



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country. [*During the giving of notices of motions*]

Notices

PRESENTATION

The SPEAKER: I again reinforce to members the requirement that notices of motions be kept to 30 seconds. I remind members that the Procedure Committee will consider formalising this requirement within the standing orders.

Bills

EVIDENCE AMENDMENT (TENDENCY AND COINCIDENCE) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 25 February 2020.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (12:16:47): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Evidence Act 1995. That Act is part of a uniform evidence law scheme, which has similar provisions in the New South Wales, Victorian, Tasmanian, Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions. The amendments are said to arise from the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The final report of that commission was handed down in 2017. The proposed amendments are set out in the objects of the bill:

- (a) to clarify that principles or rules of the common law or equity preventing or restricting the admissibility of evidence about propensity or similar fact evidence are not relevant when applying Part 3.6 of the principal Act,
- (b) to provide that a court, when assessing the probative value of evidence under Part 3.6 of the principal Act, is not to have regard to the possibility that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination,
- (c) to introduce a rebuttable presumption that certain tendency evidence relating to a child sexual offence is presumed to have significant probative value and to set out matters that may not ordinarily be taken into account by a court to overcome that presumption and determine that the evidence does not have significant probative value,
- (d) to clarify that coincidence evidence includes evidence from multiple witnesses claiming they are victims of an accused person, which is used to prove, on the basis of similarities in their evidence, that the accused person did a particular act,
- (e) to provide that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence adduced by the prosecution about a defendant is inadmissible unless the probative value of the evidence outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant, and
- (f) to provide that the proposed Act does not affect proceedings where a hearing has already begun or notices given in proceedings.

I note the public support for the implementation of these amendments from figures such as Dr Annie Cossins and Karen Willis. These amendments are to part 3.6 of the Evidence Act, which deals with tendency evidence and coincidence evidence. The aim and purpose is explicitly to facilitate greater admissibility of coincidence and tendency evidence. In his second reading speech the Attorney General said there was a particular focus on the greater admissibility of tendency evidence in criminal proceedings for child sexual offences. Tendency and coincidence evidence is not normally admitted unless it satisfies the requirements of the Evidence Act. This bill seeks to loosen those requirements. The royal commission established that in relation to child sexual abuse the criminal justice system saw lower reporting rates, higher attrition rates, lower charging and prosecution rates, fewer guilty pleas and fewer convictions than with other offences. In its section on tendency and coincidence evidence, the commission's final report said this:

How the criminal justice system deals with allegations against an individual of sexual offending against more than one child is one of the most significant issues we have identified in our criminal justice work.

The report correctly conceded that these are complex and technical issues, which have troubled the courts for many years. It also pointed to the High Court's decision from June 2017 regarding the case involving Robert Hughes and concluded that it is still not clear that the test for admissibility of tendency evidence will be able to be consistently applied in this "vexed" area. Nor did that case, in the commission's view, address the issue

of admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence to the extent necessary to prevent injustice to the victims of child sexual assault. I note in passing that the report predated the case of Dennis Bauer. On pages 71 and 72 the commission's Criminal Justice Report stated:

In relation to the test for admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, we have concluded that the first limb of the test for admissibility should reflect a test of relevance but with some enhancement. In order to avoid the more practical concerns of the courts and others about collateral litigation and the jury being distracted from the issues in the trial, we consider that a test—drawing on the approach in England and Wales—that requires that the tendency or coincidence evidence be "relevant to an important evidentiary issue" in the case should be adopted. In relation to the second limb of the test for admissibility, we do not accept the current unequal weighting of the test in favour of exclusion. That is, it is not clear why the probative value of the evidence should be required to "substantially outweigh" the risk of unfair prejudice.

The commission's report went on to state:

We are satisfied that there should be provision made to enable a judge to exclude the tendency or coincidence evidence if it is more likely than not to result in the trial, as a whole, being unfair to the accused in a manner that will not be cured by directions. At both stages of the test for admissibility, we consider it necessary to expressly exclude the common law. The interpretation of the Uniform Evidence Act provisions to date demonstrates how difficult it has been for the courts to apply the statutory provisions without importing common law assumptions, particularly as to unfair prejudice.

Additionally, the report stated:

We also recommend that the possibility of concoction, collusion or contamination should not affect the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence. The impact of any evidence of concoction, collusion or contamination should be left to the jury.

Those views are reflected in the recommendations of the report and those recommendations are, in turn, broadly reflected in the provisions of the bill before the House. The potential problem is whether this renders the changes unfair to the accused. Instinctively I would think not, granted the figures from the commission report that I cited previously. More substantively, the report highlights the position in Western Australia, where the bar for admission of such evidence is already low and has been for some time. There is apparently no suggestion from that jurisdiction that unfairness flows from that regime. I note that the commission proposed a draft amendment to the uniform code in appendix N of its report; that provision is not adopted in the bill. There certainly seem to be some variances but I am not critical of the fact that there are.

The present rule for admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence is usually expressed as having two limbs. The first limb is that the evidence has significant probative value. The second is that the probative value of the evidence substantially outweighs any prejudicial effect it may have on the defendant. There is also a notice requirement. New section 97A is inserted into the Act to alter the application of the first limb in relation to child sexual assault offences—that is, only in that category of criminal cases. New section 97A (2) provides a presumption that particular tendency evidence will have significant probative value for the purposes of the first limb of the test. That evidence is tendency evidence about the sexual interest the defendant has or had in children and also tendency evidence about the defendant acting on a sexual interest that the defendant has or had in children.

This is the case whether or not the interest was directed at the complainant, at any other child or at children generally. However, the court may determine that this tendency evidence does not have sufficient probative value if there are sufficient grounds to do so. New subsection (5) sets out matters that are not to be taken into account when determining whether there are sufficient grounds to find that tendency evidence does not have significant probative value and thus would not be admitted. The aim of that subsection is to prevent myths and misconceptions contaminating the reasoning of the court. Section 98 is amended by adding a new subsection (1A), which deals with coincidence evidence. I note the Attorney General's explanation in his second reading speech that this provision is consistent with the current position in New South Wales but provides a clear basis for the admissibility of the sort of evidence referred to in that section.

In accordance with a royal commission recommendation, proposed new section 94 (4) excludes any principle or rule of common law or equity that prevents or restricts the admissibility of evidence about propensity or similar fact evidence. That would logically follow from the regime of part 3.6 of the Act—although despite that, as the royal commission report stated, those rules and principles still seem to find their way into some judgements. New section 94 (5) prevents the possibility that evidence is the result of collusion, concoction or contamination from being considered when determining the probative value of the evidence. When admitted as evidence, it is up to the tribunal of fact to place on it whatever weight they consider appropriate.

The change to section 101 is of a different type from the rest of the bill. It is a change to the second limb of the test but it applies to all criminal matters, not just child sexual offence cases, and thus goes well beyond the recommendation of the royal commission. The evidence base for this proposal is far less clear than that for the rest of the bill. The current provision provides for the admission of evidence where the probative value of the evidence substantially outweighs any prejudicial effect it may have on the defendant. It is to be replaced by the following:

... the probative value of the evidence outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant ...

The Attorney General said that this language would mirror section 137 of the Act. He also said that legal stakeholders largely supported the change. I should indicate for the record that the New South Wales Bar Association has said to me, in relation to the bill generally but particularly in relation to that provision, that:

We were fully consulted during the development of the legislation and don't have any particular comment to make at this stage.

To that extent, the Attorney General's comments seem to be well and truly justified. Certainly this provision seems to lower the bar for admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in all criminal cases, not just in child sexual offence cases. The changes will not apply to proceedings that begin before the Act commences. The Act will commence on 1 May 2020. I conclude with three general comments. Some legal practitioners with whom I have discussed this matter think the High Court decision made in *The Queen v Dennis Bauer* (a pseudonym) [2018] HCA 40, in practical terms, has already lowered the bar for admission of such evidence, and that the changes in this legislation are in that sense not as stark as they might at first appear—that is, the High Court was heading in this direction in any event.

The second point is that inevitably, and particularly in relation to the changes to the second limb, we are likely to spawn an entirely new area of jurisprudence. There is likely to be a whole range of lawyers arguing about exactly what the words in that second limb mean. That is not a reason to oppose the bill; it is simply an inevitable consequence of changing the words. It is worth acknowledging that changing the law—in a way that pretty well all members in this House think is going in the right direction—is going to have those sorts of consequences. The third general point I make is that tendency and coincidence evidence is already a complex and highly technical area of the law. As the royal commission has said, it is an area that is vexed.

Taking one category of cases out of that regime and treating them in an entirely different way will add to the complexity, not reduce it. I do not say that in criticism of the bill, but it is important for us to recognise what we are doing here. Whilst I suspect that those changes will get no opposition in this Chamber, we need to understand that it will add to the complexity of the law in this space. In that context I refer briefly to a communication I have had from David Hamer, who is the professor of evidence law at the University of Sydney Law School. Mr Hamer has written to me about this and has prepared an item that will be appearing in the April version of the *Australian Law Journal*. He makes the point that the law as proposed is, in his words, "absurdly complex".

He also makes the point that the reform focuses on tendency evidence rather than coincidence evidence. The actual consequence of that is likely to be that the prosecution will characterise evidence of a defendant's other misconduct as tendency evidence rather than coincidence evidence, even where it more naturally fits the latter characterisation. As I have said, this is not in any way an opposition to the bill or necessarily criticism. I am simply making the point that these are the consequences that flow from making changes that we support to terribly complex areas of the law. As I have indicated, the Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:28:42): I make a contribution to debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse closely considered tendency and coincidence evidence and its use in child sexual abuse proceedings. The royal commission's extensive work on this issue was informed by research that it commissioned, submissions, expert evidence and several case studies. It led to eight recommendations for legislative reform across uniform evidence law jurisdictions and ultimately a national reform process to consider and respond to those recommendations. That close attention from the royal commission and the strong response to its recommendations in the bill reflect the unique importance that tendency and coincidence evidence can have in child sexual offence proceedings. I will explain why it is important because it is a key reason that the bill is so necessary.

As the royal commission noted, tendency and coincidence evidence can be critically important in child sexual assault proceedings because such offences are generally committed in private, often have no eyewitnesses, often are reported years after the offending occurred and may not be possible to confirm with medical or scientific evidence. The fact in issue in those proceedings is often whether the offence or offences occurred rather than the identity of the accused. In those circumstances, the trier of fact is effectively considering the word of the complainant against that of the accused. When tendency and coincidence evidence is admissible it can contribute to the trier of fact concluding that it is more likely that the alleged offence or offences occurred, as the allegation is supported by evidence from other complainants or witnesses who allege that the accused also sexually abused them. It can also provide crucial support to the complainant's reliability or credibility.

The royal commission also noted that defendants in proceedings for child sexual offences had often offended against multiple victims. This is consistent with studies that suggest that the "propensity" of such offenders is particularly high. In those circumstances, it may be more likely that relevant tendency or coincidence evidence could be available. I emphasise that the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence can also

impact on whether a joint trial is held to determine charges against an accused by multiple complainants. This is because a joint trial is less likely to proceed when tendency and coincidence evidence is not cross-admissible.

If a joint trial is not held, often restrictions on the evidence can be adduced and the full picture of the accused's alleged criminality is not presented to the jury. This can also make it particularly challenging for complainants to give evidence. Joint trials can be important for building a sense of unity and mutual support amongst complainants and can significantly reduce the length and thus the cost of criminal proceedings. It is of course always imperative that relevant evidence be admissible in criminal proceedings unless it jeopardises the fairness of the trial. The bill not only will strike the right balance in terms of the admissibility of evidence but also directly supports greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in the particular context of child sexual offence proceedings. As I have explained, this is significant and should be supported.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (12:33:01): I make a contribution to debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. What I say should be seen to be endorsing the remarks made by the member for Liverpool. The time allotted to me does not allow me to go into the detail of the provisions of the bill. However, I want to make some observations from almost a lifetime in the criminal justice system where I have appeared for people charged with offences of this nature and have prosecuted them. Ever since the enactment of the Evidence Act, which was supposed to be a uniform evidence law but initially was adopted only by New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory and still has not been adopted uniformly across the country, the provisions of sections 97, 98 and 101 that relate to tendency and coincidence have caused huge difficulties in all areas of criminal law. In fact, until the High Court determined *Bauer* in 2018 it is fair to say that nobody really knew what they actually meant.

Prior to the enactment of the Evidence Act everybody knew what similar fact evidence was. If uncharged acts were strikingly similar, we knew it when we saw it. But adding the level of complexity and the wording used in sections 97 and 98 and then applying in criminal matters the test in section 101 has meant the courts have struggled to apply them. Most of the time the use of tendency and coincidence evidence applied to sex offences, particularly child sex offences. It was those offences where evidence of uncharged acts was to be led by the Crown in an effort to show that the charged acts of an accused were not acts in isolation. It makes common sense that if a child is able to give evidence of certain acts occurring to them and there is evidence of other similar acts occurring then that evidence should be admitted so that the evidence can be considered "in context" so that the allegations are not allegations in isolation—that sexual interest can be proved. That makes common sense. The problem is that the words of the statute made it extremely difficult for anyone to apply.

The royal commission chaired by Justice Peter McClellan did outstanding work. I remind the House that the royal commission related to institutional abuse. Anecdotally, from my experience of the criminal justice system, I would hazard a guess that institutional abuse is a minority area of the abuse that is occurring to children. So much of it permeates society and always has permeated society. But in terms of the breadth and difficulty of that evidence, there is no better person to be responsible for preparing the report than Justice McClellan. When he was at the bar he was an expert at being able to distil expert evidence.

In 2017 the royal commission made recommendations in respect of tendency and coincidence evidence and from its investigation it attributed the inability of the Crown to lead evidence as tendency and coincidence as being responsible for the acquittal of guilty offenders. If that be the view of Justice McClellan, I respect it and I value it. Trial judges have told me anecdotally that since the McClellan report there has been, without a change of the law, an increase in the number of convictions for those offences—uncorroborated historical offences. Judges speculate that it may well be that the community, through their representatives, have greater knowledge of those offences than they had prior to the royal commission and the publicity associated with the royal commission.

Since the royal commission's report and recommendation, the Council of Attorneys-General has spent quite a considerable period in an effort to adopt a uniform approach to tendency and coincidence. That uniform approach is contained in the bill proposed by the Attorney General. The only observation I make in respect of it is this: Since the royal commission's recommendation, the High Court determined *R v Bauer* [2018] HCA 40, where it gave a unanimous judgement on three very important issues:

When is tendency evidence admissible in a sexual assault case where there is a single complainant?

How should a judge balance the different statutory considerations on when to allow pre-recorded evidence from a previous trial? What can a judge consider when deciding whether previous representation evidence is "fresh in the memory"? The Court acknowledged that their previous judgments on tendency evidence had caused difficulty, and they must provide a clear test for trial judges ...

In fact, *Bauer* holds the distinction of being a unanimous High Court judgment on tendency evidence. Unlike a number of its previous decisions, the court has spoken with one voice to provide guidance to lawyers, trial judges and appellate courts on how to deal with single complainant evidence cases. Such cases often involve few

witnesses and so surrounding circumstances can be significant for a jury. Following its determination, work commenced by the Attorneys General concluded afterwards and some changes have been proposed in this bill. I do not oppose the changes because, despite the High Court's unanimous judgement to clarify wording in sections 97, 98 and 101, to this day I am not sure what it means. To clarify section 101, which is to apply to all criminal cases, the bill states:

Omit "the probative value of the evidence substantially outweighs any prejudicial effect it may have on the defendant" from section 101 (2).

Insert instead "the probative value of the evidence outweighs any danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant".

That makes more sense. Lawyers, judges and I know what that means. As the member for Liverpool observed, this will open up another area of jurisprudence. It will provide another argument for lawyers to appeal decisions of the court when the issues seem to have been settled by Bauer and the High Court. I add that caveat in relation to the amendments, although I understand the basis for them. I give the House the benefit of my advice from both prosecuting and defending hundreds of these cases that, whether you prosecute or defend or you are the judge presiding, nobody likes having the conduct of such cases. The Crown wants to put before the jury evidence of uncharged acts that make it more likely or not that an accused has acted in the way in which the Crown charges. That is the evidence the Crown wishes to lead. [*Extension of time*]

The bill tries to make clear the circumstances under which that evidence is admissible. The House should appreciate that if we were to listen to the directions that a jury needs to be given when uncharged acts are to be utilised as tendency evidence, as distinct from context evidence, we would realise that the jury has no idea what the judge is talking about. I have listened to the judge give the required legal directions hundreds of times and seen the eyes of jurors glaze over. The complexity of the law and of the wording makes it extremely difficult even for a lawyer to understand the directions, let alone a jury. Even the High Court struggled to get it right until Bauer, after many years of appellate courts throughout this country and the High Court in majority-minority judgements trying to give guidance to trial courts.

When a jury is confused about the legal directions there is a fear that perhaps their complexity does not allow the jury, as a trier of fact, necessarily to understand what they do. Recently I raised that matter with some judges, who reminded me that not only have there have been more convictions without a change in the law since the royal commission but also juries have been relatively discreet in their verdicts. For example, there might be five counts charged in respect of one complainant of which the jury has convicted on three and acquitted on two. Despite the complexity of the directions that juries are bound to receive, the juries have been shown to be discreet. I provide that anecdotal material to the House.

This change in the law does not necessarily change the law relating to all uncharged acts. There are uncharged acts that do not fit within tendency and coincidence that would still be led as context. It may well be that some prosecutors, including me at times, have preferred not to rely on tendency but have led the evidence anyway as context. I did that because I wanted to have the evidence of uncharged acts before the jury so the jury would know about them and the judge's directions would be as simple as possible at the end of the day to judge the evidence. Fortunately, in all those cases the jury convicted the accused. Again, to provide a fair trial it is essential that the jury understand precisely what the directions are.

The particular parts of the bill that amend sections 97 and 98 and add new section 97A operate as a clarification of the law. They are still complex and are not designed to ensure an unfair trial of an accused. They are designed to ensure that uncharged acts can be more simply admitted as tendency and coincidence, and to repair an area of the law that every court—every appellate court including the High Court—has struggled with since the enactment of the Evidence Act.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:47:32): I support the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I bring to this debate my experience prosecuting as a detective and as a defence lawyer. I agree with my colleagues' comments about the importance of the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The significance of the work of the royal commission and the value of the comprehensive response by the New South Wales Government through its recommendations cannot be underestimated. It is for this reason that I am pleased to support the bill. The bill will achieve the objectives of the royal commission in relation to the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence as outlined in recommendations 44 to 51 of the Criminal Justice report.

The royal commission found that the operation of existing evidence law excludes relevant tendency and coincidence evidence in child sexual offence proceedings, resulting in "unjust outcomes in the form of unwarranted acquittals." It considered that the existing rules unnecessarily render evidence inadmissible in criminal proceedings and unnecessarily prevent joint trials, concluding that "the criminal justice system is failing to provide adequate criminal justice for victims." Tendency evidence is evidence of the character, reputation or

conduct of a person, or a tendency that a person has or had, adduced to prove that a person has or had a tendency to act in a particular way or to have a particular state of mind.

An example is evidence that an accused person has a tendency to be sexually attracted to young boys and to act on that attraction. A jury may reason that this tendency makes it more likely that the accused person committed the particular offences that are the subject of the prosecution. Similarly, it could apply for a person charged with stealing who has committed many other offences of stealing. Coincidence evidence is evidence that two or more events occurred that are adduced to prove that a person did a particular act or had a particular state of mind on the basis that, having regard to any similarities in the events or the circumstances in which they occurred or any similarities in both the events and the circumstances in which they occurred, it is improbable that the events occurred coincidentally.

An example is multiple complainants alleging that an accused person abused them when they were children. A jury may reason that it is improbable that the similar allegations are a coincidence, making it more probable that the accused also committed the particular offences that are the subject of the prosecution. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to clarify that principles or rules of the common law or equity preventing or restricting the admissibility of evidence about propensity or similar fact evidence are not relevant when applying Part 3.6 of the principal Act,
- (b) to provide that a court, when assessing the probative value of evidence under Part 3.6 of the principal Act, is not to have regard to the possibility that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination,
- (c) to introduce a rebuttable presumption that certain tendency evidence relating to a child sexual offence is presumed to have significant probative value and to set out matters that may not ordinarily be taken into account by a court to overcome that presumption and determine that the evidence does not have significant probative value,
- (d) to clarify that coincidence evidence includes evidence from multiple witnesses claiming they are victims of an accused person, which is used to prove, on the basis of similarities in their evidence, that the accused person did a particular act,
- (e) to provide that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence adduced by the prosecution about a defendant is inadmissible unless the probative value of the evidence outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant,
- (f) to provide that the proposed Act does not affect proceedings where a hearing has already begun or notices given in proceedings.

The royal commission recommended that evidence law be reformed to facilitate greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, particularly as part of the prosecution case in child sexual abuse proceedings, and set out a model for legislative reform that it suggested could be adopted to implement its recommendations in uniform evidence law jurisdictions. For the test for admissibility, the royal commission recommended that in child sexual offence proceedings tendency or coincidence evidence adduced against the defendant should generally be admissible if the court thinks the evidence, either by itself or having regard to the other evidence, would be relevant to an important evidentiary issue in the proceeding.

This test would be satisfied if the evidence "shows a propensity of the defendant to commit particular kinds of offences if the commission of an offence of the same or a similar kind is in issue in the proceeding" or "is relevant to any matter in issue in the proceeding if the matter concerns an act or state of mind of the defendant and is important in the context of the proceeding as a whole". The royal commission stated that relevant evidence should only be excluded when, on the application of a defendant to refuse to admit tendency or coincidence evidence, the court determines that "admission of the evidence is more likely than not to result in the proceeding being unfair to the defendant" and "if there is a jury, the giving of appropriate directions to the jury about the relevance and use of the evidence will not remove the risk".

As a prosecuting detective, I wanted to admit tendency and coincidence evidence. In sexual assault cases there may be six, seven or eight victims of one offender. It is important that those matters are heard together and that evidence of other allegations makes it into the trial. Defence lawyers try to stop that evidence being presented because the probity value is outweighed by the prejudicial effect on the hearing and the client. That was the conundrum and what these court cases were all about. The bill addresses that issue. Until 1995 common law covered the matter but then the uniform evidence law was brought in. Under common law it was a lot easier to understand the roles and responsibilities of the jury and the trial judge. The Evidence Act made it more difficult.

Broadly speaking, the objectives of the eight recommendations on tendency and coincidence evidence sought to facilitate greater admissibility and cross-admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, as well as more joint trials in child sexual offence proceedings in order to address the injustice to complainants and the community occasioned by the exclusion of this relevant evidence. Whilst this bill is designed to achieve the objectives of the royal commission, it does not replicate the particular terms of its recommendations on the test for admissibility. However, it does directly adopt several aspects of the royal commission's recommendations. For example, when assessing the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence the court will be required to

assume that the evidence is accepted, leaving consideration of any issues of possible collusion, concoction and contamination to the trier of fact.

Common law principles or rules that restrict the admission of propensity or similar fact evidence will be explicitly abolished or excluded for the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence. The decision to depart from the terms of the recommendations of the royal commission for the proposed amendments to the test for admissibility was not taken lightly. It is the result of a two-year law reform process that involved collaboration with all other uniform evidence law jurisdictions and close consultation with key stakeholders. Through that process, all uniform evidence law jurisdictions came to the view that the royal commission's model was unlikely to be the most efficacious way to achieve its objective of facilitating greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence. [*Extension of time*]

A majority of legal stakeholders in New South Wales expressed reservations about how successful the royal commission's recommended approach would be in operation. Some of the compelling concerns raised included that the royal commission's model would not sit comfortably within the existing evidence law framework; was unnecessarily complex and may exacerbate uncertainty; could undermine an accused person's right to a fair trial; and was limited to child sexual offence proceedings. Further, due to its scope, the royal commission's recommendations related only to child sexual offence proceedings. The royal commission was precluded from considering the application of the uniform evidence law in other proceedings or developing a reform model that could apply more broadly.

Whilst this bill ultimately includes a provision targeted to the prosecution of offences in which the commission or alleged commission of a child sexual offence is a fact in issue, the provisions of the bill maintain the same set of rules and processes for child sexual offence proceedings and all other proceedings. The bill also maintains the framework of the uniform evidence law and, unlike the royal commission's recommended approach, does not include the mandatory and discretionary exclusions under sections 135 and 137 of that law.

Overall, the New South Wales Government considers that this bill strikes the appropriate balance between the parties in criminal proceedings. It achieves the objectives of the royal commission without the risks and issues clearly identified by legal experts. The bill represents the next step in a strong and effective response to the recommendations of the royal commission. Turning to several of the sections within the amending bill, new section 97A talks about the admissibility of tendency evidence in proceedings involving child sexual offences. New subsection (1) states:

This section applies in a criminal proceeding in which the commission by the defendant of an act that constitutes, or may constitute, a child sexual offence is a fact in issue.

New subsection (2) states:

It is presumed that the following tendency evidence about the defendant will have significant probative value for the purposes of sections 97(1)(b) and 101 (2).

The bill is saying that it is presumed that tendency evidence about the defendant will have significant probative value. If we go to the old common law, the weight of probative value had to outweigh the prejudicial effect upon the accused. Now we are saying that the probative value far outweighs the prejudicial effect, that it is a presumption of that and it is therefore up to the defence to negative that presumption. So as the probative value—the prejudicial effect—goes to the defence, it is up to the defence to show the judge that it is unfair and prejudices the defence. New subsection (2) (a) refers to:

tendency evidence about the sexual interest the defendant has or had in children (even if the defendant has not acted on the interest),

And new subsection (2) (b) refers to:

tendency evidence about the defendant acting on a sexual interest the defendant has or had in children.

This is something that has been brought about by the recommendations of the royal commission after hearing what has been happening in institutional child sexual assault cases and many other child sexual assault cases in the community. This is a welcome reform of the Evidence Act. I am sure we will learn through cases whether it is overly prejudicial of defence cases. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (13:02:40): I make a contribution to debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. It is no surprise to members of this House that I have spoken about the issues regarding child sexual abuse, especially those that were presented to the royal commission, many times in this House. As members know, my mother, my aunts and my uncles are care leavers, and I am a patron of the Care Leavers Australia Network. They suffered horrific abuse and institutional violence. Many of them have not as yet had their full redress, but some members of my family have had full redress to give an example of just how bad that abuse has been for my family, but also for other families time and time again. It is also no

surprise that I have often talked about victims of crime and advocated for victims of crime in this House and in the community well before I became a member of Parliament.

I am pleased to support this bill put forward by the Attorney General, which obviously is based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. First, I will go through the recommendations put forward by the royal commission. Secondly, I will go through the legislation and then talk about an area where future bills, not this bill, perhaps should go further and beyond just child sexual abuse, because the abuse we see of these children is also something that impacts on women, generally, when it comes to sexual abuse cases and rape cases. Of the many recommendations, I am pleased with this one. First, I will look at royal commission recommendation 44 under "Tendency and coincidence and joint trials", which states:

In order to ensure justice for complainants and the community, the laws governing the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in prosecutions for child sexual abuse offences should be reformed to facilitate greater admissibility and cross-admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence and joint trials.

Recommendation 45 under that section states:

Tendency or coincidence evidence about the defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution should be admissible:

if the court thinks that the evidence will, either by itself or having regard to the other evidence, be 'relevant to an important evidentiary issue' in the proceeding, with each of the following kinds of evidence defined to be 'relevant to an important evidentiary issue' in a child sexual offence proceeding:

It goes on:

- i evidence that shows a propensity of the defendant to commit particular kinds of offences if the commission of an offence of the same or a similar kind is in issue in the proceeding
- ii evidence that is relevant to any matter in issue in the proceeding if the matter concerns an act or state of mind of the defendant and is important in the context of the proceeding as a whole

That is so important because in the past five years we have seen that the child sexual offenders register in New South Wales has increased 500 per cent—500 per cent in five years. Obviously the register is working, as we have been able to identify so many child sex offenders. But when it comes before the court, having a case in isolation, without being joint, without looking at other evidence, which is often predatory behaviour by an individual, it is so important that the judiciary and the jury can see the big picture—can see the whole sexual offending of the individual. Recommendation 45 under "Tendency and coincidence and joint trials" goes on:

- a. unless, on the application of the defendant, the court thinks, having regard to the particular circumstances of the proceeding, that both:
 - i admission of the evidence is more likely than not to result in the proceeding being unfair to the defendant
 - ii if there is a jury, the giving of appropriate directions to the jury about the relevance and use of the evidence will not remove the risk.

So there is a balance there in the judicial process. It is not just saying, "The defender is before us. Let's throw everything about his life and past to the jury or to the judge." They look at balance. They look at predatory behaviour. They look at the history of the individual—of the alleged perpetrator—and then they will make a decision as to how much evidence should be released. So there is a balance. Recommendation 46 under "Tendency and coincidence and joint trials" states:

Common law principles or rules that restrict the admission of propensity or similar fact evidence should be explicitly abolished or excluded in relation to the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence about the defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution.

It continues at recommendation 47:

Issues of concoction, collusion or contamination should not affect the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence about the defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution. The court should determine admissibility on the assumption that the evidence will be accepted as credible and reliable, and the impact of any evidence of concoction, collusion or contamination should be left to the jury or other fact-finder.

When I read that I was reminded of discussions I have had time and again with care leavers that no-one believed their stories when they were kids. Recommendation 47 attempts to get around that—concoction, collusion and contamination, and whether it affects the tendency of the evidence. They are looking for that balance that is so important when cases come before the courts. Recommendation 48 under "Tendency and coincidence and joint trials" states:

Tendency or coincidence evidence about a defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution should not be required to be proved beyond reasonable doubt.

I am very pleased about that recommendation. Recommendation 49 under the same section states:

Evidence of:

- a. the defendant's prior convictions
- b. acts for which the defendant has been charged but not convicted (other than acts for which the defendant has been acquitted) should be admissible as tendency or coincidence evidence if it otherwise satisfies the test for admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence about a defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution.

