$1.8 billion drought package. We are trying to support those communities as best as we can, but these are tough times. I will use every opportunity I have in this Chamber to talk up regional and rural New South Wales. We should never talk down the regions. We should never talk ourselves out of the market. More importantly, I will send a message to people that if they are thinking about going on holiday they should think about regional and rural New South Wales. It has some of the best cafes and restaurants and, most importantly, the best natural tourism attractions in the State.

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:03): My question is directed to the Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections. Under section 16 (1) of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, Ministers must notify the Premier in writing of conflicts of interest involving other MPs. When he was the Minister for Planning, did the Minister know about the member for Drummoyne's property empire at Tallawong and Five Dock and notify the Premier?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (15:04): That sounded suspiciously like two questions, not one, but I am reluctant to ask for a ruling today.

The SPEAKER: Are you asking for a ruling?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: No.

The SPEAKER: I think that is very wise.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Thank you. The answer to the question is: No and no. The first I became aware of the member's alleged holdings was when I was listening to, as we all did, and recording, because I did record them, the budget estimates hearings—and what I read in the news. I have been here for a little while. For those in the gallery, Opposition questions are usually based on what is in the news today. They go to *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Sydney Morning Herald*—not so much *The Guardian*—and their questions will be influenced by what is in the news. If we want to talk about news, though, I have got some fantastic news for the House. It is great news, in fact, to the tens of millions watching this today on the internet. On behalf of the Premier—and what a great Premier we have—I had the honour of opening the Fourth World Congress on Probation. We had 26 countries represented and 360 delegates from every continent except Antarctica.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. As interested as I am in parole and probation and all those other things—

The SPEAKER: The Minister has directly answered the question and I am happy to indulge him further.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We are talking about the news, and this is an opportunity for me to inform those in the press gallery, who were here. I cleared them out successfully. I will make sure they get a copy of my speech. It was a great speech and it was applauded wildly by the 360 delegates and many of my corrections staff, who had no choice but to applaud me wildly. I inform the House that probation is critical and we attracted policymakers, researchers, academics and practitioners from across the globe. This Government is committed to building safer communities. In order to do that, we need to ensure that offenders are getting the assistance they need to address their behaviour, reintegrate into society and stay out of prison.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. We were happy with "No and no."

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I clearly wasn't.

Ms Jodi McKay: You can sit down now.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I answered the question and now I am providing additional information.

The SPEAKER: I have indicated that, given his direct response to the question, the Minister will be indulged further to waste our time.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will be hoping for an extension. Our prisons manage a daily average of around 13,500 adult inmates at some 39 facilities. I place on record that Community Corrections officers play a vital role in monitoring offenders and giving them the tools and guidance they need to live productive and lawful lives.

Mr David Elliott: They do a great job.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: As the former Minister says, they do an incredible job. They have their ups and downs dealing with people but they are there constantly giving them the best level of support they need to reintegrate into the community. Our Community Corrections officers work to identify the causes of an individual's reoffending and implement strategies to address them. A case plan is developed for each offender at the start of supervision to identify their risks and provide structure for how those risks will be managed. Other strategies include contacting significant people in the offender's life, liaising with police and other— [*Time expired.*]

TRANSPORT AND ROADS LEGISLATION

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:09): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Roads, and the Leader of the House. Will the Minister provide an update to the House outlining the Government's transport and roads legislative agenda, as well as any other matters relating to the administration of the House?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (15:09): I thank the good member for his question. Of course, the administration of this place is incredibly important to our wider community. To be able to see the administration of this place done with confidence is really important. In the transport space we are working around the clock to integrate Roads and Maritime Services with Transport for NSW and working on a number of other measures relating to transport and roads, including ongoing efforts to make sure that we reduce the road toll and the crash rates across the road network. Later today I will be delivering the second reading speech on the Road Transport Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill, which goes to the heart of cleaning up a number of anomalies in the court and judicial system as it relates to our road network.

As Leader of the House I am charged with the responsibility of making sure that this place operates with complete and utter propriety. Earlier in question time I was very pleased to hear the Premier say that there is going to be put in place a \$100 cap on cash donations. That is a long time overdue. In today's world, with all of the technology that is available, there is no reason that we should have cash payments—be they in red envelopes or the like—being used by those opposite. I was also interested in what the Premier said earlier about this matter. In particular, I draw the attention of the House to an article by Brad Norington that appeared on 3 September, in which the shadow Minister for Transport said that he did not believe that Mr Wong was involved in fundraising for the Kogarah campaign. Yesterday, in another article, that same journalist reported—having sat there and no doubt watched the proceedings at ICAC—that Mr Wong had, in fact, donated to Mr Minns' campaign.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: That goes to the heart of what the Leader of the Opposition is going to do about this, because I would have thought that she should have satisfied herself in relation to the shadow Minister.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat.

Mr Ryan Park: My points of order are under Standing Orders 129 and 73. I have heard a lot of irrelevant answers; this is completely irrelevant.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order on relevance. The Minister will be more relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In terms of the shadow Minister, who sits opposite on the front bench, and in terms of the administration of this place—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I have just ruled on a point of order. I will not hear another point of order at the moment.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am going to continue my answer. I would have thought it appropriate that we get clarity and that I, as the Minister for Transport and Roads, have an understanding as to whether the shadow Minister should be on the backbench or the front bench in light of this.

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The point of the matter is that it has now emerged that the donation was made.

The SPEAKER: I cannot hear the Minister because there is too much noise in the Chamber. I will not hear the member's point of order because I cannot hear what the point of order would be taken on.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Coming back in relation to—

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. Is the point of order on something different?

Mr Jihad Dib: It is Standing Order 73.

The SPEAKER: I will let the Minister continue his answer, but I will be mindful of your foreshadowed point of order. I will let you take it in a moment if he continues. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In relation to the Leader of the Opposition and in particular what has been indicated by the Premier today, I have not seen any public commentary since this morning about the cap.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: But I would draw the attention of the House to a fundraiser that took place in 2017 involving the Chinese Friends of Labor.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat.

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is obvious that the Minister is now flouting your ruling. You ruled on relevance; he is being totally irrelevant and disrespectful to you personally. I find that offensive because I respect you so much.

The SPEAKER: The member for Swansea will resume her seat.

Ms Yasmin Catley: You can rely on me getting up again.

The SPEAKER: The member's attempt at flattery will not get her anywhere. I ask the Minister to be more relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I was speaking in relation to the administration of the House and the \$100 cash cap that is going to be implemented by the Premier.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This relates to the administration of the House.

The SPEAKER: I do not regard your response as sufficiently relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I make the point that, coming very soon, this Parliament will be introducing legislation to address the \$100 cash cap. As Leader of the House in the administration of this place I want to ensure that the community understands very clearly the importance of this legislation, because it seems to be lost on those opposite.

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was in regard to the administration of roads and transport.

The SPEAKER: I will hear from the member for Ku-ring-gai.

[Extension of time not granted.]

MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:15): My question is directed to the Premier. Section 12 (2) of the Ministerial Code of Conduct legally requires her to make a ruling as Premier if she is satisfied John Sidoti's property empire did not pose a conflict of interest. Did she make such a ruling and, if so, will she table it in the Parliament?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:16): I have answered a similar question previously. I stress to the Leader of the Opposition that all Parliamentary Secretaries, as the provisions of the Ministerial Code of Conduct apply to them—most provisions apply to them but not all of them—and all Ministers have very strict guidelines around declarations. Some declarations are routine but other declarations might come up during the course of their duties. These declarations are made, of course, according to the rules and there are independent assessment processes to make sure that all of that occurs. That is issue number one. The second issue is that, notwithstanding the fact that the member for Drummoyne has said that he has not been involved in any wrongdoing, the Independent Commission Against Corruption is looking into these matters. With all due respect to the Labor Party, let us allow the ICAC to do its work.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This question specifically refers to the Premier's legal requirement in regard to section 12 (2) of the Ministerial Code of Conduct. It is very specific.

The SPEAKER: I do not need to hear further. Can I have a copy of the question? The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I said before I was rudely interrupted—

Mr Michael Johnsen: Just don't take the lift back to the office.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I will not take the lift back to the office. As I was saying, there are strict provisions in relation to these matters. There are also processes which ensure the integrity of these matters. These are matters which are delegated at the appropriate time.

[Opposition members interjected.]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Order!

The SPEAKER: Indeed, we should have greater order. We will swap positions; that is fine!

[Members interjected.]

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The Speaker's responsibility in this House is to maintain order. That comment was entirely unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. There are occasional moments of levity in this place, but members have gone beyond that. I take the point of the Leader of the House and ask that a more serious tone be set in the Chamber. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I was saying in my response, obviously there are very stringent processes which Parliamentary Secretaries have to comply with in relation to parts of the Ministerial Code of Conduct that apply to them. Similarly, Ministers have to ensure that their pecuniary interests, in addition to any conflicts that might arise in the course of their duties, are disclosed at the appropriate time. There are processes in place, including delegated authority to relevant officials. We also know in relation to these matters that, notwithstanding that the member for Drummoyne has said that he has complied with all these requirements, the ICAC is investigating these matters. I have full confidence that the ICAC will canvass all of these issues in its preliminary investigations. I also ask the Leader of the Opposition: Why is it that she is allowed to ask me this question but I am not allowed to ask her about her own failure to disclose at the appropriate time? Why am I not allowed to repeat something on the public record, where the campaign of one of her frontbenchers received a donation from Mr Wong?

The SPEAKER: The member for Auburn will remain quiet.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Why am I not allowed to ask whether she has made any inquiries about that donation?

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Londonderry and the member for Auburn to remain quiet for the remainder of question time.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: I have heard enough. The Premier can continue. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am certainly making the point that the public has the right to hear questions asked in this place.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Chris Minns: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: I have just ruled on Standing Order 129. The member will resume his seat.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: Mr Speaker knows that I do not often raise points of order unless I have a fairly good reason. My point of order relates to Standing Order 74. The whole idea of question time is that the Opposition gets to ask questions. The Premier is now asking questions when the Opposition cannot reply. That is being quarrelsome; it is forcing people to respond.

The SPEAKER: I was happy to hear from the member for Wyong because he does not take points of order frivolously, but on this occasion I do not uphold the point of order. I call the member for Kogarah to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was simply making the point that if I am asked about matters that are in the public interest, the public expects me to respond to those matters. But if there is a matter that is raised on the public record that applies to the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition should also be subject to those issues. That is the point I am making. You cannot have one law for one side of the House and another for the other side of the House.

PLASTIC BAG RECYCLING

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:22): My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how the reuse and recycling of plastic bags can help protect the environment?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (15:23): I thought I would never get the chance. We know that there are no such things as single-use plastic bags in the Labor Party. The fishes are meant to jump onto the hook in this place.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order relates to the use of props.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will continue his answer without the use of props.

Mr MATT KEAN: Do not worry, member for Cessnock; I got it out of the way early. What a great question from a great member. She is probably the hardest working member in the Parliament. She does outstanding work and no-one is more committed to the environment than the member for North Shore. I thank her for that commitment. She is like all of us on this side of the House, which is why we are going to take responsible and decisive action to tackle the issue of climate change and why we are also going to expand the footprint of our National Parks network. I know the green member for Baulkham Hills is very excited about this, and I cannot wait to make a big announcement with the member for Baulkham Hills. We are not only going to do that. We are also about protecting our threatened and endangered species. Just look at our Saving our Species program in New South Wales, a \$100 million program to protect the bilby and the quoll.

Mr John Barilaro: And our brumbies.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Monaro wants some things protected, but they are not in my Saving our Species program. They do not need any protection. But these are not the only things we are going to do to protect the environment. That is why we are going to tackle the issue of plastics in New South Wales. Plastics are having a detrimental impact on our environment and a devastating impact on our marine life. I know the member for Hawkesbury is very concerned. As a diver and a marine park lover, she is very concerned about plastics in our natural environment. In fact, 30 per cent of turtles and 90 per cent of our seabirds have ingested plastics. It is shameful and terrible. Plastic is so pervasive in our community—not just in the Labor Party—that on average every New South Wales citizen ingests about a credit card's worth of plastic every week.

Luckily for them, the New South Wales Government is taking decisive action to tackle the issue of plastics. We have already rolled out the Return and Earn scheme. We have collected two billion containers since that scheme was rolled out, and not just from the member for Baulkham Hills's backyard. The scouts are raiding his bins all the time, I am told. They are making a motza. It is the largest litter reduction program in New South Wales's history. It is a great thing because not only do we protect our environment, but we also enable community groups to earn much-needed income to support their great causes. We have also signed up to ban the export of plastics, restricting the export of our waste overseas. That is a great thing which will not only protect our global environment, but also catalyse the development of new recycling industries right here in New South Wales. This is all about creating jobs and growing our economy.

Mr John Barilaro: Hear, hear!

Mr MATT KEAN: I note the interjection of the member for Monaro, who is keen to see these facilities built in the regions. There is a great opportunity in Parkes to do something similar, and we are working on it at the moment. These are some of the great things that we are already doing. I also take this opportunity to update the House on how we are developing a comprehensive plastics policy in New South Wales. I know the members for Fairfield and Lakemba are very interested in these issues. The policy will tackle the issue of straws, cutlery, takeaway containers and a whole range of things that are causing plastic pollution in New South Wales.

Ms Kate Washington: Why won't you ban the bags?

Mr MATT KEAN: I note the interjection from the member for Port Stephens, and doesn't she wish we had banned the bag a bit earlier. We are going to come up with a response to deal with these issues. It is very important that we tackle plastics. That gets me to the point of the plastic bag. One of the biggest causes of plastic pollution in New South Wales—indeed, in Australia—is the plastic bag. Australians use about four billion plastic bags every year. That is about 10 million plastic bags every single day. *[Extension of time]*

I thank the member for North Shore for giving me the additional two minutes to get to what I actually want to talk about. Some 50 million plastic bags end up in our oceans and waterways every year, so we have to ban the bag. But we also need to encourage people to reuse and recycle the bag. I am delighted to see that the Labor Party has fully embraced this strategy. We thought its motivation was environmental, but it turns out it was logistical—how best to carry dirty cash into Sussex Street? Is it any wonder brown paper bags are so passé in the Labor Party? There is a risk that they will break.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: There are so many reasons why we need to ban the bag.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. That carry-on is clearly irrelevant.

Mr MATT KEAN: I know that the people in the gallery care deeply about ensuring that we are reducing plastic waste. That includes banning the bag. That also—

The SPEAKER: I will let the Minister continue, given that he has been relevant for the overwhelming majority of his answer.

Mr MATT KEAN: Sorry, were you making a ruling?

The SPEAKER: I was ruling on a point of order.

Mr MATT KEAN: I feel there is a great shortage of them in today's question time.

The SPEAKER: Would you like another one?

Mr MATT KEAN: It is not only about banning the bag, we also have to encourage reuse and recycling. I tell The Greens on the crossbench that our motives are pure on this. We want to make sure we are protecting the environment, not looking after the logistics of getting dirty cash into Sussex Street. We are committed to the environment, we are going to tackle climate change and we are going to expand the footprint of our national parks.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: We will also make sure we reduce plastic pollution in New South Wales, and I am the man to do it.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has completed his answer.

BYRON BAY HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (15:30): My question is directed to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. Given that homelessness figures in Byron Bay are the highest in the State outside of the Sydney CBD and the percentage of Byron Bay's population that is sleeping rough is around six to seven times the national average, will the Minister include Byron Bay in the Government's proposed Assertive Outreach homelessness services?

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (15:31): I thank the member for Ballina for her question and for her genuine interest in homelessness. I thank all members of the House for their genuine interest in homelessness. I have met with many members from all sides of Parliament in relation to what is an important issue across our State. I also thank the member for Ballina for her comments in relation to the Children's Guardian Bill this morning. I appreciate her support and that of all other members.

As members would know, our Premier and the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government have as one of their key priorities halving street sleeping. We are committed to reducing homelessness where we find it. Our Premier has set a very ambitious target, but she set it because of how passionate she, the Government and all members of the House are about addressing this important social issue. I commend the work of Graeme West from the Institute of Global Homelessness, who is working with cities right around the world to halve street sleeping. His work is exceptional and I know members appreciate what he is seeking to do.

This target has previously been set for cities, but unlike other places we in New South Wales have set the target for the entire State. I am proud of the work that is being done to that end. The member for Ballina referenced Assertive Outreach. I commend the work of our Assertive Outreach teams to members who are not familiar with it. I was recently out with the member for Sydney as well as Daniel and Holly, on the streets of Sydney, looking at the work they were doing to find people stable, safe places to live. I also commend the member for Parramatta. I went out with Rocko, Heather and the member for Parramatta in his part of the world to see the work of Assertive Outreach.

For those members who are not familiar with Assertive Outreach, it involves finding people who are homeless and ensuring that we provide the wraparound services so that we can keep people in tenancies. It might interest members to know that since this program started we have housed around 500 people and, of those, around 92 per cent have remained in those tenancies. This program recognises that homelessness is a symptom of other issues such as mental health, domestic and family violence, financial hardship and drug and alcohol abuse. By using a program that wraps services around people we not only find them a roof, but we also find them a pathway back to stable housing. As the member referenced in her question, I commend the Government on extending Assertive Outreach to other parts of the State. I particularly commend my friend the member for Tweed, who has been a strong advocate for this particular service in his part of the State, largely because of the very difficult issues confronted in Tweed, particularly cross-border issues and the nature of the population.

We are also expanding this service to areas such as Newcastle. I commend the member for Newcastle for his advocacy on these issues, because I know how important he believes they are. I have directed the department to ensure that every single FACS district looks at how it uses existing resources and how we can enhance them. It is with this in mind that the Government is seeking to do the first street count right around New South Wales so that we can better identify the problem and address it appropriately.

I know the member for Ballina is particularly close to and supports homelessness services in her electorate, not least of which are The Family Centre—as the member is aware, I met with David Boutkan when I was in her electorate—Social Futures, the Mullumbimby & District Neighbourhood Centre and the Byron Community Centre, all of which are doing great work. In addition, Byron council has also had a stream count for many years in order to assist homelessness supports to ensure that we target them appropriately. What we are prepared to do is look at what is working. As Assertive Outreach is a new program we want to see how that is working but also to adapt and change programs so that we can address homelessness.

I know that across this State we have many homelessness supports and services, such as things that help people sustain tenancies. We have Rent Choice, Rent Choice Youth and the Homeless Youth Assistance Program, which all recognise that it is not just about addressing homelessness but also about preventing homelessness from occurring. Members might be interested to know that 10 October is World Homeless Day. I encourage all members to continue the conversation about how we support people who are homeless. If you do find somebody who needs assistance, please call Link2home or provide them with the number, 1800 152 152, so that we can ensure that they get the support they need. This Government is providing a record \$1.1 billion for homelessness services. Last year we assisted around 72,000 people with homelessness support. But we recognise that there is much more to be done. I thank all members for their genuine bipartisan interest in this issue and for supporting the vulnerable. We

will continue to ensure we provide the best responses. I look forward to continuing to work with the member for Ballina.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:36): I address my question to the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Will he update the House on how the Government is keeping our community safe?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:36): I thank the member for Wollondilly for the question. There is no more important thing that a government does than keeping its community safe, in particular, those who are the victims or the survivors of family and domestic violence. That is a scourge that affects all parts of our society. Whether you live in Broken Hill or Bondi, whether you are Indigenous or Anglo-Celtic, whatever background you come from, whatever gender you are, you can be a victim or a survivor of domestic or family violence. But we also know that domestic and family violence is overwhelmingly gendered. In intimate partner violence the vast majority of victims are female. Of course, we also know that outside of intimate partner violence, in other areas of family violence many men can be victims as well.

But overwhelmingly the perpetrators of that violence are male. That is why it is important as part of an overall community safety program and an overall fight against domestic violence we have to have a holistic approach that first and foremost has an emphasis on primary prevention. That is why I am delighted that New South Wales has signed up to Our Watch, the national primary prevention program, to change attitudes to domestic and family violence. The fight against this scourge has to have many fronts; that includes refuges for those escaping family and domestic violence, behavioural interventions and legal change. That is why, as the Attorney General, I was pleased to see changes to the law that created a simplified strangulation offence in New South Wales.

We know that non-fatal strangulation is a red flag for fatal domestic violence. We know that one in four victims of domestic and family violence homicide have been the victims of non-fatal strangulation. That is why we amended the law of strangulation to a much simpler offence. Instead of people being charged with common assault, which did not give that red flag, they were charged with strangulation. There have been numerous prosecutions and convictions for that offence since the law was changed. It is why we also amended the law in relation to cyber bullying, to make it clear that where someone uses a cyber approach to stalking or intimidation that is caught. We know that the majority of victims or survivors of intimate partner violence have also been the subject of cyber bullying.

It is an approach on many fronts; it is an approach on law reform. With the Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund we are trialling numerous interventions to change the behaviour of perpetrators and make them responsible. Of course, women's refuges and those supports are incredibly important. We support organisations like White Ribbon. White Ribbon Day is coming up in a couple of months. I urge all members to get involved in their local communities. Domestic and family violence is one aspect of keeping the community safe. The Government takes a holistic approach to keeping the community safe. One of our key aims, one of our Premier's Priorities in this term of government, is to reduce reoffending by 5 per cent.

We know that reoffending is far too high. It requires a holistic approach. It requires the approach of my colleague the corrections Minister, with the work that we are doing in jails with rehabilitation programs; high-intensity units addressing the causes of crime; it involves corrections officers in the community; and it also involves our law reforms that emphasise the importance of behavioural interventions with offenders. We know that where there is a choice between short prison sentences, doing nothing and giving people a slap on the wrist like a good behaviour bond or some kind of behavioural intervention for what might be called low- to mid-range offenders, it is that third option that is most effective in driving down reoffending. It is not about being soft or hard on crime; it is about taking a hard-nosed approach to what works and reduces reoffending. We know that intensive corrections orders, for example, are 11 per cent to 31 per cent more likely to stop reoffending than a short prison sentence. [*Extension of time*]

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research did an evaluation, I think in about 2017, looking at a cohort of those who had been subject to intensive corrections orders—that is, non-custodial sentences out in the community with behavioural interventions on the one hand—and those with short prison sentences on the other hand, and the difference in reoffending is between 11 per cent and 31 per cent depending on the particular type of offences involved. We have made it easier for courts to make intensive corrections orders by removing the compulsory work requirement. Previously, sometimes judicial officers were reluctant to make an intensive corrections order because those subject to it had a cognitive impairment, a mental health issue or a workability issue that meant that they could not comply with the up-front requirement of 32 hours of community work.

That is no longer a compulsory element but community orders now have a mandatory supervision component when there are intensive corrections orders, plus a second component as well, which might be an anger management program, a substance abuse program or a work program. It is designed to attract and to intervene in the behaviour of the offender. We will closely monitor this program. These are orders that are alternatives to short prison sentences. They are also alternatives to good behaviour bonds, which we have abolished, where people are basically given a slap over the wrist and are then sent back out into the community. Their underlying problems, be it substance abuse or some kind of behavioural problem, have just not been addressed. There is no more important thing that a government can do than keep its community safe. We will take a hard-nosed approach to what works and what does not work. We will try some things and we will try other things to see what works and fails, but rest assured community safety remains our number one priority.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

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

Thirlmere Residential Development

Petition requesting that the Government ensure that appropriate design is applied to residential infill dwellings in the village of Thirlmere, received from **Mr Nathaniel Smith**.

Bills

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2019

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Andrew Constance, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (15:45): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Road Transport Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2019. The purpose of the bill is to amend road transport legislation to give effect to a number of reforms that will improve road safety. The bill proposes amendments to certain provisions of the driver licence disqualification reforms introduced by the Government in 2017 and seeks to clarify the circumstances in which police are able to request blood and urine samples from drivers involved in fatal off-road accidents to enhance evidence-gathering capabilities. The bill also includes amendments that will put beyond doubt the circumstances in which a motor vehicle assessor must notify a damaged vehicle to the respective heavy or light written-off vehicles registers.

I turn to the details of the bill. The first amendment I speak to relates to the provisions of the driver licence disqualification reforms that provide for a disqualified person to apply to have their disqualification removed in certain circumstances. In October 2017 the Government introduced a number of reforms to provide a path back to lawful driving for a person who had demonstrated they had behaved responsibly by complying with their disqualification, and remaining offence free for a minimum period of two or four years depending on their driving history. The rationale for the need to remain offence free for either a two- or four-year period is based on the seriousness of the offence. For example, a disqualified driver who has been convicted of a more serious offence, such as drink- or drug-driving, would be required to serve a four-year offence-free period. Drivers disqualified for a less serious offence, such as driving whilst suspended for non-payment of fines, would serve a two-year offence-free period before becoming eligible to apply for the removal of that disqualification and the reissue of a driver licence.

In 2018 the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research confirmed the effectiveness of these reforms in reducing the average duration of licence disqualification by more than 50 per cent. A reduction of almost 25 per cent in the average prison sentences imposed for unauthorised driving offences has also been achieved. However, an issue has recently been identified regarding the calculation of the offence-free period. The current legislation does not nominate the date that should be used in this calculation to subsequently determine when a person becomes eligible to apply for the removal of the disqualification by the Local Court. The question has been raised as to whether or not the offence-free period should be measured from the date of conviction for the most recent relevant offence or calculated from the date the offence was committed for which the person was later convicted and disqualified.

Considerable discussion of this issue has occurred between the legal community, including Local Court magistrates. A working group comprising representatives from the Transport and Stronger Communities clusters was established to implement and monitor these reforms. This working group considered possible remedies to address this anomaly and concluded that in the interests of fairness and equity the offence-free period should be calculated from the date of offence in all cases. Adopting this approach will provide clarity for the applicant, the judiciary and other members of the legal profession. This approach will also alleviate the risk for administrative errors to occur when assessing applications for eligibility. Amending the relevant sections of the Act to specify that the offence-free period is to be calculated from the date of offence is both prudent and necessary. This approach will provide the ability for the Local Court and the legal profession to confidently determine when an applicant is eligible to apply to have the driver licence disqualification removed.

One of the cornerstones of the driver licence disqualification reforms is to prohibit a person convicted of the most serious of driving offences from making an application to the court to remove their disqualification. These serious driving offences—or "never eligible" offences, as they are sometimes referred to—include murder and manslaughter by the use of a motor vehicle, driving offences where death or grievous bodily harm has been caused, police pursuits, hit-and-runs, and menacing driving. They are very serious offences indeed. Section 221D of the Act currently lists all of the offences for which a person is not eligible to apply to have a disqualification removed. Despite this there has been a number of cases where the Local Court has removed a disqualification period for an individual convicted of such an offence.

Currently the Act does not provide any avenue for such an order to be returned to the Local Court for correction. A "never eligible" offence means just that: These people are never eligible to ever have their driver licence reissued until they have served out their disqualification period in full. Consequently, to ensure that the most dangerous drivers are not returned to our roads early—which is the fundamental objective of these reforms—the authority, which is currently Roads and Maritime Services, must seek a judicial review in the Supreme Court for such matters. While the Supreme Court has ruled favourably in overturning the Local Court decisions, this is both a costly and time-consuming exercise, and not sustainable in the longer term. Administrative measures have also been introduced to assist in remedying the issue, including publication of additional material about the existence of "never eligible" offences contained in the Act.

Despite these efforts, it is clear that a legislative amendment is required to rectify any future errors by the Local Court, should they arise. The bill will provide an avenue for the authority to return to the Local Court any future incorrect order to remove a driver disqualification for a person who is not eligible, for the matter to be reopened for correction. An additional anomaly in the legislation has also been identified, in that there is currently no provision in the Act to count convictions for equivalent serious traffic offences that occurred under former road transport law as "never eligible" offences under the current Act. As I have already stated, these "never eligible" offences include the most serious driving offences, including those where death or grievous bodily harm has been caused. The bill will also remedy this oversight.

I turn to the next amendment to road transport law proposed by this bill. In 2015 an amendment to the Act extended the circumstances in which police can arrest a driver for blood and urine tests in the event of a fatal motor vehicle accident that occurred off-road. This amendment was intended to ensure that police have clear powers to arrest a driver for the purposes of conducting a blood and urine test regardless of where a crash occurred if it resulted in or was likely to result in a fatality. The 2015 amendment resulted from recommendations of the Deputy State Coroner following an incident where two young people were tragically killed by a motor vehicle being driven on private property. At that time police were limited in the action they could take—the driver could not be charged with an offence under the Act because the accident did not occur on a road or road-related area as defined under the Act.

