



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday, 12 November 2019

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 12 November 2019

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: I remind members that notices of motions are not statements. The motion of which the member for Swansea gave notice was, in part, very close to being a statement.

Bills

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (RMS DISSOLUTION) BILL 2019

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 15 October 2019.

No. 1 GRNS No. 1 [c2019-070A]

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

No forced redundancies for RMS or TfNSW staff

A person who, immediately before the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, was a member of staff of Roads and Maritime Services or Transport for NSW must not be removed from the Transport Service (other than on disciplinary or incapacity grounds or as part of a voluntary redundancy) within the period of 4 years commencing on the date of that dissolution.

No. 2 GRNS No. 2 [c2019-070A as amended]

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

No privatisation or outsourcing of RMS or TfNSW work

For the period of 4 years commencing on the date of the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services—

- (a) any function or work that, immediately before that dissolution, was exercised or carried out by Roads and Maritime Services or Transport for NSW must not be privatised or outsourced to a non-government sector entity, and
- (b) any existing contract or arrangement for the carrying out of road and construction maintenance work on behalf of Roads and Maritime Services or Transport for NSW in the Sydney metropolitan area (within the meaning of the *Regional Development Act 2004*) by a non-government sector entity must not be extended in scope.

No. 3 GRNS No. 3 [c2019-070A as amended]

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

Minimum number of TfNSW regional employees

- (1) For the period of 4 years commencing on the date of the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, the number of full time equivalent employees of Transport for NSW in regional NSW must not be reduced below the sum of the number of Roads and Maritime Services and Transport for NSW full time equivalent employees in regional NSW immediately before that dissolution.
- (2) In this clause, **regional NSW** means that part of New South Wales means that part of New South Wales that is not within the following areas —
 - (a) the Sydney metropolitan area within the meaning of *Regional Development Act 2004*,
 - (b) the local government area of the City of the Blue Mountains.

No. 4 GRNS No. 4 [c2019-070A as amended]

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

RMS awards not to be merged into Transport Service awards

- (1) The Transport Secretary must ensure, for the period of 4 years commencing on the date of the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, that the existing RMS awards are maintained as separate awards and are not combined with any other award applying to employees in the Transport Service.
- (2) In this clause, *existing RMS awards* means the following—
 - (a) the *Roads and Maritime Services Consolidated Salaried Award 2019*,
 - (b) the *Roads and Maritime Services School Crossing Supervisors Award 2019*,
 - (c) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Traffic Signals Staff) Award 2019*,
 - (d) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Wages Staff) Award 2019*.

No. 5 **OPP No. 5 [c2019-055C]**

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

Certain industrial disputes regarding dissolution of RMS may be resolved by Industrial Relations Commission

- (1) If a person who, immediately before the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, was a member of staff of Roads and Maritime Services is of the opinion that the person has, or a group of similar persons have, been materially disadvantaged by that dissolution or actions directly consequent on that dissolution, the person, or an industrial organisation acting on behalf of the person or group, may apply to the Industrial Relations Commission to have the matter determined by conciliation and, if necessary, arbitration.
- (2) The Industrial Relations Commission may conduct that dispute resolution process in a manner that the Commission considers appropriate.
- (3) The Industrial Relations Commission may make orders in relation to the matter that the Commission considers are fair and reasonable in the circumstances.
- (4) In this section:
industrial organisation means:
 - (a) an industrial organisation of employees within the meaning of the *Industrial Relations Act 1996*, or
 - (b) an association of employees registered as an organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* of the Commonwealth.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (12:18:01): I move:

That:

- (1) The Legislative Council amendment No. 3 be agreed to.
- (2) The Legislative Council amendments Nos 1, 2, 4 and 5 be disagreed with.
- (3) The Government amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2019-202R be agreed to:

No. 1 **No forced redundancies for RMS staff**

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

No forced redundancies for RMS staff

- (1) The employment of a Transport Service non-executive employee who, immediately before the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, was a member of staff of Roads and Maritime Services must not be terminated on the grounds of redundancy (other than voluntary redundancy).
- (2) This clause continues to have effect only while any of the following awards apply to any non-executive employees in the Transport Service—
 - (a) the *Roads and Maritime Services Consolidated Salaried Award 2019*,
 - (b) the *Roads and Maritime Services School Crossing Supervisors Award 2019*,
 - (c) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Traffic Signals Staff) Award 2019*,
 - (d) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Wages Staff) Award 2019*.

No. 2 **No privatisation of certain RMS work**

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

No privatisation of certain RMS work

For the period of 4 years commencing on the date of the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services—

- (a) any work that, immediately before that dissolution, was performed by Roads and Maritime Services must not be privatised to a non-government sector entity, and
- (b) any contract in force immediately before that dissolution for the carrying out of road maintenance work on behalf of Roads and Maritime Services in the Sydney metropolitan area (within the meaning of the *Regional Development Act 2004*) by a non-government sector entity must not be extended in scope.

No. 3 **RMS awards not to be merged into Transport Service awards**

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

RMS awards not to be merged into Transport Service awards

- (1) The Transport Secretary must ensure, for the period of 4 years commencing on the date of the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, that the existing RMS awards are maintained as separate awards and are not combined with any other award applying to employees in the Transport Service.
- (2) Subclause (1) does not apply to an existing RMS award if all the industrial organisations that are parties to the award consent to the combination.
- (3) In this clause, *existing RMS award* means the following—
 - (a) the *Roads and Maritime Services Consolidated Salaried Award 2019*,
 - (b) the *Roads and Maritime Services School Crossing Supervisors Award 2019*,
 - (c) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Traffic Signals Staff) Award 2019*,
 - (d) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Wages Staff) Award 2019*.

No. 4 **Disputes may be resolved by Industrial Relations Commission**

Page 6, Schedule 1[35]. Insert after line 34—

Certain industrial disputes regarding dissolution of RMS may be resolved by Industrial Relations Commission

- (1) If a person who, immediately before the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, was a member of staff of Roads and Maritime Services to whom an RMS award applied is of the opinion that the person has been materially disadvantaged by that dissolution or actions directly consequent on that dissolution, the person, or an industrial organisation acting on behalf of the person, may apply to the Industrial Relations Commission to have the matter determined by conciliation and, if necessary, arbitration.
- (2) However, the person, or industrial organisation acting on behalf of the person, before making the application to the Industrial Relations Commission under subclause (1), must follow the dispute settlement procedure set out in the applicable RMS award as far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
- (3) The Industrial Relations Commission may conduct the dispute resolution process in a manner that the Commission considers appropriate.
- (4) The Industrial Relations Commission may make orders in relation to the matter that the Commission considers are fair and reasonable in the circumstances.
- (5) If a Transport Service senior executive or Transport Service senior manager who, immediately before the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services, was a member of staff of Roads and Maritime Services is of the opinion that the executive or manager has been materially disadvantaged by that dissolution or actions directly consequent on that dissolution, the executive or manager, or an industrial organisation acting on behalf of the executive or manager, may apply to the Transport Secretary to review the matter.
- (6) The Transport Secretary may, after reviewing the matter, make directions that the Transport Secretary considers are fair and reasonable in the circumstances.
- (7) The Transport Secretary may delegate any of the Transport Secretary's functions under subclauses (5) and (6) to a person employed in the Transport Service.
- (8) In this clause—

industrial organisation means—

 - (a) an industrial organisation of employees within the meaning of the *Industrial Relations Act 1996*, or
 - (b) an association of employees registered as an organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* of the Commonwealth.

RMS award means the following—

- (a) the *Roads and Maritime Services Consolidated Salaried Award 2019*,
- (b) the *Roads and Maritime Services School Crossing Supervisors Award 2019*,

- (c) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Traffic Signals Staff) Award 2019*,
- (d) the *Roads and Maritime Services (Wages Staff) Award 2019*.
- (9) To avoid doubt, nothing in this clause affects the operation of section 74 of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* or section 68O of this Act.
- (10) Subclauses (1), (2) and (5) cease to have effect on the expiry of the period of 4 years commencing on the dissolution of Roads and Maritime Services.

The Government does not support four of the amendments to the bill that were made in the other place and proposes in their place four amendments that better address the issues and concerns that were raised in the Legislative Council, particularly by members of the Labor Party and The Greens. The Government is willing to support the Legislative Council amendment No. 3 in order to facilitate the passage of the bill through the Parliament. The bill as introduced by the Government envisages no change to the underlying employment status of staff or industrial arrangements for the newly integrated agency. The Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] and Transport for NSW staff remain on their current awards. All five awards have recently been negotiated and agreed to by unions and have been made by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission for two-year terms.

Turning to the individual amendments, it is clear that the amendments are a little out of kilter with the purpose of this legislative change and the protections that are already afforded to staff. The conditions contained in these amendments were not sought by the unions in the award negotiations nor in the consultation process that has been running for around five months. These conditions have not been sought by unions in relation to any of the machinery of government changes that have occurred across the government sector. These amendments seek to apply artificial constraints which are completely unnecessary. However, the Government is prepared to accept one of the amendments and proposes four of its own amendments that deal with issues of concern, if it will assist the passage of the bill.

I again urge members in the upper House and particularly in the lower House to remember that the Government is integrating roads and transport in order to achieve the right public policy outcomes for our communities. That cannot be achieved by having a standalone roads agency. The only amendment made in the other place that the Government will support is amendment No. 3, despite the view that the amendment is obviously unnecessary. As I have said time and time again, the Government has already made solid commitments around regional growth in jobs. We are increasing jobs in the regions to support the growth of our transport and road network.

I turn now to the four amendments made in the other place that the Government does not support, amendments Nos 1, 2, 4 and 5. The Government opposes each of these amendments and proposes in their place the following amendments. First, the Government proposes that the House rejects amendment No. 1 made in the other place and proposes instead its own amendment clarifying that there will be no forced redundancy for any non-executive employee in the Roads and Maritime Services. The Government believes this amendment is wholly unnecessary as the Government has already made solid commitments around jobs growth. We are increasing jobs in the regions to support the growth of the transport network, and I will keep saying it until I go blue in the face. However, if the inclusion of a new section in the bill assists with the passage of the bill the Government is willing to do so.

As the Government has said before, the bill before us is designed to do no more than support the integration of the Roads and Maritime Services and its staff and functions into the transport cluster. It ensures that these functions continue to be exercised even after its dissolution as a separate statutory entity and that staff can continue to exercise those functions confidently and lawfully. The objective of the transition is to integrate the function of the Roads and Maritime Services with Transport for NSW. The Transport secretary has already made a commitment that there would be no forced redundancies as a result of the bill implementing the machinery of government changes announced by the Premier in April this year. The Premier also committed that there would be no job losses in the regions as a result of the government sector machinery of government changes. It is on the basis of these commitments that the Government is of the view that, again, this amendment is not necessary.

However, the Government is willing to support a new version of this amendment if doing so assists in the passage of the bill. The amendment as passed in the other place was too broad and too uncertain. It applied indiscriminately to executive and non-executive employees, notwithstanding the very different rules and principles that apply to each category. The Government amendment provides that a transport services non-executive employee who was a member of staff of the Roads and Maritime Services immediately before the dissolution of the Roads and Maritime Services cannot be terminated on the ground of redundancy other than through voluntary redundancy.

The Government does not support amendment No. 2 as passed in the other place. As we have said time and time again, the bill has nothing to do with privatisation. Those opposite know it and those in the other place

know it. However, to give everyone comfort, the Government proposes its own amendment to the bill to prohibit the privatisation of any Roads and Maritime Services work for a period of four years. Amendment No. 2 proposed by the Government puts beyond doubt that for a period of four years following the dissolution of the Roads and Maritime Services any work that immediately before the dissolution was performed by that entity must not be privatised to a non-government sector entity. This amendment excludes the reference to outsourcing as contained in the amendments made in the other place.

A reference to outsourcing is opposed both in principle and in detail as it would create uncertainty for the agency about what is outsourcing of work or functions and what the legislation covers. It could cover outsourcing of general programs commonly undertaken across the sector, including aspects of IT, fraud and corruption investigations and auditing exercises. We would not be able to engage experts to help us design our mega projects. It could impede the use of labour hire in an emergency to backfill positions to ensure delivery of services to the people of New South Wales.

Including a reference to outsourcing would also mean that the trialling of innovative service delivery models, such as on-demand transport, would not be able to occur. This will not impact on existing staff but it will delay innovation that could otherwise be delivering improvements to our community. The Government's proposed amendment also supports the commitments already made by the Transport secretary and accepted by the unions that existing contracts or arrangements for the carrying out of road maintenance work by Transport for NSW or the Roads and Maritime Services within the Sydney area must not be extended in scope during that four-year period.

The Government does not support amendment No. 4 as passed in the other place and proposes in its place Government amendment No. 3. The Government is concerned that the amendment that was made in the other place preserves for four years awards that were made by the Industrial Relations Commission with a duration of two years. Such a provision would prevent the industrial parties from agreeing to changes that might be sensible and desirable to both parties. The Government's proposed amendment simply adds a provision that recognises the right of the parties to conduct normal negotiations and to work together if the unions that are parties to the relevant awards all agree to the awards being combined.

The Government does not support amendment No. 5 as passed by the other place. I am advised that the conditions contained in this amendment were not sought by the unions in recent award negotiations nor in the consultation process that has been running for over five months. In place of that amendment the Government moves its own amendment No. 4, which gives primacy to the dispute resolution processes already agreed to by transport services employees and the unions contained in the relevant awards while still permitting access to the Industrial Relations Commission, if required. This is sensible. The effect of the amendment made in the other place would be to enable any person who is a member of staff of the Roads and Maritime Services to make an application to the Industrial Relations Commission if they believe they have been materially disadvantaged by the dissolution of the Roads and Maritime Services.

Such an application would also be able to be made on behalf of such a person or group of such persons by an industrial organisation. This would allow individual employees, including the most senior executives, to lodge disputes directly—and I emphasise the word "directly"—with the Industrial Relations Commission. This is inconsistent with current settings of senior executives and senior managers across the government sector. This amendment would significantly limit the ability of Transport for NSW to resolve disputes at a workplace level. All Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services awards contain dispute resolution procedures that have been agreed through award negotiations and which have successfully resolved a significant proportion of disputes. These dispute resolution clauses are consistent with those operating across the entire government sector and are available to public sector employees to resolve disputes in relation to the impacts of machinery of government changes. The existing processes work. They are efficient and effective. They have been developed and consistently applied across multiple agencies. The amendment made in the other place is unacceptable for all of the above reasons.

However, in order to satisfy staff and the unions that the Government is serious about ensuring that concerns about employees being materially disadvantaged by the dissolution of the Roads and Maritime Services will be dealt with, the Government instead proposes amendment No. 4. This amendment appropriately provides for separate pathways for dealing with any concerns by Roads and Maritime Services staff about disadvantage for non-executive employees on the one hand and senior executives and senior managers on the other for a period of four years following the dissolution. This recognises the clear distinction in the ways that the Transport Administration Act, the Government Sector Employment Act and the Industrial Relations Act deal with these different categories of employees.

For non-executive employees, any person who was a member of staff of the Roads and Maritime Services immediately before the dissolution who feels that they have been materially disadvantaged by that dissolution or

actions directly consequent on it has the right to apply to the Industrial Relations Commission to have that matter dealt with. However, consistent with the industrial disputes powers of the commission in the Industrial Relations Act, the proposed amendment gives primacy to the dispute resolution procedures in the relevant awards. Before making an application to the commission the complainant is required to follow the dispute settlement in the applicable Roads and Maritime Services award as far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances. As I have emphasised before, these dispute resolution processes have been agreed with the relevant unions and are enshrined in the relevant industrial instruments. I note that the right to apply to the Industrial Relations Commission is available both to non-executive employees on their own behalf and to an industrial organisation acting on behalf of such an employee.

Provision has also been made for senior executives and senior managers in the Transport Service who were members of staff of RMS immediately before the dissolution of that entity. Should such an employee be of the opinion that they have been materially disadvantaged by a decision made as part of that dissolution, the amendment gives them a right to apply to the Transport secretary for a review. Again this is an appropriate mechanism for senior executives and managers and is consistent with the approach taken across the entire government sector for senior executives. As I have outlined, we are, in essence, seeking to make some small changes to the amendments passed in the other place to clean this up so that we can get on with the appropriate integration with confidence and surety for the hundreds of staff at RMS and Transport for NSW. I would be hopeful that those opposite would be in agreement with the amendments and also the upper House. On that basis I commend the amendments.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (12:30:31): Before I begin I will speak completely outside the leave of the amendments and say thank you to all those in my electorate, those in the electorate of the Minister and those in the electorate of the Chair who are currently on the ground fighting fires and keeping New South Wales safe from a catastrophic and deeply troubling situation. I point out that the Opposition received the amendments as circulated this morning, so they have not been the subject of detailed negotiations between the Government and the Opposition. I am not suggesting there has been a lack of goodwill in the consideration of these amendments but it does mitigate against the Opposition supporting them, I think on good grounds. They meaningfully change the amendments moved in the Legislative Council and as a result limit the industrial opportunities for affected employees that, as far as we understand, were the subject of guarantees made by the Government to affected unions during negotiations for the proposed merger of the two agencies.

The first change the Government has pursued in its circulated amendments deal with no forced redundancies as a principle for non-executive RMS employees. We may not necessarily have an issue with that but for some reason it applies to non-executive employees of the Roads and Maritime Services and not Transport for NSW. Why there is that distinction is not apparent to me in the amendment as circulated. The second part relates to the clause in the amendment moved in the Legislative Council where the clause "within the period of 4 years commencing on the date of that dissolution" has been replaced with a clause listing the relevant Roads and Maritime Services awards.

In my cursory reading this morning of clause 2.8, the Roads and Maritime Services Consolidated Salaried Award 2019 expires in two years, so that would, in effect, cut the will and intent of the Legislative Council amendment by two years. I do not believe the Minister has provided the House with enough evidence to justify the truncating of that right, so on those grounds we would not support the proposed amendment as moved by the Government as it relates to No. 1 as circulated. Amendment No. 2 as circulated, "No privatisation of certain RMS work", does not include wording in relation to outsourcing. The bill as amended from the Legislative Council reads:

- (b) any existing contract or arrangement for the carrying out of road and construction maintenance work on behalf of Roads and Maritime Services or Transport for NSW in Sydney ... (within the meaning of the Regional Development Act ...) by a non-government sector entity must not be extended in scope).

Clause 2 (a) reads:

Any function or work that, immediately before that dissolution, was exercised or carried out by Roads and Maritime Services or Transport for NSW must not be privatised or outsourced to a non-government sector entity.

The Government has excised the words "or outsourced" from the prospective amendment. I do not want to get into a detailed semantic argument around the differences between outsourcing, privatising or franchising but it seems to me that the Opposition and the Government are locked in a dispute about the definitional meaning in a finance sense of the word "privatisation" versus the word "franchising" as it pertains to regions 7, 8 and 9 of the bus network. On those grounds we have not been given reasons for the removal of those words from the amendment and, based on previous limited experience, we would oppose that amendment. Amendment No. 3 as circulated pertains to the RMS awards and the Transport Service award. There is an included subclause (2) that reads:

- (2) Subclause (1) does not apply to an existing RMS award if all the industrial organisations that are parties to the award consent to the combination.

We accept that amendment. It seems reasonable in the context of allowing parties, via negotiation and conciliation, to come to an agreement in relation to employment provisions in Transport for NSW or RMS, depending on their applicable award. The amendments were presented in globo. We would have accepted the amendment if it were moved separately. It is important that we signal to the Minister that it is something we would support in the upper House. Amendment No. 4 as circulated relates to disputes that may be resolved by the Industrial Relations Commission. It is not possible for me to determine the intricacies of the dispute settlement procedure as negotiated between the relevant unions, the department and the Government.

The specifics in relation to changes the Government has made in this amendment specifically have to do with the Industrial Relations Commission and when an employee, being of the belief that they have been disadvantaged as a result of this merger, would be allowed to take the matter to the Industrial Relations Commission. This seems to insert a stage referencing the dispute settlement procedure that has been negotiated. Without having access to that it is very difficult for me to ascertain whether or not that is an appropriate step to include in the provision and on that basis we offer cautious opposition.

The Minister may be able to disabuse me of this belief but it seems as though this amendment allows an individual to file a grievance with the Secretary of Transport but not a group. Obviously within the meaning of the industrial provisions that have been negotiated between the unions and the Government that would seem to carry with it the potential for slowing down the appealable rights of an employee who felt aggrieved or disadvantaged as a result of the merger of the two agencies. If the Government believes that is not the case, then obviously we have the House of review to make that very clear to affected parties and also to Opposition MPs as it comes before them. I do not want to take up the time of the House unnecessarily. We would support changes as circulated on the Government's amendment paper to No. 3—RMS awards not to be merged into Transport Service awards, the inclusion of subclause (1). As to the others, I have outlined the reasons for us opposing them at this time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (12:38:34): I thank the shadow Minister and apologise. One of my staff has a personal issue that has led to this morning, so I apologise for the shadow Minister getting the amendments only this morning. I will say a couple of things to help alleviate some of the issues he has raised. First, as to the RMS award, it is a two-year award—a nominal period of two years and then it rolls over for an extra two years. That is why it is written in that way. It has no effect in terms of the existing award. The member expressed concern about the two-year period. To alleviate his concern, it does relate specifically, as it appears, to the two-year nominal period and then the rollout. It is RMS we are dissolving, not Transport for NSW, which is why the provision relates precisely to RMS employees.

In relation to outsourcing, whilst I appreciate the issues that the member for Kogarah raises about franchising, I reiterate the point I made earlier that we need absolute clarity on things like IT outsourcing or other important operational issues on which we cannot go it alone as a government sector and might need to engage the private sector—for instance, the design work required for a mega project or investigations that may be required into the behaviour of staff. The provision provides absolute clarity that it relates only to privatisations. Further to the concern of the member for Kogarah, outsourcing of maintenance has been a contentious issue. This provision gives absolute clarity that we are not further outsourcing road maintenance functions in the regions because of the way in which we are moving this provision in order to get it through the upper House. The only outstanding contentious issue in relation to the definition of what the member for Kogarah refers to as "privatisation" and what we refer to as the outsourcing of functions is road maintenance, and the provision gives absolute clarity on that.

In relation to the concerns of the member for Kogarah about dispute mechanisms, in essence we are codifying what is already in the award regarding the dispute mechanism to resolve issues brought forward by staff. There is nothing controversial about that. The ability for a dispute process to be looked at separately to the secretary and then the option to go to the secretary—which unions, as industrial bodies, can do as well, not just the individual concerned—will be codified in the statute, as well as the ability for employees to go to the Industrial Relations Commission. There is no insertion of anything new in the dispute process to which the member for Kogarah alludes. I respect the member's position on the lower House, but ultimately the upper House will assess what amendments the Government is bringing here today, should we have the numbers to pass them. Again, I ask the member for Kogarah to consider carefully the Government's arguments on this.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The question is that Legislative Council amendment No. 3 be agreed to, that Legislative Council amendments Nos 1, 2, 4 and 5 be disagreed with and that Government amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2019-202R be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes43
 Noes37
 Majority.....6

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
 Berejiklian, Ms G
 Constance, Mr A
 Crouch, Mr A (teller)
 Elliott, Mr D
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Henskens, Mr A
 Lee, Dr G
 McGirr, Dr J
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Smith, Mr N
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Wilson, Ms F

Ayres, Mr S
 Clancy, Mr J
 Cooke, Ms S (teller)
 Davies, Mrs T
 Gibbons, Ms M
 Hancock, Mrs S
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Lindsay, Ms W
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Preston, Ms R
 Saunders, Mr D
 Speakman, Mr M
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

Barilaro, Mr J
 Conolly, Mr K
 Coure, Mr M
 Dominello, Mr V
 Griffin, Mr J
 Hazzard, Mr B
 Kean, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Provest, Mr G
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Stokes, Mr R
 Tuckerman, Mrs W
 Williams, Mr R

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Butler, Mr R
 Chanthivong, Mr A
 Daley, Mr M
 Donato, Mr P
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Park, Mr R
 Scully, Mr P
 Warren, Mr G
 Zangari, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dalton, Mrs H
 Finn, Ms J
 Haylen, Ms J
 Kamper, Mr S
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Parker, Mr J
 Tesch, Ms L
 Washington, Ms K

Bali, Mr S
 Catley, Ms Y
 Crakanthorp, Mr T
 Dib, Mr J
 Greenwich, Mr A
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lynch, Mr P
 Mehan, Mr D (teller)
 O'Neill, Dr M
 Piper, Mr G
 Voltz, Ms L
 Watson, Ms A (teller)

PAIRS

Bromhead, Mr S
 Pavey, Mrs M
 Sidgreaves, Mr P
 Singh, Mr G
 Williams, Mrs L

Barr, Mr C
 Doyle, Ms T
 Harris, Mr D
 Lalich, Mr N
 Saffin, Ms J

Motion agreed to.

Messages

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I move:

That a message be sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

Motion agreed to.

FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 22 October 2019.

No. 1 **OPP No. 1 [c2019-200A as amended]**

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert after line 15—

[16] Section 23 Amount payable under penalty notice

Insert after section 23(5)—

- (6) Despite any other provision of this Act or any other Act or law, the Commissioner may, on application by a person to whom a penalty notice is issued, reduce by 50% the amount required to be paid under the penalty notice if—
 - (a) at the time the person committed the offence specified in the penalty notice, the person was in receipt of a Government benefit, and
 - (b) the Commissioner thinks it is appropriate having regard to the relevant guidelines issued under section 120.
- (7) In subsection (6), a person in receipt of a Government benefit includes the following—
 - (a) a holder of a Health Care Card, Ex-Carer Allowance (Child) Health Care Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card issued on behalf of the Commonwealth,
 - (b) a person in receipt of the Disability Support Pension or Newstart, ABSTUDY Living or Widow Allowance under a law of the Commonwealth.

No. 2 **OPP No. 2 [c2019-200A]**

Page 11, Schedule 1. Insert after line 33—

[59] Section 117C

Insert after section 117B—

117C Unlawful disclosure of personal information

- (1) If the Commissioner becomes aware of an unlawful disclosure of personal information about an individual that is held by the Commissioner, the Commissioner must, within 28 days after becoming aware of the disclosure, notify the individual of that disclosure in accordance with any directions given to the Commissioner by the Privacy Commissioner in relation to the matter.
- (2) However, the Commissioner is not required to notify the individual of the disclosure if the Privacy Commissioner advises that notification is not appropriate in the circumstances.
- (3) The Privacy Commissioner is to include information about all unlawful disclosures under this section in the Privacy Commissioner's annual report for the period in which the disclosures occurred.
- (4) In this section—
personal information has the same meaning as in the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

No. 3 **OPP No. 3 [c2019-200A]**

Page 11, Schedule 1. Insert after line 33—

[59] Section 120 Guidelines on exercise of functions under this Act

Insert after section 120(1)(d)—

- (e) the class of persons in respect of whom the Commissioner must not make a reallocation of an overpayment under section 122C.

No. 4 **OPP No. 4 [c2019-200A]**

Page 12, Schedule 1[59] (proposed section 122C(3)), lines 7–10. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

- (3) The Commissioner must not, unless requested by the person, make a reallocation of an amount otherwise refundable to a person under this section if the person—
 - (a) was in receipt of a Government benefit at the time the person became entitled to the refund, or
 - (b) belongs to a class of persons specified in guidelines issued under section 120.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (12:51:01): I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

The Legislative Council has passed the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 with some amendments. The Government worked closely with the crossbench to settle on these. I ask the Chamber to support the bill as amended. Amendment No. 1 passed by the Legislative Council provides a 50 per cent reduction in penalty notice amounts where the person is in receipt of a government benefit but, importantly, also requires the Commissioner of Fines Administration to consider the appropriate reduction having regard to guidelines issued under section 120 of the Act. A person in receipt of a government benefit is defined to refer to certain concessions including the Disability Support Pension, Newstart or the Health Care Card. Under section 120 the Minister may issue guidelines in respect of a number of matters including the exercise of functions under the Act by the commissioner.

The guidelines must be complied with and are required to be published. The guidelines therefore provide a means to clearly set out a framework to guide decisions by the commissioner in respect of reductions in fine amounts. These guidelines will be developed in consultation with government and community stakeholders, including Legal Aid NSW and Community Legal Centres NSW. Under such guidelines the commissioner could consider extenuating circumstances where payment of the fine in full is not feasible or may impose further hardship on the individual. In such circumstances the fine amount may be warranted. The Government has worked constructively with both the Opposition and The Greens to settle on an alternative to the original amendment put forward by the Opposition.

Under the proposed amendment No. 2 the Commissioner of Fines Administration must, within 28 days of becoming aware that personal information has been unlawfully disclosed, notify the affected individuals in accordance with any directions given by the Privacy Commissioner in relation to the matter unless the Privacy Commissioner advises that this is not appropriate in the circumstances. The amendment also provides that the Privacy Commissioner will report on such lawful disclosures in annual reports. This is in line with current practice whereby agencies voluntarily notify the Privacy Commissioner of relevant breaches. The revised proposal will ensure that decisions regarding notification of privacy breaches are sound and have appropriate oversight by the Privacy Commissioner.

As members know, amendment No. 3 introduces a new safeguard that fine overpayments cannot be reallocated in respect of persons on low incomes unless they give their permission for such reallocation. Such persons are identified by whether they are in receipt of certain government benefits. The proposed amendment No. 4 by the Legislative Council extends the bill's safeguards to also protect classes of persons specified in guidelines issued by the Minister under section 120 of the Act. This means that the safeguard is not limited to persons in receipt of certain government benefits. It will also protect other people who, although not receiving a government benefit, are otherwise considered vulnerable. Such classes of people would include refugees, people on bridging visas and people who are homeless or who are affected by domestic violence or financial abuse. These guidelines will be developed in close consultation with government and non-government organisation stakeholders and reviewed in 12 months to ensure that the safeguard is adequate.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (12:55:03): The Labor Party will support the Fines Amendment Bill 2019 as amended by the Legislative Council. The bill incorporates a number of amendments that were moved by Labor members in the other place. I acknowledge and put on record that when it comes to good public policy both the Government, the Opposition and the crossbench are willing to listen, particularly to the important stakeholders this will affect. I think the amendments that were passed are very important. I acknowledge all of those members who worked very hard to make sure that we moved these amendments. I introduced a few amendments in this place. I thank my colleague in the upper House the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the shadow Minister for Finance and Small Business.

I thank members of the crossbench, Minister Dominello and Minister Tudehope's office for very constructive discussions. The toing and froing was not easy but we have come to a very good landing. The first amendment that we moved will allow the Commissioner of Fines Administration to reduce a penalty by 50 per cent if a person was a recipient of a government benefit at the time an offence was committed. The amendment defines a government benefit to include a holder of a Health Care Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or a recipient of the Disability Support Pension, Newstart, ABSTUDY or Widow Allowance. The amendment provides that the commissioner is only to make such a reduction if the commissioner considers that it is appropriate.

In making a decision about the appropriateness of a reduction the commissioner will be required to have regard to guidelines published under section 120 of the Fines Act 1996. These are sensible changes that recognise the unique hardship which can be imposed on people on low and fixed incomes if they receive a penalty notice. In his second reading speech the Minister talked a lot about assisting people who are disadvantaged or on low incomes. Working with the crossbench, we have a very good amendment. It is important for the Minister to ensure that people are aware of the hardship panel. Not many people have appeared before the hardship panel.

I understand why; I used to work in the Treasurer's office. But it is really important, particularly for people who are in very difficult circumstances and have to pay huge fines. I call on the Minister to look at that.

The other amendment that Labor moved relates to changes to protect people's private information. We have gone through this in this place and a lot has been said about it. I was very concerned about what happened to the member for Maroubra during the State election campaign. It was terrible. Leaking private information is really terrible. I acknowledge that this amendment has been supported. That is a big step forward. The amendment will ensure that if an unlawful disclosure of a person's personal information occurs the Commissioner of Fines Administration must notify the person within 28 days.

The amendment provides that notification will not be required if the Privacy Commissioner advises that notification is not appropriate in the circumstance. That is a sensible safeguard that we support. Like I said, we are glad that the Government has supported this and recognises that this needs to change. We need to ensure that during this digital transformation people's information is protected. I acknowledge the work done by Community Legal Centres NSW, the peak body for not-for-profit legal centres across New South Wales, on amendments Nos 3 and 4, which deal with the reallocation of overpayments. It has made extensive representations to the Minister, the Opposition and the crossbench. I thank Community Legal Centres NSW for its amazing work.

There will be more bills of this kind coming through in the next year and I urge the Government to ensure that it speaks to stakeholders. It is very difficult for these groups. They have so much work going on, then a bill is introduced and they have to rush to put together a document outlining their concerns. Community legal centres will be at the front line implementing these changes. It is very important to listen to what they have to say and try to understand. It is not an unreasonable ask. I am not speaking for the Minister, but I know he would want the proper process to take place as well. During debate I discussed the issue of overpayment. I am not going to repeat what I said, but I welcome that the Government acknowledged the concerns that Community Legal Centres NSW raised. Penalty notices can have significant impacts on many vulnerable people in our community.

It is important that the Fines Act recognises those impacts and provides appropriate mechanisms to ensure that people are not disproportionately punished because they are socially or economically disadvantaged, live in regional or rural New South Wales, have an Indigenous background or live with disability. We have to take people's circumstances into consideration. Our amendments are about protecting vulnerable people. I am grateful to all members of the Legislative Council who supported these amendments. They are very important. It is good that there are some changes and reform to the way that we administer fines. I once again acknowledge my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey for his work. Labor looks forward to continuing to work on good policy. We are happy to extend a hand to the Government and crossbench to consider some good policy for the people of New South Wales, particularly the vulnerable.

There is a long way to go in the fines administration space. The Minister is very big on the digital transformation, but people who do not have access to online content or the internet and people from non-English speaking backgrounds are very vulnerable. That needs to be taken into consideration when we make changes around online and SMS access. It is great for a lot of us because it provides time efficiency, but we need to consider a whole cohort of people who do not have access. We look forward to working on other areas. I want the people of New South Wales to know that the Labor Party will continue to undertake the policy work that is necessary around fines and penalty notices. We believe that it is essential that this aspect of our legal system is just and fair for all.

Motion agreed to.

DESIGN AND BUILDING PRACTITIONERS BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 23 October 2019.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (13:05:30): I speak on the Government's much-awaited Design and Building Practitioners Bill 2019. I have given this bill much consideration and have met with many stakeholders, including industry associations, consumer groups and residents of apartments with defects. This is an important bill and today I have the opportunity to not only debate Labor's view on the bill, but also discuss some of the overarching concerns reported to me by the sector and present an alternate model of regulation. We are debating this bill because both sides want to achieve the aim of restoring confidence in the building sector by ensuring we build quality, safe buildings that stand the test of time. However, whilst I have great respect for the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, Kevin Anderson, I respectfully disagree with this undoubtedly piecemeal approach. We can and should do much more. We should take not small steps, but giant leaps.

Ultimately this bill addresses one part of a sector that is crying out for a robust legislative and regulatory framework, better enforcement, and a commissioner and commission to help execute the Government's policies and laws in this sector. It is fair to say that this billion-dollar industry is extremely complex. The issues should not be taken lightly. The building industry in New South Wales contributes \$25 billion to the State's economy per annum and employs around 250,000 workers, which is 10 per cent of the New South Wales workforce. It is a significant economic driver, particularly in the Sydney metro area. New apartments, houses and commercial buildings are not simple products. There are many elements beyond the four walls that are necessary and have come to be expected by consumers.

We would not have the safe homes that many live in today without modern inventions, including fire protection systems, toughened glass, sturdy balconies, complex lifts, pools, ducted air conditioning and heating, roof terraces and even urban gardens, including the one on the Central Park development on Broadway in Sydney's inner city. Modern technologies in construction have allowed us—theoretically—to build quality apartments that keep people safe and provide a good quality standard of living. I say "theoretically" because this Parliament has heard much about the extensive failure of the apartment market over the past 20 years. Worrying reports have come out of the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

Since 2006 City Futures has worked with the strata industry and government to examine a whole host of issues with strata, including sustainability, governance, accessibility, liveability, and defects and repairs. In their most recent research on defects, Professor Bill Randolph, Dr Hazel Easthope, Martin Loosemore and Laura Crommelin found that a worrying 85 per cent of high-rise buildings built in New South Wales post 2000 have some form of defect. An even more recent report from Deakin University from mid-2019 found that 97 per cent of apartment buildings in New South Wales had some form of structural defect. That was higher than the national number of 85 per cent. Dr Nicole Johnston, the lead researcher on this project, said it best when she said:

Unfortunately new residential building in Australia appears to be plagued with defects, and while the building itself can be fractured by these defects, it is the residents living there who face the impacts.

She then went on to say that Government intervention is urgently needed to stem the flow of these defects. Geoff Hanmer, an adjunct lecturer in structures and construction at the University of New South Wales and building professional, also had some thoughts on strata defects with respect to the bill before the House today. I will share his thoughts with the House. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 26 October he said:

While we can be thankful something is finally being done, the Minister's assertions are overblown.

The bill will have no immediate impact on confidence in the building market because it can only begin to apply to new buildings after about 2022 and it will have no impact at all on existing housing stock. If recent research by NSW, Deakin and Swinburne universities is accurate, more than 70 per cent of strata units less than 30 years old have defects.