Recommendation 50 under "Tendency and coincidence and joint trials" is the final recommendation I will speak about. It states:

Australian governments should introduce legislation to make the reforms we recommend to the rules governing the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence.

Those recommendations were made in December 2017. Normally I would be critical of any government that waited perhaps two years to put in place a piece of legislation such as this. However, I know that the State Government, the Attorney General and the previous Attorney General have been talking to the other States and the Federal Government about bringing in this legislation. There is coordination across the country in regard to this legislation. They should be commended for that. It is worth waiting the time to get it right, and I believe that is what the Government and the Attorney General are trying to do here.

I support this bill; I do not oppose it. After reading the bill, it is fairly clear that it is implementing the recommendations I have just gone through. The explanation behind this is that tendency evidence is evidence of character. I think that needs to be understood: The reputation or conduct or tendency a person has—for example, a tendency to be attracted to young boys or young girls—is a tendency. It is not just the first charge or the first time they are before the court; there has been a history to the alleged perpetrator. The explanation behind coincidence evidence is evidence that more than one event has occurred and is allowed into evidence to prove it is improbable that such events occurred coincidentally because of their similarities. This can sometimes be explained when multiple victims are alleging child sexual abuse against one alleged perpetrator.

The Attorney General has put six specific aims in the bill. The first is to clarify the relevance of principles and rules of common law concerning tendency and coincidence provisions of the Evidence Act 1995. The second is to provide that a court, when assessing the probative value of such evidence, is not to have regard to the possibility that it may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination, thus leaving the issue for the jury or tribunal—just like the recommendations from the royal commission. The third aim is to introduce a rebuttable presumption that some tendency evidence in relation to child sexual offences is presumed to have significant probative value and excludes certain matters from being used to overcome presumption.

The fourth aim is to clarify the inclusion of coincidence evidence from multiple witnesses. The fifth aim is to provide that tendency and coincidence is admissible unless the probative value of the evidence outweighs unfair prejudice to the defendant. The sixth and final aim of the bill is to provide that the Act does not affect proceedings where a hearing has already begun and to provide that the Act commences on 1 May. This is part of a uniform scheme, which, as I mentioned before, is coming across the different States in the country. It is extremely important that it is. Perpetrators who have a long history of child sexual abuse move States. They flee their areas. [*Extension of time*]

It is extremely important that these perpetrators cannot flee jurisdictions and go to places where they can hide. We have had a history of that and have seen it happen time and again. I know that in 2019 the Commonwealth and State Attorneys General produced a model bill that they had developed, but New South Wales will be the first jurisdiction in which this model bill is introduced. It is anticipated it will also be introduced in other jurisdictions in due course. I congratulate all the different State governments that end up doing this and I congratulate the Attorney General on pushing this forward.

In my final few minutes I will talk about something I touched on in my introduction—and I could probably talk for hours on this, because it is such an important issue. I am very supportive of the bill, but in future I would like to see members working together to make sure that it does not just relate to child sexual abuse. I think it needs to be expanded to other forms of sexual abuse. Of course, what I am talking about mostly is abuse against women. I had correspondence about this issue with Professor David Hamer, who is a professor of evidence law at the University of Sydney. He has sent me quite a bit of work on this. I will go through some of his ideas, but also add to them, because I think that for future pieces of legislation we need to refocus. He states:

I think that it is appropriate that the evidence be made available to the prosecution. However, I have some grave concerns about the form this legislation takes—

The law is quite complex as it is at the moment; I think we can streamline it in the future. He continues:

First, the (first or two) admissibility test(s) is relaxed, but only in respect of tendency evidence of the defendant's sexual interest in a child in ... proceedings with the commission in issue. NSW law in this area is already overly complex. This makes matters worse. Technicality is extremely inefficient, adding time to pre-trial hearings, trials and increasing the likelihood of appeals.

There is a further problem with limiting this reform to tendency evidence rather than coincidence evidence. The natural consequence is that the prosecution will characterise evidence of a defendant's other misconduct as tendency evidence rather than coincidence evidence, even where it more naturally fits the latter characterisation—where, for example, the prosecution, in reality, is relying upon the improbability of the different alleged victims all telling similar lies. This will hinder jury understanding of the evidence, and increase the risk of prejudice. Courts and law reform bodies in the past recognised that tendency reasoning poses a greater risk of prejudice than coincidence reasoning.

Finally, it is unjust that the reform be limited to child sexual abuse cases. It should extend more broadly, at a minimum, to include prosecutions for sexual assault of women.

The rationale for the reform is that child sex offending is a serious offence that occurs on a wide scale and yet, because of the nature of the offence, it is difficult for the prosecution to prove. Evidence of a defendant's other misconduct can be crucial to a prosecution. However, it is subject to exclusion. The obstacle this presents is not justified.

The rationale applies equally to the sexual assault of women. In fact, in a key respect it is even more difficult to prove the sexual assault of women. The prosecution has to prove the woman's non-consent. And, on this issue it is even harder for the prosecution to rely upon evidence of prior convictions or evidence of other alleged victims. The High Court in the case of Phillips (2006) 225 CLR 303 held that other complainants' lack of consent 'proves only what mental state each of the other complainants had on a particular occasion affecting them, and that can say nothing about the mental state of the first complainant on a particular occasion affecting her'.

If NSW (with other jurisdictions likely to follow) is planning to introduce major reform to increase the admissibility of evidence of a defendant's other misconduct in order to facilitate the prosecution of sexual assault, this should extend (at a minimum) to sexual assault of women. It should not be limited to child sexual assault. And the reform should explicitly overturn the High Court's ... illogical ruling in Phillips.

In my opinion, the New South Wales Parliament should broaden the scope of the planned reforms and, in time, there should be an inquiry into the bill by the Standing Committee on Law and Justice. I commend the bill to the House. I know we need to have child sexual abuse dealt with first, but in the future I would like members to work together to expand it to include not just child sexual abuse, but also assaults on women.

Debate interrupted.

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

Announcements

BUSHFIRES

The SPEAKER (14:15:00): The President of the Legislative Council and I have received a letter dated 25 February 2020 from Senator Toni G. Atkins, President pro Tempore of the Senate of the State of California, expressing the sympathies of the Californian Senate to the people of New South Wales regarding the recent bushfires. I remind members that California is a sister State of New South Wales. I table the letter.

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I inform the House that the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Rulings

QUESTION TIME

The SPEAKER: During question time last Thursday three Opposition members were removed from the Chamber and seven Government members were placed on calls to order. I would prefer that no members are removed from the Chamber today. When a Minister addresses a serious issue in a solemn manner members will listen in silence. When members on one side of the House engage more vigorously I will extend similar latitude to members on the other side of the House. I will extend no latitude when members take frivolous points of order, deliberately attempt to make a statement or interrupt the flow of a Minister's response.

Question Time

TAFE NSW

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:16:36): My question is directed to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister guarantee that no more TAFE NSW teachers and support staff will lose their jobs as a result of his TAFE NSW review?

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (14:17:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. Members on this side of the House have always supported and will

continue to support TAFE NSW. I am surprised that members opposite would not want to see TAFE do better, whether through the improvement of existing courses or the provision of new courses in the future.

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: The review presents great opportunities. I was talking to the NSW Teachers Federation—

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: The NSW Teachers Federation welcomed David Gonski and Peter Shergold heading up the review. I asked permission to mention that in the House and was told, "Go ahead, we support it. We support a review by those eminent leaders in education." The Government does not want to politicise TAFE. It is getting on with the job of delivering—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Opposition is seeking a guarantee that no more TAFE teachers and support staff will lose their jobs. Will the Minister give that guarantee? Will the Minister make that commitment here and now?

Dr GEOFF LEE: The reality is that the Government supports TAFE teachers. I am pleased to report to the House that the 2019 annual report of TAFE NSW shows that, as at 30 June 2019, TAFE employed 5,827 full-time equivalent teachers. That represents an increase of 6.8 per cent on the previous year.

COVID-19

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (14:19:01): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on government action and advice with respect to COVID-19?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:19:10): I thank the member for Vaucluse for her question. I appreciate why she has asked it. Understandably, concern is growing across Australia, and in New South Wales in particular, about the spread of coronavirus. I assure the community that New South Wales is well positioned to deal with that health emergency. Our health system is on alert and is well resourced. All community members should take the advice of health experts and remain calm. Nine cases of coronavirus had been confirmed in New South Wales as at last night. A short time ago I was advised that a tenth case has been confirmed. That is being dealt with and family members are being advised as I speak. However, it is positive that the four diagnosed patients have recovered and have been discharged from hospital. NSW Health is constantly reviewing potential new cases and undertaking contact tracing of all persons who have an association with confirmed cases.

I provide insight into what is currently occurring, without causing alarm, by reporting that more than 3,000 people have either come forward or been identified as potentially posing a coronavirus threat. All 3,000 people have been cleared. The NSW Health website is the best source of information for New South Wales citizens. It has the latest public health information on coronavirus. People can stay up to date by checking the latest travel advice on the Commonwealth's Smarttraveller website. I thank the Federal Government and the Federal authorities for ensuring that we all work together to prevent further spread of the virus. I stress that New South Wales agencies will continue to work with Federal authorities.

New South Wales health and education departments are working together closely on keeping our school students safe. That is very important. The Department of Education will keep parents informed. I am proud that we took strong action in January to protect students by asking those who had visited mainland China within a fortnight of the beginning of the school term to stay home for 14 days following their departure from China. New South Wales was the first State to do this. Other States followed suit. We do not apologise for our proactive and precautionary response to this health issue.

I take this opportunity—and I know the health Minister will do the same—to thank the Chinese and Iranian communities for the way in which they have communicated about the virus within their communities. Our health officials are some of the best in the world. I thank them for the enormous amount of time and energy they are putting into keeping our communities safe. I commend them and all our agencies for the collaborative way in which they are working together to put community safety first. I commend not only the Chief Medical Officer, Kerry Chant, but also the Minister for Health and Medical Research for the information they are providing to the public. I thank the community for demonstrating, yet again, our collective capacity to take advice, respond appropriately and not be alarmist. NSW Health's public health laboratories have developed diagnostic tests to ensure that cases are diagnosed as quickly as possible. NSW Health is working with the Federal health authorities to update GPs, pharmacists, emergency departments and the broader health system on the situation as it evolves to ensure that all potential cases are investigated, diagnosed and managed as quickly as possible.

The State Emergency Operations Centre, or SEOC, was established in early February to support the Government's whole-of-government management. Responsibility for the management of COVID-19 extends beyond the health department. Preparations are underway should widespread transmission of the coronavirus occur. I emphasise the word "should". If that happens, we are aware that it will coincide with the regular influenza season. The Minister and the Chief Medical Officer have been providing information about this to the community as recently as yesterday. Hospitals have been asked to undertake planning for acute respiratory clinics to deal with a possible influx of patients with either coronavirus or the flu. [*Extension of time*]

I advise the House that hospitals are also preparing for increased presentations to emergency departments, hospitalisations and admissions to our intensive care units—all of those plans are in place. As I foreshadowed in response to the member's question, please ensure that you follow the advice of the health department and the NSW Chief Health Officer, please listen to the statements made by the health Minister and other community leaders, and please make sure that, if you have travel arrangements in place, you check the relevant website to receive the best advice available because, as we know, in these circumstances situations are ever evolving. To repeat the message given by both the health Minister and the Chief Health Officer, we can all play our part by making sure that we wash our hands thoroughly and often, we cover our coughs and sneezes as appropriate, and we avoid close contact with people known to be unwell. Please make sure to stay home if you are unwell.

I stress to the House that our State is well positioned to deal with this disease. Our health system is well resourced and on alert. I thank the many health professionals who have had to ensure that our system is as well prepared as possible, because when it comes to community safety nothing is more important. I thank all those involved in the health system in New South Wales, as well other agencies, our State Emergency Centre and the Federal authorities for the cooperative way in which we have been dealing with this issue.

TAFE NSW

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (14:26:05): I direct my question to Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education. Given it has been a week since the review into TAFE was announced, why has the Minister not yet publicly released the terms of reference?

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (14:26:38): I thank the member for Lakemba for his question. I know that the member has a deep interest in TAFE. Rest assured that members on this side of the House are fully supportive of TAFE as a gold standard in vocational education and training. Like I said before, it was interesting to meet with the NSW Teachers Federation this morning. It commended us on commissioning David Gonski and Peter Shergold to look at TAFE.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order: I tried to be as clear as possible. The question was about the terms of reference and why they have not been released.

The SPEAKER: This is the first minute of the Minister's time. The Minister will continue. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said, members on this side of the House want to see more frontline teachers. We are supportive of the review of the future of TAFE and we will continue to support not only TAFE but also the review of TAFE headed up by Peter Shergold and David Gonski—something even the teachers union supports.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (14:28:10): I address my question to the Deputy Premier, the Minister responsible for disaster recovery. Will he update the House on the bushfire recovery effort?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:28:29): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question. Before Christmas his region was impacted by the fires. When the Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and I went to Taree and visited Club Taree I recall how the community had come together to look after themselves and, most importantly, the impact that had on the community. It seems like it was a long time ago. We thought this was a significant fire event in the northern part of the State and at that stage we did not yet know what was about to confront us through the summer period, especially down on the South Coast. I acknowledge the member for Myall Lakes, who is also an RFS volunteer—as are some members of the Opposition. They were on the front line fighting fires. I congratulate them on their efforts to protect their communities.

There is no question that the recovery is important. I have previously updated the House on the recovery efforts of this Government to support individuals, families, businesses and farmers, and to make sure that the rollout of the recovery is in line with what individual families and landholders expect. Dealing with someone's property is a sensitive issue, especially when everything that they have owned, including all of their memories, are a burnt pile on their block of land, the place they call home. When we do the clean-up we have to be sensitive

about how we approach it, which is why we are flexible and the landholder is at the heart of everything that we do; they sign the scope of works and they sign off on the job when it is completed. We will do the simple things. Even though we have given ourselves an ambitious target of 30 June to have the clean-up done, we are doing it in a way that is sensitive to the needs of individuals.

For example, Laing O'Rourke and its subcontractors were asked if they could run a metal detector over a particular area because of a lost wedding ring. In another case, the clean-up was done around an outdoor pizza oven that had memories because a father and son had built it. This is not like clearing land to build a new road, a tunnel, a hospital or a school on a greenfield site; this is about managing the sensitivity around going onto someone's land that was previously their home. That is why, from the Government's perspective, we want to see a clean-up and we have given ourselves an ambitious target. We have put in place a program with our partner, Laing O'Rourke, to employ local subcontractors who understand their local community and to ensure that we support the individuals.

Every three weeks I get the next three weeks of clean-up. As I have said previously, this is right across the State; it is not just the north or the south. We will work in parallel to assist property owners who have registered and are ready for clean-up. Insured or not insured, this is the Government's commitment—which is worth hundreds of millions of dollars—to support those individual families. We also recognise the importance of choice and what happens next for many of these families. It is almost the two-year anniversary of the Tathra fires and only 15 homes have been rebuilt.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Under your Government.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I am not playing politics here.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: People are still waiting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Wow. Please. I have said in this House before that when it comes to recovery I will not entertain the Opposition's political games, though I give credit to many of its members. This is about being sensitive to the needs of individuals. Tathra was an example where people decided in some cases not to rebuild, to buy somewhere local or, in other cases, to buy a new home and start a new chapter in life elsewhere. That is why the New South Wales Government today, with the support of the Premier and the Treasurer, has announced a stamp duty exemption for the next two years for those who have lost their home if they choose to purchase a new home. They will be exempt from stamp duty, saving up to \$55,000 for properties valued up to about \$1.25 million. We want to allow people to make a choice about what is next.

I was in Merimbula with the member for Bega, Andrew Constance, on Friday dealing with a range of issues. At the end of the day we popped into a local brewery to have a beer and talk about the day. Andrew Constance's neighbour was with us—Andrew Constance has spoken about him in this House. He is an RFS volunteer firefighter who helped to save other people's houses but then lost his own. In the middle of the night he was not even sure where his family was. This is a guy who put his own life on the line to protect his community. We were having a beer with Andrew Constance and his neighbour, who said to me, "I am not sure if we are going to rebuild."

Mr Stephen Bromhead: I seek further information, particularly the retrospective aspect to the schedule.

The SPEAKER: I grant the Minister a two-minute extension, but the member for Myall Lakes was out of line when he asked for those additional words.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The point I am making is that the conversation that was being had in that household—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: The member for Myall Lakes cannot do that. The Government is very picky with the behaviour of members from my side of the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: I indicated that the member for Myall Lakes was out of line in adding those words, but I have granted the Minister a two-minute extension.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The conversation that was had in that household was tough. They asked themselves, "Do we rebuild in an area that may now be prone to future fires or do we choose to build somewhere else?" From the Government's perspective, it should support them or anybody who wants to make those decisions—hence today's announcement about flexibility, choice and the ability to make a decision that is best for your family and your family's future. That is why it was important.

We know that insurance companies are currently paying out policies and that is why it is important that, as a government, we make it clear this particular policy is to support individuals who have chosen to buy a new home and who may choose to buy a new home. There are many who already made that decision because the fire

season, as we know, started somewhere back in the second half of last year. For those who have already made that decision to purchase, this policy announcement will be retrospective and we will refund the stamp duty to those purchase owners. They can do that by registering. More information about that process will be on the website next week.

When it comes to recovery what we are doing as a government is dealing with today but planning for tomorrow. The reality is that each and every day different communities and different individuals have unique issues, and we will find unique solutions in finding a way forward. That has always been our journey. At the start of this we said that our bill would be about \$1 billion for recovery. I can update the House that we are in excess of \$2 billion from a State perspective in supporting our communities. That is why you run budgets in the black: so you can deal with crises. That is why as a government we are focused on the recovery and on making sure that we are bringing some level of normality back to our regional communities.

TAFE NSW

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (14:35:56): I direct my question to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, and Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. Will my comrade guarantee that TAFE fees will not rise for any course as a result of the TAFE review?

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (14:36:36): I thank the member for Blacktown for his question. I say to him that on this side of the House we are absolutely committed to building new TAFEs and seeing more frontline teachers. We are absolutely committed to a building program that is delivering \$135 million for the member of Ryde—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: This had better be good after only 15 seconds.

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I am just clarifying that the question relates to TAFE fees.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The Deputy Premier did remind me that on this side of the House we actually want to see more students because more students equals more teachers. We are very proud of our record 100,000 fee-free apprenticeships that will be issued over the next four years.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the standing order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: I am getting to it. It is clear that the Minister—

The SPEAKER: What is the standing order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is clear that the Minister has answered three very different questions with exactly the same answer.

The SPEAKER: What is the standing order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is Standing Order 59: tedious repetition.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Swansea will resume her seat.

Ms Yasmin Catley: He has answered three separate questions exactly the same.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms Yasmin Catley: If the Minister does not know the answer—

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: Along with 100,000 fee-free TAFE and vocational education and training [VET] courses over the next four years, we are also delivering 70,000 fee-free traineeships. That is on top of the 30,000 places for mature age students. This side of the House is directed at delivering TAFE and VET skills. More students equal more teachers.

Ms Prue Car: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister has not answered one question that the Opposition has asked. The Minister is making a mockery of TAFE.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being generally relevant and will continue.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I conclude by saying that this side supports—more students equals more teachers—a record program in TAFE.

ASSET RECYCLING

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (14:39:07): I address my question to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the economic dividends of financial reform?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:39:20): I thank the member for Albury for his question. Being from Albury, which is the birthplace of the Liberal Party, the member knows that in the history of Australia there have been only a few great reformist governments. There was the Reid-Carruthers Government in New South Wales—he was a great Liberal, Carruthers—which was visionary in the areas of education, training, land release, infrastructure and fiscal management. Brad Hazzard was there.

[A Government member interjected.]

There was the Menzies Government with the Snowy Hydro scheme and State aid to non-government schools. There was the Holt Government, which got rid of Labor's White Australia policy and expanded our trade in the Asian region. There were the landmark reforms of Hawke and Keating, which seem to have been forgotten by the new Corbyn-like Australian Labor Party. There were a range of impressive reforms, like the GST, introduced by the great Howard Government. Now we can add to this great pantheon of political heroes a new government: the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. Our asset recycling program literally leads the world. Do not take it from me, let us hear it from others.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Inflated surplus figures—

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Noted US economist Robert Poole has said this:

... the Australian infrastructure recycling initiative resulted in the revitalization of a wide range of infrastructure assets. Without this program, what became new public investment would have remained idle and unable to support new projects.

According to the unaligned Bipartisan Policy Centre in Washington:

... the asset recycling model found success in Australia, leveraging \$20 billion of private investment ... thus alleviating [some] pressure on federal and state budgets. One of the most beneficial effects was stimulating public-private project development.

The World Economic Forum—it might know something—which has used four case studies from New South Wales to highlight the success of asset recycling said this:

Asset recycling enables governments to redirect capital towards their most critical infrastructure needs, using several innovative mechanisms ... So far, the state of New South Wales has most successfully implemented a complete asset recycling strategy.

As we know, the asset base of the State continues to grow under this Government after it was sold off by those opposite. We are not resting on our laurels. There is a need for deep and fundamental reform in the area of our broken Federation. For this reason we established a review of Federal financial relations and we brought some of the best public policy minds on the job.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The former Telstra CEO David Thodey has chaired this review. We have had the former New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English, the former Australian Deputy Prime Minister and great Nationals stalwart John Anderson, Professor of Constitutional Law Anne Twomey, University of Melbourne economist John Freebairn and former Federal Secretary Jane Halton. We have tasked this eminent panel to drive a bottom-up vision of what our Federation should look like.

Importantly, we are doing this on a bipartisan basis because we know it is important to work together with the other States and the Labor States. The States just are not passengers; we actually have a real obligation to drive economic reform from a State level. I thank the great Labor treasurers around the country, such as Tim Pallas in Victoria, Jackie Trad in Queensland and Ben Wyatt in Western Australia, who I note has just announced his retirement from politics. That is not just a loss for the Labor Party but it is also a loss for the people of Western Australia because he has been a great Treasurer there and has been instrumental in driving Federation reform from our State body. When I sit down at those State Treasurers' meetings I have moments where I look across at the treasurers and I realise that the New South Wales Labor division is the worst division of the Labor Party in the country by a long, long way. It is sad to sit across from them and think that, deep down, they are embarrassed to be associated with all of you. *[Extension of time]*

If you look back through some of the greater State debates with the Federation, dating back decades, it was great Labor treasurers like Michael Egan who worked in this space arguing for a better share of the GST, arguing

that we have a system that incentivises States to reform and that does not penalise them. The facts are that when it comes to Federation reform and when it comes to the distribution of GST it is States like New South Wales that reform that are worse off. We know that it is not just around the country but around the world that there is strong interest in our economic leadership in New South Wales. We have seen the Republicans and the Democrats coming over. We have had congressmen, MPs, governors. We had the President of Israel recently. Vice President Pence was here.

Mr Chris Minns: They all came over to see you, Dom.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: They all came over to learn from the best. Even last week, who came out? It was the Prime Minister for progressive Labour, the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Who did she meet with? She met with the Premier. She met with the Leader of the Opposition, Anthony Albanese. She met with the Prime Minister. Who didn't she meet with? She met with none of those opposite. The member for Londonderry likes to think she is the next Jacinda Ardern but I am talking about the real Jacinda Ardern. Those opposite are an embarrassment not just to the labour movement in Australia as a nation; they are an embarrassment to the labour movement globally. No-one wants anything to do with them, they are so toxic. Even Jeremy Corbyn would not want to meet with any of them. Even Jeremy Corbyn, if he came to New South Wales, would avoid them. While we on this side reform, those opposite should get out of the way as we take New South Wales from good to great.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:46:29): My question is directed to the Premier. What does the Premier say to the thousands of Sydney commuters who were late to work again today while stuck on one of the most unreliable transport systems in Australia?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:46:46): I understand—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will give the Premier a chance to answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand this morning that a maintenance vehicle was derailed on the City Circle network, which obviously caused delays. I understand that from 7.30 a.m. frequent services were reinstated but I appreciate that many workers who come to the CBD need to catch the train before that time and they were inconvenienced. Of course we are always apologetic in a heartfelt way to all those who were inconvenienced. I also stress that frequent services resumed at 7.30 a.m., which is good news, and obviously all of our personnel—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: All of our workers are working around the clock to ensure that the peak runs smoothly in the evening.

COVID-19

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (14:47:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. Will the Minister update the House on COVID-19 or coronavirus in New South Wales?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (14:48:08): I thank the member for her question and particularly for the work she does looking after her constituents in Port Macquarie. She is someone who understands the challenges of providing the very best of health in sometimes very difficult circumstances. This is an evolving situation in New South Wales, in Australia and indeed across the world. Just a few weeks ago—in fact, it is not that many days over 60 days—the first advice was starting to come from China that there was a new or novel coronavirus that was striking down many people in China. Now we have seen it come to our shores. In late January and early February it started to become an issue for us right here in New South Wales.

Novel coronavirus—what is it? It is a new type of coronavirus. We would all remember severe acute respiratory syndrome [SARS] and Middle East respiratory syndrome [MERS], which were also coronaviruses. But this one is one that we do not yet understand and the entire world has been learning about its transmission and its impact. We are a long way from understanding yet how we might develop a vaccine, although we have some amazing scientists working in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to try to address it by having a vaccine. Last week I was very pleased that we still had the original four people who it had become obvious had had the coronavirus. All of those had come to Australia from the Wuhan area or the Hubei province area, so it was a direct connection with China. We know the Chinese Government has been working very hard to try to address those concerns.

Last week, yesterday and today have certainly changed that scenario. Over the weekend and into yesterday we had more cases announced. Just before question time I would have said to you that we had nine confirmed cases in New South Wales. That would have meant we had an extra five. Those present heard earlier that the Premier was told just minutes before question time that there was a tenth case and she has briefly outlined the details of that particular case. It is very new and we obviously do not know many of the details yet except that he is a 39-year-old gentleman who appears to have flown from Iran. Again, each of the recent cases have had some connection. Those over the weekend and the last couple of days have had connection with Iran. I will address two of those in a moment.

What is particularly concerning is that literally as I sat here in question time I received another message. That seems to be the challenge we have at the moment: It is a very fast-moving situation. I can tell the House that Dr Kerry Chant, the Chief Health Officer in New South Wales, and her team have just advised me of yet another case. This is a 53-year-old gentleman who returned from Singapore—this is a new location for us in terms of anybody coming to this country—who came in late last week on 28 February, which was Friday, and has literally just had his pathology confirming minutes ago that he has also tested positive for coronavirus. We now have cases here that have come from China, Iran and now Singapore. I want to highlight two of the cases from yesterday because every other case so far has come into the country with symptoms that have manifested shortly after they have arrived and have then been able to start having treatment in our hospitals. Of these two particular cases I make reference to, one was a 53-year-old doctor who normally works in one of our hospitals. He unfortunately appears to have had transmission here. [*Extension of time*]

The reason we think that is because that doctor has not actually travelled for at least three months to the best of our knowledge. Having in mind that the time from infection to the time of manifestation of symptoms is normally considered to be somewhere between zero and 14 days, although there are some reports overseas that it could be as late as 24 days or so, in his case his symptoms arose with apparently no travel. That suggests he has received some transmission in Sydney. We do not know yet whether it was at work or during some activity or contact afterwards. NSW Health is working on that. The other person was the sister of a gentleman who had flown in from Iran—we identified him over the weekend. She is in her 40s. It would appear that that is also a transmission on our soil and a close contact, obviously being her brother.

At this point we have some challenges but we have the best health system in the world, by far. The first four people who have been in hospital have recovered and been discharged. I am hopeful that that will happen with each of the subsequent cases. We need the community to work with us on this. This is not just for health. As the Premier said, washing your hands, making sure you sneeze into your sleeve, making sure that if you feel sick you stay home—preferably self-isolated for 14 days—are all things that people can do practically but the simplest thing is to wash your hands. Wash your hands as frequently as you can because we think this virus lives on hard surfaces for anything up to two or three days.

I thank the members of the Chinese and Islamic communities who we know about because they came forward and shared with our medical experts the fact that they were not feeling well and that they thought they might have coronavirus. I say to members of our communities who are subject to the possibility of coronavirus to keep coming forward. We are here to support you. We will support you. Some major issues are coming in. For example, the Iranian New Year will be held on 20 March. Today I was advised that the Imam Husain Islamic Centre has sent a memo out today to all of its community advising that unfortunately the centre has made the tough decision, in the interest of health and safety of all its community members, to close for two weeks from Monday 2 March to Monday 16 March. I say at this important time for so many in our community whether they are from Azerbaijan or Iran that we understand celebrations are coming up, but I thank all of those who are prepared to share the message with their community that it is better to be safe than sorry.

The SPEAKER: I thank the House for showing the Minister that indulgence on what is a very important message.

PYRMONT AND WESTERN HARBOUR PRECINCT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (14:56:37): I direct my question to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Given the concerns of the community and the City of Sydney about overdevelopment in Pyrmont—already one of the most densely populated places in the country—how will the Minister ensure any future plans listen to the needs of the community, and deliver important social infrastructure including arts, creative spaces, public transport and social and affordable housing?

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (14:57:04): I thank the member for Sydney for his question and for his great commitment to the people of his electorate and Pyrmont, in particular. I trust the member had a great time at the Mardi Gras on the weekend as I know it is an event very important to him and his electorate. I also know that it is an event that brings much excitement to the Treasurer

because of the great economic benefit it brings to Sydney and to all of New South Wales. On the subject of the Treasurer, Pyrmont and excitement, what could be more exciting than the future of the Pyrmont and Western Harbour Precinct in recent months? Both the Treasurer and I, together with the Mr Alex Greenwich, have a great deal of passion for it.