Clause 12 of schedule 3 to the Act deals with police powers to arrest persons involved in fatal accidents for blood and urine tests. The 2015 amendment introduced a specific definition of "accident" into clause 12 to cover both on-road and off-road accidents. However, the clause also makes use of the term "fatal accident", which is defined in the Act elsewhere for other purposes and includes only those that occur on a road or road-related area. Police have raised concerns that the inclusion of both these terms within the clause may cause confusion which, in turn, may compromise the ability of police to require a driver in an off-road fatal accident to provide blood and urine samples. This would clearly undermine the intent of the 2015 reforms. The amendment proposed by the bill before the House is seeking to clarify the provisions of the Act so that police can arrest a driver for blood and urine tests under the clause, irrespective of whether the accident occurred on- or off-road. This change will ensure that the intent of the 2015 amendment is satisfied. I should also point out that the amendment that the bill seeks will not extend police powers or any obligation on drivers beyond what was intended by the 2015 amendments.

The next amendment that the bill proposes relates to the management of written-off vehicles in New South Wales. All Australian States and Territories have registers for written-off light vehicles to ensure that crashed vehicles that are structurally unsafe are not re-registered and driven on public roads. In 2010 New South Wales introduced legislation to prohibit the re-registration of any written-off light vehicle. In New South Wales any damaged light vehicle that is declared to be a total loss must be classified as a statutory write-off. A damaged vehicle is classified as a total loss when the cost of its repairs, plus its value as a damaged vehicle, are higher than its undamaged market value. A statutory written-off vehicle cannot be re-registered in New South Wales or, by national agreement, in any other jurisdiction, and it can be used only for spare parts or scrap metal. The Government has been active for some years in advocating the need to establish a written-off heavy vehicles register and late last year took a leadership role by introducing such a register, which applies to vehicles over 4.5 tonnes.

At the time of developing the policy and supporting legislation for the introduction of the written-off heavy vehicles register, it was considered appropriate in the interests of road safety to align the approaches used for managing written-off light and heavy vehicles. The legislation included the need for written-off heavy vehicles to be notified to the register, for damage assessment to be undertaken for the purposes of the classification of a statutory written-off heavy vehicle and for the maintenance of records to be kept relating to motor vehicle assessments. The written-off heavy vehicles register provides for the notification of "statutory written-off heavy vehicles", which cannot be re-registered, as well as "repairable written-off heavy vehicles", which can be re-registered, as long as a certificate of compliance has been issued confirming the repairs have been undertaken by a licensed repairer. Allowing a written-off heavy vehicle to be repaired acknowledges the high cost of these vehicles and the fact that there are interchangeable components that could comprise a heavy vehicle.

New South Wales and the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council also led the subsequent development of national damage assessment criteria for the classification of heavy vehicle statutory write-offs on behalf of Austroads in consultation with industry, and State and Territory road agencies. Austroads has since published that information as a technical guide for industry. An equivalent technical guide for the classification of light vehicles was also published by Austroads in 2011. During industry consultation and training undertaken before the implementation of the written-off heavy vehicles register, concerns were raised by industry about the need for a damaged heavy vehicles to be notified to the register when the vehicle had sustained certain structural damage as identified under the Austroads national damage assessment criteria. This damage might include damage to the chassis rail or impact damage to the cabin.

Industry indicated that because of the modular construction of a heavy vehicle, a damaged chassis rail can be replaced and so can a damaged cabin, which means that the vehicle could be safely repaired and returned to its pre-accident condition, mitigating the need for it to be written off. Under these circumstances the vehicle would not be declared a total loss and should not be classified as a statutory write-off. As the current provisions of the Act, had they been applied, prohibit vehicles from being repaired when it is economical and safe to do so, heavy vehicle operators and repairers would likely experience serious financial impacts. Therefore, an order was made by the then Minister for Roads exempting notifiable heavy vehicles from certain provisions of the legislation for a period of up to 12 months to enable further time to assess the implications of these reforms on industry.

Industry also advised during these consultations that the current practice of motor vehicle assessors across Australia is only to notify a damaged light vehicle to the written-off light vehicles register once it is declared to be a total loss. This approach accords with the intent of the national guidelines published by Austroads. As a result of industry concerns Transport for NSW undertook a review of the existing legislation for managing written-off light vehicles and found some inconsistencies regarding the circumstances in which a damaged light vehicle should be written off. In particular, the definition of a written-off light vehicle in the legislation also includes a vehicle that has been assessed as being not a total loss, but has sustained certain damage as prescribed under the Austroads national damage assessment criteria and the insurer has decided not to repair the vehicle.

This definition of a written-off vehicle is contrary to the definition of a written-off vehicle in use in all other jurisdictions. All other jurisdictions require that a vehicle must be declared a total loss by the motor vehicle assessor before it is written off and notified to the written-off light vehicle register. This position accords with current national industry practice. As I mentioned earlier, in New South Wales any damaged light vehicle that has been declared to be a total loss by a motor vehicle assessor must be written off and classified as a statutory write-off. A statutory written-off vehicle cannot be re-registered in New South Wales or, by national agreement, in any other jurisdiction and can only be used for spare parts or scrap metal. Therefore, it is critical that the New South Wales approach is aligned with the national practice to mitigate the risk of any financial impact to small business such as motor vehicle repairers.

As the industry needs certainty on these matters, the bill will provide the necessary amendments to put beyond doubt that the process for classifying whether or not a vehicle is a statutory write-off must occur only after

the vehicle is declared to be a total loss by a motor vehicle assessor, that is, when the cost of the vehicle repairs plus its value as a damaged vehicle are higher than its undamaged market value. This change will make it clear that the New South Wales approach is the same as all other States and Territories and is aligned with the intent of the Austroads national guidelines for classifying statutory written-off vehicles. Let me be clear, though: This change is purely technical in nature and will in no way water down the existing requirement in New South Wales that damaged light vehicles declared a total loss must be written off and classified as a statutory write-off. That means these vehicles will never be re-registered here or in any other jurisdiction.

The bill will also ensure that the current exemptions for written-off heavy vehicles provided for under the ministerial order are made permanent, thereby removing the potential for any unintended consequences of the legislation to impact the motor repair industry and heavy vehicle operators. As I said at the outset, the bill makes a number of important amendments to road transport law. These amendments will improve road safety and ensure that there is no doubt regarding the circumstances in which police can collect evidence to properly investigate motor vehicle crashes, including those that occur off road. Clarification of the circumstances for notifying written-off vehicles to the respective written-off vehicle registers will restore confidence in the industry and demonstrate that the Government has listened and taken action to address their concerns. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:00): On behalf of all members, I say to the member for Heathcote that he is doing an outstanding job in the role of Temporary Speaker and Chair of a number of committees.

Mr Ryan Park: Are you trying to get an extension of time?

Mr MARK COURE: Maybe, maybe not. As I was saying before the lunchbreak, I acknowledge and congratulate the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. I have probably mentioned him three times now in *Hansard* in my contribution to the second reading debate.

Mr Gareth Ward: Making up for yesterday.

Mr MARK COURE: Making up for yesterday. You will never get this back again. I congratulate all those involved. As I was saying beforehand, I am advised that the Children's Guardian has met with members of the Joint Committee on Children and Young People, the CEO of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies [ACWA], Family and Community Services, NSW Health, the NSW Ombudsman, the NSW Department of Education, the Office of Local Government, the NSW Police Force and the Advocate for Children and Young People to consult on this draft bill.

Last year the New South Wales Government released its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. As part of that response the Government announced the transfer of the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Community Visitors scheme in relation to children in care from the Ombudsman to the Children's Guardian. Since that date gaps have been identified in the New South Wales reportable conduct scheme. Some of those gaps are, in fact, before courts at the moment. These amendments to the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 will not only facilitate the transfer of the scheme and implementation of the royal commission recommendations, but will also show New South Wales responding to existing loopholes identified through cases before the courts. They will also futureproof the scheme to cover the outside work conduct of people if they engage in child-related work.

The proposed amendments strike the balance between keeping children safe and not imposing a disproportionate regulatory burden. The extent of the scheme will be expanding and this will target those persons in an entity who have or need a Working With Children Check. These proposals seek to ensure the New South Wales framework continues to evolve to address any gaps in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across New South Wales. It is fair to say that in recent years, particularly with the bill and its amendments, we are leading the country in terms of the protection of children. In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse the Government is committed to a number of important reforms to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse, and provide treatment and support for survivors of child sexual abuse. I am pleased to support the Children's Guardian Bill 2019.

This bill continues progress on key commitments made by the New South Wales Government to implement its response to the royal commission's recommendations. It makes significant strides in ensuring that

the past failures of institutions that were supposed to care for children do not happen again, today or into the future. This Government said in its response to the royal commission that it would consider including all registered psychologists and people in religious ministry in the mandatory reporting scheme. True to its word, the New South Wales Government has acted on this. This bill, when passed, will make all registered psychologists and persons in religious ministry or persons providing religion-based activities to children mandatory reporters. These groups will be required to make a report if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm.

Along with the amendments to expand the mandatory reporting scheme, this bill contains important protections for reporters, adding to the existing protections found in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. As a former Chair of the Committee on Children and Young People and more importantly as a father of two, James and Samuel—the elder being five years and the younger being five weeks—this is something I am very supportive of. The royal commission found that in the absence of legal obligations, many institutions and their staff do not report abuse to the relevant authorities. This has to stop. It is to the detriment of the children in their care. New South Wales has a strong child protection mandatory reporting scheme contained in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This Government is committed to making the mandatory reporting scheme even stronger.

The royal commission recommended expanding the mandatory reporting scheme to achieve national consistency in reporting groups. For New South Wales this means expanding the mandatory reporting scheme to include psychologists and people in religious ministry. Our mandatory reporting scheme already captures the other groups of individuals identified by the royal commission such as out-of-home care workers—previous speakers have mentioned them—early childhood workers and school counsellors. This bill also contains important amendments that strengthen the mandatory reporting scheme by ensuring that members of the expanded groups are required by law to report suspected abuse. These reforms are crucial to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse, and ensuring the safety of children within our institutions and, of course, within our community. I thank all those involved and support the bill.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:07): I speak on the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 and repeat what my colleagues have said: The Opposition does not oppose the bill. Indeed, anything that looks after our young people is to be commended. The Minister and all members would agree that looking after young people, especially those vulnerable and at risk, is above politics, no matter what political view one holds or subscribes to. This is a sensible bill and Minister Gareth Ward should be acknowledged for introducing it. Members have spoken about the different elements of the bill so I will not go through all of them. However, the Children's Guardian Bill will create a new Act that consolidates the Children's Guardian's powers, functions and responsibilities into one Act. It also moves the Children's Guardian's adoption functions into the Adoption Act 2000. It transfers the responsibility of the Ombudsman under Community Services while oversight of the scheme will be transferred to the Children's Guardian.

The bill transfers the functions for the reportable conduct scheme from the Ombudsman's Office. I will stop there and talk about a number of things that relate specifically to that. I note that it has been foreshadowed that some amendments may be moved about reporting to the Parliament via the joint standing committees. I acknowledge the work of the shadow Minister, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, on this bill, which is presented as a response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, especially in relation to the expansion of mandatory reporting through a range of bodies, including religious institutions. The bill also takes into account recommendations of the 2018 NSW Ombudsman report. My understanding is that a consultation process had taken place prior to the bill being presented to us.

We all know the horrific accounts and the damage done to the lives of children when gaps are left unattended. The safety and wellbeing of children is incredibly important. We need mechanisms to ensure that young people are protected in the first instance and supported with the full weight of the law in the awful event that they may become a victim of abuse. My background is in education and as such not only was I a mandatory reporter, I was also responsible for ensuring that teachers working at my school were well aware of their obligations. I understand children and I understand the importance of setting up an opportunity for them to live the most successful and fulfilling lives possible. These are aspirations that all like-minded people hold.

The challenge for us is how we now move from aspiration to reality. I acknowledge the Children's Guardian, Ms Janet Schorer, who is here with some of her team, for their great work. They do a lot of the grunt work of not only accrediting the Working With Children Check, for which they are known, but also many things that happen behind the scenes. They have oversight of this important regulation in New South Wales in protecting children. I wish Ms Schorer all the best in the job ahead. I thank her and her team for their work. However, the bill will significantly increase their responsibility and workload, especially in relation to reportable conduct and out-of-home care responsibility. I anticipate that with this additional responsibility comes an increase in resources

and funding, noting an increase in the most recent budget so they can undertake this work in the best way possible. I also hope that additional funding and resources do not come at the expense of other key areas within the Families and Communities cluster.

I welcome the decision to create independence of the Children's Guardian. As the title suggests, the role of the Children's Guardian is to guard children and as such the Children's Guardian will be led by what is best and what needs to take place rather than what the Minister of the day may see as important without the full breadth of understanding of the Children's Guardian. Furthermore, appointment of the Children's Guardian through the Governor and dismissal requiring parliamentary approval of both Houses is a good, strong, protective measure that I believe ensures the independence of the Children's Guardian. This level of requirement, in my opinion, adds to the importance of the role and the value that is placed on it across the entire Parliament.

The fact that the mandatory reporting window is being narrowed is a good thing. The previous benchmark of 30 days was far too long. The proposed two-step process, a seven-day notification followed by a 30-day report is a good, solid framework in which to work. I think the extension into reportable conduct to be mandated for religious institutions is important. I understand the questions and concerns that some representatives had upon initially hearing this had been addressed. It is important that the mandatory reporting process be seen for what it is by these institutions: It is about the protection of children rather than a guideline that would negatively impact or target them.

In relation to the work of the Children's Guardian in validating Working With Children Checks, I am satisfied, having spoken to the Children's Guardian, that the Children's Guardian takes into account a range of factors in relation to Working With Children Checks that include practical measures such as casual visitors to schools or other places where children will be, as well as a contextualised view of a person's life history. I agree with the Children's Guardian's opinion that the Working With Children Check is just one measure. It certainly does not replace good processes and practices in these environments when it comes to visitors. In my role as shadow Minister for Youth and Juvenile Justice, I see this as a big step forward. However, there is still a gap on who has responsibility for young people in detention.

Whilst there is a role for the Inspector of Custodial Services, it seems to me that youth in custody, especially in relation to reportable conduct, potentially could fall under the purview of the Children's Guardian. I suggest that the Minister consider the way in which young people in detention are thought of and which organisation might have responsibility and oversight. At the moment there is the potential for an inadvertent silo effect and thinking in relation to this group of young people. In this space, an autonomous Children's Guardian may ensure, through an oversight capacity, that someone is looking out for young people at risk, especially those who may, for want of a better term, fall through the gaps. Without an oversight body, these young people may be bounced around from one agency to another. Young people at risk include homeless youth, those in residential care, non-school attenders and those who stay in motels or serviced apartments for an extended period.

I have every confidence that all stakeholders in this legislation want the very best for young people. I hope that with the new guidelines and increased independence measures the Children's Guardian will have every opportunity to be a coordinating and an oversight body that takes a holistic view of the guardianship of children. The increased transparency that this bill provides is a key element to celebrate. The Children's Guardian can get on with the task at hand, link everything together and guard the children. I thank everyone who works with children in whatever capacity and especially those who work with children who are vulnerable, complex, displaced or hurt by the actions of others. They are trying to bind a broken society. In my opinion, they are the invisible heroes. They perform incredible work and often are paid very little. They never waver in their sincerity to create a better world for these young people, who need a champion. We have come a long way.

While the bill does not cover every gap—and we must acknowledge that there always will be gaps—as a Parliament we are taking things forward. That is an important step. In the spirit of doing the right thing for those who need it most, I am very happy to support the bill. I anticipate that the guidelines in this bill and the responsibility allocated to the Children's Guardian will mean that children in the most vulnerable circumstances will have the best future possible.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:16): My contribution to debate on the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 will be brief. I acknowledge the members who preceded me in this debate: the member for Lakemba, who did a wonderful job as usual, and the members for the electorates of Camden, Holsworthy, Miranda, Ku-ring-gai, North Shore and Oatley. I commend the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services on the introduction of this lengthy 111-page bill. The bill deals with a serious subject and this legislation has to be right. I commend the Minister and his team for all their diligence and hard work because this bill will go a long way towards keeping young people of New South Wales safe. That is a core job of this Government. I sincerely congratulate the Minister and his hardworking team, who are present in the Chamber, on their contribution to the preparation of this bill.

The bill continues the implementation by the Government of its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The bill transfers the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Community Visitor scheme, provides a targeted expansion to persons who deliver child-related services, ensures consistency of coverage and makes discrete further changes to recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian. Across New South Wales, including on the Central Coast, there are great organisations with members who dedicate their lives to protecting young people and making their lives better. I, like many members of this House, have the privilege of spending time with those organisations. There are almost too many to name on the Central Coast that commit to delivering great outcomes for young people across our region but I will note the Regional Youth Support Services [RYSS], which is a wonderful organisation. The CEO, Kim McLoughry, together with her staff, does an excellent job to support at-risk youth across the region. I have the great opportunity to meet with Kim regularly and I have visited the RYSS support services at its Gosford headquarters.

The RYSS has been the beneficiary of a funding grant from the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Hon. Mark Speakman, to obtain a mobile youth centre, a bus. It is a great initiative because it means that young people at risk, many of whom do not have a driver licence—something that we all take for granted—can catch the RYSS bus, which moves around the high-risk areas of the Central Coast. The bus makes it possible for members of the organisation to engage with young people, who obviously benefit from the outstanding outreach and connection services that RYSS provides. Hats off to RYSS on its incredible dedication and service to the young people of our community. The bus is very well known around the Central Coast. I believe it formerly belonged to the former member for East Hills. He offered RYSS a great deal.

The bus, which is well decked out and marked up, is a very visible sign of active participation and assistance for young people. I have seen the bus many times moving around the Central Coast, most recently a couple of weeks ago in Gosford. Organisations like RYSS establish great initiatives to help our young people. The bill before the House will provide young people with an extra layer of protection. I take this opportunity to commend the outstanding work of the staff of the Family and Community Services [FACS] on the Central Coast. They have a tough gig. I have been privileged to spend time with them and the former Minister and I look forward in the future to spending time with them and the current Minister, who is a regular visitor to the Central Coast.

Mr Gareth Ward: Love it. Can't get enough.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I look forward to the Minister visiting RYSS, seeing the bus and meeting the people who are at the coalface—those who provide the services. I am sure that Kim would be more than happy to extol the virtues of the work that RYSS is engaged in across the Central Coast, which is conducted hand in glove with the outstanding Central Coast staff of FACS. This bill of 111 pages will provide a targeted expansion to those who deliver child-related services, such as RYSS, and will ensure consistency of coverage to make the discrete further changes to which I referred earlier. The amendments in the bill will not only facilitate the transfer of the scheme and implementation of the royal commission's recommendations but also show that New South Wales is responding to existing loopholes, such as those identified through cases like the very public case of the Mosman swimming instructor.

The bill will futureproof the scheme to cover the outside work conduct of people who are engaged in child-related work. It is important to have those systems in place in order to provide the ultimate protection for our young people. The proposed amendments strike a balance between keeping children safe, which is of paramount importance, and not imposing a disproportionate regulatory burden. To the extent that the scheme will be expanded, it will be targeted at those persons in an entity who have or need a Working With Children Check. These proposals seek to ensure that the New South Wales framework continues to evolve to address any gaps in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across New South, which of course includes the Central Coast.

The bill targets the reportable conduct scheme to those in child-related work. This is done by extending the scheme to cover the inside and outside work conduct of employees of public authorities, such as local councils, if they engage in child-related work. Many councils in New South Wales do that type of work, including the Central Coast Council, and this is a very good initiative. Further, it will cover the inside and outside work conduct of contractors and subcontractors of any entity if they engage in child-related work. This will include swimming instructor contractors but will exclude tree lopper contractors, who obviously have no contact with children. That is a very logical part of this legislation.

The bill covers the heads of religious bodies and persons or entities who engage in child-related work at the religious body itself. The bill clarifies the definitions in the legislation, as was suggested by the royal commission. In addition, the bill tightens the notification requirements to require the head of an entity to inform the Children's Guardian within seven days, rather than 30 days, of becoming aware of an allegation. It is important that the time frame has been reduced to one week from one month. Time factors can be critical in cases where

there is an alleged wrongdoing. When we are dealing with young people we have to move swiftly. This legislation allows for that to occur.

The bill largely replicates the Official Community Visitor functions and powers that are in place with the Ageing and Disability Commissioner. I congratulate Minister Ward on the appointment of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner. It was an excellent move. The replication ensures that the transfer of functions to two separate agencies does not result in gaps or inconsistencies. The Children's Guardian Bill recognises the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian and its independent statutory functions. As I said earlier, my contribution to the debate on this legislation would be brief. I commend the Minister and acknowledge his staff, including Sharminie Niles, Anna Reid, Allison Waring, Catherine Gray, Stacey Romeo and Rebecca Harvey. They have worked extremely diligently and hard on these 111 pages of legislation.

The staff who worked on this bill can go home tonight knowing that they have done everything possible to protect the young and vulnerable people in our community. They are working for an outstanding Minister in this portfolio. They should be very proud of what they have done. I know it has been a hard slog but the detail has to be right. I have no doubt that the work that has gone into this bill—and the contributions from both sides of the House reinforce this—has ensured that the bill has got it right. All those involved can be very proud. Once again I commend the Minister and his staff and I commend this outstanding bill to the House.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (16:26): I commend the Minister and his staff for introducing the comprehensive Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I am sure they have been commended many times today for the hard work they have done in this space. I commend also the Opposition for working with the Government and the Minister's office on this bill. I could go over the pages and pages of legislation, 110 in fact, but they have been comprehensively spoken about today. Instead I will speak about the impact this bill will have in our communities on children who have been abused. Hopefully this will cease abuse into the future.

The Engadine District Youth Service [EDYS] is an organisation in my local area that deals with children who are under threat. Some of those children have been abused. The organisation takes the kids in and makes sure that they are looked after with regard to their mental health. The organisation supports the children's families as well and helps them with counselling. It wants to make sure that those young people are okay after what has happened to them. Hopefully it will never happen to them again. Another organisation in my electorate that I have mentioned on many occasions is the Dunlea Centre. This organisation was previously known as Boys' Town but it now looks after both boys and girls

Dunlea has a fantastic program that helps children who have not had the best of upbringings. Often there have been sexual assaults or domestic violence within their homes. Under its program, the centre takes the kids five days a week and not only works with the children but also works with the parents. It is a whole family wraparound counselling situation. The kids receive a proper education. Education is at the top of the list of what Dunlea does for these children. The most important thing is that it brings the parents in and counsels them on how to better manage their teenagers. Anyone who has teenage children realises that it is not easy. These children do not necessarily want to go to school and they spend a lot of time wagging. They have often been suspended or have disruptive behaviours. That is probably because they have been sexually abused in the past, there is domestic violence within the family or there is alcohol and drug abuse within the family.

The whole family gets counselled at Dunlea, including brothers and sisters. Everybody is involved in making sure that the charge who is going to Dunlea is looked after and supported. The staff support the families to maintain contact with them throughout the week and give them regular updates on how the student is going. In some cases it also takes the financial pressure off the family. The Dunlea Centre has become a bit of a favourite place of mine because there is so much good news coming out of there in terms of the children's response to the education program. Fantastic students are coming out of that school wanting to go to university and beyond or are going straight into a trade and working hard. You can see that the students are scarred and that they have had issues. Unfortunately, some of them have attempted suicide because of their circumstances. The Dunlea Centre brings them through all that, makes them feel like they are full, whole people again and supports them into the future.

The Children's Guardian Bill is part of what will make those young people's lives and future children's lives a lot easier and better. The people who commit these crimes in our community need to be called out. As the Minister has said on many occasions, sunlight is the best disinfectant. If anybody has knowledge of any sort of abuse of a child and/or young person they need to call them out and report it. Recent studies and recent Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data show that domestic violence is being reported a lot more. We have had a slight spike in domestic violence reports. That does not mean we have any more domestic violence; it is just that it is being reported more often now. That is good news for our communities. In my area of the Sutherland shire they say that there has been an increase in domestic violence reports. That is exactly right. People are more aware of it. Organisations such as White Ribbon Australia are calling out violence.

The majority of that violence is committed against women, children and young people. I have had an organisation contact me that has had up to 300 young people, including infants, in its care who have been sexually abused by a step-parent or parent. Familial sexual abuse is rampant in every community. It is not a very nice thing to talk about. There are issues with the Family Court. I will not be speaking about that today but it is something we need to look at. As we speak, the Federal Parliament is holding an inquiry into what happens in the Family Court. Once again I congratulate the Minister on bringing forward this very important bill. The Minister is thoroughly across his brief, as he demonstrated today during question time. The way he got up in the heat of question time and answered a question without any notes shows that he has a thorough understanding of his brief. He is doing a fantastic job within his portfolios.

Again, I come back to the staff who are wrapped around the Minister. The Minister cannot do it alone and the fantastic staff that now surround the Minister shows how important it is to have good people around good people. It is fantastic to see the support that the Minister has. I look forward to having a visitation from the Minister again in the not-too-distant future. It is fantastic to see him out in the field. The other day he visited my favourite school, Dunlea. The kids love having the Minister there because he gets down on their level and talks to them eye to eye, person to person. In just a few minutes they have a funny understanding of who Gareth Ward is. It is fantastic that he has that link with young people; they instantly take a liking to him. It is fantastic to see that somebody of Minister Ward's stature takes the time to spend some time with unfortunate children who have had a very rough upbringing. I congratulate the Minister on bringing the Children's Guardian Bill forward and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:35): It is an absolute pleasure to speak in debate on the very important bill that is before the House today, the Children's Guardian Bill 2019. I commence by mentioning what an outstanding job the Minister is doing in his portfolio. I know it has been mentioned a number of times by previous speakers but as the member for Seven Hills I compliment him on his stewardship of the portfolio. What an outstanding job he is doing right across his responsibilities, whether in Families, Communities or Disability Services. I commend his excellent performance.

Not long ago I was speaking to the Minister about the outstanding role that carers play in our community by taking in children who have come from unfortunate or tragic life circumstances. The carers foster children who have been exposed to very unfortunate and tragic circumstances and assist them to grow and develop. The carers do a fantastic job. I know the Assistant Speaker would have many of those people in his community. It is always pleasing to be able to pass on that message to those in the community who assume the role of foster carer to our disadvantaged children. They do not often get the recognition they deserve. I have talked about that issue with the Minister and he has assured me that he puts those carers first and foremost as part of his responsibilities in his portfolio. I look forward to working with him in relation to carers.

The Children's Guardian Bill 2019 continues the implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The bill transfers the reportable conduct scheme and the Official Community Visitor scheme, provides targeted expansion to persons who deliver child-related services, ensures consistency of coverage and makes further changes to create the Children's Guardian Bill 2019 to recognise the expanded regulatory role. As has been mentioned by previous speakers, the process of bringing this bill before the House and the consultations involved have certainly required lots of hard work and dedication by those involved, not only in the department but also in the Minister's office. I congratulate the staff involved, who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. I congratulate each and every one of them on their contributions to the bill before the House.

The bill consolidates the powers and functions of the Children's Guardian into one Act. The office was established under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to promote the interests and rights of children and young people living in out-of-home care. In 2013 legislative changes expanded the role of the office to be an independent government agency that works to protect children by promoting and regulating quality child-safe organisations and services. The bill is a further step in that process and clearly recognises the independent statutory functions of the Children's Guardian. The existing powers, functions and responsibilities of the Children's Guardian are contained in a number of pieces of legislation. The current functions of the Children's Guardian include adoption accreditation powers under the Adoption Act 2000 and out-of-home care and children's employment functions under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. The Children's Guardian Bill will consolidate those powers.

The bill includes new functions relating to the administration of reportable conduct schemes and the Official Community Visitor scheme as it relates to children, which are being transferred from the Ombudsman Act and the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993. The Children's Guardian Bill 2019 clearly recognises the expanded regulatory function of the Children's Guardian and the independent statutory functions that are held there. In summary, I commend the bill to the House. As I said when I began my

speech, I commend the great efforts of the Minister in bringing the bill before the House and the fantastic efforts of his staff in delivering this very important legislation for the State of New South Wales.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (16:41): In reply: There can be no more important cause than the protection and guardianship of children. The Children's Guardian Bill 2019 seeks to make New South Wales a safer place in which to raise children. I thank members on all sides of the House for their alacritous support for and bipartisan collaboration on this legislation. I particularly thank the members representing the electorates of Londonderry, Camden, Charlestown, Holsworthy—and happy birthday to my Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Holsworthy—Wyong, Miranda, Ballina, Ku-ring-gai, Bankstown, North Shore, Oatley, Terrigal, Lakemba, Heathcote and Seven Hills. I particularly thank the Children's Guardian, Janet Schorer, who is in the Speaker's gallery. Ms Schorer has done and continues to do an absolutely brilliant job. Hers is a role in which she has incredible purpose. The State of New South Wales and its children are lucky to have someone of the character and ability of Ms Schorer. I place on record the gratitude of the people of our State for her efforts and those of all of her staff.