He goes on to say:

The other key initiative that the government needs to take to rebuild confidence is to develop a policy for rectifying existing defective buildings. There is nothing in the current proposals about this at all.

Holding people to account is all very well but knowing who to blame when something has gone badly wrong is cold comfort. Just ask the residents and owners of Opal Tower and Mascot Towers.

I have been reading out these quotes to the House—and I will be quoting a lot of stakeholder feedback—because I think it is important to highlight that academics, industry and apartment owners are united in their view that the Government is tinkering around the edges here. This is a Government shirking a serious reform agenda and ignoring the advice of experts, industry and owners along the way. This is a crisis in so many senses, and I am deeply concerned that the Minister and the Government are ignoring the crisis at hand. The sheer numbers of defects speak for themselves.

Government members have their heads in the sand, totally and completely. Both the Premier and the Minister have utterly failed to tackle the large structural issues facing the building and construction sector at this time. Industry is crying out for a strong regulatory and legislative framework to reignite consumer confidence in the sector. All sides of industry want to ensure that when a potential buyer walks through the door of an apartment building they will have the confidence that it was built to standard and will last the test of time.

I cannot talk about the current state of this industry without talking about the history of tragic events that have lead us to this crisis of confidence. While I know there are many apartment buildings and strata committees that have been quietly dealing with defects for some years now, this issue first burst on to the public scene in 2014 when the Lacrosse building in Melbourne suffered a serious fire, which was started by a cigarette on a balcony. Because of the design of the building and the specific type of cladding used on the exterior of the building, a fire quickly ignited, directly affecting the approximately 450 people residing in the building.

Fortunately in this case there were no fatalities or injuries, but it was clear that this product was highly dangerous and rendered the building defective. This fire, unlike most house fires, was not contained to the one apartment it started in; it affected the entire building. It also brought into the spotlight the adequacy and the ability of the relevant building legislation to keep people safe. Tragically, flammable cladding can be deadly. Many members will remember seeing the sad event at Grenfell Tower on the news in June 2017. The 24-storey building had external flammable cladding that ran up the entire building, causing a fire that started from a malfunctioning fridge to spread rapidly through the entire building. On that sad day 72 people died, a further 70 were injured and 223 people escaped, but were displaced. The fire burned for 60 hours before firefighters could extinguish it fully. It was the worst residential fire in the United Kingdom since World War II.

There are over 400 buildings across this State, 120-odd of them high-rise residential, that are covered in this deadly flammable cladding. Defective buildings is what they are yet, still, the Government dithers. While Premier Daniel Andrews has shown leadership in Victoria, pledging to fix the 500 high-risk buildings needing immediate rectification with a \$600 million fund, our Government does nothing. It is not just these tragic fires that highlight the complete failure of regulation and failure of leadership from successive Ministers in this sector. Structural building defects across our State are having a devastating impact on the lives of apartment owners. Of course, I am speaking of those residents of Opal Tower, Mascot Towers, buildings in Erskineville and Zetland, and, as we have learned from the Building Commissioner, another building in Alexandria. I am even speaking about the residents in new buildings in the regions, such as the Landmark building in Charlestown.

I cannot imagine what it must have felt like for those residents in Opal Tower. On Christmas Eve last year they were evacuated from their building after residents heard cracking noises, which was the structure of the building shifting one to two millimetres. Out of fear that the building may be structurally unsound, residents were evacuated that evening. Imagine spending Christmas in temporary accommodation, unsure if you could go back into your home through no fault of your own. At a time when we are supposed to be relaxing and enjoying the company of family and friends, they were worried that their largest financial investment may crumble. It must have been a sobering thought indeed.

Debate interrupted.

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

Members

MEMBER FOR CAMPBELLTOWN

MEMBER FOR BLACKTOWN

The SPEAKER: I wish the member for Campbelltown a happy belated birthday for last week. I wish the member for Blacktown all the best for his birthday today.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: We have in the Chamber today a number of guests. Firstly, I extend a warm welcome to my guests in the Speaker's gallery. Mr Pat Cox is the former President of the European Parliament. Mr Cox served three terms in the European Parliament and was President of that Parliament from 2002 to 2004. Prior to entering the European Parliament he served in Ireland's national Parliament. I understand a number of members of the Friends of Ireland will be meeting with Mr Cox later this afternoon. With Mr Cox we have the Consul General of Ireland, Owen Feeney, and the Vice Consul of Ireland, Rory Conaty. I welcome you all. I also thank Mr Cox for presenting at the Australian Study of Parliament group at lunchtime today.

I extend a very warm welcome to student leaders, parents and teachers from Eastwood Public School, Northcross Christian School, Eastwood Heights Public School and Marist College Eastwood, all guests of the Minister for Customer Service and member for Ryde. I welcome you to the Chamber.

Announcements

ANDREW CLENNELL

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge Andrew Clennell, who is leaving the New South Wales Parliament press gallery. A seasoned political journalist, Andrew has covered seven Premiers during his career. He started in the press gallery for *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 2005 when Bob Carr was Premier and became State political editor in 2017. In 2010 he worked for *The Daily Telegraph* before moving to *The Australian* in 2017. I understand that in his new role he will still be eligible to play for the media in the cricket games against the parliamentary

team. We thank Andrew for his service over many years. I am sure the House will join me in wishing him well for the future.

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I inform the House that the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Water, Property and Housing who is at the Kempsey evacuation centre at this point in time.

Announcements

DEATH OF PAUL FRANCIS PATRICK WHELAN, FORMER MEMBER FOR ASHFIELD AND FOR STRATHFIELD AND A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I inform the House of the death on 30 October 2019 of the Hon. Paul Francis Patrick Whelan, a former Minister of the Crown, who served as the member for Ashfield from 1 May 1976 to 5 March 1999 and as member for Strathfield from 27 March 1999 to 28 February 2003. On behalf of the House I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly for the loss sustained. This will be the subject of a motion of sympathy on a future day.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

Question Time

BUSHFIRES

Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (14:22:50): My question is directed to the Premier. Will she update the House on the catastrophic fire conditions that New South Wales communities are facing?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:23:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the entirely appropriate question today. As of a few minutes ago there are unfortunately 10 fires at emergency level. This morning we woke up with over 50 fires across the State, but none were at emergency level. That has now escalated in the last hour. As predicted, the warm weather conditions coupled with the extreme wind conditions have exacerbated the fire conditions. In particular the areas of most concern are the mid to north coast, north-western New South Wales and now regions of the Upper Hunter as well. I thank the thousands of volunteers who are on standby.

We have 1,500 out in the field already with another 1,500 ready to go. I cannot commend highly enough the work of Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service Shane Fitzsimmons and all of the agencies that are working in such close cooperation today. We are in a state of emergency in New South Wales, a state that has not been declared since 2013. I urge all members of the community to please adhere to the serious warnings being issued today. I urge everybody to download the Fires Near Me NSW app, which literally provides minute-by-minute information on specific fire locations and the proximity of those fires to where people live.

This is the first day the House has met since three people unfortunately lost their lives over the weekend. I extend the deepest condolences of all members of this place to the families and loved ones of the three deceased persons. I extend also our deepest empathy to the many people who have lost their homes. It is estimated to be at least 150 homes but we cannot rely on that figure until the recovery process commences because some areas are still in very difficult circumstances. It struck me when I visited the Taree evacuation centre on the weekend that many people whose homes had survived were experiencing extreme trauma and guilt. It is not just those whose houses have been lost who are experiencing trauma but also community members who are living through very difficult circumstances.

I state at the outset that a state of emergency is in place for the next seven days. Regrettably, it is anticipated that the catastrophic conditions today will exacerbate the fires that are already burning. I am hoping that is not the case but by the end of question time we may see additional fires reach emergency level, as has been experienced in the last few minutes. Weather conditions are expected to be in a catastrophic state until at least 7.00 p.m. Our thoughts are with the courageous firefighters who are putting their lives and safety on the line to support others. It is extremely humbling to be in the presence of the people who have been fighting these fires and, as the member for Clarence validated this morning, in some communities not just for days but for weeks. In some instances firefighters have been on the frontline for months.

In particular I extend my gratitude to the Premiers of South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, who have proactively sent reinforcements to New South Wales so that our own local firefighters can have a much-needed

reprieve when the reinforcements have arrived. I assure all members in this place and the community at large that every effort and resource is being dedicated to combating what are very exceptional circumstances. I thank all the State government agencies for their cooperation. It is humbling when I visit the Rural Fire Service headquarters to see all the agencies closely working together to ensure they provide the best coordinated effort, whether it is the State Emergency Service, Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, the National Parks and Wildlife Service or the Forestry Corporation.

I thank the efforts of the health Minister who has ensured that medical services are ready if and when they are needed. The education Minister has done a great job in taking the precautionary measure of evacuating close to 600 schools across the State. Of course, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has done a great job in the last few days ensuring that the Government takes a whole-of-government approach. We look forward to ensuring that all resources are dedicated to supporting our communities across the State. Our thoughts are with those who are experiencing a lot of fear. Many families have been evacuated or have left their homes and our thoughts and prayers are with all of those people across the State.

BUSHFIRES

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (14:28:10): I appreciate the Premier's response to the previous question. I seek further information on how the devastating fires are continuing to affect communities across New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:29:06): I thank the member for Goulburn for her question and state at the outset that a number of reinforcements have been based at Goulburn in proximity of the police academy ready to be deployed to parts of Greater Sydney, the South Coast or Illawarra if and when they are needed. I know that the member for Goulburn—as do all members in this place—appreciates the severity of the situation that we are facing today. A government does not call for a state of emergency lightly but we have done so because it is crucial that the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] Commissioner has the ability to act swiftly and that all government agencies are within his command. Those actions within his command include forced evacuations, road closures and control over utilities—in essence making every decision that is required to ensure the safety of life and the protection of properties. Our priority today and over the next few days is the protection of life and property and also the welfare of animals and wildlife.

There has been pre-planning. Months ago the RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons warned us of the likely scenario over the course of this summer. I am pleased to say the New South Wales Government has not left any stone unturned when it comes to resourcing and the provision of equipment. I am proud that we are the only State that has a permanent large air tanker to ensure that water or retardant can be dropped at very short notice. The large air tanker can get to any part of New South Wales within an hour. We have an additional three on lease. Over the weekend we were pleased to lend the tanker to the south-eastern parts of Queensland to ensure that that State had the support of the aircraft.

These fires have come on top of drought, which has deeply impacted many of our rural and regional communities. We appreciate the stress and difficult circumstances that many in the community are experiencing as I speak. Again, I assure all members of the community that they are not just in our thoughts today, tomorrow and the rest of the week but for the weeks, months and in some circumstances years that it will take to rebuild their communities. I provide an update to the House that the Government appointed Euan Ferguson as Recovery Coordinator. This is an important step. Generally we would wait until the fires had subsided before appointing a person to coordinate the recovery effort but we got in early to ensure that Mr Ferguson, who has extensive experience with the bushfires in Tathra and floods in other parts of the State, is able to start recovery planning.

I commend and thank the Federal and local governments for their support. Everybody has come together to ensure that we do everything we can. The Federal and State governments together ensured within hours of the disaster unfolding over the weekend that those who have been evacuated and those who have lost their homes have immediate access to direct cash support and also support over the next three months in relation to employment and other measures. I am incredibly proud of all the teams who have stood up at the approximately 15 evacuation centres. That number goes up and down depending on the scenario. Some people who come into a centre know their property has gone and some do not but they all need assistance. All of the State government agencies have come together. In addition to the ones I have mentioned, there are also mental health support workers, counsellors and Family and Community Services workers who are providing vital support.

It was a humbling experience when the Deputy Premier, Minister Elliott and I, along with the Prime Minister and local members, went to the evacuation centres and spoke directly to people who had been displaced. I spoke to some Old Bar residents who were very emotional. Their properties had been saved but they knew that a few streets down their neighbours had lost their properties and that was causing them immense angst. Speaking with them about their experiences brought home the extent to which people are suffering during these times.

I cannot thank enough the thousands of volunteers who have put themselves forward, the 1,500 firefighters who have been on active duty and those who have been involved in activity over the last few weeks and months. *[Extension of time]*

I cannot thank them enough. A number of residents whom I met at the emergency control centre and the evacuation centre said to us, "We don't know how to thank the volunteers who saved our lives and properties. We do not know how to express that in words." I assured them that we would do so on their behalf and I take this opportunity to do that. I am incredibly proud of the Rural Fire Service. I believe it is the largest volunteer fire service organisation on the planet. I could not feel prouder of the work they are doing. I also appreciate the stress they are under.

Again I want to stress to this House that our thoughts are with all those who are currently in fear of losing their homes and those whose loved ones are out there fighting the fires on behalf of all of us. We will continue to watch the situation and we will continue to ensure that every agency across the State has the resources they need. My words to Commissioner Fitzsimmons were, "Do what you need to do. We will sort it all out later." There is no stone that he should leave unturned. He knows that. He is grateful for that. We wish him and all the agencies the very best today as they are on the ground fighting the fires on behalf of all of us and protecting human life.

BUSHFIRES AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:34:44): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the widespread nature of the fires, what is the Government doing to ensure we have adequate resources to combat these conditions, especially if they continue over a sustained period?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:35:05): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I have partially answered the question already. I want to quote some of the words used by Commissioner Fitzsimmons yesterday when he was asked about resources. He said he felt proud that he has received record funding arrangements from our Government and not just this year but in previous years. All levels of emergency services have received record funding from our Government. It is not just dollars, it is also the support and the power they need to undertake the responsibility. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Australian Defence Forces. I know the Minister for Police and Emergency Services will elaborate on this during question time today. In addition to our Government providing all the resources our State government agencies require, we are grateful for the support on standby from the Australian Defence Forces—for example, helicopters and other aircraft are on standby to assist evacuations, if needed, and to assist in fighting fires.

I commend also local government. When we have met with our local members, more often than not local councillors, local mayors and local government staff have been there. It has been a combined effort from all three levels of government and I commend everyone in the community who has been pulling together. I assure every person in this House that not only are our emergency services the best resourced in the nation, we are the only State that owns a large air tanker and has access to three additional air tankers. We also are on standby to receive support if we require it from North America and of course from the Federal Government through the Australian Defence Forces. We are proud of the fact that there is no stone unturned when it comes to resourcing. But at the end of the day we know that we are facing unpredictable weather conditions. No matter the amount of resources or planning that are in place, one cannot predict how the day will unfold. It is a watching brief. But rest assured that every resource is available, funding is available and all three levels of government are working together to ensure that our communities have what they need during these most difficult times.

BUSHFIRES AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:37:09): 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 the current bushfires that are devastating regional New South Wales?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:37:25): I thank the member for Clarence for his question. He is a member who has been dealing with fires for much of this calendar year. His region, his electorate, has been battered by fires and for a big part of the year the drought. They have been doing it tough. The electorate of Northern Tablelands is another area that has been dealing with drought, a lack of water and now significant fires. I know it was a tough weekend, starting on Friday in the electorate of Northern Tablelands, for those communities that have been impacted by the fires.

As the Premier touched on, there are currently 10 fires that we are concerned about. With the way conditions are in regional and rural New South Wales at the moment, by the end of the day that number will increase. Most importantly, we must take time out today to think about the people who are at the coalface of the fire, that is, the volunteers who are fighting fires and saving communities. Many of these volunteers have left their

jobs, and we should acknowledge the employers who allow their employees to leave and act as volunteers. A lot of these volunteers are fighting in communities that they are visiting for the very first time, possibly with the risk that their own community and their own homes could be under siege through fire.

I was lucky enough on the weekend to travel to Taree and Port Macquarie with the Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Prime Minister. We met with locals and many volunteers at Club Taree. We should never forget the volunteers. On a recent trip to California I met with the chief fire warden. He said that one of the things that most impressed him about Australia was the volunteer organisation called the Rural Fire Service [RFS], with 70,000-plus volunteers who were prepared to put their own lives in danger to protect community assets and their fellow Australians. As Australians, we should never take that for granted. We also should acknowledge how important it is to be part of such a significant volunteer organisation. With the issues that we face in regional and rural New South Wales through isolation, fires, floods and of course through what is a significant drought, it is these organisations that underpin community and are at the heart of our community. If they are not fighting fires they are training, and if they are not training they are helping the local footy club with a barbecue.

The RFS members are more than just firefighters; they are a big part of the community and the community spirit. They are our people. They are the farmers, the hairdressers, the business owners, the footy coach; they are part of our community. At any time that there are fires similar to what we have seen over the weekend and today they put everything aside and put themselves forward. I acknowledge all those volunteers across the State. I acknowledge also those volunteers coming from other States. The Premier and I, along with the Minister, had the opportunity on Sunday to welcome a crew from Tasmania. Every State is contributing to the fire efforts to protect life and assets in regional and rural New South Wales. It is a tough time for the bush, there is no doubt about it, but we are resilient and we will continue to be resilient.

The Premier touched on meeting a number of locals at Club Taree on Sunday and hearing what they have just been through. Some did not know if they had lost their homes, some knew they had lost their homes and others knew their homes were safe but did not have access to them. As they came together in Club Taree we saw the country spirit, the community spirit of regional and rural New South Wales that we always talk about in Australia. Regardless of what was happening at home, they were concerned about what may be happening in the community. They were talking about what may be happening and where they could help.

There were so many volunteers at Club Taree helping out. I want to take time out to acknowledge those individuals. As the Minister and I entered Club Taree we saw the kitchen stocked with meat pies, chips, schnitzel and a whole range of food—we did not touch any; we probably should not have. The club opened up its doors. I give credit to Chief Executive Officer Morgan Stewart and the staff of the club, who worked day and night: volunteers like Paul Allan, Mal Neale and Lisa Ruprecht and chef Jonathan Flanagan, who have been working night and day to make sure that everybody who entered the club were well fed, and they were. There was plenty of food. It was no different at the Tuncurry Beach Bowling Club on Friday night where again many used it as an evacuation centre. [*Extension of time*]

They too were looked after. It did not matter where we went across Taree. We heard stories of people at their local Woolworths who filled up their trolley with barbecue chickens because they wanted to support the RFS volunteers. Others were filling up their trolleys with bottles of water to support RFS volunteers. This is the beauty of regional and rural New South Wales. This is who we are and what we do. We all come together regardless of what is going on in our own lives to make sure we support the many people who are doing it tougher. The Laurieton United Services Club is another club that is supporting the community. The Settlers Inn Hotel in Port Macquarie, owned by Alistair Flower, is booked out by the Rural Fire Service. It is offering free meals and accommodation to support our Rural Fire Service men and women, while Carlton & United Breweries is sponsoring those venues as a way of support. The big end of town, the small end of town, big business, small business, volunteers, individuals, community groups, church groups and service clubs—everybody is coming together to help and support our regional and rural communities. That is something I am very proud of as the Minister for Regional New South Wales.

I am also proud of those communities that continue to do whatever they can to make sure that those who are worse off are being cared for and looked after. Today we wear poppies to commemorate Remembrance Day, which was yesterday, to remember those who defended our shores. They are heroes. Today there are thousands of heroes fighting fires on behalf of the communities of this great State and nation. They should be acknowledged and we should do everything to support our volunteers and those communities who in the next 24 hours will either be doing it tougher or picking up the pieces. Today is a day to acknowledge all those who are putting their lives at risk to protect the community.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY COORDINATOR

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:34:44): My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier provide the House with an update on what the Recovery Coordinator will do and what initiatives he will undertake to assist communities devastated by fire?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:35:05): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. An example of what the Recovery Coordinator, Euan Ferguson, will do is exactly what was done during the Tathra bushfires. I visited the Tathra fires shortly after they had subsided and the recovery effort had begun and not a single person that I met did not proactively state to me how pleased they were to have a coordinator to coordinate the recovery effort. The primary focus of the NSW Rural Fire Service and all the relevant State government agencies is to save lives and to ensure fires are put out and that people are kept safe by being advised as to whether they can return to their homes. The Recovery Coordinator also ensures that people are not left on their own to pick up the pieces and that all State government agencies are coordinated in ensuring people's accommodation and livelihood and are focused on infrastructure across the townships that may need rebuilding and on utilities that may have to be replaced.

The Recovery Coordinator's main focus is to ensure that the recovery plans are implemented and that there is coordination across all State government agencies. In most instances each agency does what it needs to do but the Recovery Coordinator is able to literally ensure that no-one falls through the gaps and that there is coordination across the whole of government. Whilst the focus of the emergency services personnel is on saving life and property, the Recovery Coordinator ensures that people are able to regain and restore their lives as best they can. In the case of Tathra, its recovery has taken a good 18 months. For many communities across the State their recovery and physical rebuilding will be quick but for other communities it will take longer and it might be one or two years before they recover to where they were at before the fires.

It is important to note that, unfortunately, the shock of what has happened often does not hit people until a week or two after the event. We have seen that time and time again. What always concerns me is the mental health not only of the victims but also of the firefighters and the emergency services personnel. People experience trauma and circumstances which none of us in this place would ever see. The Government is concerned to make sure that post the event the recovery plan includes good mental health support for victims, communities and our emergency services personnel. There is a whole range of activities which the Recovery Coordinator undertakes. Members opposite who want an example of that should look at the case study of Tathra. We had learnt from experience in previous years how we could have done things better and more quickly. We took on that learning and applied it to Tathra. Tathra was the first example where we ensured that Federal and State coordination was such that all the paperwork that was required happened within hours rather than days. We also ensured that we had plans in place and evacuation centres set up. We have taken the learnings from Tathra and are applying them now to the tragedy that is currently unfolding.

Having said that, what we are experiencing and have been experiencing in New South Wales for the last few weeks and months is beyond anything our State has experienced for a very long time. In fact, the word "unprecedented" has not been used lightly by our commissioners and heads of agencies. We will take the advice of the heads of our agencies but also of the Recovery Coordinator, Euan Ferguson, as to whether there is anything else the Government should be considering. We look forward to receiving his advice. We might find that he needs additional support, given the number of communities impacted and the vast geographic spread of what has occurred. The Government will consider additional resourcing if we need to in relation to the coordination and recovery effort. I want everyone to know that the recovery plan has already started. We are not waiting for the fires to go out, we are not waiting for the next few days or weeks to unfold. We are already starting to put the plans in place. But we will not have a good sense of exactly what we are up against until we get through the worst of it. I am sorry to say to the people of New South Wales that we are not yet through the worst of it—we are living through that experience now—but I am confident that every resource and every plan is in place.

I again commend Commissioner Fitzsimmons and the heads of our agencies, who have been warning the Government and the community for a number of months that we are going to experience a horrific summer bushfire season. Unfortunately, those predictions have come to fruition. But I assure the community that the Government has taken every single piece of advice we have received on planning and preparation and on resourcing and recovery. Once life and property are protected as best as we can over the next few days and weeks we will then ensure that our complete focus is on recovery. What heartens me already is that the evacuation centres now have mental health support, with chaplains and others whom our communities can rely on. We know that people can react differently to a very traumatic situation. I have confidence that Mr Ferguson will continue to advise the Government if there is anything further we need to do in relation to the recovery effort.

BUSHFIRES

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:49:41): My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting our communities affected by fire this week?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:49:57): I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question and for his genuine interest in not only the emergency services but in ensuring that this State is well prepared in responding to and helping the recovery of those communities that are facing a bushfire emergency as we speak. Currently we are entering uncharted territory when it comes to natural disaster in this State, with catastrophic areas in the Hunter Valley, metropolitan Sydney and the South Coast of New South Wales. "Catastrophic" is a new category that was introduced after the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria. It is a category that the New South Wales Government very rarely uses but it is emotive language for a reason: It warns the community that we are entering uncharted territory. We have emergencies from Nowra right up to Nambucca.

Since the beginning of question time another two bushfires have started. Since the beginning of question time the number of bushfires that have been increased to emergency level has gone from eight to 10. This is a very real, emerging disaster that this State may not have ever seen before. With strong westerly winds forecast at 50 to 60 kilometres an hour and potentially gusting to 90 kilometres an hour and with so much fuel for bushfires, brought about by the crippling effects of the drought adding to the dryness of the State, it means that we have the perfect storm for bushfires.

Currently there is already plenty of fire on the ground. I remind the House that what has been burnt through so far this season—and we have not even reached summer yet—is three times the amount that was burnt in the totality of the last season. These are statistics that are meant to alarm us so that the community and, indeed, members of this Parliament are under no illusion of what we are facing. So far we have seen the tragic loss of five lives, three over the course of the most recent operations, and more than 30 people, including firefighters, have sustained injuries. Just before question time I called two of those Fire and Rescue officers who were involved in a life-threatening accident over the weekend. I am delighted to report to the House that one of those firefighters is expecting to return home this afternoon while the other firefighter is undergoing further scans. I will be speaking to them again and hopefully they will be recovering at home very soon.

So far over the course of these particular fires 178 homes have been destroyed. The Deputy Premier, the Premier and the Prime Minister joined communities in Port Macquarie, Wauchope and Taree, meeting people who have lost their homes. I do not think there is anybody here, with the exception perhaps of the member for Hawkesbury, who knows what it is like to lose a home by fire. The building impact assessment that we will do over the course of the next few days will be considered by Euan Ferguson and we will ensure that the recovery of those lifestyles will happen as soon as possible.

Currently 1,500 Rural Fire Service volunteers are on the fire line and we have an extra 1,500 who are able to be deployed at short notice. But as the Premier said, it is not just the Rural Fire Service that is providing this level of support. I have already mentioned that 200 Fire and Rescue officers are part of strike teams, and they are being ably supported by the State Emergency Service, which has provided a lot of operational support. NSW Police is, as usual, providing high levels of support and strategic advice to the Rural Fire Service Commissioner.

I want to reassure the people of New South Wales that we are doing everything we can as a government through our agencies. Despite what members may have heard in the media, we actually have record funding when it comes to emergency services in this State. This is an important message for the Government to get out to ensure that people do not try to take political advantage of this current crisis. We have gone to the unprecedented step of declaring a state of emergency. Again, this is not something that governments do every day. In fact, as the Premier has already indicated, the last time a state of emergency was declared in New South Wales was in 2013. [*Extension of time*]

I think this says to the people of New South Wales that they also have to take responsibility because there is no higher level of danger to which the Government can take the community. Of course, a state of emergency means that the Government can direct agencies to conduct certain functions. The Rural Fire Service commissioner will hold that delegation on behalf of the Premier and me. He can evacuate people from property, he has the right to close roads and thoroughfares, he can order the shutdown of essential utilities and services and he can enter or take possession of both public and private property in the course of the emergency response. The message from a declaration of a state of emergency cannot be clearer: If the Rural Fire Service tells you to do something, do it. No ifs, no buts—there will be no discussion. They are doing it to save lives.

As the Premier and the Deputy Premier mentioned, on Sunday we toured a number of the communities affected by the fires. Amongst the havoc, the horror and the tragedy we found hope. We found hope in the regional communities that have been brought together. They know that, as Dorothy McKellar said, this is the result of living in a sunburnt country. On the plane to Wauchope I met with a number of fireys who came from Tasmania. As we congratulated and thanked them for their support, their very polite and modest response was simply, "We are repaying the favour," because our RFS members were there earlier this year to assist them as they received a very similar level of charity. I am delighted to boast, as I have in the past, that the Rural Fire Service made a very good strategic decision to purchase the 737 named *Marie Bashir*. On its first day of operations it had four deployments and, unfortunately, it has been on a number of operations ever since. Members need to come together with our communities to ensure that they know that we are behind them and we will do everything we can to try and get them through this current emergency.

BUSHFIRE SEASON

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:57:07): I direct my question to the Premier. What advice has the Premier received concerning the longer-term forecast for fire conditions in New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:57:18): The advice I have received has been consistent since July this year, which is that we are expecting the worst fire season imaginable over the next few months. It is barely the end of spring and we have witnessed that already. The forecast is that these conditions will continue. Extreme weather conditions due to the deep drought are likely to continue over the next few months and beyond. The predictions that have been presented to the Government since July have come to fruition. It is amazing that I have the ability to be in regular briefings on an almost hourly basis, or at least daily, and speak directly to those people who make the predictions.

Yesterday when I spoke to experts at the Bureau of Meteorology, coupled with the heads of agencies, the predictions that they have given to the Government since July have unfortunately come to fruition. The conditions we are experiencing today and that we experienced over the past few weeks will unfortunately be a hallmark of what we can expect over the summer months. Of course we are also looking at the forecast for rain. The most recent advice I have received is that we do not expect any substantial rainfall before February or March. The Government is working towards that. We are assuming that we will not get any substantial rain between now and February or March at the very earliest when we are considering all of our plans, not just in managing fires now but also in managing our water across the State.

I assure the Opposition and all members of the community that the Government has not left a stone unturned in terms of planning, whether it is fighting these bushfires, protecting life and property or planning to ensure our communities across the State have water. The Government has been working on water infrastructure over the past few years, particularly the past three years. We appreciate that the forecasts give us insights into not only how to deal with the immediate crisis but also how to support our communities over the medium and long term with the infrastructure and the utilities that they need. Without speaking out of turn, yesterday the Deputy Premier also gave a very good update on the stimulus that the Government is providing for our regional communities during these difficult times.

Whilst we appreciate that our immediate concern today, tomorrow, next week and in the weeks to follow is to protect life and property, we also appreciate that some of our communities have now been suffering for some years due to the drought and extreme weather conditions. We have ensured as a government that we are doing everything we can to support our communities outside the farm gate and in the townships. Again, I have had the privilege to see some of the communities by the air. It is quite shocking to see how dry those communities are, particularly in the north-west of the State. When we combine that with the extremely dry and windy conditions today, we can appreciate that there is no doubt why we are experiencing what we are. The advice I have also received is that, unfortunately, the deep drought has ensured dry conditions that allow fires to progress much more quickly than they otherwise would. The drier conditions mean fires are more unpredictable but they can also spread more quickly.

In fact, the Government has the opportunity to get regular weather forecast briefings and I am more than happy to provide those briefings to any member of Parliament who wants them. I understand the commissioner has offered them. I say in all genuineness that we are more than happy to provide those briefings to any member, especially those whose communities are directly impacted. We want to ensure that every member can access government information in relation to forecasted weather conditions and access the Government's plans to keep our communities safe and to focus on the future.

Whilst today is not a day to comment on some broader initiatives that the Government is undertaking, given the severity of the bushfires, I say that the Government's stimulus package for our regions, notwithstanding these bleak weather conditions, has ensured that we have created in excess of 40,000 jobs in our regions. We

know what communities are going through now. They are not thinking about anything else than protecting life and property. But I want communities to know that the Government will keep doing what it needs to do to build communities, to provide stimulus and to allow the recovery to be quicker than it otherwise would be. Again, we do not know how the rest of the day or the week will unfold but I appreciate that the community should be updated regularly and should have confidence that the Government is doing everything it can to be well prepared, to plan well and to also think about the short-, medium- and long-term objectives it has to support communities throughout the State.

BUSHFIRES AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (15:02:18): I address my question to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, and acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. Will the Minister update the House on the impact of the bushfires currently burning across New South Wales on schools and TAFEs?

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (15:02:42): I thank the member for Heathcote for his considered question in such difficult times. I know the member has a close interest in schools and TAFE as a former teacher. I understand that Loftus TAFE is temporarily closed during this emergency situation. I acknowledge the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for the update on the State's fire situation. I am sure that every member is aware that the current bushfires are having a devastating impact across the State. I will share some sad news felt by the TAFE NSW community in connection with the bushfires currently raging across the State, particularly in northern New South Wales.

I have been advised of the tragic news that a TAFE NSW employee has perished in the fires. I extend my condolences to the family and also to all victims of the fires. I am aware that others within the broader TAFE education community have been affected by the fires through the loss of property and through evacuations. I am assured that TAFE NSW is doing all it can by arranging additional support such as counselling for staff and students affected by the fires.

Throughout the past few days I have been inspired by many stories of TAFE and Department of Education employees coming together and reaching out to provide clothing, toiletries and, in some instances, emergency accommodation to affected workmates. We are likely to hear many more stories today and over the coming days as bushfires continue in many parts of the State. I am also proud to acknowledge that many Department of Education and TAFE employees are contributing as local volunteers for the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and other volunteer organisations involved in emergency response and relief efforts. I acknowledge the efforts of our RFS and SES volunteers who risk their own safety to save others or who are part of a large support team working to support those on the ground.

I advise the House that the exceptional volunteers from the Department of Education and TAFE are granted special leave on full pay for the time they are absent from duty. Of course, we have already heard from my colleagues about the catastrophic conditions today. Following precautionary safety recommendations made by the Rural Fire Service, more than 600 schools, 21 TAFEs and several university campuses have shut today. I am advised that two public schools have been lost to the fires already: Bobin and Wyaliba public schools. TAFE NSW and the department are working closely with emergency services to assess any emerging threats. Minister Mitchell has been keeping everyone updated on the schools that are closing and making sure that the department has up-to-date information, particularly on the recent evacuations in Upper Hunter and Tamworth.

The department and TAFE NSW will continue to work with school principals and TAFE campus coordinators to ensure that they are supported during this time. Principals and TAFE campus coordinators have also been advised to ensure that decisions and actions are communicated via school websites, social media and communication lists. Schools and TAFEs in directly affected areas that have closed will reopen when it is safe. The safety of our staff and students is our priority. Schools and TAFEs not in immediate danger have been advised to review their bushfire and emergency management plans to ensure that they have robust systems in place, update current contact information for parents and staff, make contact with local emergency services, and clear school grounds of debris. TAFE NSW and the Department of Education staff are doing everything they can to support staff and students in affected bushfire zones.

Many students have felt the distress of having to evacuate from their schools or homes. This, combined with images published in the media and streamed on social media, may mean many students are distressed. Some may need extra support. The department is mobilising teams of experts to advise and provide support for students and staff where required. I thank all of the parents who have taken the day off today to care for children not at school. We know it can be disruptive, but the safety of our communities comes first. My thoughts—as well as the thoughts of all of my colleagues on both sides of the House—are very much with those people affected by these bushfires. The situation on the ground is changing hour to hour. I reiterate the warning for everyone to take care over the coming days.

BUSHFIRES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:07:52): My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. How are local councils supporting communities impacted by the bushfires?

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (15:08:08): I thank the member for Sydney for that very sensible question—as all the questions have been today—and for the care that he is showing for all the members affected and their communities today and over the past few weeks. The question indicated that bushfires are not an issue that divides city and country at all. I know that the member for Sydney and other members who traditionally feel safe in events such as these bushfires are thinking of the rest of us, including the members who are not here today because they are in their electorates doing what they can. We all do that when we are facing bushfires.

I note the contribution made by councils. Many local councils, the City of Sydney in particular, are indicating that they are going to direct some of their resources to bushfire efforts. I am grateful to the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney and her council for doing that. It is important that people living in the city can do something. People want to do something but they do not quite know what to do. It is up to councils that are not so affected by bushfires to try to direct as many of their resources as possible to help. Water trucks and waste water trucks are being directed to bushfire-affected areas.

The other 128 councils throughout the State do what they can on a daily basis to deal with bushfires. Preparedness for bushfires does not happen in only the one or two weeks before an event when we know it is coming but throughout the year. Councils are at the forefront of organising their emergency management committees. All areas have those committees. As the Premier said earlier, this is where we bring together all the government agencies, including the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and—in my case—Surf Life Saving NSW, Marine Rescue, the RSPCA and Family and Community Services. I have visited many of those agencies in the Shoalhaven area. They all come together and cooperate. That is what is happening out on the firegrounds—all of those agencies are coming together. I know they have done that.

Those of us living in affected areas—including the member for Kiama, the member for Heathcote, the member for Goulburn and myself—are now dealing with a catastrophic fire risk. Being here does not feel very good for many of us. We would rather be home doing everything we can, but the business of government goes on. We will go if we need to go. Very often when we turn up at our emergency evacuation centres it is the councils that are leading the way to set up some of those recovery centres—along with the clubs that we heard about earlier. They are doing what they can. There are 55,000 people employed in local government and all of them are doing what they can. Who do we often see on the television at night and who do we often hear on the radio? The mayors of the councils, talking about their areas. They often know best about their areas, where the fires are and where the fires are going. They talk about what they can do.

I pay tribute to the extraordinary leadership of the Premier over the last few not only days but also weeks. I thank also the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Deputy Premier for their extraordinary dedication to regional New South Wales. I pay extraordinary tribute to Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service Shane Fitzsimmons. I know the commissioner very well because the Shoalhaven has experienced bushfires on a pretty serious scale in the past. He has a handle on where the fires are and what they are likely to do. He shows strength, commitment and dedication in the face of enormous uncertainty. I am sure the commissioner will not be listening, but hopefully sometime in the future he will hear this shout-out from everybody in the Parliament to him and the leadership he has shown. He will continue his work in the days, weeks, months and years ahead—as the Premier said—as we head towards recovery.

These are serious events but, as I said before, local councils are at the forefront of leadership. I am heartened to know that the City of Sydney, which would normally consider itself immune from these events, is not isolating itself from the solutions. It will be involved. I reiterate what the Minister for Police and Emergency Services said, that there have been no budget cuts. The commissioner pointed that out yesterday. I noticed an extraordinary tweet by NSW Labor in the past 20 minutes. I reiterate that RFS will receive a 12.9 per cent increase to its budget. Fire and Rescue is receiving an additional \$51.9 million increase to its budget. There are significant increases to budgets. Apart from that, the Government has purchased extraordinary equipment in preparation. I ask NSW Labor to take the tweet down. It is misleading the community and it is a lie.