In a planning sense, Central Sydney's harbour-side geography and the peninsula, particularly Pyrmont, creates some constraints based around its peninsula location, its undulating topography and the fact it is also very densely settled with land scarcity issues. Of course, in a planning sense with those constraints is the crucible of creativity and that is precisely what we want to see—the Government, landowners and the community working together to get the maximum benefit for the community and for businesses in the Eastern Harbour City, one of the three great cities of Sydney. The eastern edge of the city is now bordered by the Domain, Mrs Macquarie's Chair and the beautiful green and open space envisioned by some of Sydney's earliest Governors.

On the other hand, the western side of Central Sydney, which includes Pyrmont and the western harbour, in times past was carved out by ports, shipping terminals and productive industrial lands. For the past two centuries this part of the city has been the gateway to the CBD from the west. The Pyrmont peninsula is dominated by heritage items, terrace housing and strata subdivisions rich in history. Along its western shore, the still-productive shipping areas and ports are being rejuvenated with government projects like the new Sydney Fish Market. At the southern end of the peninsula, the University of Technology Sydney anchors a hub for jobs in multinational businesses and start-ups alike, setting Sydney up to compete in the global economy.

With such a wide variety of land uses having been enabled over the years in such a geographically tight area, it is no wonder that there have been competing visions for land use. The city and the State are left with a whole mismatch of different planning controls, particularly across Pyrmont and the western harbour, that form a patchwork tapestry over time with layers of planning controls that have come to restrict the economic potential of Pyrmont and the western harbour when we know its economic potential is very real. Recognising this potential the New South Wales Government requested the Greater Sydney Commission [GSC] complete a review of the planning framework for the Western Harbour Precinct, including the Pyrmont peninsula.

The GSC provided its report to government in September and made three recommendations. First, to support the delivery of the New South Wales Government's vision and objectives through a consistent consideration of the Greater Sydney Region Plan and the Eastern City District Plan in local and State planning matters to realise benefits for residents, visitors and the wider CBD. Secondly, to develop a place strategy for Pyrmont, which includes a master plan, an economic strategy and a simplified planning framework. It is supported through collaborative arrangements between State Government, industry, council and the community because collaborating is indeed the only way to realise a sustainable vision. It also considers the individual character and potential of sub-precincts within the Pyrmont community. Thirdly, to establish a timeframe and options for implementation of the place strategy.

The Government has accepted those recommendations and is implementing them via the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy that is being developed right now. It will be completed before the end of October, consistent with the GSC's recommendations for the masterplan to be delivered within a year. Pyrmont and the Western Harbour Precinct will be transformed into the next jobs hub and economic driver of Sydney. The place strategy will articulate the strategic vision for the peninsula. It will be framed by a long-term economic strategy for the area, which will inform the master plan to help deliver that strategy over the next two decades. It will establish a pathway to resolve and simplify the complex, overlapping planning controls in the area to deliver the economic strategy and master plan, providing greater certainty to all stakeholders. [*Extension of time*]

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

Mr ROB STOKES: A steering committee has already been established towards this end. Major development proposals that are being planned in the area will need to demonstrate they are consistent with the direction and strategic intent of the place strategy, or capable of being consistent with the place strategy at critical gateways, to continue progress down their respective planning pathways. Mr Alex Greenwich also specifically asked about social infrastructure like arts and creative spaces, public transport, public and green spaces and social and affordable housing, which are key pillars of the work being examined by government in preparation of this place strategy. The steering committee is preparing a set of directions to guide the economic and place strategy that we will release publicly soon.

Those core issues included in the question asked by the member relate to a clearer and unified planning framework that focuses not only on economic potential for the area but also the social and environmental opportunities, with green space, public and active transport connectivity, nurturing our creative spaces and encouraging a variety of housing tenures for our society. Already the Government works with the City of Sydney and City West Housing to ensure that new development in Pyrmont makes contributions towards new affordable

housing. Under State Environmental Planning Policy No. 70—Affordable Housing, 428 affordable units have been delivered in Pyrmont and Ultimo, contributing to better social outcomes in this renewal area.

The community will be consulted along the way not only in a statutory sense on any new planning framework that is recommended by the Steering Committee but also on the economic and place strategies. Following the release of the directions, I look forward to briefing the member for Sydney on the work being undertaken in Pyrmont and the western harbour so that we can ensure that the future of this unique peninsula is a beautiful place for everyone to live and work and that it embraces those creative and place strategies mentioned by the member.

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

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:04:29): My question is addressed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on the State's current water situation?

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (15:04:41): I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. He represents one of the communities that have faced this drought for longer than most. Upper Hunter was one of the first parts of New South Wales to go into drought and it has been a very, very challenging period. We need our communities to be patient while water makes its way down the Darling system. We are in an exciting time. The modelling shows that we can expect 200 gigalitres of water to make its way to Lake Wetherill, which is half of Sydney Harbour. It will wet dry river beds and water communities in the south. The last significant inflows into Wetherill were at the end of 2016, more than three years ago. However, two years ago this Government established the Natural Resources Access Regulator [NRAR]. It sets the standard for compliance across the country as it implements an effective, innovative and comprehensive compliance and enforcement regime in all parts of the State, from campaigns in the south to a focus on horticultural interests in the north-east, and in monitoring activities on the Barwon-Darling in the West.

The citizens of New South Wales are answering the call to report suspected breaches and to seek information on how they can comply with water management legislation. Since its inception NRAR has received nearly 10,000 calls to its hotline, resulting in nearly 3,000 breach allegations being logged. This is not the only source of information that NRAR utilises to support its activities. The agency has taken an innovative approach to building its understanding of the regulated environment. NRAR has eyes in the sky, employing spatial imagery and using satellites, drones and manned aircrafts. NRAR uses satellite data from the European Space Agency's Sentinel system, the United States Geological Survey's Landsat satellite network and several other commercial providers.

Data collected is analysed using the Australian Geoscience Data Cube system, which also leverages resources from NASA, CSIRO and the Australian National University National Computational Infrastructure supercomputer facility. NRAR has grown its frontline staff to more than 100 people, with more than 40 investigators in the field. Those boots on the ground operationalise the information collected and translate it into effective education, advice and compliance outcomes where necessary. NRAR has more than 800 active cases on its books. Investigation of those cases has involved 646 property inspections and 334 property audits. It has also resulted in an unprecedented level of compliance activity, with the issuing of 137 penalty infringement notices and 183 statutory notices. NRAR has also initiated 17 prosecutions in the Local Court and the Land and Environment Court.

New South Wales is in the grip of a devastating drought. After enormous rains on the east coast the Sydney catchment was filled and replenished to 81.9 per cent. But it is important to understand that the drought continues inland in New South Wales. Copeton Dam is at 10.8 per cent capacity, Keepit Dam is at 11.3 per cent, Burrendong Dam is at 4.5 per cent and Hume is at 15.6 per cent. We are still challenged with a lack of rainfall in our regional areas. But there is good news. The remnants of Cyclone Esther are coming through regional New South Wales. There is more hope this week than we have had in a very long time. I genuinely hope that Cyclone Esther lives up to its beautiful name in history. Esther was an orphan who became the queen to King Xerxes in Persia. She went on to save the peoples of the Middle East from great calamities. I sincerely and genuinely hope that we have a situation where our dams are replenished, our farmers can get on with their farming and we can enjoy our town water supplies in regional New South Wales through the remnants of Cyclone Esther. Let us pray that the whole of New South Wales will come out of the drought once this system goes through regional New South Wales.

*Bills***BETTER REGULATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020****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) (15:11:50):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Better Regulation Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to 13 principal Acts and associated amendment Acts across the Better Regulation and Innovation portfolio. The bill ensures that the legislation being amended can operate as Parliament intended. It does so by ensuring strong consumer protections by inserting specificity into powers, clarifying legislative intent and reducing uncertainty, clarifying and streamlining regulatory requirements and removing unnecessary red tape. The amendments contained in the bill are mainly administrative and have been identified through consultation with industry stakeholders, the development of supporting regulations and the day-to-day functions of the agency. Other amendments have arisen as a result of taking a stewardship approach to the legislation in the portfolio to ensure that the legislation remains fit for purpose.

This Government has already made significant inroads in reducing red tape and removing unnecessary regulatory burden. Last year Parliament passed the Better Regulation Legislation Amendment Act 2019, which sought to improve the operation of legislation in the portfolio. The majority of amendments contained in that Act have commenced and are already improving the operation of the law. I will now turn to the amendments in the bill. The amendments to the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 contained in schedule 1 to the bill strengthen protections for consumers and improve the administration of the licensing regime. The proposed new section 22A provides the secretary with the ability to immediately cancel a licence if it was issued, renewed or restored because of a misrepresentation or error.

There is precedent in other legislation in the portfolio for a power to cancel a licence due to misrepresentation or error. For example, the Home Building Act 1989 contains similar powers. Experience with that Act has shown that having this capacity to immediately cancel a licence that should never have been issued makes for efficient administrative processes and avoids unnecessary delays. Importantly, new section 22A allows the licence to be restored without the applicant having to apply for the licence again. This will only apply in circumstances where the error is rectified, the applicant acted in good faith or there are other reasons the licence should be restored. The restoration of the licence can take effect as soon as notice is given to the licence holder. This improves customer protection by providing a much easier way of cancelling a licence incorrectly issued and also ensuring that the licence holder does not have to submit to disciplinary processes, particularly if they acted in good faith.

The amendments contained in schedule 1 to the bill also seek to address a regulatory gap by ensuring that non-minor repairs to all transport service vehicles are carried out only by a licensed motor vehicle repairer. This requirement currently exists under the point to point transport legislation for taxis, hire cars and Uber vehicles. However, this important safety obligation should also apply to other small businesses providing services directly to consumers, such as Car Next Door and GoGet. In addition, other types of businesses may enter the marketplace in the future. To ensure clarity, the bill includes a new definition of a "transport service vehicle" in section 10 of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act. This definition removes any ambiguity as to what vehicles are subject to the requirements.

Each owner of a transport service vehicle will be required to use a licensed motor vehicle repairer, except for minor work such as changing wiper blades or replacing a flat tyre. With the increase in ridesharing and peer-to-peer businesses, more consumers are exposed to the risks associated with the vehicles not being repaired by appropriately qualified people. Given the importance of ensuring these repairs are done adequately and safely, the bill creates a new offence provision for non-compliance under the Act. The Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 establishes the Motor Dealers and Repairers Compensation Fund. The primary purpose of the Motor Dealers Compensation Fund is to provide a last resort for consumers who have suffered a financial loss due to the actions of a motor repairer or motor dealer but who have been unable to obtain compensation via direct negotiation with the repairer or dealer through the tribunal or who cannot afford to initiate legal proceedings.

The vast majority of claims made on the fund are for relatively small amounts of money. The cap on individual claims helps ensure the fund contains adequate amounts to pay these numerous small claims. It is

important that the cap allows for adequate compensation but does not allow excess payouts to drain the fund. Currently the \$40,000 cap on the maximum compensation payable to a consumer is contained in the Act. The amount of the cap has not been amended since the Act commenced in 2013. The bill amends section 171 to enable the maximum amount payable from the fund to be set by regulation. Having the maximum amount in the regulation allows for greater flexibility in adjusting the cap to ensure that it is commensurate with consumer needs and the capacity of the fund. This helps to futureproof the legislation, helping ensure it remains fit for purpose.

The bill also reduces the regulatory burden for second-hand boat dealers. Currently second-hand boat dealers need to hold a motor dealer licence if trailers are sold in conjunction with the boat, which was not the intention of Parliament. The amendment addresses this issue by creating a new subsection 5 (5) in the Act that specifically provides it is not necessary for a person to hold a motor dealer licence to sell a trailer for a second-hand boat. This is because if a person is in the business of selling second-hand boats they are already required to hold a second-hand dealers licence under the Pawnbrokers and Second Hand Dealers Act 1996. This significantly reduces the regulatory burden on second-hand boat dealers by not being required to obtain and hold two separate licences, without reducing consumer protection.

I now move to schedule 2 to the bill, which amends search warrant provisions in a number of Acts in the portfolio. The amendments are necessary to carry out searches of premises and gather information in a timely way. Search warrants obtained from a court allow the department to ensure the appropriate compliance and enforcement of the laws. However, not all these search warrants require the NSW Police Force to accompany the department's authorised investigators. Under the amendments contained in schedule 2 to the bill, search warrants can be executed without the presence of a police officer when it is either not appropriate or not necessary. This schedule replicates existing search warrant provisions in other Fair Trading legislation and allows investigative and enforcement action to be carried out expeditiously.

The amendments have the support of New South Wales police, who were consulted during the development of the bill. The nature of some of the offences under these Acts, such as unlicensed trading, odometer tampering and unqualified repair work, requires Fair Trading to urgently take investigative and enforcement action to protect consumers from actual or potential loss or harm. Authorised investigators will continue to execute search warrants in accordance with their investigation and enforcement powers to safeguard consumer rights and protect citizens in New South Wales. It is imperative that I point out that this reform does not prevent a police officer from accompanying an authorised officer when a search warrant is executed where it is appropriate or necessary for the police to attend.

The amendments will reduce the demand on the time of the New South Wales police, allowing them to attend to their duties and provide Fair Trading with greater flexibility to take enforcement action swiftly. This will lead to better outcomes for consumers and greater protection for the community. The bill also tidies up and streamlines the way in which unclaimed proceeds are dealt with under the Storage Liens Act 1935. The Act provides a legislative framework for liens over stored goods. The provisions in the Act regulate the storage and preservation of goods, the power to sell goods and the disposition of proceeds of sale of goods seemingly abandoned.

Currently the Act requires the surplus remaining from the sale of stored goods to be deposited with the NSW Public Trustee & Guardian. Under the amendments contained in schedule 3 to the bill, the balance of proceeds will be dealt with under the provisions of the Unclaimed Money Act 1995 and transferred to Revenue NSW instead of the NSW Public Trustee & Guardian. The current process is inconsistent with the way unclaimed moneys are dealt with in other legislation in the portfolio. In addition, the NSW Public Trustee & Guardian is no longer the appropriate repository for these types of unclaimed moneys. The role of the NSW Public Trustee & Guardian has evolved since the introduction of the Storage Liens Act back in 1935. The NSW Public Trustee & Guardian is now predominantly concerned with other public services, including will making, administration of deceased estates and attorney services.

In contrast, Revenue NSW looks after unclaimed money in this jurisdiction and currently has approximately 430,000 unclaimed items from deceased estates, share dividends, bonds and overpayments. Revenue NSW also has an easily accessible, fast and free online search tool that allows members of the public to check whether they have any unclaimed money. Members of the public can also visit any Service NSW centre and ask for an unclaimed money check to be done for them. Any unclaimed money will be held indefinitely by Revenue NSW on behalf of the New South Wales Government. Reclaiming money from the sale of stored goods regulated by the Act will be more efficient under the amendments.

For those reasons, the transfer to Revenue NSW is a logical and necessary reform. It will assist New South Wales citizens by allowing them to be able to search for their money in the one place. Schedule 4 to the bill makes some very minor and inconsequential amendments to the Retail Trading Act 2008. The Government's Better Business Reforms package in 2018 amended a number of Acts in the portfolio to provide that forms under the

legislation are no longer prescribed in the regulation but rather are approved by the secretary. Having forms approved by the secretary instead of being prescribed by regulation provides a faster and simpler method of updating the form when required.

This removes unnecessary and time-consuming administrative processes for government and ensures that the needs of business and the regulated community are met more effectively and efficiently. Consequently, the bill amends section 11 of the Retail Trading Act 2008 so that an application must be in a form approved by the secretary instead of a prescribed form. As a result of this amendment, only one provision remains in the Retail Trading Regulation that can be appropriately included in the parent Act. The bill therefore provides an opportunity for some general housekeeping by transferring unamended this one longstanding and settled provision from the regulation to the Act. This will leave nothing in the regulation, so it can be repealed under schedule 4.2 to the bill. The regulation-making powers will remain in the Act, so that in the event there is a need in the future to make regulations under the Act that can be done at the time. Such amendments are minor and do not affect the operation of the retail trading legislation or any powers or rights within that legislation; the amendments are purely administrative.

I move to schedule 5 to the bill, which makes amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. Currently, there is no requirement for landlords to disclose the jurisdiction in which they reside in the residential tenancies agreement where this is not New South Wales. As a result, a New South Wales tenant may attempt to access remedies in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal only to be informed that the tribunal does not have the jurisdiction to determine their case because the landlord resides in another State or Territory of Australia or in a foreign country. Schedule 5 to the bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to require the disclosure of this information. Schedule 5.2 also makes a subsequent amendment to the Standard Form Agreement contained in the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019 to reflect the change to the Act.

This amendment has no impact on the jurisdiction of the tribunal. It simply makes it clearer, from the time of the agreement, whether the tribunal has jurisdiction in the case or whether it needs to be referred to a Local Court or District Court. The amendment will assist tenants by allowing them to seek redress faster under these circumstances as well as enabling the tribunal to quickly refer matters to the appropriate court if needed. The amendments also align with the changes to New South Wales tenancy laws that are aimed at improving the renting experience of New South Wales tenants. The changes start on 23 March 2020 and deliver important protections for tenants and landlords. The amendments contained in schedule 5 to the bill support these reforms and continue to develop this Government's commitment to the citizens of New South Wales who benefit from strong customer protections.

The bill also delivers on the Government's commitment to reduce unnecessary administrative burden. Currently, individuals operating a pawnbroking business or a business dealing in second-hand goods must hold a licence under the Pawnbrokers and Second-Hand Dealers Act 1996. Licensed pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers must comply with detailed record-keeping requirements about the origin and owners of goods. These requirements help prevent and detect trading in stolen goods. The Act allows for exemptions for certain persons from these record-keeping requirements. However, these exemptions can only be granted by making a bespoke amendment regulation. This means that each such exemption requires an amendment regulation, the approval of the Minister and the Executive Council, and the Governor's assent. This process can result in delays and costs for the businesses seeking exemptions and also imposes costs and administrative burdens for government.

Current exemptions for second-hand dealers include licensees who receive and resell used mobile phones and tablet computers provided by telecommunications companies such as Optus and Telstra. These licensees are exempted from the record-keeping requirements because the origin and details of the original owner of the devices have already been carefully recorded and the goods are not at high risk of theft. When the amendments commence, the existing exemptions under the regulation will remain. The amendments will apply to future applications for exemptions. The new process for dealing with exemptions will allow the secretary to condition, revoke or vary an exemption at any time. This ensures that the agency can act quickly if the exemption is no longer appropriate or needs amendment.

A publicly available register of exemptions will also be required to be kept. This will ensure that information about exemptions can be quickly and easily ascertained if an entity has the benefit of an exemption and what the exemption is for. Allowing exemptions to be dealt with via administrative means under the amendments contained in schedule 6 to the bill will deliver a more efficient and cost-effective process for granting exemptions. At the same time, this will maintain consumer protections and fully support the pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers' laws.

I now move to schedule 7, which contains miscellaneous amendments to a number of Acts. The bill makes minor updates to the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave Scheme) Act 2010 to reflect

changes in the contract cleaning industry. The Act constitutes the Contract Cleaning Industry Long Service Leave Committee and requires specified industry bodies to nominate two members to the committee to represent them. One such body is the Australian Cleaning Contractors' Association, which ceased operating in December 2018. Schedule 7.1 to the bill amends the Act by removing the reference to the association. In place of the provision referencing the association the bill inserts a new section 9 (2) (e), which provides that the Minister can appoint two individuals who have experience and knowledge of the industry. This ensures that the committee has appropriate representation from industry. It also allows for nominations of representatives from the wider pool of industry employers.

The bill also updates the reference to the United Workers Union (NSW Branch), which was formerly called United Voice (NSW Branch). The bill also makes important amendments to the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017 to enhance gas safety protections for consumers in New South Wales. Amendments contained in schedule 7.2 to the bill amend the definition of "electrical installation" to clarify that it excludes transmission electricity meters owned by an electricity supply authority or located at a place owned or occupied by the authority. When the Act was previously amended to ensure that residential meters fell within the definition of "electrical installation", the amendments inadvertently captured meters used by network operators as part of their network systems. The bill therefore gives effect to the intention of Parliament to only capture residential meters.

The amendments in schedule 7.2 to the bill also help ensure gas meters in the workplace are appropriately tested and examined. This is achieved by excluding regulations made for gas meter examination and testing in a workplace from the general exemption for certain gas installations and appliances in section 5 of the Act. In addition, the bill enables the secretary to grant exemptions for certain persons, classes of persons, gas appliances and gas installations from the provisions of the Act relating to the sale and connection of uncertified gas appliances. This would apply in scenarios involving trade shows where safety plans are adequately in place.

The bill also amends the definition of "trade certificate" in section 33 (3) of the Act. The amended definition includes a tradesperson certificate for all types of autogas installation work. The current Act only captures autogas installations that are designed for use with liquefied petroleum gas and compressed natural gas. The reform will include autogas installations that are designed for use with liquefied natural gas, thereby ensuring consumers are fully and adequately protected. To further improve customer service, schedule 7.2 to the bill expands the existing gas and electrical related investigation powers of Fair Trading NSW to allow investigations of autogas installations, which may be in a vehicle, vessel or machine. This reform enables Fair Trading NSW investigators to investigate and prohibit the sale and use of unsafe autogas installations, protecting the public from unsafe work.

Schedule 7.3 to the bill also clarifies the time limits in the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act 2002 for bringing proceedings for indictable offences under the Act. The amendment clarifies that proceedings for indictable offences under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act are subject to the requirements of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This means that it will now be abundantly clear that the three-year time limitation for bringing proceedings under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act does not apply to the indictable offences in the Act. As the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act is the primary piece of legislation regulating the real estate and property services industry, it is important to ensure that agents are being held accountable for any misconduct. The law must be clear. This is imperative to support public confidence in the industry.

There is currently confusion regarding the applicability of the Criminal Procedure Act to the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act in regard to limitation periods for bringing proceedings for indictable offences. These are offences like trust account fraud, where an agent misuses the money being held in trust accounts for consumers. This confusion results from the relationship between the imposed limitation periods under the two Acts. The Criminal Procedure Act requires certain charges under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act to be brought summarily. These charges are ordinarily not subject to a statutory limitation period. However, the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act, as it is currently written, provides for a three-year limitation period for bringing charges under that Act unless those charges are brought on indictment. I am glad the bill clears that up. In matters before the court, defence counsel have argued that certain charges brought against their clients are subject to the three-year statutory limitation period. Although unsuccessful to date, those arguments prolong hearings, delay proceedings, reduce efficiency and result in additional expenses for the court and the parties involved.

The bill amends section 217 of the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act to clarify that the limitation periods in the Criminal Procedure Act apply to certain charges under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act. The amendments ensure the law is clear, operates as intended and that legal costs are not unnecessarily increased. The amendment does not change the objective of the Act; it simply clarifies the process for bringing proceedings under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act and the application of the requirements of the Criminal Procedure Act. The bill is an important part of the Government's regular legislative review and

monitoring program. The amendments in the bill strengthen consumer protection, support businesses and reduce red tape. They address emerging issues, close gaps in the law, improve compliance, clarify uncertainty and correct drafting errors. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

EVIDENCE AMENDMENT (TENDENCY AND COINCIDENCE) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (15:36:38): As the Minister responsible for child protection, I feel strongly about the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I commend my friend and colleague the Attorney General not only for introducing the bill but also for his passion for matters concerning the care and protection of children more broadly. He may do it quietly, but I can assure members that we are fortunate to have the member for Cronulla as our Attorney General in this State. I am sure all members feel strongly about the rights of children and the need to protect them. The obligation to stand up and speak out lies not only with governments but also with every individual in the community. When someone perpetrates a horrific offence against a child, the victim of that offence lives with a life sentence. I have no tolerance for those who commit acts of indecency against children or for those who cover them up. Child sexual abuse offenders should have nowhere to hide.

The Parliament is considering legislative reform that will help deliver justice for survivors of child sexual abuse by enabling greater admissibility of evidence, such as evidence about an accused person's tendency to have a sexual interest in children. The bill represents another significant reform by the New South Wales Government in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The royal commission was an extensive, five-year inquiry that documented the terrible experiences of people affected by child sexual abuse in an institutional context. It revealed the extent of the abhorrent abuse that left lasting impacts on many children and young people. The royal commission held over 8,000 private sessions, 57 formal public hearings and heard evidence from over 1,200 witnesses. In its final report, the royal commission made 409 recommendations for change, of which 85 were criminal justice recommendations.

In October 2018 the New South Wales Government announced a \$127 million package to implement responses to the royal commission's recommendations. The package is strengthening prevention measures, ensuring greater access to treatment and support services, toughening the criminal justice response and strengthening measures in organisations providing child-related services. New South Wales also announced one of the State's largest criminal reform packages to strengthen child sexual abuse laws in response to the royal commission's *Criminal Justice Report*. The reforms include maximum life sentences for persistent child sex abuse and the introduction of offences for failure to report or failure to protect against child abuse. New South Wales continues to work with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on the implementation of the National Redress Scheme, which commenced in July 2018. The scheme provides critical support to people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

In November 2019 I was pleased to introduce legislation to strengthen the existing mandatory reporting scheme by expanding its application to people in religious ministry, people providing religion-based activities to children and registered psychologists providing professional psychological services. The protections afforded reporters were also strengthened, protecting them from civil and criminal liability and detrimental action. Last year I was pleased to introduce the Children's Guardian Bill 2019, which strengthened the mandatory reporting scheme and provided a process to manage complaints about behaviour that crossed professional boundaries with respect to children and young people.

The responses of the New South Wales Government to the royal commission's recommendations for youth detention environments include upgrading CCTV infrastructure at youth justice centres and continuing to develop policy and practice responses that are trauma-informed, inclusive and aligned with child safety standards. The New South Wales Government has published two annual progress reports outlining those and other achievements in implementing comprehensive responses to the royal commission's recommendations. That work is building a stronger system that improves the safety and protection of children and young people in our State.

The Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020 is a significant criminal justice reform and will amend a number of provisions in part 3.6 of the Evidence Act 1995. Part 3.6 sets out when tendency evidence and coincidence evidence may be admissible in civil and criminal proceedings. The bill will facilitate greater admissibility of those types of evidence with a particular focus on greater admissibility of tendency evidence in criminal proceedings for child sexual offences. Tendency and coincidence evidence about a defendant

often play an important role in child sexual abuse prosecutions, especially in circumstances where a defendant is alleged to have abused more than one child.

Evidence of a defendant's other alleged sexual assaults can be particularly valuable in child sexual assault cases. Those cases are often difficult to prosecute due to a lack of evidence supporting the complainant's testimony. Medical, forensic or opportunity evidence that may once have been available is often lost through the victim's understandable delay in reporting the offence due to trauma and other psychological damage. However, evidence of other alleged assaults may be subject to exclusion. Traditionally, common law jurisdictions exclude other misconduct evidence, but it may be admitted if it can satisfy the admissibility test. The common law has traditionally excluded evidence of a defendant's other misconduct due to concerns that the evidence would prejudice, confuse or distract the jury. Particular concern has been expressed about the jury employing propensity reasoning along the following lines: the defendant has done this before; he has a propensity to do this kind of thing and, true to form, he did it again on the charged occasion.

One of the points made by courts and commentators in each of the jurisdictions is that admissibility decisions are highly discretionary and fact specific, making it difficult to generalise. While true to a degree, some general points flow from this commentary. The common law admissibility test in Canada and the statutory admissibility test in New Zealand require that the probative value of the evidence outweigh its prejudicial risk. Both jurisdictions recognise that other misconduct evidence carries the risk of both reasoning prejudice, such as confusion, distraction and misinterpretation, and moral prejudice, which involves failing to give the defendant the benefit of a reasonable doubt out of repugnance. The two jurisdictions also broadly agree on the features that give the other misconduct evidence its probative value. [*Extension of time*]

The main features are frequency of alleged other misconduct, similarity with the charged misconduct, distinctiveness of the similarities and proximity with the charged misconduct. Those factors go to the strength of the connection between the other misconduct and the charged offence. Both jurisdictions also recognise that the assessment is contextual and that the other misconduct evidence may be valued more highly having regard to the way in which it fits with the prosecution's case. In effect, the other misconduct evidence can derive support from other prosecution evidence. This is an important consideration in child sexual assault cases where the other misconduct evidence may derive considerable support from the direct testimony of the complainant. The royal commission noted that child sexual offences are "generally committed in private and with no eyewitnesses [and] no medical or scientific evidence capable of confirming the abuse". The royal commission also noted:

Where the only evidence of child sexual abuse is the complainant's evidence, it can be difficult for the jury to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the alleged offence occurred. The jury is effectively considering a "word against word" case.

In these cases, evidence of other allegations—or convictions—of child sexual abuse perpetrated by the accused person can be valuable evidence to assist a court to determine whether it is more likely that the alleged offence or offences occurred, as the allegation is supported by evidence from other complainants or witnesses who say that the accused also sexually abused them. To call a spade a spade, this bill recognises that type of offence is unique and underscores a tendency to behave in a totally unacceptable way towards children. Past behaviour in this instance should have a probative value. The royal commission considered that:

If a complainant accuses a particular person of sexually abusing them as a child, this accusation is more likely to be true if the accused has sexually abused other children.

For example, it explained that in child sexual offence proceedings:

... if the jury accepts the other allegations or convictions, the jury might be satisfied that they prove that the accused has a tendency or propensity to act in a particular way—for example, to be sexually attracted to young boys and to act on that attraction. The jury may then reason that this makes it more likely that the accused acted on this tendency—

and committed the particular offence that is the subject of the trial. The passage of this targeted provision should send a strong message that Parliament expects that this type of tendency evidence generally will have significant probative value in child sexual abuse prosecutions. This recognises the close connection between a tendency to have a sexual interest in a child or children and/or a tendency to act upon such an interest and criminal proceedings relating to such offences. This legislation sends a powerful message that this Parliament stands with victims and recognises their rights. I do not believe this amendment outweighs the right of someone's assumed innocence. This is not the question before the House today; the question is simply whether a person's past behaviour should inform other evidence in the context of proceedings related to child sexual assault.