I thank the following people from the Department of Communities and Justice: Sharmini Niles, Anna Reid, Catherine Gray, Stacey Romeo and Rebecca Harvey. I thank also Anne King from my office, who is in the gallery, as well as all of my staff, including my chief of staff Loki Ball, for their hard work in bringing together this legislation. These amendments continue the Government's implementation of its response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Before concluding, I will address some of the particular matters that members raised in the second reading debate. I will go through each of those. The Working With Children Check inclusion was raised. The Children's Guardian will continue to administer the Working With Children Check scheme. That is included in the functions of the Children's Guardian at clause 125 of division 5 of the bill. The legislation governing the Working With Children Check is currently a standalone piece of legislation known as the Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012. It is well known and understood by its users.

The royal commission recognised the benefits of co-locating the reportable conduct scheme and the Working With Children Check. This bill does that and there is also an intention to move the Working With Children Check functions from the Office of the Children's Guardian. The purpose of consolidation of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act and Adoption Act provisions into the Children's Guardian Bill is to enable clarity and ease of usage. There are just too many pieces of legislation, all doing what we need them to do but in separate pieces of legislation. I can confirm no consideration is being given to removing the administration of the Working With Children Check scheme from the functions of the Children's Guardian—none at all. I know that was raised.

Members raised the joint parliamentary committee review. There will be no difference in the joint parliamentary committee review from that which was available under the Ombudsman Act, except that a particular parliamentary committee will be the Committee for Children and Young People. The joint parliamentary committee review is provided by amending clause 37 of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act. The amendment can be found in schedule 5.2 to the Children's Guardian Bill. The level of oversight is entirely appropriate. The oversights are being provided by the same committee that already provides oversight to the administration of the Working With Children Check scheme—another function of the Children's Guardian.

The issue of funding was raised by members. The Children's Guardian has been given additional funding for implementation of the royal commission's recommendations, including the residential care workers register and the mandatory child safe standards. The staff and funding that goes with the reportable conduct scheme are being transferred from the Ombudsman's office to the Office of the Children's Guardian. This ensures that staff with significant corporate knowledge and expertise in reportable conduct matters will continue to be involved to ensure a seamless transition. In addition, to implement the royal commission's recommendations regarding the expansion of reportable conduct to the religious sector, funding is being provided by the cluster.

Members raised the independence of the Children's Guardian. This is a critical component of the legislation. The Children's Guardian is already independent. It is an independent statutory authority. The level of independence is further enhanced as the bill provides in clause 125 (3) that the Children's Guardian is not subject to the direction or the control of the Minister—not this Minister nor a future Minister. The legislation makes clear that the Children's Guardian's appointment to office and removal from office aligns with that of the Ombudsman. Further, the Children's Guardian will have the same powers as the Ombudsman in relation to part 4, reportable conduct matters. That includes the royal commission inquiry powers and the same protections in relation to secrecy and powers of entry without warrant—except where there is privilege, of course—not compellable in legal proceedings, and joint parliamentary committee reviews.

The Children's Guardian will also have access to the information that the Ombudsman had access to. To provide for accountability in decision-making, decisions arising from the Children's Guardian's self-initiated

investigations will be reviewable by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. Members raised the NCAT review and greater transparency. I note that my friend the member for Bankstown is in the Chamber. She was a former Opposition spokesperson on these matters. She did an excellent job as the shadow Minister. I know how passionate she is about these issues. She continues to be an absolute champion for children, young people and families. Transparency of the reportable conduct scheme is being improved, whereby there will be NCAT reviews of Children's Guardian-led investigations and decisions. Currently there is not an avenue of review of Ombudsman-led reportable conduct decisions. This bill will increase transparency by enabling NCAT reviews of those decisions.

It is important to note that this review function is limited to Children's Guardian-led investigations, of which there are anticipated to be but a few. Currently there are very few Ombudsman-led investigations. While the Children's Guardian's independence is important and well protected in this legislation, it is equally important to ensure accountability, just as the Children's Guardian's decisions in relation to Working With Children Checks are reviewable by NCAT. This is the balance that this legislation has achieved incredibly well—independence and accountability, mitigating risk to the New South Wales Government, and particularly mitigating risk to children in New South Wales.

Complaint handling in relation to the Children's Guardian's functions was raised by members. The Children's Guardian will continue to be under the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman as CS-CRAMA—the software that is used by the Ombudsman and the guardian—is not transferring to the Office of the Children's Guardian. The matter of a deputy guardian with specific oversight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was raised, and I want to address that now. The Children's Guardian Bill has made provisions for the appointment of a deputy guardian and an assistant guardian in proposed section 121. This provision is no different to the provision in the Ombudsman Act that provides for the appointment of a deputy guardian but does not specify the particular functions of that office. I note that there have been comments made by members regarding the appointment of a deputy guardian role responsible for issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Though it is not specifically prescribed in the legislation, this is a matter for the consideration of the guardian. As members have pointed out, it is important that the guardian be independent, so these are matters for the guardian to consider. I would certainly commend them to her consideration.

Members raised the annual reporting requirement in relation to reportable conduct matters. The Children's Guardian is required to prepare an annual report on her functions and responsibilities, and this will now include her functions in relation to reportable conduct. The bill also enables the Children's Guardian to prepare special reports to the Minister on request. Further to this, the Children's Guardian can also prepare special reports to Parliament consistent with her statutory independence. In addition, as I stated, the reportable conduct function will be subject to joint parliamentary committee oversight. This bill is also required to be reviewed within two years of its commencement, and this period allows the guardian sufficient time to consider any amendments required once the scheme is implemented within the Office of the Children's Guardian. However, should annual reporting to Parliament on reportable conduct matters be considered appropriate, this can be facilitated through the special reporting functions already provided for in the bill.

Members raised immigration detention centres, and I want to turn to that. The royal commission recognised the New South Wales reportable conduct scheme as one of the most robust in the country. I would say that it is the best in the country. This is why the royal commission recommended that the New South Wales scheme be adopted nationally. Immigration centres fall under Commonwealth responsibility. Further consultation and capacity building with the Commonwealth regarding the scheme would be required to facilitate this should it be viewed as necessary.

I turn to enforcement. There are robust mechanisms in the scheme to ensure compliance. If the Children's Guardian is unsatisfied with the head of an entity's response to allegations of abuse she can conduct an own-motion investigation of the abuse. The Children's Guardian can make recommendations in a report arising from one of these investigations. Under section 53, the head of an entity may—and, on request, must—advise the Children's Guardian of steps taken to implement a recommendation arising from a Children's Guardian investigation report. The Children's Guardian can also require information from an entity regarding its systems and processes for addressing reportable conduct allegations, and there is the ability to name and shame entities that fail to provide information in relation to their systems for preventing this abuse. I will be encouraging the guardian to do exactly that, without fear or favour. Further, there are more robust information-sharing provisions in the bill, whereby the Children's Guardian can refer information to State inter-jurisdictional and Commonwealth agencies for the purposes of investigative and disciplinary action.

Members raised the issue of conflicts of interest and accreditation versus reportable conduct. The Children's Guardian already manages a vast amount of sensitive information arising from her various functions and has well-developed systems, rules and processes to ensure information is handled appropriately. There are

also systems in place to detect and take action promptly in response to any inappropriate or unlawful disclosures. The Children's Guardian can also make guidelines about information sharing between the various units and information-sharing arrangements between the reportable conduct unit and the working with children unit. They are specifically prescribed in the legislation. Further, there are explicit protections against malicious accusations and equally the legislation includes an explicit protection against retribution when a person acts in good faith to make a report regarding reportable conduct.

Given the direct transmission of the function and the transfer of reportable conduct staff from the Ombudsman's office, corporate knowledge will be maintained and potentially enhanced. Rather than a conflict of interest and loss of expertise, the co-location of operations will ensure robust decision-making into the future. All functions of the Children's Guardian will now be better and more fully informed by knowledge of the agency's ability to appropriately investigate allegations and produce even more reliable outcomes. The real potential benefits of co-location arise in the creation of a leading platform for promoting child-safe practices, monitoring performance and detecting non-compliance to reduce the likelihood of a child being harmed within an organisational context. Surely, this is a move in the right direction.

These amendments seek to ensure that the New South Wales reportable conduct scheme continues to evolve to address any gaps in the protection of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in New South Wales. The transfer of reportable conduct functions from the Ombudsman to the Children's Guardian will result in greater integration and streamlining of oversight arrangements for safeguarding children in this State and will remove the duplications that occur under the current arrangements.

Housing the reportable conduct scheme with other child protection functions under the Children's Guardian will ensure that critical information about individuals and agencies of concern does not fall through the cracks and will deliver a cohesive approach to auditing, researching, reviewing and capacity building with the many thousands of agencies that operate in the reportable conduct sphere. This bill addresses the gaps in the scheme as recently highlighted in the media, continues this Government's implementation of its response to the royal commission, delivers improvements to the scheme that provide independent oversight of responses to child abuse and neglect, and will clearly recognise the Children's Guardian's expanded regulatory role and independent statutory office.

This Government has an ongoing commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community and our children. This bill will strengthen the role of the Children's Guardian, the independent regulator that creates safe places for children. This bill consolidates the powers and functions of the Children's Guardian into one Act. The office of the Children's Guardian was established under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988 to promote the interests and rights of children and young people living in out-of-home care. In 2013 legislative changes expanded the role of the office to be an independent government agency that works to protect children by promoting and regulating quality child-safe organisations and services without fear or favour. It is entirely appropriate for this to be an independent agency with real power to get real outcomes.

This bill is a further step in the process and clearly recognises the independent statutory functions of the Children's Guardian. The existing powers, functions and responsibilities of the Children's Guardian are across a number of pieces of legislation, as I outlined earlier. This Children's Guardian's current functions include adoption accreditation powers under the Adoption Act 2000 and out-of-home care and children's employment functions under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. The Children's Guardian Bill consolidates these powers. The bill also includes new functions relating to the administration of reportable conduct scheme and the official visitor scheme as it relates to children, which are being transferred from the Ombudsman Act 1974 and the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993.

The new Children's Guardian Act will clearly recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian and her independent statutory functions. The bill's objects are key. The Children's Guardian protects children by promoting and regulating the quality of organisations and people that provide services to children. Under these reforms, the Children's Guardian will continue undertaking the important work of keeping the wellbeing and safety of children and young people at the heart of all efforts to promote and regulate the quality of child safe organisations, services and people. The bill will also continue the implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. For example, this bill includes a legislative lever to establish a new residential care workers register. This will provide a mechanism for out-of-home care residential care providers to exchange information about the safety and suitability of residential care workers prior to making a decision on whether to engage a person.

Transfers of the reportable conduct scheme and the official visitor scheme as it relates to children are also in line with suggestions from the royal commission. Further, the bill clarifies the definitions that apply to the reportable conduct scheme as suggested by the royal commission and extends its coverage to religious bodies.

I acknowledge the religious bodies that have welcomed this particular move. I had a wonderful conversation with Archbishop of Sydney Glenn Davies, who was particularly supportive. I thank him as well as all other religious leaders for recognising the importance of these changes.

The bill also provides targeted amendments to the reportable conduct scheme to apply to persons who deliver child-related services, ensures consistency of coverage and makes discrete further changes to recognise the expanded regulatory role of the Children's Guardian. The consolidation of the Children's Guardian's functions into one piece of legislation makes perfect sense. Further, many of the amendments have been suggested by the royal commission after careful deliberation. It is important to have sustained and determined action to ensure that our communities and institutions are safe for children. This bill recognises the Children's Guardian and her important role in that process.

I have brought two pieces of legislation into the House in my time as Minister, the first of which was the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Bill 2019. Robert Fitzgerald is doing an outstanding job as commissioner. All members were invited to a recent function in this place where we introduced Mr Fitzgerald, who not only served on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse but also has a long history in ageing and disability policy. He has been widely welcomed as commissioner. I thank members for their bipartisan support of this bill. It is my second piece of legislation as Minister and I am grateful to all members who have worked productively and proactively to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Unfortunately, this is something the media do not see—the changes we make to legislation to make things better and safer for children. You would like to think that the fact that we work so positively together on the things that are important in the protection of our most vulnerable would be on display more. These are so important and I am so grateful to members from all sides for being professional, sensible, reasoned and rational. This bill will now go to the upper House. I ask that my colleagues there ensure its swift passage so that we can continue to make New South Wales by and large the safest place to raise children. 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.

Third Reading

Mr GARETH WARD: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Public Interest Debate

RURAL HEALTH CARE

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes there is a rural healthcare crisis across New South Wales.
- (2) Acknowledges this crisis contributes to a growing gap in life expectancy between rural and urban residents of the State.
- (3) Calls on the Government to immediately commission an independent needs analysis of all regional hospitals to determine gaps in services and funding.
- (4) Calls on the Government to commit to increase regional health funding to address the gaps highlighted by the independent needs analysis.

If you want to find out how sick someone is, what is the first thing you should check? Their blood pressure? Their temperature? Their pulse? Their heartbeat? No. The first thing you should check is their postcode because in New South Wales where you live determines how long you will live. The ABC *Four Corners* program recently brought this crisis into the spotlight. In regional hospitals across Australia, people are dying early due to one thing: lack of funding

Our State is leading the way. Twenty years ago people in regional New South Wales actually lived longer on average than those in Sydney. In my part of the world, Murrumbidgee, we now die five years earlier. In the Far West there is a six-year death gap. The further away from Sydney you live, the worse your health outcomes are. This is no surprise when you consider how successive governments have gutted regional public hospitals over the past two decades. When I was growing up our local country hospitals serviced all our needs. Doctors performed caesarean sections, vasectomies, hernia operations and epidurals. They set broken bones, removed infected tonsils, stitched up wounds and did other basic everyday procedures. That is not the case anymore.

As doctors have retired, they have been replaced by monitors, with the actual service now located in bigger cities. My local hospital in Griffith services more than a dozen towns and 80,000 people but it does not even have the capacity to fix a fractured finger. A child who breaks a bone in Hay, for example, needs to travel three hours to an already overstretched Wagga hospital for treatment. In Leeton the hospital has been without a single doctor on call for 12 of the past 14 days. In Parkes the sudden closure of maternity services meant that a woman in labour had to drive more than an hour to Orange to give birth.

Cancer patients have to travel even further. Sydney is often the closest port of call. Husbands, wives, fathers and mothers miss work and fall into debt due to spiralling travel and accommodation costs. The Government's accommodation allowance is a piddly \$43 a night. That would barely get you a parking spot in Sydney, let alone a hotel room. Even in cases of rape, some victims have to drive for three hours because there is no-one on shift at Griffith Base Hospital who is able to administer the rape kit. Are we still a First World country or what? We are in a bizarre situation where Sydney politicians talk about decentralisation, they talk about encouraging people to move out to the bush, but at the same time they centralise all of the services to big cities and strip country hospitals bare.

Our regional hospitals are in dire straits due to a lack of funding, waste, mismanagement, excessive bureaucracy, corruption, bullying, harassment and neglect. They say the fish rots from the head—pardon the pun. But the Government seems to want to look the other way, protecting the status quo with a toxic level of secrecy. Doctors and nurses who dare to express their views on improving their hospital are threatened with the sack or with a code of conduct violation. The Government has created a healthcare crisis while shutting down the voices of those who best know how to fix it. When I asked my local health district bureaucrat to show me a Leeton hospital roster, they refused to give it to me. We cannot address our healthcare crisis if we cover it up and deny it exists.

I know there are no easy solutions. Attracting medical specialists to regional areas has always been a challenge. But it is also true that red tape, waste and underfunding of hospital infrastructure is stopping doctors and nurses from moving out west. This is something that we can immediately address. If the Government can build the 270-kilometre Broken Hill pipeline in one year, bypassing all due process, there is no excuse why nearby regional hospitals have to wait decades for much-needed upgrades. We often hear the Treasurer brag about his \$4 billion surplus. There is absolutely no excuse to continue to put country lives in danger by neglecting regional hospitals. A First World country should never tolerate Third World care for those who live outside big cities. I call on everyone in this Parliament to support this motion to show all people in New South Wales that we care about the crisis in rural health care.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (17:07): I thank the member for Murray for moving this motion, though I note that while it acknowledges there are challenges in rural health care, the member is simply attacking the New South Wales Government. From what I just heard, she must be the only local member who does not work with her local health district [LHD]. She has just told the House that apparently she has not been given access to various information. I have to say, if she did not have such an obstructive and challenging way about her she certainly would have—

Mr Clayton Barr: Hang on.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Well, it's true, from what I just heard. You will find that the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Cootamundra work with their local health districts, and that is essential. I would say to the member for Murray that is what she needs to do. She came to a meeting with me and she went out straightaway afterwards and put a spin on it that was not true. Every member in this place would acknowledge that I work with them on health issues, yet the member for Murray can be obstructive with both her local health district and others.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. Members listened quietly to the member for Murray. I ask that the same respect be shown to all members in this House. Members will be heard in silence.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I move an amendment as follows:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "House", with a view to inserting instead:

- (1) Notes the Government is investing unprecedented amounts in regional and rural health care to support residents who live outside major cities.
- (2) Notes there are challenges across all regional areas in Australia in delivering health services.
- (3) Notes the Government has done more than any government in history to increase the number of health staff working in the regions and to improve technology initiatives to support regional health staff in delivering for their communities.

On the issue of Griffith, I heard the member say that nothing had happened. I point out to her that thanks to her predecessors, who worked constructively with the local health district, there has been more than half a billion dollars spent on capital works in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District on a whole range of projects just in the past few years. In addition to that, a complete renewal of the Griffith hospital is about to be undertaken. It is really quite unfair and unreasonable for the member to represent it that way but, again, that is part of the problem.

I note that across the Murrumbidgee Local Health District—with the member for Wagga Wagga, who is working very constructively with his community and the Government—the \$282 million Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital redevelopment is underway. There is the \$13.2 million Gundagai Multi-Purpose Service [MPS] and \$8 million for the Lockhart MPS. The new Albury ambulance station, I think, is funded by about \$3.3 million and there is \$13.4 million for the Gundagai Multi-Purpose Service and \$12.4 million for the Hillston MPS.

Right across the region, and indeed across the State, massive amounts of money have been spent on regional infrastructure. More than \$10 billion has been spent on infrastructure more broadly across New South Wales, and another \$10 billion will be spent in the next four years. Staffing has increased dramatically across all of the regional areas since 2011. In the next four years another 8,300 staff will be employed. Five thousand of those will be nurses, of which 45 per cent will be going to the regions. More than 1,000 doctors will be employed. Again, more than 45 per cent of those staff will be going into the regions. Off the top of my head, I think nearly 900 allied health staff will be employed in the next four years, and more than 45 per cent of those will be going into the regions.

I can assure the member that whilst her basic assertion is correct, insofar as it is very challenging to deliver services across the State and across Australia, she is quite wrong to assert that nothing has been done by the Government. In fact, the case is quite the opposite. We know that right across Australia every Labor and Liberal health Minister finds it very challenging in their States and Territories to get the services into the regions that are otherwise available at level 5 and 6 referral hospitals in the major cities. But the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government has been doing as much as humanly possible. For example, just before the election we announced \$21.7 million for the Centralised Stroke Telehealth Service. I could talk for an hour on the topic of all of the work that is going into the regions.

No government in history has done as much for regional residents as this Government, as I said. We value our regional residents. They live in wonderful areas, but it is challenging to get all of the services that are necessary. The Government has certainly worked very hard to deliver those services and will continue to work hard. As I said, it is not just a matter of infrastructure in terms of the hospitals right across the regions. I have listed some of those just in the Murrumbidgee LHD. The member for Cootamundra has worked very well with her local health districts and the member for Wagga Wagga has worked very well with his local health districts. The member for Murray need to be constructive.

I would say to the member that I appreciate her bringing this motion, but during the meeting that I had with her she was a little too aggressive and obstructive. I invite her to come and talk to me and work with me, as Labor, Liberal and every other member does. We will achieve good things for her electorate. But at the moment she is riding off the back of work that has been done before her, and she is simply attacking her local health district. She should stop doing it.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (17:13): This is a fantastic motion from the member for Murray. When we watched the *Four Corners* program—I acknowledge the work of Louise Milligan for what I think was one of the most powerful pieces of journalism this year about the state of the crisis in rural health—we called on the Government to commission a full independent inquiry into rural and regional hospitals. We want to get to the bottom of three issues: the funding issues that the member for Murray and others have talked about, the staffing issues that have already been raised and the cultural issues that exist within some of these local health districts. We know from the Coroner's report into Tumut Hospital that there are issues in that part of the world. We know from the horrific case of Alex Braes—a man who was completely let down by the New South Wales health system when he went to Broken Hill, a man who should never have died—that there is a problem in that health district. We know that there are issues in the Bega district.

What we do not want is to have Health investigate Health. What we want to do, in a spirit of bipartisanship, is say to the Government that we will support a full, open and independent inquiry into rural and regional hospitals in New South Wales, with the terms of reference focused on funding, staffing, cultural challenges and management practices that exist within those local health districts. We cannot allow the death of people like Alex Braes and the suffering that his family has gone through—as well as the families of many others across rural and regional New South Wales—to simply go unnoticed without action being taken. We are not saying that one person, one individual or one local health district is to blame. However, we are saying that we have a problem and a crisis in rural and regional hospitals right across New South Wales. This issue is not going to go away by having Health investigate Health. It needs a fresh set of eyes, an independent set of eyes. It needs

an in-depth analysis around those criteria so that the men and women in the communities of rural and regional New South Wales can be assured that there is a roadmap going forward so that they can be delivered the best possible health care that the rest of us get in capital cities and major metropolitan cities.

We know from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW] figures released in July that the further Australians live from capital cities the higher the rate of potentially avoidable deaths. These are deaths that should not have happened. According to those figures from the AIHW, for every 100,000 people there are 91.6 avoidable deaths in major cities. Outside the major cities it is a shocking 248 avoidable deaths. That is something that none of us in this House can sit by and allow to continue without further scrutiny and investigation as well as a plan for funding rural and regional hospitals to an appropriate level.

Every person in this place knows there are challenges within the health system—no-one is saying otherwise. However, the *Four Corners* episode, the AIHW figures and the Bureau of Health Information data released last week clearly indicate that for too long a person's postcode has determined the level of health care they receive. The Labor Party stands ready to work with the crossbench, the Government and every member in this place to make sure that we get to the bottom of what is happening in rural and regional hospitals. We want to make sure that the communities in rural and regional New South Wales get access to the quality health care that they deserve and expect.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (17:18): I am glad the shadow Minister decided to make a contribution to this debate. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the terrible legacy those opposite left the people of New South Wales, particularly in regional health infrastructure. What did their 16 years in office do for country hospitals in New South Wales? How many new hospitals did they build or refurbish in country New South Wales in their 16 years in office? They built one hospital: the Bathurst hospital. Remember that one? They built it so well that the trolleys could not even fit through the doors. They had to refurbish it straight away.

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

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: They built and refurbished fewer than five hospitals in 16 years in regional New South Wales. In just over eight years since we have been in Government there have been 70 projects in regional New South Wales, including new hospitals, refurbishments, HealthOnes and multipurpose service programs [MPSs]. We have delivered more than 70 projects in half the time those opposite were in office, while they did fewer than five. What a miserable legacy they left the people of regional New South Wales. Members opposite stand up and want to join in debate on this motion from the member for Murray. Gosh, I have never seen a member who is getting an investment of over \$200 million in a new hospital come into this place and whinge about it! As the health Minister said, you have to be constructive. You have to work with your health districts to make sure you have the workforce and the infrastructure.

If you look across regional New South Wales you see projects everywhere. Of course, I love talking about my electorate in this place. Let us have a look: there is \$60 million for the Armidale Hospital redevelopment, which is nothing on the \$200 million at Griffith but still very positive. At Inverell Hospital there is also a \$60 million redevelopment. I thank Minister Hazzard for the \$80 million to rebuild Moree Hospital and the \$20 million to refurbish Glen Innes. The infrastructure is critical for the attraction of staff. It is critical to retain services and build new services. Of course, there are always going to be workforce issues. I have seen them in my electorate, where all of our district hospitals are completely reliant on local GPs to maintain the medical staff roster, particularly for emergencies after hours. In some instances there is not the quantum of GPs in a community or, like in Inverell in my electorate, there are plenty of GPs in the community but only two of the 14 actually want to work the roster at the hospital. This puts the health service and the local community in a very precarious situation.

What does the community do? We work with the health service, bring in locums and introduce a contract model until those GP stocks are up. We work with organisations such as the NSW Rural Doctors Network and Rural and Remote Medical Services. We work with whoever we can to get those medical staff. Even in very small communities, such as Bingara in my electorate, a community of fewer than 2½ thousand people—we have a beautiful, relatively new MPS with a beautiful GP clinic not far away. The local council worked with Hunter New England Health and the State Government to come up with a great model where to attract a GP we jointly provided the GP with a home in the community and a clinic to work out of. In exchange for accepting that, the GP agreed to work the roster at the MPS.

Mr Brad Hazzard: You were constructively involved.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Of course, yes. Well, no, to be quite fair—I would not accuse the Minister of ever gilding the lily—but the local council, Gwydir Shire Council, was instrumental in that. I commend the council for that. It really stepped up and showed strong leadership.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

The Government worked very closely with the council.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Minister to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Hunter New England Health provided the funding but the council worked incredibly hard. That is what you have to do to make sure that you have adequate staffing. In our district hospitals we rely on a GP workforce—which, of course, is part of the Federal structure, not the New South Wales structure. Unfortunately, you cannot direct GPs where to live, where to work and how to practice. What the Federal Government can do in that space I will leave for another time—particularly my local member. The fact is that the Government has a strong track record of working incredibly hard to deliver new hospital projects for our regions, something that we are very proud of.

Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:24): I make a contribution to the debate on rural health care and thank the member for Murray for raising this very important topic. I bring to the attention of the House what I believe is a looming crisis in the provision of health care in rural areas. The member for the Northern Tablelands has referred to the medical workforce and I will spend some time talking about that. We know that the health of people living in rural and regional areas is simply not as good as that of those living in metropolitan areas. There are higher rates of smoking, untreated illness, mental health issues, cancers and cardiovascular disease, and a higher death rate. That has been documented by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for some time now. In that context, rural and regional health and hospital services are absolutely critical in the fight to make sure that the health of all Australians is as equal and as good as it can be.

Services in rural and district hospitals are important. They allow access to the system for patients, families and carers. They are close to those people, they provide emergency care in a timely fashion and they are part of the economic viability of rural towns. They provide employment and are a source of non-farm income and local expenditure. They are absolutely paramount to the success of rural communities. It is not an easy environment. The health needs of those communities are great. The social needs are also great and often these communities do without the workforce and support the city services have.

We need to continue to support rural health services in order to provide high-quality care. I give a big call out to those people working in rural health services throughout the State who do such a great job looking after their communities. I believe they are under threat from the lack of on-site medical staff. Many rural hospitals throughout the State are regularly without doctors on site and that means that patients, families and carers have to travel great distances to get medical care. If they require ambulance transport, that puts additional strain on paramedic emergency services personnel who have to leave the community, sometimes unnecessarily, because the care should have been provided in that community.

There is an example in my electorate at Tumut where in the last year the hospital has frequently been without on-site medical staff. Residents are quite distressed and have shared their concerns with me. They are concerned that those with chronic and complex illnesses who depend on timely treatment in the hospital will not get it. It is enough for them to consider leaving their home towns. There are Telehealth systems in place where local nurses can call or video call a doctor and get backup. That is a useful backstop, but it should be in addition to medical care on site; not a replacement for it. Sadly, I am concerned that in many of our hospitals it is becoming just that: a replacement for a basic level of emergency care that people in the city accept as a right but that people in rural areas are increasingly seeing as something they are just grateful for. What worries me is that services at hospitals may be downgraded as a result. That would be another blow to rural communities.

I acknowledge the role of the Government in building hospitals in rural communities. It has certainly been important for my electorate. I know that Tumut Hospital is on the agenda and work will start before the end of the year. We now need to tackle the issue of on-site medical cover in the communities. We cannot let it continue to be unaddressed, relying on Telehealth solutions and those sorts of issues. It is not ideal. There are a couple of ways it can be addressed. The Commonwealth Government, in particular, has done a lot of work defining the role of a rural generalist, that is, a general practitioner who is skilled to work in these hospitals.

Part of the problem we face is that we do not have enough specially trained doctors. General practitioners will often move to communities, but they do not have the skills to provide the services required. The Commonwealth has done the preparatory work and Queensland has a model for rural generalists in place. Unfortunately, in New South Wales our attempts to train rural generalists have not filled the gaps and we need to look at why. I think the answer is that we need a locally based, locally run solution, such as the one put forward

by the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, to train rural generalists. I know that will take a while but we need to start work on that and I encourage the Government and the Minister to provide whatever support is needed for that very important initiative, as well as looking at what can be done now to provide on-site medical care.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:29): I thank the member for Murray for bringing this very important motion to the House today. I note that the Minister for Health and Medical Research has spoken in rather deriding terms to the member. Essentially the Minister has told her to put up or shut up. I think her constituents would be very grateful for her telling the truth about the very real impacts on her community. They would be appreciative of what she has done and not so appreciative of the Minister's comments about her that were quite personal and direct. Before entering this Parliament I was a medical negligence lawyer. I represented too many families who had experienced avoidable and devastating health outcomes in rural and regional New South Wales. Some of my cases involved the worst health outcomes imaginable, including the entirely preventable loss of a child during childbirth—and not just one.