BUSHFIRES AND HEALTH FACILITIES

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:13:15): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is responding to the health impacts of the bushfires and keeping our hospitals and patients safe?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (15:13:42):

I thank the member for Tweed for his question. I know he is very concerned about what is happening not far from his area down through the North Coast and mid North Coast. I acknowledge the communities within the electorates of Lismore, Oxley, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Clarence. It is a very difficult time when, first of all, the risk of bushfire occurs and then when the first tell-tale smoke arrives. If you are nearby you get a low, terrible feeling as you see that fire rise. It can be minutes or hours when you then see all the emergency services—as I did on the weekend—with the aerial response and the ground response. And the smoke, of course, takes over the entire community.

In that context I thank, particularly at this very difficult time in New South Wales, the health staff right across the State who are playing such a vital role in ensuring that our community is kept safe. Clearly, as soon as the Premier had declared the state of emergency and brought together all of the various emergency services it was an opportunity for each of those services to show New South Wales residents just how well they can respond to these crises. I thank them because they are responding so well. I thank the doctors and nurses of our hospitals at the front line, and particularly those in the area of Port Macquarie. At the Port Macquarie Base Hospital we have seen quite a substantial increase in emergency department presentations for asthma particularly and for breathing problems.

I thank the staff in the hospitals generally of the mid North Coast as well as northern New South Wales and the Hunter New England, where again asthma and breathing problems are increasing and causing more presentations to our emergency departments. I thank the ambulance service and the paramedics for their responses to breathing issues which have increased quite dramatically. Again, that is extended not just to those areas that I have mentioned but also into south-western Sydney. I particularly give a warning to our citizens in New South Wales that if you suffer from respiratory issues or asthma, please use your relievers—otherwise known as puffers—if you have them. We have already had situations—I was just advised minutes ago of this—of people who have not used their preventers and, accordingly, have ended up in our emergency departments. Please look after yourselves.

I also thank the ambulance staff—and not just here in New South Wales and not just our paramedics on the ground but our paramedics from broader afield. I am advised by the Chief Executive of Ambulance NSW that we have had offers of help from other States, and as recently as Sunday we had a forward incident officer come from Victoria to determine our needs. We have been offered additional staff and are getting additional staff from Victoria. I thank those paramedics from other States who are going to make themselves available as we determine our needs during the course of this week.

I also thank the paramedics who are down on the ground with the fireys—with our Rural Fire Service and our fire brigade. We have remote area fighting teams who are joined by paramedics. Again it shows the closeness of the services as they often work behind very difficult fire fronts. Those paramedics go in there knowing that it is crucial that they be there to support our Rural Fire Service and our fire officers generally in case there are burns or other issues. I note that we have moved additional air support of an AgustaWestland AW139 to Taree with the appropriate medical retrieval teams. We have been able to receive two extra air support helicopters—Bell 412s—that will be available for logistical support across the area of northern New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

Those helicopters have come in from Queensland and have been offered to us by Toll, who provide other services across this State for the ambulance service. I particularly thank Toll for making those two Bell 412 helicopters available. There is no doubt that we are facing very challenging times, but as health Minister, having thanked our staff, I call on the citizens of New South Wales to realise that we are in extremely difficult times. If you do not need to go to an emergency department for a minor ailment, please do not, because our emergency departments, particularly on the mid North Coast and North Coast, are going to be needing all the resources they can get. But if you have issues that arise from a fire or if you have issues that arise from your respiratory function then certainly get along. If you have any other issues that are serious emergencies get along there, but if it is a case of getting in there with something you could have put a bandaid on I would strongly ask you not to use those emergency departments during the course of the next few days.

I point out to folks who have drinking water supplies on their properties to be a little cautious because you may be in an area where your water has been exposed to contamination because of the fire retardants that have been dropped as part of the water that was necessary to put out fires near your homes. Just be a little bit cautious and if it has not started yet, please disconnect the downpipes for your rainwater tank and make sure that no retardants can get in there. The retardants are generally recognisable because they are coloured red or black so you would know if retardants were being used in your area. Again I thank all health staff for their amazing work and all other emergency staff who are doing what New South Wales really requires in our time of great need.

*Documents***NSW OMBUDSMAN****Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Part 3B of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I announce receipt of the report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled *OCHRE Review Report*, dated 28 October 2019, received out of session on 28 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 142 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I announce receipt of the following reports of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission entitled:

- (1) *The New South Wales Child Protection Register: Operation Tusk Final Report 2019*, received out of session on 31 October 2019.
- (2) *Operation Asinara*, dated October 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019.
- (3) *Operation Mindo*, dated October 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019.
- (4) *Operation Taupo*, dated October 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019.
- (5) *Operation Trieste*, dated October 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019.
- (6) Report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 28 October 2019.

I order that the reports be printed.

INSPECTOR OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 141 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I announce receipt of the annual report of the Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 28 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 39 of the Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009 and section 61D of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, I announce receipt of the annual report of the Information and Privacy Commission for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 29 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 16 of the Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012, I announce receipt of the annual report of the Inspector of Custodial Services for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session of 29 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I announce receipt of the annual report of the Office of the Children's Guardian for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

NSW OMBUDSMAN**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I announce receipt of the report of the NSW Ombudsman for the year ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

NSW CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 34F of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, I announce receipt of the annual report of the NSW Child Death Review Team for the ended 30 June 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019. I order that the report be printed.

INSPECTOR OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 242 (6) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act, I announce receipt of the report by the Office of the Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission on Criminal Organisation Search Warrants for the period 7 August 2017 to 6 August 2019, dated September 2019, received out of session on 30 October 2019 and authorised to be printed.

OFFICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Reports**

The CLERK: In accordance with section 433 of the Royal Commissions Act 1923, I announce receipt of the report by the office of Local Government entitled *Report of the Section 430 Investigation into Warrumbungle Shire Council*, dated October 2019, received out of session on 25 October 2019 and authorised to be printed.

AUDITOR-GENERAL**Reports**

The CLERK: In accordance with section 38E of the public finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Ensuring contract management capability in government—Health Share NSW*, dated 31 October 2019, received out of session on 31 October 2019 and authorised to be printed.

In accordance with section 52B of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1981, I announce receipt of the Financial Audit Report entitled *Internal Controls and Governance*, dated 5 November 2019, received out of session on 5 November 2019 and authorised to be printed.

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

Ms FELICITY WILSON: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 8/57*, dated 12 November 2019. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FELICITY WILSON: I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 7/57, dated 22 October 2019.

*Documents***PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)****Reports**

Mr GREG PIPER: As Chair: I table the report No. 2/57 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled *Report on the Parliamentary Budget Office 2019 Post-Election Report*, dated November 2019. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION
AND THE CRIME COMMISSION****Membership**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that on 5 November 2019 the Hon. Trevor Khan, MLC, was elected Deputy Chair of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission.

*Senate***SENATE VACANCY**

The SPEAKER: I report a message from Her Excellency the Governor regarding a vacancy in the representation of the State of New South Wales in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia following the resignation of Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos, AO, which occurred on 11 November 2019.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I move:

That:

- (1) The House meets in the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos, AO.
- (2) A message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution and requesting the Legislative Council to fix a time and a place for the joint sitting.

Motion agreed to.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

The Star Casino

Petition opposing construction of a proposed residential and hotel tower on The Star casino site, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

Petition requesting increased funding for low-cost housing and homelessness services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Inner-city Ferry Services

Petition calling on the Government to fast-track project work for ferry wharves and services at Glebe Point; Johnstons Bay, Pyrmont; Woolloomooloo; and Elizabeth Bay, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Powerhouse Museum Ultimo

Petition requesting the retention of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and the expansion of museum services to other parts of New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Social Housing Mental Health Services

Petition requesting community outreach and support programs for social housing tenants with mental illnesses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

Grafton Base Hospital and Maclean District Hospital

Petition requesting increased nurse staffing levels through the implementation of ratios for all clinical areas at Grafton Base Hospital and Maclean District Hospital, received from **Mr Christopher Gulaptis**.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The CLERK: I announce that the following Minister has lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Aboriginal Flag on Sydney Harbour Bridge—lodged 26 September 2019 (Mr David Harris)

*Business of the House***BUSINESS LAPSED**

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 (3):

- (1) General business notices of motion (bills) Nos 1 to 3 have lapsed.
- (2) General business orders of the day (bills) No. 2 have lapsed.
- (3) General business orders of the day (general orders) Nos 1 and 2 have lapsed
- (4) General business notices of motion (general notices) Nos 12, 14, 17 and 22 to 41 have lapsed.

*Bills***WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT (REVIEW) BILL 2019****First Reading**

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Kevin Anderson, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (14:28:02):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Work Health and Safety Amendment (Review) Bill 2019, which seeks to amend the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to expedite implementation in New South Wales of 12 proposals based on recommendations of a national review of the model Work Health and Safety Act, on which the New South Wales Act is based. The reforms are intended to make workers in New South Wales safer and are being expedited ahead of completion of the national process to ensure that the issues in the Work Health and Safety Act identified by the national review do not continue to affect New South Wales workplaces.

The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 commenced on 1 January 2012. Its primary object is to protect workers and other persons from harm to their health, safety and welfare by eliminating or minimising the risks arising from work. The Act creates a strong framework for managing risks to health and safety in New South Wales. But workplace deaths in this State remain too common. Last year there were 47 work-related fatalities in New South Wales; the year before, there were 62 work-related fatalities. Workplace injuries are also too frequent. In 2016-2017 there were 32,998 serious injury or illness claims accepted in New South Wales.

The Government believes that every worker who goes to work in this State should come home safe at the end of the day. We want workers to have healthy, safe and productive working lives. On the whole, the Work Health and Safety Act enables workplaces in New South Wales to manage health and safety issues effectively. However, in the past year two national reports have identified critical issues in the Act that need to be addressed to ensure workers' safety. The first of these reports followed a Senate inquiry into the framework surrounding the prevention, investigation and prosecution of industrial deaths in Australia. The report of that inquiry, entitled *They never came home—the framework surrounding the prevention, investigation and prosecution of industrial deaths in Australia*, which was published in October 2018, highlighted the devastating impact that workplace fatalities have on the families of victims, and identified a number of issues in prosecuting and investigating workplace deaths that are currently affecting workplaces in New South Wales.

The second report is the 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws, which was conducted by an independent reviewer, Ms Marie Boland, on behalf of Safe Work Australia. In conducting the review, Ms Boland consulted extensively with stakeholders. She received over 100 submissions and held consultations in every capital city and in regional centres, including Tamworth, where she met with safety regulators, businesses, workers, unions, industry organisations, health and safety legal practitioners, academics, and community organisations. Ms Boland's final report was published in February. She made 34 recommendations for improvements to the work health and safety laws. In June this year Safe Work Australia published a consultation regulation impact statement on Ms Boland's recommendations. I understand that Safe Work Australia is preparing a regulation impact statement for the consideration of Ministers, which is expected to be shared later this year.

Amendments to the model Act will not be progressed until well into next year, but having regard to the critical issues identified by Ms Boland and the Senate I am of the view that New South Wales cannot afford to wait until a decision is made to amend the model Act to address these issues. New South Wales remains committed to national harmonisation of the work health and safety laws. I acknowledge that harmonisation has had great benefits for businesses in this State. In making these amendments, New South Wales seeks to anticipate changes that will be made to the model laws in due course. Careful consideration has been given to the amendments likely to be made at a national level, as well as to the needs of New South Wales now. There are a number of recommendations from the 2018 review we do not propose to expedite, because the form they are likely to take in the model is still unclear.

The amendments strike an appropriate balance between the objective of maintaining nationally consistent work health and safety regulation, and the Government's goal of reducing risks to workers' safety in New South Wales. The amendments will address the ongoing issue of workplace deaths, strengthen support for the families of workplace victims, streamline investigations, and give workers and businesses greater clarity on aspects of the Work Health and Safety Act. These amendments will not affect the nature of the existing obligations of businesses to protect workers and others from risks to their health and safety.

I now turn to the substance of the bill. The Work Health and Safety Amendment (Review) Bill 2019 makes the following amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act. First, clause 3 of schedule 1 inserts a note in the part of the Act that sets out offences and penalties to the effect that workplace deaths may be prosecuted as manslaughter under the Crimes Act 1900. It has long been the case that, where appropriate, a work-related death can be prosecuted as manslaughter by criminal negligence. This is an offence for which the Crimes Act imposes a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment. But the availability of this offence to prosecute work-related deaths is not well known or well understood in the community. The insertion of the note will make it clear to employers, businesses, workers and the community more broadly that anyone who causes the death of a worker through negligence faces serious criminal sanction.

Secondly, items [4] and [5] of schedule 1 amend section 31 of the Act to make it easier to prosecute the most serious work health and safety offence—the category 1 offence—which is committed when a person who owes a work health and safety duty recklessly exposes a person to whom that duty is owed to a risk of death or serious injury or illness. It carries the highest penalty imposed by the Act. The bill will increase those penalties. An individual will be liable to imprisonment for up to five years and/or a fine of \$346,500. A corporation will be liable for a fine of \$3,463,000. This offence is key to the deterrent power of the Act. But across all of the jurisdictions that have adopted the model Work Health and Safety Act, it is rarely prosecuted. Since the Act came into effect in New South Wales there has been just one prosecution for a category 1 offence.

The 2018 review identified the lack of category 1 prosecutions as a serious issue with the offence provisions in the Act. It found that regulators have been hampered in bringing prosecutions because the fault element of the offence—recklessness—is too difficult to prove. A person acts recklessly when they have actual knowledge of a risk and consciously disregards it. This requires the prosecution to prove matters relating to the defendant's subjective state of mind. The 2018 review proposed adding "gross negligence" as a fault element to the category 1 offence. At common law, a person is grossly negligent when their behaviour falls so far short of what is reasonable and involves such a high risk of death or serious injury that it deserves criminal punishment.

The bill gives effect to this recommendation in New South Wales by adding "gross negligence" as a fault element to the category 1 offence. It is intended that the existing common law will provide guidance to the courts on interpreting the amended provision. This will make it easier for regulators to bring category 1 prosecutions, particularly following a workplace death. But a death is not required to bring a category 1 prosecution. Regulators will be able to prosecute grossly negligent duty holders who expose workers to a risk of death or serious injury or illness whether or not a worker is killed. This will strengthen the deterrent power of the Act and is consistent with the risk-based preventative framework that underpins it.

Thirdly, item [20] of schedule 1 creates new offences relating to insurance or indemnity arrangements which cover work health and safety penalties. The bill will make it an offence for a person to enter into, provide, or benefit from insurance or indemnity arrangements for liability for a monetary penalty for a work health and safety offence. If a company commits the new offence, its officers may also be liable. Both the 2018 review and the Senate report strongly condemned the availability of this insurance, and found that it had the potential to seriously undermine the deterrent power of the Act. If those who breach work health and safety duties are able to escape the consequences of their actions, their incentive to take those duties seriously is substantially lessened. The new offences will put an end to the practice of insuring for liability for work health and safety offences, and contribute to creating a strong health and safety culture in New South Wales workplaces.

Next, item [18] of schedule 1 and schedule 2 of the bill increase the maximum penalties for over 70 offences in the Act to reflect increases in the consumer price index since 2011, and create a mechanism to

ensure that the penalties will be increased annually to reflect changes to the consumer price index in the future. Item [21] of schedule 1 and schedule 3 to the bill extend this approach to over 550 offences in Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017. The maximum penalties for work health and safety offences have not increased since the Act came into operation in 2012. This means that the penalties for non-compliance with our work health and safety laws have not kept pace with increases in the costs of compliance or with community expectations about the penalties that should apply to work health and safety offences. Through the new mechanism to keep penalties up to date, we will ensure that they retain their real value as deterrents.

The Senate inquiry found that the trauma experienced by families following a workplace fatality can be greatly exacerbated by prolonged investigations and a lack of information about how the investigation is proceeding. The bill proposes two amendments to the Act to improve support for the victims of workplace accidents and their families. First, item [16] of schedule 1 will amend section 231 to extend the time within which a person can make a request that a regulator bring a prosecution in relation to a workplace incident involving a risk of death or serious injury or illness from 12 months to 18 months. At present a person who believes a category 1 or category 2 offence has been committed can request the regulator bring a prosecution between six months and 12 months from the date of the alleged offence. If the regulator decides not to prosecute, the person can request a review by the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP]. Complex investigations of workplace incidents can take longer than 12 months. When they do, victims and their families can be left without an effective review process. Extending the time to 18 months will allow for the completion of the investigation and a review by the DPP before the expiry of the two-year limitation period for offences.

Item [17] of schedule 1 amends section 231 to add a provision requiring regulators to provide three-monthly updates to a person who has made a request that the regulator bring a prosecution while the investigation is ongoing. These amendments will ensure that workers and their families are kept informed during investigations. The bill also contains amendments to streamline investigation processes. First, item [13] of schedule 1 amends section 171 of the Act to enable an inspector to exercise the powers that inspectors presently have on entry to a workplace—that is, powers to require the production of documents and answers to questions—up to 30 days after they or another inspector have entered the workplace. Requiring inspectors to enter and re-enter a workplace when they discover that they need further information has the potential to delay investigations, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Secondly, item [19] of schedule 1 amends the Act to clarify the extent of work health and safety regulators' ability to share information with regulators in other jurisdictions. Restrictions on information sharing can impede investigations. This will streamline regulators' conduct of cross-jurisdictional investigations. Finally, schedule 1, items [12] and [14] will make the processes for issuing and serving notices in the Act consistent. Regulators will be able to serve notices by post and email, rather than by personal service. This is expected to reduce delays and ensure that investigations of workplace incidents in New South Wales are as efficient as possible.

Lastly, the bill contains four amendments that are intended to give workers and businesses in New South Wales greater clarity on key aspects of the Act. First, items [1] and [2] of schedule 1 will add notes to section 5 and section 7 of the Act to make it clear that a person can be both a worker and a person conducting a business or undertaking at the same time. In complex, multi-contractor worksites, the Act intends that a contractor or subcontractor in a contractual chain can be both a worker owed a duty by persons conducting a business or undertaking further up the chain, and a person conducting a business or undertaking who owes duties to workers further down the chain. This amendment reflects the way that worksites in New South Wales are operating and makes duty holders' obligations clear.

Secondly, items [6] to [10] of schedule 1 amend section 72 of the Act to clarify that health and safety representatives can choose their course of training. At present, the Act provides that health and safety representatives can choose their course of training, but must do so in consultation with persons conducting a business or undertaking. A lack of clarity about what this means is leading to stalemates and disputes in New South Wales workplaces and delaying training. This prevents health and safety representatives playing their part in addressing health and safety issues on behalf of their co-workers. The new provision will reduce disputes by clarifying that health and safety representatives can choose their course of training. They will still need to consult with persons conducting a business or undertaking about time off to attend training and the reasonable costs associated with training. Work health and safety regulators intend to develop guidance on the reasonable costs of training in consultation with stakeholders.

Thirdly, item [11] of schedule 1 will clarify that in cases of discriminatory or coercive conduct, courts in New South Wales can grant declaratory relief. The discriminatory and coercive conduct provisions protect workers from retributive action in a variety of circumstances connected with performing duties under the Act or raising health and safety issues. This will give courts flexibility in responding to discriminatory and coercive

conduct where other orders are inappropriate. Finally, this bill will also give the Government an opportunity to amend the Act to implement a recommendation of the statutory review of the Work Health and Safety Act conducted in 2017. Items [22] to [24] of schedule 1 will clarify the identity of the duty holder in relation to the storage and handling of certain dangerous goods and the operation or use of high-risk plant outside of a workplace or where the plant and goods are not being used to carry out work.

Matters relating to dangerous goods or high-risk plant are left to the discretion of jurisdictions by the model Act. This amendment will strengthen regulators' ability to take compliance action in relation to dangerous goods or high-risk plant that affects public safety. The bill also contains consequential amendments and amendments making transitional arrangements for the new offences. As a whole, the reforms in the Work Health and Safety Amendment (Review) Bill 2019 will strengthen regulators' efforts to assist persons conducting a business or undertaking to reduce the number of workplace deaths and injuries in New South Wales. They make it easier to prosecute workplace deaths, enhance the deterrent power of the Act, streamline investigations and clarify key aspects of the Act's framework. They will also enable regulators to provide greater support to workers and families affected by a workplace death. In bringing forward this bill, the Government is addressing the critical issues in the Act identified by the national process. This will put workplaces in New South Wales in the best possible position to manage risks to workers' health and safety without further delay. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

DESIGN AND BUILDING PRACTITIONERS BILL 2019

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:48:44): Then in June, Mascot Towers residents were evacuated from their homes due to persistent cracking. Here in this House all members will be familiar with my calls for the Minister and the Government to do the right thing by these owners and offer them a low-interest loan to help them get back on their feet and back into their homes. Mascot resident Kasumi, who came to Parliament House, said:

We do all the right things, pay all the taxes, we saved the money to buy a place to live in. It's so unfair.

I agree with her: It is terribly unfair. These residents now face paying back a loan to the tune of \$5 million to \$10 million, a loan that is set at a variable interest rate of 7.7 per cent, which in anyone's terms is staggering when we are in a time of incredibly low interest rates. In five years or 10 years, when the market inevitably changes, how will these residents afford these repayments? How is it fair that they face potential financial ruin through no fault of their own, especially when it was a poor regulatory framework, with few checks and balances that helped lead to this complete and utter failure that has undoubtedly ruined their lives in the short term, if not the long term? Yet the Minister stills sees fit to skirt the difficult responsibilities of his job to help these people. Instead, his office saw fit to accuse them of some kind of scam.

I say to the Minister that they do not want a handout. They wanted some assistance, but the Minister's office refused to give it and then insulted them in the process. It is clear that the Government has got it wrong on building over and over again. We have had six Ministers and over a dozen inquiries and reviews, but what have we achieved? Unfortunately, not much at all. I will give the Chamber a little history lesson. Maybe members will learn a thing or two, get some bright ideas and get on with the job of fixing building and construction in this State. Firstly, I find it shocking that this portfolio, one of the most important in our State given its economic value, has been a game of pass the parcel amongst the caucus seated opposite.

In eight years we have had a total of six Ministers, and I am pleased to say that one of them, Minister Anthony Roberts, is at the table now. He is the longest-serving Minister in this portfolio, from 2 April 2011 to 19 December 2013, and he did a fine job. Minister Stuart Ayres served from 9 December 2013 to 6 May 2014—he did not even last 12 months. Matthew Mason-Cox served from 6 May 2014 to 2 April 2015—he was another one who served less than 12 months. Minister Victor Dominello served from 2 April 2015 to 30 January 2017; he was a bit more of a stayer. Minister Matt Kean also did an excellent job and was Minister from January 2017 to March 2019. He was a stayer, but saw himself as a favourite and jumped out of the barriers as quickly as he could; he knew what was coming. Finally, we have Minister Kevin Anderson, our current Minister.

With the complexity of regulation and legislation, successive Ministers have not been around long enough to truly get to the bottom of the reform agenda that is required. However, successive reviews have managed to highlight some of these key problems at hand. In fact, these reviews have provided us with many of the answers, but the constant turnaround of Ministers has meant a stalling of legislative process. Even though the solutions to our State's building crisis have been clear on the paper in front of them and recommended by the

experts, nothing of substance has been done. Quite frankly it is a disgrace. It is irresponsible and it is the hallmark of a government asleep at the wheel.

In late 2015 a review headed up by former Secretary of Treasury Michael Lambert made 150 recommendations to the Government aimed at improving building regulation and certification reform. The Government has deferred 70 of the recommendations and there is no timetable for the implementation of the reform—serious reform that looks at the overhaul of an industry that we know to be in crisis. The Lambert review spent some time, importantly, focusing on the cost savings if processes and regulation are centred on ensuring compliance during the build, rather than repairing faults after the fact. One mind-boggling example given is that waterproofing costs on average \$500 to install during construction, but it can cost up to \$20,000 to address after construction if the work is done poorly or incorrectly and needs to be rectified. The review included a cost-benefit analysis undertaken by ACIL Allen. Based on a 4 per cent real discount rate and a 20-year evaluation period, they assessed that the implementation of the reforms as an entire package would generate a net economic benefit in present value terms of \$13.5 billion, which represents a 4.6:1 benefit-cost ratio. Unfortunately, all we have seen so far is a fragmented approach to implementation rather than the implementation of the full 150 recommendations as a suite of reforms.

After the Lambert review came the Federal Shergold Weir review. I also note the work that Bronwyn Weir has done on this bill. The report was commissioned in 2017 by the Federal Building Ministers' Forum and was released in 2018. A suite of 24 recommendations was made to the Building Ministers' Forum. Recommendations 1 to 4 focus on the registration and training of practitioners and address the concerns that led to the development of this bill. In addition, recommendations 13 to 17 refer to the adequacy of documents. I know that the Government has flagged better online methods of document and record keeping, which will enable a better third party review of documents and scrutiny from potential purchasers.

The recommendations include having a consistent approach to licensing across States. That is why I proposed in this Parliament during the last sitting week that we adopt the professional engineers registration scheme. This would have brought New South Wales into line with Queensland and Victoria and soon the Australian Capital Territory and would provide us with assurance that engineers across the State borders are qualified and up to standard. This is what the engineers association has called for and it supports the content of that bill. If the Government is serious about implementing the reforms suggested by the Shergold Weir report and, indeed, about creating the robust regulatory framework that the Government is touting, it would support our bill alongside its own.

Following these two major reports the Government introduced a number of, I might say, piecemeal reforms to this Parliament. I will address one of those bills before I move on to discuss the content of this bill before the House because I believe it highlights just how frivolous the Government is about real reform in the building sector. I refer to the Government's Building and Development and Certifiers Act 2018, introduced by the former better regulation Minister, Minister Kean. Minister Kean touted those reforms as some of the toughest new laws in the land. He read his speech on 17 October last year, it passed through both Houses of Parliament shortly thereafter and yet we are still waiting for it to commence. Clearly, it is a fine example of the Government getting on with the job!

The bill will allegedly commence on 1 July 2020. That is almost two years after we debated what the Government touted as an urgent and important bill at the time. Quite frankly, the development of an Act and associated regulations has been an absolute shambles. I sincerely hope that this bill does not take 20 months to implement. We will be keeping check. We do not need any more reports, inquiries or reviews to tell us that this is an industry in crisis, it is a broken system. Sadly we have no clear or strong will from our governments to give our laws the overhaul they need.

That brings me to the bill before the House today. Yes, it is a very small step or, to quote one of my colleagues from last week's upper House building inquiry, it is more like a shuffle in the right direction. The truth is that it is a bill of little substance with much of the detail left up to the regulations. The bill tinkers around the edges, making some suggestions for the way forward that are not inherently wrong but we do not believe go far enough. I will spend some time dealing with ways in which we believe the bill could be improved and where we think the deficiencies lie in the bill. Michael Lambert, the author of the extremely comprehensive review into the Building Professionals Act, said at last week's building inquiry in this Parliament:

First of all, [the bill] exacerbates the overall problem of fragmentation of legislation in this State. Every time there is a building problem, a new bit of legislation gets established. I noted this in my 2015 report. Since then there has been three or four bits of legislation established, all of which do not link to each other.

Labor went to the last election with a strong policy on fixing up the building and construction sector. I will outline those policy initiatives because I believe they are relevant to the bill before the House. I put it out there: The Minister can steal one or two of these ideas if he sees fit, as we think that it might improve the sector now instead

of in four years when Labor is in government. First, there was a pledge to introduce a standalone building Act, which would strengthen regulations, improve consumer protections and transparency around owners' rights and raise professional standards in the industry. This was a key recommendation of the Lambert review and it has been said over and over again by stakeholders.

Last week at the building inquiry in this Parliament experts advocated to tear up the legislation and start again with a new building Act. New South Wales and South Australia are the only two jurisdictions in Australia without a standalone building Act. As we know, the legislation is shared between Planning and Fair Trading. The legislation is complex, it is messy and it overlaps. It is confusing not only for owners and residents but also for industry. Our aim is to introduce a principles-based, plain English piece of legislation under one Minister and one agency, which would strengthen the integrity of building regulations, improve consumer protections most importantly, raise professional standards and transparency and strengthen the duty of care between builders, end users and home buyers. Unfortunately, the Government rejected this key recommendation of the Lambert review, which has left us with the piecemeal approach we see in the Parliament today.

Secondly, Labor committed to establishing a New South Wales building authority to bring together and build on existing resources to ensure increased oversight and accountability of every person in the construction chain. The authority would be modelled on similar organisations in Victoria and Queensland and would combine existing resources within Fair Trading, such as the Building Professionals Board, the Home Building Services Unit policy and enforcement teams, and from Planning the BASIX assessment policy, the systems and strategy unit and the building policy unit. In addition to the new authority, Labor would establish a building regulation advisory committee to work with the authority to oversee and deliver the reforms.

Whilst the Government has dithered on reforming building regulation and has effectively sat on the Lambert review since it was delivered to the Minister in 2015, Labor would act quickly to deliver the required reforms. To delay and simply react in a kneejerk fashion when matters like non-complying cladding become matters of media scrutiny betrays the industry and erodes public confidence. An authority would be tasked to deliver key recommendations of the Lambert review, which have been delayed by the Government. I am confident that the whole 150 recommendations will be implemented by 2023. That includes core recommendations such as fast-tracking the recommendations on fire safety reform contained within the Lambert review. I acknowledge that much of this work is already underway but it needs to be done and in a very quick fashion.

Also included would be the development, in consultation with local government, of protocols governing the relationship between certifiers and councils; setting out roles and responsibilities for compliance and enforcement supported by an information strategy for building regulation; and establishing a best practice building regulation certification process by setting out a risk-based framework to raise standards for certifiers to ensure we focus on tackling defects up-front and more thoroughly during the construction phase rather than addressing them afterwards. Other key recommendations would be establishing a task force to crack down on the incidence of phoenixing companies, which allow dodgy builders and developers to hide behind \$2 shelf companies; addressing payment to subcontractors, which was announced at the 2017 Labor conference and will be the initial focus of the task force, as well as looking at tightening the licensing system to crack down on phoenixing; improving the professionalism of certifiers conjointly with the Professional Standards Authority; and investigating strategies to enhance the coverage of sustainability of professional indemnity insurance for certifiers.

It is clear that the Government is ignoring serious and holistic reform to the sector. In fact its past behaviour on the development of bills that would eventually become legislation has highlighted an inertia. Who knows whether it is the Ministers themselves or the department that makes any substantial change. I have repeatedly called on the Government to introduce a chain of responsibility into the building sector. Labor has proposed introducing a chain of responsibility for everyone in the building process. This is not just for those practitioners working in the industry but it also includes a chain of responsibility for building products to permit product recalls, ban the use of nonconforming products and empower building inspections and audits. Who can forget that the New South Wales Government watered down principles in the Building Products (Safety) Act 2017 to remove the key principle of chain of responsibility? Some Government members may have forgotten, so I will remind them.

The changes that removed the principle from the draft bill were condemned by a broad range of stakeholders in the industry, including the Housing Industry Association and the Building Products Industry Council. Among the deleted clauses are provisions for issuing product recalls, banning the supply of nonconforming and noncompliant products, making it an offence to use nonconforming products, powers to issue directions for building inspections audits, duties for all parties in the supply chain to provide evidence of product conformance and suitability and consumer protections. It has always been Labor's intention to restore these principles in a new Act. I am not alone in my support for a new standalone building Act instead of this—whilst it is not flawed—piecemeal approach before us today. Just last week in Parliament we heard from witnesses to the

Legislative Council's inquiry into regulation of building standards, building quality and building disputes. Mr Brett Daintry, director of Daintry Associates, told the committee:

We really just need a building Act. It is great that architects are registered, and because of their registration they have always been held in high esteem. Surveyors are also subject to their own registration Act, and they have always been held in high esteem and well regulated. Engineers should likewise fall under an Act. But maybe it all needs to come under one Act.

My colleague in the other place the Hon. Courtney Houssos then asked:

In 2015 Michael Lambert said we need a standalone building Act and he has made exactly the same submission to our original inquiry and then subsequently to this inquiry. That would be your view, Mr Daintry, that we need a standalone Act?

Mr Daintry gave an extremely succinct answer. He said:

I have been saying that for decades.

I also want to read further testimony from Mr Daintry because it highlights the complexity of these layers upon layers of legislation which, while seeking to do something to clean up some parts of this billion-dollar industry, really just add layers of confusion. He said:

I just believe this whole thing is a kneejerk reaction to the Opal Tower, the Mascot Towers and other matters and it does not seem to me that there has been a cohesive approach to any of it.

The chair said:

It is an announceable dressed up as policy.

Mr Daintry went on:

Yes. I think there is an expectation, clearly there is an expectation from the public that the Government will do something about this mess. In my opinion this bill does not fix the mess, it just adds another layer of complexity to the mess.

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg from the other place stated:

Just to summarise, the position is that you scrap all this mishmash, hotchpotch approach with the several Acts and all the regulations, you have an overarching, thorough approach via one building Act.

Mr Daintry said, "Yes." The Hon. Mark Buttigieg went on:

And you enforce it with government regulation and people proactively going out and inspecting. That fixes the problem, but we are nowhere near that, are we?

Mr Daintry said:

No, we are not. This in my opinion is another Act that is put in place to prop up a fundamentally flawed and failed system.

Importantly, Michael Lambert, the author of the Government's very robust and rigorous review into the sector, has repeatedly called on the Government to introduce a standalone building Act. This is the esteemed former public servant who wrote the Government's own report saying as recently as last week that we need a standalone building Act. I will put on record Mr Lambert's comments from the building inquiry on the need to move away from this piecemeal approach towards a standalone building Act. The Hon. John Graham said:

That is a world away from where we need to be. It is also a world away from the hyperbole we have had from the Government about its repeated reform attempts. There has been plenty of activity but, from what you are saying, very few results.

Mr Lambert said:

Well, certainly. There have been two bits of legislation. There is also the other legislation about building certifiers, which has been drafted but which has not been enacted at this stage. There has been activity around legislation but not around the substance of the problem and that is very disappointing.

The Hon. John Graham said:

And we are back here again with this bill. That is really what you are telling us.

Mr Lambert agreed. He said, "Yes." The chair said:

We are watching the deckchairs constantly being rearranged.

Mr Lambert replied:

It is actually making the legislative structure progressively more and more complex and difficult to navigate whereas it should be simplifying it.

The Hon. John Graham then said:

It is the opposite of what you called for—a single building Act.

Mr Lambert replied:

Make it principles-based plain English legislation supported by regulation underneath it, but one omnibus Act I think is what is required.

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union also made noises about the piecemeal approach of the bill in the inquiry hearing last week. Mr Greenfield said:

I think we are miles apart. I heard it said here we are just putting another layer in. There is no enforcement. We are making it harder for people to achieve anything. It is hard enough as it is because there is no compliance and there is no enforcement. Adding another layer in without doing a comprehensive plan and adding everything in should not be done. We see it in other States and it seems to work well.

It seems the calls from experts are falling on deaf ears with the Government. We need a standalone building Act to address all facets of this industry, not just tinkering around the edges with regulations that will take months, if not years, to deliver. But we are here to talk about the bill and its specific contents, which I will address. Despite our preference for a standalone building Act we will not oppose the bill because we believe it is a step in the right direction. However, I note it was the recommendation and recent inquiry evidence of Michael Lambert that a standalone building Act be developed to solve some of the glaring problems with the current legislative framework. We acknowledge that any effort to beef up licensing is welcomed by both industry and the community. The bill has a number of key objectives:

- (a) to require compliance declarations for regulated designs to be provided by registered design practitioners and principal design practitioners who provide designs for certain building work (*applicable building work*),
- (b) to impose obligations on registered building practitioners who carry out applicable building work to take all reasonable steps to provide building compliance declarations and to obtain compliance declarations for regulated designs,
- (c) to impose on building practitioners who do applicable building work an obligation not to carry out the work unless regulated designs have been obtained and compliance declarations provided,
- (d) to impose on building practitioners who do applicable building work an obligation to take all reasonable steps to comply with the applicable requirements of the Building Code of Australia,
- (e) to establish a duty of care owed by persons who carry out construction work relating to certain buildings to take reasonable care to avoid economic loss caused by defects arising from the work,
- (f) to establish a registration scheme for design practitioners, principal design practitioners and building practitioners who are subject to compliance declaration requirements and to establish insurance requirements for registered practitioners,
- (g) to provide for enforcement of the requirements of the proposed Act,
- (h) to establish a register of practitioners registered under the proposed Act,
- (i) to enact other minor and consequential provisions and provisions of a savings and transitional nature,
- (j) to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The bill sets out to overhaul the system and quality of design and building work in New South Wales. This includes—as stated in the objects of the bill—providing a skeleton of a framework for registration of building professionals' work on certain classes of building and rules they must follow to ensure that the buildings they design and build are of an acceptable quality. It also lays out a pathway for enforcement when things go wrong. I say "skeleton" because that is what this bill is: an outline that leaves much to the regulations. Whilst the Opposition supports the general direction and intent of the bill as presented, it is difficult to say whether there will be any adverse effects arising from the regulations.