I believe the reforms in the bill will implement a fairer approach to the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, which is informed by the findings of the royal commission about the use of this evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions. The bill does not displace the requirement that evidence be relevant, the general exclusion of tendency and coincidence evidence, and the general discretions and mandatory exclusions that apply to evidence. However, it does make a number of significant changes that should encourage the evidence to be

deemed admissible in appropriate circumstances. Those changes are necessary and recognise and implement important recommendations of the royal commission, guiding future judicial consideration in line with contemporary understandings of child sexual abuse and of abusers.

I anticipate that comparable bills will be introduced in other jurisdictions that also apply the uniform evidence law, including Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth. This coordinated response will ensure that evidence law in these jurisdictions remains uniform—I encourage those States to follow suit—as agreed, and that the objectives of the royal commission in relation to the tendency and coincidence evidence recommendations are achieved in all participating jurisdictions. The bill is another step in the New South Wales Government's—and indeed this Parliament's—commitment to respond comprehensively to the royal commission, support victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, and ensure that perpetrators are held to account for the things that they have done to children.

Members in this Chamber have strong feelings about the work of the royal commission and its importance. It is important to have honest and frank conversations about things that can make the system work more effectively and that we seek to do our very best to heal some of the most extraordinary acts of abuse in the past. This will be a very difficult thing to achieve, but so often what people seek is justice—that is the most basic component of any test that this House must apply. These amendments, albeit amendments that may not be considered in the context of other offences, are important because of the nature of the charges, because of the nature of the perpetrators and because of the challenges in proving, often in difficult circumstances, what acts did occur. I believe that these amendments make the system fairer, support victims' calls for the judicial system to be fair and also make sure that they get the justice that they so rightly deserve when they have been treated so appallingly and horrifically. Again, I thank the Attorney General for introducing this legislation and for his continuing work and advocacy for the care and protection of children in our State.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:50:47): I support the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020 and I thank the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House. The Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was an extensive five-year inquiry, which documented the experiences of people affected by child sexual abuse in an institutional context and revealed the extent of the horrific abuse that affected far too many children and young people in New South Wales and across the nation. To contextualise the size of this important inquiry, the royal commission received over 42,000 calls and over 25,000 letters. It held over 8,000 private sessions and 57 formal public hearings and heard evidence about the abuse of children from over 1,200 witnesses. The royal commission produced a wide range of reports, including a criminal justice report released in August 2017, and its final report was presented to the Governor-General in December 2017. The final report contained 409 recommendations, 85 of which had already been made in the criminal justice report.

All Australian governments and all Australians have a responsibility to act on the recommendations of the royal commission to prevent these abhorrent crimes occurring. I am pleased to say that in New South Wales the response to the royal commission has matched the significance of the inquiry. On 23 June 2018 the Government formally responded to the royal commission, accepting the overwhelming majority of its recommendations. The Government's response covered changes already implemented and new reforms introduced in response to recommendations. It is worth outlining some of the important changes the New South Wales Government has made in response to the recommendations of the royal commission to keep children safe, hold perpetrators to account, and provide justice and support to survivors.

The changes include joining the national redress scheme and bringing legislation to give effect to that commitment, leading significant reforms to improve permanency and stability for children in out-of-home care, introducing reforms to make it easier for child sexual abuse survivors to access civil justice, appointing specialist judges trained in managing child sexual assault matters, introducing legislative reforms aimed at reducing trauma experienced by victims during sexual assault proceedings, introducing legislative reforms to expand the categories of mandatory reporters and strengthen protections for people who report suspected child abuse, introducing legislative reforms to make the New South Wales Reportable Conduct Scheme more comprehensive and robust, and introducing reforms to ensure New South Wales bodies can share child protection information with statutory child protection agencies in other States and Territories.

The changes also include developing trauma-informed care training packages for caseworkers and carers, commencing a major program of work to improve record keeping relating to child sexual abuse, releasing a guide for upholding the rights of children and young people, and increasing sector capability and awareness of child safety through training and workshops and the development of child safety resources. They also include improving services for children and young people who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviours and improving education about those behaviours, increasing protection and strengthening support services for young people in detention, and improving specialist sexual assault services.

The bill is the next step in this important and ongoing work. It represents a fairer approach to the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, which is informed by the findings of the royal commission and the use of this evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions. The bill reflects the continued commitment of this Government to respond to the royal commission's recommendations and to ensure that the criminal justice system is as effective as possible in responding to child sexual abuse. In my previous career as an investigator in the Australian Federal Police I was proud to be an inaugural member of the newly established Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team, which was a specialist team of investigators established to provide an effective and appropriate investigative response. It was a team that required a significant degree of knowledge about child sexual abuse and offender behaviours and a high level of skill in conducting investigations and interviewing victims, witnesses and suspects.

We were the world leaders in establishing this team and we were followed by the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams in Victoria and the Joint Investigation Response Teams in New South Wales. Those teams were always complemented by collaborative and multidisciplinary service provision. The overall effect has been an increasingly specialised investigative capacity which is enriched and supported by experts in the victim services and offender treatment sectors. As a result complainants of sexual offences are having more positive experiences when reporting to police. Anecdotal evidence from the sector indicates improved attitudes and increased knowledge amongst police and a greater capacity to see themselves as partners alongside other agencies in supporting victims and survivors to engage with the justice system and in preventing further offending. However, best efforts at this front end of the justice system do not necessarily translate into improved outcomes in relation to prosecution and conviction. The arena of adjudication is markedly different from the investigative one.

The bill will assist us to ensure that our criminal justice system meets the needs of survivors and that perpetrators are brought to justice. While these reforms will not undo the harm suffered by victims of child sexual abuse or remove the challenges of prosecuting child sexual offences, the bill builds upon the reforms already introduced by the New South Wales Government to ensure that our criminal justice system meets the needs of survivors and that perpetrators are appropriately punished. This Government has been a leader in its response to the royal commission. With the introduction of this bill we continue to lead, as we will become the first uniform evidence law jurisdiction in the nation to implement these reforms. I am pleased to support the bill.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (15:58:55): I support the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. These vital reforms that enable the greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, particularly in child sexual abuse prosecutions, build on the New South Wales Government's comprehensive response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I acknowledge the other members who have made comment on this important bill and I acknowledge that the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services made some remarks in the House earlier.

In September 2015 the royal commission released the redress and civil litigation report. This report found that across Australia civil litigation systems and redress processes had failed to provide justice for survivors and that there was a need for reform across all jurisdictions. As would be expected, and as has been the case, New South Wales acted swiftly to improve access to justice and remove legal barriers for survivors by implementing all 15 royal commission recommendations about improving the capacity of civil litigation systems to respond to the scourge of child sexual abuse. It is important to reiterate that New South Wales acted swiftly and we have indeed implemented all 15 royal commission recommendations to improve the capacity of the civil litigation system.

In 2016 the New South Wales Government implemented guiding principles to ensure that a more caring and compassionate approach is taken across government when responding to civil claims for child sexual abuse. In the same year we removed limitation periods for child abuse actions against perpetrators and institutions, allowing survivors to launch civil compensation claims regardless of when the abuse occurred. This reform recognised the disproportionate effect that limitation periods have on victims of child abuse, who on average do not disclose their experiences until decades after the abuse occurs. In 2018 New South Wales completed its response to the civil litigation recommendations of the royal commission by enacting three significant reforms that remove the legal barriers identified by the royal commission and that provide a clear pathway to justice for survivors of child abuse in institutional settings.

These reforms included, first, abolishing the so-called "Ellis defence", which allowed some institutions to avoid liability on the basis that the organisation had no legal personality. Secondly, they included imposing a prospective duty on all institutions to prevent child abuse, with a reverse onus of proof, so that an institution is now liable for child abuse unless it can prove it took reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse. Thirdly, the reforms included codifying and extending the various prospective liabilities of institutions to include

non-employees who are akin to an employee, such as volunteers or religious representatives, who have taken advantage of their position to carry out abuse.

New South Wales was one of the first States to announce that it would join the National Redress Scheme and was the first State to pass legislation referring powers to the Commonwealth to establish the scheme. I am sure that I speak for all of us in this place when I say that is a matter of great pride. The scheme includes a payment of up to \$150,000, access to counselling and psychological support, and a direct personal response from the participating institution or institutions. As a Government we remain committed to delivering a response to the royal commission that builds a safer future for children, holds perpetrators to account and provides a clear pathway to justice for survivors of child sexual abuse. This has been seen in the New South Wales Government's comprehensive response to the royal commission's recommendations about improving the capacity of the civil litigation system and can be seen from the landmark reforms before the House today. I am pleased to support the bill.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:04:27): I speak on behalf of The Greens on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020 and offer our support for the bill. The bill, as we know, will enable greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence, such as evidence about an accused person's tendency to have a sexual interest in children. The bill provides by a new section 97A that in a trial relating to sexual offences against children, tendency evidence about the defendant's sexual interest in a child or children or acting on sexual interest in a child or children is presumed to have significant probative value. This is a rebuttable presumption if the defence can prove the evidence does not have significant probative value. The reforms will also lower an additional threshold for the prosecution to use tendency and coincidence evidence against the defendant.

As others have outlined in their contributions, evidence was presented to the child abuse royal commission about many criminal cases where evidence of a person previously offending against children was ruled inadmissible in the courts due to concerns that it may unfairly prejudice the case against that person. Many who have made contributions to the bill have acknowledged the courage of those who came forward during that royal commission to share horrendous, horrific and traumatic stories of injustices against them. It is a credit to their bravery, courage and willingness to attempt to ensure that those kinds of horrific incidents do not happen to others in our community. They shared and relived their trauma in order to see significant changes made to laws in New South Wales and around the country.

New South Wales and other uniform evidence jurisdictions agreed to a model bill at COAG in November 2019. This national and State approach demonstrates to those people that the contributions they made had significant value in changing the laws. Hopefully others will be prevented from ever going through what those people went through but, if they do, perpetrators of those offences on children will be treated appropriately. The royal commission made a specific recommendation that common law principles or rules that restrict the use of similar fact or propensity evidence should be abolished. The royal commission also made a recommendation that prosecutors should be able to rely on evidence of a defendant's prior convictions or charges, except if acquitted, in relation to child sexual assaults. Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald said:

Over many years, Australia's criminal justice system has failed to provide adequate justice for survivors of child sexual abuse, in part because of the unnecessary exclusion of tendency and coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings ...

Following the Royal Commission's comprehensive inquiry, and in the context of alarmingly low conviction rates for child sexual assault offences, we were convinced of the need for change.

The Greens and I strongly support the changes to the bill along those lines, but I ask members to listen to the commissioner's words relating to alarmingly low conviction rates and the need for change. While he was referring in this instance specifically to child sexual assaults, I suggest that sexual assault offences against women in this context should also be the focus of this Chamber. I foreshadow that The Greens intend to move an amendment in this place that would seek to review the way those laws operate over potentially a two-year time frame. We seek consideration of expanding those provisions to address the incredibly low conviction rates for other types of sexual assault offences, particularly offences against women.

In most of the examples provided as reasons for recommendations along these lines, the perpetrator and the victim or the survivor are in a private setting and it is often one person's word against another. We are not suggesting any rash movement into expanding this just yet, but it is hard not to see that the reasons for introducing this legislation include the challenges of the private nature of those offences, the low conviction rate and the issue of it being one person's word against that of another. All of those descriptors—while they have emerged from the evidence of the royal commission into child abuse—could equally be used to describe the situation with sexual offences against women. The Greens foreshadow that we will move an amendment along those lines during the consideration in detail stage of the bill to allow us to consider that in light of those changes.

Obviously, we would prefer not to have another royal commission to establish why there are low conviction rates for sexual assault and sexual offences against women. We believe that we can learn from and, more broadly, use lessons from the royal commission to assist in other areas where there are low conviction rates and the circumstances are possibly quite similar in terms of power imbalances, the private nature of the offences and it being one person's word against that of another. I acknowledge the fact that New South Wales is leading the way in this matter. We support the proposed change to the law that will remove barriers to justice for survivors of child sexual assault.

On behalf of Mr David Shoebridge, one of my colleagues in the upper House, I acknowledge that The Greens may wish to raise some issues around the technical drafting of the proposed bill and whether it will achieve the desired outcomes. Our amendment may seek to allow for a consideration of those. As we have heard from the Attorney General, this amendment bill takes steps to make significant changes. I think we would all agree that those changes intend to be for the better, but we also need to make sure the legislation is working in the way that it is intended.

In its deep consideration of this issue as part of the royal commission it was found that the prejudice to the accused from tendency and coincidence evidence had previously been overstated and the actual risk was likely to be minimal. The current test in the law for admissibility was found to be too harsh. It was found that the law as it stands prevents joint trials being held even in cases where such trials would be in the interest of justice. The royal commission further recognised that, because child sexual offences are generally committed in private and with no eyewitnesses or other evidence, it can be harder for judges and juries to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt. Credible evidence of other allegations or convictions of child sexual abuse committed by the accused can be valuable evidence to allow a determination on the facts.

I acknowledge again how great an achievement it is for people to make the tough decision to give evidence to a royal commission, not knowing how that evidence will be taken and not knowing if the personal trauma and pain they have to go through to make that contribution will result in any change. It is a credit to those people that their contributions to the royal commission are bringing about change that is being supported in a bipartisan, cross-party way. We are attempting to use those recommendations in the best ways. I honour the courage of those who made those contributions. I remind people that sometimes people listen and things change as a result. People should not give up and think that those systems cannot change or that broken things cannot be fixed. It is important that we have hope and that people know their contributions can make change in the community and the laws that provide us with the kind of world we live in.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:13:43): I speak in debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I thank the Attorney General, who is present in the Chamber, for introducing the bill. I also thank the member for Newtown for her comments, particularly those about how the bill helps give hope to those who have suffered so much. In that sense, the royal commission showed us the terrible failures of governments and non-government institutions to protect children. Survivors' courage in coming forward has given us a unique opportunity to make criminal justice reforms, to protect children better and to facilitate prosecutions for child sexual offences so perpetrators can be held accountable. A criminal justice response is important not only for survivors seeking justice for their personal experiences but also to encourage reporting of child sexual abuse where it has occurred and to prevent child sexual abuse in the future. The Government is committed to ensuring that past mistakes are not repeated.

The bill represents perhaps the most significant criminal justice reform by the New South Wales Government in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I note that this legislation stems from a working group led in New South Wales. That working group was established by the Council of Attorneys-General in early 2018 to develop a reform proposal that could achieve the objectives of the royal commission in uniform evidence law in several jurisdictions, including New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth. A comprehensive reform proposal and model bill to implement the proposal was developed by this working group in consultation with expert legal and academic stakeholders.

I note that further amendments will be required to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to enact two additional supplementary reforms agreed to by the working group and the Council of Attorneys-General. These are to be progressed in the next Justice Legislation Amendment Bill, which is anticipated to be introduced in Parliament in mid-2020. I will now briefly explain the intent of the bill before the House. Tendency evidence is evidence of the character, reputation or conduct of a person, or a tendency that a person has or had, adduced to prove that a person has or had a tendency to act in a particular way, or to have a particular state of mind.

An example is evidence that an accused person has a tendency to be sexually attracted to young boys and to act on that attraction. A jury may reason that this tendency makes it more likely that the accused person committed the particular offences the subject of the prosecution. Coincidence evidence is evidence that two or

more events occurred, which is adduced to prove that a person did a particular act or had a particular state of mind on the basis that, having regard to any similarities in the events or the circumstances in which they occurred, or any similarities in both the events and the circumstances in which they occurred, it is improbable that the events occurred coincidentally.

An example is multiple complainants alleging that an accused person abused them when they were children. A jury may reason that it is improbable that the similar allegations are a coincidence, making it more probable that the accused also committed the particular offences that are the subject of the prosecution. The royal commission found that "there are unwarranted acquittals for child sex abuse prosecutions", including because of the exclusion of important tendency and coincidence evidence. The bill responds to the royal commission *Criminal Justice report: Outline of recommendations*. Recommendations 44 to 51 aim to facilitate greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions.

The bill complements the work already undertaken by the New South Wales Government to implement the overwhelming majority of the criminal justice recommendations made by the royal commission, which I will detail now. The Government has already introduced significant criminal justice reforms, including legislating a maximum life sentence for an offence of persistent child sexual abuse. This penalty recognises the devastating and lifelong impact of that abuse on victims, and the community's expectations around the punishment of such offenders. Secondly, the reforms introduce new offences for failure to report and failure to protect against child abuse, aimed at preventing those abuses from occurring in the first place, and to ensure that if they do the future risk to victims and potential victims is mitigated.

Thirdly, they require courts not to take into account an offender's good character when sentencing for historical offences where their reputation facilitated the offending. Fourthly, they require courts sentencing for historical child sexual assault offences to apply current stricter sentencing standards and to reflect present understanding about the lifelong trauma sexual abuse can cause. Finally, the reforms introduce a new offence of grooming an adult to access a child and strengthening the current grooming offence to include providing a child with gifts or money. While these reforms will not undo the harm suffered by victims of child sexual abuse, they will go a long way to ensuring that our system better meets the needs of survivors and that perpetrators are appropriately punished. I support the bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:20:02): I support the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I am sure that members in this place have read about cases of child sexual assault and have wondered why certain judgements and punishments have been handed down. Unfortunately, the real punishment is suffered by the poor children who are sexually abused. I have sat on various committees and met representatives of the Law Society, the Judicial Commission and the NSW Sentencing Council. At first I wondered why what appeared to be lenient sentences were handed down, but I learnt that the sentencing laws are very complex—the NSW Sentencing Council has a large data base of precedents—and the laws we pass in this place guide them. We want to do everything we can to protect children and keep predators away from them, but in recent times the prevalence of child abuse has arisen. These days most tabloids I read contain horrific stories and I have enormous sympathy for the children involved. As I said, the perpetrators will eventually be released from jail but the effect on the victims will continue well into the future.

The Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill amends the Evidence Act 1995 to facilitate greater admission of tendency and coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly in child sexual assault proceedings. I will now give context to the significance of the bill on child sexual assault prosecutions. One of the prosecutions examined by the royal commission illustrates just how inconsistent the current state of law is with our conceptions of justice. In that case, the accused was indicted on 17 counts of child abuse offences committed against six complainants. The offences allegedly took place between 1983 and 1985. The complainants were boarders in the year 7 dormitory of a college at which the accused was a housemaster.

The Crown argued there should be a joint trial. However, the accused sought orders that there should be separate trials and that the Crown should not be permitted to rely on tendency or coincidence evidence in the different trials. The trial judge granted the accused's application. The judge ordered six separate trials and that the court could not rely on tendency or coincidence evidence in each of the different trials. In the ultimate verdicts, the accused was found not guilty of all charges. The court's decision was on the basis that there was a possibility of contamination or concoction, which meant that the evidence could not have significant probative value. That possibility was not on the basis of any actual evidence of contamination, concoction or collusion. Rather, it was on the basis that there was an opportunity for contamination, concoction or collusion to occur. Recommendation 47 of the royal commission states:

Issues of concoction, collusion or contamination should not affect the admissibility of tendency or coincidence evidence about the defendant in a child sexual offence prosecution. The court should determine admissibility on the assumption that the evidence will

be accepted as credible and reliable, and the impact of any evidence of concoction, collusion or contamination should be left to the jury or other fact-finder.

That recommendation largely aligns with relevant High Court decisions about assessing the probative value of tendency and coincidence evidence. In *The Queen v Dennis Bauer (a pseudonym) [2018] HCA 40*, the High Court held that the risk of contamination, concoction or collusion generally only goes to the credibility and reliability of tendency evidence and is therefore an assessment that must be left to the jury, rather than a factor that the court can consider in determining probative value. However, the High Court also stated that there was an exception to this general proposition where:

... the risk of contamination, concoction or collusion is so great that it would not be open to the jury rationally to accept the evidence, the determination of probative value excludes consideration of credibility and reliability.

Proposed section 94 (5) in schedule 1 [1] to the bill provides that when a court is determining the probative value of tendency or coincidence evidence it is not to have regard to the possibility that the evidence may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination. This closes the small gap left open by the courts and ensures that recommendation 47 of the royal commission is fully implemented.

Importantly, we are not seeking to undermine any person's fundamental right to a fair trial with these reforms. This reform does not do that. It simply states that if an accused person has actual evidence that concoction, collusion or contamination has taken place, they can put that to a jury and argue that the witness is not reliable or credible. We are just saying that what might ultimately be highly persuasive evidence should not be excluded as a default position. The jury must have the right to hear it and either accept it or, as the case may be, reject it if actual evidence of concoction, collusion or contamination exists. It goes to the heart of the bill.

It allows the jury to make the decision; it is not made inadmissible by a point of law. That is the basis of our judicial system. Whether we like it, love it or hate it, it is probably the best system we have. We need to support judges and, in particular, juries. Justice is blind. People are judged for their actions by their peers. This bill goes a long way to ensure that. The ultimate goal is to ensure that trials are fair for all parties and lead to further convictions of predators of underage children so that children are safe in future years. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (16:28:30): It gives me great pleasure to speak in debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I congratulate the Attorney General on the work he has done in shaking the cages of sexual predators across the community. This amendment bill will assist in that goal; it will help to ensure that predators get their true comeuppance. Any person or perpetrator who harms or sexually abuses an underage child deserves the full force of the law to come down on them. Too many kids in our communities go through their lives damaged because of what happened to them when they were underage. I am quite passionate about this issue and if time permits I will expand on this later.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard evidence of shocking and appalling abuse perpetrated on children by the very people who were supposed to care for them. In December 2017 the royal commission handed down a whopping 409 recommendations across a wide range of policy areas. The recommendations went well beyond reforms to Australia's civil and criminal justice systems. It recommended groundbreaking reforms designed to keep our children safe in institutional contexts now and in the future. Today I will try to provide just a snapshot of some of the incredible reforms the New South Wales Government has committed to in response to those recommendations.

In February 2019 the Office of the Children's Guardian released a discussion paper entitled *Regulating Child Safe Organisations*, publicly seeking feedback on a model for the regulation of child safe standards in New South Wales. More than 200 responses were received and the Office of the Children's Guardian met with representatives from more than 50 organisations from different child-related sectors, including peak bodies and government agencies. Following this extensive consultation, the Office of the Children's Guardian released the *Making organisations safer for children* report, which outlines key elements of a child safe regulatory model for New South Wales. The new model will be rolled out in 2020.

The New South Wales Government is focused on increasing sector capability and awareness of child safety. Since January 2019 the Office of the Children's Guardian has provided training and workshops on child safety to more than 5,300 individuals. Its focus is to provide sector specific training that is practical and targeted to meet different needs. For example, the Office of the Children's Guardian has progressed a sport-specific project with nine State sporting organisations: Hockey NSW, Football NSW, Dragon Boats NSW, Orienteering NSW, Northern NSW Football, Netball NSW, Water Polo NSW and Tennis NSW.

Further to increasing sector capability, the New South Wales Government is working better with other jurisdictions to protect children. New South Wales bodies can now share child protection information with statutory child protection agencies in other States and Territories. In February 2019 amendments to the Children

and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 commenced. The amendments allow New South Wales prescribed bodies such as police, schools, healthcare providers and day care centres to directly share information with interstate statutory child protection agencies if the information relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a particular child or young person. This change will improve child protection outcomes by reducing fragmentation of information, delays and inefficiencies in information sharing.

The Government has taken up with gusto the recommendations of the royal commission on the expansion of mandatory reporting groups. Mandatory reporting places a legislative obligation on selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse to the Department of Communities and Justice. New South Wales has passed legislation to meet the royal commission's recommendation on the groups of individuals who should be mandatory reporters. Amendments to the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 require all registered psychologists, persons in religious ministry and persons providing religion-based activities to children to mandatorily report suspicions that a child is at risk of significant harm. The amendments also strengthen existing protections for people who report suspected child abuse. Reporters who make reports in good faith will be protected from all civil and criminal liability and from retribution for making or proposing to make a report.

Those protections will also apply to reporters who make reports or complaints about child abuse to any institution engaged in child-related work. The expansion of the categories of mandatory reporters and increased protections for people who make reports will result in increased reporting of child abuse and neglect, allowing the Department of Communities and Justice to prevent children from being abused or to put a stop to abuse that is already occurring. Those changes will commence on 1 March 2020. Moreover the New South Wales Government is committed to improving protections for children in out-of-home care [OOHC]. On 1 July 2019 a project commenced to complete community service checks on carers and household members exempted under legislative amendments introduced in 2015 and who are still caring for children. The project is expected to be completed by June 2020, improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in OOHC.

This is just a snapshot of the many and far-reaching reforms taking place in New South Wales in response to the royal commission. New South Wales will continue work to ensure that all children and young people, now and in the future, are protected from harm. New South Wales will continue working with the Australian Government and other States and Territories to progress recommendations requiring intergovernmental cooperation and action. The New South Wales Government will publicly report on its progress every year. The Government will continue this important work to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people and survivors of child sexual assault.

I have spoken previously about my ongoing experience with a gentleman who reported to me. I went with him to the police station to report for the royal commission. I am still traumatised by that experience. The gentleman is 57 years old and he is still reliving every day what happened to him when he was six. He was put in an institution after his mother had to give him up for health reasons. One of his carers was "Dolly" Dunn. I do not know if members know who that is but "Dolly" Dunn is one of the worst creatures ever put on this earth and he preyed upon this poor man. The gentleman now has his recompense from the royal commission and is starting to turn his life around. But it has been a long road for him. Children are not necessarily believed and that is what the amendments are about. From the age of seven he was telling those who were supposed to be looking after him that he was being abused. Nobody took any notice of him.

He said he was shoved from home to home and was sexually abused. It was almost like he was a plaything for paedophiles. He spent all his childhood being abused in an organisation that was supposedly looking after him and that has severely impacted on his ability to have a relationship, to hold a job and to live normally. I fully support the Attorney General in looking after children. All of us must be vigilant. If we have any suspicions about sexual abuse against children, we must report them. Those perpetrators are very good at being friends to everyone and they need to be called out. The best sanitation for a paedophile is having the light shone on them and being reported. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:38:36): I speak in support of the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. Firstly, I thank members for their contributions in debate on this excellent legislation. I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Hawkesbury; the member for Myall Lakes; the member for Kiama and disability services Minister, who gave a very passionate speech in this Chamber about this piece of legislation; the member for Goulburn who is still in the Chamber; the member for Albury; the member for Manly; the member for Tweed; and the member for Heathcote, especially the chilling story he outlined to us about a victim living in his electorate. I believe the member for North Shore will be speaking after me.

I am pleased to speak in debate on the bill today. It amends the Evidence Act 1995 to facilitate the greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly in child sexual assault proceedings. Currently under section 97 of the Evidence Act, in civil or criminal proceedings, tendency evidence is not admissible unless it will have significant probative value. The bill introduces a provision that will apply in

proceedings in which the commission of a child sexual offence by the defendant is a fact in issue. Judicial discretion is retained in this amendment, as the court may determine that this evidence does not have significant probative value if it is satisfied that there are sufficient grounds to do so.

Proposed section 97A (5) sets out a number of matters that the court will not ordinarily be permitted to take into account in determining whether there are sufficient grounds to rebut the presumption. The matters are drawn from the findings of the royal commission and issues in recent case law, such as a difference in the relationship that the defendant had with the relevant children and the time between the relevant incidents. A court may take those matters into account only if there are exceptional circumstances in relation to those matters that warrant it doing so.

Currently under section 101, tendency or coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings from the prosecution about the defendant cannot be used unless the probative value of the evidence substantially outweighs any prejudicial effect it may have on the defendant. The bill amends this to provide that it will not be admissible unless the probative value of the evidence outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant. This proposed amendment would apply in all criminal proceedings. I want to focus on the child abuse royal commission that concluded in 2018. We heard the chilling account of the member for Heathcote about a gentleman, well into his fifties, who is still deeply traumatised by what happened to him as a child. We need to do everything we can to protect young people in our community from this predatory behaviour.

On 22 October 2018 Prime Minister the Hon. Scott Morrison, MP, delivered the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse in response to the royal commission. The Prime Minister apologised to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on behalf of the Australian Government, as well as their families, supporters and all those affected. The apology acknowledged the appalling abuse inflicted on vulnerable children, including current generations, by those who were supposed to care for them and protect them. The member for Heathcote eloquently described the immeasurable and lasting damage that abuse has caused.

On 22 October 2018 the New South Wales Government held an official ceremony at the Sydney Opera House to screen the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse as it was delivered live at Parliament House in Canberra. Prior to screening the apology Premier Gladys Berejiklian delivered an apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on behalf of the New South Wales Government. This apology paid tribute to survivors and thanked those who bravely shared their experiences through the royal commission. As if they had not endured enough, they had to relive incidents of child abuse in front of a royal commission. But they were brave as they recounted the despicable and dastardly acts that were carried out on them as children by the lowest of the low in our community, those who should never have been in a position to perpetrate such acts on innocent children.