Those families, after losing a child, never recovered from that loss—a loss that was brought about by a health system that was under-resourced and inadequate. Our health system is still very different once you step outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. The further you go the worse it gets. When these awful and entirely avoidable health outcomes occur, it is often the individual health workers in the system who are blamed. But the reality is that our entire health infrastructure is under-resourced across the State and that under-resourcing is most pronounced in rural and regional New South Wales. The need to address the systemic issues within the health system is one of the reasons why I fought to come into this place and why the role of the shadow Minister for Rural Health is my responsibility, and I take it very seriously.

The simple facts are that people living in rural and remote communities have poorer health and shorter lives than people living in the cities. This is not a simple matter of dollars and cents; it is the wide-scale under-resourcing across New South Wales which has created a health system under immense strain, where nurses and doctors are struggling to meet the sheer need. It has created an environment where errors increase and so too do the numbers of devastating adverse health outcomes, as we saw writ large in the recent *Four Corners* program. In regional New South Wales hospitals are at breaking point. In communities like Wagga Wagga, Goulburn, Lismore and Tweed Heads, thousands of patients are waiting for longer than a year to get the surgery they need. Emergency wait times are blowing out, and too often the nurses and doctors on site cannot deliver the quality health care that they want to.

Royal Far West—an incredibly well-respected rural health organisation—has been telling this Government for years that one in three children in rural or remote New South Wales cannot access the health services that they need. That is so obviously a situation that would never be acceptable here in Sydney. But what has the National Party done for the communities it supposedly represents? Does it take a *Four Corners* investigation and yet another avoidable death in a regional New South Wales hospital for The Nationals MPs to pay attention? How loud do the warning signs have to be for them to start standing up for their communities? The Sydney infrastructure agenda of the Government is not delivering the outcomes desperately needed for rural and regional New South Wales. The Government's priorities are all wrong and it is just not providing for its communities' needs. It is not being felt in the communities, and that is the message the member for Murray has brought here today. The Government continues to ignore what she is saying but that is the very real experience of rural and regional New South Wales.

I know my community, along with many other regional communities, is crying out for improved health access to a range of services like dialysis—which I have recently raised with the Minister—chemotherapy, palliative care, mental health and women's reproductive health services. These are the services that people in rural and regional communities ought to have and many do not. Everyone in New South Wales should be able to access the health services they need, regardless of where they live. Your postcode should not determine your health outcomes, but sadly that is the current reality, and the longer the Government ignores it the worse its electoral outcomes will be. I know that the Minister genuinely cares, but his Government has been running this show for 8½ years now.

In that time access to quality health services in rural and regional New South Wales has become harder. Even if a service can be accessed, the wait times are longer and the risks are higher. Those of us who choose to live in rural and regional New South Wales make that choice because we love living in our communities, but the choice should not come with a compromise to our health and our family's health. However, that is where we are at under this Liberal-Nationals Government. The divide between the city and country has only deepened. Rural and regional New South Wales deserve so much better.

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:34): In reply: When confronted by a crisis across regional Australia all this Government wants to do is talk about how good it is or blame others. Anyone who has visited a regional hospital knows that the so-called record health spending is often spent in the wrong places. It is often to

replace old dilapidated hospitals with new multipurpose centres that provide few services and are now only bandaid depots or new operating theatres that will never, ever be used. There is no money for staff or resources and there are no doctors to help. It is being used to centralise services to the big cities. It is being used to prop up private hospitals in regional areas to keep them viable. We seem to have an overabundance of health bureaucrats and empire building and the gagging of dedicated staff and not enough delivery on the health outcomes we expect and deserve.

Regional health care is not the number one priority of this Government. A sick child in Deniliquin should have more priority than sports stadiums, dodgy pipelines and moving museums. I could name dozens of things that this Government cares about more. Today is a chance for all of us to show the people of rural New South Wales that we value their lives as much as we value those of people in Sydney. The only way to do that is to support this motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes48
Noes42
Majority.....6

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Gibbons, Ms M
Gulaptis, Mr C
Henskens, Mr A
Lee, Dr G
O'Dea, Mr J
Piper, Mr G
Roberts, Mr A
Sidoti, Mr J
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S
Constance, Mr A
Crouch, Mr A (teller)
Elliott, Mr D
Greenwich, Mr A
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

Barilaro, Mr J
Clancy, Mr J
Cooke, Ms S (teller)
Davies, Mrs T
Evans, Mr L.J.
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

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
Barr, Mr C
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Dib, Mr J
Harris, Mr D
Hoenig, Mr R
Lalich, Mr N
McDermott, Dr H
Mehan, Mr D (teller)
O'Neill, Dr M
Saffin, Ms J
Tesch, Ms L
Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E
Butler, Mr R
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Doyle, Ms T
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McGirr, Dr J
Mihailuk, Ms T
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Voltz, Ms L
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Bali, Mr S
Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dalton, Mrs H
Finn, Ms J
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T.F.
Warren, Mr G
Zangari, Mr G

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

*Business of the House***SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Mr RYAN PARK: I seek leave to move a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders so that the message from the Legislative Council regarding reference to the Independent Commission Against Corruption dated 18 September 2019 can be considered forthwith.

Leave not granted.

*Private Members' Statements***COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (17:44): There is no doubt that the Community Building Partnership [CBP] program delivers positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes across New South Wales. In Ku-ring-gai over the past two years there have been 29 projects funded in full or in part by the New South Wales Government's CBP program. As you know, that funding goes straight to the organisations that serve our community. From Scouts groups, P&C associations and churches to the local bowling clubs, the New South Wales Government is investing in our communities and by doing so is investing in our community's future. During the past few months I have taken the opportunity to visit completed works from the 2017 and 2018 CBP program. It has been rewarding to see how the funding has had a vast impact on the local area. I will now outline a few of the projects that have been successfully delivered.

In 2017 the Ku-ring-gai Hockey Centre, which is situated within the grounds of the Ku-ring-gai High School, applied to the CBP program to purchase and install an electronic scoreboard. The centre received \$16,318 to complete the project. After visiting the field only a few weeks ago, the difference it has made to the Gordon North Sydney Hockey Club is fantastic. While watching the under-13s mixed team play, I spoke with volunteer Bruce MacLennan who shared that the scoreboard has been a game changer to the club, and not only for the players but for spectators as well. Members travel a long way to play at the grounds, with the catchment area ranging from North Sydney to Mount Colah. I was pleased to hear that the installation of the scoreboard had made such a positive impact.

The 1st Pymble Scout Group has been serving the local community since 1954. Providing a fun and diverse scouting program requires the right equipment, as well as maintaining the scout hall for local use. This means much-needed funds are vital to help the group continue its work with its ever-eager and energetic cubs and scouts. In 2017 the 1st Pymble Scout Group was granted \$22,000 under the CBP program to upgrade the driveway and egress to the hall for safe access. The leader in charge, Philip Heys, and the assistant scout leader, Toni Kearns, collectively expressed their gratitude for what the grant had achieved, as the rain rivers and erosion were becoming an issue for the group, and a safety issue for their cubs and scouts.

The Hornsby Shire Historical Society applied for the CBP program in 2018 to upgrade its tired bathroom facilities. It received full funding of \$13,640. The renovations were completed this year and in August I went to see the finished product. I can proudly say the rotten weatherboards, dated toilet suite and sink have been updated and the facilities look great. Prior to 2018, the society received CBP funding for new air conditioning and hearing loop aid facilities. Everyone expressed their appreciation and the society is eager to submit a 2019 application.

But it is not just the CBP program that creates positive change in our communities. Just two weeks ago every electorate in the State had one or more deserving community groups or organisations elected to receive funding from the State Government's My Community Project. I was fortunate to deliver to the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association [KNA] \$200,000 to put towards its long-awaited lights on nine of its Canoon Road netball courts. After 17 years, KNA's 4,000 members will be able to play and train later into the afternoon and evening. Installation of the new lights commenced this month. I look forward to visiting South Turramurra to see the progress of works.

However, it is important to acknowledge our volunteers, who are of huge value to most, if not all, organisations that have received CBP grants. The truth is that not-for-profit organisations can contribute to our communities because of their volunteers. I thank and commend all the hardworking members of the community groups within the Ku-ring-gai electorate. No matter how significant the funding, people like Patricia, Bruce, Jo-Anne, Toni and Philip, to name a few, should all take a bow. They run these organisations for no reward, which makes me proud to be their local member. I will always continue to support them and others like them in the Ku-ring-gai community. Each organisation that received funding through the Community Building Partnership program and other Government grants over the past two years has been a worthy recipient. The new infrastructure works or upgraded facilities are a win for the local community. I look forward to receiving the 2019 CBP applications, with the closing date coming up in the next week.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (17:49): I apologise for earlier addressing you incorrectly, Madam Deputy Speaker. Most of us have the security of a place we can call our home: Certainly, all members of this House do. A home not only provides us with protection from the elements, the extreme heat of summer or the chill of winter, but also gives us the security and confidence to become members of our communities. It is the basis upon which we grow and develop. I draw to the attention of the House a couple I recently met while in the Newcastle region with my colleague Tim Crakanthorp, the member for Newcastle. They are husband and wife—Troy Hurst and Pauline Thomas—and they live in their car. Troy and Pauline are just two of the 1,000-plus individuals who are on the waiting list for social housing in the area. Troy and Pauline have been couch surfing, living in a tent or sleeping out of their car for close to six years. They also explained to me they have been on the social housing waiting list for over six years. As members of Parliament, we need to do better than this.

When I took over the role of shadow Minister for homelessness, I said I would use opportunities in this place to share stories that often are not shared in a place like Parliament. For people like Troy and Pauline, opportunities to advocate and agitate as well as to improve themselves are difficult to come by. Troy has a number of disabilities and has been in and out of work, but predominantly out of work, for approximately six years. When I spoke with him and Pauline down by the river, it was clear that that had taken a considerable toll, as it would on all of us.

How can we expect people like Troy and Pauline to begin to rebuild their lives if they do not have the security of a permanent home? Troy has shared his life story and was proudly employed up until the age of 40. But, unfortunately, as I said, Troy injured his back and now at age 54 has also suffered a heart attack. He is now taking medication for his heart and has a heart condition. I understand that both Troy and his wife, Pauline, suffer from mental health conditions and are struggling. As the members of this place we must provide social infrastructure, which is just as critical as transport infrastructure, health infrastructure and roads infrastructure.

My message to every member of this House is that both major parties must go to the next election with considerable investment in social housing; otherwise the men and women we represent in our community will continue to fall through the gaps. Homelessness will not be addressed because homelessness is a lot more than just street homelessness, which accounts for approximately 7 per cent of homelessness, and certainly would not pick up people like Troy and Pauline, particularly if they are couch surfing. I say to Troy and Pauline, firstly, thank you for taking the time to share your story. It was a powerful moment—a moment like many others when people have shared their stories with me since taking over the role of the shadow Minister for homelessness. I will remind myself of those stories as we, as members of Parliament, shape policies, hopefully, by working cooperatively with the Government, but certainly with an emphasis on HousingFirst.

HousingFirst is a broad initiative that will ensure that we put housing front and centre of everything we do to address homelessness or to assist people fleeing from domestic violence issues within their family. It means that we will give people the building blocks upon which they can grow, the engagement with their community that they need, the services wrapped around them and the ability for them to rebuild their lives. I know everyone in this place cares about homelessness. I know everyone in this place has heard stories about homelessness. I say to everyone in this place: Advocate and agitate within your parties and within your communities so that we as a Parliament can make sure that HousingFirst is front and centre for the 2023 election. I want to ensure that New South Wales is front and centre and the best in the world when it comes to addressing homelessness. This Parliament can deal with the homelessness issue in a bipartisan manner, but it requires all of us to always remember the Troys and Paulines of the world and to ensure that we put housing first.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:54): I express my concern for Troy and Pauline. It sounds like the member for Keira is doing all he can to look out for their welfare and wellbeing. I recommend that he also discuss the situation with either me, as Parliamentary Secretary, or the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. I know he has had a good working relationship with the Minister for a very long time. If there is anything that can be done to support Troy and Pauline or ensure that they are not sleeping in their car or undertaking any kind of unnecessary hardship then that should be done. We need to make sure those supports are available to them. I know the member for Keira is aware of Link2home and that there is record funding for homelessness at the moment. But we should ensure that that funding goes to the right place and that those services are utilised by the people who need them the most.

DROUGHT

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (17:55): I once again update the New South Wales Parliament and my colleagues on the terrible situation that regional New South Wales and the Tamworth electorate is facing due to the lack of rain. This drought has been the worst in living memory. Wherever I go in the Tamworth electorate I try to ask people how they are coping. Regardless of

what they do—whether they are running a farming enterprise, a small business or a family business, or whether they are a worker or a contractor—I want to know how they are coping. Every business is affected by this drought, which some are saying we may not have seen the worst of yet. I can update the community that in Tamworth just a few days ago the water Minister and the acting Treasurer announced \$50 million for emergency drought initiatives.

We need to do everything we can to ensure that the water we have at the moment is conserved for as long as possible. The 60,000 people of Tamworth rely on Chaffey Dam for their water supply, but it is not just about the city itself: It is about everything around it, including the farming sector, the industrial estates, the meat processing plants, the intensive livestock industries, the hospitals, the correctional facilities and the families that rely on fresh running water when they turn on their taps. The \$50 million emergency drought initiative fund will look at building a pipeline from Chaffey Dam to the Dungowan intersection so that water can run directly, via the pipeline, from Chaffey Dam through to Tamworth. The fund also includes \$3.5 million to look at options to secure town water for the upper Namoi, including the communities of Barraba and Manilla.

We are thinking about the long-term water security of Walcha, which is in dire straits. There has been \$1.5 million allocated to start looking at an off-creek storage for Walcha's permanent water supply. In addition to the work that we are doing to conserve as much water as possible for as long as possible, we are also working day and night to get a new Dungowan dam built in the Tamworth electorate. That dam will increase the water capacity for the city and its surrounds. We are seeking the support of the Federal Government in this endeavour, as well as Tamworth Regional Council, which has done the geotechnical work to start the process. While we are looking at emergency drought initiatives, we also need to think about long-term water security.

We need to get better at managing the water in our rivers, dams and catchments. In previous years Federal governments, State governments and local governments have not done a good enough job managing water when we had it. I implore all three tiers of government to not lose focus of how critical this precious resource is when it rains again—and it will rain again—and our dams and rivers are full, our paddocks are green and we are growing crops, and fattening cattle and stock. We need to think very carefully about what we do in the future to conserve water. We cannot take our eyes off the ball and say, "It will be right; let's worry about that another day." In the meantime we will do everything we can to conserve as much water as we can for as long as possible. I implore the community to continue to pray for rain. One day it will rain again. Then we will continue to do everything we can to make sure that we are never in this situation again.

FAR SOUTH COAST SURF LIFE SAVING

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (18:00): We are fortunate to have amazing volunteers on the Far South Coast, and today I acknowledge and thank our local surf life saving volunteers and congratulate them on their work to keep our local beaches and communities safe. On Saturday 31 August Surf Life Saving NSW hosted the annual Awards of Excellence. I am honoured to say that 14 clubs and individuals of the Far South Coast branch were finalists at the awards. We ended up winning three of those award categories, plus an added extra. Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club was awarded the President's Medal and, most appropriately, life membership of Surf Life Saving NSW was bestowed to the late Donald Hay of the Pambula Surf Life Saving Club. I acknowledge Donald's wife, Maria, who was there to receive the award, and their son, Jack.

The Surf Life Saving Far South Coast branch was named Branch of the Year for the second year running. I pay tribute to President Tony Rettke—who is a long-time personal friend of mine—for what he has achieved. The branch has done an amazing job. It runs several inclusive surf education programs and new carnival formats. Last year the branch responded to 35 emergency call-outs, supported by the combined efforts of its seven clubs and the support operations team. The branch, in partnership with other emergency services, has championed the development of new processes for remote search and rescue incidents, and has been recognised for leading the way with multi-agency operations with the police and State Emergency Services. The branch has always been there for the community, going above and beyond just surf patrol.

The Volunteer of the Year award went to Wendy Law, an incredible volunteer for the Broulee Surfers Surf Life Saving Club. Wendy has been a volunteer since joining in 2005 and is a hardworking, well-respected member of the club. Her award clearly highlights the respect so many across Surf Life Saving NSW have for her. It is highly deserved. The Innovation of the Year award went to the Far South Coast branch support operations team, which has become a highly respected and integral part of the emergency services. The team was recently tasked with identifying new and innovative ways to improve traditional operational responses. The result was outstanding new capabilities that are first of their kind in the State. Club call-out teams, jetski operators and drone pilots have all been involved. I saw firsthand the benefit of the drone pilot program, especially with the spotting of sharks and identifying their threats to swimmers and surfers on local beaches. Every piece of technology we

are able to offer any of our emergency services will better protect our communities and visitors. The surf lifesaving movement is leading the way in that innovation.

The President's Medal went to Cheryl McCarthy from the Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club. Cheryl embodies what being a volunteer surf lifesaver is all about. She is highly respected in the branch and throughout Bermagui for her leadership, enthusiasm and commitment. She is a fantastic role model. Cheryl currently holds multiple positions, including Far South Coast director of lifesaving, branch duty officer and director of administration at Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club. She is a member of multiple committees and working groups advising on policies and procedures at the State and national level. We are very fortunate to have Cheryl as part of the Bermagui team. There is no doubt that her contribution to the far south coast branch is absolutely integral.

On a sad note—but something very important—life membership was bestowed on Donald Hay. Don obtained his Bronze Medallion in 1980 and quickly became involved in all aspects of the club. He became club president in 1994—a role he held for 17 years straight and for a further two seasons from 2014. Don achieved life member status at Pambula Surf Life Saving Club in 1997 and at the Far South Coast branch in 2008. However, his life membership in Surf Life Saving NSW was his final achievement prior to his passing in March this year. Don's life membership is the ultimate recognition of his hard work and dedication to a club he loved so dearly. He was passionate, devoted, and loved and admired by so many.

I acknowledge Maria and their son, Jack, and thank them both for their support of Don and of the surf lifesaving movement, through which he touched so many lives at Pambula Surf Life Saving Club and at the Far South Coast branch. I give a huge call-out and thanks to our local surf clubs: Batemans Bay, Broulee, Moruya, Narooma, Bermagui, Tathra and Pambula. I cannot tell members what it means to have strong leadership at the branch level. I also pay tribute to Tony Rettke and his wife, Judy—but particularly Tony, who has led an outstanding branch for many years. I know he was as proud as punch when he saw the branch take out so many awards at the State awards. I congratulate him and the surf lifesaving movement.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:06): An article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* this morning mentioned "The 'tweak' coming to Sydney's vast golf courses". Apparently this is a plan by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, for parklands. My big problem with it is that when it comes to planning and parklands, this Government has a very poor record. In fact, when it comes to planning of any description, the Government has a poor record. Wentworth Point in my electorate has wall-to-wall high-rises, basically, along the whole peninsula. Parklands were promised there before the school opened at Wentworth Point. The parks were meant to open in 2016. The school opened two years ago and is already at capacity. The park—last on the priority list, of course—has not been built. Wentworth Point school is at capacity. Newington Public School now has 21 demountables; the Government's response to that is to schedule 5,500 dwellings for the Carter Street precinct. But the Government was good about it: It put in a planning mechanism to say, "That's all right, because we will give you a primary school there," according to the Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment.

However, the message does not seem to have got through to Education, because all the apartments are nearly finished and guess what? There is no school. There are 5,500 dwellings going in, no extra school, and a school at Newington that is already overflowing—so much so that it had to take land off Sydney Olympic Park that it cannot build anything on because it is marshland. That is the Government's idea of planning. I hope it has a better plan than tweaking a few golf courses to come up with parklands for Sydney, because we have seen what this Government does with parks. It tweaks them, alright: It runs light rail across them, like it has done in the city and at Robin Thomas Reserve. It whacks car parks on them, which is what it is doing at Parramatta parklands. But now the good news, according to Rob Stokes, is that we have plenty of space in Sydney and we have been pretty lazy about the way we have allocated it. Yes, we have been pretty lazy—because we keep building things on it.

The reality is that just tweaking golf courses is not a solution. The idea of putting bike tracks around golf courses is an old one. In fact, Cycling NSW has been pushing to have bike tracks around the edges of golf courses. It is a fantastic idea because it separates cyclists—particularly road riders—away from mainstream traffic. But it costs money. The Government says it has a plan for what it is going to achieve, but it does not have any money or infrastructure to put it in. The article mentioned that 700 synthetic football fields are needed just for the growth of Sydney. That is about \$729 million, which sounds like a familiar amount—oh, it is about the cost of one stadium. The Government could have built its synthetic football fields, but it did not; it built its stadium. When it comes to what it says is needed just for Sydney's growth alone, the Government talks a big talk but does not actually deliver anything.

We can see this in the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, which was a \$33 million project that was supposed to go across Sydney. There is a big arc out there in western Sydney where 1.3 million people live, and

the Government is pretty selective about where the grants have gone out there. Most of the grants have gone to the North Shore and the inner city. They did not go to the Blacktown local government area[LGA]; they did not go to the Fairfield LGA; they did not go to the Liverpool LGA; they did not go to the Campbelltown LGA; and they did not go to the Canterbury-Bankstown LGA. That is 1.3 million people who did not get a grant.

Then three grants went to the Penrith LGA. Do not get me wrong: I do not say that was a marginal seat the Government was fighting over. There was one in western Sydney: It was in Granville. The member for Granville might say that she had a pretty hard-run fight for that. The other two went to Camden and Wollondilly. I would have thought that if the Government was serious about addressing the places where people do not get to play sport and where costs have the biggest impact then Blacktown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Canterbury-Bankstown would be on the top of its list. Looking at the Active Kids rebate—the Government will not give us the actual figures for how many vouchers have been used—

Mr Mark Coure: It is on the website. Check it out.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ: Around 30 per cent of vouchers have been downloaded. Yes, that is right: What is on the website is how many vouchers have been issued. What is not on the website is how many vouchers are actually used. It does not matter how many times or in what iteration you ask the department or the Minister how many have been used; they will give you some nonsense answer about how many have been downloaded. It is just not good enough from this Government.

ST GEORGE DISTRICT ATHLETICS CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:11): I inform the House of the fantastic work of the St George District Athletics Club as it approaches its centenary in 2021. Athletics currently has over 35,000 participants across the country and has produced some of Australia's greatest sporting legends, including Betty Cuthbert and Cathy Freeman. With track and field events ranging from long-distance running to high jump to shotput to javelin, athletics is a sport that accommodates all skill sets and ability levels. Locally in my community, St George District Athletics Club is one of the oldest continuously running athletics clubs in New South Wales. Its members have included 12 Olympians and Paralympians, such as Daniel Batman—who went to St Joseph's in Oatley, as I did—and four-time world record holder the great Albie Thomas, OAM. The club's current ranks include national representative Bridie Delaney and Paralympian Nicole Harris.

The club has been pivotal in shaping the role of athletics in the St George area. It has provided training in a range of events for athletes from across the St George community. It boasts an impressive list of athletes who have gone on to compete in national and international championships. I will share some of the club's successes. This year Jasmin Lockwood competed in the Melanesian Championships in Vanuatu and placed first in the under-18 female javelin event. This is an incredible event and the win is an achievement that Jasmin and her family should be extremely proud of.

Lauren Carey of Riverwood is a local girl who boasts an exceptional young career. In January this year Lauren made her debut at the six-kilometre cross-country at the national titles in Canberra, ultimately being selected for the world under-20 junior cross-country championships in Denmark. Although only 15, Lauren produced the best Australian result in 10 years, finishing sixteenth behind the traditional powerhouses of Kenya, Ethiopia and Japan. Lauren also excels on the track, where she not only accumulates Little Athletics titles over 1,500 metres and 3,000 metres, but also achieves open medals at the Athletics NSW competition. I congratulate Lauren and her family.

Although not part of my electorate, congratulations must also be extended to Andrew Goschnik of Carlton and Billy Humberstone of Cronulla. These talented young men hold distinguished hurdling records and were selected to represent Australia at the Oceania Area Championships in Townsville. Nationally, the club had numerous athletics places in the New South Wales track and field championships as well as the New South Wales relay championships. The under 18 women's javelin team managed to break the New South Wales record by an astonishing 22.58 metres. Achievements like that demonstrate the extremely high calibre of the athletes who train with the club. They make me proud to be a member of our great local community. The club is also great for those who just want to be active and give athletics a go.

St George District Athletics Club provides opportunities for athletes as young as five years old as well as some of our most senior citizens. Between keeping fit, making friends and enjoying nature, it is no wonder that the red and whites have so many happy and loyal members. Although athletics is an individual sport, members of the St George District Athletics Club have the opportunity to be part of a friendly, welcoming community, forming relationships that last a lifetime. There is a plethora of benefits to staying active. Exercise not only improves physical fitness but also keeps the mind active and is essential for mental and emotional wellbeing. I am proud to say that this Government is committed to supporting clubs like the St George District Athletics Club and also to

supporting general health and exercise across the State. Initiatives such as the Active Kids program are encouraging children to join clubs such as the St George District Athletics Club. On behalf of our local community I congratulate Chris Stratford and the whole team of the St George District Athletics Club on their success as a club and thank them for their immense contribution to our local community.

BROTHER ANTHONY BOYD

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (18:15): The Lane Cove electorate is tremendously fortunate to have an abundance of men and women selflessly devoted to our community, those willing to stand up and be stewards of our environment, our local sports clubs and, most importantly, our youth. These can be difficult times for young people making their way in a rapidly changing world. However, with a firm hand and a kind word, they can be guided to see their potential realised. Brother Anthony has been the mentor that so many young men of Lane Cove have needed as they have grown up and prepared for the real world.

As a young student from Yass in New South Wales, Brother Anthony Boyd attended St Joseph's College Hunters Hill as a boarder from 1964 to 1969. His late parents, Ray and Pat Boyd, were loyal supporters of the college and the Marist Brothers. Always close to the institute of the Marist Brothers, they were both buried from the college chapel in recent years. Upon completing his Higher School Certificate, Brother Anthony joined the Marist Brothers and completed the postulancy and novitiate in Mittagong. In 1971 he took his first vows in the Joeys chapel and his final profession as a Marist brother in the chapel in 1979. After teacher training and study, Brother Anthony was appointed in 1975 to the staff of St Joseph's College. Remarkably, for some 40 years St Joseph's College would witness his extraordinarily gifted pastoral care, remarkable leadership and administrative skills, effectiveness as a teacher, expertise as a coach and inspirational commitment as a Marist brother. Brother Anthony was appointed deputy headmaster at Joeys in 1997, a position he has held with much distinction and respect for the past 23 years.

Brother Anthony is also very well known for having made a remarkable contribution to schoolboy sport, particularly rowing and rugby. In rowing he has coached crews in a wide variety of boats, from junior crews to senior eights, and has experienced much success—indeed, against crews that I rowed in. In rugby Brother Anthony as a coach is held in the highest regard nationally and has coached junior, senior, Great Public Schools, State and Australian representative teams. No fewer than 10 current and former Wallabies affectionately claim Tony as their formative coach. His exceptional understanding of the game, his ability to communicate and his motivational skills have helped his players not only achieve much success but also grow in character, personality and philosophical outlook as young men. Apart from his extraordinary success as a teacher and coach, one of Brother Anthony's greatest strengths is his ability to support and assist boys who have experienced adversity or tragedy in their lives. A common question from old boys is, "How's Boydie? You know I wouldn't have survived Joeys if it wasn't for that bloke".

Much can be made from the appreciation of the six headmasters with whom Brother Anthony has served as deputy. Each of them at different times has attested to his invaluable assistance and loyal support to them in the discharging of their onerous duties as headmasters. As a former St Joseph's College headmaster, Ross Tarlinton, OAM, wrote in his final report in 2017, "He is a friend in the deepest sense of the word, and I have no doubt that when the next edition of the history of the college is written, Tony Boyd will be a significant figure." It pleases me this evening to inform the House that Brother Anthony Boyd is an outstanding Marist educator. He transitions to retirement at the end of 2019. On behalf of a grateful Parliament, the St Joseph's community and the broader New South Wales community, we congratulate and thank him for his extraordinary service over more than 40 years to Marist education and the wellbeing of so many. Again we wish Brother Anthony all the very best in his retirement, including great health. I look forward to seeing him at the next Riverview versus St Joseph's match where I say, quite proudly, the Catholics will always win.