I am not alone in raising concerns with this bill. It is important to note the concerns of not only Labor but also apartment owners, industry groups from the sector, experts such as Michael Lambert and academics specialising in these fields. It is only right that we shine a light on the deficiencies of this bill and note that there is a long, long way for the Government to go to rebuild consumer confidence in this sector. It is fair to say that the Government has not had a great track record in the sector over the past eight years. There have been six Ministers and countless reviews and inquiries with little action. A cladding task force has done nothing to rectify deadly buildings and there has been a piecemeal legislative approach, with the Government simply forgetting to enact some legislation. I am not sure how one forgets to enact critical and tough—as my former counterpart loved to call them—laws but somehow this Government managed to do so. All of this leaves Labor, as well as the public, unconvinced that the Government is serious about building reform.

The most concerning thing about this bill is that detail is scant and the majority of the reform is left to regulation. I am pleased that the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation is in the Chamber to listen to debate on this critical piece of legislation. Quite frankly, the bill leaves the checks and balances system of this Parliament in the dust, with the majority of the detail in the regulations. As legislators, we are not to know how this legislation will impact on industry and consumers. We can only trust that the Government will engage in robust and genuine consultation in this process, although I will not hold my breath. Engineers Australia highlighted its concerns about the lack of legislative detail in its submission to the Government. It stated:

The bill leaves a lot to regulations and it is recommended that it be amended to provide much more detail. Doing so would provide clarity to industry and the public as to what the reforms encompass. The reforms are important, so it is best to make the laws with the full scrutiny of Parliament, as opposed to leaving much of the changes to be defined by regulation. An Act of Parliament is the ultimate documentation for the application of a law, though other mechanisms are available to provide greater clarity on, and proper accountability for, the Government's long-term intentions.

It is absolutely critical that industry and consumer groups such as the Owners Corporation Network are engaged in the development of the regulations. More critically, the Government must engage with the insurance market to ensure that there will be insurance products—which are mandated by this bill—in the market when the legislation and regulations commence. The Building Designers Association, which has provided excellent guidance to me during my time in this portfolio, highlighted the following:

Engagement with the insurance industry is also critical to the success of this bill and the regulations as the effectiveness of the bill and the regulations is contingent on each design or building practitioner having access to appropriate insurance.

That sentiment was echoed in the building inquiry hearings last week, where we heard that the Government has not adequately engaged with the insurance industry. There is real and significant fear from practitioners that they will not be able to find insurance or that it will be too expensive and cost prohibitive. Another deficiency in the bill worth highlighting is the definition of "building elements". There has been, and rightly so, significant concern raised by stakeholders. The bill states:

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, **building element** means any of the following—
 - (a) the fire safety systems for a building, as prescribed by the regulations,
 - (b) waterproofing,
 - (c) an internal or external load-bearing component of a building that is essential to the stability of the building, or a part of it (including but not limited to foundations and footings, floors, walls, roofs, columns and beams),
 - (d) a component of a building that is part of the building enclosure,
 - (e) other things prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this section.
- (2) The regulations may exclude things from being building elements for the purposes of this Act.
- (3) In this section—

above grade wall means a wall above the level of the ground surrounding a building.

below grade wall means a wall below the level of the ground surrounding a building.

building enclosure means the part of the building that physically separates the interior environment of the building from the exterior environment, including roof systems, above grade and below grade walls (including windows and doors).

We appreciate that the Government has taken at least a slither of the stakeholder feedback on board and slightly amended the bill from its draft exposure form to include below grade walls, which will include the structures below a building that ensure its structural integrity. Engineers Australia raised some serious concerns about the type of element or building work that may be missed in this bill or the regulations. In its submission it states:

... the draft bill does not appear to address services (apart from certain fire services) such as vertical transportation, electrical systems, communications, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), geotechnics, or the many other parts of a building that are designed by engineers. The bill will therefore improve some standards, but only to the fire safety, waterproofing, and external load-bearing components of a building that are essential to its stability. These are of course vital elements of a structure, but it ignores many others that are essential for a building to be fit for purpose. The most glaring example of where the draft legislation could fail to overcome major problems with apartment buildings is that while the apartments in a building might be structurally sound under the proposed new regime, the integrity of the entire building itself could still be compromised if it is sitting in/on unstable ground.

During the development of the regulations it is absolutely vital that stakeholders are thoroughly consulted to ensure that this occurs. Another area of significant concern with this bill is its coverage. The bill will inevitably only cover class 2 buildings—residential high-rises. I think I speak for all residents, visitors and owners of buildings in New South Wales when I say that I want to feel safe when I walk into any building, whether it be a friend's home, a hospital, an office building or even this Parliament. People should feel that they are safe in a quality building wherever they go, not only in a high-rise apartment building. It is absurd that the Government thinks that the problems of the building industry can be contained to one class of building. It is short-sighted and makes absolutely no sense. Why would a building designer, engineer or other building practitioner need to be licensed only for work on one type of building and not another? I note that the Government has extended its proposed coverage to include mixed-use buildings with residential and commercial uses. But that is just another small concession. In its submission the Owners Corporation Network noted:

The current definition of "class" limits the government's ability to make decisions upon what the Bill will and will not apply to by restricting the government to using BCA building classifications when making those decisions. Further, the restriction is to prescribing a BCA class classification for "a building" (i.e.: a whole building, not part of, or parts of, a building).

That definition of "class" will be like a straitjacket for the government when it focuses upon drafting the regulation. It could result in the Bill, or substantial parts of the Bill, not applying to various mixed-use buildings involving significant residential parts clearly intended to be regulated by the Bill. However, such a perverse outcome can be easily avoided by providing a flexible definition that is not limited to describing different types of construction via the BCA building categories all limited to decisions to "a building" being either completely in or completely out of the Bill's operation.

One approach to easily resolve this issue would be changing the section 3 "class" definition to:

- class of building means a building or part or parts of a building of a type or nature prescribed by the regulations. This would leave the government with the flexibility to be able to implement what it ultimately wishes to implement via the regulation as opposed to leaving the government with problems that it cannot solve via the regulation due to the limits of the regulatory power. Mr Michael Lambert has highlighted the same concerns in his submission on this bill. He said:

It only partially covers the building practitioners. It does not cover, for example, the full range identified in the Shergold Weir Report. It does not cover subcontractors. It does not cover suppliers. It is a very partial coverage indeed. Thirdly, it appears, to me, to only cover Class 2 buildings—not Classes 3 to 10—and, particularly, it does not cover mixed-use buildings which are often apartment blocks with shops and a bit of offices et cetera. Engineers Australia highlighted the very same concerns, saying:

The bill is silent on the scope of the reforms with regard to the classes of structure under the Building Code of Australia (BCA) to which it will apply. It is nonetheless understood that the Government's intention is to begin with Class 2 (apartments) only, with other classes to be included at a later time via regulation.

However, as advised to Government in recent weeks and introduced above, Engineers Australia retains strong concerns that this approach does not go far enough and risks merely transferring the problems that Class 2 buildings have experienced to other buildings and other major structures which rely heavily on engineering services. The bill must include more detail to ensure industry and public confidence that the reforms will in fact extend to all parts of the building sector, or do so within a prescribed timeframe. It would be a failure of the reform process if those engineers who are not suitable to practice are able to simply move to other parts of the building sector, or if the public did not have confidence in a longer-term goal to include all structures and all relevant professionals under the proposed new regime.

Related to the above, a very simple but critical clarification is needed for the applicability of the reforms to mixed use structures. This is for circumstances in which an apartment is part of a mixed-use structure such as offices or shops.

In fact, Engineers Australia has outlined how problems in construction go beyond class 2 buildings. In their submission to the draft exposure of this bill, they gave the example of the use of tilt-up panels in factories and commercial properties. The failure of temporary bracing is not an uncommon occurrence and has prompted WorkCover to issue guidelines after a particularly bad case where a 40 tonne panel collapsed. Here they have used this as an example of why engineering services across a wide range of buildings is crucial—not just on class 2 buildings, but that good quality, licensed engineering work is important in all structures for the safety of workers and the community.

What is important here is that Engineers Australia have stated that the risks and problems will simply transfer from one class to another. The problems will not go away, this means that essentially the Minister is playing a game of whack-a-mole with this bill. He is hitting those shonky operators in class 2 buildings, but I can guarantee they will be popping up in other places as soon as this bill and the regulations come into force. We have seen it before in sectors like pay-day lending. You introduce some piecemeal legislation and they simply pop up elsewhere, doing exactly the same thing.

Another issue the industry has raised in their submissions, with regard to building classes, is consistency. The Building Designers Association has noted that its members work across all classes of buildings and that consistency in licensing across classes was preferred. The Design and Building Practitioners Bill 2019 should encompass buildings and structures of all classes under the National Construction Code. Design and building practitioners work across all classes of buildings and therefore should be consistent in process. I note that the building designers have already provided advice to the Government on what an appropriate scheme should look like in much detail as they already provide an opt-in accreditation program that mirrors the Queensland and Tasmanian systems.

It should be ringing huge alarm bells to the Minister that we are seeing stakeholders raise these serious and very valid concerns about covering all classes of building. Quite frankly I am shocked that the Minister has not incorporated this feedback into his revised bill. Another concern—really it is a loophole—is that developers seem to be missing in action from this bill. It is curious that this Government could find a reason to regulate every profession involved in the construction and design of an apartment building and yet seem to miss that developers are involved in the process. As the Owners Corporation Network stated:

The Bill does nothing to regulate developers. Developers are the parties controlling apartment developments and making the ultimate profits. However, they are completely unregulated and routinely use \$2 companies to avoid any responsibility for defects. Changing that is integral to achieving the NSW government's objective of changing the current building industry culture.

We have a culture of dodgy developers, two-dollar shelf companies and poor quality products in New South Wales. I would like to see the Government also tackle some of these big and difficult problems to ensure people

get a quality product. Perhaps the Minister will take up some of the advice of these stakeholders and close these loopholes. I will not hold my breath. A number of stakeholders have also raised concerns with building standards and licensing arrangements. This is particularly around the need for strict licensing and enforcement for those building practitioners that construct our buildings, not just those that design them. Consult Australia noted in its correspondence on this bill:

This Bill focuses heavily on designers and design stages and fails to address all the persons doing the actual building work and the construction stage. While all designers in a project will likely be covered by the Bill as design practitioners (with strict registration and declaration requirements) not all persons doing building work will be covered as building practitioners.

The obligations on building practitioners are also significantly flexible allowing them to only take "reasonable steps" to comply with the designs. In addition, they benefit from a "reasonable excuse", allowing them to construct without final designs and compliance declarations. The Bill doesn't account for design variations made by non-design practitioners.

It must be remembered that the skill level and knowledge of building regulations/codes varies significantly across the different participants involved in such a project—from professionals, technicians, skilled trades, and casual trades.

The Australian Institute of Architects has raised similar concerns in its submission, arguing, rightly, that all practitioners, design and otherwise, should be treated equally. Why has the Minister chosen to make building practitioners less accountable than design practitioners? Why must one group "ensure" that design compliance declarations are given as required, whereas building practitioners are only required to "take reasonable steps to ensure" that regulated designs are prepared by a registered practitioner?

The Minister should not pick and choose which practitioners have more or less responsibility than others. It should be equal, shared responsibility to do the right thing and build and design quality products across the spectrum of those involved in the design and construction of all types of buildings. I am very disappointed that it is not the case in the bill. I suspect that if the public knew about the nuance of this discrepancy it would be disappointed in the Minister's work here, too. Additionally, stakeholders have raised concerns about the importation of goods and the obligation of those manufacturers and importers to provide safe, quality goods. Regarding importers and manufacturers, the Owners Corporation Network has stated:

Their lack of accountability does nothing to discourage profiting from unsuitable products and leaves a large hole in the consumer protection provided by the regime.

It is important that everybody in the process is held responsible, including those importing goods or builders knowingly using those dodgy products. I will talk more about the cladding crisis later. However, the extremely hefty task of removing unsafe and potentially deadly cladding from buildings across our State is now going to cost owners tens of thousands of dollars each, all out of their own paycheques—and all because dangerous products were imported and installed on buildings. The manufacturers of those products are not liable, nor are the installers or the building designers. Unfortunately, here the buck stops with the owner.

It is clear that there is a loophole here. While the Building Products (Safety) Act 2017 has the ability to ban specific products proven dangerous, the bill before the Parliament does nothing to protect consumers against dodgy products being imported and installed on the buildings. When you have got dodgy professionals working on and designing buildings and potentially dodgy products being imported and installed on buildings it seems right to introduce legislation to clean the industry out. I think the Minister is trying his best, but his best is just not cutting it. It was put to me by a stakeholder that we are in a world of speed and greed. Builders and developers are building up into the sky as quickly and cheaply as they can, using cheap products and cutting corners while turning a blind eye to quality.

Even the best and most robust legislation will not completely solve the weak and perhaps incompetent approach to enforcement by the Government. The legislation on the table today may restore some faith and trust in the system, but can I say it is only marginal. It is clear our enforcement approach is inadequate and that the Liberal-Nationals Government is letting cowboys and shonks run wild. Recent budget estimates hearings illuminated the extreme shortage of staff in the office of Fair Trading NSW and its inability to have boots on the ground where it matters. In the last financial year Fair Trading NSW received a staggering 7,988 complaints about building and construction work. There were only 13 staff members in the building construction policy team within the Better Regulation division. There are only 20 specialist building inspectors. New South Wales staffing is significantly lower than that of the benchmark jurisdictions of Victoria and Queensland. To reach equivalents with Victoria, an additional 50 staff would be required to undertake all of the various requirements of building compliance.

I have said it before: This is a billion-dollar industry. There are thousands of new buildings being built each year, yet we only have a handful of government inspectors to ensure that there are quality and safe buildings being built. These inspectors are then under the office of Fair Trading NSW, instead of having the power and independence of a building authority or commission. It is worrying for our economy that the average person on the street would be worried about the quality of building work occurring right now. Even the Government's own

expert and contractor Bronwyn Weir said she would not buy an apartment building built in the last 20 years—talk about inspiring confidence.

Mr David Elliott: That was when you were in government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What, are you going to get your badge out?

Mr David Elliott: I'm in the fire brigade calendar.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Have you got a fire badge too, do you? You're just an all-rounder.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Swansea will not respond to interjections. The member for The Entrance will come to order.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Consumer confidence is hurting and it will not improve without two key pillars: a robust legislative and regulatory framework and, importantly, more inspectors on the ground making sure the laws are being adhered to. The NSW Building Commissioner himself knows this is the right approach. He has repeatedly said that he will be out and about—a real cop on the beat, if you will—inspecting buildings and chasing down the bad guys. But a half-hearted, underfunded approach just will not work. We need real boots on the ground. That means real investment.

As Michael Lambert recommended, we need a building commissioner to support a building commission with significant additional staffing and to ensure that buildings get inspected and that there is a genuine fear from industry that if you are doing the wrong thing you will get caught. However, the bill just does not deliver on this. There is no mechanism for increased enforcement. We are just going to have to trust that industry does the right thing—because that has clearly worked so well over the last 20-odd years. There is no doubt that confidence is where it is. The Owners Corporation Network [OCN] has highlighted this need for a drastic overhaul of the way industry is scrutinised. Scathingly, it states:

... the Bill will fail consumers. It will not provide the cultural change needed to reduce the prevalence of defects. That can only be achieved by transparency and accountability. It will instead keep letting a number of the industry participants who are taking shortcuts avoid accountability by 'staying under the radar'.

Transparency and accountability will only be achieved by robust enforcement and ensuring our government agencies are resourced sufficiently to ensure there is cultural change to support this new legislation. Unfortunately, cultural change can only come with leadership. That is where this Government is lagging. It has a Minister who has barely attended meetings of the cladding task force, who does not understand this industry at all and who cannot stand up and make a bold reform that is so greatly needed.

Mr Kevin Anderson: I'm hurt by that.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I note the Minister's interjection. Whilst he may be hurt, he is probably not quite as hurt as those people who cannot actually go back into their home, those people who live in Mascot Towers or, indeed, those other people who have cladding and live in buildings that are unsafe every night.

Mr David Elliott: Built under your Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Now we have got the new cop on the beat with something to say.

Mr David Elliott: I should arrest you for misleading the House. You should have been under arrest a long time ago.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What I say to the new cop on the beat is that he should not be making fun of this very important matter, which is a crisis in New South Wales. Transparency and accountability—something that the new policeman on the other side of the Chamber has very little of—will only be achieved by robust enforcement and ensuring our government agencies are resourced sufficiently to ensure there is cultural change to support this new legislation. Unfortunately, cultural change can only come from strong leadership and that is not something we are seeing from this Government.

A number of stakeholders have also raised with me problems associated with the duty of care aspect of the bill. As the Owners Corporation Network has outlined, a substantial weakness in the bill's duty of care is that it will not apply to designers or installers in respect of construction that is not within the definition of building work. Due to the issues with the definition of class, which has already been noted, the OCN is also of the strong view that confirmation of what the duty of care is to apply to should not be left to a regulatory decision at some point in the future. That is particularly important given the Government's announcement throughout this year that the duty of care will apply to all industry participants. I note that the bill states that the person who carries out construction work has a duty to exercise reasonable care. We do not yet know the full extent of what this duty is. I suspect, as with any complex but scant legislation that gets presented to this place, the devil will be in the detail.

Mr David Elliott: Have you read the detail?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: We must come up with a foolproof and airtight way in which those who contribute to the process of designing, building and financing buildings are held to account for their actions when something goes wrong. I note the interjection of the Minister, the new policeman, asking me if I have read the detail. I declare in this House that I am very, very familiar with the detail of this legislation that was forgotten to be introduced. I am very familiar with Michael Lambert's review. I am very familiar with the Shergold Weir review. I feel as though I am very across that. The member should be very concerned about this. Recently I have been to his electorate in the Hills district where there are a lot of new buildings. I know because I have been to visit—particularly a new retirement village that has terrible building defects. I would think that instead of the Minister sitting there trying to point score on this very serious debate he might be asked to remain silent for the rest of my contribution. The bill states that the person who carries out construction—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The bill states that the person who carries out construction work has a duty to exercise reasonable care. We do not know yet what the full extent of this duty is. As I suspect with any complex but scant legislation that gets presented to this place, the devil will be in the detail. We must come up with a foolproof and airtight way in which those who contribute to the process of designing, building and financing buildings are held to account for their actions when something goes wrong. It has always been Labor's position that a chain of responsibility is the best way forward to ensure all practitioners, design or otherwise, suppliers, developers and anyone else involved in the building process are held accountable for their work or products. It is that approach that delivers buildings that people are confident about and feel safe to live in.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the other serious concerns that have been raised about the Government's response to the crisis that we are facing in the building and construction sector in New South Wales. The fact of the matter is that we are light years behind other States in the regulation of our building sector. There is a real and significant failure of leadership in this sector. Consumer confidence is at an all-time low and we cannot afford to wait any longer. There are significant legacy issues that need addressing and we must move forward. But instead we have a government refusing to act on a serious crisis in the sector, such as flammable cladding.

I will take some time to discuss the Government's approach to flammable cladding. Tragic incidents like the Grenfell Tower or the Lacrosse building show just how dangerous deadly flammable cladding can be. We have continually called on the Government to be transparent and honest about the extent of the cladding crisis in our State, and at every step of the way it has buried its head in the sand and refused to acknowledge the grave and serious danger that residents have been left in, with hundreds if not thousands of buildings affected across this State. One only has to wander around the streets of Pyrmont or Ultimo to see dangerous cladding attached to buildings, and wonder when the rectification work might begin. It is extraordinary that there is no real plan about cladding from the Minister or his department. He has dithered and delayed while at the same time we have seen the Victorian Premier show real leadership on this issue, putting in place a \$600 million plan to ensure that flammable cladding is removed from high-risk buildings across that State.

It is becoming obvious that this State needs a Labor government to show leadership on this issue. What a shame it is for the residents of these buildings. It was just one cigarette. One cigarette was all it took for the Lacrosse building to go up in flames and endanger the lives of hundreds of people in that building and thousands of people in surrounding buildings. The Government and department has known about the flammable cladding problem for years. To be quite frank, their response has been woeful. A task force that successive Ministers have never attended is made up of disparate agency staff who meet to receive updates. The task force is not about action, and it certainly is not about rectification. We learned in budget estimates hearings that the Fair Trading officials do not know the specifics about government buildings with flammable cladding. I will quote Commissioner for NSW Fair Trading Peter Dunphy, who said last week:

We do not get into specifics of individual buildings, so I am not familiar with the specifics.

In fact they held what they described as an ad hoc meeting merely days before the supplementary budget estimates hearings, which was the first meeting the Minister and Mr Chandler, the new Building Commissioner, had attended. Presumably this was so they did not face the embarrassment of having to say yet again at another government hearing that they had never attended a task force meeting. We have repeatedly asked for the Government to provide us with a list of buildings with flammable cladding and to make that list public. Successive requests to the Government under the Government Information (Public Access) Act were denied on security grounds; however, I would argue that a much greater risk to public safety is those people living in, staying in or indeed visiting those buildings with high-risk flammable cladding being completely unaware of the significant dangers posed to them. All it would take is an Airbnb visitor smoking on the balcony to endanger the lives of

every person in an inner city apartment building with flammable cladding. We know that it is that easy because we have seen it all before.

Every day thousands of students and teachers walk through the Ultimo TAFE, but it was not revealed until some months ago—inadvertently, I might add, at a budget estimates hearing—that this building was now on the Government cladding list. Has that cladding been removed? No, it has not been removed, because the Government does not have a plan of rectification for dangerous flammable cladding in this State, and quite frankly it is a disgrace. It is not just our education buildings though. Patients and workers at our hospitals are also at risk. Earlier this year NSW Health safety documents revealed five hospitals in New South Wales had dangerous flammable cladding: the St Vincent's Hospital O'Brien Centre, the Armidale Hospital ambulatory care building, the John Hunter Hospital Royal Newcastle Centre building, the John Hunter clinical services building and the Queanbeyan Hospital main building.

It is my understanding that one of the higher risk buildings at St Vincent's Hospital—not too far from where we are today—is in one of the most densely populated areas in Sydney. Work on it was not due to commence until the second half of this year. The Government cannot tell me that it has a plan and is taking this issue seriously because it is not. In the Hunter area \$9 million has been spent on rectification costs. While governments get to the task of removing flammable cladding the poor old private sector is another kettle of fish where the risk is even greater. Organisations like the Strata Community Association and the owners—Mr Assistant Speaker, I ask that the members listen to this very important contribution.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Swansea will be heard in silence. I call the member for North Shore to order for the first time. I call the member for North Shore to order for the second time.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Organisations like the Strata Community Association and the Owners Corporation Network have been calling on the Government to provide some sort of assistance to owners who have been left in the lurch with this dodgy product and no financial means to fix it after they were told the products were safe, innovative and perfectly fine to be put on their buildings. The Strata Community Association has previously called on the Government to provide a \$1 billion reform package similar to that offered by the Victorian Government to help owners remove the dangerous cladding as quickly as possible. What is plainly obvious is that this is a government whose members are more interested in protecting themselves and their developer mates—

Mr David Elliott: I beg your pardon?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will say it again, what is plainly obvious is that—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Swansea will remain relevant to the leave of the bill.

Mr David Elliott: Aren't you under investigation by ICAC for developer donations?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am being relevant. The developers are not mentioned in this legislation and stakeholders have serious concerns about that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am not debating that point. I have heard enough from the member for North Sydney.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Government members are so interested in protecting themselves and their developer mates from scrutiny that they will hide from the public a list of deadly buildings that are putting at risk the lives of thousands. This is incredibly relevant and should be known by everybody, and I am glad to have read it to the Parliament. I could perhaps forgive the Minister in the first instance because I am not sure he has even seen a high-rise, they are outside of Tamworth, but after having attended one ad hoc cladding task force meeting I am sure—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The level of noise and the insults will be reduced. The member for Swansea has seven minutes remaining.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Why have I got seven minutes? I will be back.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am sure you will be. I remind members that at 5.00 p.m. the public interest debate will be proceeded with.

Mr Nathaniel Smith: You have kept me sitting here for an hour listening to your drivel.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I ask that he withdraw that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Which part?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: He knows what he said.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: We have seven minutes; let us continue with this for the next seven minutes—six minutes now. I ask the member for Swansea to continue, without the insults.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: After having attended one ad hoc cladding task force meeting I am sure that the Minister is now across the gravity and detail of the problem. Maybe he will shortly see his own 10-point plan to fix it immediately. I wait with baited breath. I am appalled that this cladding crisis and our looming defects crisis are not the top priority of the Office of Fair Trading and indeed other agencies in the Government. We were told, in fact, that our saviour was coming, that is, the Building Commissioner, but what a disappointment that has been thus far to the people of New South Wales. The commissioner, not through his own fault, has no powers, no staff—

Mr Kevin Anderson: Yes, he does.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —and he has no agenda to clean up a billion-dollar industry that is in crisis. I note the interjection from the Minister who just said, yes, he does have powers. He does not have any powers whatsoever in this bill and if the Minister can point it out to me, I would welcome it, because that is misleading the House.

Mr David Elliott: He would have to read it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I know you have your badge. You can share your badge around, all you over there, with all the boys.

Mr Nathaniel Smith: This is sexist stuff.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Swansea has five minutes left.

Mr David Elliott: I don't even have a library card.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: You don't need one. You just keep pulling your badge out. That seems to work for you everywhere else.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: That is enough with the badge.

Mr David Elliott: It doesn't work. If it did work I wouldn't be here.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order!

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is a bit of banter.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: We now have five minutes—four minutes.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am appalled that the cladding crisis and our looming defects crisis are not the top priority of Fair Trading. As I have just said, the commissioner has no powers, no staff and no agenda to clean up a billion-dollar industry that is in crisis. The commissioner's unfortunate inability to influence any of this process is shown in this bill. In the past the commissioner has been critical; in fact, he has been scathing of the Government's approach to this sector. He has called on the Government to implement big reforms, including laying out a pathway for the new commissioner before he was appointed to the role. An article in *The Fifth Estate* stated:

Here's a challenge for the new Building Commissioner:

1. Publish a list of priority actions and list the governance areas that will be amended.
2. Set benchmarks to indicate progress and accountability.
3. Set out a plan to make the regulatory system future-fit.

It is many months since Mr Chandler was appointed, yet we are still waiting to see the work plan, his vision for how he is going to overhaul the industry. When he was asked in budget estimates about sharing his work plan, which, might I add, he said would be available within weeks of his first appearance at the building inquiry in the Legislative Council, Mr Chandler then said to the supplementary estimates committee in October:

I have prepared a work plan, which is currently being socialised with industry and in the relevant parts of government. We are on schedule for that.

But again back in August Mr Chandler told the Legislative Council committee:

I will have available before the next three months a work plan—I already have a draft work plan; I am just not sharing that publicly at the moment because I would like to bring the rest of the team on board with it—but I have a work plan ...

That is the very issue that we are taking issue with. Mascot Towers, Opal, Erskineville and Zetland—these buildings are only the tip of the iceberg. They are emblematic of the defects crisis engulfing our State, yet the commissioner charged with the arduous and important task of fixing the problem cannot even share his vision or what that reform would look like with the House, but, more importantly, with the public of New South Wales. That is why, while we support the bill's general intent, we are deeply sceptical and deeply disappointed. This is a government that in all senses has been deeply and utterly opaque on building defects, flammable cladding and the administration of its hand-picked commissioner. The Government claims that this bill is the big game changer—it is anything but. Until we see the detail of the bill, until we know that it will cover all classes of building, until we know that a registration scheme will be in place for professionals—

Debate interrupted.

Public Interest Debate

BUSHFIRES

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (17:00:39):

I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales is currently facing severe fire conditions.
- (2) Notes that the Government has declared a State of emergency for seven days.
- (3) Acknowledges the efforts and thanks the thousands of firefighters from the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW deployed across the State who are working to fight these fires and protect the communities affected.

I address the House on this matter of public interest and highlight to the House that what we have seen in the past 72 hours particularly has been unprecedented and, as I mentioned in question time today, the language being used by the Government, particularly by the Rural Fire Service, in relation to the situation in New South Wales cannot be underestimated. We all hoped, of course, that the preparations that have been laid out over the course of the past few days would be in vain. Unfortunately, as it stands, it is exactly how it has been predicted. As of four o'clock this afternoon 76 bush or grass fires are burning across the State, primarily between the Hunter and Northern Tablelands.

Half of those fires are uncontained. For the benefit of members who are not familiar with the categories and the definitions used by the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW, uncontained fires are obviously, by definition, out of control. They also create probably the most cause for concern for firefighters because an uncontained fire does not necessarily bring risk to life and property, but with the numbers we are seeing at the moment it is only a matter of time before some of them spread and repeat some of the devastation that we have seen over the course of the past couple of weeks. Fifteen of the fires are at emergency warning level, which comes with advice from the Rural Fire Service that people who are living nearby those fires should take affirmative action to escape in the event of the fire coming to their residence. Six of those fires are at watch and act level, which is the next category down.

Catastrophic fires, conditions across the Greater Sydney, Greater Hunter, Illawarra and Shoalhaven areas, have also been unprecedented, given that we have very rarely, if at all in New South Wales, used the term "catastrophic", which was introduced a number of years ago by fire agencies across the Commonwealth in response to the Black Saturday fires in Victoria. As we sit in this Chamber today, temperatures around the State are in the mid-thirties and winds are currently gusting at around 90 kilometres an hour in some areas. That, combined with low humidity and the crippling effects of the drought, means that we have, as I mentioned in question time, the perfect storm for bushfires. In light of the forecast conditions that the Premier has indicated to the House, the Premier has declared a state of emergency—the first one in six years—which will last for seven days from yesterday.

In the 18 evacuation centres across the communities of the mid North Coast in Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Hastings, Nambucca, Coffs Harbour, Clarence, Lismore, Glen Innes and Singleton, we have seen the best of our communities come together. We have seen groups that have been beneficiaries of corporate support, we have also seen people come together who have lost everything and people come together who have lost nothing, but are making sure that all their neighbours and their friends benefit from peace of mind, knowing full well that the communities that they live in will do everything they can to ensure that life returns to normal as quickly as possible. Since the conclusion of question time, a number of fires have started across western Sydney. The advice that I have received is that all of those fires are being responded to by the Rural Fire Service [RFS], and Fire and Rescue. At this stage some of those fires may not be contained, but I am confident that at this stage, unless there are some devastating changes in the weather conditions, they will be dealt with over the course of the evening. When it comes to preparing for fires, this Government has left no stone unturned.

We have already discussed the fact that we have a record budget for our emergency services, and that includes a \$26 million investment in aviation support, particularly the 737 Large Air Tanker, which has been deployed to very strong effect. Currently we are enjoying the support of the Defence Force as well as personnel from fire services around the Commonwealth. We will continue to commit whatever funds are necessary to fight not only these fires but also the fires that we expect to continue over the course of this long, hot summer that is before us, and we will ensure that our 75,000 volunteer firefighters know full well that this Government does not consider them as just public servants in uniform.

We expect that all Australians pay the appropriate levels of respect to our volunteer firefighters, who give up so much in employment, family and their own time to ensure that our homes are kept as safe as possible. Our current RFS fleet consists of 6,800 appliances—3,800 pumpers, 900 personnel carriers and command vehicles and 1,600 support and logistic vehicles. That says to me that we could not be more resourced. I invite all members of the House to contact their local RFS on behalf of the entire Parliament to ensure that they know how very grateful we are for the support that they are providing us.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (17:08:00): It feels somewhat disconnected to be in the safety and sterility of this Chamber talking about fires and their impact on towns and communities across the State. I think many MPs in this place whose towns and communities have been placed on alert and many MPs who are worried about their communities would much rather be in their communities offering help, assistance and support. On our side of the House a number of MPs have already returned to their communities. Over the past couple of days I have been in contact with MPs from the Liberal and National parties and from the crossbench whose communities have been impacted or who are likely to be affected. Over the course of this week more than 150 homes have been destroyed, three lives have been lost and firefighters and members of the community have been hurt. We have seen proud towns and villages across the North Coast utterly devastated.

As I stand in this place people's lives and homes are in danger. I let everyone in New South Wales know that as we are in this House and talking about the fires—it was a difficult decision to be in this House today—we are thinking about all those in New South Wales whose lives and homes are in danger. Today is first and foremost about those in harm's way. Today is not the day to talk about the cuts to Fire and Rescue NSW and to the Rural Fire Service, or about the dozens of permanent jobs that remain unfilled—decisions that are putting huge pressure on workers on the front line. But we are not going to talk about that. There will be a day in this House when Labor will talk about those cuts. We are not going to raise the cuts to the National Parks and Wildlife Service either, which conducts vital hazard-reduction activities.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order!

Ms JODI McKAY: We are not going to talk about that today, but we will ask questions on those issues in this House at another time. According to the Deputy Premier, today is not the right time to discuss the link between climate change, bushfires and drought. We will not talk about it today, but we will talk about it because people in rural New South Wales demand that we talk about it. Since becoming the Leader of the Opposition I have travelled widely across New South Wales. I promised to be a leader for everyone; therefore, I have been out of Sydney and I have been in rural New South Wales. As someone who grew up in country New South Wales, I feel a real connection and affinity with country areas of this State, possibly like no other Labor leader has.

I have been in Armidale, Broken Hill, Menindee, Dubbo, Queanbeyan, Cootamundra, Parkes, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Wauchope, in the South Coast, Upper Hunter and Illawarra and, most recently, in the northern New South Wales town of Drake, which is still recovering from the impact of bushfires last month. The never-ending drought, the devastating fires and the impact of climate change on their livelihoods are very much a part of the conversation in the bush. I have heard it and we must bring that to this House eventually. Simply to say that climate change is not an issue that people in country New South Wales want us to talk about does a terrible injustice to their experiences.

Today our focus is on the fires, but we cannot separate from this discussion the reality of the drought. The bush is tinder dry, towns are running out of water and communities are facing immeasurable suffering. The conversation around climate change is one we need to have, and we will have that debate. Today I thank the RFS volunteers who, as we speak, are defending towns and villages across New South Wales. I thank the State agencies and the frontline services that are on the ground in these communities. I thank the emergency services and the community organisations that are rallying at this time. It is the case that so much of our response to these emergencies depends on volunteers, and everyone in this place is so very grateful to them.

To every person facing peril, and to the thousands of firefighters and volunteers working so hard, I say that New South Wales stands with you today. We know, however, that this will not be the last time we stand in this place recognising your efforts, that it is not the last time you will be called on to help. The Premier told the House today that there is no significant rain forecast until February or March next year, so this could just be the

beginning of the very difficult times ahead. Our job in this House is to ask the hard questions—and we will—but today we stand with everyone in New South Wales.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (17:12:57): For the Northern Tablelands, 2019 has been the most devastating and deadly year for bushfires in our history. It is hard enough for people being gripped by the worst drought that our region and our State has ever experienced, forcing people to sell up farms, and lose jobs and their livelihoods; but on top of that to have fire rip through their properties, taking all that is left in fodder or fodder storage, is nothing short of a tragic disaster—it is heartbreaking. Earlier this year, in February, fire swept through the communities of Tingha and Gilgai, destroying more than 17,000 hectares, and taking 27 homes and buildings with it. Fast forward seven months and we are in the grips of what can only be described as an absolute fire crisis.

For the past two months bushfires have ravaged farming properties, destroyed homes, destroyed villages and snatched away precious lives on the eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range in my electorate. Looking at the current catastrophic fire situation now it seems almost inevitable that we would come to this point. The extensive dry fuel loads due to drought in both the public land estate and on private property just need the smallest ignition to take off. As of this evening six major bushfires are threatening properties and villages in the Northern Tablelands electorate alone. The Whans Road fire at Llangothlin, which the member for Lake Macquarie knows quite well, went to emergency level this afternoon, but thankfully is now back at watch and act. Today it prompted the closures of Guyra Central School, Black Mountain Public School and Bald Blair Public School. The fire burnt out nearly 2,000 hectares, which sounds like a lot, but, relative to what we have experienced, that is only a small one.

The Gulf Road fire at Torrington was upgraded to emergency level at noon. The fast-moving fire threatens properties around Emmaville and in the village itself, which is home to around 400 people, as well as the locality of Stannum right up in the north of the Northern Tablelands. The Wandsworth fire between the communities of Guyra and Tingha is at watch and act level. I received reports a few moments ago that landholders self-evacuated to an evacuation centre established at the Guyra Showground as a precautionary measure. The coming days are going to be some of the toughest in living memory ever faced by our firefighters, communities and landholders. I pass on my sincere thoughts to colleagues on all sides of the House who are not with us today for this debate, but who are in fact in their local communities.

I know very well what they are going through and what they will go through in the coming days. All of our thoughts are with them and their respective communities. Over the weekend we saw the crisis level reach an all-new level in the Northern Tablelands, an absolutely tragic level with the loss not only of the village of Wyaliba and almost all of its dwellings, including the local school and the recently opened RFS firefighting shed, but we also saw the tragic loss of two people, long-term residents of Wyaliba. We are no stranger to fires in our part of the world but to lose two lives is absolutely harrowing. My thoughts and prayers go out to both families who have lost loved ones and, of course, to the very tight-knit community of Wyaliba, which regards everyone who lives down there as part of the family, whether related or not.