I like what the member for Heathcote said. The best way to expose them is to shine a light on their disgusting behaviour. That is exactly what we will be doing. The apology recommitted to the implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the royal commission's recommendations. Attorney General Mark Speakman and the former Minister for Family and Community Services, my good friend Pru Goward, also delivered addresses at the ceremony. Attorney General Speakman focused on reforms to criminal justice and civil litigation as well as this Government's commitment to the National Redress Scheme. Former Minister Goward focused on key reforms to make institutions child-safe such as improving cross-border information sharing about children's welfare and health interventions that prevent and respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours. *[Extension of time]*

The New South Wales Government provided small grants to community organisations to hold their own apology events had they not wished to attend or in the event that they were not able to attend the official ceremonies in Canberra or at the Sydney Opera House. We know that the apology does provide closure to some of those victims of this incredibly appalling behaviour that was institutional in some places and totally unacceptable. The video recording of the New South Wales Government's apology is available on the Government's website and YouTube. While not a specific recommendation of the royal commission, the apology was an important part of the New South Wales Government's response. People need to know that we are genuinely sorry about what they experienced at the hands of others, especially when they were young children, who are most vulnerable and trusting. Children should be able to know that they are safe in the custody of those who are caring for them. What those victims were put through over generations was totally unacceptable. The Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020 has a number of objects. The overview of the bill states that the object of the bill is to amend the Evidence Act 1995 as follows:

- (a) to clarify that principles or rules of the common law or equity preventing or restricting the admissibility of evidence about propensity or similar fact evidence are not relevant when applying Part 3.6 of the principal Act,

- (b) to provide that a court, when assessing the probative value of evidence under Part 3.6 of the principal Act, is not to have regard to the possibility that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination,

As I outlined earlier, the bill introduces a rebuttable presumption that certain tendency evidence relating to a child sexual offence is presumed to have significant probative value and to set out matters that may not ordinarily be taken into account by a court to overcome that presumption and determine that the evidence does not have significant probative value. The amendment bill also clarifies that coincidence evidence includes evidence from multiple witnesses claiming they are victims of an accused person, which is used to prove, on the basis of similarities in their evidence, that the accused person did a particular act itself. It also provides that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence adduced by the prosecution about a defendant is inadmissible unless the probative value of the evidence outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant. It provides that the proposed Act does not affect proceedings when a hearing has already begun or when notices are given in proceedings. This is an excellent piece of legislation and I was pleased to hear members on both sides of the House speak in favour of it.

I commend the Attorney General on the work that has been done on the bill. This is a complicated issue and it is so important that we get it right to make sure that we provide the best protection for young people in our community in the future. People have worked hard and experienced a lot of pain when reliving those incidents through the royal commission, but they are coming through the other side of it now. They can see that the Government is listening to what they have experienced and it appreciates that they are truly victims of unspeakable crimes. I am proud to be part of a government that has introduced in the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill. I have spoken at length about the portion of the bill that covers those issues.

I again thank the members who have contributed to this debate, especially the member for Heathcote, who outlined his encounter of working with a victim and how that has affected him personally. To hear those stories firsthand from those victims is nothing if not confronting. Obviously it is hoped that this event has raised awareness in the community about the lifelong impacts of child sexual abuse and that it will help protect children both now and in the future. I again commend the Attorney General and his excellent team who have worked incredibly hard drafting this legislation and some of them have been in the Chamber. They are the engine room; they do all the hard work behind the scenes. I acknowledge all of the staff in the Attorney General's office who have worked so diligently and thoroughly on this excellent piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:51:40): I contribute to debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I thank the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House. I also acknowledge that this is the first bill of its kind in Australia. We are looking forward to seeing other jurisdictions follow suit. I support the bill, which amends the Evidence Act 1995 to facilitate the greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly in child sexual assault proceedings. This was identified by the royal commission as one of the reasons why there were low rates of prosecutions when it came to child sexual assaults. It gives us the opportunity to put in place a reform of our judicial system that will actually meet the justice needs of members of our community who have been significantly harmed by the actions of others.

Tendency evidence is evidence to the character, reputation and conduct of a person, or a tendency that a person has or has had adduced to prove that a person has or had a tendency to act in a particular way, or to have a particular state of mind. That might be evidence that shows an accused person had a tendency to be sexually attracted to young boys and to act on that attraction. A jury may reason that this tendency makes it more likely that the accused person committed the particular offences that are the subject of the prosecution. Coincidence evidence is evidence that two or more events occurred, which is adduced to prove that a person did a particular act or had a particular state of mind and, on the basis of that, having regard to any similarities in the events or the circumstances in which they occurred or any similarities in both the events and the circumstances in which they occurred, it is probable that the events occurred coincidentally. A jury may reason that it is improbable that the similar allegations are coincidence, making it more probable that the accused also committed the particular offences that are subject to prosecution.

In supporting the bill I speak about the significance of the bill on child sexual assault prosecutions and some of the work that has come out of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We know in this place that all members support the response to the royal commission. The New South Wales Government is particularly committed to a comprehensive response to the recommendations. That is why we have made record investments to strengthen measures to prevent child sexual abuse, ensure greater access to treatment and support services for survivors and to toughen the criminal justice response to child offence matters. That commitment is illustrated by the New South Wales Government's \$127 million package of reforms announced in October 2018 by the Premier, the Attorney General, the then Minister for Family and Community Services and the health Minister. The package included almost \$59 million for new measures to prevent child sexual abuse,

\$36 million to improve therapeutic services and support for children and adult survivors, and \$32.4 million to strengthen the criminal justice response.

First, the Government's investment is helping to prevent child sexual abuse by providing, in addition to other important programs and initiatives, a new register for therapeutic care workers; additional child-safe training for 72,000 providers who work with children; additional training for NGOs to better respond to complaints; improved safety of children in juvenile detention with upgraded CCTV in four juvenile detention centres; stronger carer checks for out-of-home care; and specialist therapies for children at risk, including early intervention and support for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Secondly, the investment is improving therapeutic supports for children and adult survivors by enhancing funding for survivor groups and community support organisations; establishing new integrated specialist therapeutic services for survivors with complex needs; and enhancing sexual assault outreach for vulnerable groups, including Aboriginal communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with disability. Thirdly, the investment is strengthening the criminal justice response by expanding the capacity of the New South Wales Local Court to respond to child sexual offence matters, allowing cases to be processed more efficiently; providing the Local Court with two additional magistrates; and investing more than \$28 million in the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program, including the provision of witness intermediaries to help support young people through the court process.

The reforms proposed by the bill will help in delivering justice and support for survivors of child sexual abuse, particularly those identified during the royal commission. The bill will make a significant difference in ensuring the successful prosecution of individuals who have perpetrated horrific acts upon the youngest and most vulnerable people in our community. It will make a difference to the sense of justice felt by the victims who have experienced significant suffering. I thank the Attorney General and his team for the work they have done on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate interrupted.

Public Interest Debate

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:57:03): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Government's commitment to making before- and after-school care available to all parents with children at public primary schools by 2021, supported by an investment of \$120 million over four years.
- (2) Notes that since 1 July 2019 more than 7,500 before- and after-school care places have been created across New South Wales.
- (3) Notes that the Government has allocated almost \$527 million for early childhood education, which includes extending funding to all three-year-olds and four-year-olds in community preschools—the first Australian State to do so.

I am pleased to move the motion. I recognise the significant work undertaken by the New South Wales Coalition Government in supporting our young people and their families from day one. Whether it is the record investment by this Government in our hospitals and schools or in major infrastructure projects across New South Wales, the Government is delivering for communities in every corner of our State. The New South Wales Government is focused on providing access to quality and affordable out-of-school care for families of all children attending government primary schools. The Government is rapidly progressing on its \$120 million election commitment to expand access to before- and after-school care across New South Wales for public primary schoolchildren. That is a significant investment and represents the values that the Government holds: supporting families and delivering for our young people, no matter their stage of life.

Since July 2019 more than 7,500 before- and after-school-care places have been delivered in New South Wales. That is great news for families and represents a commitment by government to work alongside schools and communities to deliver much-needed spaces. Since July 2019 we have grown the before- and after-school care sector by 68 more services, with seven schools in the focus areas of Sydney, Newcastle, the Illawarra and the Central Coast. In addition, major regional centres have new onsite services. By term one 2021 we will have created 120 new services statewide, including 44 new onsite services in metropolitan and inner regional schools, with enrolments above 160 students. Overall, that will create up to 19,000 new places across the State—an incredible achievement by the Government.

Included in the \$120 million package is a commitment by the Government to deliver \$50 million for before- and after-school-care infrastructure to expand facilities for the creation of places; \$20 million for smaller communities in New South Wales to pilot new approaches where a standalone approach may not be viable;

\$40 million in rental subsidies to be made available to services at public primary schools; \$8 million for teams of proactive specialists to help coordinate services and resources across different areas of New South Wales by providing on-the-ground assistance with set-up, contract management and service transition; and, finally, \$2 million to create new online support tools for parents.

For the benefit of members opposite, Service NSW is playing a vital role in the rollout of the program. Many parents use Service NSW to find available before- and after-school-care services near them. They can place expressions of need when no services are available. Whether it is through bushfire relief or before- and after-school care, Service NSW has become an invaluable tool for the families of New South Wales. I recognise and commend the good work of the Minister for Customer Service, Minister Dominello, and his team. The New South Wales Government is delivering world-class early childhood education, anchored by extension of funding to all three-year-olds and four-year-olds in community preschools. I am proud that New South Wales is the first Australian State to do so.

The Government remains committed to universal access to two years participation in preschool for a minimum of 600 hours. We have allocated \$20 million over the next four years in addition to the \$42.1 million announced in the 2018-19 budget for new or existing community preschools to either build, improve or extend facilities to cater for increasing enrolments, wherever they may be across New South Wales. I recognise the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning in the other place for delivering the investment for the betterment of all New South Wales communities. Since 2018 over 1,200 grants have been awarded under the Quality Learning Environments grants program, totalling more than \$13 million. I can attest to the positive impact of grants allocated to preschools in my electorate of Manly.

The grants program supports the delivery of quality early childhood education by recognising that to support the educational needs of our young people their preschools' physical environment is key. The program supports preschools to enhance their premises by addressing identified safety, health or other functional needs. We have some great preschools in Manly. I recognise the Northern Beaches Council, which operates numerous community preschools on the peninsula, many of which have been recipients of a Quality Learning Environments grant. The importance placed on early childhood education by this Government can be seen in my community.

Investments include \$10,000 to Harbord Kindergarten in Freshwater for its playground upgrade; \$10,000 to Manly Vale Community Kindergarten for a new cubby house and additional works, which I was proud to open in August last year—I did not go inside the cubby house; over \$9,000 to St James Kindergarten in Balgowlah Heights for upgrades to its outdoor play area and water play wall; almost \$10,000 to Manly Community Preschool, operated by Northern Beaches Council, for gardening at the preschool; and \$10,000 to North Harbour Children's Centre in Balgowlah, also operated by the council, for sustainability workshops. Those grants made in my electorate exemplify the Government's commitment to directing funding where it needs to go. From Manly to Mudgee and anywhere that needs support across New South Wales, this Government is delivering for our young people and their families by investing in quality learning environments in our preschools and supporting universal access for all three-year-olds and four-year-olds in community preschools. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (17:03:25): I move:

That the motion be amended by adding:

- (4) Notes the Government's appalling history in not achieving its early childhood promises over the past nine years.
- (5) Calls upon the Government to stop lagging behind the rest of Australia and provide the universal early education that our children deserve.

I move this amendment because, as with everything this Government has anything to do with, it knows how to talk the talk but it does not know how to walk the walk. This motion is shameless backslapping. Last year we were told that \$120 million would be spent providing before- and after-school-care places for every child in a public primary school by 2021. The member for Manly said that this was for all children in public primary schools. There are 491,000 children in our public primary schools. In total, even with the places created, only 105,000 are places for outside-school-hours care. There are nine months until the Government's own deadline for promised universal access and we have only one outside-school-hours-care place for every five children in a public primary school. One in five is hardly universal access. But we are used to this. The Government has form on being big on headlines and small on action. In 2018 there was the promise of \$200 million to get every three- and four-year-old child into two years of preschool education before they start school.

Ms Kate Washington: I remember that.

Ms JODIE HARRISON: Absolutely. The member for Port Stephens would remember. Now the Government has backtracked and said, "Whoops! We meant to say community preschools." Even if we look at community preschools, which provide only a fraction of preschool programs in New South Wales, when that

policy was announced there were 28,740 places in community preschools. Universal access was announced and big spending was shouted about but where were we 18 months later, at the end of last year? We had a reduction of 1,000 places just in community preschools. There are fewer preschool places for our kids; that is what this Government wants to celebrate this afternoon. Every parent is getting used to what this Government means when it talks about universal access.

But there is something much more serious at stake here. This morning in budget estimates the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning assured the committee that her chief commitment and highest priority was safety in our early learning services. After all, the Minister is responsible for the licensing and regulation of early childhood services in New South Wales—her own department does this. But she forgot to tell the committee that the number of unannounced spot checks at services are going down, not up; the number of serious incidents—children being locked in or being taken from services and being unaccounted for—is up, not down; and serious incidents in proportion to the total number of services is disproportionately up in New South Wales when compared with the rest of Australia.

Why might this be happening? Here are some disturbing figures. Currently, 373 early childhood learning services in New South Wales have been approved but have had no external quality assessment by the regulator, the Government, which lets them operate. Those 373 services have places for over 24,000 children, and many of them have been operating for more than two years without any formal assessment of their quality. What has the Government done in response to back up its big talk on quality and safety? It has budgeted to spend nearly \$1 million on a new sticker to show the quality rating that a service has received. No wonder early learning providers are up in arms about this Government. It is not investing in quality, it is not making good on the promised new places, but it is signing a \$70,000 contract with The Wiggles so that the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning can be photographed with Dorothy the Dinosaur and her new sticker. The latest *Report on Government Services* says that New South Wales is lagging behind the rest of Australia.

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

Ms JODIE HARRISON: We have the lowest participation rates in early education programs, the highest costs to families in the country and the worst safety record for our young children. This Government should be ashamed of itself.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Terrigal will resume his seat.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:08:48): I support the motion moved by my esteemed colleague the member for Manly. He and I share many things in common, including a very personal interest in early childhood care, given that we both have children who are just over one year old. We are incredibly reliant on our communities and services to make sure that we can invest in the future of our children. All members in this place are committed to providing the investment that all children need across our community to have the best start in life. We know that early childhood learning and education is vital to ensure that our kids get the best start in life, and education is one of the reasons that I came to this place. The Berejiklian Government has made historic increases in funding provided per child in community preschools across New South Wales.

In the 2019-20 budget \$526.7 million was allocated to early childhood learning, including the Start Strong program to support preschool education in community preschools and long day care centres across New South Wales. This Government is also committed to improving access for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. It has provided \$16 million over two years for the Strong Start Pathways program, which targets the early learning needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children who are too young for preschool and supports pathways into early childhood education. The Government has also continued funding to enhance participation and educational outcomes in early childhood education for children with a disability. We know that our kids thrive in the right environment, so ensuring that each early childhood centre and preschool can create the right environment is vital.

Through the Government's Quality Learning Environments program we have been able to support a number of early childhood education services to improve their learning environments and positively impact experiences and outcomes for preschool-age children. In my electorate of North Shore, a number of early childhood education services have received funding through the Quality Learning Environments program. Goodstart Early Learning in North Sydney received \$7,763 for the purchase of outdoor equipment and the development of an art corner; Uniting Shirley Road Preschool received \$8,946 for Aboriginal cultural incursion and yoga classes; Goodstart Early Learning in Mosman received \$7,349 for outdoor play equipment; Goodstart Early Learning in St Leonards received \$5,714 for the purchase of a playhouse and outdoor equipment; and St Johns Child Care Centre, which is just across the road from my electorate office, received \$9,073 for the purchase of new outdoor equipment.

The parents had a big working bee to put that equipment together. They have a wonderful outdoor space with lots of risky play for children to try and make sure they give them the learning environment they need to have the development they deserve. At the end of last year I visited the centre across the road to talk to the staff about how programs like these are making a positive impact on the centre and the kids. Not only do the kids benefit from using new and improved outdoor equipment by getting outside and being physical, but also they see their parents involved in the school community through the day care centre. The kids were very proud to play on the equipment that their mums and dads worked on. Members on this side of the House know that juggling a family and work can be very difficult. In my electorate there is a significant number of families where both parents work. They rely heavily on early childhood care and also before- and after-school-care services to assist in their day-to-day lives.

Before- and after-school-care services operate in about 720 public schools in New South Wales. They provide before- and after-school-hours care as well as onsite holiday care for students at the school and other eligible children. At the 2019 State election we committed \$120 million to expand access to before- and after-school care for public primary schoolchildren across the State. This Government initiative aims to fill gaps in access to services across the State and to clear waiting lists in areas of high demand. The commitment includes: \$50 million in infrastructure funding to expand facilities and create new places, \$20 million for smaller communities to pilot new approaches where a standalone approach may not be viable, \$40 million in rental subsidies to be made available to services at public primary schools, \$8 million for a team of specialists to help coordinate services and resources and \$2 million to create new online support tools for parents.

This is a government that listens, which is why we have made such a significant investment in before- and after-school care. I know that many parents and families in my electorate rely on those services as they try to balance work and family life. I have spent quite a bit of time with Mosman Public School and the Department of Education on work investing in a new building for before- and after-school care. We have heard from over 6,000 parents in our survey. We are working hard to ensure that we continue to deliver for our communities by providing the services that many rely on.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:13:51): Members opposite have no credibility whatsoever when it comes to education at any level—whether it be early childhood learning, primary school, high school or TAFE. The Government's form over the past 11 years shows exactly how it feels about education and public education in this State. They have no credibility to get up here and debate this at all. It is shameful. I am going to start with a little story from my electorate; it was those opposite who actually closed down early learning centres in public schools. It is sickening for the Opposition in New South Wales to have to sit and listen to the diatribe that comes out of Government members' mouths. Imagine how sickening it is for parents whose services are being cut and whose kids cannot even attend any of these services.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the member for Shellharbour.

Ms ANNA WATSON: It is an absolute disgrace that those opposite can come in here—

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

Ms ANNA WATSON: —and open their mouths and think that they have any credibility in this space at all. I know that the member for Kiama does not really care about this issue because—

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

Mr Gareth Ward: You have just been rubbishing and dribbling on.

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

Ms ANNA WATSON: At the end of the day you just have to ignore him because he cannot help himself.

Mr Gareth Ward: You cannot help yourself.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Kiama to remove himself from the Chamber for 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Kiama left the Chamber at 5.18 p.m.]

Ms ANNA WATSON: Excellent. See you later. Assistant Speaker, thank you for that. That is an excellent call. We know that every person caring for a young person in New South Wales is already struggling to make ends meet due to the broken promises and systemic mismanagement of the early childhood sector by those opposite. The amendments provided by my colleague the shadow Minister for Early Childhood Learning get to the root of what we should be discussing today. I congratulate her on that.

Those opposite have an appalling track record with the early childhood sector and we all know that. It is our State's families and our State's children who are suffering the most. This Government spends drastically less per child on early childhood services than any other State in Australia. I will give members the statistics on that because they are very interesting. In 2017 the New South Wales Government spent an average of \$246 per child on early childhood services. Western Australia spent an average of \$733 per child. South Australia spent an average of \$704 per child. The Australian Capital Territory, a territory of New South Wales, spent \$628 per child, which is more than double what New South Wales has spent. Those opposite should not stand in this place and lecture us on what a great job they are doing in this space. I would be very embarrassed if I were any of them.

Our State has the lowest proportion of children enrolled in preschool participation in the year before full-time school. In 2017 only 71 per cent of our State's kids were enrolled in preschool before attending full-time school. Australia-wide, governments have been given a goal to see 95 per cent of their children enrolled. Those opposite are failing miserably and they know it. New South Wales is lagging behind every other State—and that is an understatement. We are also paying one of the highest hourly rates for child care in Australia. Those most vulnerable and people who really need to access the services do not have the means to do so.

Right now people in our State are paying more than anyone and getting less out of their government. Why should they believe a thing that comes out of the mouths of any of those on that side of the House? People have stopped listening. They do not trust the Government on TAFE. They do not trust the Government on early childhood education. They do not trust the Government on primary school education. In the 2015 election it was a Labor Government that committed \$45 million to build a school precinct in West Dapto. In 2019 we committed \$60 million for a school precinct in West Dapto. What did those opposite commit? Nothing. Ten years later they have not even bought the block of land.

In January this year data revealed that parents in New South Wales are paying more than \$15,000 a year for child care. Since this Liberal-Nationals Government came to power hourly fees at our State's childcare centres have grown by 34 per cent. Those astronomical costs are coupled with the ballooning costs of living. I could go on and give members the statistics, but what makes me most sick is how those opposite sit there and say, "We are just so proud of what we've done in this State." How proud are they about those statistics on early childhood care? How proud are they about parents having to pay \$15,000 more a year than parents in any other State in this country? There is nothing to be proud of—nothing whatsoever. While taxpayer-funded subsidies mean that families are not shouldered with the full cost of child care, that does not mean we should not do everything we can to reduce the costs. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (17:19:04): I speak in support of this motion and in doing so I speak as a parent, a grandfather and the father of a teacher.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Wollongong wants to join the member for Kiama, I can make that happen.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: While those opposite wallow in their own self-induced misery I will talk about some positive news. I am proud to serve in a government that is delivering for young people and their families across New South Wales. It is a matter of understandable pride for those of us on the Treasury benches that the Government has made a commitment to making before- and after-school care available to all parents with children at public primary schools by the year 2021, which is supported by an investment of \$120 million over four years. The Government's \$120 million commitment includes \$50 million for new facilities and equipment; \$40 million in rental subsidies; \$20 million for innovative solutions to meet the needs of smaller schools, particularly those in our rural and remote communities; \$8 million to create a specialist team to support principals in administering these vital services; and \$2 million to create new online support tools for parents.

The commitment aims to deliver to places where there is student need in our communities. We know that it can sometimes be a challenge to get enough enrolments in rural, regional and smaller schools to make a service a viable operation. That is usually why those services do not exist already. This is the reason the commitment includes funding targeted directly at our rural, regional and smaller schools, and the team is co-designing approaches with stakeholders from those areas. Every community is different and the plan includes pilot programs for transport to other sites and a range of other measures to ensure services are sustainable.

We take pride in the fact that since 1 July 2019 more than 7,500 before- and after-school-care places have been created across New South Wales. It is the first State in our Commonwealth to extend funding to all three-year-olds and four-year-olds in community preschools. Those are the hallmarks of a government that places great importance on responsible economic management and all of the benefits that flow from that. I have seen this firsthand in my electorate of Upper Hunter, where preschools and young families have benefited from government grants and programs that have made our preschool sector the envy of Australia.

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

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: Thanks to the New South Wales Government's Quality Learning Environments program the Upper Hunter electorate has benefited from \$102,661 in funding grants. Those grants can be used to make physical improvements to early childhood services such as new gardens, jungle gyms or bathroom renovations and can also assist the rollout of new learning programs such as music lessons or yoga classes. The New South Wales Government's preschool drought relief program is another example of this Government delivering for not just young families but also those communities in rural and regional New South Wales that are affected by drought. This additional drought relief funding for childcare centres can be used to reduce fees and to implement transport initiatives, staff training and environmental adjustments.

In the Upper Hunter electorate this funding has amounted to \$251,575 across 31 local providers. This funding helps to ensure that early childhood services in our region continue to operate despite the potential challenges brought on by drought. Further to this was the recent announcement that preschools in bushfire-impacted areas will benefit from a one-off payment to provide fee relief and to help with the recovery from this summer's devastating fires. In the Upper Hunter electorate five local preschools benefited from this funding. They are Gloucester Pre-School, Singleton Mobile Preschool, Singleton Heights Pre-School, Singleton Pre-School and Stroud Neighbourhood Children's Co-operative. The payments are another way the Liberal-Nationals Government is supporting bushfire communities to get back on their feet.

Two preschools in Upper Hunter successfully applied for the New South Wales Government's successful capital works grants program. In 2017 the \$10 million Start Strong Capital Works grants program resulted in Singleton Heights Pre-School receiving \$330,000. In 2018 the \$5 million Start Strong Capital Works grants program saw Paterson Pre-School receive \$790,000. They say that actions speak louder than words. This Government's commitment to before- and after-school care speaks for itself not just in Upper Hunter but across New South Wales. We have a proud record and it will only get better. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (17:24:14): I welcome the opportunity to debate the motion on early childhood learning in this House today. I note that in the past eight years of the conservative Government this is the first opportunity that I or this House has had to have a serious discussion about early childhood education. It has been eight long years. I want to capture a couple of the points made by the member for Charlestown and the member for Upper Hunter. I agree that provision of early childhood learning services should be based very much on addressing the need of areas. I will draw on a couple of my experiences as a teacher in Walgett and conversations I had with early childhood teachers way back in the late 1980s. The member for Wyong, as a former primary school teacher and principal, would have some experiences to relate if he were speaking about this too.

Capturing one of the points made by the member for Charlestown, the first question I ask the Government is: Why is the number of new places so very small and nowhere near universal across the State? Why do we have the lowest participation rates in Australia? But I would like to focus on workplace issues that the Government must address. The early learning sector is facing a workforce crisis. We need to know what the Government is doing and what its initiatives are to encourage workforce growth—where are they? Why are degree-trained early learning teachers leaving for the primary sector? Is it because their pay rates and conditions are better in the primary sector than they are in the early childhood sector? Early childhood is the time when all of a person's foundational knowledge is made, particularly up to the age of three.

For example, one of the four areas in the NSW Early Childhood Education Workforce Strategy is to support the workforce to obtain qualifications and experience to prepare them for the workplace. As part of the strategy the Government announced a \$1.3million four-year program of scholarships commencing in 2016 to train 120 teachers for early learning in rural and remote areas. It is four years on and only \$375,000 has been distributed and only eight students have qualified. That is only 6 per cent of the promised 120 teachers. Workers are leaving the sector in droves—they really are. We looked also at the experiences of Victoria and Queensland. Perhaps we need to look at some of the things they are doing.

Before I continue I will give a few examples from the late 1980s when I was first teaching at Walgett. I had some conversations with some infants teachers at Walgett Public School. We had spent some time at Brewarrina, Goodooga, Burren Junction and Collarenebri. They were all the schools that the Teachers Federation used to go around to in those areas even more isolated than Walgett. We would have barbecues and just check that they were all okay. The problems the infants teachers talked to me about in the 1980s have not gotten any better. They talked about the fact that the students were not school ready.

In Walgett most of the children grew up on a mission reserve, unemployment was extremely high and living conditions were very poor. The children turned up at school without knowing how to brush their teeth or how to hold a pencil. Their parents did not have any books because they could not afford them so they had no reading experience. Compare that to some of the students mentioned today from some of the better, richer areas.

Unfortunately I recognise that it has not got any better for those kids who live at the Gingie mission or the Namoi reserve in Walgett. They are still getting to school not ready. I ask the Government: What are we really doing about those kids with the greatest needs? How is the Government changing the lives of those children for the better?

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:29:19): On behalf of The Greens I make a contribution to this public interest debate. The subject of this debate, early learning and before- and after-school care, is certainly in the public interest. The Government's pre-election promise was to provide before- and after-school care at every primary school in Sydney and major regional centres. In practice this promise has developed into the privatisation of many before- and after-school-care services and unacceptable increases in fees to not-for-profits as well as lowering the standards of care in some instances. There is huge demand for affordable before- and after-school care in New South Wales, with over 150,000 primary school students requiring this care.

Early learning itself is crucial and invaluable in addressing inequality and disadvantage in our society. Privatising this essential part of our education system is unacceptable. It is unacceptable that we are outsourcing our children's education and learning to private, for-profit providers, which is cause for serious concern. We are entrenching inequality in our future society if the main way people access early childhood education and learning is through paid services with for-profit providers. Recent reports have shown that Australian families are spending up to \$6.8 billion on child care and early learning costs every year, including an average of \$6,000 on long day care.

We have to start building a society where child care is an essential service, and early childhood education and learning is universally available and freely accessible to every family that needs it. That is what The Greens want to see, that is what the community wants to see, and that is what our children need and deserve. Instead, in New South Wales the Government's solution has been to seek to radically alter before- and after-school care by opening it up to for-profit companies and providing large subsidies to companies to do this. Parents are concerned about this and the sector is concerned about this. There have been overwhelming calls to ensure that smaller not-for-profits are sustained, that fees are reduced, that accountability and transparency are provided and that there be a move away from rather than a move towards unfair and unreasonable tender processes that mean small, not-for-profit providers can never be competitive against the major businesses and companies that are putting in tender submissions.

This is happening all over the State, including in the Newtown electorate at Stanmore Public School with the council-run service. Other not-for-profit services in other electorates such as the Rainbow Activity Centre in Randwick have been knocked out of the tender process by larger organisations. Fees have increased and as a result there has been a shift in the pressures put on parents, principals and school communities. The experience of parents at one of our local schools, Stanmore Public School, is an example of the way this process is simply allowing companies with little or no experience or expertise in the area to seek profits in this sector. One parent who wrote to us recently about the situation at Stanmore Public School said:

This is a private for profit company, which could of course, increase their rates at any time in the 5 years of this contract. They could be bought by another provider and increase rates as for profit companies do. At this stage we do not have any recourse if the owners and directors of this company decide to sell to a multinational or another for profit company.

...

The two Directors are Secretaries of the company, and their registered address is in the city ... They do not list any childcare or children's services as their area of expertise.

The parents are very concerned about this decision to privatise a service, which is of a high standard, and appreciated and trusted by us.

...

Of course privatization then moves the entire services to the Children's Services Award, which is much lower than Council rates of pay and conditions.

This reduces the pay and conditions of the workers in those centres. Numerous firsthand accounts are on the Community Early Learning Australia website regarding issues around this privatisation agenda. We need to move to a model of universal and freely accessible early learning and child care as well as before- and after-school care for all in our community, not based on a for-profit model or the ability of someone to pay.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:34:20): In reply: At times this was a meaningful and useful debate and some great personal perspectives were given by members, especially the member for Wallsend. I am pleased that this debate gave her her first opportunity in some eight years to contribute to debate about early childhood learning. I thank her genuinely for raising her concerns about workforce participation in early childhood. Equally I thank the member for North Shore for bringing to the debate her personal experience with her daughter Eleanor.