REGIONAL HEALTH CARE

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (18:20): Today I wish to speak about health care in regional New South Wales. At the outset I want to acknowledge that Minister Brad Hazzard has been incredibly accessible to me since I was elected. The four local health districts have also been extremely easy to engage with, and I thank them for their cooperation. However, there is something that predates the entry of all of us to this place. Shockingly, in the Far West of New South Wales my constituents can expect to live three fewer years than their western New South Wales neighbours and 6.5 fewer years than their city cousins.

Twenty years ago those in the Far West lived two years longer than the city dwellers. How do I know this? I know it because the healthcare system is one of the most monitored systems in this State. Everything from emergency waiting times and causes of death to patients' satisfaction with their hospital meals is measured. So how has this been allowed to happen? When there is so much information about what is happening in the system,

why are we faced with the stark numbers that show life expectancy has gone backwards for people in this State? The numbers do not lie. The stories are too confronting to deny that there are serious problems with regional health services. When people get sick, when people get hurt or when parents see their children in pain, we must put them at the centre of care. The people of Barwon want better health outcomes. We need a healthcare system that delivers for our communities, patients, carers and families because at the end of the day, as the saying goes, this is people's lives we are talking about.

Since the recent episode of *Four Corners* went to air, my inbox has been flooded and people have been on the phone to tell me about their issues with health services. An elderly couple in my electorate drive a 200 kilometre round trip three times a week, at their own expense, for cancer treatment. A nurse recently told me about her experience keeping a premature baby alive, breathing for him using a bag for over two hours while they waited for an air ambulance. A gentleman who was having chest pains was told by 000 staff that he would need to get himself to hospital because there was no ambulance available, only to arrive at the hospital to find there was no doctor available.

To me, the story that hit home hardest in the past couple of days came from a gentleman named Martin in Quambone. Martin messaged me about his wife, Jacinta, who has recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. It took almost seven months—including two months of being treated for misdiagnosed arthritis—for a series of locum doctors to diagnose metastasised pancreatic cancer. Following this diagnosis, Martin and Jacinta were told they would have to wait four weeks to see an oncologist. Jacinta will die in her early fifties. Had she received a diagnosis earlier her cancer may have been treatable. Martin and Jacinta have been robbed of their life together. Martin says Jacinta has accepted that her experience is the price they must pay for living where they live.

I do not accept that this is the price someone needs to pay for living in the country. Our hospitals in Barwon cannot deliver basic services like setting a fracture or performing minor surgeries so we put people in ambulances and send them to hospitals hours away. When they are discharged they are often expected to find their own way back again. They can be hours away from their support networks so they put a call in for someone to come and get them. What they are really asking is for someone to take time off work, days potentially, and spend money on fuel to come and get them.

I ask today: Is that acceptable? Is this a system that is putting the needs of people first or is it a system that is putting the bottom line and centralisation above the people it is there to help? Under the current Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme—the scheme designed to support people who need to travel long distances to access treatment not available locally—people receive 22¢ per kilometre travelled. If they need accommodation, they will get back \$43 a night if they are away from home for less than a week. Think about where they are travelling to. It is likely a regional centre or Sydney. Where can they stay for \$43 a night in those places? And factor in that for them to travel a fair distance away from home they will need to fill their car with fuel, they will need meals and they will have likely taken a couple of days off work. Members would now start to get a picture of how much of a burden is placed on people in the Far West when they need to access specialist medical services.

This is how we have ended up in our current situation. In rural areas there are higher rates of smoking, harmful use of alcohol, melanoma, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, mental health concerns and, sadly, suicide. But who is going to try to get some care when they are likely to be sent away to see someone? Where are they going to find the days to travel and the extra cash to afford it? I have found that people do not go and they end up sicker. It is unacceptable that they cannot get the care and medical attention they rightfully deserve. The Government cannot continue to put regional health care in the too-hard basket. Communities in regional New South Wales rightfully demand better and, frankly, they deserve it.

WRAN LEISURE AND AQUATIC CENTRE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (18:25): Today I draw the attention of the House to the Wran Leisure and Aquatic Centre, an important recreational facility to the community of Villawood. Built in 1978 and opened by its namesake, then Labor Premier Mr Neville Wran, the Wran, as it is affectionately known, was built with the purpose of serving and supporting the local community of Villawood. The Villawood community is over-represented by residents in social, community and subsidised housing who do not have access to a backyard pool or private transport. For most local residents, the Wran provides access to their only local public pool within walking distance of the heart of Villawood. However, the facility, which once boasted a variety of activities, has been largely neglected in recent years and could be revitalised to better serve our local community again.

Recently at its ordinary meeting on 27 August the City of Canterbury Bankstown council resolved to adopt its Leisure and Aquatic Strategic Plan 2018, which recommends the permanent closure of the Wran Leisure and Aquatic Centre, despite widespread community opposition. Along with several local residents and stakeholders, I attended and addressed the council meeting to voice my concern on behalf of the local community

and highlight the disadvantages that the community of Villawood already faces. We also drew the council's attention to the lack of consultation with significant local stakeholders, including Villawood East Public School, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, the Woodville Alliance and the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre. None of these organisations or stakeholders was consulted or notified about the council's pending decision regarding the Wran Leisure and Aquatic Centre.

The basis of the council's Leisure and Aquatic Strategic Plan 2018 is the North West Local Area Plan, which was adopted by the then Bankstown Council in 2013. The North West Local Area Plan acknowledged the Wran Leisure and Aquatic Centre as "a key community asset" that "accommodates a swimming pool" and the plan foreshadowed the future redevelopment of the Wran leisure centre due to the building's age and structural limitations. The North West Local Area Plan did not specify that the redeveloped centre would not include aquatic facilities. It was widely assumed by my community that the existing services provided by the Wran Leisure and Aquatic Centre would be incorporated into any new redeveloped facility.

Sadly, the Leisure and Aquatic Strategic Plan recommends the permanent closure of the Wran leisure centre and the investigation of opportunities for a new community centre at a different park in Villawood. The new centre would not have a pool; it would just be a simple community centre. The council's strategic plan was publicised by way of a flyer distributed in Villawood, including to local schools. Consistent with the North West Local Area Plan, the flyer did not indicate the loss of Villawood's aquatic facility. I believe the material that this council provided to residents was misleading. It has become increasingly clear that under the strategic plan adopted by the council, any community centre that may be constructed to replace the Wran will not be an improvement upon the existing facility and certainly will not include a pool.

In making the decision, the council and the mayor—who was dogmatic in his approach of shutting down the pool—assured those present at the meeting that the Wran would not be closed this year, next year or the one after that. However, a letter from the mayor dated 28 August 2019, which I received on 3 September 2019, clearly suggests that there is settlement and cracking around the pool area which may be beyond short-term repair. For the council to suggest that this is a cost issue is not acceptable. No attempt has been made to seek either Federal or State funding. I have formally asked both the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans whether the council had indeed sought any grant funding from them.

The City of Canterbury Bankstown council has allocated \$158 million to the delivery of its Leisure and Aquatic Strategic Plan and for other centres across this new, large council but it will shut down the Villawood pool. Residents like Carol Fulton, Nga Bui and Carol Tomkinson are deeply distressed by this decision and I feel for them. At a later date I will produce some of their letters and have them incorporated in *Hansard* because their views should be on the record. I know this is very distressing for the residents but it is a fight that I believe is not over.

MANLY ELECTORATE MY COMMUNITY PROJECT

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:30): I speak in recognition of four organisations and their projects that were successful under this year's My Community Project. Local ideas, local projects and local decisions underpin the My Community Project program. Without a doubt, that describes the projects that were successful in the electorate of Manly. The top-scoring project was submitted by the P&C at Balgowlah North Public School, which has received \$35,000 for an all-weather community sporting hub. The funding will also allow for the construction of a new synthetic sports field that will be used year round by children and families in the North Balgowlah community. This project is part of a broader social and sporting hub program that the P&C and the Department of Education are delivering. It brings the community together whilst promoting active participation in sport. I have been informed that the project is essentially ready and will be delivered within four to six months. This is incredibly exciting for that community.

For those who do not know, Balgowlah North Public School has an open grounds policy, which means the school is the epicentre of recreation for many families and young people in North Balgowlah. It is fantastic to see this community come together, support this project, support this grant program and secure top billing in the electorate of Manly. I congratulate Nick Kuys, president of the Balgowlah North P&C Association, on his stewardship behind the scenes to get this project ready and for locking in all the necessary approvals from the department. I also commend Nick's fellow committee members, Ali Fraser, Nicole Nortmann, Anne-Marie Pickard, Chris Munro, Sadie Melov and Kate Bartlett, for their outstanding work. They are a shining example of the importance of parents and citizens associations in our community and I am proud of the work they do. I look forward to visiting the school with Nick, the P&C and the students to tour the grounds and see the new home of North Balgowlah's all-weather community sporting hub.

The next successful organisation was the Manly Food Co-Op, our own community-owned organic grocery store. Its project includes new equipment and signage for its store on Wentworth Street in Manly, totalling

almost \$23,000. The Manly Co-Op is not just another grocery store; it is a co-operative owned and jointly run by its members and first opened its doors in Manly in 1997. It offers plastic- and waste-free shopping as an alternative to the major supermarkets. It has had a few homes in Manly over the years, but now finds itself on Wentworth Street, just down from my office and across from Manly Village Public School.

The co-op is unique when compared to a regular supermarket in that shoppers collect, weigh and buy only what they need. They usually buy in bulk to save money and to reduce excess packaging and containers. The co-op stocks a wide variety of hundreds of products that are ethically sourced, organic and either low or zero waste. Its products include organic olive oil and local honey from Queenscliff. Importantly, it also stocks regular household items, including natural alternatives to cling wrap and snap-lock bags, reusable straws and lunch boxes. This project embodies the heart of Manly, its environment and the protection of its natural beauty. It is no wonder it was the second most popular project in Manly. I congratulate the co-op, its members and volunteers.

The third successful project in the Manly electorate is the Seaforth Public School Community Nature Playground, sponsored by the Seaforth Public P&C. The P&C is led by its outstanding president, Jeremy White. The project includes \$50,000 that will go towards a new sensory nature playground, with activities to develop children's problem-solving and motor skills. It will be available for use by the entire community. It will occupy a little used space on the school site adjoining the library and overlooking the existing garden.

Seaforth Public School is also partaking in the New South Wales Government's Share Our Space program, which has seen over 300 playgrounds, basketballs courts, ovals and gardens opened to the community over the school holidays. I recognise Corina Crowe from the P&C Association, a qualified project manager with over 10 years' experience, who will be managing the project on behalf of the P&C. It is great to see the breadth of experience that our P&Cs have and can bring to bear on behalf of improving our community facilities. I look forward to touring the facilities with Jeremy, Corina, the P&C, students from Seaforth Public School and the wider community in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, the incredibly exciting project sponsored by the Sydney Institute of Marine Science titled "Celebrating Sydney's Underwater Forests" has received almost \$200,000 for what will be an art-meets-science festival celebrating the importance of the seaweed forests that dot our coastline. Members will have heard me regularly speak about Operation Crayweed, the work of the Sydney Institute of Marine Science and the Lim Sutton Initiative, which re-established crayweed back to the reefs where it once flourished in Sydney's metropolitan area. I believe there is no greater commendation than the support of one's own community, and this project's success proves that. The festival will celebrate this important ecosystem and encourage more people to get involved to not only protect and preserve but also enhance and grow these important marine environments. The Sydney Institute of Marine Science has partnered with Studio TCS, a public art consultancy based in Sydney, to coordinate a collaborative art installation highlighting our important seaweed ecosystems.

HOUSING SUPPLY AND HOMELESSNESS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:35): Recently I hosted a forum on housing affordability, housing supply and homelessness because we cannot address one without the other. When we talk about homelessness, often a lot of solutions or programs are offered. But without a holistic approach and a proper framework from the Government for housing supply and housing affordability, we cannot begin to even tackle homelessness. More than 40 key organisations and stakeholders from the housing sector, the not-for-profit sector and local government attended the forum. The forum was in response to the dire need for affordable housing supply and homelessness support in the Lismore electorate and the wider region.

A large number of people contact me each week seeking support. The many agencies and individuals at the forum were far better qualified than I am to offer proposals and suggestions on how to tackle this serious issue. Some of them have done a lot of work in this area. The recommendations they have put forward are well developed, well thought through and will work, and they are the ones that I am advocating for. As I said at the outset, it is up to the Government to get the framework in order to deliver not only homelessness solutions but also more housing stock. Whether it does that directly or with the community housing sector is something to be worked out. If the Government is unable to do it, then it should allow the community housing sector to do so because it does it well, particularly in my area.

When speaking to the recommendations from the Northern Rivers Housing Forum, I include Tenterfield. The Northern River Housing Forum covers Lismore, Kyogle, Clarence Valley, Richmond Valley, Ballina, Byron and also the Tweed, seven local government areas, and I also have talked with providers in Tenterfield. The six key urgent housing actions that are required are, first, the development of a minimum of 100 additional social housing properties per year for 10 years. We may need more than 250 to clear the existing waitlist and more again for affordable housing. The second key action is to quarantine part of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund [SAHF] for regional areas. There is no actual quarantine for regional and rural areas. A lot of that fund will,

understandably, be gobbled up in the city but we need our fair share in the regions. From 2012 to 2018 there were only about 18 SAHF developments in my area.

Third, traditional accommodation for clients of specialist homelessness services must be increased by 150 properties. This is essential to relieve the pressure on the limited crisis service in the Northern Rivers and to support people in the transition to longer-term housing. Fourth, additional homelessness support funding must be allocated for the Northern Rivers. This should include proper funding of 24/7 youth and adult crisis services and rough sleeper outreach programs. The fifth urgent action is to redevelop Housing NSW properties to deliver better quality and higher densities in appropriate allocations. Sixth, existing planning instruments that support affordable housing developments must be extended to the northern New South Wales local government areas. I know not everybody is totally in sync with that, but it is something that the people in the sector say is desperately needed. The North Coast Community Housing in 2018 commissioned an independent report on the whole issue. The six recommendations of that report are:

- Make more public land (both State and council) available at low/no cost for social and affordable housing projects
- Devise a coordinated Northern Rivers housing strategy, with extra State Government funding
- Introduce a mandatory 5% to 10% affordable housing inclusion in all new larger housing developments
- Make current Government social housing initiatives better suited to regional areas, and match the need
- Leverage the role of community housing providers, including transferring more public housing
- Government to provide "gap funding" to make viable the delivery of more social/affordable housing.

I note a few statistics. Many Northern Rivers locations are among the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas in New South Wales; homelessness rates increased by 23 per cent from 2011 to 2016; and the region's share of the estimated 500,000 new social and affordable dwellings needed by 2026 is around 6,200. There is a lot of work to do.

MIRANDA ELECTORATE MY COMMUNITY PROJECT

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:40:3): I acknowledge the Sylvania Heights Community and Youth Clubs and the Sutherland Shire Netball Association, which were the successful recipients of the My Community Project grant for the Miranda electorate. Thanks to the NSW Generations Fund, the New South Wales Government is investing \$24.68 million in projects across New South Wales to help improve the wellbeing of people and communities. I am delighted that the Miranda electorate will benefit from \$238,679 of funding provided by the My Community Project, which is all about local ideas, local projects and local decisions. The Sylvania Heights Community and Youth Club is the successful recipient of \$200,000, which will contribute to the modernisation of the club's facilities.

Founded in 1958 through the determination of Sylvania Heights residents, the club is a not-for-profit community organisation with a primary focus on sporting and recreational activities for all ages and genders. Today the club has over 1,400 individual participants registered across a range of activities provided throughout the year, including cricket, football, physical culture, calisthenics and jujitsu. Given that the club has been in operation for over 60 years and provides facilities for a number of activities, the refurbishment of its facilities will continue to boost community engagement and togetherness. My Community Project funding will contribute to the inclusion of female-friendly amenities and the refitting of existing change rooms to support the diverse range of community activities and major sports provided by the club.

Last week I had the pleasure of visiting participants, staff and the executive committee of the club to congratulate them on their successful application and to see the important role the club plays in the community firsthand. I particularly acknowledge president Trent Jordan, vice president Peter Barker, secretary Jenny Buchanan, treasurer Tony Robbins, registrar Sue Foster and the very hardworking representative of the football club Chris Plakias. The continued success of this club would not be possible without the dedication of this team. I thank them for continuing to bring our community together through a mutual love of sport.

I am pleased that the Sutherland Shire Netball Association has also been successful in its My Community Project application and will receive \$38,679 for the installation of nine sun-safe shelters at our local Bellingara netball complex. The shelters will not only provide members with protection from the weather but also serve as meeting points, storage of netball equipment throughout the day and as a place of general belonging. The Sutherland Shire Netball Association was inaugurated in 1960 and is the biggest netball association in New South Wales today, comprising 24 teams from across the shire. The Bellingara netball complex in Miranda is home to 34 sealed courts, including an indoor stadium, which is frequented by junior, intermediate and senior competitions.

Last month I was privileged to attend the association's fifty-ninth annual grand finals and presentations. I commend the association's executive committee, who were instrumental in ensuring a successful season, as

always. I thank president Karen Salter, vice president Anne Heptinstall, secretary Prue Haberecht, treasurer Margaret Burke, registrars Shirley Way, Kerry Phillips, Jenny Rees, Diana Marjoram and Tammy Moussa, tournament representative Maureen Finch, coaching coordinator Nerida Noble, representative liaison officer Sue Woods and umpires convener Dianne MacLachlan for their dedication to the great sport of netball and the hundreds of players who are registered with the association.

Whilst both Sylvania Heights Community and Youth Club and Sutherland Shire Netball Association were successful applicants of the My Community Project program, I note that there were many other projects that sought to make our community more liveable, cultural, accessible, safe, revitalised and healthy. I was pleased to observe all of the applications submitted; they really did have our local community needs at the forefront of their submissions. For this reason I am pleased that applications for the New South Wales Community Building Partnership program are currently open. Like the My Community Project initiative, the New South Wales Community Building Partnership program awards grants for community infrastructure projects.

In 2019 incorporated not-for-profit community organisations and local councils are eligible to apply for grants of between \$2,500 and \$300,000. I encourage all not-for-profit community organisations to engage with the program and submit their applications before 5.00 p.m. on 27 September. I take this opportunity to congratulate both Sylvania Heights Community and Youth Club and Sutherland Shire Netball Association on their successful My Community Project applications, and encourage all not-for-profit community groups in the Miranda electorate to apply for the New South Wales Community Building Partnership program. These groups are truly the backbone of our community and the beating heart of the shire. I thank them, as always, for contributing to making our shire the best place to live, work and raise a family.

WARRAGAMBA DAM

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:45): Tonight I speak about the New South Wales Liberal Government's plan to raise the Warragamba Dam wall and flood the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in a cynical and dishonest exercise to open up flood-prone land for property developers along the Hawkesbury-Nepean River. I have spoken about this issue in this House a number of times and I have also outlined my concerns about the real motivation of the Liberals in pursuing this agenda. But I now wish to further explain why the proposal to raise the dam wall is not just a bad idea but also a dishonest proposal. I am also concerned to see scaremongering being funded by the New South Wales Government and the State Emergency Service [SES] being politicised to support billboards and newspaper advertising that seek to panic the people of western Sydney and the Hawkesbury about their exposure to flood risk.

It is distressing to see the SES being politicised. It is shameful that the Government impacts the integrity of our SES. I express my fulsome support for the SES, but I must leap to its defence when I see the frank and fearless advice of public servants being used to push a nakedly political agenda that has its basis in supporting a property development agenda along the flood plains of the Nepean and the Hawkesbury. As the member for Penrith said when he cast his arm out wide down at Penrith Lakes: There will be development for as far as the eye can see. Standing in an empty field next to a flood level marker he said, "As far as the eye can see, to that tree line, all the way around, that's the urban development land."

As the shadow Minister for emergency services, I am very concerned to see the SES being drawn into a Liberal Party political campaign, and its reputation, the goodwill that exists for the service, and the trust that people have placed in the service being used for a brazen scare campaign. This is especially troubling when you consider that the Emergency Services Levy, which funds so much of the work of the SES, is raised by a tax on individual insurance policy holders. Essentially, the Liberal Party is funding a dishonest scare campaign using the hip-pocket contributions of ordinary residents. Instead of paying for vital emergency response and rescue equipment, the Emergency Services Levy is now being used to fund Liberal Party propaganda. The upper House is conducting an inquiry into the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. The submissions it has received—including my own, I might add—make interesting reading. These submissions present the facts about flood risk. The former Liberal Mayor and a serving Liberal Councillor on Blue Mountains City Council, Daniel Myles, who opposes the proposal to raise the wall, makes the following point:

Of particular concern is the large amount of high ground draining into the River below the Dam. From the Dam to Windsor is approximately 61 kilometres of River. This includes all the flow from the Grose River, Colo River and MacDonald River not to mention Glenbrook and Erskine Creeks near the Dam and many more tributaries which do not even have names. Things get worse below Sackville where the River receives runoff from both sides.

The flood risk arises not because of a lack of capacity in the Warragamba Dam, but because of a convergence of multiple river systems at Richmond and Windsor, and the tidal effects present as far up river as Ebenezer. Perhaps most distressing, however, is the advice of Professor Jamie Pittock from the Australian National University, who said:

The NSW Government's strategy for managing flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is predicated on allowing more people to move into harm's way ... Flood risk has been exacerbated by local councils and the NSW Government approving housing developments on low lying lands over several decades.

I also note the advice provided to the Department of Planning by Molino Stewart in 2012, which identified choke points and bottlenecks in the road network, which presented a risk to human life in a flood event. In more than 50 per cent of the subsectors from which residents and businesses would need to be evacuated, the major risk factor was not the flood itself, but the capacity of the road network to handle the traffic that would arise during an evacuation. We have a scenario where the proposal being put forward will not actually reduce flood risk enough to prevent a major flood scenario and that will be used to justify a huge development agenda. Shame.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:50): It is disappointing that the member for Blue Mountains would put a bunch of [words expunged] on the public record and would completely mislead this House when it comes to the proposal to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam. The reality is that this has nothing to do with development, and the member for Blue Mountains knows it.

Ms Trish Doyle: It has everything to do with development; everything.

Mr MATT KEAN: It has nothing to do with development, and the member for Blue Mountains knows it. In fact, we should be ruling out having any development because of the raising of the flood plain, then the Labor Party will have no scaremongering to do on this issue. The reality is that this is a recommendation because of a body of work by Infrastructure NSW. It is not about development: It is about the safety of citizens. The member for Blue Mountains knows full well that the Government is currently reviewing that recommendation, and how we can mitigate risk to life and property in the Nepean River. We will do that through an independent process; the Government has not made a decision. For the member for Blue Mountains to come in here and [words expunged] to the House and misrepresent the reality, which is that it is focused on protecting lives and citizens, is an absolute disgrace.

OXLEY ELECTORATE SPORTING CLUBS

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (18:51:5): Madam Deputy Speaker, I speak on a subject that we both love, and that is Australian Rules Football. I congratulate the remarkable and talented sports people—men and women, boys and girls—across my electorate. As we go into final seasons, we have had some extraordinary achievements from some of the best. But I am so proud of our Aussie Rules contributors from Kempsey who have played an incredible part in a very successful premiership side. Local Aussie Rules great Bert Holten from Kempsey passed on his remarkable skills and dedication to the game not to one, but to four of his Indigenous grandchildren. Just like the Sunrise Team brothers in the 1950s—Les, Colin, Stan, Angus, Vincent and Bert—67 years later it was a privilege and an absolute honour to watch Royce, 21; Shayden, 19; Leithem, 16; and Quenten, 14, keep the family tradition alive.

It just so happens that I was to be at the opening of the new stadium at Coffs Harbour, a magnificent structure funded by the Federal Government and the local council. Two years previous my son was a two-point deficit from winning the A reserve grand final at that very stadium. These magnificent young men and athletes—Royce, Shayden, Leithem and Quenten—all contributed to their team's premiership success, the A-grade Breakers, which came up victorious with a score of 104.76 over the Sawtell Saints 71.24 in the reserve. These remarkable young men's talents were not only noticed on grand final day but throughout the season, with Shayden awarded best and fairest for the season and best on ground on the day, as well as marking his debut for the Sydney Swans reserve team earlier in the year. In addition 14-year-old Quenten picked up best and fairest for the Valley Eagles and captained the North Coast representative team.

The Macleay Valley Eagles Australian Rules Football side are an extraordinary group of people out of Kempsey. They have created this talent pool—Macleay Valley fields teams in the under 11s, under 13s, under 15s and the youth girls 13 to 17. A lot of these kids are also in our Clontarf academy at the local high school. They are amazing young people and I am so proud to watch them play the great game of Australian Rules football. Some people tell me about another game called football, but I call it soccer. On Sunday three junior teams took the field under smoky conditions because of the fires in the Guy Fawkes National Park. I have to say there is something about Bellingen and football—soccer. The under 12s Bellingen boys demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship with a 1-0 win over Urunga. The outstanding sportsmanship continued with the under 14s girls. However, following a controversial penalty kick being awarded to Sawtell, the team lost 1-0. I look forward to the Champion of Champions games of the under 14s girls and under 15s boys next weekend.

The senior Bello's team delivered on the pitch as well as with a nail-biting division 1 men's game against Coutts Crossing and were up one-nil early in the match. Despite dominating most of the possession and creating many opportunities, it was not until the dying minutes of the game that Bello got the equaliser in a penalty finished by Kale Hopper. Bello went on to win 2:1 in extra time. Overall with the Bellingen and Urunga football clubs

there is a very strong presence of soccer—or football, whatever you like to call it—on the mid North Coast. I was fascinated to learn and understand that a lot of the genius and talent came from our Italian immigrants and other immigrants who came to grow bananas. They developed this great game in our shire.

I thank every volunteer and every person who helps because it takes a lot of effort to get teams on the field. Behind the scenes there are a lot of amazing people who work as officials and volunteers and I thank them very much. I also make a call out to Lyndal Sutton who has been working tirelessly to get the Maxwell pool heated. Our officers helped her this week. We got a guarantee from Central Energy that they will get a quote to increase the timing of the transformer for the Maxwell pool because we want it heated nine months of the year. A decision needs to be made by council on this matter by 27 September when the applications are due. Lyndal and Councillor Janine Reed have been working hard on this matter, and I support them in that process.

NORTH SHORE BEAR PIT PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:57): Public speaking is a powerful and invaluable tool especially for young people. Last week I was proud to host the second annual North Shore Bear Pit Public Speaking competition in this place. Fostering the development of public speaking and listening skills, this competition gives students from year 3 to year 6 in my electorate the opportunity to grow and showcase their abilities as confident, articulate public speakers. I am particularly passionate about this competition as, during my university years, I was always an eager debater. I would have loved the opportunity to speak in Parliament as a young student.

After progressing through three competitive rounds within their schools, the finalists joined me in Parliament for the last stage of the competition. Even though there was some crossover with the speaking topics, there was an enormous diversity of views and approaches shared—a diversity not uncommon to this place. An especially popular and amusing subject was "my secret life as a spy" which the kids dove into with much enthusiasm. Other topics included important life lessons such as the ethicality of zoos, the definition of Australian identity and the choice between doing what is right or doing what is popular. I think my colleagues would agree that even for an adult those topics can be hard to tackle. The students of my electorate addressed these challenging issues head-on with impressive and insightful arguments, well beyond the expectations of their age.

Being a good public speaker is about more than just writing; it requires confidence and delivery. I am proud to say that the students of North Shore had no trouble there, as many of the kids seemingly leapt into character the moment they stood up to speak. I thank our three judges who kindly volunteered their time and experience to review the speeches. Chris Davitt is a public speaking coach and past president of Mosman Toastmasters' experience, which enabled him to share his wisdom and feedback with the participants. As the editor of the *Mosman Daily* and *North Shore Times*, Tim McIntyre brought a journalistic flair and an editorial eye to his judging. Helen Minnican, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, brought the inspiring awe of Parliament into the competition, which made it a truly special experience.

I am sure we all agree that it is no easy task for a child to stand up and address this Chamber. I certainly know the immense sense of awe and privilege that comes with speaking in this place. My own career has been built on the opportunity to be a voice for our community and I initiated this competition to ensure that the next generation will feel empowered to have their voices heard. I was so impressed with the courage and confidence with which all of the students spoke in this year's North Shore Bear Bit Public Speaking Competition.

I will acknowledge the students who were finalists from year 3 and year 4. From stage two, I acknowledge Eloise Pagent, Banjo Lieutenant, Allegra Shipley, Soraya Christian-Hare, Zale Mills, Julian Horry-Thew, Sienna Placanica, Charlie Wilson and Finn Duffy who competed. From stage three, I acknowledge: Madeline Hilmer, Jacob Callaway, Sam Hutchison, Scarlett Owenes, Phoebe Sampson, Arabella Keating, Marissa Glezos, and Phillippe-Michel Anquetil. I was delighted to watch as they wittily engaged with the audience and I commend the students who got involved at all levels of the competition throughout their schools. Congratulations to Finn Duffy from St Aloysius Junior School, the winner of stage three, who wowed judges with a theatrical and engaging speech on his secret life as a spy. Runner-up and last year's winner Soraya Christian-Hare of Mosman Public School also gave another memorable speech this year.