It is absolutely tragic whenever we see fire wreak havoc, but to lose lives is another thing entirely. We regret the loss of Vivian Chaplain and George Nole, and we mourn with the families their tragic departure from this world. Evacuation centres are open right across the State. The most prominent in my electorate is at the Glen Innes Showground, together with the work at Guyra Showground. I encourage people to listen to the RFS. This is not a time for tombstone heroics; this is a time to listen to the authorities. I thank the RFS and the volunteers for everything they do.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:18:10): This table is not the place I would like to be right now and I know many other members here today feel the same. Given the catastrophic fire danger rating for many of our electorates we would prefer to be with our communities and with our families, doing all we can to keep them safe from harm. But we are the lucky ones. Our colleagues who are not here today, those members who represent electorates on the mid North Coast and North Coast, are exactly where they need to be today. That includes the shadow Minister for emergency services, who is looking after her fire-prone electorate of Blue Mountains. She sends her thoughts to communities across the State that are experiencing the worst of times and those who are sitting in wait, preparing and, quite naturally, feel very anxious.

I know everyone here has those same thoughts, thinking of members who are not here today, thinking about those communities and hoping they are all safe. There have already been too many lives lost, homes destroyed, heartbreak for families whose lives have changed forever. The terrifying ferocity and nightmarish extent of these fires is, according to those who have been on the fireground for decades, truly uncharted territory. We have old-growth forests alight and we have rainforests that are so dry they are burning—they have never burnt before. Areas of national significance and areas with critical koala populations have all gone up in flames. The ferocity of these fires is leaving no skerrick of wildlife. Right now we have fires everywhere north of my electorate

of Port Stephens. Emergency level warnings have been issued in recent hours at Greta, Nahiab, Tenterfield, Thunderbolts Way and, unfortunately and tragically, many other towns.

There is nothing more terrifying, and I know this too well, than getting the message, "Too late to leave." It is chilling and many families face that as we speak here today. I recently met with RFS volunteers and residents of Tyringham and Dundurrabin, north-west of Dorrig. When I met with them they had already spent weeks battling the Bees Nest fire, which started in the Guy Fawkes National Park. They had spent days and days working around the clock. Through their efforts they protected the towns of Dundurrabin, Tyringham and Billys Creek. I was devastated to hear over the weekend that the fire had not gone out and kicked up again this weekend. It went through the township of Tyringham, an unrelenting force against an exhausted community and an exhausted group of firefighters who fought as hard as they could. What is happening right now is devastating, but it is not entirely unpredictable. Greg Mullins, the former Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, an expert in fire management and emergencies, someone who has more of a right to speak on these issues than any of us in the House today, called for urgent action to protect communities and address climate change. He said:

Unprecedented dryness; reductions in long-term rainfall; low humidity; high temperatures; wind velocities; fire danger indices; fire spread and ferocity; instances of pyro-convective fires (fire storms – making their own weather); early starts and late finishes to bushfire seasons. An established long-term trend driven by a warming, drying climate. The numbers don't lie, and the science is clear.

For years we have been told that weather events will be more extreme and will occur more often. These events are accelerating. People who live in rural and regional New South Wales know that climate change is a factor with the current drought and the current catastrophic conditions around the State. No-one is saying it is the only factor, but those who deny that climate change is making our environment warmer and drier are denying the very reality facing communities across the State right now. These fires are unprecedented, and the surrounding conditions are exactly what climate scientists have been predicting for years. Any member who turns their back on this reality is not serving our State or its citizens well. Now is not the time for finger-pointing and politics.

Mr David Elliott: You just did!

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I am accused of finger-pointing because I mentioned climate change. I find that very interesting coming from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Port Stephens to continue.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will, because now is not the time for finger-pointing and politics, yet The National took less than 24 hours to blame The Greens, even though it has nothing to do with hazard-reduction activities. Today The Nationals used these fires as an opportunity to discredit and dismantle our national parks altogether. Right now is a time to show our support for communities under immense pressure and give our heartfelt thanks to all of the volunteers and firefighters.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:23:20): I support the motion submitted by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Baulkham Hills. The threat of fire is obviously very real in many parts of New South Wales as we are seeing right at this very moment. My community is well aware of how this feels, especially after the last bushfire took hold in Casula, Wattle Grove and Holsworthy and then extended through to Barden Ridge, Menai and Alford's Point in the Sutherland shire on Saturday 14 April last year. These bushfires came close to many homes. Some came up to backyard fences. Local residents stood in their yards defending their homes with buckets and hoses from flames just across the street, like many are doing across the State right now.

We saw a remarkable coordinated effort by the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW crews to protect people and property. During that time more than 650 firefighters and 120 appliances were deployed to fight the fire. The dedication of our fire and emergency services resulted in no major loss of property or life. It is claimed that 888 homes were saved, but that accounts only for the homes that were directly saved. In reality whole communities were protected. That was a truly remarkable outcome given the scale of that fire. Unfortunately we have not been as lucky this time, with five lives already lost, 30 people injured, including three firefighters, and homes destroyed across the mid North Coast. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those affected by this tragic event.

The commissioner's 4.00 p.m. update informed us that 78 fires were burning, with 48 of them not contained. The fires and conditions we are facing are unprecedented. A catastrophic fire danger rating has been applied to the Greater Sydney, Greater Hunter and Illawarra/Shoalhaven areas. To assist with this rating and the fires we are facing, the Premier has declared a state of emergency, which provides the commissioner with extraordinary powers, including to direct any government agency to conduct or refrain from conducting its functions; control and coordinate the allocation of government resources; evacuate people from property within the declared area; close roads and thoroughfares to traffic; pull down or shore up infrastructure at risk of collapse;

order the shutdown of essential utilities in the declared area, including electricity, gas, oil and water; and enter or take possession of property in the course of the emergency response.

I thank the Premier, the Minister, the commissioners and their teams for their efforts to protect us all. Our three new large air tankers [LATs], including the *Boomer* and *Marie Bashir*, are being utilised to assist with the fires that are occurring. The New South Wales Government is relentless in ensuring our firefighters are equipped with the resources and facilities they need to get the job done. In fact, today we signed off on a fourth large air tanker. These kinds of aircrafts are game changers when it comes to fighting bush and grass fires. I saw that firsthand when I had the opportunity to launch the *Boomer* at the start of the fire season. I learnt that the tanker can dump more than 11,300 litres of water or fire retardant at a time and can be used for a direct attack on bush and grass fires. It is incredibly impressive.

Today's announcement brings the squadron up to four LATs and hundreds of smaller contract aircrafts. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue have had cuts. That is absolutely false. She should stop going out of her way to scare people. Putting up tweets and then taking them down after she realises they are inaccurate shows that she is going out of her way to mislead the public at a time when they are incredibly scared. I am incredibly disappointed that she did that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Holsworthy.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: More than \$20 million was invested in the aircraft, more than \$17 million was invested in the new training centre and \$5 million is going towards fire mapping. That investment is providing our emergency services with the tools they need to get the job done. It is important that we pay tribute to all Rural Fire Service members—the thousands of men and women who volunteer to serve and protect our communities. They respond to a vast range of incidents, including bush and grass fires, house fires and vehicle fires. They also assist with flood and storm emergencies, search and rescue operations and deployments further afield when required. I thank the Rural Fire Service teams in my electorate, including at Casula, Sandy Point, Menai and Liverpool, who have been helping out across the State. I once again advise the community to follow the warnings to stay safe. People should have their important papers and sentimental items ready to go. They can keep up to date via the Fires Near Me app. A house can be replaced but the lives of loved ones cannot. Look after yourselves.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:28:24): The motion before the House reads:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales is currently facing severe fire conditions.
- (2) Notes that the Government has declared a state of emergency for seven days.
- (3) Acknowledges the efforts and thanks the thousands of firefighters from the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW deployed across the State who are working to fight these fires and protect the communities affected.

I encourage the House to support this motion. At 1.45 p.m. more than 50 fires were burning across New South Wales, about half of which were out of control. At 2.38 p.m. the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] website listed 10 fires as emergencies. I understand that figure is now higher and stands at about 15. At 4.50 p.m. there were fires burning in the vicinity of the Central Coast, although fortunately they are contained. More than 600 schools across the State have been closed as a consequence of this state of emergency. On the Central Coast 33 public and private schools are closed today, including the TAFEs at Ourimbah and Wyong and the University of Newcastle. The Rural Fire Service [RFS] has advertised a list of Neighbourhood Safer Places, the last resort for people when all other options for bushfire survival cannot be put into action. The Central Coast local government area has a total of 22 safer places available should they be necessary. I encourage my constituents as well as those of my colleagues on the Central Coast to refer to the Rural Fire Service website to search for and familiarise themselves with the Neighbourhood Safer Places. I also encourage people on the coast to download the RFS Fires Near Me app, which is a very useful tool in the current circumstances.

The Greater Hunter, Greater Sydney and Illawarra regions are under a catastrophic fire warning. This is the first time this level of warning has been issued for the State. The fire warning system that operates in this State has six levels, with catastrophic being the highest. Fire danger ratings give us an indication of the possible consequences of a fire if one were to occur. More than 3,000 volunteer firefighters and professional firefighters, including several hundred from interstate, have been fighting these blazes virtually non-stop since last Friday. Personnel from the 10 fire stations on the Central Coast are fighting fires on and north of the Central Coast.

The Rural Fire Service on the Central Coast, which includes the Lake Macquarie local government area, has 54 local brigades and 1,300 volunteer firefighters, many of whom are fighting fires to the north of the State, including volunteers and equipment from the Berkeley Vale Rural Fire Service. An indication of the uniqueness of the Central Coast is the large number of Rural Fire Service brigades located close to Fire and Rescue NSW

depots. It is a unique place because heavy bushland deeply intrudes into urban areas. On the Central Coast there is close cooperation between the volunteers and professionals to ensure that the region is protected when fire threatens.

In determining our response and preparedness for fire we need to be constantly reviewing the resources we direct at our firefighting efforts. We need to also review the causes of fire, including the geographic and climatic reasons. We need to listen to expert advice through those inquiries. A recent fire in The Entrance electorate caused me to request the Minister to undertake a review of the resources on the Central Coast. On 20 October a fire at Ebbitide Mall, which is located in The Entrance, resulted in the tragic death of Patrick Carroll. During that fire both of the two aerial pumpers available on the Central Coast were engaged and extra equipment had to be brought in from Newcastle. I have asked the Minister to review the resources allocated to the Central Coast and I am looking forward to his response. I finish by sending my condolences to all those who have suffered loss as a consequence of these fires. I send the best wishes of myself and all my colleagues on this side to those fighting the fires currently ravaging the State.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (17:33:43): I speak to this very important public interest debate on the fires and the critical, unique situation we are experiencing in New South Wales right now. This situation has been called "unprecedented" and it is very clear that that is the case. That said, many of us have experienced dramatic bushfires within our electorates over the years. We have seen the resilience of our communities. But I think none of us has seen fires on such a broad scale across New South Wales, with a threat of the fires escalating to even greater levels. I acknowledge the Government's response, which I believe is appropriate. Whilst things have not become as critical as had been feared, that is due in large part to the good work of those working in this space and the measures that were taken by the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I acknowledge the Government and all of those in the agencies. We have all heard of the great work of Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers. They have been doing fantastic work. Those people at the coalface who are defending our communities deserve a great deal of thanks, if not the vast majority of our thanks.

In Lake Macquarie there are currently five fires burning, three of which have opened up fronts this afternoon. It is very likely that they will spread, particularly through ember attack. Another 12 fires are burning in the Hunter region. One of those, near Greta in the electorate of the member for Cessnock, is out of control. I am sure all members wish the people there all the best and that the fire is controlled and does not cause too much damage. Of course, we are seeing huge property loss and a huge impact on the natural environment. People's properties are being destroyed. The memorabilia and documents in their houses are being lost. Most worrying is the injury and death that has occurred recently. We do not want to see that occur to members of the public.

The members of the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] and the emergency services are putting themselves at risk to assist us. I acknowledge, as a special request, the member for Ballina. I know there are other members away from Parliament today and I acknowledge all the members—particularly those who have electorates on the mid North Coast and the North Coast—who have been under incredible pressure in their electorates. The member for Ballina asked that I put on record that she is out there supporting her electorate today, with fires in the southern and western borders of her electorate threatening rural villages in her community. She extends the utmost gratitude and praise to her local RFS, police and State Emergency Service for an unbelievable response.

I acknowledge our Local Emergency Operations Controller [LEOCON], Daniel Sullivan. I imagine the Minister for Police and Emergency Services knows of him. I know the member for Terrigal does. He is a brilliant local area commander. He has taken over as LEOCON and this morning at 7 o'clock he opened the emergency operations centre. He has told me that that will stay open until at least 10 o'clock tonight, when the situation will be reassessed. I do not think that we could do better than the volunteers and the services that we have in this State. The issue of resources and those sorts of things will be a matter for debate but I have not had any complaints from my local RFS members about the resourcing from the Government. I have seen a rollout of a new fleet and new equipment. I hope that that has happened across the board. I acknowledge our brigades, Killingworth, Awaba, Wakefield, Cooranbong, Martinsville, Mandalong, Morisset Peninsula, Dora Creek, Wyee and Wyee Point, and all Rural Fire Service brigades around New South Wales, who are working hard to protect our communities.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (17:38:52): In reply: I acknowledge that this is one of those rare debates where all members come together in heated agreement, if members will pardon the pun. I thank the members for the electorates of Strathfield, Northern Tablelands, Port Stephens, Holsworthy, The Entrance and Lake Macquarie for their contributions to this debate. I note, with a slight level of disappointment, the attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to politicise the debate but I look forward to the subsequent debate about the increased funding that this Government has given emergency services and to assisting the Leader of the Opposition in her desire to learn how to read budget papers.

I note with a great level of disappointment that yesterday and today four people have been charged with breaching the total fire ban. In addition, a nine-year-old boy was given a caution for lighting a fire. Reading the infringement notices I noted that those four people—who were probably not being malicious—could have caused a great deal of damage to their communities and risked the lives of our firefighters. Much has been said about the fires that we are engaged with at the moment. I note the comments and concerns raised by the member for The Entrance. I have already had a brief discussion with the member for Terrigal and I will make sure that the representations that he has made to me will be reviewed in the appropriate manner.

I note that over the course of the debate there was much discussion about whether or not this is unprecedented. It is in modern times unprecedented to see such a collection of environmental factors leading to this current bushfire emergency. I note also that in April 1770 Captain Cook wrote in his journal, as he was sailing up the east coast of Australia, that he saw significant levels of smoke coming from the coastal areas of New Holland, as it was called then. Even as late as today Indigenous leader Warren Mundine said that bushfires have been managed by Indigenous communities as a way of managing the environment for thousands of years. I think the message is clear. We thank the Rural Fire Service for their service today and we hope that we do not have to stand up in this way again between now and the end of the bushfire season.

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

Motion agreed to.

Senate

SENATE VACANCY

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to a joint sitting, to be held on Thursday 14 November 2019 at 3.45 p.m., regarding a vacancy in the Senate following the resignation of Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos, AO.

Private Members' Statements

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MILITARY HISTORY CLUB

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (17:43:20): I was honoured to attend the Sutherland Shire Military History Club's official unveiling of their plaque at the Veno Street memorial in Heathcote on 29 August 2019. There was a fantastic turnout on the day, with over 80 guests in attendance, including the Sutherland Shire Mayor, Carmelo Pesce, descendants of Edward Kirkby, Sutherland Shire Military History Club members, RSL members, Botany Bay Family History Society members, shire councillors and staff and students from Heathcote primary and high schools. I was pleased when the club initially approached me to seek support for a commemoration to recognise the men involved in the first wireless radio transmission in New South Wales, which occurred in 1910 in then Bottle Forest, now Heathcote.

The first plaque was initially unveiled in 1968 giving credit to Lieutenant George Taylor for the success. It failed to recognise the three local signallers Edward Kirkby, Reginald Wilkinson and Waler Hannam, who played an integral part in the operation and success of the first military wireless signal transmitted in New South Wales. A number of key details were also incorrect on the first plaque, which needed to be corrected. I am proud to have assisted the club with funding for its project for a memorial plaque at Veno Street Reserve Memorial under the New South Wales State Government Anzac Community Grants Program. I acknowledge the donors who contributed with the balance of funding and congratulate them on their generosity: Brian Kirkby, Mick Fallon, John Campbell, Greg Knight, Ron Vincent, the War Book Shop, John White, Bruce Gill, Col Scott, Marion Baker, Dick Baker, Bob Brown and Colin Burgess.

The success of the first wireless signal in New South Wales came about when George Taylor, then lieutenant in the army intelligence corps, was intrigued by how technology could assist during war. He was determined to prove the value of the technology in notifying troops of impending threats and enemy movements. As Taylor and his army had no wireless skills, he recruited civilians Kirkby, Hannam and Wilkinson for their expertise to conduct the test during an annual artillery camp at Bottle Forest, now Heathcote. They intended to transmit a message from a location with an approaching threat, in a cave known as Station-B, to the headquarters near Heathcote railway station, known as Station-A. After many trials and errors, on 28 March the men were successful in sending the wireless signal from an overhanging rock ledge near Waterfall to the tent near Heathcote railway station, despite Taylor's fellow army officers being sceptical of the experiment. Prior to the successful wireless signal the army used flags, semaphore or Morse code by light flashes or heliographs to send signals.

I encourage all members to read the book that the club has produced, which includes extensive research into the history of the successful experiment and the men's backgrounds and life experiences. The book was edited by Clive Baker, based on the writings of George Taylor and other sources and the research of Brian Kirkby,

Frank Purvis and the late John Risebrow. I commend the efforts of all involved to ensure the men were recognised for their expertise and their skills. It was a fitting ceremony to mark the delivery of the plaque after three years of hard work. It was interesting to hear from Brian Kirkby, who spoke about his devotion to updating the history and ensuring his relative and his counterparts were acknowledged. Frank Purvis, a member of the Sutherland Shire Military History Club, also spoke about how he and the late John Risebrow tried to find the two original sites and eventually located the cave. In closing, the day we held the ceremony was one of the coldest, windiest, rainiest days I think God has ever produced. The 80 people present were standing and shivering for most of the ceremony. The plaque is well done and now stands on the corner on Veno Street, near the IGA in Heathcote. If anyone would like to stop off and have a look at the commemorative plaque they are more than welcome to do so.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:48:33): I speak on a subject that sits at the very foundation of our State's workplace: our workers compensation scheme. Compensation for ill or injured workers is intrinsic to the functioning of every workplace in our State. It is a protection that thousands of workers depend upon and millions hope they will never need to depend upon. Unfortunately, whilst the system goes by the name of icare, the reality of the scheme seems to be the opposite. Nearly every week my office is approached by a new constituent who is suffering under the current workers compensation scheme. People report feeling trapped, helpless, isolated and without hope. This is a system that is intended to support our most vulnerable workers but the people dealing with it are calling it pathetic and cruel.

I will give members an example. I had a constituent from Shellharbour approach my office about 12 months ago. His name is Adam. Adam was receiving workers compensation for a back injury he sustained at work. He first contacted my office when he was alerted to the fact that his payments were going to be cut to 80 per cent of his wages pre-injury. He had been on the workers compensation scheme for 14 weeks. In this time he had seen a doctor, been referred to a specialist, waited 60 days for his insurer to accept the claim, made a specialist's appointment, been sent for scans, waited another 21 days for approval from his insurer for his scans and then waited another two weeks for his follow-up appointment to receive his results.

That is not all. He was prescribed spinal steroid injections and after waiting another 21 days for approval he received two injections one week apart. Unfortunately the injections did not work. From there he was recommended surgery for his injury. He submitted a claim and waited another 21 days for approval. Then he waited for his surgery date. He had blown through all of his 14 weeks of full coverage before his surgery, not to mention the lengthy recovery. Adam went through all of this only to have his payments cut at a time when he should have been focusing on his recovery. No matter where he turned in the system he felt like he was being hung out to dry. It is not just the people receiving coverage who are struggling with the current system, the industry itself is speaking out against the failures of icare. In relation to the workers compensation scheme, an individual from Oxley Insurance Brokers who had worked in the compensation industry for 33 years stated:

What we are experiencing now is the worst I have seen ... I have never experienced so much anger and frustration in the industry than I am dealing with now.

Groups and individuals are calling out the New South Wales workers compensation scheme for what it is: a failure, a sinking ship, a scheme that is ploughing head first into a crisis. The current workers compensation scheme fosters a lack of care and empathy. It is leaving injured workers feeling isolated, depressed and suicidal. The members opposite claim to be a government for our workers but the blindingly obvious truth is that it is anything but. It is the party for dodgy employers. It is the party for undercutting wages. It is the party that has allowed wage theft to become a rampant business model in New South Wales. So what can be done? To start, I believe that the five-year limit on benefits needs to be abolished. It is an arbitrary time limit and it will see thousands of workers just like Adam in my electorate struggle to find work and be cut off from income support.

Likewise it is unacceptable that return-to-work rates have stalled. Insurers should enforce employer compliance with return-to-work rates and not just play a hand in deciding what medical care is necessary. An injured worker should only be allowed to be terminated when their treating doctor certifies their best chance of returning to work is with another employer. Lastly and simply, we need to be treating workers and employers not as claim numbers but as people. Right now it is icare in name but not in nature. That needs to change. We should measure the success of our State's businesses and workforce by how we treat our most vulnerable and those who are struggling the most. Our workers and our State depend on those opposite finally getting their act together. However, I fear this will fall on deaf ears. I stand here looking at those opposite in the Chamber today. None of them seems to really care about injured workers in this State.

TRIBUTE TO BARRY CHARLES FRENCH

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (17:53:30): I inform the House of the passing of Barry Charles French, or Uncle Charlie of Muswellbrook, who passed away on 17 October 2019. Many in our Upper

Hunter community mourned the passing of Barry French, a highly respected Aboriginal elder of the Gomeroi people, a valued community leader and a much-loved family man. Barry was farewelled at a very large civic funeral in Muswellbrook, with flags flying at half-mast within the Muswellbrook shire in respect of this great man. Barry French was born in Moree on 12 January 1943. He was one of 11 children, and as pointed out in the eulogy given by his daughter, Leanne Ellis, Barry was born in a tent beside Moree Hospital as back then Aboriginal women were not allowed to give birth in the hospital. Barry was educated to the age of 12 and at 14 he was employed by the Post Master General, or PMG, to deliver telegrams on his bicycle to the residents of Moree.

At the age of 18 Barry married the love of his life, Helen, and he and his wife embarked on an adventure to Sydney when he was transferred to the PMG near Central station. Whilst at the PMG in Sydney Barry was offered work on the railway and as a result was transferred to Muswellbrook. Barry, Helen and his young family settled in Muswellbrook in 1963 and Barry worked as a fireman with the railway. Muswellbrook was very lucky to have this remarkable man call Muswellbrook his home. Barry spent 56 years in this community where he raised his six children. During this time Barry became a familiar face to all in the Upper Hunter community.

After his working life on the railway ended through redundancy Barry kept himself busy working alongside many archaeologists who conducted site works throughout the Upper Hunter for environmental impact statements. He volunteered also on many committees within the community including Juvenile Justice, Mount Arthur Coal working group, the reconciliation group, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group committee, the Muswellbrook and District Workers Club, where he was vice-president, and the Glencore Reconciliation Action Plan Committee. Barry was also one of the co-founders of the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council and served as chairman. He chaired the Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation, served as a Juvenile Justice panel member and gave 20 years' service to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

In 2015 Barry was awarded the Muswellbrook Shire Council Citizen of the Year award. He was twice awarded NAIDOC Elder of the Year. As I have mentioned, Barry was a proud Aboriginal Gomeroi Elder who presented the welcome to country at many functions, including at schools and for NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Day ceremonies throughout the Upper Hunter over many years. He became a familiar face to many students and staff from the Department of Education. Barry became a mentor for children, promoted understanding with non-Aboriginal people and provided advocacy and support for young inmates in the Juvenile Justice system. I will share a comment from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. It states:

Everyone knew the man they called Uncle Charlie. Selfless. Tireless. The backbone of the region. He is widely regarded as the most significant figure in the process of reconciliation in the Muswellbrook community.

Further, his grandson Jacob Ellis said:

If it wasn't for our upbringing, and the influence from our father and grandfather, we wouldn't be the strong and proud people we are today. Realistically, he made sure we knew who we were and fought to be accepted from being born in a tent, growing up in a tin shack to becoming one of the most inspirational people in the area's history.

Barry's granddaughter Alieria French spoke at his funeral on behalf of the grandchildren and said:

To our Poppy French, thank you for showing us how to walk with humility and love, to live a life without compromise and to be unapologetically proud of who we are. You are the epitome of all that is good in the world. We love you with all of our hearts and we will miss you so much every day.

In the eulogy his daughter Leanne Ellis delivered she said:

We will be forever indebted with the legacy you have left behind and the Muswellbrook community will never be the same without your presence. We will miss you more than words could possibly express but the wonderful memories will be with us always.

Vale, Barry Charles French or Uncle Charlie.

HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE KOALA COLONY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:58:38): I speak about a matter which many in the Holsworthy electorate, including myself, care deeply about—protecting our local koala colony. South-west Sydney is host to a colony of disease-free koalas. It is estimated there are only about a thousand of them left. They roam from the top of the Southern Highlands all the way up to land around Holsworthy and the Holsworthy Barracks following the line of the rivers. It was eye opening to attend a walkthrough of areas in the south-west that these koalas currently populate, guided by members of the Total Environment Centre. I thank them for their time. I was joined on the day by the Minister for Energy and Environment; the Hon. Mark Latham, MLC; State members for the electorates of Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly; and the Federal member for Macarthur.

We were incredibly lucky to be met by members of the centre, who had already spotted a koala and her joey sitting further up a tree. We did not expect to find one so quickly and easily, but it was horrifying to know that the koala was just metres from Picton Road and areas where so much development is planned. Its environment will obviously be hindered in the future. I believe that protecting these koalas should be above politics and we

should focus on getting results to ensure their survivability. I am happy that many of the politicians who attended indicated that they agreed with this notion as well. In 2018 the Premier and then Minister for the Environment released the NSW Koala Strategy. This strategy was the biggest commitment by any State government towards securing this much-loved marsupial in the wild.

Ms Gabrielle Upton: Hear, hear!

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I know the member for Vacluse was pleased to be a part of that. It was a step forward for koala conservation in south-west Sydney and across New South Wales and will support a range of conservation actions over the next three years to stabilise koala numbers across the State. The strategy included: \$4.5 million to support caring for sick or injured koalas and returning them to the wild; \$3.3 million to fix priority roadkill hotspots across New South Wales; \$3 million to build a koala hospital at Port Stephens; \$8.9 million to improve our knowledge of koalas, starting with the development of a statewide koala habitat information base; \$5 million to deliver local actions to protect koala populations through the Saving Our Species program; and a new single wildlife rescue call number, making it easier for people to alert authorities to injured or sick koalas.

Locally this funding provided for community workshops in south-west Sydney and the Southern Highlands and allowed for 1,400 hectares to be managed as koala reserves. It also provided for the provision of fencing on Picton Road to improve koala safety and the assessment of the koala population via approximately 230 systematic spotlighting survey plots. While this was a good first step, I believe far more needs to be done. My journey in trying to gain more progress is one that I have been working on behind the scenes for some time. It was a privilege to meet Gae Constable, the Animal Justice Party candidate for Holsworthy at the State election. While we do not agree on everything—I do not think anyone in politics can actually do that—she explained to me the situation in detail over many long days on pre-poll. She had a captive audience and I am glad she did because she taught me a lot.

Gae arranged a meeting between ourselves and Saul Deane from the Total Environment Centre earlier this year where we discussed some ideas to help our local koalas. After this meeting I corresponded with the Minister's office and discussed the matter with the Minister on several occasions. It was a pleasure to hear after our discussions and the Minister's visit to the local area with the Total Environment Centre, community groups and the other politicians, that Minister Kean has committed to looking at the need to establish a national park in our local area to protect the State's last chlamydia-free koala colony as part of his commitment to add 200,000 hectares to our national parks estate over the next two years. I know that this will go a long way to help provide safety for our koalas and could also potentially create a new industry for our local area with the ability to focus on ecotourism.

I lend my support to this idea and call on the Government to do at least two important things for the koalas in our local area: first, extend the Dharawal National Park that the Liberal-Nationals Government delivered in its first term of government or, alternatively, create a new national park to provide a safer corridor for these koalas; and, secondly, investigate measures to reduce the number of koalas being hit by cars on Heathcote Road—particularly near Deadman's Creek Bridge. As I have previously stated, this is an issue that is of great importance to my constituents and me I know many of us care about our koalas. We need to protect our koala population for generations to come and I urge the Government to assist us in accomplishing this goal. Now more than ever we need to do everything we can to protect this iconic and precious species.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vacluse) (18:03:46): It is appropriate that as a former environment Minister I make a comment. I commend the member for Holsworthy for her contribution. This Government was the first to have a comprehensive Koala Strategy, which was released in 2018. It included a variety of important things. Veterinary hospitals, information data bases and a Picton Road upgrade were announced, which I know is of great concern to a number of members in this House. We announced also getting the community involved in tracking koalas.

Koalas are fragile, iconic species. They are hard to find and track and that is part of the challenge in making sure they have a safe and more secure future. There is more to do and I am very confident that the new environment Minister will step up to that challenge. It is about more koala habitat. It is about all the things that were announced in that package and doing more. I commend the member for bringing this to the attention of the House. I know that the Government will do even more to ensure that this iconic species is protected into the future.

INFANT HEALTH EMERGENCY PLANNING

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:05:07): Australia seems to be facing an increasing number of natural disasters such as bushfires and floods. The current statewide emergency is a good example. During these times our very youngest citizens, our infant babes, are the most vulnerable because of their feeding needs. While adults can live on water alone for a number of days, babies have very specific requirements and without

appropriate food and fluid can be in real trouble within a matter of hours. This is especially the case in hot weather. My constituent Associate Professor Karleen Gribble of the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University has co-authored a paper that reports an audit of New South Wales emergency plans which has found that there is a dearth of planning for babies in emergency situations.

According to Dr Gribble's research, no State agency is designated to take care of the emergency response for infants or children and there are no plans describing how to ensure that infants are protected. Her research found also that New South Wales has far better planning for animals than it does for infants. For animals there is a clear designation of organisational responsibility and extensive planning. There were just 30 uses of the word "baby" or "infant" in New South Wales plans whereas there were 268 uses of "animal" or "pet". I was informed by Dr Gribble as follows:

We have seen reports of poor responses in previous emergencies in Australia which had direct impacts on infant health. This has included high rates of diarrhoea, hospitalisation of dehydrated babies, babies being wet nursed in evacuation centres because of a lack of infant formula, parents washing bottles in puddles outside evacuation centres, women unable to get assistance with breastfeeding, and breastfeeding mothers being unwilling to evacuate because they are concerned about a lack of privacy in evacuation centres.

Dr Gribble further informed me:

Not only are current government plans grossly inadequate, but NSW emergency kit lists do not detail what parents need in their kit to keep their baby safe. So parents are not prepared either. This is particularly dangerous for formula fed infants, for whom we rely on our infrastructure, including access to water, electricity, good hygiene, and health systems to keep safe. But all of these resources may be compromised in a disaster.

Dr Gribble's research has demonstrated that we are trusting luck to protect babies in emergencies. I think there is a pressing need for emergency planning for infants in New South Wales to be reviewed. Dr Gribble has recommended that NSW Health be appointed the lead role in supporting infants in emergencies. I will provide a copy of her research to the Minister and shadow Minister. That is referenced at Gribble et al, BMC Public Health, *Open Access Journal*, on 13 May 2019. I encourage the Minister and the shadow Minister to give careful consideration to the paper's findings and address this important area of emergency response for the better welfare of our State.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:08:48): Whilst we are seeing an unprecedented number of fires across New South Wales, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of our Rural Fire Service volunteers in this State. It gives me great pleasure to speak about our fireys. An unprecedented number of fires are raging across New South Wales at the moment and tonight is an opportunity to not talk specifically about my electorate but to express thanks to our men and women volunteers, the captains of the brigades, those in management and all those involved in operations across New South Wales. There is no doubt that when people put their hand up to be a member of the Rural Fire Service, they do so because they want to protect people, their assets—homes and property—and make sure that they are safe. I admire each and every individual who is a part of that organisation.

The Rural Fire Service covers a large proportion of New South Wales; indeed, around 95 per cent of the State. In my electorate of Bathurst a couple of fires have popped up—one at Mount David and another at Burruga, which has burnt only 37 hectares, so it is quite small compared to a number of the other fires burning across New South Wales at the moment. I give a shout-out not only to the Rural Fire Service personnel but also to Forestry workers because they have been dealing with the fire at Burruga and they were quick to act to bring it under control. It is interesting to note that over the last 10 weeks about 100 Forestry Corporation workers have been fighting fires around New South Wales non-stop during that period. Whilst we have been talking about fires over the weekend and this week, we must remember that fires have been happening in New South Wales for many months. Currently the fires at Mount David and Burruga have been contained.

The men and women who join the Rural Fire Service are part of a very proud tradition. They have certainly joined a wonderful organisation with a very proud history. When I was growing up I had the opportunity to become part of a brigade about 15 kilometres outside the town of Bathurst at Peel and I was involved in a real team effort. People are on the front line undertaking the firefighting effort, people are working behind the scenes doing the administration, people are involved in the communications centre and others are doing the catering, making sandwiches and bringing drinks to the local fire shed to ensure that those fighting the fires are supported. We should not forget that our Rural Fire Service volunteers work on weekends. In my local area I often see them at fetes and different shows educating the public on what to do in various situations.

The volunteers also run a number of development programs for our youth and run very important training and education programs. Our volunteers undertake activities beyond fighting fires across the State. The Eglinton Rural Fire Service achieved great heights over the weekend through its involvement in the Firies Climb for Motor

Neurone Disease [MND]. Last Saturday Cameron Evans, Dwayne Esparon, Matt Nelson and Nathan Inwood climbed Sydney Tower's 1,504 steps in full firefighting gear to raise much-needed funds for MND research. The Eglinton Rural Fire Service raised \$6,373 towards the cause, with the entire event accumulating just over \$748,000. I thought it was important to highlight that today because these volunteers not only are putting their hands up to protect lives and property, they are also out there doing a lot more for our community.

KU-RING-GAI REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (18:14:13): Yesterday the usual Ku-ring-gai Remembrance Day Service was combined with our council's official opening of the Blair Wark VC Community Centre in Lindfield. The centre was named in honour of Major Blair Anderson Wark, who was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1918 for his gallantry during a three-day battle at the Hindenburg Line. I attended the service with the Federal member for Bradfield, and Minister for Communications, the Hon. Paul Fletcher, Mayor Jennifer Anderson, councillors and representatives of many local schools. Kate Johnsen from Ravenswood spoke on behalf of the Knox Grammar and Ravenswood Cadet Unit; Lena Morris from Turramurra High played the *Last Post* and *The Rouse*; Major Mike Askey, the former President of the Roseville RSL gave *The Ode*; Pymble Ladies College cadets Sergeant Major Alessandra Natale and Sergeant Ashely Chen gave the Blair Wark and Charles Bean Address; and Lieutenant Colonel Phil Pyke gave a commemorative address.

In May of this year I was privileged to hear one of the most powerful speeches I have heard delivered by my good friend and former Federal MP, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, AO, who is currently the Director of the Australian War Memorial. His speech was called "Memories and Memorials" and he spoke of the importance for the future of having strong memories of the important events of the past. If the words "we will remember them", which we utter on Remembrance Day, are to mean anything, then it is incumbent upon us to tell the stories of the brave men and women who gave their lives in the First World War.

I went to one of the many war memorials in my area and took some names of the fallen from the Wahroonga War Memorial. I then went to the multivolume work by the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, *Rallying the Troops: A World War I Commemoration*, to find some facts about local soldiers who gave their lives to stop the totalitarian militarism of Germany that so threatened the freedom of the world. Colin Vernon McCulloch was a graduate in law of the University of Sydney. He was admitted as a barrister before enlisting in the AIF in 1916. He lived on the Pacific Highway in Wahroonga and his family home was where the Knox Grammar War Memorial Chapel is now located. Colin began as a private in the army but his bravery and leadership at Bullecourt led him to being commissioned as an officer in the field of battle. After bouts of pneumonia and a serious gunshot wound to his right arm, he returned to the battlefield after periods of recuperation, only to be killed by a piece of shrapnel as a shell burst at a station in Amiens in April 1918.

James Francis O'Donnell was a labourer who had attended Warrawee Public School. He enlisted in 1916 as a private in the infantry and saw action in the infamous Somme Valley before sustaining a gunshot wound to his right hand. After recovering, he participated in action at Polygon Wood and Ypres before being killed by a shell fragment at Villiers-Bretonneux. Dr Francis Pockely was a brilliant Sydney ophthalmologist who lived at "Greystanes" at 49 Burns Road, Wahroonga. He and his wife would lose two of their sons to the war. Dr Brian Colden Antill Pockely followed his father's career and, as a recent medical graduate, enlisted in 1914.

Dr Brian Pockely was the first person from Ku-ring-gai to lose his life in the war. He was part of an expedition force to destroy German wireless stations near Kokopo in the New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea in 1914. Shortly after saving the life of a German sergeant major who required his hand to be amputated in the field, Dr Pockely gave his Red Cross armband to another soldier who was evacuating an injured AIF soldier, saying, "I can look after myself." Devoid of his non-combatant insignia, a short while later Dr Pockely would be shot and killed. He was a prefect at the Shore School and captain of the school's first-15 rugby team and a much-admired man.