I also thank the member for Upper Hunter, who is a grandfather. Those opposite will not be surprised to learn that his grandchildren call him Grumps.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! If members want to join the member for Kiama, I can make it happen.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: The debate then went off the rails.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! No-one wants to join the member for Kiama.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: That is when this public interest debate got a bit weird. We heard the contribution of the member for Shellharbour, who seemingly asked us to be proud of our contribution. The Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services interjected and quickly disappeared from the Chamber. The facts are important. The facts are that more than 7,500 before- and after-school-care places have been delivered in New South Wales since 2019. In addition, the Government has grown the before- and after-school-care sector by an additional 68 services, with seven schools in focus areas of Sydney, Newcastle, Illawarra and the Central Coast, as well as major regional centres. I commend this outstanding motion as read. It notes the terrific commitment and contribution that this Government has made to expanding and increasing early learning and before- and after-school care.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Manly has moved a motion, to which the member for Charlestown has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes40
Noes44
Majority.....4

AYES

Aitchison, J
Butler, R
Chanthivong, A
Dalton, H
Doyle, T
Harrison, J
Kamper, S
McDermott, H
Mehan, D (teller)
O'Neill, M
Piper, G
Smith, T
Warren, G
Zangari, G

Atalla, E
Car, P
Cotsis, S
Dib, J
Finn, J
Haylen, J
Leong, J
McGirr, J
Mihailuk, T
Park, R
Saffin, J
Tesch, L
Washington, K

Bali, S
Catley, Y
Crakanthorp, T
Donato, P
Harris, D
Hornery, S
Lynch, P
McKay, J
Minns, C
Parker, J
Scully, P
Voltz, L
Watson, A (teller)

NOES

Anderson, K
Berejiklian, G
Conolly, K
Crouch, A (teller)
Gibbons, M
Hancock, S
Johnsen, M
Lindsay, W
Pavey, M
Preston, R
Saunders, D
Singh, G
Stokes, R
Tuckerman, W
Williams, L

Ayres, S
Bromhead, S
Constance, A
Dominello, V
Griffin, J
Hazzard, B
Kean, M
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Provest, G
Sidgreaves, P
Smith, N
Taylor, M
Upton, G
Wilson, F

Barilaro, J
Clancy, J
Cooke, S (teller)
Evans, L
Gulaptis, C
Henskens, A
Lee, G
O'Dea, J
Petinos, E
Roberts, A
Sidoti, J
Speakman, M
Toole, P
Ward, G

PAIRS

Daley, M
Hoenig, R
Lalich, N

Davies, T
Elliott, D
Williams, R

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

Private Members' Statements

KOGARAH LUNAR NEW YEAR CARD COMPETITION

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (17:44:00): The Kogarah electorate is incredibly fortunate to have a number of schools and groups that provide educational activities for young people to develop their skills in languages or the arts. This year I organised a special event with those organisations to celebrate the talents of young people in my electorate, as well as the 2020 Lunar New Year. The Kogarah Lunar New Year card competition contest invited young artists to help design a creative and colourful picture to be featured on a 2020 Lunar New Year greeting card, which was sent to more than 6,000 homes in my electorate.

The schools and organisations that participated were: CASS Chinese School, Sydney Yu Cai Chinese Language School, the Academy of Chinese Culture, Sydney Victory Mandarin School, the Creative Arts Education Academy, VA Music and Art School, Red Sugar Art Centre, Clement Art School, Georges River Association and Advance Diversity Services. Entries were received from 265 local students: 232 from children in kindergarten to year 6 and another 33 from students in year 7 to 12.

The Lunar New Year is the most important holiday in the Chinese calendar and I was thrilled that so many of the artworks captured the excitement, colour and vibrancy of the celebration. The two winners were selected by a panel of three judges that comprised of local and international artists. I thank the three judges: Ah Xian, one of Australia's foremost modern sculptors who has works in the National Gallery of Australia, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Powerhouse Museum, the National Gallery of Canada and the New York Asia Society Museum; Sarah Kalidis, a St George-based artist and designer, a member of the St George Art Society and the creator of Studio Onethirty; and Jim West, treasurer of the St George Art Society, accomplished painter and advocate for the arts in the St George region.

The winner of the junior category, kindergarten to year 6, was eight-year-old Erin You from the CASS Chinese Language School in Kogarah for her traditional Chinese brush painting of a rat. The winner of the senior category, year 7 to 12, was 15-year-old Sandy Yu from the Creative Arts Education Academy in Hurstville for her intricate drawing of the 12 zodiacs enjoying a reunion meal around a dinner table with family and friends. I thank every principal, teacher and parent who got behind this competition and encouraged our talented and creative students to create their artworks. It should go without saying that the Chinese community in Hurstville contributes a wonderful diversity to the St George community and Sydney in general. With the current coronavirus affecting this community perhaps disproportionately in commerce and the patronage of local restaurants, my thoughts and sentiments are with local residents, businesses and families as we all go through this challenging period.

SMALLS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (17:47:28): I have the frequent and enjoyable privilege to attend many occasions throughout Ryde that evoke some strong memories and emotions. However, the event I attended on 22 February was particularly fantastic thanks to the community and many kids and their families enjoying their new school. Last Saturday Smalls Road Public School held an open day to thank the broader community for their support of the new school and understanding during its construction phase. The circular three-storey building, which houses flexible learning spaces, is nothing like my primary school. Attendees on the day viewed the new buildings with eagerness and delight. Our hosts on the day were beautifully outshone by potential students, as well as the 2020 kindergarten students, the first to be enrolled at Smalls Road Public School upon opening last month.

Approximately 100 family groups toured the latest New South Wales public education marvel between 9.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. My community's enthusiasm for the design and capability this site brings is a compliment to the optimism and promise of the planning and building stages. I thank the families of Ryde who came to visit our new school. After all, the work of the Government is for them. Access to quality education is rightly deserved

and is the foundation of everyone's pursuit of the Australian dream. In particular I thank Keith and Juliana, Carl and Charlie, Shuchi and Supatrik and their young children for speaking with me at length about the school. Their confidence in the future is remarkable. They already truly embody the new school's spirit. Families like these will one day help form a new P&C community group, with whom I look forward to working with to facilitate the best for our children—an ongoing commitment for the new world-class infrastructure.

Also enjoying the morning were Ryde High School alumni Robin and Tracey. As they recounted memories of the original school, they were happy to recognise the trees, open spaces and playing fields. They believe that the new school holds much promise for future generations. Like many in the community, they are happy to see the site returned to the community as a school once again. Along with the academic and administrative team at Smalls Road, headed by Principal Megan Gibbons, we are creating the next chapter for students of this magnificent new facility and Ryde as a whole. We have already begun to forge an impactful and wide-reaching relationship between the school and its community.

It was a busy day. In addition to touring the building, marvelling at the architecture, seeing the learning spaces and library, and visiting with the administrative staff to learn how to enrol year 1 to year 6 students for 2021 when the school becomes fully operational, we had to compete with the children themselves. The children's noise level rivalled that of any school recess break! Smalls Road's giant slide kept the younger visitors fully engaged. I will not be surprised if I receive petitions to have more like it placed all over Ryde.

I remember campaigning to save the school site many years ago. The local residents, Editor of *The Weekly Times* John Booth, Councillor Roy Maggio, a number of others and I worked hard to galvanise community support to save the site, which was earmarked for development. Thank God we won that fight. The next fight was to establish a school on that site for our rapidly growing community in Ryde. We won that battle as well. To see the colosseum of learning, as I have tagged it, come out of the ground so quickly was incredible. The build only took about one year to complete.

It truly is a bespoke building and is like nothing else I have seen in education. The inside is more like a university setting, with open learning spaces, labs and breakaway rooms. If this is what primary schools look like now, our education system is looking good for the future. If we create great learning environments and have great teachers and curricular, all the key ingredients for success are there. All we need to do now is add the learning and great results will follow. I am so proud that we have built the first school in Ryde in more than 50 years. I am 52 years old and I cannot remember the last time we built one. It is great to have a new school in Ryde.

GUNNEDAH TAFE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (17:52:34): "Build it and they will come." There are so many examples of the success of this simple slogan in the Tamworth electorate, but none more so than the Gunnedah TAFE. The recent opening of a \$3 million upgrade to the Gunnedah campus of TAFE NSW was particularly prized to me. I believe in the phrase, "Train local to stay local." Over a long time I worked with many members of the local business community, Gunnedah Shire Council and TAFE NSW to move this upgrade forward. Now in place and being used in the day-to-day training of our future skilled employees, these fantastic upgrades will benefit not only the local community, but also the wider region, helping more people get the expertise they need to get the jobs of tomorrow and satisfy the needs of businesses today.

The new and upgraded facilities feature multi-trades workshops, digitally connected learning spaces and a specialist light automotive workshop. The cutting-edge learning spaces are equipped with new information and communication technologies equipment to enable wider course offerings to students, as well as industry-standard workshops to support mining, automotive and construction training to be more personalised, adaptive and real-world focused. Recently we have added to the 33 courses already available locally and complimented by the hundreds of courses that are accessible through TAFE Digital in Gunnedah. That is 11 new courses, including the reintroduction of the Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade. For the first time since 2011 this course is again being delivered in Gunnedah because of an increase in apprentices requiring engineering training in our region.

Add to this a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, Certificate III in Civil Construction - Plant Operations, Certificate II in Horticulture, a number of short courses and a range of online courses available through TAFE Digital. Gunnedah TAFE is reaffirming itself as the number one training provider in the New England North West and the Gunnedah Basin specifically. The TAFE Gunnedah campus is well-equipped for the future so it can continue to deliver high quality, industry relevant and innovative training that leads to jobs. The opening of the upgrades at Gunnedah TAFE also celebrated the beginning of the new pre-apprenticeship course, which aims to develop the foundation skills for people to actually get their first job.

For many young people the hardest thing is getting those basic levels of skills so employers can say "you have the skills, we want you for the job". I thank the businesses of the Gunnedah community for partnering with Gunnedah TAFE to ensure the pathways are there for people—whether they be young, old, retrained or new into the game—to progress to getting a job or upskilling to another job. This is also about young people at school choosing a career in the trades and for unemployed people to say "this gives me a chance for a career opportunity locally". Once you give people the right skills, they can get a job and build a rewarding career.

The new course will also help local Gunnedah businesses to find potential new employees as it involves a placement component. The course has already attracted 15 students to enrol, with more on the waiting list. This investment in the campus and in the young people of Gunnedah resulted from conversations with businesses in the community, Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce, Gunnedah Shire Council and the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education Geoff Lee. This is a great example of collaboration and a community working with its local TAFE for the benefit of those in the community to get local training, local jobs and local outcomes, as well as regional growth and economic development.

It is great to see that when employers in our region call out for new or expanded training, the public training provider is responsive to the home-grown needs. We have been working hard over a long period with many in our community to identify how TAFE can better meet homegrown needs. Build it and they will come. Back it because we have the skilled trades to do the job. We have a strong base to deliver this training and we have the talent looking for the work.

SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:57:41): On 11 February I was delighted to welcome the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Gareth Ward, to the Seven Hills electorate. The Minister and I held a carers' forum at the Toongabbie Sports Club with the My Forever Family NSW organisation and local representatives of the Department of Communities and Justice. This forum was incredibly informative for me and the Minister, who loves to engage directly with foster carers across the State about how his department and associated organisations can better help our foster carers and the children they look after. We heard the experiences and stories of western Sydney locals from Blacktown, Cumberland, The Hills and Parramatta. Many of those stories highlighted the depth of compassion and passion ever present in those involved in caring roles. In New South Wales we have many devoted foster carers who place a large amount of time and energy to ensure the best of outcomes for the children involved.

The Minister and I then visited Ability Options to speak with Seven Hills electorate locals who are proudly entering the workforce. It was terrific to learn from Ability Options staff and clients about their journeys towards training and newfound employment. We heard from excited young people who recently became team members with Kmart Mount Druitt. Kmart is putting in place more positive policies to ensure inclusive access to jobs in their stores across western Sydney. This is a great partnership between Ability Options and Kmart. I hope to see such initiatives by large stores continue to grow locally across the Seven Hills electorate. The Minister and I then attended the Lalor Park Community Centre's Common Groundz Studio to speak with local artist Danielle RG and community members about her Stitches Collection therapy dolls. The dolls help to assist children facing medical and mental health issues and stigma such as anxiety, depression, dyslexia and self-harm.

Danielle is developing these with local organisations across Blacktown such as the RSL, with input from local school pupils and educators. We also spoke with the Common Groundz Community Cafe manager about employment training for local youth. We had a chat with Lalor Park Community Garden manager John and Lalor Park Public School principal Deanne Taylor. The Minister was keen to hear about the local insights of these local leaders on how social policy in New South Wales can be strengthened. Next we visited William Rose School at Seven Hills. Whilst at the school, the Minister and I spoke with staff about special education and the importance of a fun environment and meaningful training for those with additional needs. Sensory play was the main feature across the school and we could see each child enjoying their integrated lessons with their dedicated teachers and support staff.

The Minister spoke with a student called Jarrod, whom he learnt was from Kiama. Jarrod gave the Minister exact instructions on how he could go from Seven Hills railway station to Kiama station, listing every stop along the way. Jarrod is a great example of the intellect, bravado and kind nature of the students in our public education system in the special needs streams and we give a shout out to him tonight. We were lucky to have afternoon tea prepared by the senior hospitality students. I thank principal Mariane Youness-Wood and Bungarribee Network Education Director Toni Kember for the visit. The Minister and I then visited the Department of Communities and Justice's housing office in Blacktown to speak with staff about western Sydney social housing. It was great to hear the experiences and suggestions of the Blacktown team. The team look after many housing tenants and care about each client and try to accommodate for all their needs. I thank team leaders Paul Brown and Lorraine Hutchinson for the visit and Blacktown's housing office for their assistance in all cases that we refer.

Finally, the Minister and I were happy to assist with the opening of a new social housing women's facility in Pendle Hill. The Women's Housing Company have worked with the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, the NSW Land and Housing Corporation and industry to build an incredible complex, which houses many women of diverse backgrounds and circumstances. Such projects are terrific outcomes of this Government's funding and commitment to newer and fit-for-purpose social housing across western Sydney. I thank Minister Ward for his visit to the Seven Hills electorate. It was a fantastic day, highlighting the Government's work in my electorate.

EDMONDSON PARK STATION COMMUTER CAR PARK

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (18:02:27): My constituents rely greatly on trust. They rightfully take people at their word, choosing to believe others will offer them the proper respect of not breaking a promise. I am disappointed that this Liberal Government has taken that trust for granted. Actually, I am appalled that this Liberal Government has kicked dirt in the faces of my constituents. For years this Liberal Government has ignored the plight of commuters in Edmondson Park. Then with last year's election looming, the Liberal Government suddenly acknowledged there was a problem.

Labor had already led the way in south-west Sydney, committing to a new car park in April 2018. The Liberal Government was very late to the party. It had to be seen to be doing something about the parking crisis. It promised 700 extra car parking spaces, with construction to start in 2019. But by the end of last year the only activity at Edmondson Park Station was the sound of crickets. Construction had not started. Plans were not released. Only a measly sum was allocated in the State budget for planning for a new car park. The budget failed to allocate the estimated \$40 million needed to build the car park.

I tried in vain to get answers from this Government. I wrote letter after letter to the Minister asking for progress updates. I asked questions on notice. My constituents continued to sign my petition calling for an end to the car parking crisis. No further details on the new car park were forthcoming. It became quite clear that the Liberal Government had broken its election promise—no-one was really surprised. After all, this Liberal Government spent years ignoring the problem. Why should anyone believe it would make good on its promise? With one broken election promise under its wing, this Liberal Government tried to save face. The member for Holsworthy took to social media to announce the old plans were out the window and now 2,000 spaces would be built. In other words, the Government tried to distract from the fact that it broke one promise by committing to an even bigger promise.

Quite rightly, my constituents will welcome more parking spaces at Edmondson Park station. We have fought a long, hard, great campaign to get this Liberal Government to fix the parking crisis. But, of course, there is always a catch. Frustrated commuters have had to wait years for the parking spaces to be built. My constituents are rightly pulling their hair out in frustration. They needed action years ago but they have received nothing but empty promises. Commuters have been promised that a temporary car park will be open by mid-2020, but the details on this temporary car park are somewhat scarce. How many spaces will be available? Where will it be built? When will the temporary car park be ready for use? Again, the commuters in south-west Sydney are left with more questions than answers.

The only thing commuters can be sure of is that this Liberal Government derailed its original promise to start construction on a new car park in 2019. The Liberal Government gave my constituents its word that it would fix the car parking crisis, with work to begin last year. It broke that promise. The truth is that the Liberal Government continues to delay building simple infrastructure for our community whilst collecting millions in stamp duty from local residents. The reality is that under this Liberal Government the commuter car parking crisis at Edmondson Park will continue because it continually proves it cannot be trusted to keep its word.

BATHURST RAIL MUSEUM

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:06:14): I am here to give good news about the things that the Government is delivering and the things that are making a big difference to the lives of people in my electorate. When I come into this place I use my private member's statements as an opportunity to talk about the exciting and good things that are happening in my electorate. It is great to see that this Government is continuing to provide investment in our area and in many other regional and rural electorates across this State. A brand-new cultural facility has recently opened in my electorate: the Bathurst Rail Museum. The museum tells the important story of rail and its history in the development of the Bathurst region and also what it means to wider regional New South Wales.

Rail first came to Bathurst in 1876. It has provided a huge benefit not only to rural and regional development but also to that area for over 100 years. The museum is a wonderful example of adaptive re-use of a State-owned heritage asset building. It used to be the historic Railway Institute building. It was a little dilapidated

and run down, but the investment in it has brought it back to life. A car park, funded by Transport for NSW, has been developed around it. John Holland has been involved, as has the local council. It is all down near our railway station—which is quite a fitting place for a railway museum. It is a hub of activity, with two train services operating each day.

This is an important cultural facility, which reminds us of other important cultural facilities in the town. We have the National Motor Racing Museum, the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum, the Chifley Home and Education Centre, the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, the Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre and the library. The museum will become an attraction for visitors to the city of Bathurst. It is known that for every dollar that is invested there is a return of about \$1.60 in economic activity in the local community. It is expected that the new museum will see around 30,000 visitors annually, with education being a key focus. However, within just one week of the rail museum opening we have already seen 1,000 people go through the doors of this new cultural facility. The construction phase generated important employment opportunities, with about 18 jobs created. It added about \$1.4 million to the local economy.

There is also a model train layout that takes up an entire room. It came to the attention of council about five years ago and was accepted as a cultural gift back then. It has taken several years to plan, design and find funding for the museum we see today. The model replicates the line from Bathurst through to Tarana. It shows the landscape and a number of buildings and properties along the way. The museum has received a contribution of \$413,000 from the State Government, \$165,000 from the Federal Government and \$3.5 million from the council. The building was chosen primarily due to its location. Bathurst has a long history as a place of learning and a place of recreation for railway workers and their families. The building has been restored and extended to continue that tradition.

I acknowledge the work of local architects Integrated Design Group. Tony McBurney and his team have done an amazing job putting it together. I acknowledge the museum designers, Freeman Ryan Design. Stephen Ryan and his team also played an important part. I acknowledge Tablelands Builders for the construction of this new museum. It is always good to see that locals got the opportunity to undertake the work. They carried it out with much pride. The local tradies, under the guidance of Rob Barlow, were there to see the project come to fruition. I also thank all our local businesses for their generous sponsorship of the rail museum. It is certainly going to be a great asset for the city of Bathurst for many, many decades to come. I have visited on a number of occasions already to see the incredible work undertaken by the staff. The joy it is bringing to so many people, both locals and visitors to the town, shows that it is a worthy investment.

SOUTH COAST ECONOMY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (18:11:23): It is no surprise to any members in this House that the South Coast of New South Wales has been devastated not only by bushfires, which started to rage in Shoalhaven in November last year, but also by subsequent floods that have devastated many of our communities, particularly in Lake Conjola. The prolonged drought has also affected our local farmers. It is unusual for the South Coast to be affected by long periods of drought, but it has been. These natural disasters have had a significant impact on our local economy. Many businesses and tourism organisations rely on the influx of visitors throughout the summer trade to get them through the off-peak season until next summer.

At the peak of the crisis tourists were driven away—asked to evacuate coastal and seaside towns for their own safety. As they left via the Princes Highway in their thousands, so too did their all-important financial investment in our region, their spending that sustains our local businesses and employs thousands up and down the South Coast. I have informed this House before—and told anyone who will listen—that we really need them back. There are so many fantastic local businesses such as coffee shops, cafes, accommodation providers, restaurants and boutiques in Milton and Lake Conjola, Huskisson, Vincentia, Nowra to Ulladulla and Bawley Point that are all now open for business. So many locals and non-locals have been doing all they can to get visitors back to our region. The Empty Esky campaign has encouraged a movement of foodies and adventurers supporting local businesses affected by bushfires. So many have already visited our region with their empty eskies, filling them with beautiful produce and locally manufactured goods.

As the member for South Coast but also the Minister for Local Government, it is overwhelming to see the support that local councils are providing to our region. Just recently—and I am so grateful for this initiative—Canterbury-Bankstown council launched a campaign encouraging Sydney residents to "Go Spend South". The initiative is also linked to a competition where participants have an opportunity to win a holiday by posting photos of their stay. I thank Canterbury-Bankstown council, particularly Mayor Khal Asfour who I know was in Milton last weekend with his family. There is even an active campaign encouraging Canberra residents to spend their Canberra long weekend on the South Coast—a campaign that has my full support.

It would be remiss of me not to note some of the fantastic businesses and organisations in the south of my electorate that make the South Coast such a great place to holiday or day trip. The beautiful historic town of Milton has a variety of boutiques, cafes and restaurants. It is the home of the award-winning Cupitt's Estate winery, brewery, fromagerie and restaurant, with some of the best food and wines on the coast. If you are taking a day trip to Milton, stop by Harvest Bar or Pilgrims cafe, which has been there for so long, or Flour Water Salt. Shop at The Fig Tree Forest, Milton Farm Shop, Wild Poppies Boutique—a lovely little clothes shop—and Wild Ivy. You can also experience the historic Milton Public Library—please look at the library—and partake in one of their many story-time events, run by the incredible Friends of Milton Library. On Friday and Saturday this weekend the Milton Show will take place at the Milton Showground. I will be there on Saturday. It is always a unique experience, and I look forward to it.

Stop off at Lake Conjola, which has been particularly affected by the bushfires and floods. Visit the beautiful, spectacular lake and have a coffee and lunch at the Tilly & Mo. cafe or fish and chips at the Lake Conjola general store. I urge members to support those businesses. We cannot forget to continue to support local clubs. They put so much back into our local communities and also supported them throughout the recent bushfires. The clubs are also struggling due to the downturn in visitors to our region. I encourage members to visit the Lake Conjola Bowling Club, which was surrounded by fire but was miraculously saved from burning down; Mollymook Beach Bowling Club; Milton & Ulladulla Bowling Club; Milton Ulladulla ExServos Club; and Mollymook Golf Club, the golf club with perhaps the best views in the State.

So many businesses need support that I cannot name them all. Across the Shoalhaven there is so much to do, so much to see and so many places to stay. Visitors can take a cruise up the Shoalhaven River with Shoalhaven River Cruise or enjoy a pie at the wonderful Heritage Bakery in Milton or at Hayden's Pies in Ulladulla. The fish and chips at Burrill Lake are just brilliant and Pelican Rocks at Greenwell Point has the best in New South Wales. People can experience the menu of Rick Stein at Bannisters or Bannisters Pavilion or go to Zac's place at Currarong. I thank every person who is supporting our local businesses. I thank all the tourists who continue to come to the South Coast to try to help in the community's hour of need. The South Coast communities need people to keep visiting and to keep spending.

TUGGERAH LAKES FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:16:26): In my previous private members' statements I have spoken about recent flooding, particularly with reference to the Tuggerah Lakes Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan. I have gone through a number of the recommendations in that plan that, unfortunately, had been neglected since the plan was written in 2014 and endorsed by the then Wyong Shire Council, which is now the Central Coast Council. I have outlined my concern that, despite the 2015 floods, many lessons have not been learnt. Groundhog Day occurred during the recent floods because many of the recommendations in the plan had not been followed up. Tonight I focus on the flood emergency and the recovery that followed. As most members will recall, it rained excessively during that weekend. On the Saturday morning I travelled around the area.

The first place I visited was the Wyong River Weir. I checked the water depth, which is usually a good indicator of the likelihood that Tuggerah Lakes would flood. I was quite surprised at the water level. By Monday it was clear that the flood would inundate many houses in low-lying areas around Tuggerah Lakes. The Tuggerah Lakes system is not just Tuggerah Lakes. It includes Lake Munmorah and Budgewoi Lake. I spoke to the shadow emergency services Minister and to Leader of the Opposition Jodi McKay. We decided to request a natural disaster declaration. That request was submitted on the Monday night. We received no response. Two days later a natural disaster was declared. That was good news but given the experience of the 2007 and 2015 floods it was disappointing that the disaster recovery response was poor. I was contacted by a large number of constituents. Maree Newham wrote:

David my husband has made 3 phone calls to the Disaster Line as the flood has now been named as a natural disaster as per Member for Terrigal Adam Crouch's FB site. They are repeatedly saying it's for Bushfire relief only. He has also rang Adam Crouch's office to complain. Can you provide any information?

People were ringing the number and getting no response. They were being told it was for the bushfires and not for floods. Obviously they were in a state of distress. They could not get any information so they came to me. I was trying to pass on their requests. Jim Sprohar also contacted me. He wrote:

David Harris, The Disaster line 1800 blah blah, will only give you a list of local Charities if you need help, Those charities are stretched beyond all measures already, was told its not been declared a disaster by the Federal Government, and they can only help bushfire victims.

Once again the natural disaster message did not get through. People were ringing the hotline but were not getting assistance. Unfortunately, a few people who contacted me were angry with the office of the member for Terrigal. Apparently some people who rang his office were hung up on. Danny rang me in a distressed state because his 70-year-old dad needed information. He complained that no information was available. Danny said that he rang

the office of the member for Terrigal and was told to check Facebook. When he tried to explain that his elderly father was not on Facebook and that the information should be available somewhere else, he was promptly hung up on. Needless to say, he was not a happy camper. I spent over an hour on the phone with Danny after that, trying to assist him.

I raise the issue because it was difficult for other local members to get any information. One of the recommendations from the *Recovery Coordinators Summary Report East Coast Storm and Flood—April 2015* was to establish a members of Parliament recovery reference group. It recommended that all members of Parliament should be part of the group because people often seek assistance from members' offices. All local members would agree that if we are in the loop we can then provide the necessary information. Unfortunately, once again, those recommendations have been ignored and the public has been let down as a result.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I welcome guests to the public gallery.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:21:47): On Sunday 1 March 2020 thousands of Australians did their bit for Clean Up Australia Day. It is an annual event founded by the late Ian Kiernan, AO, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary this year. Along with Kim McKay, AO, who now leads the Australian Museum, Ian turned a simple idea into a day of volunteering and community spirit that encourages people to come together to clean up their local neighbourhoods. My local community did its bit with over a dozen local events hosted by community groups, including Rose Bay Secondary College, Rotary Club of Rose Bay, Dover Heights Community Preschool, Cooper Park Community Garden, the 3rd Rose Bay (Judean) Scouts Group and Double Bay Sailing Club to name a few.

Bright and early on Sunday morning I joined local residents at Tingira Park at Rose Bay to help clean up the beach. The clean-up site was hosted by Woollahra council. I was joined by Woollahra Mayor Susan Wynne and Councillor Mary-Lou Jarvis and Councillor Isabelle Shapiro. The Ocean Action Pod supported the clean-up. A scavenger hunt with prizes and a multimedia display about ocean pollution were provided for the kids. I met local mums Eliana Leopold and Miriam Enoch. They brought their six-year-olds along to help clean up as part of a larger year 1 delegation of parents and students from Rose Bay Public School. I was impressed by their efforts. They had a lot of fun. I thank the students from Cranbrook School who were out in force across the area.

Rose Bay Beach was in pretty good shape. That can be attributed to the steady work of our Rose Bay Beach Working Group, which meets quarterly to improve the overall water quality at the beach together with the efforts of local residents, council and a number of government agencies. I am proud that the event was made possible by a \$60,000 New South Wales Government litter-prevention grant, which will fund two more community clean-up events in Watsons Bay and Rushcutters Bay later in the year. The grant funding will also go towards six new Seabins. They will be installed near the Cruising Yacht Club Australia in Rushcutters Bay, along with new cigarette butt bins and no-littering signage.

We all know litter is a local problem. While we are getting better at doing the right thing every day this everyday problem is best tackled at a local level with those grants, which focus on local hotspots. After I had finished at Rose Bay Beach I headed over to Bondi Beach to my own Clean Up Australia Day site, which I have hosted for the past nine years. I thank former Waverley Councillor Joy Clayton for volunteering. She has been there every year for many more years than I have been the local member and she knows the beach from top to toe. I thank Waverley Councillor Will Nemesh for coming along and the 29 students from the UTS BUILD program. I have been working with UTS for the past few years and I am grateful that every year those students from all over Sydney put up their hand to help clean Bondi Beach. A special mention must go to Anita Kolni, founder of the Ocean Lovers Festivals, for coming along to help with her beautiful family.

The Ocean Lovers Festival will be held at Bondi Beach between 17 and 22 March. There will be workshops, films and exhibitions. I will join the festival on Friday afternoon. The New South Wales Government is a proud partner of this fantastic event. It was gratifying to hear from locals and volunteers at Rose Bay Beach and Bondi Beach that as a result of the Return and Earn container deposit scheme there were less plastic, aluminium and glass bottles littered than previous years. As the former environment Minister I had the challenge and joy of introducing the deposit scheme. Return and Earn provides an easy way to recycle our bottles and cans when we are out and about. Recently it hit the milestone of three billion containers returned, which is amazing. I am gratified to see those numbers translate into cleaner local beaches and public spaces.

On Bondi Beach I ran into our amazing volunteer lifesavers from North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club. They were having their weekly Sunday club swim, training nippers and were starting the first week of their Dippers program, which is run by Autism Australia. The program provides vital water skills to people of all abilities. I was really happy to run into the Moruya Surf Life Saving Club, which had come to swim and train at Bondi for the

weekend. We know Moruya and its neighbouring communities did it tough during the recent bushfires, so it was great to see them supporting each other and having fun in this modest but unifying way. It was a simple reminder that while our small clean-up sites on Sunday made a difference, there are bigger clean-ups to do as we rebuild our State and support our fire- and drought-affected communities. I commend my private members' statement to the House.