I repeat, I am proud to hold the North Shore Bear Pit Public Speaking Competition as I am committed to encouraging and inspiring the future leaders of our communities. I congratulate also Mosman Preparatory School stage three winner Jacob Calloway who spoke thoughtfully on Australian identity, cleverly using some of our iconic Australian colloquialisms to engage with the audience. I am sure it was a tough choice for our judges. Second place went to St Aloysius Junior School student Phillippe-Michel Anquetil who drew on the historic figures of Charles Darwin and Fred Hollows to make a persuasive case in defining Australian identity.

I am so proud of these students—their confidence, their eloquence and their preparedness to tackle the tough issues. Their passion is a testament to the educative success of their teachers, their parents and their schools. I sincerely thank the staff at Queenwood School for Girls, Mosman Preparatory School, St Mary's Primary School, Middle Harbour Public School, Neutral Bay Public School, Blessed Sacrament Primary School, Beauty Point Public School and St Aloysius College for participating in the competition and for running the heats within their schools in preparation for the final. When people have a voice they can change the world; I know these young leaders are going to change the world for the better. Congratulations to all those who participated in the competition. I look forward to seeing these young minds back in this place hopefully as articulate leaders of the future.

ROYAL HOTEL WYONG

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (19:02): The Royal Hotel at Wyong was built on the southern end of Wyong in 1889. Originally it was a wooden structure. The Royal Hotel, which has been an institution in Wyong, has been re-energised under the new ownership of Frank Arangio and Marney McQueen—affectionately known as the queen of Wyong. Frank and Marney have a vision and a plan. We are so lucky that fate brought them to Wyong. Frank worked in the industry with Lion for about 25 years before he decided to jump the bar, so to speak, and become a publican. Marney is one of Australia's most diverse performers, starring on stage, film and television.

Marney has starred in over 600 performances as Marion in *Priscilla Queen of the Desert the Musical*, as the evil Velma Von Tussle in David Atkins' critically acclaimed production of *Hairspray* the musical and was typecast as the villain in Cat Stevens' *Moonshadow* where she played the evil Queen Zeena. Most recently she appeared in *Dream Lover the Musical*—the story of Bobby Darin—alongside David Campbell, Caroline O'Connor and Marina Prior. Frank and Marney have become much loved locals very quickly and they are developing their establishment as a cultural mecca with brilliant shows on a regular basis. They also support local charities and have become involved with community organisations.

On Saturday 7 September 2019 the Saturday Night Spectacular at the Royal Hotel exploded to new heights when they hosted the leading lady of Australian stage, Marina Prior. An Australian favourite, Marina took to the stage to perform a variety of musical classics in an intimate up-close experience. Marina's first professional audition resulted in her first lead role playing Mabel in the Victoria State Opera's *The Pirates of Penzance*. She was subsequently invited to perform the role of Guinevere in *Camelot* alongside Richard Harris. She performed the characters of Jellylorum and Griddlebone in the Australian premiere of *CATS* and as Cosette in the Australian premiere of *Les Miserables*.

Since then Marina Prior has performed the lead role in over twenty productions, including as Christine Daae in *The Phantom of the Opera*, *West Side Story*, *The Secret Garden*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Harp on the Willow* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, for which she won a Green Room Award. More recently she appeared in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, for which she received a Helpmann Award nomination. Marina Prior met Marney McQueen as part of the Melbourne cast of *Dream Lover*. The Royal Hotel was packed as the audience was treated to an up close and personal journey with Marina as she recounted stories, sang favourites and performed a magical duet with Marney. There was hardly a dry eye in the place as Marina performed *Danny Boy*. Her *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Evita*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* covers were also outstanding.

I was pinching myself, mystified by the musical magic all happening in downtown Wyong at the Royal Hotel, not two metres from where I sat. It was certainly a once in a lifetime experience and the crowd just could not get enough. Frank and Marney have made a commitment to Wyong town and this is indicative of the resurgence that Wyong is currently undergoing with new shops, restaurants and cafes springing up in its heritage buildings. The Wyong business chamber has refocused itself on building business in the town. New chairman Matt Lusted, who is driving that focus, is supported by people who love Wyong and wish to see it thrive.

Wyang is home to the Central Coast Council Administration Centre, various government departments, the main police centre for Tuggerah Lakes command and the very good Arthouse Performing Arts Centre. But Wyong needed some passion to help develop the business and restaurant scene and through the fabulous Chapman Building and the recently renovated Wyong Arcade we are seeing that passion developed. Duck, Duck, Moose, Reign Burgers, The Marshmallow Co., Motel Mezza, Hungry Wolf's and Glee Coffee have also added to the food mecca Wyong is becoming. They join Siam Terrace, RU's Chinese Restaurant, Legends Bakery, Railway Café and Osteria A'Mano, to name just a few. The Royal Hotel also serves a mean meal, as does Gennaro's at the Grand Hotel. Unfortunately I don't have time to mention every establishment, but I am sure members will get the picture.

Wyang is fast becoming the eating capital of the Central Coast and people are discovering the culinary excellence—bookings are essential. But back to the Royal Hotel, Frank, Marney and their two beautiful sons who are making a fabulous contribution to our community and sharing their awesome skills to enrich the local flavour

of this heritage town. Transport for NSW can assist with this booming town by funding the upgrade to the town centre and highway. Our community is certainly doing their bit to improve our local area and the offerings therein. Hopefully the Government will join the boom that is Wyong, come on board and invest in a project for which we have waited for more than 10 years. Wyong is a different place to what it was five or 10 years ago. It is becoming a place to be. Wyong is a town of which we can all be very proud.

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH MCKAY MEMORIAL

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:07): The thunder of hooves echoes through this nation's military history. From the waste and tragedy of Gallipoli to the famous mounted charge at Beersheba, we owe much of the peace, strength and stability of the nation to country men and their horses. On Saturday 31 August in the tiny town of Murrumburrah we turned the clock back to before Federation, to the early days of the South Western Slopes settlement and a young man with a dream. In colonial Australia, typified by its rough terrain, vast distances and little to no transport, to ride was to survive.

From the early 1880s horses were used in the pursuit of revolting convicts and bushrangers. The bond between bushie and horse was undeniable and in battle it was powerful. Born in 1869 in Wallendbeen, James Alexander Kenneth Mackay grew up recognising this power most distinctly. In 1885, as a student, Mackay first raised a voluntary cavalry troop—the West Camden Light. After entering politics as the State member for Boorowa in 1895, he continued to promote the notion of an official Australian light horse militia. Thanks to his passion, his advocacy and influence, in 1897 he raised the first Australian Volunteer Light Horse Regiment, which would ultimately become the Australian Light Horse, in Murrumburrah.

Just two years later when war broke out between Britain and the Boers of South Africa, Britain was at first wary of using untried, unprofessional colonial cavalymen. But the slouch-hatted Australian bushies proved themselves to be gun rough-riding horsemen and good shots, fighting expertly for the Imperial cause. Bush life had hardened them. In Murrumburrah we know well the stuff these men were made of. We recognise it still in our sons and daughters today. James Mackay saw the military power and potential in country men and their horses and as a soldier he experienced it firsthand. He was wounded leading a mounted charge with the New South Wales 6th Imperial Bushmen contingent during the Boer War. He later continued his decorated military career as Brigadier of the 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades in 1912.

He was responsible for the establishment of the Australian Army Reserve Force in 1915, and appointed its first director general in 1916. Promoted to Brigadier General he later retired to Major General in 1920, being honoured with the Order of the British Empire the same year. It was an honour to join members of the Mackay family and the Murrumburrah community on the last day of August in recognition and appreciation of a great part of the history of this town and the nation: the Australian Light Horse. Murrumburrah is the very heart and the scene of this great history and it was humbling to be among the family and the community whose ancestors raised such a man as this—a man without whom history would look very different.

Thanks to the stunning work of sculptor Louis Laumen we have immortalised the vision, bravery, dignity and service of Mackay in bronze. I congratulate the Harden Murrumburrah Historical Society, the Murrumburrah Heritage Lt. Horse Troop, the Mackay Family Association and the organising committee for the completion of this wonderful project. It has cast this great story and great man in bronze for generations to come. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, who supported this project with \$140,000 in funding, I thank you all for your dedication to this cause and your passion in delivering a wonderful landmark and a fitting tribute to a hero of our region.

In Murrumburrah now stands a sculpture of Major General, the Hon. James Alexander Kenneth Mackay, CB, OBE, VD, FRGS. But it is also a sculpture of the spirit of this great town, the independence, the bravery, the skill and the sacrifice of the light horse, to which this town will always be home. It was an absolute honour to share this day with you all. I look forward to this memorial helping to share the story of the Major General and his legacy with all that pass it by.

OUR LADY OF MERCY COLLEGE PARRAMATTA

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (19:12): Last month Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta held its 2019 HSC visual arts and technological and applied studies showcase. This year was a special year as the college celebrated its 130th anniversary. The event was a great success. Students, staff, parents, ex-students, board members and other community members filled the Ailsa Mackinnon Community Centre to view the works prior to the awards ceremony. This was the first time the college had presented works from all year groups for both visual arts and technological and applied studies. Well done to all the students on their exemplary works that were on display. Principally the showcase marked the time when the year 12 major projects for visual arts and design and technology were completed.

I extend my congratulations to the year 12 visual arts students on the completion of their visual arts body of works. The works demonstrated deep reflection, creativity and an exploration of important political and social issues, with a particular emphasis on the theme of stewardship—one of the college's eight mercy values—and how that relates to the environment. I also congratulate the year 12 design and technology class whose projects were diverse and demonstrated high-level design thinking and creativity.

I acknowledge the students in year 7 to year 11 in technological and applied studies, visual arts and photography and digital media whose work was also on display. I congratulate the winners: Margaret Maroon for the principal's award; Angela Higginbottom for the highly commended award; Tiana Van Gestel for the design and technology award; Simrat Kaur for visual arts people's choice award; and Rachael Nakhoul for design and technology people's choice award. The awards presented on the evening were selected by the college principal, Mr Stephen Walsh, for excellence in the conceptual and material basis of the project. The showcase is a well-established tradition at the college, running for more than 20 years. It initially began as a visual arts show featuring the HSC bodies of work and has evolved over time. This year it formed part of a showcase series which saw the HSC dance and HSC music showcases also held during August.

These showcases are undoubtedly a significant undertaking on the part of the college, involving many staff and students and months of preparation. The college is very committed to holding events such as these because they provide an important opportunity for a wider audience to view the students' work. I applaud all students and staff involved. The college has a long tradition of excellence in creative fields from arts and design to music and dance. The 2018 Visual Arts People's Choice Award Winners were selected for the prestigious ARTEXPRESS. Talitha Hanna's impressive body of work was exhibited at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre as part of the travelling ARTEXPRESS exhibition. She has joined a long list of Parramatta Mercy Girls who over the years have been shortlisted and chosen for statewide HSC exhibitions and showcases. I congratulate Talitha Hanna.

I commend the staff and students at Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta for another impressive showcase and for their continuing commitment to fostering excellence in the areas of visual art and design. I also commend Principal Stephen Walsh for his leadership at the school over many years and recognise the Mercy sisters for their dedication to the Mercy values that have been serving the Parramatta community for over 100 years. Well done to them all.

COOKS RIVER BANK NATURALISATION

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:16): Tonight I will talk about the Cooks River, particularly its sheet piling. The Cooks River has always been one of Sydney's most iconic rivers. Local Indigenous custodians of this land have had a long and important history with the river and it is embedded deep within the colonial history of New South Wales. The river extends from Botany Bay all the way to Chullora and has tributary creeks that extend into Erskineville and Hurstville. Local Indigenous custodians—and, to an extent, early settlers—have had a history of sustainability with the river. However, in the early 1900s industry upstream turned the river into one of Australia's most polluted.

On top of the effect of industry, the river has also been reappropriated and redesigned to suit the needs of local development. That has included lining the banks of the river with concrete and steel and filling in the surrounding wetlands. In the 1990s local communities began spearheading a movement to both improve and protect our river. Local communities have rallied and lobbied State governments and local councils to join them in cleaning up the river. I commend all those volunteers who do the clean-up every weekend including the Mudcrabs and the Wolli Creek Cooks River Valley Association. All of those people do very important work.

Tonight is about calling on the Government. I acknowledge our shadow water Minister, who is here and has been listening to me about water and the Cooks River. We need the State Government to take responsibility. We need to know which department is responsible for the maintenance of the Cooks River. I have spoken to my community. We have been at barbecues and we have been campaigning. We have had meetings with the local council. I acknowledge our local councillor Clare Raffan and local community leaders such as Brian Keogh. There is important work to do in the coordination between State and local government. I acknowledge the member for Watson, Tony Burke, Anthony Albanese and Linda Burney for their announcement during the election campaign of \$200 million to improve our waterways. However, what we need from the State Government is for it to define who is responsible for the Cooks River, particularly in relation to removing the sheet piling. I have written and we also lodged questions during the budget estimates process.

I acknowledge that Sydney Water has started naturalising some banks to encourage wildlife to return. As it stands, both NSW Labor and Federal members as well as Canterbury-Bankstown council are committed to improving and protecting the river. Despite the success of the local community, more has to be done. This brings me to the steel sheet piling along the Cooks River. Funding for its installation was granted under the Cooks River

Improvements Act 1946. Although the sheet piling is on Crown land, no level of government has claimed ownership of it. Despite this, the Environmental Defenders Office NSW has advised—and the council did give me a copy of the letter—that the sheet piling is most likely owned by the State Government.

It is also important to keep in mind that all sections of the river under the control of Sydney Water have either been re-naturalised or there is a program to naturalise them. In my electorate of Canterbury there is 1.65 kilometres of rusted steel sheet metal, particularly along Riverview Road and on the border of Marrickville. I acknowledge my colleague the member for Summer Hill, who would also back in this issue. Whether it is the water Minister or the Crown lands Minister or the environment Minister, tonight I call on them to come and sit at the table. We need the decision-makers there. We need to have a coordinated approach about a program going forward to remove the steel sheet piling and naturalise the banks so the Cooks River can be used for recreation. Let us meet that vision for the people of our community and New South Wales. I hope that my call is listened to by the relevant Ministers.

TOPGUN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:21): I share the amazing success of a simple training program in my electorate that is not only showing us a unique way to tackle skills shortages but also providing young people with real career opportunities. Youth unemployment is high across the Riverina, yet there are trade shortages in a number of sectors, including automotive mechanics and the agricultural sector. We have got big business employers seeking workers with industry-specific experience struggling to recruit appropriately skilled applicants. While this problem spans a number of industries, a company in my electorate not only identified the issue but also made a decision to solve it.

In 2014 Wagga's John Deere dealer Hutcheon & Pearce was hiring apprentices who had completed a trade certificate in agriculture mechanics technology. However, its apprentice mentor Matt Duffy said that some of the apprentices who actually finished the certificate III were lacking the skills required to jump straight into the roles they were needed for. Not only that: More than two-thirds of those apprentices did not stay with the company. I did not realise this, but agricultural machinery equipment is quite specific to each dealer. John Deere, through Hutcheon & Pearce, realised that if it wanted appropriately skilled tradesmen it needed to grow them from scratch.

Following a number of meetings, John Deere partnered with TAFE NSW in Wagga Wagga. Together they launched a training hub for apprentice mechanics in 2015. Since its introduction the TOPGUN Apprenticeship Program remains, in my opinion, the benchmark for agricultural mechanical technology training. The course kicked off with only 12 Hutcheon & Pearce apprentices. Just three years later 250 apprentices have passed across the paddock and completed their certificate III. In 2016 Case and New Holland embraced the same product-specific training model and partnership and encouraged their nationwide dealers to send apprentices to the North Wagga educational facility.

There are currently more than 220 apprentices studying their certificate III in this qualification at the site, with more than \$7 million worth of machinery and other equipment located at the Primary Industries Centre. With access to state-of-the-art training that is consistent and 100 per cent relevant to their brands, apprentices are given real machines and real problems to diagnose, repair and test on site. The TAFE NSW students are now completing the course with industry-relevant and current knowledge and skills and are being trained by suitably qualified teachers.

Automotive head teacher Wayne Sibrey said apprentices were able to contribute to dealers' productivity within six months, instead of the 18 months recorded prior to the introduction of the TOPGUN program. He said a significant increase in apprentice retention rates was also being achieved, with numbers jumping from 28 per cent to 78 per cent, due to brand loyalty and training consistency. Mr Sibrey said the program was not only leading to increased productivity but also delivering a high level of diagnostic skill well beyond that of other machinery apprentices. As an added benefit, students can pursue further education, completing a second qualification in auto electrical or a certificate IV in automotive mechanical diagnosis.

There is no apprentice training quite like this, and it gets better. In 2020 at the TAFE NSW Primary Industries Centre more than 300 apprentices are set to be studying agriculture mechanical technology. That number has the potential to triple in the coming years as more dealers join the program from all States across Australia. That is a great example of a business initiative and training collaboration that can and should be the new benchmark for trade industries across the State. In 2018 the Bureau of Statistics identified the Riverina as one of New South Wales five worst youth unemployment hotspots, at more than 14 per cent. Yet we have employers who desperately need skilled labour. Our students are often choosing university for study when the real jobs, the real need and the real opportunities in our communities lie in trades.

To secure a future workforce in trades industries we need structural solutions that drill down to local job markets and specific infrastructure challenges. The Hutcheon & Pearce motto is "If it doesn't work, we fix it" and that is what the TOPGUN program has done. It is a regionally based solution that provides a model to tackle youth unemployment by linking education programs to local industry needs. I encourage other industry leaders to take on their own partnerships with vocational education and training providers to address skills shortages and provide young people with real career opportunities.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE OPEN SPACES AND PARKLANDS

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (19:26): I inform the Chamber of the great work of local community groups in my electorate that have been advocating for more public open space. Marita Macrae and David Palmer from the Pittwater Natural Heritage Association, Gavin Butler and the Newport Residents Association, renowned artist Mick Glasheen, and a number of local Bushcare volunteers have been advocating for the preservation of land along the Bilgola Escarpment on Hillside Road in Newport. I was pleased to join Councillor Michael Regan, Mayor of the Northern Beaches Council, and a number of local resident groups last month to announce a joint investment of \$4.6 million between the Government and council to save more than 10,000 square metres of precious environmentally significant littoral rainforest at the site in Newport.

Littoral rainforest is listed as an endangered ecological community under New South Wales and Commonwealth law. The land connects with the Bilgola Escarpment, comprising Attunga Reserve, Hewitt Park, Hamilton Estate and Porter Reserve, ensuring it is a green corridor extension to other important habitat and biodiversity-rich areas, and protecting a crucial landscape break between Newport and Avalon Beach, alliteratively known as the "Bilgola Bends". Importantly, its dense vegetation makes it particularly valuable for native birdlife, like the powerful owl, which is listed as vulnerable. However, for many years the land on Hillside Road has been at risk of subdivision and significant development.

Thanks to the advocacy of the groups and individuals described earlier, in 2018 I took these concerns to my colleague the former planning Minister. Before the March election, the former planning Minister made a commitment that the Government would jointly save the land for public open space, and I was proud to deliver it last month. I am very grateful to the former Minister for listening to the community's concerns. The purchase will have social and environmental benefits for generations to come. Coastal lands like the littoral rainforest in Newport are of critical ecological significance to New South Wales and our Government is committed to, where possible, acquiring and further protecting land like it.

In 1973 the then Liberal Government introduced the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme, a program that seeks to acquire coastal lands for public benefit. Acquisitions are made based on at least one of three acquisition criteria: first, to promote public access to the coastal foreshore; secondly, to maintain the scenic quality of the New South Wales coast; and, thirdly, to protect ecological sites of regional, State and/or national significance. Since 1973 the scheme has successfully acquired 90 per cent of coastal land identified from the original 1973 list. By identifying, acquiring and reserving land, we have been able to create new coastal national parks and reserves for public benefit.

Each year the Government has approximately \$3 million to spend acquiring land of this nature under the scheme. Many members in this place represent coastal communities and may know of parcels of land that fit these criteria. In my role as Minister for Planning and Public Spaces it is my goal to not only create better public spaces for people to enjoy but also preserve as much green space for ecological and public benefit purposes for generations to come. I encourage members from all sides of politics to contact me or my office with opportunities to expand our local coastal lands for the benefit of their communities under the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme. We will endeavour to do so as best we can.

In order to expand our coastal land network we must work hand in hand with the community to identify land we want to preserve for the future. As a government and a parliament we have a real opportunity to leave behind a great legacy of open and green spaces across the State and I intend to do so. I thank Marita Macrae, David Palmer and the Pittwater Natural Heritage Association, Gavin Butler and the Newport Residents Association, Mick Glasheen and the large number of local Bushcare volunteers, as well as the local residents of Hillside Road, Newport, who advocated for the preservation of the littoral rainforest in my electorate.

I know that the member for Port Macquarie's electorate has littoral rainforest in it as well, but we have precious little of it left. I think I am right in saying only 2 per cent of what was bequeathed to us by the Aboriginal peoples of New South Wales remains. It is important that we secure this precious natural resource. I also thank Mayor Regan and the Northern Beaches Council for its partnership, an amalgamated council that now has the capacity to participate in land acquisition that former councils could only have dreamed of. It is these sorts of

opportunities that we as a government and a parliament need to take advantage of in the interests of present and future generations.

INNER WEST BUS SERVICES

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:31): This June marked the one-year anniversary of the privatisation of our inner west region 6 bus services. But the Government can pack away the party streamers because there is not much to celebrate. On-time running remains pitifully low. There are complaints about buses deviating from their routes because new drivers are getting lost. There are stories of buses literally falling apart, raising serious questions about maintenance. There are reports of commuters turning up for services advertised as accessible only to discover they cannot get on the bus—like Audrey from Marrickville, who has been left stranded countless times as the 423 bus could not accommodate her and her walking frame.

Critical training for drivers has been slashed, with a tragic fatality of a trainee driver last year. Drivers are being short-changed wages under substandard agreements. In short, it is a mess, and the Government knows it. In budget estimates hearings the Minister for Transport and Roads confirmed that on-time running of buses in the inner west sits at a stubborn 93.8 per cent. In the past year on-time running has never been above the benchmark figure of 95 per cent that the Government set itself when it sold our region 6 buses to the highest bidder. Members will remember that on-time running was the single biggest reason the Minister gave when he sold off inner west services, but now he claims that it is not actually possible because of congestion that makes on-time running too hard. Dare I say it? We told you so.

The Minister's dirty little secret is that rather than improving on-time running, the Government is instead shifting the goalposts. It has changed the formula used to determine on-time running so that greater weight is given to when a bus leaves the depot as opposed to when passengers actually arrive at their destination. What is the point of inner west residents being on the bus at the scheduled time if they are not getting to their final destination on time? Public transport should run on time, full stop. It should not run on Minister Constance's new version of how to conveniently measure what on time is.

Not only are commuters being let down by the Minister for Transport and Roads, so too are our bus drivers. Local bus drivers have spoken to me about the issues plaguing the sector. The restructure of the workload and rosters has had a disastrous impact on many bus drivers and their families. Drivers are now being asked to do broken shifts, and are sometimes rostered for 12-hour days. Previously, a driver who started at midday could take the kids to school in the morning, or those who started at 5.00 a.m. could finish in time to pick up the kids after school. Now those shifts are making it impossible for many to balance work and family. The reality of these kinds of shifts are that people wake up in the dark and get home in the dark. New drivers are reportedly paid less than those who moved over from the State Transit Authority. That is causing frustration, division and low morale among driver ranks. It is imperative that in the process of harmonising these awards, no drivers' wages are reduced and all drivers' wages are lifted. Finally, drivers report that training continues to be a problem and it is putting commuters at risk. A bus trainer was tragically killed last year.

Trainee drivers were once given hands-on one-on-one training on out of service buses. Members would have seen them on the road. That allows drivers to have better knowledge and experience of the routes, as well as of course about the buses themselves. Now, trainee drivers are trained in groups, reducing the amount of time drivers have behind the wheel under the one-on-one supervision of trainers. I want everyone to consider what it would mean if we taught all drivers in that way. As parents would members feel comfortable if their learner driver kids were being taught how to drive a vehicle in a group? I know I wouldn't.

No wonder we are hearing countless stories of buses meandering through residential streets far from their designated route. No wonder we are hearing stories about frustrated drivers, about near misses and collisions and about passengers being left on the roadside as bus drivers are pushed to meet the new on-time running formula set by the Minister. This has led to an increase in inexperienced drivers who are less familiar with the routes and who have less experience driving large vehicles on Sydney's busy roads. The Minister needs to urgently investigate and guarantee that there is no increased risk to local commuters from his ham-fisted privatisation of region 6 inner west buses. The Minister should also investigate claims that Transit Systems has reduced the use of articulated buses in favour of shorter buses. This decision reduces capacity on our routes, reduces the pay of drivers and, more importantly, narrows the set of skills drivers have as well. A year on from the privatisation, the Government has nothing to celebrate.

PENRITH MEN'S WALK AND TALK

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (19:36): Last week I had the fantastic privilege of participating in the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk, a relatively new initiative launched earlier this year. It was the brainchild of Emu Plains local Kevin Canning, who had the

idea after seeing his 21-year-son attend five funerals over a two-year period, some of them relating to suicide. Kevin joined forces with Alan Harding, Paul Wallace and Jamie Large, all of whom have been impacted in some way by mental health or suicide in recent times. With the help of Billy Beggs, the idea became a reality. Penrith Men's Walk and Talk is held rain, hail or shine every Thursday evening. I can attest to the rain hail or shine—I know that a large group turned up in the rain a couple of weeks ago. Starting from the Nepean River Coffee Club, walkers undertake one lap of the Nepean River walk, traversing the Yandhai Nepean Crossing, which has opened up that precinct.

Open to men of all ages, the walk is a no-pressure event where men can talk as much or as little as they like, with the clear principle that no man walks alone. Whilst it is a men-only event, the support shown by the women of our community has been nothing short of outstanding. In fact, a family walk is planned for this Sunday around the Nepean River. It is an opportunity for men to start new friendships and increase their fitness to benefit mental health. It encourages men to have a conversation about issues they are facing and break down the stigmas associated with mental health. Since the inaugural walk, the number of walkers each week has grown steadily. Not even the cold winter evenings have deterred them. I have seen well over 100 participants in a number of the walks over the past few weeks. Amongst the group is eight-year-old Wilson the whippet, who since joining the walks is off his medication for anxiety and his social interaction has greatly improved. There has also been considerable personal healing for many of the male walkers involved.

Walkers are welcome to meet up for a coffee and listen to a guest speaker. Recent guest speakers have included Peter and Billy from LikeMind Penrith, Gus Worland from Triple M radio, who is also a strong advocate for the Gotcha4Life Foundation, and Greg Bond. LikeMind was launched in Penrith in 2015 and offers easy, one-stop access to a wide range of services for people living with mental illness and their families and carers. The services include vocational and employment services, general health and wellbeing programs, counselling, education and housing. People living with mental health challenges often have complex health and social needs, which is why the New South Wales Government is so determined to ensure that those services can be easily accessed when they are needed. It is fantastic to see Billy from LikeMind supporting the men every Thursday night as they conduct this walk.

Former Panthers players Brad Drew, Peter Kelly and Royce Simmons have also joined the walk. A long list of local businesses have supported the walk and sponsored coffees for the walkers; indeed, people throughout the community are making anonymous donations to purchase coffee for them. Given its great success, the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk has encouraged a group from the Blue Mountains to start their own walk and talk group. Photos of the group are captured each week to share on Facebook and their Facebook page has now grown to have over 4,000 likes. Last week Penrith Men's Walk and Talk partnered up with the Gotcha4Life Foundation and a number of the walkers ventured over to the Penrith PCYC to participate in a Tomorrow Man workshop, a fantastic initiative that gets men together to talk about the challenges of being a man in the modern world—enabling them to talk about things that are impacting their life, their values, their work and to deal with some of the most complex challenges that men do not always handle very well.

I encourage members and others with a Tomorrow Man initiative or event taking place in their community to attend. In conclusion, I extend a big vote of thanks to Kevin Canning and all of those who have been involved in the creation of the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk. It is a great example of Penrith men looking after Penrith men and creating a fantastic, positive environment for people to come along and support each other. As every single one of those men say: On this walk, no man walks alone.