John Graham Antill Pockely, his brother, was a grazier. He enlisted as a private, was allotted to the Medical Corps but transferred to the combatant side. He successfully applied for a commission and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in 1916. Near Villiers-Bretonneux he was struck by machine gun bullets. After he fell he refused to allow stretcher bearers to treat him until they had attended to the other wounded nearby. "Take my men first," he told the medics. He died about three hours later. William Bernard Ramsey was a carter who lived near Blytheswood Avenue, along Warrawee Public School. He spent only four days on the front line when he was killed in April 1917. His sergeant said:

It was his first time in the trenches. There was no need for him to have gone in front of the post and he set a very fine example.

These are some of the stories of those names that appear on walls of honour in the many memorials in Ku-ring-gai. Whether a labourer, a carter, a barrister, a grazier or a doctor, the deadly fields of the Great War did not discriminate. We owe our current freedoms to their sacrifice. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

REVIVE PROGRAM

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:19:22): Today we have heard a lot about the bushfires that are raging and the amazing efforts of our volunteers and Rural Fire Service. I, too, add my weight to the many messages of support and I thank them for everything they are doing, especially those firefighters—we have heard the heartbreaking stories—who are busy saving other things while their own house might be burning. It points to the great Australian tradition of volunteering and the importance of helping people out and putting other people before yourself. That is a good segue into my private member's statement today. I work with a fantastic local group in my area made up of a range of different people who represent different organisations. There are representatives from Campsie police, Bankstown PCYC, the local State Emergency Service, the Bulldogs and the Giants. We all get together and we try to do things to help young people out with a range of programs. The most recent program we have running is called the Revive program.

The Revive program operates one day a week and up to 15 local schoolkids who are in year 9 or year 10 take part in a 10-week course to basically develop their life skills. I will speak more about that later in my statement. This tailored grassroots course is all about giving kids an opportunity to be better people, to learn new skills and to have new experiences. I acknowledge and thank the very fine member for Manly. Last year I said I would like to take some kids to learn some basic surf skills. A lot of kids from my electorate go to the beach but they are not very good around the beach—they struggle with their swimming, they jump into the water without completely understanding rips and they do not know what to do if they get themselves into trouble. The member for Manly and I said that we would do it after the election. Here we are in term four in 2019 and we did do it.

I thank the member for Manly for organising the day with the support of Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches. They were fabulous. We managed to take 15 kids who were taught basic skills—things that we take for granted, such as what does it mean when the sign says to swim between the flags? What do the blue flags mean? What are the surf craft? We were not only able to identify how to spot a rip but also what to do if caught in a rip—to swim sideways and not try to swim against it. They learnt how to rescue somebody if this becomes necessary; what to do when pulling somebody out of the water; and how to catch a wave.

One of the greatest joys I have, and I am not a surfer, is to have a body surf, although more often than not I feel like I am in a washing machine. The member for Manly got up on a surfboard; I was eating a bit of sand after I tried. Kids need to learn those things because being at the beach is such a great part of our Australian lifestyle, but we have to make sure that we keep people safe, that we get people to enjoy the beach and we get them to look after things. The commentary on the day was fantastic. One of the organisers, Najah from Lighthouse Community Support, said that these are kids who do not have the best opportunities in life. Najah said that they do not choose to be born maybe on the wrong side, but that is where they are and we have got to give them the best opportunities we can. She said we have to show these kids that we believe in them over and over and that we know that they can do good things in life. That is what all of this support program is about; it is about making sure that kids know that regardless of where they are born, regardless of their circumstances, there are people who love them, people who want to help them and people who want to do the right thing for them so that they can have those opportunities.

The surf lifesaving lesson was one element of the program. One of the kids said to me, "Best-ever day at school, sir," I suppose because he was not there. But his best-ever school day was the day that he was not at school—I need to have a chat with his principal about what was going on. Some of the other things this program does is to build life skills—things like goal setting, nutrition and working hard. A number of kids who go through the program end up getting a job at the local Macca's, which also supports us in every way it possibly can. One particular kid whom I admire greatly I first met when she was in year 9. These are kids who are technically classified as at risk and she was part of this program. Last year she was the school captain of Kingsgrove North High School, and I was so incredibly proud.

Later this month I will invite the member for Manly to join me as we give these kids a graduation certificate. It may seem like something very small and insignificant, but, for people who do not have much, recognition and belief in what they do goes an exceptionally long way. What we have done has genuinely made a difference. We sit in this House and get adversarial, but the best work that we do is when we come together and have people from different sides of politics who personify what we are all here for and that is to make a difference.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:24:44): I place on record my thanks to Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches for giving up its time and its efforts to welcome 15 great young people from the member for Lakemba's electorate for some surf safety skills and a good, fun day. I thank them for a couple of hours well spent.

LANE COVE FUN RUN

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (18:25:18): To friends in this House and to the people of New South Wales, the Lane Cove electorate is a special place where individuals and groups come together to build something bigger than themselves, a place where people aspire to live in a community that cares. I have always perceived that the value of a community is in its ability to value one another. Lane Cove has that in spades. Most recently the Lane Cove Public School P&C conducted its fourth Lane Cove Fun Run. The event raised over \$67,000 in a combination of entrance fees, partnerships with local businesses and support from Lane Cove Council, which will help provide additional teachers and learning support staff at the school as well as provide funds to the charities Sydney Community Services and Got a Pen? This is an exceptional and laudable effort.

The highly successful event saw over 1,000 entrants. Unsurprisingly I have been told the number of finishers was slightly lower than that. However, these numbers do not provide the full picture as to the joyous nature of the day. There were live bands, energy balls, barbeques run by the local rugby clubs and drinks stalls, in the Cove and sports stations. The Longueville community embraced the day and brushed off the inconvenience of having streets closed down. Hundreds of families enjoyed a brisk early morning outing at what is quickly becoming a mainstay in the Lane Cove calendar. I congratulate the winners of the day. Running builds good habits, discipline and confidence in one's ability. It teaches individuals to strive for a goal and handle mistakes.

I extend congratulations to Julien Smith, Beth Croft, Bradley Chan, Ingrid Kingsmill, Oliver White, Pinpin Meenijacin, Dominic Bullock, Mia Guillergan, Oliver Fratini, Eloise Lawry and Akira Howard on winning their divisions. I congratulate Greenwich Public School on winning the highly coveted schools challenge. The competition was fierce. Enjoy the bragging rights for a year. I say to Lane Cove Public School that the cabinet trophy will shine brightly with both the two-kilometre and five-kilometre fun run plates. Finally, I thank the people behind the scenes, those who quietly toil away and without whom none of this would be possible: Founder Carla FitzSimmons and coordinators Vanessa Mundell, Michelle Tabrett and Katie Sykes. I thank the current organising committee: Anthony Nolan, OAM, Andrew Sullivan, Pru Carrol and Dr Darshini Jeyaratnan.

I thank Lane Cove Public School Principal, Terry McKinnon, for his wisdom. Finally I thank emcee Bernie Birch for his wisecracks on the day. Their commitment to our electorate is inspiring. Thus I inform the House that the fun run is over for another year. However, the hard work continues, the moments that bring our community together will thankfully continue and we look forward to seeing it once again hit the pavement next year. I commend the Lane Cove Public School and its P&C to the House.

WALLSEND ELECTORATE PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (18:28:52): Glendore Public School has been broken into four times since January 2019. The total cost of these break-ins, accounting for damage and stolen goods, has reached more than \$150,000. In the face of these crimes our wonderful school community banded together and, after a petition was circulated and the matter raised multiple times in this House, we were able to secure a promise from the education Minister that, at long last, a security fence will be built at the school—hooray! This demonstrates how important school infrastructure is, how pressing the matter of proper infrastructure can be for a school and our community, and how quickly we can solve these problems if we sit down and work together. The story of Glendore Public School's security fence has a happy ending, but it is a symptom of a bigger problem.

New Lambton Heights Infants School recently applied for a grant of \$27,000 not to establish a new program for their students, but to build a retaining wall to ensure that the children's play area had proper drainage. The grant application raised concerns about land movements and the risk of collapsing structures without sturdy foundations. Shortland Public School asked for \$25,000 to fix a kitchen at the school that had fallen into a state of total disrepair. Located in the school hall, the kitchen has broken doors and handles, and no floor covering. It is unsafe. I spent many years as a teacher in some of the most impoverished schools in the State in places like Walgett and Kempsey. I know how important adequate school facilities are—I really do.

I know how disruptive rundown or poorly maintained school facilities can be to students, teachers and to teaching. I am very concerned that local public schools are forced to compete with non-government community groups for grants to fund necessary infrastructure upgrades and maintenance. We are not talking about luxuries: We are talking about the basic infrastructure required to keep schools functional. These works should be paid for by the department, not by grants. It is unacceptable that P&Cs are begging for money to get the works done so that kids at these schools have access to basic facilities. Making sure that play areas are not flooded every time there is a rainstorm and that school kitchens meet basic safety standards should not be optional extras. These are the basics we should expect for our schools.

When local P&Cs are successful in getting a grant or raising enough money for a project they are then faced with the extraordinary costs of having the project managed by the Department of Education Asset Management Unit, which in most cases charges double for projects when compared to the private sector. An example of this problem from the Wallsend electorate comes to mind. A local school managed to get money to upgrade its canteen facilities, but when it went to get the works done it discovered that the Asset Management Unit was charging 50 per cent more than the quotes from other builders that it had received. Costs spiralled from \$45,000 to \$70,000. This is simply not acceptable. Our public school students should not have to be in substandard facilities.

When school communities raise the funds needed to upgrade or fix school infrastructure they should not be slapped with extra costs. I have mentioned the cases of Glendore, Lambton and Shortland, but a number of other schools also need help. I believe in the importance of working productively to achieve outcomes for our local schools. I know it is really important that we work together. I do not want to score political results, I just want good outcomes for our public schools in Wallsend. They deserve the best.

HARBORD BOWLING CLUB

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:34:04): I am very proud of the recent success of the wonderful Harbord Bowling Club, which was named winner of the Heart of the Community Award at the recent Clubs NSW Clubs and Community Awards for its initiative and commitment to the local community. Established in 1946, Harbord Bowling Club is nestled amongst the back streets of Curl Curl, opposite John Fisher Park. It is a well-renowned and popular bowling club on the northern beaches. In March this year Harbord Bowling Club held a heart-warming fundraiser, Summer Nights on The Green, to raise funds to assist a local family and their son, Archie Innes, who lives with a rare condition. Archie does not have eyes and lives with other significant health challenges.

More than 200 enthusiastic and compassionate locals took part in the night time lawn bowls competition, raising an incredible \$70,000. The club's vice chairman, Toby Williams, presented a cheque to the Innes family to enable them to buy a new vehicle that will provide them with the ability to more easily attend important medical appointments and to travel together as a family wherever they need to go. Summer Nights on the Green was organised by the club's functions and marketing manager, Mish Miller, who knew about Archie and his family, and wanted to help. Mrs Miller arranged to meet with the Innes family and explained her idea for a fundraising event, which they loved. Summer Nights on the Green was a success due to the generosity of the local community, major sponsors Schwarz Real Estate, Bill Buckle Brookvale and others who were eager to assist by sponsoring the event and providing assistance.

As members know, clubs such as the Harbord Bowling Club are successful as a result of the work of many people. I sincerely thank club patrons Warren Simmons, Rod Langker and Peter De Gioia; chairman Stephen Nugent; vice chairman Toby Williams; treasurer Gerard Parlevliet; club directors Garry Belling, Alan Franklin, Graham Tetsall and Jenny Gepp; CEO and secretary manager Mark Slattery; finance committee member Paul Meyers; match/greens committee members Forrest Craig and Jim Dowd; and entertainment/house committee member Garry Belling. I congratulate the entire team at Harbord Bowling Club on the award and thank them for their service to our community.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (18:37:04): Last week I found myself in an uncomfortable position. I was dressed in a white singlet, white jeans and white shoes, I had studded bands on my wrists and I was standing on a stage surrounded by 14 Hunter School of Performing Arts dancers, lip-syncing the Queen classic *We Will Rock You* in front of 500 people. To say I was out of my comfort zone is an understatement. As one cheeky commenter put it, "It's a brave man who wears all white other than on a cricket pitch." However, I think my rhythm was more of a worry, as my family only too kindly pointed out. But I did not perform just for the sake of it. Along with local television weatherman Gavin Morris and *The Bachelor* contestant Elly Miles, I was battling against the three hosts of the hit 106.9 Newcastle morning radio show—Nick, Jess and Simon—to stand up against domestic and family violence. On average one woman is murdered in Australia each week by a current or former partner and one in six women has experienced sexual or physical violence by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15. In 2018 New South Wales police were called out to more than 71,000 domestic violence incidents.

These figures—along with last month's announcement that anti-domestic violence organisation White Ribbon Australia was going into liquidation—spurred the radio team into action. They wanted to do something that was a little bit different and a lot of fun to make sure that this issue does not fade from our consciousness. For me the timing was fortuitous as I had been working to obtain funding for the Jenny's Place Domestic Violence Resource Centre. The service—which operates outside of the scope of its women's refuges—provides approximately 60 women with counselling, safety and exit planning, and other specialised services each month.

The resource centre relied on donations and private backing, but a few months ago that funding ran out. As soon as the news broke stories started pouring in from women who used the resource centre to leave dangerous situations. One woman who emailed in described Jenny's Place as essential for the Hunter. She sought support from the service to keep herself from returning to her abuser, who was later convicted of intimidation and assault. She said:

I was terrified that I would succumb to his manipulation and I would end back with him again, as it took me three attempts to permanently stay away from my abuser.

In order to keep myself from returning to an abusive environment, I contacted every domestic violence group that I could possibly find in my region. Jenny's Place was one of those groups and gave me confidence at a time when I needed it the most.

Despite advocacy from the community, me and Jenny's Place, the Government will not provide funding for this vital service to continue. The service is asking for \$900,000 to fund the Domestic Violence Resource Centre for three years. Donations offered a small reprieve, but that figure is pocket change to this Government. Its response is not good enough. The Government has refused, despite bragging about a \$1.2 billion budget surplus; despite it reaping \$2 billion by flogging off Newcastle community land, social housing and our port in recent years; and despite Jenny's Place needing just a fraction of what this Government has made from Newcastle.

We should be making it easier for victims of domestic violence to leave; not harder. We should be funding the services that provide the avenues to escape. We should have a universal entitlement to paid domestic violence leave. We should be handing down harsher penalties to those who harass, menace and assault. We should be doing much, much better. If it takes me getting up on stage, wearing all white, to see basic funding and entitlements flow then that is what I will do. I may have been uncomfortable, but that is nothing compared with the discomfort that victims and survivors of domestic and family violence face every day. The statistics and stories around domestic and family violence are harrowing. If my performance is what it takes to make a difference then I will do it again and again and again.

BUSHFIRES AND NORTHERN TABLELANDS ELECTORATE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:42:19): With a heavy heart I speak for the third time this year on the bushfires that have wreaked havoc across our State and have devastated homes, properties and livelihoods across the Northern Tablelands electorate. At the outset I thank the hundreds of Rural Fire Service, Forestry Corporation and National Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers and inter-State firefighters who have left their homes and families—some of whom are also at risk—to fight these terrible blazes. Those volunteers have been joined by staff from local councils and members of the public who are all pitching in to help in any way they can to fight fires, prevent fires and deal with the carnage after the fires pass through.

I acknowledge those on the firegrounds today who are dealing with the catastrophic and extreme conditions that have marked the worst day for fires in the State's history, capping off the worst 12 months of fires we have seen in the history of the Northern Tablelands. It is an unprecedented time. If it was not hard enough for landholders, who are in the grip of the worst drought in our State's history—they have lost their farms, been forced to sell, and have lost their jobs and livelihoods—they now have fires ripping through their properties, taking everything else that is left, including stock, any fodder they had on the ground and any feed they had in storage. It is nothing short of a tragic disaster. Indeed, it breaks my heart, as well as the hearts of all in our region.

For the Northern Tablelands this fire emergency has not been one that ignited overnight. It has been a slow burn for more than eight weeks, taking a physical and emotional toll on firefighters and communities alike. Tonight there are three fires causing considerable concern for the RFS in the Northern Tablelands, including the Whans Road fire at Llangothlin, which went to emergency level this afternoon, but thankfully is now back to watch and act level. That fire prompted the closure of Guyra Central School, Black Mountain Public School and Bald Blair Public School today—three of 11 schools across my electorate that are closed. That Whans Road fire has burnt out almost 2,000 hectares.

The Gulf Road fire at Torrington was upgraded to emergency level at noon, with the fast-moving fire threatening properties at Emmaville and Stannum. Tomorrow that fire may push further east, closer to the community of Deepwater. The Wandsworth fire between the communities of Guyra and Tingha is at watch and act level, and I have heard reports of landholders self-evacuating to an information centre at Guyra Showground as a precautionary measure. That centre has been set up by Armidale Regional Council. I also learnt of the destruction of a number of stock.

All these fires have the potential to be deadly, much like the Kangawalla fire east of Glen Innes, which flared to emergency level—out of control—last Friday afternoon and has now burnt itself into a place in the region's history books. We wish it had not. Not only were a school and a large number of homes in the Wyaliba area destroyed by this fire, but sadly two lives were tragically lost. My thoughts are with the families and loved

ones of long-term Wyaliba residents 69-year-old grandmother Vivian Chaplain, who succumbed to burns she received while trying to protect her home, and George Nole, who perished, trapped in his vehicle as the fire front moved through. It is unimaginable how terrifying it must have been for George, trapped and alone in that car when the fire rushed through the Wyaliba village. I acknowledge my colleague the Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell, who was quick to confirm, when I asked on the weekend, that Wyaliba Public School definitely will be rebuilt. It will be a huge relief to the community that was very concerned that their small school may never re-open.

An evacuation centre has been established at the Glen Innes Showground staffed by Red Cross volunteers. More than 70 people from Wyaliba as well as some from Emmaville and Torrington have utilised that venue. Donations from the public have been received and are being distributed from that site. I suspect that tomorrow, as the Gulf Road fire continues to develop, more people from the Torrington and Emmaville areas will gravitate towards that evacuation centre. I inspected the fire grounds around Wyaliba, Torrington and Wandsworth last weekend, and I will continue to do so when I return home from Parliament House. I assure the community that, while it is a long and difficult row to hoe, I will stand with them every step of the way, shoulder to shoulder. We will get these communities back on their feet by supporting people to resume their normal lives once the fires pass.

DOLTONE HOUSE

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:47:34): Today I celebrate 50 golden years of Doltone House, a brand entwined with a wonderful migrant story that embodies the Australian spirit of working hard and having a go. With humble beginnings in Sylvania Waters, this family owned and operated business has since grown into one of Sydney's most iconic hospitality brands. At just 19 years of age, Biaggio Signorelli arrived at Pyrmont Wharf from a small Sicilian town with only a suitcase in hand, an experience mirrored by so many migrant families. His first job was unloading fruit and vegetables at the Darling Harbour docks, moving on to work in a fruit shop and eventually buying a greengrocer business in 1962.

In 1988 Biaggio opened his first local business, Mother Nature's Fruit World, a complex of eight food shops in Blakehurst. Biaggio had the foresight to know that food retail would eventually be taken over by supermarket giants, so in 1993 Biaggio sold Mother Nature's Fruit World and two years later bought Doltone House Sylvania Waters with his son, Paul. By way of background, Doltone House was originally built in 1969 by Tony and Dolly Stubbs, two Sutherland shire locals who realised their own dream and helped create wonderful memories to last a lifetime for countless others. Tony and Dolly were no strangers to owning and operating a local family business, having opened GyMEA's first cake shop, Doltone Cakes, in 1955. Joining their first names to create the name Doltone, they created a successful business with a reputation for providing quality food, service and attention to detail.

Upon purchasing the Sylvania Waters venue from the Stubbs family in 1995, the Signorelli's invested in major renovations. They increased the size of the venue to accommodate up to 800 guests, and worked to uphold the values and exceptional reputation of the existing business. Doltone House quickly became pioneers of the wedding industry and transformed banquet catering to a la carte standard, raising the bar for the industry. The Signorelli family's passion for the industry quickly became evident, with the Sylvania Waters venue winning the Annual Bridal Industry Award for a function centre in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2001, and the award for wedding coordinator in 2000 and 2001.

Doltone House continued to grow from strength to strength over the years and has celebrated multiple milestones. Of note is the acquisition of the marquee function space at Darling Island, Pyrmont, in 1999, which could cater for up to 1,000 guests and was the first expansion out of our shire, along with becoming the exclusive caterer for the Sydney Olympic Media Centre in 2000. Today Doltone House is a network of venues throughout Sydney delivering amazing events and maintaining the family's values of passion, commitment and trust. From the hallmark elegance of the beautiful Sylvania Waters venue in the Miranda electorate, to Sydney Harbour's spectacular waterfront venues at Jones Bay Wharf and Darling Island, contemporary sophistication of the Hyde Park venue, industrial-style venue at Australian Technology Park, and the newest partnership at Club Marconi, the breadth of the Doltone House brand offers something for everyone.

Doltone House is a brand that is synonymous with community, and this is because of the Signorelli family. As the company's executive director, Paul, has stated, the Signorelli family does not seek accolades but aims to make a statement to the next generation to be good, to be caring and to help others. I have no doubt that this is in large part due to the values that Biaggio and his wife, Filippa, imparted to their children, Paul Signorelli, Nina Milazzo and Anna Cesarano, who are Doltone House's current directors. There is no better testament to Biaggio's kind and selfless nature than his dying wish to help save others. Shortly after Biaggio's passing from mesothelioma in October of 2007, the family established the Biaggio Signorelli Asbestos Cancer Foundation to raise funds to create awareness about the dangers of asbestos, for early detection and treatment and, ultimately, a

cure for mesothelioma. The foundation aims to support research into the asbestos-related disease, as well as assistance to medical practitioners seeking to improve their knowledge.

I would like to end where the journey started, by acknowledging the Sylvania Waters venue and all it represents. It proudly continues to provide our community with wonderful experiences and lasting memories under the supervision of venue manager, Paul Romano. That being said, it is so much more than bricks and mortar: It is a reminder that in this country a migrant family can experience success through hard work and dedication. Biaggio and Filippa's legacy lives on through their children Paul, Nina and Anna, who capably run Doltone House, and also their grandchildren Filippa and Biaggio, whom I regularly see working hard as wait staff at Sylvania Waters. I extend to the Signorelli family congratulations on Doltone House's golden jubilee. I thank them for supporting so many causes in our community and giving local kids their first jobs. I wish them every success for the future.

BUSHFIRES

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (18:52:23): It is with a heavy heart that tonight I address the bushfires raging across our State that are affecting families, workers and communities. I had intended to deliver a different private member's statement, but I have postponed that to ensure that I acknowledge the various bushfires that have wreaked havoc throughout New South Wales. The statistics are horrific. This afternoon *The Sydney Morning Herald* said that there were 78 fires throughout our great State—47 not contained. Eleven of those were at emergency levels, 10 were classed at watch and act, and 40 remained uncontained, although we now know that number is 47.

Three thousand firefighters and volunteers were on the ground supported by 60 aircraft. Six hundred schools have been closed. Other statistics show that five people have tragically and sadly passed away during this catastrophic event. One hundred and seventy-eight homes have been destroyed and 89 damaged; 28 facilities have been destroyed and 27 damaged; 442 outbuildings have been destroyed and 190 damaged. I acknowledge the many volunteers, the workers and the businesses that are challenged through these times. I also acknowledge the parents and families, and everyone involved with the schools and the businesses—everything that is associated with these fires—but I cannot move past those who have paid a tragic price.

The fire danger level has left many on edge. That is understandable. I acknowledge all of the councils and communities that have been impacted by these fires in varying degrees. In my capacity as the shadow Minister for Local Government, I acknowledge some of those councils: Tamworth, Armidale, Narrabri, Glen Innes, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Tenterfield, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Port Macquarie-Hastings, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, Singleton and Cessnock. I particularly acknowledge the people of Greta, who are now evacuating that area with their families. I acknowledge also the councils of Lithgow, Ku-ring-gai, Penrith, Blue Mountains, Wollondilly, Goulburn, Shoalhaven, Hilltops, Oberon and Dubbo, amongst many others. The impact of these fires on local communities and their local economy should not be underestimated. Glen Innes Mayor Carol Sparks recently stated:

I think we are all a bit shell-shocked and coming to terms with the death of our friends and coming to terms with losing all of our belonging and our structures and our homes and our lives.

We are going to have a big rethink about the future of our community.

We have lost so much.

"We have lost so much", she said. That speaks volumes of the impact that our State confronts at this time. MidCoast Council Mayor David West, when speaking about recent fires and what we are confronting now, stated:

Inside those trucks are fathers, sons, mothers and daughters but all we see is a fire truck ... We have no idea who they are but they are people who give up their day-to-day income to defend people who have decided to live a country life ... They didn't run away, they stood and faced these fires.

There is one heartening matter that I take away from this: the fabric of the true Australian spirit and the great people of this State in the face of adversity. We may have to leave our homes, we may have to confront the challenges that are required but we never, ever leave each other. I say to all of these people: We do not leave you, we will never leave you. We are in this Chamber when we would rather be in our communities but our hearts are with you and thoughts of you are in our minds. If we had our way we would be there with you. Please take care and do everything you can to look after each other. All of us in this place must make sure we do what we can.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:57:42): I thank the member for Campbelltown for his very sincere and heartfelt contribution and the thoughts he conveyed to the individuals and the communities that have been devastated by these fires that are wreaking havoc across our State. His contribution is typical of many that the member for Campbelltown has made in this House, as he seeks not only to represent his community but also to reflect on issues that affect all

people across this State. For that I thank him and acknowledge his contribution. I am sure the fireworks on those firegrounds today, tomorrow and in the coming weeks certainly appreciate his sentiments as well.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (18:58:25): At 11.00 a.m. yesterday, Monday 11 November, many Australians fell silent in tribute to those Australians who valiantly defended our nation and those who sacrificed their lives with courage and conviction. I am truly humbled and thankful for the freedoms our nation possesses today and I acknowledge that it has come at a great personal price for so many. At the time of the Great War Australia's population was not yet five million, yet the war claimed 60,000 young Australians. Wars continue to cost our nation. This was brought home to me when a local boy from my electorate, Luke Gavin, lost his life eight years ago.

Luke Gavin enrolled in the Australian Defence Force in 2004. After completing his basic and initial employment training, he was posted as an infantryman to the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment in Townsville in 2005. He was then promoted to lance corporal in January 2009. Lance Corporal Gavin was known for his positive attitude and loyalty. His subordinate soldiers were motivated by his professionalism, mateship and outstanding specialist skills. Sadly, Lance Corporal Gavin was killed in operations in Afghanistan on 29 October 2011, leaving behind his wife and three children. Yesterday whilst I pictured young Luke in my mind at the Remembrance Day Service in Victoria Park in St Marys, Lynette Forde gave her own reflection on the impact of war upon our local community. Lyn stated:

Remembrance Day, once called Armistice Day, meaning an agreement between opposing armies to suspend hostilities in order to discuss peace. November 11th 2019 is 101 years since the end of World War I. The Great War to end all wars. Australia really is a "lucky country" and if it wasn't for all those men and women who volunteered or were conscripted since that time, we probably wouldn't be such a lucky country.

Lyn's grandfather James Hackett Junior fought in France in World War I, coming home with severe trench foot and an illness that killed him 10 years later. This left Lyn's grandmother Connie a war widow with two small children and a hard life ahead. In St Marys we lost a quarter of our volunteer soldiers to sickness, wounds and instant death. Some of our soldiers lay on the battlefields for days as the battle raged around them. Their names are now commemorated in perpetuity on our war memorial in Victoria Park and various war memorials around Australia and the world. Our soldiers came back to their families with war wounds and problems that plagued them for the rest of their lives. These were our young boys from our district who volunteered to go on the so-called "great adventure" because they heard that the war would be over by Christmas.

On the battlefields of Gallipoli and the Western Front our brave boys grew up fast and came to the realisation that there would be no Christmas celebration at home in 1914. The folks at home realised from those precious letters sent from far away that they would not see their loved ones for a long time. Mostly those letters home were upbeat, as the writers tried to spare their family the horrible battles they were fighting. However, the families started to dread the postman or the parish priest who came with a telegram of bad news. The memorial in Victoria Park is 97 years old. In 1920, when the memorial committee started a collection for it to be built, they had set themselves a very big task, asking the local community to volunteer their time and money. Finally, in 1922 they managed to raise £873. Major-General Sir Charles Rosenthal was the guest of honour who opened the memorial. During yesterday's service Tomas Hamilton read his poem entitled *If Only We Had Known*. I read the poem to bring to light what many of our servicemen and servicewomen face when they go out on our behalf to fight our foes. It reads:

Sydney Heads came into view, we were finally home
 So many comrades left behind, to rest 'neath foreign loam
 Yet with all the cheering, the laughter and the toasts
 Our nation shared the burden, of sixty thousand ghosts
 Each of us a father, a brother, a son
 Everyone a volunteer, our duty we'd not shun
 A tin leg my souvenir, that came at such a price
 For the soldier always loses, when the devil rolls the dice
 The Newspapers sang out our praise. "Heroes of the day!"
 But the nightmares and the shaking, would never go away
 Though we tried to settle down, I was back planting crops
 For a one-legged farmer, it seemed life never stops
 We had all the bravery faced, the horrors of mankind
 The memories of the Western Front, would always haunt my mind
 We were part of history, victors on the throne
 We won the war to end all wars. WELL—IF ONLY WE HAD KNOWN

I wanted to read that poem into *Hansard* because it illuminates the challenges that many of our service men and women face—those who have gone before us and those who serve our nation and countrymen today—whether

on the battlefields or here at home. In remembrance of Remembrance Day yesterday, I add that to the Parliament record and say: Lest we forget.

COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE ARTWORKS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:03:33): I pay tribute to the marvellous artwork on silos, bridges and other prominent places around my electorate. A mural on the water tower at Narrandera has been awarded the 2019 Mega Mural Award at the Australian Street Art Awards last week. This is a wonderful achievement. The incredible artwork, inspired by local landmarks, activities, flora and fauna, is well deserving of this award. The artwork shows the lizard, reflecting the Wiradjuri characterisation of the land as a "place of many lizards", the koala acknowledges the healthy population of koalas along the edge of the Murrumbidgee River, while the Tiger Moth airplane represents the No. 8 Elementary Flight Training School, which was established during World War II on the site of the present Narrandera Airport. The paddle steamer depicts the historic means of freight cartage for the region, with paddle steamers a frequent sight on the Murrumbidgee River from 1858 carrying wool and stores between communities. The Oakbank Brewery tower is depicted in the artwork and, of course, so is the Murrumbidgee River, the heart of Narrandera. Congratulations to Narrandera Shire Council, artists Apparition Media and all of the community who provided input into the themes reflected by the artwork.

Bland Shire Council was the first in the State to take up the idea of silo art with the Weethalle silo murals completed in July 2017. The Weethalle silo mural was painted by Melbourne-based artist Heesco Khosnaran and is a tribute to the rich agricultural heritage of Weethalle and the surrounding communities by representing the wool and grain industry. The mural features a merino sheep being shorn and a farmer inspecting a wheat crop, with a combine harvester working in the background. The Weethalle silo art has featured in a special collector's edition of Australia Post stamps. More recently Heesco was commissioned by local grain trading business Grenfell Commodities for another silo art project in the region, this time at Grenfell, the birthplace of Henry Lawson. Weddin Shire Council estimate a 54 per cent increase in visitors since the completion of the silo art. The Grenfell silo artwork represents the contemporary farming industry and landscape of the Weddin shire, with the foreground featuring sheep, cattle and native birds set in a landscape adorned by the Weddin Mountains National Park.

Other artworks can be found across the region. In the Bland shire the largest Sherrin football is located in Ungarie, as a tribute to the local Daniher family. Bland Shire Council has also completed major tree carvings in West Wyalong at McCann Park, comprising a wedge-tailed eagle and a malleefowl carved by Melbourne chainsaw master Brandon Kroon. West Wyalong and Mirrool have 3D murals completed by Zest Events International. The 3D mural at West Wyalong is a big bull painted by artist Anton Pulvirenti. The 3D mural at Mirrool was painted by artist Zac Craig on the NSW Rural Fire Service shed wall and shows a horse, magpie and young child. Inmates from the Junee Correctional Centre have painted a large mural, depicting a number of old Junee landmarks, which has been installed in the Old Junee Hall. The mural depicts a train, representing the importance of rail to this community, the Old Junee Public School from the 1880s, a farmer shearing sheep, accompanied by his faithful dog, and a paddock of canola.

Bridges across the electorate display artwork on their underside. Bridges in Young have been painted by a group of artists led by Joy Cornish and Enid Clarke, while pylons beneath the Lachlan River Bridge in Cowra feature Aboriginal murals painted by local Aboriginal artist Kym Freeman, depicting the history of the Wiradjuri people in Cowra. These murals and artworks are making regional Australia more vibrant, putting towns on the map and drawing visitors to the region. They reflect the creativity of the region and leave a positive message. They are a boost to morale in difficult times and an opportunity for communities to portray and celebrate their unique histories, landmarks and characteristics. There are many other upcoming projects, such as a proposal for Wallendbeen silo art, which I look forward to celebrating in the future. I am honoured to have this opportunity to pay tribute to these fabulous artworks, the artists who created them and the communities who inspired them.

EASTERN SUBURBS BUS SERVICES

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (19:08:32): On 24 October the transport Minister announced the privatisation of regions 7, 8 and 9 buses, which includes the eastern suburbs bus services. Since then my office has received thousands of emails, letters, phone calls and signed petitions from local residents, furious that this Government has turned its back on them and broken pre-election promises. I have received more than 50 letters from students of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, Clovelly, who have detailed to me their concerns about the privatisation and why they think it is so important to keep these buses in public hands.

By privatising our eastern suburbs buses the Premier and her Liberal Government are breaking three key election promises to the people of the Coogee electorate and of New South Wales: there would be no further privatisations; the Government would increase existing bus services in the eastern suburbs; and the Government would return the 378, a bus that it previously cut. During the election the Premier and the Liberal candidate for Coogee committed in published media releases on Liberal Party letterhead to reinstate bus services that had been

cancelled and to increase services. To quote Nina Vesper from St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, "The Premier has lied." One thing is clear: the privatisation of public buses does not work in the public's favour. We know the moment public assets are privatised that profits come before people and the interests of shareholders trump that of passengers.

Figures from the State's transport agency have revealed that since the inner west buses have been privatised the punctuality of buses has worsened. The on-time running of buses operated by Transit Systems averaged 90.5 per cent between January and April, which was worse than the 93.5 per cent by the government-owned State Transit Authority in the same period a year earlier. In the inner west the distance between bus stops has been extended, making accessibility much harder for older Australians as well as those with injuries, ailments and accessibility difficulties. Ask any inner west commuter, their day-to-day travel is now harder, slower and more cramped than it was when their buses were in public hands.

The eastern suburbs community, through groups like Save Our Buses, have been strongly advocating for years on the importance of the local bus networks. Grassroots groups like this have seen the damage that cuts to public services can do to the fabric of a community. They know firsthand that this sell-off of our buses will see the elderly, parents with prams, schoolchildren and workers suffer. It will be the local routes taken by everyday people that will be the ones really under threat—the buses people take to go to the doctor, the supermarket, the library and the hospital. Privatisation puts at risk these much-loved routes whilst also placing price pressure on the fares of all routes still in operation after the privatisation is finalised. It is clear that the Government is committed to further cuts to services when it opens the light rail. In 2014 the Government published its proposed changes to bus services as a result of the light rail. We know that the following buses are on the chopping block: the 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 395, 396, 343, 397, M10, M50, 391, 392, 393, 394, 399 and the L94.

If members needed any further proof that bus privatisation does not work they should look no further than the other side of the House. The members for the electorates of Wakehurst and Pittwater are well known for their advocacy for public buses, with both using their voices to ensure the B-Line bus service to the northern beaches was brought on as a public service and was retained in public hands. Both these members have also spoken out about the failures of private bus services. They refused to see public services in their Liberal electorates of Pittwater and Wakehurst sold off to the highest bidder. I note that the member for Wakehurst was quoted in a local paper as being "completely opposed to tossing the baby out with the bath water when generally the local bus system and drivers were doing a good job". Apparently, the transport Minister does not agree with them.

What may be the most concerning element of this debacle is the malevolent attempts by the Government to gag any arguments against privatisation and silence its critics. On 5 November I was asked by the Rail Tram and Bus Union to visit the workers of both Randwick and Waverley depots, talk to them about the privatisation of their services and listen to their concerns about the privatisation. Unfortunately I was not allowed access to the depot or the workers onsite as there was a concern that I might say something negative about the Government. A duly elected member of State Parliament was denied access to visit a State asset in case she spoke out against the government of the day.

I woke up this morning in the year 2019 but on 5 November we would each be forgiven for thinking it was 1984. We were forced onto the street where we held a public meeting at Randwick and at Bondi Junction; more than 300 people turned up for a snap rally to stop the privatisation of the eastern suburbs bus network and to also speak out against a government that wants to silence any dissent towards it. People are worried that their vital bus services will be cut once a private company takes over. Along with being the local member I am a fifth generation local. I catch these buses to get to where I need to go. Today I reaffirm my commitment to fight to keep these buses in public hands. This is not a done deal, not by a long way.