TRIBUTE TO PETER BARRACK, OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (18:26:55): I pay tribute to Peter Barrack, a hugely significant citizen of Newcastle who has sadly passed away. Peter was a man who was easy to spot in a crowd. Not because he was very tall or well-built, but because he had a spectacular head of hair. It was high, it was thick and it was curly. That hair meant business and so did Peter. Peter was a union man through and through. When he passed away on 24 January at 84 years of age Newcastle lost a union legend. Peter had been at the helm of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council for an amazing 21 years. He took on the role in 1979, but his path began more than 20 years earlier when he joined the painters' union as an 18-year-old apprentice. It was when he went to work at the Courtaulds plant in Raymond Terrace in the 1960s that Peter was seized by the imperative to fight for workers' rights. The company was a large-scale producer of rayon and the work involved the use of lead and acids, which were poorly stored and often leaking from machines.

The conditions were so bad that often the entire factory was on strike. Peter's willingness to stand up to reckless management was not a one-off. Activism was clearly in his bones. He campaigned against the Australian Government's support of the Vietnam War and conscription. He was also instrumental in instituting the 1970s green ban, which saved historical buildings in Newcastle's East End and in Cooks Hill and prevented overdevelopment. By this time Peter was well known in the community as a fighter, but his unopposed election as secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council was still a reluctant one. It was a position he had never aspired to and a position for which he felt there were far more appropriate candidates. He also came to it as an emergency replacement for Keith Wilson, who had suddenly become ill.

Peter held that position for 21 years and his achievements are far too many to name here tonight, but there are fights from those times that are still talked about. One of those began in 1991 when the Greiner Government announced its intention to close the Wallsend District Hospital. The Newcastle Trades Hall Council was approached by the Wallsend Volunteers, a community group that were dedicated to keeping the hospital functioning. The council unanimously voted to support those volunteers, and a picket line outside the hospital that lasted for an amazing 18 months helped to prevent the removal of any of its important equipment. Three demonstrations and marches supported this campaign. When John Fahey became Premier in 1992 the decision was made to not close the hospital entirely. Instead, it became an administrative centre and aged care facility that offered some community health services.

This was an extraordinary example of people and union power. It showcased Peter's ability to lead a movement and his commitment to a fight for the long haul. There were many others, including several campaigns to save jobs as steelmaking declined in the city, the infamous Patrick's dispute in 1998 and the dogged support for striking Hunter Valley miners. His standing in the community saw him serve as president of the Newcastle Workers Club for 22 years. He held board positions with Hunter Water, the Hunter Development Board and the Hunter Economic Development Corporation. Daniel Wallace, secretary of Hunter Workers—as the Newcastle Trades Hall Council is now known—told the *Newcastle Herald* on Peter's passing, "Being Novocastrian means you've benefited from the work of a man like Peter." Daniel was right.

I could go on about Peter's activities as a trade unionist and voice in the public sphere for the benefit of Newcastle, but he was more than that. He was an OAM recipient and a prostate cancer survivor. Perhaps most importantly he was a husband to Di, a father to Kerry, Glen and Tracey from his first marriage, and a father to twins Peta-Maree and Damien from his marriage to Di. Peter was determined, he was brave, he was smart and he was loyal. He was steadfast in his beliefs and stood with the courage of his convictions. He also had a spectacular head of hair. Vale, Peter.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE FIRE BRIGADES

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (18:31:59): I recognise the local fire brigades that courageously battled the fires in the Wollondilly electorate and across New South Wales in recent months. Those brave men and women put their lives on the line with little thought for their safety. Many left their homes to defend the homes of others. I especially thank the brigades in the Wollondilly electorate. There are too many individuals to name, but I recognise the captains and deputy captains of each of those brigades who represent the many volunteers in each brigade. They lead with skill, compassion and a desire to serve others. The captains and deputy captains of the RFS brigades within the Wollondilly electorate include: Captain Mark Cupitt and Senior Deputy Captain Alan Kerslake in Alpine-Aylmerton; Captain Darren Rolfe and Senior Deputy Captain Michael

Riley in Appin; the courageous Captain Brendon O'Connor and Senior Deputy Captain Peter Lawrence in Balmoral Village, which was under a lot of fire on 19 and 21 December.

Throughout the fires I spoke daily with Captain Greg Green and Deputy Captain Paul Rogers in Bargo, which was also hit very hard on 19 December. There is also Captain Peter Fenning and Senior Deputy Captain Joe Fenning in Buxton, making it a family affair. Just before Christmas Joe very kindly took me around Buxton and Balmoral to show me the amazing amount of homes that the brigades saved. There is also Captain Daniel Curle and Senior Deputy Captain Anthony Peters in Cawdor; Captain Craig McMullen and Senior Deputy Captain Brad Curtis in Colo Vale; Captain Shane Greenwald and Senior Deputy Captain Stephen White in Douglas Park; Captain Ian Coates and Senior Deputy Captain Michelle Coates in Hill Top; Captain Damien Cutmore and Senior Deputy Captain Natalie Fergusson in Lakesland; Captain Alan Agland and Senior Deputy Captain Michael McGrath in Menangle; and Captain John Muddle and Senior Deputy Captain Adam O'Maley in Mittagong.

They also include Captain Marie Turner Senior Deputy Captain Rory O'Reilly in Mount Hunter; Captain Michael Webber and Senior Deputy Captain Arron Agius in Oakdale; Captain Craig Kinlyside and Senior Deputy Captain Leigh Daniels in Orangeville-Werombi; Captain Max Lazarus and Senior Deputy Captain Michael Clunne in Pheasants Nest; Captain David Wyper and Senior Deputy Captain Brian Pullman in Picton; Captain Barbara Jolley, who was also the Wollondilly Citizen of the Year in the recent Australia Day festivities, and Senior Deputy Captain John Webb in Silverdale; Captain Mitch Quirk and Senior Deputy Captain Ben Radford in Tahmoor; Captain Jeremy Wilson and Senior Deputy Captain Jason White in The Oaks; Captain Hugh Gent and Senior Deputy Captain Richard Warren in Theresa Park; Captain Cheryl Ashton and Senior Deputy Captain Justin Dodd in Thirlmere; Captain Peter Shearer and Senior Deputy Captain Rob Tolhurst in Wilton; Captain Jeff Morrell and Senior Deputy Captain Warren Rochefort in Yanderra; and Captain Leigh Thomas and Senior Deputy Captain Peter Thiessen in Yerrinbool.

In addition, there are those who look after the communications: Wingecarribee Shire Captain Janine Miltenyi and Senior Deputy Captain Lesley Wood, Wollondilly Shire Captain Kathy Radford and Senior Deputy Captain Lorna Sparkowski. These volunteers are the lifeblood of our community. They come from all walks of life; they are working people, students and professionals, young people and retirees. They constantly amaze and inspire me, and they show kindness and commitment to the broader community that is real and ongoing. There are countless stories of bravery, triumph, heartbreak and loss. There are so many that are not told to the public, but the local communities know what they did. I will share an example that illustrates this. Mick Duggan from Balmoral recalled the horrors of the Green Wattle Creek fire that swept through the town on those two devastating days in December.

At one point an injured firefighter, Matt Eyles, had to be pulled from his truck as he was suffering from heat exhaustion. Paramedics brought his temperature down with ice packs and when he regained consciousness he looked at Mick Duggan and said, "Mick, your home is fine." All of this was occurring while they were fighting at the gates of hell at Balmoral. These stories show the real on-ground situation that those volunteers faced on a daily basis. The strength of community that I have felt throughout my electorate and the inspiration that I have received makes me so very proud of those volunteers. I say a very special thank you to all those volunteers for their selfless service. It will remain with us for all time.

WARNERVALE TOWN CENTRE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (18:36:56): I am going to give floods a bit of a rest for a moment to talk about a very exciting development in my electorate. In 2007, when Labor was last in government, I was part of a push to make the Warnervale Town Centre a State significant development. That was done. Since that time, work has been very slow in progressing to the stage where we finally get what local residents were promised: a viable, vibrant town centre. We are now in the final stages. Housing construction is underway at the front part of the site and around the back of the site. It is now time for the commercial and retail development to get underway.

There is a last piece of the puzzle. The site where the town park is supposed to be was a former green waste dump with a methane problem. The council has been working for almost a decade to try to cap it so the methane cannot escape. Once that is finished—and it should be finished in the next six months—the landowner, LandCorp, can sign a final deed with the council and get the commercial development fully underway. That commercial development includes land that has been purchased by Woolworths for a neighbourhood shopping centre. There are plans for a childcare centre, there is a tavern and the park itself will have sporting fields, plus a bike and walking track.

What I am asking Central Coast Council to do at the moment is have a little vision. The original plans included a community centre and a swim complex. That was subsequently left out, but the developer has come up with a way it can be progressed again. There are about six schools in the vicinity. There will be childcare centres and there is a lot of residential development—around 4,000 houses—in the area. So it would make sense for there

to be a multi-use sports and community centre, as well as a swimming pool. That would make it a real attraction for the area. It would have the park, the swim centre, the childcare centre and the tavern on the weekend. A whole range of things would draw people to the town centre and make it viable for most of the day, from early morning until late at night.

Another thing I hope the council will consider is that in the northern part of the Central Coast there is no dedicated public performing space. I am not talking about a performing arts centre or a huge facility costing tens of millions of dollars. I am talking about something that is about the size of The Peninsula Theatre at Woy Woy—some people know it as Woy Woy Little Theatre—which would cost about \$2 million to \$3 million. It would be a dedicated, 150-seat facility in which the local drama group, local dance groups and quality, award-winning and competition-winning bands like the Wallarah Community Band would have a good space to perform. I will contact the council about both of those issues; I know the developer has spoken to the council about those particular facilities. People have waited for literally decades for this development to finally get underway. It would be a terrible waste if after all that time, lobbying and hope, we get an ordinary town centre when we could have a great town centre.

It is not going to cost huge amounts of money. The whole area has large amounts of developer contributions. In 2014 the State Government built an intersection and upgraded Sparks Road in front of it at a cost of about \$25 million. The internal road was paid for. There are still plans for a possible railway station and more opportunities for commercial development. The thing that strikes me is when you add up the jobs generated by what is already proposed and add on the performing arts centre and the swimming pool, there is the potential for 10,000 jobs to be created in that one precinct, in an area that has relatively high youth unemployment and many people having to commute out of the area. The council needs to consider those two other developments very seriously to make sure we get this town centre right and deliver a viable, beautiful community for everyone involved.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (18:42:08): I do wish I had spent a little bit more time engaged in listening to what the member for Wyong was saying. I will say that I know he is incredibly passionate about his community, and the words he has put on the record this evening are particularly important for his community. If he would like to take up any further issues with the respective Ministers, I have no doubt that they will be taken seriously. If he engages with those Ministers I am sure that his work will be well received by his constituents.

AUSTRALIAN AIR LEAGUE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:42:58): On behalf of the Central Coast, it gives me great pleasure to talk about the Australian Air League, which held a march in Gosford on the weekend. It was a fantastic event attended by almost 300 Air League cadets from across New South Wales. It was a bit of a warm day on Sunday but that did not stop the cadets from turning up en masse for the Australian Air League. The parade was absolutely outstanding. It was attended by my good friend the member for Robertson, Lucy Wicks, and me. We had great pleasure accepting the salute from the Australian Air League. It was also hosted by the Air League's Central Coast Wing, which has a fantastic history. For 23 years the Air League has been located on the Central Coast at its home at Warnervale Airport, which the league is very passionate about. The cadets enjoy flying and doing their training courses out of Warnervale Airport.

The Air League has an incredible history stretching over 86 years, with cadets—both male and female—looking to aviation as their future. I was proud to attend on behalf of the Government and see almost 300 cadets take part in the march. They were judged and presented with various awards on the day. The Gosford waterfront was spectacular and at its best. The cadets then attended a swimming competition at the nearby Gosford pool, where they got to cool off after a hot march on the 37-degree day. They competed passionately at the swimming carnival.

Again, I pay tribute to the Central Coast Aero Club for its support of the Australian Air League. The Toukley squadron also has its home at the club at Warnervale Airport. The aero club has been such a huge supporter of those young people. Numbers provided by Boeing confirm that over the next 20 years the industry worldwide will need almost 800,000 pilots and more than 760 aircraft engineers. Being a member of the Air League gets these young people motivated and involved in all sorts of programs related to the air industry and flying. The Central Coast Aero Club had a very well attended "try and fly" day on the Saturday prior to the Air League's march. People from across the Central Coast had a chance to spend some time in light aircraft flying around the beautiful Central Coast.

You could not get a better place to fly over than the Central Coast on a perfectly clear day, with a chance to see the vista, the beaches and the natural beauty of the bushland. We also benefit from the unrestricted airspace around Warnervale. Young cadets from all over New South Wales, including Penrith, attended and did

exceptionally well. The Air League is such a wonderful institution. I commend the 300-odd cadets who participated. The Air League also flies out of Camden and many other regional airports. As cadets, they know how important regional airports are to rural and regional communities. Warnervale is one of those airports, where there is an incredible symbiotic relationship between the Air League Central Coast Wing and the Central Coast Aero Club.

I congratulate Andrew Smith, the CEO of the Central Coast Aero Club, on his dedication and devotion to providing those services to the Air League. Long may that relationship continue because, as I said earlier, we know that aviation will provide excellent employment opportunities for our young people in future, especially given the current shortage of pilots worldwide. I thank the almost 300 cadets who took part. I appreciated the invitation to attend. It was an honour to be there and to accept the salute on behalf of the Air League on Sunday at the Gosford waterfront. I wish the cadets all the best in their future endeavours as members of the Air League. As I said, it is a fantastic institution that deserves our support. I learned from talking to the local members that they have seen an increase in their numbers and, more importantly, in female membership. I congratulate the Air League Central Coast Wing on the weekend's events.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I thank the member for Terrigal, who was speaking in place of the member for Northern Tablelands.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (18:48:08): I feel compelled to give a reply that I will be comfortable with when I read the *Hansard* at some stage in the future. I congratulate the member for Terrigal on his contribution about the Australian Air League on the Central Coast. He raised a very valid point about the importance of regional aerodromes to the operation of the Air League, which incidentally has been established in Australia since 1934. As acknowledged by the member for Terrigal, there is an Air League unit in my electorate of Penrith. It is a fantastic institution that encourages people from all different parts of society to get involved in aviation. As the Minister responsible for the new aerotropolis, I understand how important aviation will be for future jobs—whether they are held by young people from across the Central Coast, regional New South Wales or even western Sydney. I am sure the Air League will continue to provide fantastic opportunities for young people in this State.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Before the member for Albury is given the call, I will run through the speakers' list, which includes the member for Albury, the member for Lismore, the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Ku-ring-gai, the member for Granville and the member for Wagga Wagga. We will then move to community recognition statements.

D.E. LIESCHKE & SON

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:49:32): It is fair to say that the decision by General Motors to retire the Holden brand in Australia will have far-reaching consequences for people such as the Lieschkes. D.E. Lieschke & Son is a Holden vehicle dealer that has two sites in the Albury electorate, one in Walla Walla and the other in Holbrook. They have been serving those two rural communities for nearly 97 years. In fact, Lieschke & Son is Walla Walla's oldest family business and commenced trading in 1923. One of the Lieschkes' greatest strengths is their personal service and care for their clients and the broader community. They have been Holden dealers for many years and over time have been the first port of call for people wishing to purchase Australia's national car.

The Lieschkes very much value loyalty and I know in that sense the loss of Holden impacts them greatly. They see the Holden network as a family. For rural communities, loyalty and mateship are constant themes. Country people like to deal with people with whom they have established relationships—people they can trust to be there when needed and provide first-class service. In fact, this is doubly important to businesses in small communities as there is nowhere to hide if you let people down—and people in the bush have long memories. Speaking of long memories, I called in to pay my regards to the Lieschkes on the day after Holden's announcement. I appreciated the opportunity to speak to Anthony, the managing director, about the challenge that the announcement presented to their business.

I enjoyed chatting to Cec, Anthony's father, aged 84 years, who remarked that he remembered selling a car to my grandmother in 1961. Not only could Cecil recall the model and colour—a two-tone FB Holden—but he also had the original sales register, with handwritten details of every car sold over several decades. He found the transaction for my grandmother's car—his memory was perfect—going back 58 years. In 1948 the Lieschkes were among the privileged dealers from around Australia chosen to be appointed as a Holden retailer. David, Cecil's father, was even invited to attend the unveiling of the very first Holden as it rolled off the production line at Fishermans Bend. Cecil started working at the business in 1950. With the closing of Holden, regional dealerships that have developed loyalty to the brand over many years will be significantly impacted. Those businesses in turn

provide employment and drive local town economies. Often in small towns, businesses and government services are highly interdependent.

Walla Walla boasts an impressive range of business and industry that supplies goods and services, both nationally and internationally. Last year the town celebrated the 150th anniversary of the arrival of several families from the Barossa. It is defined by its German heritage, which is reflected in family, faith and heritage sites. In fact, St Paul's College is located in Walla Walla and is the only Lutheran secondary school in New South Wales. A great example of business in Walla Walla is Kotzur Pty Ltd, which is a leading manufacturer of bulk-handling and storage facilities. Kotzur supplies the mining, agricultural and manufacturing sectors and has been in business since 1962. The company employs over 100 full-time staff. One of its most significant products is the ubiquitous grain silo that is seen all over Australia. The company is managed by second-generation family member Andrew Kotzur. There is no doubt Kotzur will be one of the businesses that will feel the impact of the demise of Holden and its effect on fellow business Lieschkes.

Wiesners is another second-generation business in Walla Walla, which focuses on agricultural machinery and tractors. There is also the successful shed builder, PJN sheds—again, a family business. The resilience of country people was emphasised to me when, despite the fact that Lieschke & Son would soon be losing its Holden dealership, Cecil encouraged me to test-drive an electric car. He got me to sit in the seat with one of his other sons, Kim, and drive it that very day—evidence that the Lieschkes recognise not only the importance of their past heritage but also the need to look to the future. The pioneering spirit lives on as we and the Lieschkes continue to evolve and innovate. Good on you, Cec.

ASSISTANCE DOGS AUSTRALIA

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:53:50): I want to give voice to people in my community who are autistic, non-neuro typical or on the autism spectrum through a young woman named Lily Bain. I will focus on some challenges they face, particularly post-high school if they get that far, as the opportunities presented to them are not plentiful, but some good things that have happened as well. Many of these people live with their parents, as getting work or meaningful community engagement is not readily on offer. Lily Bain and her mother, Maree Thompson, wrote to me to seek my advocacy and support for a national Assistance Dogs Australia Centre, albeit in western Sydney.

Normally I would eschew the location, as I would go for country New South Wales first, but it seems that in western Sydney the work it will do will be without fear or favour for country residents. The key issue is that it will benefit all. They want Assistance Dogs Australia to secure \$7 million from the Federal Government and the State Government to add to the \$9 million it intends to invest if it can raise the requisite funds. I promised Lily and Maree that I would write to the Treasurer, shadow Treasurer, salient Ministers and shadow Ministers seeking support for the centre. I have the letter drafted. With her permission, I shall now read Lily's letter to me as it sets out, better than I can say it, how her assistance dog has changed her life. She wrote:

Dear Ms Saffin,

My name is Lily Bain, and I have autism.

I applied for an assistance dog after it was suggested by my psychologist. I have tried many different strategies to try and help with my anxiety and social skills, including medications, cognitive behavioural therapy, meditation etc, but have not had much success. An assistance dog sounded like an idea that could actually help me in day to day life. I love animals, and I have always found that our dogs at home are helpful with stress, but I obviously can't take them in public places with me. So I decided to investigate support and assistance dogs.

After much research, I found Assistance Dogs Australia, which had a program of dogs for children and young adults with autism. I applied, and now I have Thelma, my chocolate Labrador. I have had her for just over three months, and she has had a huge positive impact on my life in that time. She provides me with constant support wherever I go, and has given me more purpose.

Thelma is my best friend. When I am struggling, she comes to me and rests her head on me, or lays on top of me, or gives me one of her toys, because she likes them so she thinks they can cheer me up. I have been able to take less medication thanks to her help. As well as helping with mental health, Thelma has also improved my physical health, as I take her for walks and feel more of a reason to get out of the house. She is also gradually helping me build up responsibility and independence.

I feel that everyone who would benefit from an amazing assistance dog should be able to have access to getting one. I want the NSW Government to provide funding to help build a National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre in Western Sydney.

Thanks

Lily Bain

With her permission her mother, Maree Thompson, wrote:

Dear Ms Saffin,

My daughter, Lily Bain was very fortunate to receive an Assistance Dog from Assistance Dogs Australia in October 2019. Lily is 21. She has autism. Having Thelma, her chocolate Labrador, come into her life has been transformational.

Because we know first-hand what a positive difference an Assistance Dog can make to quality of life we want to advocate for the NSW Government to provide funding to help build a National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre in Western Sydney. Our family supports Assistance Dogs Australia 2020/2021 Budget Submission for a one-off funding contribution which was lodged on 5 December 2019.

...

Many more people deserve to know the independence, joy and companionship an Assistance Dog brings.

I hope that my letter has shown you how much Assistance Dogs Australia needs funding, and how many lives will change from your decision—

meaning the New South Wales Government—

Yours sincerely,

Maree Thompson

TRIBUTE TO GEOFF MATHER

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:59:05): If we sat down and tallied up the hours put in by the hundreds of NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers who combated bushfires in the Northern Tablelands electorate during the summer of 2019-20, it still would not come close to the 70 years of service contributed by former Nullamanna RFS volunteer Geoff Mather. Over seven decades Geoff was a constant in the Nullamanna brigade and a stalwart of that little community. Sadly on Christmas Eve 2019 he passed away at the age of 85.

Nullamanna is a rural locality about 19 kilometres north-east of Inverell. Nullamanna is not big—there are a few houses, an amazingly well cared for community hall and an immaculate green shed, synonymous with the RFS brigade—but the community has a huge heart. A number of years ago I had the privilege of presenting Geoff with his 60-year service medal, which proudly sat beside his 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th clasps and to his national medal and, to his credit, he is the longest-serving RFS member anywhere within the Northern Tablelands. Geoff joined the RFS at the age of 17 in 1952. At the time his father was captain of the local brigade and the way things worked in that organisation were very different from the way things work today.

I remember him telling me about the old square water tanks that had to be filled by hand and the first New South Wales State-issued hand tools—leather flaps on handles—to douse ferocious bushfire flames. The beautiful big tankers that are the pride and joy of brigades today, including Nullamanna, were completely non-existent at that time. They were not even in the imagination of members in 1952. The fireys at Nullamanna relied on four farm trucks, a few 200-gallon tanks on the back, hand pumps and a whole lot of heart to get fires under control. Geoff underwent a baptism of fire when he first joined up, immediately made senior deputy captain, a title he held until the new millennium some five decades later where he was finally promoted to captain.

In 2015 Geoff received the ultimate recognition from NSW Rural Fire Service when he was made a life member. Today the Nullamanna RFS brigade currently has 35 volunteers, many of who are starting to get a little long in the tooth. Across New South Wales the average age of an RFS volunteer is between 48 and 50 years of age. For years brigade captains like Geoff have pleaded for an injection of fresh blood into their ranks. Fortunately the feeling of helplessness experienced by so many as they watched the homes of friends and family burn to the ground over summer has ignited a new wave of volunteers.

Since the bushfires first started in my electorate last September the Northern Tablelands fire district, which takes in Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield local government areas, has seen 130 new recruits sign up to the RFS. Down the road in the New England district, covering Armidale, Uralla and Walcha 87 new volunteers have come on board. This is reflective of what is happening in brigades across the State and what a relief it must be to those fire-hardened men and women who, like Geoff Mather, have given so much time to protect their communities. We need to harness the expertise of our older volunteers, because if the recent fires have taught us anything it is you cannot beat local knowledge and you cannot beat first-hand experience on the ground. While their bodies might not be as strong as they used to be, their old heads are overflowing with vital local information, which is just waiting to be passed onto the next generation.

This Saturday I will be joining Geoff's wife, Leonie, his family and the local community at a memorial service for Geoff Mather at the Nullamanna Hall. No doubt there will be a wall of yellow on the ground to pay their respects. As a State we should be incredibly proud of what the NSW Rural Fire Service has done and stands for today. I like to think that Geoff is up there somewhere looking down on us. I know that he too would be satisfied and very proud with what his mates have achieved over the past six months fighting fires, and safe and proud in the knowledge that they will continue to do that in the years to come. Vale Geoff Mather.

PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:04:11): When I think of Australia Day I am reminded of the poem *My Country* by renowned poet Dorothea Mackellar, who wrote:

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

The poem epitomizes the harshness of our environment and landscape, but also reminds us of what we love most about Australia and being Australians. As we know, the Australian story began long before 26 January 1788. Aboriginal people have inhabited the land we call home for over 60,000 years and I acknowledge them as the traditional custodians. I acknowledge the hundreds of generations of Indigenous ancestors who have lived and died here over that time. I also take this opportunity to pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. This year in my electorate the Australia Day awards were held on Town Green in Port Macquarie, at the Bruce Porter Reserve in Laurieton and at the Harrington Community Centre. The community had the opportunity to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our local volunteers who have gone above and beyond in providing service, and to welcome our newest citizens.

I congratulate all those who were nominated for awards in recognition of their incredible community service, their willingness to support others and their determination to make our area a better place to live, work and play. The winner of the Australia Day Citizen of the Year award for 2020 was Port Macquarie local Luke Anderson, who was recognised for his instrumental work with youth in our community. Luke has established a voluntary gratis speaking role with Lifeline and NSW Health called "Reduce Risk-Increase Student Knowledge", which focuses on sharing his own personal experiences about the hardships encountered in life. He has presented his story to hundreds of schoolchildren in communities from Port Macquarie to Coffs Harbour, highlighting messages on road safety skills and suicide prevention, often linking his discussions with police, Fire and Rescue NSW, and Roads and Maritime Services. Luke is an outstanding ambassador for our young people in Port Macquarie. I commend his dedication and commitment to supporting them in making better life choices.

In Harrington the nominations presented to officials for Citizen of the Year meant it was a difficult choice and in the end they were unable to split two candidates, with a decision made to give them both the highest commendation on the day. Michael Cleland, Captain of the Harrington Rural Fire Service Brigade, was acknowledged for his outstanding leadership throughout the 2019-20 bushfire crisis. I extend to him my personal thanks for his efforts during this difficult and challenging time for our community. Chris Elford was named as a joint winner of the Citizen of the Year award, recognising his passion and tireless volunteerism for local organisations, including the Coopernook Hall, St Lukes Anglican Church and the Harrington Lions Club. I have seen firsthand his dedication to his community and offer him my heartfelt congratulations on a well-deserved honour.

The trend for co-award recipients continued, with Dr Gurpal Singh and Paul Flanagan both awarded the Senior Citizen of the Year accolade. Dr Singh received recognition for 42 years of dedicated service to improving health outcomes for residents living in Harrington, while Paul Flanagan was recognised for chartering the Harrington Lions Club and for his service to the local men's shed. In Port Macquarie Senior Citizen of the Year was awarded to small business grocer and well-known local Kenny Little, whose passion and commitment to youth employment programs and overwhelming generosity to support local sports clubs and community fundraisers are second to none. The Environmental Citizen of the Year award went to Dianne Davidson from Port Macquarie for her significant and ongoing involvement in the Friends of Mrs York's Garden organisation, and her conservation efforts to preserve habitat and wildlife.

Brittany Daly, 27, was named Port Macquarie's Young Citizen of the Year for her commendable service in the Australian Defence Force and amazing volunteer efforts in the Bonny Hills Rural Fire Brigade. Brittany has also dedicated her time fundraising for a myriad of important causes, including motor neuron disease and mental health. The Junior Citizen of the Year award went to Harrington Public School student Declan McCartney for his enthusiasm and eagerness to learn at school and exemplary leadership qualities. His nomination highlighted his level of maturity, which has earned him the respect and admiration of his peers and teachers alike. Taking out the Youth Volunteer of the Year award was Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club member Madison Gill, who was recognised for her technique and skillset on patrol, as well as her dedication to the organisation in general.

Last but certainly not least, the co-winning Rural Fire Service brigades of Harrington and Coopernook took out the Volunteer of the Year award for their instrumental involvement in protecting our communities during the devastating bushfires that had such an impact across the region. Whilst not from the Port Macquarie electorate, it would be remiss of me to finish without mentioning the Rotary Club of Wauchope, which was announced as the Community Group of the Year. As a fellow Rotarian in the same district, I know only too well the incredible work it undertakes and the impact the programs it has developed have on the local community, nationally and abroad.

I congratulate everyone involved. It is often said that volunteers are the backbone of every community. That statement could not be more true for rural and regional New South Wales. I congratulate our award recipients—our unsung heroes and leaders serving the mid North Coast.

KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE SCHOOL PRESENTATION DAYS AND AWARD NIGHTS

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:08:49): As the member for Ku-ring-gai, one of my favourite times of the year is attending end-of-year school assemblies. Ku-ring-gai is home to some of the best comprehensive and selective public, independent and Catholic schools in Australia. As I have said in this place before, it does not matter what school you go to, the ultimate goal is the same. A good education is one that is geared towards preparing our young people to meet life challenges in whatever direction in life they choose. Last December I had the pleasure of participating in 18 end-of-year presentation days and award nights. It was truly an inspiring time to see our students showcase their talent and achievements in 2019. Across the electorate, each school had a fantastic year, particularly with our HSC students, with Hornsby Girls' High School, Normanhurst Boys High School, Abbotsleigh School and Knox Grammar School placing in the top 25 schools in the State.