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT PANELS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (19:41): I draw to the attention of the House my concern about the practice and procedures developed by the planning panels and independent hearing and assessment panels that are determining development applications in my electorate. My concern relates to the way in which those panels conduct themselves. The determination of development applications needs to be completely transparent. I accepted the former Minister's view prior to the amendments last year that took away development application decisions from councillors as a corruption prevention measure and I accepted those matters that he drew to my attention that required that legislation.

My concern about the panels are that, for example, if I am a citizen and wish to be heard by a panel, I expect that the only matters the panel has before it will be reports written by council planners or the Department of Planning and that the deliberation of the panel will be transparent and I can see it. But that is far from the case. Planning panels spend their time with council officers being briefed behind closed doors, viewing sites and having discussions with council officers behind closed doors. Some of those panels, even after they have heard from the public at their public hearings, retire to debate the issues amongst themselves before announcing the decision. That sort of conduct, in my view, is unlawful and in breach of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Subclauses (2) and (3) of clause 25 of schedule 2 to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act states:

- (2) A planning body (other than the Independent Planning Commission) is required to conduct its meetings in public.
- (3) A planning body is required to record meetings conducted in public (whether an audio/video record, an audio record or a transcription record). The record is required to be made publicly available on the website of or used by the planning body. The Parliament requires complete transparency. It is not good enough that the planning panels go and hide behind closed doors or have transmitted to them any information that is not subject to public scrutiny. The public is entitled to know what the panel is being told behind closed doors. The practice must stop. They must comply with the law. It is the Minister's responsibility to ensure that they comply with the law.

There are other difficulties associated with the panels. Many mayors of councils have complained that the panels are departing from development standards. I thought when a couple of mayors raised the issue with me that it was only them complaining that they do not have planning powers—until the Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel, in respect of a development application in my electorate for a Bunnings store, ignored the recommendations of the traffic committee of which I was a member. The recommendation incorporated a planner's recommendation that a deferred commencement approval be granted. I am referring to a Bunnings development application in Tempe where council officers recommended that the project be deferred until such time as a full and comprehensive local area traffic management study was undertaken by council, at the applicant's cost, to determine the potential impact on specific local streets, including Smith Street, Union Street, Foreman Street, and South Street.

A recommendation of the traffic committee, which I joined as did the police and Roads and Maritime Services, obviously was accepted by council planners yet it was completely ignored by a planning panel. To add insult to injury the public and the community of Tempe, who wanted to address the planning panel, found, firstly, that the planning panel was meeting at 10 o'clock in the morning and, secondly, in the amalgamated Inner West Council, were meeting a considerable distance away from Tempe rather than at a nearby town hall. On their behalf I wrote to my very good friend with whom I get on very well, the Hon. Carl Scully, and requested that he, as the chair—that is what I was required by the department to do—convene the meeting at a time convenient to the local residents. Of course, that did not suit him and the panel met at 10 o'clock in the morning and the panel was not accessible to local residents, who at that time are at work. These issues require the urgent intervention of the planning Minister.

ASQUITH GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (19:46): Today I acknowledge Asquith Girls High School, which celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this year. Over those 60 years Asquith Girls has had a number of hardworking and dedicated teachers and principals who have built the school into the wonderful educational institution that it is today. It is also the support of the local community, parents and students that makes the school even more special. You are not just part of a school, but a family. Asquith Girls High School was born from a need for more high schools to cater for the growing population between Hornsby and the Hawkesbury in the late 1950s. Students at that time had attended the Hornsby Home Science School, which in part was destroyed in the devastating Black Saturday bushfires.

Knowing they needed somewhere for a new high school the department was able to purchase seven acres in Asquith in 1958. This was the site of the Stokes Orchard and the Victory Dairy. With land acquisition over the next seven years the school was able to double in size to accommodate a school hall and better sports facilities. When it officially opened on 3 February 1959 the 690 students were greeted with rain, mud, rubble and incomplete buildings. The students along with 38 teachers faced only a few complete classrooms. Physical education was taken on the unsealed road at the front of the school and history was taken in the staff room. While they may have been faced with construction the students had modern and new facilities which had not been seen in high schools in Hornsby. Asquith Girls was a trailblazer and continues to be to this day.

The first Principal, Miss Alma Hamilton, set the green school uniform colours, wrote the first school song and wrote the school motto. Some of these have changed over the years but the motto, Learn to Live, is still the same today. I know there are many past Asquith Girls who are proud to have lived under this motto in their time at the school. It did not take long for the school to grow in popularity, with 717 students by the end of the first year and over 1,000 students within two years. The 1960s saw hockey fields and tennis courts installed at the school. The 1970s saw a new science and library block, which included 3,500 new books. In 1984 it was with great pride that the school opened the hall, which I have spoken in many times since being the member for Hornsby.

However, in 1990 Asquith Girls was rocked by a fire that destroyed the library and with it 20,000 books and staff notes which went back 20 years. Despite the damage to the library and other surrounding buildings Asquith Girls High's spirit was not damaged. They were able to rebuild the library under the guidance of the then Principal, Mr John Johnson. I have visited Asquith Girls High School many times. Each and every time I see teachers who go above and beyond to ensure their students are getting the best possible education. I take this opportunity to thank every teacher, both past and present, who has made Asquith Girls the awesome school it is

today. Your dedication to your students has ensured thousands of Asquith Girls High students get the best possible education.

Asquith Girls High School has been a standout in providing exceptional education for all of its students. This has been seen with amazing HSC results. In fact, over the last three consecutive years the school has produced students coming first in the State in individual subjects in the HSC. In 2017 Katherine Tejcek topped the State in business studies and Amy Lewis was selected to perform her individual drama performance at OnSTAGE. Jasmine Morton's industrial technology, multimedia HSC major project was nominated for InTech. And 100 per cent of the HSC dance students nominated for Callback, which is a showcase of HSC dance students. In 2017, 48 students were offered early university entry and 93 per cent of students accessed their first course choice at university. In 2018 Katherine Tejcek again topped the State—this time in community and family studies—and seven out of seven students were accepted by Macquarie University under the Global Leaders Program. Additionally over 33 per cent also received unconditional offers by various universities under the leadership and schools recommendation schemes. The school was also proud in 2018 to have been in the top 150 schools in New South Wales for the HSC.

This year already a number of drama students have been nominated for possible inclusion in OnSTAGE, which is a selection of performances and individual projects from Higher School Certificate drama students. They include Amanda Bellamy, Sophia Branagh, Miya Handsworth, Sophie Lewis, Grace Steele and Lilly Stephenson. I was impressed to see Sophie Higgs, a year 10 student, participate in the Department of Education Secretary for a Day Program during Education Week this year. She was selected from more than 120 applicants and during her time took part in a number of workshops with education experts.

I congratulate the year 10 debating team who competed in the grand final round of the Premier's Debating Challenge against Northern Beaches Secondary College. I have met many outstanding ex-Asquith Girls High students over the years, including my staffer Heidi Cameron, who works in my electorate office. Her daughter, Hollie, is currently at the school and her mum, Coralie, also attended the school. I also was thrilled to see ex-Asquith student Julie Attwood doing amazing work for the people of Hornsby through Relay For Life. Asquith Girls ex-students also include artist Fiona Foley, Ann Roberts, who was the first woman to receive the university medal in physics from the University of Sydney, Janelle Barry, who won the university medal for biomedical science at the University of Technology Sydney, and actor, Diane Craig. I make special mention of the current Principal, Elizabeth Amvrazis. Thank you for your leadership and congratulations to Asquith Girls High for 60 outstanding years of education in our community.

Community Recognition Statements

HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:52): I recognise Phoenix Nincsis, Emma Page, Sasha Davies and Adam Wall of Hastings Secondary College, who have been selected to be part of a statewide drama showcase in Sydney. The 2019 New South Wales Public Schools State Drama Ensemble provides students currently attending a New South Wales public school with the opportunity to perform at the State Drama Festival. The four students were judged against hundreds of other students in the State with Phoenix, Emma and Sasha being selected for the ensemble while Adam secured a place in the senior ensemble.

Compliments must also go to drama teacher Hellene Underwood, who has helped students to prepare for the extremely competitive auditions against some of the best drama students across the State. To have four local students selected in this highly competitive competition is a testament to the dedication of the teachers, staff and students of Hastings Secondary College. I wish the students all the very best for their performance in October. I look forward to seeing the results of their hard work. I am sure they will make our community incredibly proud.

RADIO 2MCR

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:53): For 30 years residents in the Macarthur district have been treated to their very own radio station. Radio 2MCR—or The Sounds of Macarthur as it is known—first went to air on 22 August 1989. Since then volunteers have kept the airwaves busy with music, community information, news and entertainment. Dr Mike Freeland, who is the Federal member for Macarthur, and I had the pleasure of recently attending 2MCR's thirtieth birthday celebrations, which doubled as a fundraiser for this important community asset. Membership is open to anybody in the community. Members can take on an active role in running the station, including training to become a presenter.

I stress that 2MCR is staffed and operated entirely by dedicated volunteer announcers, administration and technical staff who bring a diverse program to local airwaves. I respect the radio station's commitment to promoting the Macarthur region and local artists, and bringing the community together with its own broadcasting facilities. Residents can listen to FM100.3 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I encourage everybody to tune in.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:54): As we know, the bushfire season is approaching, arriving very early this year, which is a cause of constant concern for all residents on the Central Coast. I acknowledge the great work of Rural Fire Service brigades across the Central Coast, especially those in my electorate of Terrigal. Last week we had the Get Ready Weekend, which encourages people to be aware and prepared for the bushfire season that is coming. The local Rural Fire Service stations opened their doors to the public. I acknowledge the great work of Macmasters Beach Rural Fire Brigade, Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade, Wamberal Rural Fire Brigade, Brisbane Waters Rural Fire Brigade and Avoca Beach Rural Fire Brigade. The stations all opened their facilities and services to make sure the public is well and truly educated on the risks of this year's fire season, especially on the Central Coast and in my electorate of Terrigal. I thank all of the amazing volunteers at our Rural Fire Service stations, who do such a great job keeping our communities safe, especially during the most dangerous time of the year, the fire season.

OUR TURN TO CARE CAMPAIGN

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:55): Last week I had the pleasure to meet with homecare workers to talk about the Our Turn to Care campaign. Supported by United Voice and the Health Services Union, the Our Turn to Care campaign is run by family members, older Australians and workers who are fighting for increased funding for aged-care homes to ensure an enjoyable life for older people. It includes calls for increased time to care, including one extra hour of care per resident per week; increased staff-to-client ratios; fair wages; access to training courses at TAFE; and, importantly, the Government to ensure the sector provides quality care and high standards and protects and supports both staff and clients in aged care. Australia currently has 2,800 specialised aged-care homes that provide care to over 207,000 people, with that number expected to grow to over 250,000 in the next 10 years. Without proper funding aged-care homes cannot be expected to continue to meet the basic requirements. I thank the incredibly dedicated home-care and aged-care workers whom I had the pleasure of meeting.

KATIE FORSTER

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:56): Kemps Creek student Katie Forster has a passion for engineering and is currently pursuing a career in aerospace engineering. After attending a women's science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] camp at Wollongong University, Katie was introduced to a range of pathways to an engineering career that sparked her interest. Her school, Emmaus Catholic College, was then given the opportunity to attend the STEM event Destination Imagination, where Katie participated in engineering challenges that she really enjoyed and flourished in. One Giant Leap Australia, a foundation that provides opportunities and educational programs for students, announced that Katie was its 2019 ambassador and the recipient of a fully funded scholarship to attend Space Camp in America later this year. Katie is incredibly excited about this opportunity. This year, as well as starting year 12, she will be working incredibly hard towards her dream of becoming an aerospace engineer. This is a wonderful achievement and I congratulate Katie.

NARARA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:57): Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers make up an amazing family across New South Wales. The work they do to support their own and other communities under the threat of fire is overwhelming. Last Saturday morning a number of crew members from the Narara Rural Fire Brigade, alongside volunteers from Copacabana, drove up to fight the Bees Nest fires near Dorrigo. I had the privilege of meeting those volunteers, still smelling strongly of bushfire smoke, just after they returned to the coast. They were glowing with pride and comradery. They said, "We don't do it for the recognition, and we know the community is super appreciative."

I thank each and every one of our Central Coast RFS members and extend a special thanks to the more than 700 Rural Fire Service volunteers who have been fighting fires across New South Wales. I thank them also for their community education efforts across New South Wales last weekend as crews opened their stations to educate locals on how to fireproof their homes and properties. Get onto it! I encourage everyone to contact their fires—bushies or townies—for more information in the lead-up to this year's fire season. I offer the condolences of the New South Wales Parliament to all those who have been impacted by the fires.

GYMEA NETBALL CLUB

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (19:58): I congratulate the GyMEA Netball Club 14B1 team on an outstanding season, which they finished as the Sutherland Shire Netball Association premiers for their division. It was an incredibly successful 2019 season for the 14B1 team. Last year the team lost all but one match, only to return this season to take out the premiership. Captain Claudia Lovell led teammates Sydney Alpen, Emma Burgess, Melissa Dodd, Tori Giles, Chelsea Smith, Olivia Stock, Tillie Tsoumbaras and secret weapon

Ella Hartley through a comeback season that defied the odds. I commend the hard work and dedication of coach Lisa Savage and manager Nadine Dodd, without whom such a fantastic result would not have been possible. The achievements of the GyMEA Netball Club 14B1 team not only demonstrate an overall improvement in skill and performance, but also exemplify the rewarding results of perseverance, hard work and a positive attitude. I congratulate the team, coach Lisa and manager Nadine on a successful season and extend my best wishes for the seasons to come.

FIGTREE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (19:59): Going back to your old school can often come with some mixed emotions: memories of the good and the bad and an acknowledgement that the school no longer seems as big as it once did. Recently those emotions and others were shared by former students and parents when Figtree High School threw open its doors for an open day as part of its fiftieth anniversary celebrations. As a former "Figgy High" student, I was pleased to take part in some of the special events associated with the anniversary, including a panel of former students grilled by current students at an assembly and the evening celebrations.

Figtree High School opened on 14 July 1969 with 242 students. It was good to see that many of those students made it to the anniversary celebrations, along with my friends the member for Keira and the Federal member for Cunningham. It was great to see former principals—including Bob Everitt, who was also the first deputy principal, and Alison McDonald—enjoying the celebrations. They were very interested in what their former students are up to. The events required a lot of organising and I thank everyone involved, particularly Karin Harlor, who put in an incredible amount of work to make sure the anniversary was memorable for former and current students, parents and staff.

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (20:00): Last night at the mayoral election of Ku-ring-gai Council, Councillor Jennifer Anderson was elected unopposed as Mayor and Councillor Callum Clarke was elected unopposed as Deputy Mayor. Councillor Anderson matches former Mayor Richard Lennon as Ku-ring-gai Council's longest serving mayor. In 2006 she was elected to the council and is now in her fourteenth year of service. She will serve in her role until the council goes to elections in September 2020. I acknowledge Councillor Anderson's service to the community on behalf of the broader Ku-ring-gai Council area, which includes part of my electorate of Davidson. I welcome the mayor's statement on being elected that, "The council will continue to focus on providing new facilities to Ku-ring-gai residents." I note that Ku-ring-gai has been recognised as the best place to live in New South Wales. We want that to remain the case.

BISHOP STUDENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (20:01): On 5 September I was delighted to attend the Bishop Student Excellence Awards in Parramatta, which recognise an outstanding student leader in every Catholic high school in the diocese, including three from the Granville electorate. Angelina Elias of Cerdon College has been outstanding as a peer support leader and a student representative council captain. She is currently the college vice-captain for social justice. Outside of school, Angelina gives her time to feed the homeless and support fundraising for stateless persons. Mary Ghribian from Delaney College is the school captain. Outside of school she assists with Eucharistic ministry, the catechism program and the Vinnies Van. She is also an active member of Granville Rotary. She was one of 20 students chosen to attend the Anzac Day ceremony in Gallipoli in 2017. Mark Paul is college head prefect at St Paul's Catholic College and has displayed student leadership over many years, leading and participating in many social justice initiatives. He is very active in the school and wider community. I thank Angelina, Mary and Mark for the great contributions they have made to their schools and our community.

PHIL HALDEN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:02): I recognise the work of Phil Halden of Barellan, who has spent 14 years organising the Barellan Yard Dog Trials. Phil took the decision to resurrect the Barellan Yard Dog Trials at the Barellan Show because he wanted to help ensure the show retained a variety of strong attractions for visitors. At the end of August his hard work was recognised by the dog triallers at this year's show when they presented him with a bronze trophy to demonstrate their appreciation. His work throughout the year to organise the many classes of trials culminates in a lot of physical effort setting up the equipment at the show, which he says is by far the most challenging aspect of being an organiser. I recognise Phil's ongoing work and his tireless desire to contribute to the success of the Barellan Show. Without selfless community members like Phil, shows across the Cootamundra electorate and New South Wales would wither and die. I congratulate Phil.

ROTARY CLUB OF WYONG TUGGERAH

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (20:03): I congratulate the Rotary Club of Wyong Tuggerah on its seventieth birthday. I was very pleased to attend the recent celebration at Wyong Golf Club and to chat to members both past and present. The Rotary Club of Wyong Tuggerah started after an increase in population of over 10,000 in the Wyong shire and Gosford Rotary Club influenced some members to start their own club. The Rotary Club of Wyong Tuggerah is about having fun, serving the community and changing the world. The club participates in events, fundraises and projects and runs sponsorship programs that allow businesses, companies and individuals to assist the Rotary Club of Wyong Tuggerah on an annual basis. The club has supported some significant projects, such as Camp Breakaway. Everyone who has joined the club over the years has made a big difference to our community. I congratulate the members, friends and sponsors involved in the Rotary Club of Wyong Tuggerah for reaching this milestone and I hope they enjoyed their celebrations.

COFFS SENIORS COMPUTER CLUB

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:04): One of the best celebrations I have been to happened recently in Coffs Harbour. I was a guest at the Coffs Seniors Computer Club's eighteenth birthday at the Cavanbah Centre. I was struck by the club members' enthusiastic welcome and high spirits. I enjoyed hearing tunes from the Marian Grove Ukulele Group and meeting so many friendly faces. Among them were Denise Porteous and June Stokes, who I was pleased to present with their 10-year membership medals. A proud foundation member, Nola Woods, was there to mark a magic milestone in the club's history. I thank club president Mary Voutos and social secretary Phyllis Taylor for making the visit so memorable for me. The birthday cake and morning tea were amazing. The Coffs Seniors Computer Club has lessons each Monday in the Cavanbah Centre, with about 65 seniors attending to learn about computers and smartphones. It is a club filled with firm friendships and a zest for socialising and learning.

BAYSIDE SPRING FAIR

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (20:05): Last Saturday Eastlakes Reserve was the location of Bayside Council's Spring Fair. Celebrating our cultural diversity, the Spring Fair was attended by thousands of local residents who enjoyed the culinary delights, arts and crafts, live music and information stalls about local services and opportunities. There were market stalls and food stalls from so many different cultures. Children enjoyed free rides—including camel rides—a petting zoo and face painting. Residents were entertained with an impressive main stage program featuring local performers and entertainers. I pay tribute to the mayor of Bayside Council, Councillor Bill Saravinovski, and councillors for an outstanding event. I am a former mayor and have never been able to come close to matching the success of Bayside Council's Spring Fair last Saturday. Such events bring many in our community together and showcase the very best of local government in this State. The House should recognise the success of Bayside Council, to which I pay tribute. I should also disclose to the House that my wife works for that council.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): I acknowledge our guests in the House, the beautiful children of the member for Holsworthy. It is lovely to have them here; I am sure they will observe the member doing something soon and will be very proud of her.

WELLINGTON COWBOYS RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:07): A 25-year premiership drought ended recently when the Wellington Cowboys took out the Group 11 rugby league grand final at Dubbo's Apex Oval. The Cowboys beat Dubbo CYMS 19-10 to claim a first-grade title for the first time since 1994. The club's reserve grade side also beat CYMS to win its first decider since 1999. It is no secret that Wellington has had its share of socio-economic problems, centred around crime and drugs, but these victories have already provided a real boost for the town.

A huge wave of maroon and white flooded onto Apex Oval at full time, and I believe that rugby league and the success the Cowboys have had this year have given a sense of renewed hope in Wellington. The win was a big one for coach Justin Toomey-White—a young man who beat cancer earlier this year. He has a new baby as well. He took to the stage with club stalwarts Aidan Ryan and Ben McGregor to hoist the trophy and sing the team song. I make special mention of Dubbo CYMS, which had teams in all four grand finals. Nic Grose led the ladies' League Tag side to an undefeated season when it beat Forbes 24-4. It was a great day of rugby league.

KINGSGROVE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (20:08): On 29 August it was a great honour to attend Kingsgrove North High School's Multicultural Day. I put on record my thanks to and acknowledgement of Principal Angelo Stassos and the teachers, parents, students and the local community. I thank everyone for bringing not only our community together but also our students, 92 per cent of whom are from a language background other than

English. It is by no mistake that Australia is the most prosperous multicultural country in the world and Kingsgrove North is a phenomenal example of that. I commend Kingsgrove North for its continual commitment to multiculturalism and anti-racism education through initiatives such as the Iftar night, the development of a PacFest team, Harmony Day celebrations, the dedication of the community engagement officers, the showcase, community engagement with local primary schools, the talent quest, and the development of strong partnerships with schools from neighbouring districts and rural and international high schools. I congratulate Kingsgrove North High School.

HOLSWORTHY HIGH SCHOOL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (20:09): Today I recognise the outstanding students of Holsworthy High School who recently volunteered their time to do work maintaining Concord's Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway. Kokoda veteran Reginald Chard, a volunteer who works at the track's education centre, has been Holsworthy High School's guest at Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies for several years. Each year students from Holsworthy High School volunteer at the memorial to say thanks to him for his community-minded attitude and volunteering spirit. Located only a kilometre away from the Holsworthy Barracks, the school's students are particularly mindful of the sacrifices made by our veterans. It is encouraging to see such a significant number of students willing to volunteer their time and effort to preserve the memorial, which commemorates all those who fought in the Kokoda campaign. Once again I congratulate Reginald Chard and Holsworthy High School students for their efforts in promoting and preserving this memorial to our military history.

SPRING INTO CORRIMAL

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (20:10): Corrimal is the heart of my electorate: I live in East Corrimal and my electorate office is in Corrimal. This year's Spring into Corrimal festival was the largest in the festival's history, with around 60,000 people attending the event. The annual festival is a one-day family event organised by the mighty 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. A grand parade and 270 market stalls make Spring into Corrimal a great day for the people in my electorate. I congratulate the Corrimal Chamber of Commerce on a fantastic job of bringing the day together and giving local businesses a unique marketing opportunity. I thank the sponsors, supporters and the dedicated volunteers, led by the mighty Paul Boulton, who ensured the day ran smoothly and was full of fun for the whole family.

R U OK? DAY

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:11): Thursday 12 September was R U OK? Day—a day on which we were all reminded to look out for one another and support those who may be struggling mentally through life's challenges. I had the pleasure of meeting with Peter Webb, a former Hawkesbury Citizen of the Year who is assisting the Western Sydney Suicide Prevention and Support Network. Peter has a target of zero suicides in Hawkesbury. That same week, Windsor High School held its annual colour run around the school oval as part of its Wellbeing Week in response to R U OK? Day. I encourage all individuals and organisations to support one another and let those who are struggling know that there is always someone they can talk to and that help is always available. I thank Peter Webb, Windsor High School students and staff and all those organisations within the Hawkesbury electorate who participated in raising the awareness of this important initiative.

WAYNE BINGHAM

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (20:12): Today I acknowledge the hard work of Wayne Bingham from the Northern Districts Little Athletics club. Over the past 30 years he has been a mentor for many young athletes in the Hornsby area, and he has been dedicated to the world of athletics his entire life. As a coach, he has helped kids achieve amazing results from club level right through to Australian titles, the Commonwealth Games and even international competitions. Wayne is an absolute inspiration to children's sport. He has spotted talent and produced State champions. He has driven overnight and slept in the back of his car to ensure the best results. He has been recognised by his club with life membership. I thank him for all he has given to our community through his hard work with Little Athletics. I wish Wayne all the very best as he enters retirement. I thank him for everything he has done to ensure the success of future generations of our track stars. He has earned a well-deserved break.

PAGEWOOD BOTANY FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (20:13): I congratulate Pagedwood Botany Football Club on another successful season in 2019. I was really impressed to see just how many club teams made it through to their finals, including the under-12 As, under-13 Bs, under-13 Ds, under-13 Es, under-14 As, under-14 Bs, under-14 Cs, under-14 Ds, under-14 Es, under-15 As, under-15 Bs, under-16 As and under-18 As, as well as the girls' under-13s,

under-15s and under-17s. Many teams were premiers in their age divisions and the boys' under-14s made the Kanga Cup grand final. The all-age men's 8 team, the over-35s and the over-45 men's As and Bs made their finals, with the men's over-45 As crowned undefeated league champions. I congratulate club executives President George Lundy, Vice-President Glenn Redding, Treasurer Julia Chernoukha and Secretary Stan Stamatellis. I also congratulate the many volunteers who make the wonderful football club possible. I commend the club's success to the House.

DEBBIE KEY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (20:14): I recognise Moree Hospital's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternal Infant Health Strategies [AMIHS] clinical midwife specialist Debbie Key as a fantastic advocate for Women's Health Week, which took place at the beginning of September this year. Debbie began work as an enrolled nurse in a nursing home in Glen Innes and following a move with her family to Moree began a Bachelor of Nursing degree. While in her post-graduate year Debbie applied to become a midwife.

In her role as an AMIHS clinical midwife specialist, Debbie works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the local community who are pregnant, providing them with support throughout their pregnancy journey, coordinating outreach clinics in isolated communities, and engaging these women with antenatal classes and education on the effects of alcohol and smoking during pregnancy on their child's health. I commend Debbie for the dedication, compassion and resourcefulness she displays in her work and the invaluable role she plays in the health and wellbeing of women in the Moree and broader community.

KURT DAWSON

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (20:15): Kurt Dawson has been named a feature dancer for the 2019 Schools Spectacular. Kurt Dawson from Wadalba Community School was named one of the four students who will be feature dancers. Schools Spectacular has been mentioned as one of the largest variety acts in the world. As a feature dancer Kurt is part of a group of 2,300 dancers who have been choreographed into a kaleidoscope of music from pop and hip hop to the classics, and a full spectrum of dance styles. Schools Spectacular Creative Director, Sonja Sjolander, believes the amazing talent and passion in each performance has made Schools Spectacular Australia's longest-running variety show and one of the biggest events on Sydney's arts calendar. The Schools Spectacular is held at the QUDOS Bank Arena, with four shows taking place on 22 and 23 November. Congratulations again to Kurt Dawson on his amazing talent. Good luck, Kurt. We wish you all the best in the Schools Spectacular.

ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL PORT MACQUARIE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:16): I recognise six students of St Joseph's Primary School Port Macquarie, who received 100 per cent in the 2019 National Computer Science School Coding Challenge. Dexter Maher, Tyler Charnock, Erin Little, Milly McGrath, Bodhi Parsons and Keanu Smiech all received 100 per cent in the challenge, which is designed to test their knowledge in coding and using technology. These outstanding results are a testament to the students who embraced the challenge and their teacher, Sarah Blundell, who helped them complete the five-week program. Congratulations to all students on your impressive problem solving skills. I suspect we have the next Steve Jobs or Bill Gates in our midst.

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL CAMPSIE

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (20:16): Last Friday I joined my community in Campsie for the traditional Mid-Autumn Festival, which celebrates the end of the autumn harvest. This was the inaugural celebration in Campsie, and I urge Canterbury Bankstown Council to continue organising this event. I also thank the council for putting on the event last Friday. I acknowledge Councillor Clare Raffan, our local member Tony Burke, Khal Asfour, and Rachelle Harika. There were amazing performers and I thank Asian Women at Work, as well. I wish everyone prosperity, health and success.

DARKINJUNG ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:17): I congratulate Matthew West on being re-elected as the Chair of the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council. It is a fantastic re-appointment. I also acknowledge the new members of the Aboriginal Land Council, Feona Sales, Danielle Captain-Webb, Deborah Swan and Amy Parry. I also take this opportunity to thank Katrina Radburn-West, Ken Warren, Barry "BJ" Duncan and Desmond Benton for their service on the Aboriginal Land Council. The Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council has been going from strength to strength on the Central Coast under the leadership of Matthew West. To see the board being refreshed is always a great opportunity. I thank those members who have given their time for the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council. It is a fantastic organisation, which is incredibly well represented and well respected.

across the Central Coast region. Once again I thank Matthew West and the team at the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council

JORDAN AMIES

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (20:18): I congratulate Glenmore Park student and athlete Jordan Amies on winning the Junior Sports Person Award for the month of July. Jordan's win was due to her amazing development and skills in competitive swimming. Jordan began swimming lessons when she was just two years old. At the age of 10, she decided to make swimming her passion and joined the squad program. Through her long hours and hard work dedicated to training and improvement, she was recognised by her school and the Penrith Valley Sports Foundation as the worthy recipient of July's award. Currently Jordan is working hard at school to achieve the grades she needs to pursue a physiotherapy course at university. One day Jordan would like to represent Australia in the Olympic swim team and then go on to use her skills in physiotherapy to work for the Australian Olympic swim team or start up her own business specialising in sports injuries. Congratulations, Jordan, on your award. I wish you all the best for your future endeavours.