PAYROLL TAX

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:13:30): I begin by acknowledging all those who have suffered as a result of the fires in the State. My heart goes out to those who have suffered and those who are threatened. I express my thanks and gratitude to those who are working hard to rescue and prevent destruction. I join with the members of the House today in expressing sentiments of gratitude to those people. Tonight I want to talk about payroll tax. "Payroll tax is the greatest disincentive to employ people that exists." Those are the words of Australian Transmission Components Managing Director John Wilcox from Wagga Wagga, who told me he could have employed another person with the amount he paid in payroll tax last financial year. Mr Wilcox is not alone.

That is the reason I am calling on this Government to provide further payroll tax reductions for regional-based businesses like Mr Wilcox's. We have a State struggling in the throes of the worst drought we have seen. Today we have heard about the catastrophic fires, the danger we are facing and the long period of recovery we are likely to face in regional areas. At a time when we need to be supporting rural and regional business, they are being shackled by the red tape of an outdated and complicated compliance system that ultimately acts against

employing more people. I understand the challenge for the Government in reducing payroll tax. It was the largest single source of taxation revenue for New South Wales in the last financial year.

I acknowledge this Government is reducing the payroll tax level for all businesses in New South Wales, progressively increasing the threshold to \$1 million by 2021-22. But in comparison to our neighbouring States, New South Wales runs a poor third behind Victoria and Queensland's more competitive tax regimes. This adds to the pressure on regional New South Wales businesses that operate close to borders as they have to pay more for additional workers than their competitors do. Wagga Wagga accountant Damien Molloy said a number of businesses he knew had chosen to operate out of Canberra, which has a threshold of \$2 million, specifically to avoid paying the New South Wales payroll tax. If the payroll tax threshold were moved to \$2 million for the 20 per cent of New South Wales businesses operating in regional New South Wales, it is my understanding that an increase to just \$2 million would result in a modest impact of just \$250 million on State revenue. That is the same amount of money that might otherwise be spent on a regional infrastructure project.

More interestingly, this is not the first time a \$2 million threshold has been proposed. In fact, recommendations made in the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development's Inquiry into Zonal Taxation last year called for a regional threshold to be increased in 2022 to \$2 million. I note the chair, the member for Upper Hunter, Michael Johnsen, in the final report foreword said that New South Wales could not afford to allow businesses to relocate to other States due to an uncompetitive taxation environment. He said, "We have decided that the most effective mechanism to provide regional areas with tax concessions and exemptions is to create two tax zones", which will "allow for specific regional tax incentives and concessions in the interests of increasing employment and economic growth".

In other words, an incentive such as this would encourage small and medium businesses to expand, it would incentivise city-based businesses to decentralise and it would bring more employment opportunities, including opportunities for youth, to regional New South Wales, boosting local economies and otherwise struggling communities. Wagga Wagga Laser Plumbing owner Greg Charleson said payroll tax was a huge expense for his and other small businesses. He said the administration alone was so complicated, with the addition of some subcontractor inclusions but not others, that it was just easier to cap salary expenditure. He said:

We've got the work. I want more people, but this tax is a disincentive to do that. It's another complex administration cost for small business. It doesn't make any sense.

Mr Charleson is not alone. There are easily hundreds of businesses across my electorate that have been stunted by this tax. It is clear the Government wants regional economies to grow. In Wagga Wagga we now have a population growth target of 100,000 by 2038 but the payroll tax is not helping, it is hurting. I have met with the Treasurer regarding this matter and I appreciate his consideration, his commitment and his interest in cutting taxes across New South Wales. But we need more than interest. This is clearly the worst sort of tax. It is a tax on inputs, a tax before businesses have made any money from their investments. I urge the Government to assess the potential outcomes of a \$2 million tax threshold for payroll tax, with a view to supporting our regional and rural communities.

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:18:35): I congratulate St George Community Transport, one of the most impactful organisations in our local area, on another successful year. St George Community Transport provides transport services to some of the most vulnerable members in our community who would otherwise have difficulty transporting themselves. This includes the frail, elderly, those with disability, their carers and a wide range of others. St George Community Transport has grown to a team of 30 employees and more than 70 volunteers, something that seemed unimaginable after its humble beginning. St George Community Transport is now one of the largest community transport providers in New South Wales and the demand for its service continues to grow. Its fleet has also grown to 27 vehicles, ranging from sedans to 24-seater buses. Many of these vehicles are custom modified to ensure comfort and accessibility for all clients.

In 2018-19 St George Community Transport delivered over 70,000 trips to 3,000 customers. Some of the most popular individual transport locations include St George public and private hospitals, Hurstville Westfield, Rockdale Plaza and of course the eye specialist in Hurstville. These trips are essential to encouraging and facilitating mobility and independence for all members of the local community. In the past year St George Community Transport has also provided transport for 134 social outings, helping to foster and develop a strong sense of community in the St George area. This includes over 3,700 clients, a growth of almost 9 per cent on the number of clients who attended social outings last year. I am also informed that this year St George Community Transport provided 216 bingo trips, a massive effort. This year St George Community Transport conducted 87 shopping trips on its practical Shopping Bus, which includes shelving for clients' groceries. Even more

impressively, it has delivered Home Care packages to those with complex needs who cannot attend the shopping trips.

One of the great qualities of our local area is its cultural diversity. St George is home to many different ethnicities, faiths and languages. In fact, 20 per cent of St George Community Transport's customers come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, which includes 61 different languages. St George Community Transport should be commended for its flexibility and efficiency in catering to this diverse client base. It now employs Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking team members each Friday in order to assist with bookings and inquiries. This is proof of its person-centred approach to service delivery and a testament to its management. St George Community Transport not only is making a huge difference in the lives of individuals, it also is creating a stronger community for all of us to live in. Its work is helping to improve community participation, ensuring that all members of our local area have the opportunity to do their shopping, enjoy local attractions and stay busy. This has significant flow-on effects for our local economy and the general thriving of our local area.

Just as importantly, St George Community Transport is one of many organisations in our local area that helps to maintain our strong sense of community. The St George area is a family-friendly community that values selflessness. By ensuring all members of our community have access to transport, St George Community Transport is allowing residents to socialise and continue to develop our large yet close community. It comes as no surprise to me, therefore, that figures such as kilometres travelled continue to increase by almost 10 per cent. At the end of last year Kate Young retired as CEO, ending a six-year tenure leading the organisation. Her leadership and skills are the main reason that St George Community Transport has grown so rapidly.

Kate has been capably replaced by Carol Strachan, who has helped the organisation through a smooth transition. I look forward to seeing St George Community Transport continuing to grow under Carol's leadership. As always, credit must go to chairman Chris Tyler for overseeing so much of St George Community Transport's success. Last but not least, I thank the employees and many volunteers of St George Community Transport, who work tirelessly to provide transport to those who need it most. We cannot understate the importance of St George Community Transport and the difference it makes to our local community. On behalf of my electorate and all members of this Chamber, I express our thanks to St George Community Transport.

RIVERSTONE PUBLIC SCHOOL NORREE SPECIAL NEEDS UNIT

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:23:14): Tonight I talk about the mistreatment of a special needs child in my electorate, a matter that is very sad and which I will be referring to the royal commission. I speak on behalf of Mrs Jane Concepcion and her daughter Portia. Mrs Concepcion has spoken to me regarding the mistreatment of her daughter Portia while attending Riverstone Public School Norree Special Needs Unit. She has sought assistance in ensuring that investigation into the matter is conducted in a transparent manner and that the findings of the investigation are provided to her in a timelier manner than is currently occurring. Mrs Concepcion wants to ensure that no other child is subjected to the same ordeal that her daughter Portia endured.

Portia was a student at Riverstone Public School when Mrs Concepcion noticed troubling changes in Portia's behaviour. Mrs Concepcion has informed me that she contacted both the deputy principal and Portia's classroom teacher regarding these signs, only to be assured that Portia was happy and safe whilst in attendance at the school. Portia is non-verbal and unable to communicate the causes of distress to her parents. These signs of distress from Portia continued and on 20 February 2019 a voice-recording device was placed into Portia's pocket whilst she attended the school. I am advised that the device recorded verbal, emotional and possibly physical abuse of Portia by her main teacher and support teacher. These incidents obtained national attention when they were the subject of a segment on *A Current Affair*.

Mrs Concepcion has informed me that after listening to this recording—and I have heard the recording—she made a formal complaint to the school principal, Michael Cruickshank, regarding the conduct of the teachers. This complaint was subsequently referred to the Department of Education's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate, known as EPAC, on 21 February 2019 for investigation. I am advised that since the reporting of this matter Mrs Concepcion has sought progress reports from the EPAC, a conclusion to their investigation and an outcome acceptable to her. I am further advised that as this requested information has not been forthcoming Mrs Concepcion made a complaint to the NSW Ombudsman on 24 September 2019 regarding her concerns. I am advised that investigations by both the EPAC and the NSW Ombudsman are still ongoing and that Mrs Concepcion has not received any further progress reports.

Mrs Concepcion believes that the EPAC investigation should have been concluded and the findings released to her by this time. She has requested to be advised as to the cause of this inordinate delay. The issuance of a response to Mrs Concepcion's complaint has been delayed several times already. She was told in May of this year that she would receive a response detailing the outcome of the investigation within six to eight weeks. This

has not been forthcoming. Following her complaint to the NSW Ombudsman she was informed that she would receive a response within 21 days. Again, this has still not been received. The Concepcion family has been waiting nearly nine months for answers regarding how Portia was allowed to be treated in this manner. They are starting to doubt that they will ever get the answers that they desperately seek.

The NSW Department of Education must explain to Portia's family how she was allowed to be treated so poorly while attending school. Greater transparency is required so that everyone involved can have faith in our education system and its ability to educate and care for students with disabilities. Mrs Concepcion has informed me of the outcomes that she seeks. They are: that stricter monitoring and surveillance of classrooms be implemented that will hold educators more accountable; that internal investigations be more objective and not biased towards teachers at the expense of the child; that the teachers involved in this matter have their licence to work with children revoked so that no other children or families are subjected to their abuse; and that the teachers involved are not allowed to work with children through community services employment.

The Department of Education may not agree that all of these outcomes are appropriate, but it owes it to the Concepcion family to provide a detailed response to Mrs Concepcion's requests. The Department of Education must also ensure that it acts in a transparent manner towards the Concepcion family, with a time line provided as to when they can expect to receive answers about this matter. The Concepcion family wish to ensure that no other child is treated in the same disgraceful manner again as their daughter Portia. We owe it to our community to ensure that vulnerable members are protected so that they can live fulfilling lives. I thank the House.

CT SCAN RADIATION

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:28:17): Once again I speak in this place to raise awareness of the health risks associated with overuse of CT scanners across New South Wales and across all of Australia. Recently two other Government members and I attended a lecture at the Blacktown Hospital University Campus, hosted by Professor James Nol. The guest speaker was international guest Dr Raymond Damadian, the inventor of the MRI machine. It was a fascinating experience to learn about how the MRI machine was invented and how MRI does not use any harmful form of radiation at all. This is not the case for a CT. Even the newest CT scanners rely entirely on high doses of X-rays for every image they produce and therefore can have a significant cancer risk. It has been reported that one in 2,000 patients exposed to a radiation dosage of just 10 millisieverts are at risk of developing fatal cancer. With CT, some patients are exposed to doses as high as 30 millisieverts. For these patients, particularly if young, the risk of developing fatal cancer can be much greater. In Australia approximately five million CT scans are being performed each year. How many avoidable fatal cancers are these producing each year as a direct result?

MRI machines do not use ionising radiation. If we support initiatives to replace CT with MRI, think how many lives could be saved, just by eliminating direct harm. MRI is very often also the best test to obtain an accurate diagnosis. CT scanners have an average success rate of just 10 per cent when it comes to detecting brain strokes, as opposed to a success rate of 99 per cent for a 90-second MRI examination. Every public hospital with MRI can already do this. So why is it not being done? Let me address a few underlying misconceptions as to why CT scans are used more frequently than MRIs. The first is cost. The cost of an MRI machine is marginally higher than a high-definition CT machine. However, I question if there are any cost savings if scans are not accurate. What if we take into consideration all imaging and treatments associated with managing patients' disability caused by an initial misdiagnosis? What if we take into consideration the need to treat all the medically induced chronic diseases and cancer patients caused by CT ionising radiation? If we take these into consideration, MRI becomes by far the most economic choice.

A second misconception is the perception of claustrophobia. Australia's hospitals and clinics currently lack patient-friendly open MRI equipment that does not have a tunnel. These are available and the increased use of these should be encouraged. Most children cannot have a tunnel-type MRI without general anaesthesia. As a result, many children are not diagnosed properly or are heavily exposed to ionising radiation using CT. With an open multi-positional MRI, babies can be examined while sleeping on their mother's lap. Would that not be a better option? A third misconception is GPs' limited access to referring patients to MRI. For most conditions an MRI can still only be done through a medical specialist.

To get an MRI in the community a patient needs to see their GP for a specialist referral, see the specialist for an MRI referral, go back to the specialist to pick up the result and then go back to their GP to discuss long-term management. That is two GP visits and two specialist visits for every MRI referral. If a GP could refer directly to an MRI that would dramatically reduce Medicare costs and, more importantly, would reduce pressure on emergency department waiting times. Patients who really need to go to an emergency department will arrive with a full diagnosis already in place and will be treated faster. It is CT scans that need restrictions and the Government must have a strategic plan to start phasing them out. I call on everyone listening to this statement to

go and research what I have outlined. Please do not allow your family or friends to accept a referral for a CT scan, insist that an MRI referral be given instead.

KOGARAH ELECTORATE ROAD SAFETY

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (19:32:51): I speak on a matter of great concern to the people of the Kogarah electorate and, in particular, the families, students and staff of Hurstville Public School. The community at Hurstville has experienced a period of great sadness recently with the passing of a Sydney Technical High School student after a motorist allegedly ran a red light on the corner of Forest Road and Lily Street on the morning of 6 September. The young student had just finished walking his brother to Hurstville Public School when the terrible incident occurred. His tragic passing has galvanised both the school communities with a determination to ensure that another similar incident never happens again. The determination of my constituents has resulted in calls for major changes to traffic and pedestrian activity in the area in order to reduce the risk of another tragedy.

On Friday 25 October the principals, head teachers and parents of Hurstville Public School, Hurstville Boys High School, Sydney Technical College, Bethany College Hurstville, and St Mary's Star of the Sea met with representatives of Bayside Council, Georges River Council, NSW Police and me to discuss their concerns. Representatives of Roads and Maritime Services were also invited but were regrettably unable to attend. The school principals, in a concerted effort to drive a response from all levels of government, drew up a list of road safety proposals that they deemed necessary to keep their students safe. The key proposal is to establish an educational precinct around all the schools in the area so that roads within the defined area become school zones with a 40 kilometre per hour speed limit. Given the high number of schools and consequently the high number of school students using roads in the area, this precinct will become a lot more approachable and a lot safer for students, pedestrians and motorists.

Proposals that have been identified by the school community that were presented to me and local councils and are relevant to the New South Wales Government include: painting the road lanes yellow with a 40 kilometre per hour school zone identifier throughout the precinct; improving flashing signage installed across the precinct; installing traffic calming bars, spots and triangles on the roadway outside all schools in the precinct; putting red-light cameras on the intersection of Croydon Road and Forest Road and also at the intersection of Lily Street and Forest Road; a long-term proposal to build elevated pedestrian crossings across Forest Road and Croydon Road where students cross these busy roads; and examining the use of pedestrian crossings on Kenwyn Street, Cronulla Street and Botany Street.

Further proposals include: installing heavy-duty safety bollards along the footpath area identified in the aerial map, including opposite the Lily Street intersection with Forest Road; putting end-to-end heavy-duty barriers along the footpath because the current ones are not high or long enough and do not extend far enough along Forest Road, so they need to be stretched to lengthen the safety protection for pedestrians; adding a red-light turn arrow to control traffic flowing from Lily Street onto Forest Road, as drivers regularly ignore the current signals; and changing the traffic light sequencing to stop all cars at the Lily Street intersection where pedestrian lights go green, because the current sequences result in Lily Street lights turning green at the same time as the pedestrian crossing on Forest Road. These are sensible proposals that have been put forward by leaders of our community with one simple aim: to protect the students and pedestrians who congregate in this area every single morning and afternoon of the school year.

Community Recognition Statements

PADSTOW PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:37:05): I congratulate six Padstow Park Public School students who competed in the Table Tennis NSW championship held at Sydney Olympic Park earlier this year: Kaiden Tang, Caleb Chen, Lachlan Leung, Jack Oehlman, Benjamin Windle and Liam Ovington. Lachlan Leung competed in the 2019 National Junior Championships held in Wollongong. His New South Wales under-11 boys team won the gold medal. Lachlan also partnered with Kathleen Yeung and they won a bronze medal in the under-11 mixed doubles. I congratulate the students and I wish them and Padstow Park Public School many more years of success in the table tennis championships.

HINDI SCHOOL KOGARAH

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (19:37:54): I pay tribute to the South Asian Australian Association, which has operated the Hindi School Kogarah since 2015. The Hindi School Kogarah is a community language school that teaches Indian languages as well as promotes an awareness of the wonderful music, dance and artistic cultures of India. The school currently has many students who have never been exposed to Hindi language at home or at school and I am pleased to inform the House of the success of the programs. I recently attended the school's Diwali Mela—a festival that represents the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance

and good over evil. The member for Oatley was also in attendance. The performances were outstanding, as were the gift stalls, henna painting and activities that all showcased South Asian culture. I congratulate the Hindi School Kogarah on this wonderful event and thank them for their continued contribution to the Kogarah community.

HEATH WHIBLEY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:38:58): I congratulate Heath Whibley from Crooble on winning the freestyle championships at the 2019 Mission Foods Australian Drone Nationals in Canberra in October. Ninety-seven of the best drone pilots came from across Australia and New Zealand to compete in the racing and freestyle events. This was Heath's first drone flying competition after starting drone flying five years ago. Heath competed in the freestyle event, which pits pilots against each other in a one-on-one battle each round. They are given two minutes and are scored out of 150 from three judges. I commend Heath for this terrific achievement and wish him all the very best as he soars to new heights in future drone competitions.

WORD MANIA LITERACY COMPETITION

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:39:49): I congratulate the students and teachers at Warilla High School on their recent achievement in literacy. Less than a week ago it was revealed Warilla High School's year 8 core skills class finished third in Word Mania, Australia and New Zealand's biggest literacy competition. Over 2,000 schools participated in this year's competition, which involved students competing in online word games to improve skills, spelling and vocabulary. The competition was open to years 7 and 8 at the school. Warilla High School's year 7 group finished eighth overall and the year 8 group placed third. I congratulate every student who embraced the competition and was involved in this very impressive victory. I thank Mrs Goucher for coordinating Warilla High School's participation in this year's competition. I say congratulations and well done to everyone.

ACTIVE KIDS GROUP EARLY LEARNING CENTRE, NARWEE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:40:45): I acknowledge the twenty-fifth birthday of the Active Kids Group Early Learning Centre at Narwee. The Active Kids Group is an early childhood provider with locations all over Sydney. The Narwee childcare centre caters for children aged up to five years and is a popular location for people who live in my electorate of Oatley. Active Kids Group aims to equip children with the tools they need to grow to their highest potential and is led by experienced educators who have a genuine passion for the service it provides. It was my pleasure to attend the twenty-fifth birthday celebration at the early learning centre. It was a fantastic event and it was a great opportunity to recognise the impressive quarter-of-a-century milestone. I thank everyone involved in helping to build the next generation and a greater society, particularly the centre's owners, Vivian and Kaream. The Active Kids Group should be very proud of what it has achieved and how far it has come. I look forward to another 25 great years.

BOB LUNDY

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:41:45): I congratulate Newcastle East pharmacist Bob Lundy on his retirement after 59 years running the City Pharmacy on Hunter Street. Bob's first experience in that line of work came after he missed out on an engineering cadetship, so he spent a year working for a local pharmacist before studying the practice at the University of Sydney. He returned to Newcastle in the late 1950s and found work at Robertson's Pharmacy before starting his own business in 1960. While Newcastle has undergone some very significant changes in that time, including to people's shopping habits, I am told that Bob's longevity is the result of providing an old-school service and genuinely caring about each person who walks through the door no matter their background or what they are seeking from the pharmacy. Bob is now 81 years old and the time has come to enjoy the perks of retirement. However, he has undoubtedly impacted thousands of lives during his career. I congratulate Bob and hope he enjoys the next phase of his life.

WOLLONDILLY WOMEN IN BUSINESS NETWORK

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (19:42:50): The Wollondilly Women in Business Network is an organisation based in my electorate that provides opportunities for professionals and business owners to unite, network and share experiences and knowledge with other members. There is also an opportunity for mentoring for new business start-ups. Excellent founder and president Michelle Legg, secretary Tina Meyer and community and funding initiatives coordinator Melissa Owen are the team driving the success of the organisation. They are currently working on two significant initiatives: the establishment of a local business hub called the Hive and the Back into the Workforce Program to encourage women to reconnect. The network holds meetings and events throughout Wollondilly each month to provide information to members and to encourage the promotion of friendship and business development in the Wollondilly shire. They conduct also one of the social highlights of

year with the network's annual gala dinner. This year I had the pleasure to speak at the function at the Bargo Sports Club where over 300 members were in attendance.

CABRAMATTA WALK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:44:01): On Monday 4 November the Cabramatta Walk Against Domestic Violence was launched ahead of the walk on Wednesday 20 November 2019. This locally organised event aims to raise awareness and educate members of the western Sydney community about issues around domestic violence and encourage reporting to the police. The launch of the Cabramatta Walk Against Domestic Violence brought together community members representing local police, schools and government, who are united in their mission to reduce domestic violence in our community. The walk has a focus on educating schoolchildren about domestic violence to ensure that they enter adult life with strategies to deal with and counter domestic violence. Students presented art and poetry that they had created over the preceding months to better understand domestic violence. Senior Sergeant Grenfell of the Fairfield City Police Area Command said:

This is not a quick fix. It's going to be a generational change. That's why we have our local primary and high schools on board to educate the next generation.

I commend everyone in attendance for their work to counter and prevent domestic violence. Removing domestic violence from our community is our greatest and most pressing challenge. Together we will succeed.

GYMEA COMMUNITY AID AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:45:01): I acknowledge the wonderful team at GyMEA Community Aid & Information Service, which I recently visited, along with the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, the Hon. Gareth Ward, to announce a \$49,950 Youth Opportunities grant. GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service has a longstanding presence in the Sutherland shire and provides information and support services to our community, especially seniors and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The Changing the Narrative project, which will be delivered by the grant, will continue this tradition by promoting through short films that a positive future can be created by young people. I acknowledge the hardworking team behind the organisation, including president Marcio Salgado, general manager Joanne Cracknell, Rita Napolitano, Jenny Grey, Katrina Vavdinos, Mona Chui, Rowena Condon, Safwan Aldod, Marie-Louise Mitchell, Cathy Chen, Kalpna Patel, Jenny Koutsonicolis, Suzanne Thomas, Danielle Purcell, Christine Valentine, Lisa Conyers, Peter Malhotra, Wendy Ducasse, Kaye Herald and Alwyn Patterson. I thank the team at the GyMEA Community Aid & Information Service for their continued dedication to our community.

BELMONT COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:46:07): This week is Perinatal Depression and Anxiety Week. I take this opportunity to reflect upon this important issue and highlight the work of the Belmont Country Women's Association. In Australia each year 100,000 families will experience some form of perinatal depression and anxiety, with one in five birth parents experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety. The Belmont Country Women's Association plays an important role in the community by not only supporting women but also helping to raise funds for numerous important causes. The fundraising efforts of the Belmont Country Women's Association have helped support organisations such as baby health clinics, women's refuges, Ronald McDonald House and the John Hunter Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I thank the Belmont Country Women's Association members for their hard work in the community and offer my support to all parents suffering from perinatal depression and anxiety.

COPACABANA COMMUNITY MEN'S SHED

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:47:12): I congratulate the Copacabana Community Men's Shed on its successful \$130,000 grant from the New South Wales Government's My Community Project program. The project has been a nine-year work in progress and I am so pleased it can finally become a reality. The new funding is in addition to \$21,800 that I was able to secure in 2018 from former mental health Minister, Tanya Davies, who is in the Chamber this evening. The men's shed project has involved the whole community, and I thank the community association, the Rural Fire Service brigade, the surf club, the Probus club and the local Rotarians for getting involved. I congratulate the committed group of locals, led by Dr Mike Mitchelmore, on overcoming a number of hurdles to finalise a location for the new shed. It will be located behind the fire station off Del Monte Place. I encourage the Copa community to get behind this initiative and I look forward to the council approving the development application so that construction can begin.

KARUAH OYSTER AND TIMBER FESTIVAL

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:48:14): Recently I had the pleasure of again attending one of my favourite festivals of the year, the Karuah Oyster and Timber Festival. Record crowds turned out on a

beautiful day at Longworth Park. We enjoyed fresh oysters while watching world-class wood chopping and dolphins playing in the river behind. It was clearly my toughest mobile office of the year! I congratulate all of the competition winners on the day, including Jodi Duncan and her husband, who won the oyster eating competition and the car show, and Kurt Farrell, who won first prize in the junior fishing competition, catching a whopping 96.5 centimetre bream. I thank Stacey Ebben, her team of wonderful volunteers and master of ceremonies Gary Edmonds—who holds everything together—for pulling together such a terrific day. I thank also the major sponsor, the Karuah RSL Club, and the other 30 local businesses that supported the event, including Cole Bros Oysters, Graham Barclay Marine, the Boathouse Resort, Karuah Waters Estate and many more. I thank Karuah for another awesome day. I am already looking forward to next year's event.

KATE PELLE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:49:16): I congratulate Erskine Park resident Kate Pelle on being named the junior sportsperson for the month of September for her development and skill in cricket, soccer and futsal. Kate is passionate about all three of her sports, beginning cricket at just six years old, soccer at eight years old and futsal in 2018. In cricket Kate was selected to represent New South Wales school cricket and won the 2018 national championships. She was captain of the 2017 Mollie Dive Team and selected for the under-13s, under-14s and under-15s New South Wales academy teams in consecutive years. However, her most exciting achievement was scoring her first 100 runs. In soccer Kate played for the Marconi Stallions under-14s girls team in the youth competition. The team took home the minor premiership and championship for 2019. Through diligent training and by playing to the best of her ability, Kate hopes to one day pursue a career as a professional sportsperson. I wish Kate all the best for her bright future in sport. I thank her coaches, family and friends for supporting her in all her endeavours.

GARRY BALDRY

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:50:24): I recognise an outstanding member of my community whose dedication and commitment makes the Hawkesbury district a better place to live. Garry Baldry has been a leader in the fight against graffiti for the past decade, running a graffiti removal program. Garry ran a program with the Rotary Club of Windsor before teaming up with Graffiti Removal Day as a site supervisor and local area coordinator in 2012. The programs Garry is involved in are working, with reports that the incidence of new graffiti occurring over cleaned sites has drastically reduced over the years he has been running his program. In Garry's own words, "Where there is a lot of graffiti, people feel unsafe and even threatened. People also get a sense of community by rolling up their sleeves and helping to rid their local area of graffiti." Graffiti is a leading contributor to communities feeling unsafe and the cost involved for local and State government is more than \$300 million each year. Through the commitment of community leaders like Garry we are a step closer to ensuring that graffiti and vandalism is reduced in our local areas.

WYONG DRAMA GROUP

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (19:51:47): It was a pleasure to attend another professional and enjoyable performance by the Wyong Drama Group at the Grove Theatre in Wyong. It was the final show to be held at the Grove Theatre before the group moves to new premises in Tuggerah early next year. The show was called *A Good Old Fashioned Big Family Christmas*. I watched with a smile on my face and my wife and I reminisced about family Christmases past involving eccentric family members and some of the antics that occurred in the name of festive spirit. I congratulate the fantastic cast, directed by Ron Baker and Julie Bailey, including Duncan Mitchell, Jane Sackman, Andrea Suarez, John Czieniecki, Sondra Broadhurst, Charlie Mortimer, Lauren Rigney, Les Besseny, Tiffany Smith, Hagen Heinrich, Nikki De Vries, Laszlo Weidlich, Kath Izzard and Helen Schumann.

DANIEL STRICKLAND

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:52:35): I had the pleasure of presenting Daniel Strickland from Mission Australia with a NSW Government Community Service Award to recognise his contribution to community service in the Goulburn region. The award, which was a great surprise for Mr Strickland, was presented to him at his local workplace, Mission Australia, in front of his trusted colleagues and other local government agencies. Mr Strickland has worked for Mission Australia since 2002 and is currently Area Manager for Southern Eastern New South Wales. His passion for helping others in not only his work operations but also his day-to-day personal life is admirable. I have been in awe of Dan's commitment to helping others since my election in March this year. I nominated him for this award due to the feedback from the local community and my admiration of his efforts locally. He is everywhere, always wanting to help. I thank Mr Strickland's wife, Jules, for her patience in allowing him to work so hard for the betterment of the Goulburn community. He is a father of five so his time is precious. I congratulate Dan, whose work is greatly appreciated in the community.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:53:45): I thank all the volunteer Rural Fire Service firefighters who are out there today and who have been out there always looking after the people of New South Wales. It takes an incredible sense of duty, commitment and comradery to put your hand up to be available to fight fires both within and beyond your own backyard. It is humbling to be here in Parliament while our volunteers are out on the front lines across our tinder dry State. I thank also our police, ambulance personnel, State Emergency Service volunteers and all those who made the difficult decisions to close schools across New South Wales, to not travel to work or to make additional trips. I thank our State forestry workers, animal rescue organisations and Australian Defence personnel. I acknowledge the insurance company staff, who will be working hard with integrity to support the people who have lost homes, cars and precious possessions to the fires. I thank the plethora of other great citizens who are assisting with New South Wales' recovery. I send love and a whole bunch of positive energy to all the affected communities for the weeks, months and years it will take for them to rebuild what they have lost.

JOHN THEODORIS AND JOHN KALLIMANIS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:54:55): I acknowledge the work of the Order of AHEPA's past grand presidents John Theodoris and John Kallimanis, who were recently celebrated at the order's testimonial dinner. The mission of the Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association [AHEPA] is to promote the Australian Hellenic ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, family and individual excellence. Both past grand presidents have played an integral role in furthering the order's mission of strengthening the community awareness of the principles of Hellenism in society, which include commitment to humanity, freedom and democracy. It was my immense pleasure to attend the order's testimonial dinner recently, where the dedication of Mr Theodoris and Mr Kallimanis, as well as other past chapter presidents, was recognised and celebrated. I thank both Mr Theodoris and Mr Kallimanis for their outstanding work, and I congratulate President Bill Skandalakis on this fantastic event.

CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (19:55:56): I recognise and celebrate the achievements of the 1,936 students from 57 schools who have participated in the Children's University in New South Wales this year. From the Hunter, Central Coast and mid North Coast, participants have been engaged in creative learning outside of the classroom through the program. I recently had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremony of the Children's University, at which the learning of 17 students from Redhead Public School, in my electorate of Charlestown, was recognised. The graduates were Amber Buttenshaw, Elyse Buttenshaw, Isla Clark, Callie Donald, Zane Hepple, Sophie Milford, Amelia Bowron, Helayna Butler, Charli Cummings, Anwen Evans, Mackenzie Little, Phillipa Norris, Olive Stephens, Macy Unwin, Anna Schwander, Scarlett Hadden and Molly Daly. Australia needs minds that never stop questioning and brains that keep exploring possibilities. I celebrate the achievements of these active learners and I wish them well for the future.

JANNALI HIGH SCHOOL

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (19:57:00): I congratulate the new student leaders of Jannali High School on their appointment. To be democratically elected by your peers is an honour, which demonstrates these individuals' competencies in the key areas of effective leadership, communication, organisation and innovation. I encourage them to make the most of such a fantastic opportunity to develop life skills and qualities that shape community and professional leaders. I congratulate school captains Noah Alcorn and Ellie Isenmonger, and vice captains Matthew King and Anna McIntyre on their successful appointment, and extend my best wishes for their final year of high school. I take this opportunity to commend the outgoing captains of Jannali High School for their service. I acknowledge 2019 school captains Roy Munro and Georgia Cherrie, and vice captains Matthew Woo and Ebony Gould, and wish them all the best for their upcoming exams and future endeavours. I extend my best wishes to this group of fantastic student leaders as they continue to exemplify that Jannali High School is "the place to succeed".

ALOPECIA AREATA AWARENESS WEEK

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:57:57): Tonight I recognise that this week, between 9 November and 15 November, is Alopecia Areata Awareness Week. I would like this House to acknowledge and thank the members in our community who have alopecia. We commend all those in our community who are raising funds and increasing awareness about alopecia. The Australia Alopecia Areata Foundation was founded in 2010 with the purpose of improving the lives of people with alopecia areata and their families. The mission is to provide support to those with all forms of alopecia areata and their families, inform the public, create awareness of alopecia areata, and support research into a cure or acceptable treatment for alopecia areata. I thank all of

those—particularly those in my community—who are currently raising money. I call on the Government to support this very important cause.

CENTRAL COAST ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:59:03): On Monday the Central Coast Animal Care Facility posted on its Facebook page, seeking temporary homes for their dogs while the bushfire emergency was unfolding. It is fortunate to have over 19,000 Facebook followers—including me. The immediate response by our community was overwhelming, to say the least. Within 15 minutes the reception area was full, and within 45 minutes there was a queue out the door. Later in the day the car park was full of locals ready and waiting to help out by temporarily adopting a dog in case the bushland surrounding the facility caught alight. Our local area has been so fortunate to avoid any fire activity today. I certainly hope this continues over the next few days. I congratulate Kim, Dee and all of the team who run the Central Coast Animal Care Facility. I am so proud to be their patron and I am humbled that our community responded to the facility's needs at such short notice. It goes to show the true community spirit shown by those on the Central Coast, especially Kim, Dee and others at the Central Coast Animal Care Facility.

MISS WAGGA WAGGA QUEST

Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:00:05): For more than 70 years the Miss Wagga Wagga Quest has provided an environment for young inspirational women to challenge themselves, to build confidence, to network, to upskill and to make a contribution to their community. It is a call to action and an opportunity for aspiring women to grow and to lead. The crowning of this year's Miss Wagga Wagga and Miss Community Princess on 2 November showcased attributes of true inspirational leaders who will be ambassadors for the city.

Congratulations to Hannah Smith, who was crowned Miss Wagga Wagga 2020, and to the Miss Community Princess, Brittany Hackett, who was a shining example of resilience and strength, attending the ceremony seven days after the tragic hit-and-run death of her father on the night of her engagement party. As I wish Brittany and Hannah all the best for the coming year, I thank Miss Wagga Wagga 2019 Stina Constantine and Community Princess Presslea Cowan for their dedication, their service and achievements across 12 months—titles earned twice over. I commend also Miss Wagga Wagga Quest contributors and committee members, including first-time chair Alexandra Tierney.

GLENMORE PARK HULA GIRLS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (20:01:17): I congratulate Glenmore Park's 12C netball team, more commonly known as the Hula Girls, on their undefeated winning streak during the latest Penrith District Netball Association regular season. The Hula Girls won 14 games out of 14 played, and scored an incredible 318 goals, with only 92 goals scored against them all season. In the finals series the girls came a close second, only narrowly missing out on the top prize in the grand final. In spite of this, the girls have created wonderful friendships through training and bonding, propelling them into their successful season. The Hula Girls' coach, Erin Vicary, spent many nights during the season training the team and encouraging them to grow their skills, sportsmanship and teamwork. Through diligence and hard work the Hula Girls are bound to have another great season. These wonderful young ladies have made their coach, families, friends and each other very proud of all they have achieved this year in netball. Well done, Hula Girls; I wish you all the best for next season.

MOVE MOUNTAINS FOR ASH

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (20:02:10): I congratulate the team behind Move Mountains for Ash, a hike that is fundraising to help cover the medical expenses of their injured friend. Earlier this year Ashley Treseder sustained a broken neck and severe spinal cord damage after diving off a pier. He lost movement from his chest down. It is estimated that over Ash's lifetime his rehabilitation expenses and housing modifications will come to \$2 million. Last month Ash's mates walked the roughly 90 kilometres from McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle to Central Coast Stadium for the Jets and Mariners game to continue their fundraising. The locations honoured Ash's love of the Newcastle Jets. Jets chief executive officer Lawrie McKinna, an army of Jets' fans and Ash also joined in for the end of the walk. Well done to Ash's friends, including Luke Alexander, Ben Hamilton, Kelsey Moss, Dan Byatt and Duncan Sandie, who have already raised almost \$90,000, in their continued efforts to support their friend.

NORTH WEST MAGPIES

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:03:16): I congratulate the North West Magpies on a very successful second season as a rugby league club. I recognise Darrin Rawlings and Anthony Magann for creating this club for our community to enjoy, and the hard work they continually put in to build the club and to achieve the success that has already been achieved. I recognise and thank the parents, coaches, managers, players and all

those who volunteer their time and effort for the club. I congratulate the under-9s on taking out the premiership this year. I congratulate those in the club who won individual awards at the club's recent presentation night. Recipients of these awards included Sulieta Manu, Sam Naylor, Max Rawlings, Jarrad Lawrence and Hudson Tait. I wish the club continued success and look forward to many more trophies being brought back to the Hawkesbury.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (20:04:13): Some 61 Australian women and 21 Australian children have been killed through violence in their homes this year. No woman is ever to blame for male violence against her. At the end of last month I proudly marched with hundreds of women, men and children to take a stand on violence against women and children in this year's Reclaim the Night march on the Esplanade at Warners Bay in my electorate of Charlestown. Reclaim the Night is a global movement for women's rights, calling for women to be free from sexual violence and abuse. This year's march sounded the alarm on the increasing rate of assaults against women in the Hunter region. We look forward to a society in which women can feel safe and in which there is justice for survivors of violence. On behalf of my local community I express thanks to Jess Salvador and the team for organising this year's march.