ILLAWONG RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (20:19): I acknowledge the selfless volunteers of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade, who have been attending fires in northern New South Wales this month. The crew from Illawong has dropped everything to attend the devastating fires north of home, readily leaping into action to assist its colleagues in northern New South Wales. These heroic men and women have been instrumental in protecting life and property under dry and windy conditions.

I acknowledge the following members of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade, whose tireless efforts have contributed to the safety of affected communities: John Koole, Chris Lynch, Greg Last, Daniel Walters, Dom Bondar, Paul Reynolds, Jason Eshman, and Patrick Tuffy. I acknowledge their heroism, dedication and selflessness. I know that I am not alone in my appreciation for the service they provide. I take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank the volunteers at Illawong Rural Fire Brigade for their continued service to our community and all of New South Wales.

COOLAMON ROVERS FOOTBALL CLUB AND NETBALL CLUB

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:20): As the footy season draws to a close I acknowledge the Coolamon Rovers Football and Netball Club—125 years for the football club and 31 years for the netball club. The Hoppers is one of the oldest football clubs in Australia, never to have merged. It has been a privilege to play a part in the resurfacing of the grounds, the installing of irrigation and the setting up of the public address system at Kindra Park. Current President Derek Owens tells me that he is not done yet, and I have absolutely no reason to doubt his word. For as long as Coolamon is thriving, so too will the Hoppers. This community has enjoyed 125 years of footy and I have every reason to believe there will be 125 years more at the very least. Well done to everyone at club for a fantastic and memorable season.

WINDSOR GIRL GUIDES

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:21): I update the House on my attendance on 11 September at a ceremony of the Windsor Girl Guides. I was witness to new young female guides pledging to honour guide laws. Two of those laws included "use my time and ability wisely" and "live with courage and strength". These are great principles to practice. Girl Guides offer these young girls access to a variety of activities and help them develop their skills whilst forming friendships. The girls are empowered to grow into confident, capable and responsible members of our community. I congratulate the new guides. I am sure they will honour the pledges they made. I thank all the volunteers for their dedication to guides, and for assisting in the growth and development of the young guides who will no doubt become wonderful females in our community. I wish the young girls all the success ahead.

CENTRAL COAST ACADEMY OF SPORT

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:22): Regional academies of sport are wonderful institutions, and that is no more evident than in the Central Coast Academy of Sport. It gave me great pleasure to meet up with Alexa Walker and Ronan Grattan this week in Parliament House, along with Ian "Moose" Robilliard from the Central Coast Academy of Sport. The academies of sport go from strength to strength in regional areas of New South Wales. I am proud to be a supporter and to be able to stand by and help out at the academies of sport, whether it be with the upgrades for the Mingara athletics track or the basketball infrastructure. It is great to see young people across the Central Coast benefiting directly from the dedication of the volunteers at the Central Coast Academy of Sport from Ian Robilliard all the way down. I also thank the parents who volunteer their time

at the academies of sport across New South Wales. I particularly thank the parents at the Central Coast Academy of Sport for the time they dedicate to their children. I wish them all the best for their future.

GWEN DOWLING AND MACLEAN HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)—I offer my congratulations to Gwen Dowling who has dedicated more than 20 years to the Maclean Hospital Auxiliary, and has decided it is time to "retire". Gwen has held the positions of President and Vice-President and has also been named a Patron of the Auxiliary. The Maclean Hospital Auxiliary does a fantastic job in supporting the Maclean Hospital with \$58,590 spent on equipment within the last twelve months and a further \$6,480 worth of equipment on order, and it's because of the work and devotion of the volunteers, like Gwen, that this is achievable. I offer my thanks, and that of the community of the Lower Clarence, to President Sandra Bradbury and all of the volunteers for their tremendous work.

CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—I rise today to congratulate all the wonderful children from Clovelly Public School who participated in this year's Education Week celebrations. This year's theme is "Every student, every voice" and provided the students of Clovelly Public School the opportunity to share their ideas, perspectives and opinions of their school lives. In front of an audience of their teachers, parents and community present, the students had an audience of open ears to listen to their stories, and were wonderful thing to listen to. Congratulation as well must go to the school band that won 3 gold medals for their performances! I would like to congratulate the Clovelly Public School community for hosting this fantastic celebration and to all of the students involved to using their voices and telling their story. I would also like to thank Mr Mathew Jackman, Principal of Clovelly Public School for the fantastic work he is doing at the school in his first year as Principal.

SUSTAINABILITY LOCAL BUSINESS AWARD

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the teams at Bella Cibo Takeaway in Jannali and The Point Preschool in Oyster Bay on respectively winning and being highly commended for the Sustainability Award at the 2019 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. When it comes to the sustainability of a food business, Nathan and Pardip Pillai at Bella Cibo Takeaway consider the sourcing of the packaging used to serve the food just as important as the food itself. The team at Bella Cibo have been striving to change their practices to be as sustainable as possible for years, reducing waste generated by single use packaging and plastic pollution wherever possible.

At The Point Preschool, Director Catherine, Sue Vrahas of Jannali, Frances Bondad-Head and Vicki Perritt maintain a longstanding and strong commitment to the environment and education for sustainability. Even the building itself was redesigned and renovated in 2010 according to sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. A love of the environment is clearly developed by the children who attend The Point Preschool, learning about recycled products, tree planting and bush care, just to name a few. I congratulate both businesses on these outstanding achievements.

SWANS PRIDE MARCH

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—On 17 August, the Wallsend West Newcastle and Wyong Lakes inaugural Pride Cup was played at Bill Elliot Oval in Maryland. Overall, the day was a huge success for both Clubs, with a trophy a piece, and the message of diversity and inclusion in sport promoted to our community. I would like to acknowledge the Wallsend West President, Steve Lewer, for his contributions to the club and the overall success of the day. I would also like to acknowledge the Players and Officials for the Women's side including Coach and Vice President Darren Bird and players Tess Barnes, Kate Booth, Emily Curtis, Nicola Deacon, Faith Eadie, Ashlea Finn, Rebecca Garside, Matilda Jackson-Fowler, Kira Jones, Sarah Livesey, Abbey Main, Alyce McCloskey, Prue McDonald, Lisa Morales, Mel Nelson, Lori Nichols, Emilie Page, Sarah Parker, Amy Pittman, Melissa Richardson and Meghann Sawkins. I would also like to congratulate the Men's coach Jonathon Hamilton and players James Bailey, Aiden Bartley, Jarod Beck, Liam Crump-Gallagher, Csaba Felkai, Lachlan Gallagher, Henry Gore, Kaeden Hudson, Mark Lim, Rhys McGrorey-Clark, Ryan Osborne, Hayden Spark, Daniel Strain, Aaron Thorpe, Jackson Tisdell, Timothy Turner, Luke Tweedie, Mathew Watson and Murray Younger.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)—There isn't much better than a game of rugby league at a suburban footy ground. But when those suburban grounds host international rugby league, the occasion is simply sensational. On Sunday, September 16, Waminda Oval – the home of the mighty East Campbelltown Eagles Rugby League Football Club – hosted a clash between Peru and Uruguay. There was certainly a lot of passion on

display with two players sent off and three others sin-binned following a melee. However, when there was footy played, it was indeed entertaining.

On five separate occasions the lead changed hands but it was Peru who eventually emerged victorious, 34-30. Peruvian hooker Jye Sommers proved the difference with a scintillating hat trick. I attended the game and the buzz from the crowd was infectious. It was a real treat to see two international teams do battle on one of Campbelltown's finest local sporting fields. I hope the Peru and Uruguay game acts a catalyst for more international games to be played on more local sporting fields throughout Campbelltown. Well done to all those involved in the game at Waminda Oval.

INGLEBURN MILITARY CAMP NATIONAL SERVICEMEN MEMORIAL

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—There is an historical place of remembrance in my electorate where we gather to reflect on and appreciate the efforts of those who have served to protect our country. The Ingleburn Military Precinct – or Bardia Barracks – holds a special place in the hearts of local residents. The grounds, historic huts and memorial serve as reminders of the soldiers and National Servicemen who have trained there since World War II. I recently had the honour of attending a Memorial Service to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the last National Servicemen 1951-1959 to march out of Ingleburn.

In the first National Service scheme between 1951 and 1959, the 13th Battalion trained at Ingleburn Military Camp. I would like to pass on my thanks to the NSW National Servicemen's Association and Affiliates for inviting me to take part in the memorial service. I have come to know your members as passionate Nashos who are committed to ensuring Bardia Barracks continues to be used to commemorate all soldiers and servicemen who trained in its grounds.

BIRDON GROUP PORT MACQUARIE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise the privately owned maritime and military defence manufactures in my electorate, The Birdon Group for securing two multimillion-dollar contracts from the US Government which promises to boost employment and contribute greatly to our local economy. Acknowledged as a major player emerging in the maritime and engineering sector, the Birdon Group announced the company's successful efforts in procuring two lucrative US Army and Coast Guard contracts valued at AUD 575 million. Based in Port Macquarie, CEO Jamie Bruce was jubilant in announcing the successful tender, noting the enormous potential a contract of this magnitude would hold for the town and indeed the Mid North Coast region.

Excited with beating the field of global competitors, Birdon will now begin upgrades to a fleet of 47-foot Motor Lifeboat vessels and supply Bridge Erection Boats for the US Army. These awards combined take their contract pipeline to over \$700 million. Founded in 1977 the Birdon Group today employs over 250 full time personnel and operates from four main divisions in engineering, dredging, development and disposals. I congratulate Birdon for achieving this remarkable contract agreement with the United States.

FEDERATION OF ITALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP QUALIFYING DINNER

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—On Friday 6th September 2019 I attended the Federation of Italian Rugby League (FIRL) World Cup Qualifier Fundraising Dinner at Club Marconi. The dinner was celebrated in grand style with more than 400 guests in attendance to celebrate and support the team as they prepare for their upcoming games in the World Cup Qualifiers against Spain and Ireland in the coming months. Italy is an emerging Rugby League nation that does not have the infrastructure or funds like the Australian Kangaroos. FIRL aim to send players of Italian heritage from around the world to represent Italy at World Cup qualifiers and ultimately the 2021 finals in England. The fundraising event would not have been possible without the support of sponsors and affiliates, in addition to past and present NRL players joining in to support the event. Special thanks to MC Vince Sorrenti for keeping the crowd entertained as only he knows how and last but not least, to my great mate and first Italian coach Mr Mick Pezzano for organising the fundraiser. Like all good Italian functions plenty of food, wine and lots of loud conversations all happening at the same time. Forza Italia!

CITY OF LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I rise to recognise the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society which held its annual Ward and Olive Harvard Memorial Lecture on Saturday 24 August in the Liverpool Library. The Society was established in 1959 and has been enthusiastically celebrating its sixtieth year. The Lecture is named after two of the Society's founders Ward and Olive Harvard. They were quite significant local historians not just in Liverpool and its region but they were also involved in the Royal Australian Historical Society, the RAHS. They were both President, among other roles, in Liverpool's Society. The guest speaker at this year's lecture was John Paul Young, OAM the well-known singer and performer. He attended the lecture

which two other members of the band Elmtree, Bob Barnett and Phil Edwards, all of them having started off in Liverpool living at various times in places like Reilly Street, Ferrington Crescent and Nagle Street. The annual lecture is one of the many things the Society does and one of many ways in which it contributes positively to Liverpool.

ERNIE HAVAS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—Since stepping into Microsprints four-and-a-half seasons ago, Ernie Havas' list of accolades has continued to increase with the St Clair resident now adding a Queensland title to his resume. During his short Microsprints career, Havas has collected a number of impressive results, including scoring back to back NSW Club Championships this season and previously winning the State Cup and the Isaacs memorial! His most impressive achievement being last season's Australian title victory at Narrabri's Northwest Speedway. With his eyes set on the 2019/20 season, Ernie plans to contest a similar schedule and participate in each of the title events. Congratulations Ernie on this terrific achievement and all the best for the 2019/20 season!

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA DAY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Battle for Australia Day commemorates all of those who fought in the land, air and sea battles in the Coral Sea, Milne Bay and New Guinea as well as those who worked to defend the home front. Our brave service men and women fought gallantly to hold back an invading force that had stormed its way through the Asia-Pacific and was on the doorstep of Australia. A service was held on the 4th of September by the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch to honour those who fought and pay respect to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It was touching to meet with veterans at this event and hear stories of their service during this series of battles. I would like to thank the President Bill Cruwys, Secretary Douglas Clarke and the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch for hosting this important event. Most of all I would like to thank all of our military veterans for the sacrifice that they have made defending Australia and our serving military members for their continuing service. Lest we forget.

KELVIN AND MICHAEL TRAN

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta)—Mr Speaker

I rise today to acknowledge two fine young gentlemen from my electorate. Kelvin and Michael Tran are both the Co-Chairs of the Fairfield Relay for Life and have been organising it for close to half a decade now. They recently were recognised for their tremendous hard work, sacrifice and dedication to the Cancer Council at the NSW 2019 Cancer Council CEO Awards where they won the Best Volunteer Team of the Year category. Planning for the 2019 Fairfield Relay for Life is well underway now, with a special dunk tank being featured this year where I will get the chance to dunk my Parliamentary Colleague Guy Zangari to raise vital funds for Cancer Research. I once again congratulate these boys for their tremendous effort at such a young age, and wish them all the best for this year's Fairfield Relay for Life.

ONE VOICE CHOIR REDFERN

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—I draw the attention of this parliament to the One Voice Redfern Choir which has over 40 members from across Redfern and the broader community. The choir members are a diverse and incredibly inspiring group of people – including local public housing tenants, people's family members, and passionate singers from our community in Redfern, Waterloo and surrounding suburbs. It was wonderful to attend the formal launch of the choir on 29 July 2019 where choir members including Laura Sabatino, Mindayla Read, Annette and Sasha spoke about the benefits the choir has had to their mental health and feeling part of their community. The choir sang several songs at the launch – and we all joined in – and a special shout out to Evelyn, Owen, Andrew, Derek, Laura and Wayne.

The choir is inclusive and welcoming – making community connections through singing. The choir was established by Redlink and Creativity Australia and meets every week for choir practice and supper. Special thanks to Musical director, Mary Kiani, Robin Miles; Choir Coordinator, Shane Brown from Sydney Local Health District, the City of Sydney, Counterpoint Community Services and Margaret Mcrae from Redlink for their support in making this happen.

LYNNE TURNER

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I wish to acknowledge the wonderful community spirit of Lynne Turner from Coal Point. Lynne has been an active member of the Lake Macquarie Garden Club for 16 years and has served several terms on the executive committee as either President or Treasurer. Several years ago, Lynne devised the idea of conducting tours of private local gardens combined with an art show to inspire gardeners and art-lovers alike. It was a great way to showcase not only the talents of local greenthumbs, but also local artists. In the event's first year in 2017, 10 local gardens were on show attracting more than 500 visitors. Those numbers are

continuing to grow with each annual event. Proceeds from the tours have now raised about \$50,000 for Hunter Medical Research Institute. Last month I was invited to a surprise afternoon tea for Lynne to present her with a Community Service Award. It was a small but very important acknowledgement of the great work she has done. Lynne is a dynamic organiser and a wonderful member of the Lake Macquarie community, and I wish to formally thank her for that.

GRAYS POINT RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—I acknowledge the significant contribution of Grays Point Rural Fire Service volunteers in battling major bushfires on the Lower North Coast and in the Northern Tablelands. Ian Kemp and Josh Howes are currently on their second deployment. Trent Kemp, Sien Tjauw and John Lawler are still on the ground today in the Northern Tablelands. I thank Aaron Minshull, Adrian Brugger, Ben Smith and Sien Lu, who completed their mission and are back home safely. The bushfire season has unfortunately started early this year. I admire the selfless commitment of our local firefighters to participate in battling the fires further afield.

WIL MORGAN – BASKETBALLER

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—Yesterday, I was very pleased to welcome the Morgan family, and in particular Wil, from my electorate to the Regional Academies of Sport Reception in Parliament House. Wil was representing the Hunter Academy of Sport at the event, along with fellow athlete Maddison Mueller. Aged 15, Wil has already made some outstanding sporting achievements in basketball including:

- 2019 NSW Country Tour Representative;
- 2019 Hunter Academy Basketball 'Athlete of the Year'; and
- 2018 NSW U/16 D-League Representative.

The Hunter Academy of Sport is one of eleven sport academies assisting talented junior athletes from regional areas of NSW. The Regional Academies of Sport were established with three major objectives:

1. To identify regional talent;
2. To educate and develop youth in regional NSW; and
3. To provide sporting opportunities.

They also provide education in coaching, injury management and treatment, fitness testing and training, sport psychology, public speaking, ethics in sport, nutrition and personal development. Many Hunter Academy of Sport athletes have gone on to represent their chosen sport at a national or state level. I congratulate all the athletes who attended the event yesterday and also the dedicated staff whose passion for sport drives the academies success.

C3 CHURCH CARLINGFORD - 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—C3 Church Carlingford is a contemporary Pentecostal church committed to worshipping God with passion, reaching people with Jesus, and building people in Jesus. It is a member of the international movement of Christian City Churches. It was founded by Pastors Richard and Sue Botta in September 1994. They started in a small school hall but within two years they had outgrown it and moved to where they now meet at Carlingford High School. The church has grown from its initial 70 people to over 450 people. It has thriving kids', youth, and young adult ministries, and is passionate about serving locally and globally. They run courses in the community on a number of life issues, and internationally, they have donated over 50,000 Christmas gifts to Sri Lankan orphans, as well as raising money for a ministry to disabled children in China. I was pleased to be able to visit C3 Church Carlingford a couple of Sundays' ago for their 25th anniversary service and celebration. It was great to catch up with some of the leadership team and meet the church community. I wish the church every success for the next 25 years.

MERCHANT NAVY DAY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker I pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of the Australian Merchant Seamen who played a vital role carrying cargo across our oceans to support the Allied war effort. I was pleased to have joined with local veterans to commemorate Merchant Navy Day. I was touched by the words of June Spiers who spoke of her late husband Dr John Spiers. I recognise also Jannion Kaufman who, along with her daughter Joan Taylor, spoke movingly about her late husband Capt. L.W. Taylor. All across NSW, the returned services league is making a difference for current and returned servicemen and women. I am proud to say, in my own electorate, we have fantastic RSL sub-branches providing support and making a difference for the servicemen and women serving our country. Thank you to Merrill Barker and Don Kennedy for inviting me to honour the hundreds of merchant mariners who lost their lives since World War I to protect our nation during the desperate times of war. Lest we forget.

BAULKHAM HILLS MY COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I inform the House of two projects put forward and voted on by the Baulkham Hills electorate, which will now be funded by the NSW Government's My Community Project program. This includes:

- \$198,560 to St Gabriel's School for transformational coaching and self-care for parents of children with disabilities and sibling wellbeing and support and social skills development; and,
- \$29,346 to Baulkham Hills Sports Club for a path and lighting upgrade to the existing walking track throughout Ted Horwood Reserve, creating a safe integrated loop for the community.

My Community Project captured the imagination of the Baulkham Hills community with people putting a lot of work into their ideas and it was great to see people get behind the projects that matter to them. I thank all applicants and sponsors for taking the time and effort to develop their ideas and promote their projects along with the members of the community who voted. I look forward to seeing applicants and sponsors getting on with the job of rolling out these projects and the benefits they will provide to the local community.

TAREE PCYC GYMAROOS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise the Taree PCYC Gymaros from my electorate, who This year gained sanctioning to represent Gymnastics Australia at the World Gymnaestrada event in Dornbirn, Austria in July. The World Gymnaestrada is an international gymnastics event held every 4 years with in excess of 20,000 athletes representing 34 countries from across the globe. The Federation of International Gymnastics Gala Show is the premiere event within the Gymnaestrada, where the top 15-20 teams from across the world perform. This year's show involved 600 gymnasts, and was broadcast live across Europe. Being given this opportunity was a great honour for the team, and I'm told an amazing experience for them all. The team would not be able to do what it does without the support from our local community, and their team Coach Sarah Hayes and team leader Justin Hayes. I wish to congratulate Team members:

Rebecca BOYD
Asha CLARKE
Miley COX
Georgia DALEY
Ruby DALEY
Ffion DAVY
Lucy HALLOT
Taya HAWKE
Patrick HAYES
Ellie HILES
Tyla HUMPHREY
Savannah HUNT
Nicholas LAMPEN
Ebony LUMANTAS-HOOKE
Jack MCGINN
Tylah ROACH
Nicholas ROBINSON
Pippa ROGERS
Island ROSAMOND
Penny SCHUBERT
Ava SHARPE
Cameron STOROK-LOHSE
Evan THOMAS
Elizabeth VAESSEN
Sophie WATSON

SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION AWARD

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I want to congratulate Southern Cross University for initiating and also winning a Higher Education Award for its fabulous Farming Together Program. On Tuesday, 27 August 2019, SCU was named as a joint winner at the Australian Financial Review Higher Education Award, Industry Engagement category. SCU's Farming Together Program is a timely and innovative industry program which helped 28,500 primary producers tackle volatile markets, climate change and drought. During its two-year pilot period, the project delivered an innovative knowledge mobilisation model to primary producers nationwide, unlocking the power of collaboration and empowering a generation of primary producers.

I congratulate SCU for its courage and commitment to take on such a big project has helped our farmers, fishers and foresters with the challenges of climate change and volatility. I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor and President of Southern Cross University Professor Adam Shoemaker, Vice President of Engagement Mr Ben Roche, the Program's Director Lorraine Gordon and SCU Team for their vision and leadership. This is a great achievement and showcases our own regional university, SCU, leading nationwide. Next global. On behalf of our community, thank you and congratulations.

FRIENDS OF THE HILLS LIBRARY

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—I would like to recognise and congratulate the Friends of the Hills Library who recently celebrated their 25th Anniversary. I was honoured to attend the event, alongside the Mayor of the Hills Shire, Councillor Michelle Byrne. The event was organised to celebrate the work of the Friends since it was founded in 1994, and to pay tribute to members past & present who have donated almost \$185,000.00 to the libraries in the Shire. The Friends of the Hills Library supports the Library and provides funds for special projects and additional resources such as large print books. The Friends also ran a special Dementia Awareness Collection program which raised thousands of dollars towards the cause. Several Life Members of the Friends were present on the day – who I would like to recognise:

Ms Sonya Phillips
Mr Robert Gardiner
Mrs May Raeside
Mrs Margaret Morgan
Mrs Christine Jolly

I want to say a huge Thank You to the outgoing President Merle Overton, and I recognise Ms Lyn Cook who is now at the helm, leading The Friends into the future. Congratulations once again to The Friends of the Hills Library on your 25th Anniversary!

THE BACKYARD CRAFT GIRLS

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)—I pay tribute to the Backyard Craft Girls who volunteer their time to hand make knitted rugs, clothes and toys to bring warmth and joy to those doing it tough in our Illawarra community and in communities beyond our shores. Over the last 25 years the Backyard Craft Girls have been a powerhouse of generosity contributing to great causes such as Trauma Teddies for the Red Cross; the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox donations program and the Knits for Nature program. The Backyard Craft Girls donate regularly to the Wollongong Homeless Hub, and support residents in Aged Care facilities all over the Wollongong area.

They throw a fabulous Mother's Day Morning tea, their most recent event raising \$5000 for the Wollongong Cancer Care Centre. Founding members Jean Mulligan, Pat Harding, Pat Cundy, Penny Mathie, Marilyn Williamson and Terrie Mant are still working hard and many other members have been recruited since then. They work tirelessly with big hearts donating their time, supplies and love to people who truly need it. I thank the Backyard Craft Girls for contributing to the rich and loving community we live in.

HOLLYDENE ESTATE

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter)—I would like to congratulate Executive Director and Owner of Hollydene Estate Karen Williams and Hollydene Estate Business Manager Emma Williams, on their major success dominating the Australian wine Show (ASWS) recently held in Melbourne. For the second consecutive year, the Jerrys Plains vineyard in the Upper Hunter electorate, secured the top prize at this prestigious event. The vineyard's 2008 Juul Blanc de Blanc Chardonnay as Best Wine of Show. To cap off a triumphant presentation ceremony, the 2008 Juul Blanc de Blanc Chardonnay was also awarded Best Mature Wine of Show and Best Extended Yeast Age (bottle fermented, 60 months tirage age).

Due to their success the Hollydene Estate will now attend VITEff, the Sparkling Wine Technology Exhibition and various sites in France from October 14 to 19. I again congratulate Karen and her daughter Emma and the team at Hollydene Estate on their exceptional achievement with back to back wins and wish them every success in their future endeavours in promoting the wine and tourism industry in the Upper Hunter and the State.

HINDAS DIVAS CELEBRATIONS 2019

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education)—I was privileged to attend the Indo-Australian Bal Bharathi Vidyalaya Hindi School (IABBV) 2019 Hindi Divas Celebrations at Thornleigh West Public School. The celebration was in honour of Hindi being adopted as the official language of India in 1949. People from all over India and the world, including schools, governments, and NGOs all celebrate Hindi Divas as a tribute to the second most spoken language in the world.

The IABBV aims to help the next generation keep in touch with their cultural roots, as well as mentor them into developing personal and professional networks, encouraging collaboration with community leaders to drive continuous social improvement and impact. Awards were presented to all outstanding students for their excellence in achievement in Hindi, as well as for their participation and engagement with community events, and the greater community. I congratulate all the award recipients and thank the IABBV Hindi School for their continuous efforts in building a cultural bridge between Australia and India. I'd also like to thank President Mala Meta for her exceptional work for the IABBV Hindi School, and for allowing me to join them in celebration of the Hindi language and Indian-Australian relations.

NARRABRI NOSH

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Nosh Narrabri returned to the sunny banks of the Namoi again this year. What began as Nosh on the Namoi in 2003, and is now the bi-annual Nosh Narrabri festival that highlights local producers of fine food and wine. Nosh remains a not-for-profit event, run by a committee of dedicated volunteers. This year in the midst of an extremely tough season saw friends from across the North West embrace the opportunity to come together and enjoy this wonderful event breaking attendance records with 4,500 attendees at the Food & Wine Expo, 500 at the Nosh on Night Concert, and 400 for the Nosh Long Lunch! This is a testament to how important social events are to people experiencing the worst drought on record.

A feature of the Nosh is the cook off. This year saw the beef, sheep, wheat, and cotton industries go head to head for the esteemed title of Nosh cook off champions. This year saw the beef industry rise to the top – Congratulations Samantha and Cody Huff. My congratulations go out to the committee members who work hard to pull off such a successful event to be enjoyed by all!

CHRIS AND CINDY CLONAN

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise Chris and Cindy Clonan of Alfoxtton Merino Stud near Armidale on winning the RaboBank Australian Supreme Merino Ram title with their 175.5 kilogram medium wool ram at the National Merino Sheep Show in Dubbo recently. Chris and Cindy's 21.5 micron, six-tooth horned ram began the day by taking out the medium wool August shorn merino broad ribbon, followed by the champion August shorn sash and final the Supreme Merino Ram award. Like many of the exhibitors at Dubbo, Chris and Cindy are battling a horror drought and their success at the show is testament to their resilience and passion. The awards provide well deserved recognition for their farm and the strength of the New England Merino industry. Well done Chris and Cindy!

CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I would like pay tribute to the 2019 Bankstown Children's Festival held on Sunday 15th September at Paul Keating Park. I attended along with Councillor Alex Kuskoff and a number of other Canterbury Bankstown City Councillors. The Children's Festival is a staple on our community calendar promoting social harmony by providing a platform for community organisations and language groups to proudly display their respective customs and traditions through an array of performances, exhibitions and displays.

The 21st anniversary of the Bankstown Children's Festival is an outstanding achievement and one that would not be possible without the dedication of President Mr Thuat Van Nguyen OAM, a passionate advocate for the children's festival since its inception, having previously been recognised as Citizen of the Year in Bankstown. I also thank the organising committee and the festival's volunteers for assisting in ensuring the continuing success of this wonderful local event. The festival was attended by 21 different cultural groups and included performances from Scottish Highland Dancing, Viet-Aus Little Stars (VALS), Kud Vadar Bankstown's traditional Macedonian dance, Huyen Quang Buddhist Youth Association, Vietnamese Cultural School, Zahrava Ukrainian Youth Association and the Revesby Punjabi School.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:23 until Thursday
19 September 2019 at 09:30**