BELLA CROKER

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:05:13): I had the great pleasure of meeting with Bella Croker to present her with a New South Wales Government State Representative Award for her efforts in hockey. Bella represented New South Wales in the 2019 School Sport Australia 12 years and under hockey championships and has been announced as being part of the New South Wales indoor hockey team. She started playing hockey when she was just five years old and is now one of the youngest members of the New South Wales State team.

Bella's passion for the sport and her commitment to training have been rewarded by her selection. I acknowledge her achievements at such a young age. Such tenacity and commitment will stand her in good stead to reach her goals of one day becoming a Hockeyroo. I acknowledge also her parents for their commitment to Bella and her hockey. We all know the lengths we have to go to assist our children in reaching their goals, but particularly in our regionally based communities where long hours travelling are the norm. Your efforts are to be congratulated, Bella. I wish you all the very best for your future hockey career.

NICOLA MCDERMOTT

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:06:13): The 22-year-old local coastie Nicola McDermott is jumping high to make her mark in the world of high jump. Nicola started high jumping at the age of eight. After a squillion tonnes of training and competitions around the world she claimed a bronze at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast. Nicola regularly represents Australia on the international stage and competes in Europe on the Diamond League circuit, pushing herself to new limits and reaching even further for her goals.

More recently Nicola competed at the World Championships in Qatar where she finished an awesome fifteenth place. She will be heading off to Japan in 2020 and has set her goals on performing at her peak at the Tokyo Olympics. I commend Nicola's support circle: her trainer, her friends, and particularly her family and parents who no doubt would have sacrificed so much already to ensure Nicola has what she requires to perform at her best. From one Paralympian to a soon-to-be Olympian, congratulations on your achievements to date and go for gold next year!

RAY CRAWLEY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:07:12): Last week a constituent of mine and member of the Terrigal Men's Shed, Ray Crawley, made a trip to Casino and Tenterfield in northern New South Wales. Ray is the zone 8 commander of the Australian Men's Shed Association. The purpose of his visit was to deliver tools valued at \$3,600 to BlazeAid, which is an initiative that helps communities rebuild after natural disasters. In the Casino and Tenterfield area this involved rebuilding hundreds of kilometres of burnt-down fencing. As Ray said in an email he sent to me just this morning, he was greeted by so many people—local farmers, local families and local mayors—who were astounded that a men's shed located 700 kilometres away would be willing to help. This is an incredibly generous donation for a men's shed to make. I acknowledge Ray and all the great members of the Terrigal Men's Shed for their incredible generosity, both in time and money. Bunnings Erina also donated additional tools. I really do thank Bunnings for its generosity, which again goes to show the true spirit of the Central Coast from one end to the other and our great men's sheds.

TIM SEYMOUR

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (20:08:17): All members in this Chamber are so proud of the members of our communities. However, on this occasion I congratulate Tim Seymour from the electorate of

Swansea, who received a Royal Life Saving New South Wales Bravery Award, one of the highest in the State. It was just another day at work for Tim when he rescued an elderly man from the Swansea Channel after his boat capsized. With a strong tide running out, Tim's quick response to jump into the water and bring the elderly gentleman back to shore is nothing short of heroic. Tim has a fiancée and two young children, and this rescue is a real testament to his selfless nature. I am so proud that there are people in our community like Tim, just as every member of this House is proud of such people in their communities. Thank you, Tim, for your inspiring effort in this dangerous yet successful rescue.

CAMDEN HAVEN CHARITY TOUCH DAY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I recognise Camden Haven as a compassionate, kind-hearted community in my electorate that has rallied behind a sick little boy, Rory Turnbull, focussed on raising funds to support the family managing unexpected medical bills. Arriving two months premature in September 2017, Aimee and Arnold Turnbull were not expecting their little bundle of joy to arrive so quickly into their lives. Following his birth, little Rory was transferred to John Hunter Hospital with underdeveloped lungs but thankfully he returned home safely to the family shortly after.

Regretfully, this year has been somewhat difficult for the young family with two-year-old Rory contracting multiple viral infections requiring numerous trips to the hospital and now sadly an operation for airway reconstruction surgery. Quick to offer support, the Camden Haven community have coordinated a Charity Touch Day aptly named "Run for Rory" to help pay for ongoing medical expenses. The event will take place on Sunday 27 October at the Laurieton Oval from 9.00 a.m. I take this opportunity to call on the Camden Haven community to get behind this beautiful family and organise a team for the Run for Rory fundraiser so together we can give Rory the best chance at a normal life.

ANNETTE CRINITI

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I would like to thank and congratulate Kemps Creek resident Annette Criniti on her hard work in creating an inclusive community atmosphere in her salon, Hairline, in Mulgoa. Annette over the years has given great amounts of support to young people within the Mulgoa community by providing them with work experience and part-time work through Nova Employment. She has been a large supporter of the Cancer Council Wig Library by washing and styling wigs free of charge and supporting many other charity and social events in local communities. Sadly, after 15 years, Annette has had to sell her business due to a hereditary disease and now needs to focus on her own health and wellbeing. Thankfully her business is being passed onto her long-time employee, Chris Pascoe, who has been with Hairline since he was just 14 years old. Again, thank you, Annette, for all you have done for the Mulgoa community and I truly wish you all the best during this season of your life.

QUOTA INTERNATIONAL FORSTER-TUNCURRY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I congratulate Quota International Forster-Tuncurry on winning the Community Group of the Year category at the Myall Lakes Community Awards. Quota Forster-Tuncurry was established in 1986 and this year celebrates 33 years of community service to the Great Lakes region. Whilst the primary interest of quota is women, children, the hearing and speech impaired, Quota supports many causes, both financial and help in kind. Quota Forster-Tuncurry recently held an Elegant Afternoon Tea and thanks to the hard work and generous donors was able to present a cheque in Murrundindee to the "Let's do it for the farmers" organisation.

Locally Quota Forster-Tuncurry contributes its time volunteering at the Wang Wauk driver reviver, at the Tuncurry Salvation Army, serving hot meals and providing knitted rugs, and at the International Women's Day Brunch. The group's active and committed members have also provided financial assistance to many local and regional organisations totalling over \$16,000 per annum. I thank the executive committee for all their hard work—Heather Dwyer, Rowena Woods, Diane Johnstone and Yvonne Hughes.

SEVEN HILLS RSL REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—Yesterday, it was my pleasure to attend the moving commemoration service for Remembrance Day and the 101st Anniversary of the Armistice at the Seven Hills RSL Club. The Club's team, the Women's Auxiliary and the Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville Sub-Branch each year hold a Remembrance Day commemoration service, but were delighted and surprised to see the biggest crowd for the event in many years. After the service, it was great to catch up with Sub-Branch Committee Member and former Wentworthville Sub-Branch President Ross Coughran and his wife Christine, and Sub-Branch Honorary Secretary Dr Chris Gammage JP. These men and the rest of the terrific Sub-Branch do a magnificent job in running each of the year's commemoration events with the Women's Auxiliary and the Club. I'd also like

to thank the other Committee members: Graeme Quinn, Peter Harrington, John Burgess, Peter Dwyer, Peter Sparrow, Graham Black, Warren Evans, Bill North, Warren Stickens, Bob Walker and Tom Jenkins.

HARDEN KITE FESTIVAL

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—It was such an honour to officially open the 2019 Harden Kite Festival again this year alongside Cr John Horton and the Harden Kite Festival Committee celebrating Kites-Canola-Country. Over 4000 people attended this year's event with perfect conditions for kite flying. The Kite Festival is an incredibly important event for the Hilltops region and it has never been more important than this year. We have some pretty tough drought conditions right across NSW and it is not exempt in Harden Murrumburrah. It was great to see people coming together in friendship and fellowship having fun and supporting the community. This event is a wonderful showcase of the Harden Murrumburrah district. A huge shout out must go to the amazing committee Nicole Scott, Lucy & Steve Taggart, Julie Dunstan and Wendy Medway.

GUISE PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICES FORUM

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—The staff at Guise Public School certainly go above and beyond for their school community. Recently the school hosted a Community Services Expo designed to put parents, carers and families in touch with local service providers. The expo was a resounding success with students and adults alike taking advantage of the opportunity to learn more about organisations and services in their local area. Some of the service providers included the Salvation Army, Youth Off The Streets, One Door Mental Health, Autism Advisory and Support Service, My Gateway, local police, We Are Community and Ability Links. I want to thank the staff at Guise Public School for organising such a worthwhile event. Special mention must go to Assistant Principal Karen Davies and the entire organising team for not only recognising a need to connect the school community with service providers, but also for bringing their vision to reality. The students at Guise Public School are lucky to have such dedicated staff.

PORT HACKING HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS

Ms ELANI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the new student leaders of Port Hacking High School on their appointment. To be democratically elected by your peers is not only an honour but demonstrates these individuals' competencies in the key areas of effective leadership, communication, organisation and innovation. I congratulate School Captains Alex Dourambeis and Zeina Khochaiche and Vice Captains Jacob Bardetta and Angelica Kalamvokis on their successful appointment and extend my best wishes for their final year of high school. Earlier this week, I was delighted to meet them and witness their leadership skills as they conducted their weekly assembly, along with their passion for their school during a values discussion regarding the annual domestic violence prevention walk.

I also take this opportunity to commend the outgoing captains of Port Hacking High School for their service. I acknowledge 2019 School Captains Nicholas Pastore and Emma Gaston and Vice Captains Luke Kemmler and Jessica Joyce, and wish them all the best for their upcoming exams and future endeavours. I extend my best wishes to this group of fantastic student leaders as they continue to embody Port Hacking High School's motto of, 'to strive is to achieve'.

CIVIC DISABILITY SERVICES

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise Civic Disability Services. Civic held an Open Day at its Liverpool Hub on Friday 18 October. Their facility at 110 Memorial Avenue is leased from Liverpool Council and had been in operation for about 8 weeks. The aim of the Open Day was to welcome Civic to the neighbourhood and to showcase some of the activities at the Hub such as sporting activities, virtual gaming, cooking and gardening. Civic was first established in 1958. They now support over 500 individuals throughout Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Shoalhaven. They already have other facilities in South West Sydney. As Civic says, they support individuals with disability to exercise choice and control, achieve their goals and be active members of the Community. They aim to provide the right support at the right moment, and help break down barriers and strive for a more inclusive society.

UNSW 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)—On Thursday 17 October, I was honoured to join UNSW President and Vice Chancellor, Professor Ian Jacobs, and UNSW Chancellor, David Gonski AC, Federal Member for Kingsford-Smith, Matt Thistlethwaite MP and President of Local Government NSW and Deputy Mayor of City of Sydney, Cllr Linda Scott, at the Roundhouse, Kensington, for the University of New South Wales (UNSW) 70th Anniversary Celebration. Since 1949, UNSW has provided high quality education for students seeking a tertiary qualification. UNSW is one of Australia's leading research and teaching universities and I acknowledge the university's lifetime of achievements, of innovation, inspiration and global achievements.

Throughout the night the work of the university was highlighted and it was a great celebration of the UNSW community. Speeches from faculty leaders and professors showcased the new developing ideas and promoted knowledge at UNSW. UNSW has created an academic environment where students and scholars cause be inspired to excel in study and research. I congratulate Professor Ian Jacobs and David Gonski AC for their unwavering dedication to study and research at UNSW and for hosting such a fabulous event and I look forward to celebrating many wonderful events with them in future.

LIZ TOMLINSON

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—I would like to acknowledge the work of former Narrabri local Liz Tomlinson and her dedication to the community of Narrabri. Born into a farming family, she learned to notice the needs of others as a pre-schooler at her mother's side delivering hot meals to the elderly. She has actively demonstrated her belief in community involvement through numerous positions held while at high school, university and as a parent. During her work as a Rural Financial Counsellor based in Coonabarabran, she shared her own time assisting clients beyond her work description while caring for her seriously ill husband. Liz is a passionate advocate for the farming community and puts her skills in economic law, adult education and policy development to use every day in numerous community positions. I thank Liz for her commitment and service to her community

PETER LUKE—50 YEAR JP AWARD RECIPIENT

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)—I congratulate and recognise Mr Peter Luke of Mount Druitt who recently received the Attorney General's Award for his 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace. A Justice of the Peace is not paid for their services, and it is vital we recognise those who volunteer their time in the service of others. Mount Druitt is a multicultural electorate and as such, there is a high need for a Justice of the Peace service. I commend Mr Luke for dedicating 50 years of volunteering the capacity of a Justice of the Peace.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)—The current fires are frightening, but I know our South Coast Community and I know that in the face of adversity we come together to help our neighbours, family and friends. We are fortunate to have the extraordinary service of our local firefighters, and I want to take the opportunity to thank them for their service to all South Coast residents. I am constantly amazed to witness the professionalism, competency and dedication of emergency service personnel, including the Rural Fire Service, NSW Police Force and State Emergency Services in times of need. Our community is fortunate to have them.

Every fire, asset, home and weather factor is being closely monitored and I extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who has worked, and who continues to work, to help either battle the fires or provide assistance to the South Coast community. Special mention must be made of the South Coast's local journalists who are working around the clock to report back to the community on the situation. My thoughts today are with everyone in my electorate facing and fighting these fires. I remind the community to remain vigilant and to follow advice from the RFS.

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2019—EPPING RSL SUB BRANCH

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—On Remembrance Day, Australia stops to remember the sacrifice of all of our brave soldiers and veterans in war, and to acknowledge the freedoms they fought for. Yesterday I attended the Remembrance Day Service at Boronia Park in Epping, where I joined with the Epping RSL Sub Branch and others to pay respects to Australia's servicemen and servicewomen. It is 100 years since the founding of the Sub Branch in 1919, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to talk with President John Curdie OAM and other members of the executive, and to thank them for their service to our country.

It was also encouraging to see the students from schools throughout the Epping electorate - the next generation of Australians, paying tribute to the generations past who fought and died so that they might live in a country blessed with liberty, democracy and the rule of law. As we pause on the anniversary of the Armistice - at the eleventh hour on the eleventh of November - it is right that we reflect upon what our freedoms cost and remember those who paid the ultimate price. Lest we forget.

HALLSVILLE RED CROSS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)—I recognise the Hallsville branch of Australian Red Cross, which recently celebrated 80 years of service at the Hallsville Community Church. What a fantastic organisation, congratulations on your contribution of eight decades to our community. Congratulations also to Joyce Scott and Marie Willis who were recognised for giving 46 years of service to your communities as well. In 2014 the nation marked the Centenary of Australian Red Cross

and the work this organisation has done on our shores and for those who are serving overseas has been beyond price. Today the Red Cross movement is just as important as it was in its early days. When Cyclone Tracey devastated the city of Darwin, the Red Cross was there. All of the major catastrophes like the Ash Wednesday fires in the early 1980s and the Black Saturday fires in Victoria in 2009 and today's bushfire dangers, we know we have the Red Cross to help those most in need. Thank you for your service in our small communities like Hallsville near Tamworth and right across our nation in times of tragedy and disaster.

SYDNEY SACRED MUSIC FESTIVAL, BHOOMI: WOMAN AND EARTH

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education)—I was grateful to attend the Sydney Sacred Music Festival, Bhoomi: Woman and Earth at Old Government House that featured a weaving of many different art forms: music, dance, visual art and spoken words. This year was the third in the series of outdoor recitals and the theme was Mother Earth, creating awareness of the similarities in our understandings of the environment and womanhood.

I would like to acknowledge the producers and directors, artistic pair Arjunan Puveendran and Indu Balachandran who created the recitals, fostering a grass-roots movement of finding ways to connect to their diverse audience by showcasing different art forms native to India and Sri Lanka, exploring their relevance to living here in NSW, in a way that brings about so much joy. The mode of presentation is innovative for their own community let alone the broader audience. The recital was truly uplifting and gave me an opportunity to celebrate how traditional arts help build cross-cultural connections. I would like to congratulate all who were involved including Poorvaja Nirmaleswaren, Shankari Chandran, Seran Sribalan, Bhairavi Raman, Kersherka Sivakumaran and Branavan Jeyarasa and I thank Arjunan Puveendran for the kind invitation.

SHEARWATER STEINER SCHOOL WEARABLE ARTS PERFORMANCE

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I congratulate teachers and students at Shearwater Steiner School in Mullumbimby for their recent Performance as part of their Wearable Arts and Vision Education program. This year's performance, entitled 'The Girl With The Sun In Her Face' was split into five themed sections. This annual performance is highly renowned in our area for its professionalism, creativity and student involvement. I acknowledge the students who have driven this project and participated in all aspects of production from concept to delivery. Students could elect to be dancers, performers, make-up artists, stage crew, set builders, prop makers, models, musicians, catering or part of the media team.

FRIENDS OF BALMAIN LIBRARY

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I recognise a fantastic community organisation, the Friends of Balmain Library. The Friends of Balmain Library was established in 1998, initially as part of a campaign to save the Library from the threat of closure – and save it, they did! Over twenty years on the work of the Friends now focuses on improvements to the library, philanthropy and activities within the space. They continue to support the library in many ways, donating beautiful stained glass windows when the library was renovated, through a monthly Open Book Group, the establishment and regular updating of the Nobel Prize collection, and book boosts to add to the library's collection.

I especially want to acknowledge the current Committee: Fiona Mitchell, Shirley Allen, Jan Aitkin, Bronwyn Monro, Vivienne Nichol Hatton, Susan Sharpe and Donna Bozowsky, in addition to others who have made significant contributions in the past including Mariella Totaro Genevois, Annette Waterworth, Gillian O'Mulloy, Herma Sieper and Helen Coleman. Thanks to the Friends, our library in Balmain continues to thrive and is a hub and much loved part of our community.

MARTINDALE CREEK CATCHMENT LANDCARE GROUP

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter)—I would like to congratulate the Martindale Creek Catchment Landcare group (MCCL) on being awarded the NSW Australian Community Media Landcare Community Group "Grand Champion" at the NSW Landcare and Local Land Services Conference Awards recently at Broken Hill. The event acknowledges the endeavours to protect NSW land, water and biodiversity, in a diverse range of categories, including farming, Coastcare and indigenous land management. The Martindale Creek Catchment Landcare's main focus is on weeds; their identification, suppression and eradication. The Martindale Creek Catchment Landcare Group only formed in December 2014 and to win this award is a great acknowledgement of their dedicated work. I again congratulate the members of the Martindale Creek Catchment Landcare on their exceptional achievement and wish them every success in their future endeavours in caring for the community.

AFTERLEE PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTENARY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—On 6 October 2019, I had the privilege to attend the Centenary Celebration of Afterlee Public School. Afterlee Public School is a small public school with a big difference. It encourages a stimulating, challenging and nurturing learning environment. The celebration was well attended by current and former students, parents, friends and members of the community, including Mr Peter Flannery, Director Educational Leadership Richmond Network. As part of the celebration, there were displays of old historic photos of the school and past students, memorabilia, student artworks, postcards and local recipe cook books. We were entertained by live performances from the students. They performed like professionals. Well done!

A special mention to the Wynedden Rural Fire Service for attending the celebration and providing us with some useful tips about bushfire preparedness and survival. Thank you for your extraordinary work! I congratulate members of the Centenary Committee for their hard work, bringing together this event and showcasing the students and their beautiful school. I congratulate Ms Robyn Wheeler, the Principal of Afterlee Public School, teachers and staff members for their commitment to public education. A centenary celebration is a big milestone, one that our community can be proud of.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate I want to acknowledge the Transgender Day of Remembrance. 2019 is the 20 year anniversary of the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which began to honour the memory of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed in the United States. Today, all around the world, people pause to remember the trans and gender diverse people who have lost their lives to violence and those who have taken their own lives because of stigma, discrimination, isolation and exclusion. The data shows that on average a trans person is murdered every three days somewhere in the world, with more unreported or hidden. This day reminds us of the ongoing need to prevent violence and discrimination against trans and gender diverse people. Today I also acknowledge the resilience, hope and strength of the transgender community and allies who work with them to build a strong supportive community and hope for the future. I thank The Gender Centre and the Inner City Legal Centre for hosting a commemoration service at Harmony Park, and will continue to work for every person to be treated equally and fairly with dignity and respect.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL DAY—ALBURY

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—On Sunday 27 October a challenge was issued to the residents of Albury City Council. The task – to remove ugly graffiti and stop it coming back. Each year communities across NSW join together to rescue their local parks, streets and public spaces in an effort to remove graffiti and discourage future vandalism. And I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Di Small and Amanda Wilson from Albury City Council local government area who dedicated their time and effort to supervise on the day. Graffiti and vandalism affects all communities across NSW, and in many cases are a contributing factor to making people feel unsafe and vulnerable in the areas which they live. Through the efforts of organisations like Graffiti Removal Day, our communities are becoming a step closer to deterring vandals and reclaiming our streets so that they are a safe space for all. Thank you. Facts and figures 2019: Number of volunteers – 2300; number of sites – 420; amount of graffiti cleaned – 12,500 square metres; number of Local Councils who participated – 53 up from 44 last year. A further 12 chose to promote the day only.

MINMI FIRE STATION FIRE FIGHTERS CLIMB FOR MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—On Saturday 9 November, more than 600 firefighters climbed the iconic Sydney Tower Eye in full structural firefighting ensemble to raise money and awareness for Motor Neurone Disease. Our very own Minmi Fire and Rescue NSW Station took part and raised valuable funds for this important cause. The crew raced up all 1504 stairs, 98 floors, of the Sydney Tower Eye, each carrying an additional 20kg of gear. It was a gruelling challenge, however it is nothing in comparison to the challenge patients with MND face every day. The crew dedicated floor 34 of the climb to Chris Fanning, a teacher who was diagnosed with MND in February 2018. As each one of the four passed the floor, they took a quiet moment to remember why they were doing the climb. Together the Minmi Fire and Rescue crew raised more than \$5300. Congratulations and thank you to Andrew Paoletti, Mick Hodges, Lindsay Parker and Joel Fisher for taking part. Also a big thank you to everyone who donated to this wonderful cause.

JASON BEHRENDT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—I congratulate Jason Behrendt of Gympie Bay for winning the Law Society of NSW President's Medal 2019. The President's Medal is an annual award recognising significant personal and professional contributions to the betterment of law and justice in the community by a NSW solicitor and member of the Law Society of NSW. Mr Behrendt is committed to justice for Indigenous people and has previously worked

for the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Mr Behrendt has acted for many years as an external adviser to Aboriginal land councils and representative bodies. He has extensive knowledge and experience in relation to land rights, native title law and natural resources law. Mr Behrendt is currently a board member of the Law and Justice Foundation and Chair of the Law Society of NSW Indigenous Issue Committee.

2019 BAYSIDE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—In the Kogarah electorate we are lucky to have some fantastic local businesses that create a vibrant commercial environment and provide employment for thousands of local people. That's why I am pleased to support the local business in the Kogarah electorate that received an Award at the 2019 Bayside Business Awards last month. There were a number of award categories to be won on the evening and there was a strong amount of competition between the nominees, with some wonderful local businesses on display. It was a great opportunity to recognise businesses that have excelled in their field and made a positive contribution to the Bayside area. Our community is better because of the success and commitment of the people own these businesses together with the hard working people they employ. The winners from the Kogarah electorate were IT Super Store, who won Excellence in Retail; and Guardian Funerals who won Excellence in Service and Trade. I congratulate all the businesses and individuals nominated, especially the successful recipients of this year's 2019 Bayside Business Awards.

GOLDEN HEART CHARITY FUNDRAISING DINNER 2019

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—It was a pleasure to attend the Golden Heart Charity Fundraising Dinner on Saturday, 26th October 2019 at Bankstown's Liberty Palace Function Centre, raising over \$97,000 to be directed towards a much-needed lung function machine for Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital to assist in the early diagnosis of pulmonary diseases. I acknowledge and congratulate the event organiser and President of the Vietnamese-Australian Medical Association Dr Vinh Binh Lieu OAM, as well as the Australian Dragon Business Association and all those involved with the Golden Heart Charity Organisation on the success of this year's fundraiser and I thank Dr Lieu for inviting me to say a few words and for his heartfelt hospitality on the night.

The Golden Heart Charity Organisation was founded in 2008 to raise funds for the Liverpool Hospital maternity ward and since then the charity has raised over \$500,000 for many worthy organisations and causes, including Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, Fairfield Hospital, the Victorian Bushfires and Queensland Flood Relief Appeals, as well as to benefit refugees in Thailand and to combat tuberculosis in Vietnam. It is wonderful to have the Golden Heart Charity Organisation making such a tremendous contribution to communities locally and abroad.

IMOGEN MCDONALD

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I congratulate Inverell High School student Imogen McDonald on being selected as one of four young women from rural NSW for a trip to Canberra to meet with influential female politicians, mentors and CEOs as part of the Country to Canberra leadership competition. In her application to the competition, Imogen was recognised for her thoughtful and terrific ideas about leadership and diversity. As part of the trip, Imogen will take part in a women's breakfast at the Hyatt Hotel, meetings with Federal Government Ministers, a careers fair, leadership and public speaking training supported by TedX and a tour of Parliament that includes tickets to question time. Imogen also participated in the NSW YMCA Youth Parliament earlier this year and is to be commended on her passion and advocacy for not only her community but also for the young women and men across rural NSW. I wish her all the best for this upcoming trip to Canberra.

BEROWRA FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—I would like to congratulate Berowra Football Club on not only a successful 2019 season but also their 60th anniversary. Premierships went to the Under 16 Division 3 side, the Girls Under 16 division 2 side and the Mens' Over 35's division 6 side. A special mention goes to the Mens' All Age 2 Premiers who won their first 12 matches straight and have earned a promotion to Premier League. The Under 11 T3 State Cup team also took out the championship.

This year the club focused on increasing female participation in the sport. The club has also implemented a new development program for all the younger players. This focuses on learning the skills players need to not only learn the game but have the most fun on the pitch. They are already looking forward to next season and 2020 will see the Cobra Academy introduced to provide pathways for development. Off the field the club inducted four new life members and I would like to congratulate Angelo Toliopoulos, Ross Smith, George and Jo Zafos for their service along with President Brad Rayner and the amazing committee for another fantastic year.

PAINT THE TOWN REaD MARRICKVILLE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Paint the Town REaD in Marrickville teaches families, early childhood educators and communities the importance of literacy for growing minds. 90 percent of a child's brain develops before the age of 5 and teaching kids reading a writing is essential to giving them the best start before school. I know it can hard in our hectic lives to read with our kids, but also how exciting it is to watch them learn a new word or write their own name. From cradle to kindergarten, Paint the Town REaD seeks to ensure kids have the necessary reading and literacy skills for starting school, no matter their backgrounds.

The program is part of a network of over 90 community organisations around Australia that seek to engage all areas of our community, to create an imaginative community approach to improving children's literacy. I was thrilled to have joined Paint Marrickville Read and Marrickville Council earlier this year to launch 1 million kids reading initiative. Thank you to all the community volunteers at Paint the Town REaD Marrickville: you encourage us to take time to engage the brains and literacy of our little ones.

JOSH MARSH

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I bring to the attention of the House the heroism of young Josh Marsh. On 30 October 2019, Josh was out for a surf at the Farm at Killalea. While on the beach he spotted a 16-year-old boy struggling to swim in the water. Josh grabbed his board and paddled out to the boy who it turns out had been hit in the head with a surfboard while swimming with his friends. Despite the boy in the water being dazed and confused and quite few years older than Josh, he managed to get him onto the board and safely escort him back to the beach. Paramedics arrived at the scene, the boy was taken to hospital to be monitored for concussion and discharged later that night. Josh is a member of the Pines Surfing Academy and says his rescue training by the Academy just kicked in that afternoon. On behalf of my community, I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to Josh Marsh for his outstanding bravery and lifesaving instincts. It's thanks to his actions that a young man made it home safe that night. Congratulations and thank you, Josh.

NSW INDO-CHINA CHINESE ASSOCIATION AND TIEN HAU TEMPLE CELEBRATIONS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—On Sunday 27th October I had the great pleasure of attending a very special event hosted by the NSW Indo-China Chinese Association Inc and Tien Hau Temple at Iron Chef in Cabramatta. The evening was a special double celebration for the Indo-China Chinese Association and Tien Hau Temple as they celebrated the 40th Anniversary since the founding of the association and its temple in Canley Vale. Additionally, the celebration also marked the inaugural Mazu parade march from Canley to Cabramatta which would be the first parade of its kind to occur anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere.

The evening was well attended and also served to welcome the establishment of the Australian Mazu Cultural Exchange Association Inc, the Australian Chinese Tea Cultural Exchange Association and the Lily Cheng International Dance Academy – Canley Vale Branch. On behalf of the community, congratulations to the association President Mr Henry Wu and Chairman Mr To Ha Huynh and the organising committee for their tireless work in creating social harmony and for their promotion of heritage and culture here in our community.

KRYSTAL RAE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—Mister Speaker,

I rise to recognise Casula resident Krystal Rae, who recently participated in the Australian Masters Games held in Adelaide. Krystal is a member of the Liverpool Catholic Club Ice Skating Club. At the Games, she competed in figure skating. She performed her mastered routine to the song Everybody Wants to Rule the World. Krystal's routines won her two medals, she won a silver medal in the technical competition in the ladies 30-49 category and a bronze in the artistic competition. Mr Speaker, it always amazes me to see someone rise to the top of their chosen passion. I strongly believe that she has done just that. I cannot wait to see what she will achieve next. Once again Mr Speaker, I congratulate Ms Krystal Rae on her incredible achievement of receiving two medals at the Australian Masters Games held in Adelaide.

STEPHANIE GULLO SCARBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—I wish to congratulate Stephanie Gullo from Scarborough Public School who, last month, was honoured in Sydney with a Fred Hollows Humanity Award from the Fred Hollows Foundation. This award recognises Year 6 students who make a positive difference in their community and I commend her on being the recipient of such a prestigious award. I was particularly pleased to receive this news as in 2018, Stephanie also received the Heathcote Parliamentary Award for Scarborough Public School. She was nominated by her Principal, Chris Hopkins, for being an exemplary leader and citizen of her school. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours especially as she transitions into High School next year.

MUM FOR MUM

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—I rise before the house today to congratulate Executive Director Nadene Alhadeff and her team at the MUM FOR MUM charity for the vital work they do. The program is a confidential, non-denominational, home visiting program where trained volunteers who are mothers themselves visit a vulnerable mother in her last trimester of pregnancy and for the first year of their baby's life in order to provide emotional support. MUM FOR MUM aims to relieve isolation and reduce anxiety and depression through creating a safe and caring space for mums to delight in their babies and develop secure attachment.

Their noble vision is that every baby is given the chance to thrive in their formative first year of life. MUM FOR MUM recently held a series of eight fundraisers in people's homes to bolster funding to support vulnerable new mothers, raising more than \$30,000. There are currently 120 mothers being supported by 110 volunteers at a cost of \$2000 per volunteer. Reported outcomes over time include increased parenting competence, confidence and well-being, increased community connectedness. The benefits for government include evidence-based cost effective service provision, eased demand on other services and community cohesion.

BAULKHAM HILLS FIRE STATION WELCOMES NEW RECRUIT

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—Baulkham Hills Fire Station has welcomed one new firefighter, Albert Wilson, after graduating at the Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) Emergency Services Academy in Western Sydney on 25 October 2019. Albert has proven himself capable of meeting the challenges of being a firefighter over months of intense training, and we are lucky to have him on the front line keeping our community safe. I take this opportunity to also congratulate the new recruits who graduated alongside Albert at the Academy and welcome them into the firefighting family.

They are a special group of men and women trained to be prepared for anything, and I know they will uphold the high standards of integrity, courage, and professionalism expected of a FRNSW firefighter. These recruits have shown they have the diverse skills, capabilities, and talents required to undertake the varied work that our firefighters do – from educating the community about fire safety and providing emergency medical care to responding to natural disasters and hazmat incidents. This is the third FRNSW graduation in 2019 with another ceremony scheduled for later in the year to bolster frontlines across the State.

CRANE BROOK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)—As the end of the 2019 school year is quickly approaching, I wish to thank and recognise the outgoing Cranebrook High School Leadership team for the positive and valuable contributions they have made across their school community. School Captains: Mikayla Carlin and Onyekachi Nwanganga, and Vice Captains: Tahlia Maher, Talia Shepherd and Shayla Raward, thank you and I wish you all the very best for your future pursuits. Additionally, I extend my congratulations to the incoming student leadership team for 2020, Captains: Amo Aperaamo and Dana Ragg and Vice Captains: Jetta Catford and Anthony Gonzalez.

ZAC CAMPBELL AND CONNOR MARKOVICH

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Northern NSW Football referees Zac Campbell and Connor Markovich, who officiated at the FFA National Youth Championships for Boys last month. The tournament saw the country's best 13 and 14-year-old footballers compete over five days in Coffs Harbour, giving both the players and officials exposure to an elite competition. Zac and Connor were able to receive coaching from some of FFA's best instructors, as they continue to develop their skills and strive towards becoming elite football referees. They were selected as a result of their past performance and potential. Referees are often the unsung heroes of sport, but Zac and Connor's commitment to improving themselves and the game is to be commended. Both did a wonderful job at the National Youth Championships, and I look forward to seeing them officiate at an even higher level in the future.

MOSMAN CARERS' GROUP

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker

I rise to acknowledge Mosman Carers' Group, which was recently nominated for a Pride of Australia Award. Mosman Carers' Group is providing a helping hand for those who help most, and I am pleased to see their important role in our community being celebrated. Established 16 years ago to provide a support network for carers, Mosman Carers' Group runs all-day outings, hosts events, and provides much-appreciated learning resources and peer-support for carers in my electorate. I wish to particularly thank the group's coordinator Liz Nagel for her commitment to providing local carers with an opportunity to relax, share their experiences, and ensure they are taking care of themselves.

Carers are providing crucial support for vulnerable members of our society, but it can sometimes be a lonely and isolating role. Mosman Carers' Group offers more than just a cup of tea and a biscuit, their weekly meetings provide a welcoming environment where carers can chat with people who understand and share their day to day challenges. I thank all the carers in North Shore, and across NSW, for the immense contribution they make to our society.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month attained a special significance in the years following the First World War. The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in that war, and in all wars. I was honoured to take part in the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the Adamstown War Memorial on 11th November 2019. Other ceremonies were held in Redhead, Cardiff and Dudley.

Those of us gathered there from the Adamstown RSL Sub-branch and local community were able to take time to reflect on the hardships endured by men, women and children in every war, and to remember our military personnel on active service on our behalf today. I am grateful to all those who took part in the ceremony including Gerard Williams, President of the Adamstown ANZAC Committee; Rob Russell, CEO of Awabakal Aboriginal Land Council; Father Chris Bird, Parish Priest of Adamstown; Lieutenant Emma Watson, Sue Maxworthy of Kotara South Public School; Saint Columba's School who sang the anthem, and Gary Mitchell who spoke about five soldiers from Morgan Street Adamstown who died in the First World War. Lest we forget.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—It was truly an honour to attend the special commemoration ceremony at Castle Hill RSL Club remembering the 100th Anniversary of Armistice. Together with the Federal Member for Mitchell The Hon Alex Hawke, the Mayor of The Hills Shire Michelle Byrne and Deputy Mayor Reena Jethi, and other guests including Commander Paul Garai of the Royal Australian Navy, we witnessed a wonderful ceremony which included wreath and poppy laying ceremony, Prayer to the Fallen and Prayer for the Queen, and a special address by Mr Melvin Evin from the Turkish Chapter of the Cumberland RSL Sub-Branch. It was great to see our young ANZAC Ambassadors take part in the ceremony and I think it is wonderful knowing that the youth of today are involved and educated about the sacrifice of their forefathers and our soldiers still serving today. I'd like to congratulate the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch on a very poignant ceremony. Lest We Forget.

ST NARSAI ASSYRIAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—It was an honour to attend the St Narsai Assyrian Christian College expansion opening ceremony officiated by His Eminence Mar Meelis Zaia, Archbishop of the Assyrian Church of the East, Diocese of Australia New Zealand and Lebanon. St Narsai Assyrian College imbues students them with the skills and values to become active citizens in our community and Australia while ensuring that they continue to reflect the faith, heritage, language and culture of the Assyrian Church of the East. The new facilities, including impressive science classrooms, spaces for creative and performing arts and a beautiful outdoor courtyard garden, will help to ensure that students continue to receive an education that will put them in good stead for the future.

Bishop Haigazon Najarian of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Reverend Father Nektarios Nemme, representing Archbishop Basilios Kodseie of the Antiochian Orthodox Church were in attendance to give the school their blessings. I would like to thank Principal Mr Edwar Dinkha and all of the teachers for the work that they continue to do to educate our young people and shape them into great community members. May our Lord God Bless their endeavours.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:09 until
Wednesday 13 November 2019 at 9:30.**