In the first week of December I attended eight assemblies. Generally presentation days and speech days involve the giving of prizes and awards, but in that week I was struck by the quality of singing, dancing and musicianship from Wahroonga Prep, Ravenswood Junior, Knox Grammar Prep and Senior School, Pymble Ladies' College Senior, Barker College Junior School, Abbotsleigh Junior School and Wahroonga Adventist. From drum and pipe bands to Chamber orchestra, concert strings, solo performances and choirs, the talent was extraordinary. Abbotsleigh Junior School performed *Come on, Let's Play*, while the Knox Prep School performance ensemble and choir performed *Coming Home*. The Ravenswood vocal ensemble performed a beautiful rendition of *Walking in the Air* and Wahroonga Adventist danced in very colourful costumes to the *High School Musical* song *What Time is it?* to acknowledge in an entertaining way that school was out for the year. Parents, families and friends in attendance had every reason to smile in admiration as the performances we saw certainly set the tone for an up-tempo day.

The following week celebrations of learning took place at West Pymble Public School, Turramurra High School, Wahroonga Public School, Ku-ring-gai High School, Killara Public School, Waitara Public School and Gordon West Public School. I had the honour of hearing and seeing more musical performances at those assemblies, and presenting a number of awards to the students who had distinguished themselves in academics, sport, performing arts and citizenship pursuits. I congratulate the students at all the schools who received an award. Following the official prize-giving ceremonies I witnessed the induction of the 2020 leaders of West Pymble, Wahroonga, Killara, Waitara and Gordon West public schools. Each school had its own tradition for the official handover from the outgoing leaders to the incoming ones, including captains, prefects and student representative council members. I congratulate all the students who received a badge. Their school communities have placed their trust in them as their representatives. I know they will do their very best to serve their local communities well.

Before the Christmas break I also had the opportunity to visit the Pymble and Beaumont Road public schools. Along with the member for Davidson and Speaker, the Hon. Jonathan O'Dea, and the Federal member for Bradfield, and Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher, I visited Killara High School. All three schools registered great achievements and had outstanding musical performances. I was honoured to be included in the days' events, particularly a question and answer session at Beaumont Road Public School, where I faced some interesting questions, both political and personal, asked by year 5 and 6 pupils, and heard world-renowned former student Simon Tedeschi play the piano, even blindfolded.

It was truly an uplifting and inspiring three weeks. I thank each school for the annual invitations. I was happy that even with scheduling clashes I attended 18 of the 29 school assemblies. We should celebrate all of the achievements of our young people. I encourage all students to keep learning and developing their own individual talents. Whether they receive an award or not, if they have done their best they have much to be proud of. At the end of the day, it is not an award that drives achievement. Similarly, they do not need to have a formal position to be considered a leader. To that end, I encourage all students to be leaders in the classroom through their support of other students, as well as their involvement in academic, sporting and community events. I thank the teachers, staff, volunteers, parents, family members and friends whom I have had the pleasure of meeting for what they do for our young people. They are incredibly devoted to their students and children. I wish all students a great new year of learning and look forward to visiting their schools over the course of 2020.

GRANVILLE ELECTORATE

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:13:59): It is almost a year since I was re-elected as the member for Granville and it is also almost a year since the Berejiklian Government was re-elected. So we should see some of those projects that the Liberals claimed had been "delivered" for Granville during the election campaign. This was

not a slip of the tongue. Liberal corflutes were printed and displayed at every polling booth claiming that express trains had been delivered to Granville station, a new Service NSW had been delivered to Merrylands and a new public school had been delivered to Westmead. All referred to were in the past tense, like they existed or something. But unfortunately for the people of Granville, they did not exist then and they do not exist now.

In 2013—when the Premier was transport Minister—Granville lost its peak express train services, which took commuters from Granville station to Town Hall station in 28 minutes. Some 100 express services a week were cut from Granville station. Now it takes up to 43 minutes on trains that stop everywhere because apparently someone somewhere wants to travel from Granville to Macdonaldtown. During the election campaign last year the Liberals—the same people who took away our express trains—promised they were coming back and were so confident in their claims that they said the services had been "delivered". They issued a press release on 5 March 2019 to that effect. Yet the new train timetable in April 2019 delivered nothing except more slow trains. Granville was established as "Parramatta Junction" when the first western train line was built. The suburb was a major rail interchange for over 160 years until this Government took Granville off the main western line and put us all on slow, all stations trains. At the same time, it approved a massive upzoning of the land next to the station, which will see the population of the suburb almost double. We want our express trains back and it is time they were actually delivered.

We also want a new Service NSW in Merrylands. If it has been delivered, no-one knows where it is. The old motor registry was closed by this Liberal Government in 2016. It was one of the few that still did driving tests. Everyone was told to go to Silverwater. So no wonder no-one believed that the Government was actually delivering one last year. The old motor registry is now a discount furniture store. However, there are plenty of other sites in Merrylands—if the Government wanted to deliver a Service NSW, it could. In fact, it did very briefly—with one of the Service NSW buses turning up during the election campaign. It has not been seen since. Maybe that is what the Liberals meant by "delivering" a Service NSW to Merrylands.

I refer to Westmead Public School, the largest public primary school in New South Wales, with around 1,600 students. In June 2018 the Liberal Government promised an additional public primary school in Westmead. By the election, it was claiming that it had been delivered. Yet nothing of the sort has occurred. No site has been identified and no budget has been allocated. The school's population has grown exponentially over the nine years of this Liberal Government, from around 800 to 900 students to 1,600 students today. The only response to this has been to bring in more demountables and to shrink the local catchment of the school. New enrolments from the entire northern half of the suburb were excluded last year. Students now either need to go to Darcy Road Public School in Wentworthville—up to 2.7 kilometres away and across the eight-lane Cumberland Highway—or to the new Bayanami Public School in Parramatta, across Parramatta Park, a two-kilometre walk or a much further drive around the park.

Labor committed \$50 million to construct a new school in Westmead. Despite claiming it had been delivered, the Liberals have not committed any real funds or identified a site. This is a suburb that is growing rapidly. Height limits are increasing in anticipation of the Western Sydney Metro, which might possibly start running from Westmead this decade, but probably not. The Berejiklian Government found \$250 million to cover the ridiculous cost overruns on the new high-rise high school just down the road in Parramatta. The primary and high school there cost \$350 million, a cost overrun of \$250 million. That is \$250 million that could have built the new, desperately needed additional primary school in Westmead five times over.

The only thing this Government has delivered to the community I represent is a council amalgamation process that no-one wanted. Most of my electorate is now in the Cumberland council area, a council that has been in existence for three years and is facing a \$6 million deficit. Rates are going up as part of the rate harmonisation process. It is also looking at privatising childcare services that the previous councils ran well for decades. The council has found the money to buy a Mercedes for the mayor to drive around in. Despite his self-proclaimed love of Holdens, he is driving around in a brand-new Merc at the ratepayers' expense. The Government has also found the capacity to drastically increase its marketing budget. So instead of delivering things we want and need—like reinstating the express train services it took away, a Service NSW where it closed a motor registry and a new school where the local school is bursting at the seams—all the Berejiklian Government has delivered is a new council and much higher council rates. [*Time expired.*]

CANCER CLINICAL TRIALS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:19:06): The people of my electorate and other regions in New South Wales are missing out on cancer treatments in clinical trials. Cancer is one of the great scourges of our times. Almost no-one is untouched, either themselves or because those they care about are affected. Medical research has made great advances in treatment, although much remains to be done. An important part of medical research for cancer is the conduct of clinical trials. So what is a clinical trial? The Cancer Institute NSW describes clinical trials as:

... research studies that test new approaches to cancer care. They can be used to test new cancer treatments or other ways of improving cancer care and they compare the new treatment to the best available current treatments.

The Cancer Institute NSW goes on to say that:

... clinical trials are an important way to support the development of new cancer treatments and improve cancer care.

Clinical trials are also an important way for patients to access treatments that may not be available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. As the Cancer Institute NSW says:

... increasing the number of places available in cancer clinical trials in NSW means that individual patients have more treatment choices.

Patients also feel they are contributing to research and improving the world for others. But we have a problem. Because these trials are most often available in cities at major research institutes, cancer sufferers in regional and rural areas have to travel and spend time away from their homes and loved ones to access the treatment. A member of my community, Associate Professor Sue McAlpin, has raised this issue with me. She is currently undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer. In relation to clinical trials, Associate Professor McAlpin said:

It is well known that people from rural and remote areas have poorer outcomes for their cancer than those living in the city. If I resided in inner Sydney or Melbourne, I would be able to attend a number of the centres of excellence available to people suffering from cancer at limited personal expense.

Professor McAlpin's point is that the costs of travel and accommodation are a burden for people in rural and regional areas and this may mean they do not get to the trials. She also told me:

It also means that most studies exclude people from rural and remote Australia and when studies have been reported they mostly include people from metropolitan centres. This is both unfair and inequitable to those of us who reside in rural New South Wales as not having the support of IPTAAS extending to clinical trials.

The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS] is a New South Wales Government scheme providing financial assistance for those seeking treatment long distances from home, but it is not available for accessing clinical trials. Information from the Cancer Institute NSW website supports Associate Professor McAlpin's points. The website reveals that for every 100 people diagnosed with cancer in New South Wales there were, on average across the State, nine enrolments into a cancer trial in 2017-18. But the range is that in western Sydney it is 27 per 100 and in southern New South Wales it is one per 100. That reflects where the large cancer treatment centres are. In my local health district of Murrumbidgee the number is five per 100. All of the regional areas are less than five per 100.

I have also learnt from the Cancer Council NSW that 27 per cent of people participating in clinical trials travel more than 100 kilometres to do so and yet do not have IPTAAS support. And this data does not capture those who live close to State borders and are travelling interstate for treatment, including people like Sue McAlpin who courageously wishes to access a clinical trial in Melbourne. There is a glimmer of hope. The Cancer Council NSW and the Cancer Institute NSW have entered into a partnership to trial IPTAAS payments for people accessing clinical trials. That began in August 2018 and already more than 137,000 kilometres of travel has been supported to 14 trial sites, including four regional centres.

This is currently being evaluated so it is a glimmer of hope. But what must we do now? There are two things. Firstly, we must support our regional cancer centres with the resources, expertise and technology to take part in clinical trials so that cancer sufferers do not have to travel. And for those who still need to travel—and sometimes that is necessary for sophisticated treatment—we must provide financial support through the IPTAAS scheme. The health Minister told me it will be considered in a future review of the scheme. That cannot come soon enough for those who are missing out on cancer treatments. We can sort this out now. Let us not wait.

DR JANE HARGOOD

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:24:13): I acknowledge the long and impressive career of gynaecologist Dr Jane Hargood. In fact, the member for Wagga Wagga might know her. She has practised in my electorate of Oatley for over 15 years. Dr Hargood's past is anything but ordinary, graduating with a degree in medicine at the age of 24 and joining the Royal Australian Navy shortly after. At the age of 27, Jane was practising as a medical officer and became the first female to go to sea with the navy in 1985. Jane rose quickly through the ranks to the position of lieutenant commander following numerous voyages, a feat made even more impressive considering she also had an 18-month-old daughter to care for.

Upon retiring from the navy Jane further solidified her passion for medicine by commencing specialist training at St George Hospital—which, as we all know, is my favourite hospital in the whole country. Jane took her interests overseas, practising in a hospital in London for three years before returning home. Jane became established across Sydney, operating consulting rooms in Hurstville, Bankstown, Miranda and Menai before cementing her practice at St George Private Hospital. However, the late 1990s saw a big shift in landscape for

Jane's practice when she relocated to Armidale. The regional town had no specialist obstetrician-gynaecologist, with Jane able to provide support to expecting mothers. She then relocated her practice to Wagga Wagga. I wonder whether the member for Wagga Wagga knows her.

Dr Joe McGirr: Indeed, I know Jane.

Mr MARK COURE: She is fantastic. In many ways, Jane's move to Wagga is symbolic of her life. Throughout her working career she has stood up where she is needed, regardless of recognition or glamour. Popular in Wagga, Jane also took up a teaching role as a senior lecturer in gynaecology at the University of New South Wales Rural Clinical School located within the grounds of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. However, in 2008 Jane and her husband returned to Sydney. She set up her practice in Hurstville—in fact, right next door to my electorate office—where it has remained ever since.

Anyone who has had a child or supported someone through the process of childbirth knows how confronting and deeply personal the experience is. My wife, Adla, had our second child last year and our obstetrician provided an amazing amount of support to both of us. Like any medical professional, the work they do is by no means easy. It is incredibly valuable to expecting families. The calibre of medical professionals in the St George area is outstanding, from new graduates such as the 45 new interns we recently welcomed to St George Hospital to experienced doctors like Jane who have dedicated their careers to improving the health of others. Furthermore, we are fortunate to have some of the best health infrastructure in the State in my electorate of Oatley. Because I cannot help myself, I will once again bring up St George Hospital. It was there that we recently opened an \$11.5 million world-class birthing unit, featuring the very latest technology and equipment for maternity care.

While at least in the earlier stages of her career Jane may not have had the same flashy equipment that is available now, she estimates that she has delivered over 5,000 babies. Impressively, some of the babies that Jane has delivered come back to have their own children. I am delighted that this Government has been able to support Jane and people like her throughout their professional careers. Investment in St George Hospital will soon slowly pass \$700 million. Last year the Premier announced a new precinct that includes an ambulatory care unit, outpatient and day surgery services, a new rehabilitation unit, an increase in subacute inpatient beds, and a hub for community health and home-based services.

Jane has been a large part of the history of St George Hospital, which has transformed from a small cottage hospital into an area leader. The hospital brings seven new lives into the world every day. Importantly, gender equity in medicine and medical leadership in Australia has still not been achieved, despite gender parity in Australian medical schools. Fighting for gender equity is just another example of Jane dedicating herself to justice throughout her career. After nearly 40 years of practice Jane hung up her scrubs at the end of February. On behalf of the babies delivered, families assisted and lives changed forever, I thank Jane for her longstanding contributions to our local community.

Rulings

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I alert members to a situation that occurred during the giving of private members' statements. I was trying to be fair, but it probably did not work out as well as I would have liked. At one point during the giving of private members' statements no member sought the call. I should have gone immediately to community recognition statements—I will do that next time. If a member is on the list to give a private members' statement I suggest that member be in the Chamber, or organise with someone else to take their place. I urge members to kindly inform the Chair that that is happening. I do not have a crystal ball. I ask members to be fair. I remind members of Standing Order 55, which states that members will stand and seek the call. If no-one is here to seek the call, next time I will go straight to community recognition statements.

Community Recognition Statements

NSW WOMEN'S WEEK

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:30:35): Yesterday I was pleased to attend the inaugural Innate Power of Women Forum at Parramatta with the New South Wales women's Minister, Bronnie Taylor. Master of ceremonies Stephen Sim opened the event and Community Migrant Resource Centre CEO Melissa Monteiro provided the welcome address. Women's Minister Bronnie Taylor had the audience eating out of her hand with her engaging story on how she came to find herself being elected into the New South Wales Parliament and her nursing career before changing professions.

The panel included Malini Raj from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Tania Rhodes-Taylor from the University of Sydney and broadcaster Tracey Spicer. These amazing women talked about their life journeys, how

women articulate their competencies and achievements for career progression, and recommendations for work-life balance, transition and reinvention. It was a fantastic start to NSW Women's Week. I congratulate Pallavi Sinha on convening the event and organising the morning with great support from her team. Any conversation that involves women and leadership is always inspiring. I look forward to engaging with other women and hearing their stories throughout the rest of this week.

GIONNI DI GRAVIO, OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (19:31:39): I congratulate Mayfield's Gionni Di Gravio, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in last month's Australia Day honours. Gionni is an archivist at the University of Newcastle and was recognised for his service to community history. He is also a member of the Australian Society of Archivists, where he has represented the peak body for the nation's galleries, libraries, archives and museums, convened special interest groups, been a national councillor and edited the society's newsletter. Gionni is also a patron of the Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society and is chair of the Coal River Working Party – Hunter Living Histories Initiative. Gionni's dedication to preserving our past is to be commended. Newcastle, New South Wales and Australia are richer for his efforts. Gionni, we thank you.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I also congratulate Gionni. I regularly attend the Coal River Working Party meetings. He is a brilliant archivist.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE SECONDARY CADET PROGRAM

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:32:54): Late last year I had the pleasure of congratulating 16 students from Ku-ring-gai High School on their successful completion of the NSW Rural Fire Service Secondary Cadet Program. In its third year at the school, the program is an ideal way to introduce our young people to the important role volunteer firefighters play within our communities. The students are taught essential fire safety techniques. There is no better time than the present to praise this program, with the work our emergency services have frequently done recently across the State. However, those students would not have had the chance to undertake such a program were it not for the support of the school and the commitment of the members from the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai RFS district, as well as all the volunteers and staff who assisted through the nine-week course. I congratulate the 2019 cadets. They have displayed a real sense of leadership. I hope they have gained an insight into the volunteer spirit of the NSW RFS, the world's largest volunteer firefighting force.

CHERRYDALE ORCHARD

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (19:33:59): Recently I visited Cherrydale Orchard, which is located 10 kilometres from Tenterfield on the New England Highway. I met with Paul Jenny Savins, their sons Mark and Tom, and Paul's sister Keran Scandrett. I was delighted to see their well-run, beautiful family business, which they proudly showed me. Cherrydale is a family business. It produces 20 varieties of cherries and many varieties of apricots, nectarines, plums and peaches. It has a great cafe and outstanding nursery. Paul has lived at Cherrydale with his parents, Allan and Fay, since 1981. After Paul and Jenny married she moved to Cherrydale and they raised their family there. During harvest time Cherrydale offers employment to many young local people, providing local jobs that enrich the local economy. Paul and Jenny recounted how challenging 2019 had been with the drought, water scarcity and bushfires. However, they are confidently looking forward to the future. I was there to listen and to support them. If you travel that way, I encourage members to visit Cherrydale Orchard.

LAMBING FLAT CHINESE FESTIVAL

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:35:06): Young will be transformed by the vibrant colour and light of the seventh annual Lambing Flat Chinese Festival to be held on Saturday 21 March in Anderson Park, Young. Now in its seventh year, the festival is an important multicultural event for Young and the Canberra region. Traditionally it is held close to Harmony Day. An initiative of Hilltops Council, the festival transforms the town's goldfield past into a multicultural festival that showcases Chinese culture and food. This year's festival will have plenty of entertainment for the crowds to enjoy, including lions dancers, the Wiradjuri dance group from Young High School, classical Chinese ensemble Future Faces and the Gold Trails Re-enactment Group, with a cannon fire display. The Lambing Flat Folk Museum will have all the town's history and Chinese heritage on display. Multicultural food stalls, wine tasting, farmers markets and art exhibitions will also be features of the festival. I am looking forward to it.

GEORGIA ODETTE SALLYBANKS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:36:22): Each year the Summer Hill Woman of the Year Award recognises a powerhouse woman who lives in the inner west. This year I am pleased to announce that Ms Georgia Odette Sallybanks, known as Odette, is the 2020 Summer Hill Woman of the Year. Odette is a local inner west singer-songwriter and Australian Record Industry Association [ARIA] nominee. Odette is only

22 years of age. She has had two consecutive Triple J hottest 100 entries and two ARIA nominations. Odette attended Haberfield Public School where she first discovered her love of English and the poetry of Keats. That influence can be heard clearly in her music. Odette used music and songwriting as a way to process her emotions at school. I had the pleasure of seeing Odette perform at last year's Splendour in the Grass. Odette's music inspires many in our community to stay true to themselves and to deal with bullying in our community. That is a great thing. I congratulate Odette and I cannot wait to hear where she goes next.

RUBY BOUGHTON

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:37:29): I congratulate Ruby Boughton, a student at St Joseph's Primary School in Mungindi, on being a deserving recipient of the Collarenebri-Mungindi Branch of Isolated Children's Parents' Association book voucher award. The award is for students who have tried hard to achieve throughout the school year but do not receive an academic or sporting award. The branch believes that students who try hard with their school work should be recognised for their efforts. I commend Ruby on her school work, her diligence and her positive attitude to learning. I wish her all the best for the rest of the school year. By working hard and enjoying all her school has to offer, I am confident that Ruby will have a very bright future ahead of her.

KAMBAN KAZHAGAN AUSTRALIA

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:38:10): Last Sunday I was delighted to participate in Clean Up Australia Day. Many members in this House also participated in the event. I joined Kamban Kazhagan Australia in its endeavours to clean up Lytton Street Park in Wentworthville. Kamban Kazhagan Australia is a literature group that seeks to keep Tamil literature and culture alive in Australia. It values its literary traditions. It is also wonderful to see that they value their new homeland in Australia by cleaning up that particular park every year. Many members of the community live around Wentworthville. Kamban Kazhagan Australia gives back to the community in so many ways—not only by keeping the culture alive but also by keeping our parks clean and tidy. I congratulate Kamban Kazhagan Australia on its efforts.

WOOLGOOLGA SENIORS' CENTRE

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:39:04): Visitors to the Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre are always assured of a warm welcome. The facility has been at the heart of the community for more than 15 years. It is much loved by its 300-odd members because it is a happy and busy place to be. In recognition of its important work, the Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre has won the Coffs Harbour electorate 2020 NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award. I was pleased to present the award to the centre during their NSW Seniors Festival celebrations. The Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre has an energetic management committee, comprising President Ron Whelan, Vice-President Colleen Williams—who is also the functions and events coordinator—Secretary Sharyn Woolley, Treasurer Roger Freestone, Barry Kelly, Suzi Johnson, Irene Noy and Ricki Moore. Deb McLeod and Graeme Ward are also valued volunteers.

GORDON FERGUSON

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:39:56): Gordon Ferguson is a life member of the Woy Woy Swim Club. He joined the club in 1967 and has held multiple positions, including the presidency for 11 years and vice presidency for four years. Responsible for the formation of the Central Coast Swimming Association in the mid-1970s, Gordon was treasurer, fundraiser and team manager. He has refereed for the club since 1972 and continues to do so in 2020. In the 1980s Gordon joined the Umina Beach Surf Life Saving Club and held the club's presidency for three years, the captaincy for two years and he is now a life member of the Umina Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Gordon is also the secretary of the Ettalong Pelicans Masters Swim Club and has obtained life membership there for his contributions. Gordon also holds life membership at Coast and Valley Swimming Association. It is clear that Gordon Ferguson loves his community and has served in many capacities to a high standard. I acknowledge Gordon's contributions and thank him for his service over decades of leadership in our community.

TERRIE MILGATE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:41:04): During NSW Women's Week I recognise Terrie Milgate for her contribution to the Trangie Indigenous community and the wider community. As CEO of the Trangie Local Aboriginal Land Council, Terrie was instrumental in securing the original funding for the establishment of the Trangie Cultural Centre. Since then she has worked tirelessly to attract grants. The centre has become a vehicle for enhanced cultural awareness activities for schoolchildren and many others in the community. As a member of the Trangie Action Group [TAG], Terrie has played a pivotal role in organising community events, including the Trangie Truck and Tractor Show, which was a massive success in August last year. I had a great time at the racecourse with a few thousand locals and travellers from right across the country.

The plan is to host the event every couple of years. Terrie has also played a role in TAG's fundraising and advocacy activities. The most notable of those is the building of a dedicated disability respite facility in the town, which has had an enormous impact. I thank Terrie for her continued service to the Trangie community.

MAITLAND YARNERS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:42:12): Countless winged, furred and feathered creatures have been killed during our recent bushfire crisis. Many others are still fighting for their lives. Koalas, kangaroos, possums, sugar gliders and even our iconic platypus have fallen victim to flames in what has become an outright environmental tragedy. I acknowledge Spotlight Rutherford, Maitland Yarners co-ordinator Tracy Bean and her team of volunteers who have collaborated to sew mittens, pouches, nests and bat wings for these tiny, traumatised survivors. The idea began when Spotlight staff were searching for a way to help injured animals. Coincidentally, Tracy reached out to the store at the same time. Spotlight set up the sewing machines and Tracy canvassed for volunteers. More than 100 people turned up to lend a hand. The group has attracted volunteers from as far afield as Sydney and people from overseas have contacted it with offers of support. The group has generated hundreds of items so far, but the expectation is that our wildlife carers will need the purpose-made items for many months to come. I thank and commend Spotlight and the Maitland Yarners Group.

HAROLD FRASER OVAL PAVILION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:43:17): Recently I attended the official opening of the Harold Fraser Oval Pavilion, located at Harold Fraser Oval in Kogarah Bay. The new \$2.4 million clubhouse and amenities were jointly funded by the New South Wales Government and Georges River Council in the member for Rockdale's electorate.

Mr Stephen Kamper: That's right. What were you doing there?

Mr MARK COURE: Where were you? A portion of the funds came from the Stronger Communities Fund. The clubhouse and amenities feature change rooms, accessible public toilets, a referees' room, canteen, medical room, store room and a lift to access the upstairs function area. The Harold Fraser Oval is used by district cricket and local football teams. The new pavilion will make it an exceptional place to play and watch sport. Hopefully, the new pavilion, as well as the earlier resurfacing of the ground, new cricket pitch and new irrigation and drainage will allow the ground to be used more regularly and encourage more people to get involved in local sport, particularly football and cricket. I thank Georges River Council for its invitation to the official opening. In particular, I thank my predecessor Mayor Kevin Greene for his continued commitment to our local area.

ROSALIND MURREE-ALLEN, OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (19:44:22): I congratulate Rosalind Murree-Allen, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in January's Australia Day honours. Rosalind was recognised for her community service, having contributed significantly to the city across education, ministry and music. Rosalind was an infants' teacher for 40 years and also served as assistant principal at New Lambton Public School. Currently she supports Carrington Public School's literacy project through the Rotary Club of Newcastle. Also with Rotary, Rosalind volunteers in the Young Driver Awareness Program. Rosalind has been in the Christ Church Cathedral Choir for over 27 years and assisted with the childhood music program. She has volunteered as a roster coordinator on the family ministry team, in the cathedral shop and has also coordinated children's holiday programs. Additionally Rosalind is a member of the Newcastle Tudor Singers and was a foundation member of the Hunter Handbell Ringers. Well done, Rosalind. This recognition is much deserved.

WAMBERAL SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:45:26): Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club Nippers came fifteenth in New South Wales at the recent 2020 State Championships. This is an awesome effort from a bunch of absolute champions. This is the highest ranking of all Central Coast clubs. I congratulate all competitors and their families, age managers, water safety and surf club volunteers for their efforts. I congratulate the following Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club members for their excellent performance: Maia Abell, Billy Brown, Spencer Campbell, Archie Carpenter, Harley Dimesch, Alicia Howitt-Marshall, Matthew Humphries, Jack Humphries, Hayden McGregor, Kirra Meale, Noah Nakagawa, Eden Pearson, Max Portass, Tahj Ragattieri, Rocco Roycroft, Lara Tillott and Keenan White. I particularly thank Chris Jones, Anthony Hall, Col Pearson and Ryan Booth for their incredible spirit. They are all officials at Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club. The Central Coast has the highest proportion of volunteers anywhere in Australia and this is certainly evident with the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club.

JULIE DAVIS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:46:35): Julie Davis has been a local volunteer on the Central Coast for the past five years, offering her time to a number of community charities and organisations throughout the region. Julie first started community volunteering at the age of 65 when she commenced retirement after working 35 years in the legal profession. She wanted to continue to make a meaningful contribution to our community. Julie has devoted over two years to Mary Mac's Place, assisting homeless men and women to obtain warm meals, showers and laundry services. In addition to assisting in those services, Julie has also provided a sympathetic, compassionate and friendly ear to those who visit Mary Mac's. Julie has served as a Cricket Australia community coach through Blowfly Cricket, which improves access for children with autism to play and enjoy the sport. Along with those volunteering endeavours, Julie is also involved with Fairhaven Services. She runs the bingo at Ettalong Bowling Club on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. Julie is an exuberant and passionate community volunteer and I thank her from the bottom of my heart for her contributions to my community and across the State over the past half-decade. Well done, Julie.

SYDNEY ISLAMIC COMMUNITY WELFARE

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:47:42): With the support of local businesses, State Emergency Services and the wider community, Khaled and Fatimah El-Kordi and Mohammed Ghamrawi from the Sydney Islamic Community Welfare Group, along with Mohammad Khayat and Imran Bediran, organised a bushfire appeal for people impacted by the catastrophic bushfires in Batemans Bay. The Sydney Islamic Community Welfare group spent three days collecting much-needed items from 5 to 7 January this year. Volunteers then headed to Batemans Bay on 8 January with a total of three trucks, carrying 44 pallets of donations consisting of water, non-perishable food, baby nappies, formula, toiletries and other goods. Working together with the Australian Army, NSW Police Force and the Salvation Army, the goods were delivered to a grateful Batemans Bay community. I thank the Sydney Islamic Community Welfare Group for its efforts in assisting with the bushfire relief.

NEWTOWN JETS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:48:36): The Newtown Jets are Australia's oldest rugby league club and are celebrating 112 years of footy this year. The Newtown Jets are beloved in the inner west. Games are regularly packed out with supporters for weekend matches at Henson Park. Thousands of inner westies bleed blue for the Jets. The Jets won their first premiership in 1910 and most recently won the 2019 premiership. I reckon 2020 will again be their year. The Jets have a proud history of supporting the inner west community. Last year it hosted the first pride and diversity match to support the LGBTIQ community. The game sent a strong message to fans and players about the importance of inclusion within the rugby league community. The Newtown Jets have got 2020 off to a flying start, winning the Canterbury Cup NSW trial match over the weekend against the Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles by 60 points to 26. I congratulate head coach Greg Matterson on a great start to the season and happy 112th birthday to the Newtown Jets.

GRENFELL COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:49:45): The Grenfell Country Education Foundation is proud to congratulate its first graduates. Melissa Causer completed a Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, and Ashlee Hewson completed a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood and Primary at Charles Sturt University in Dubbo. They were supported through scholarships from 2017, the first year of Grenfell's foundation. The Country Education Foundation began in 1993 and to date has helped more than 5,000 rural and regional young Australians. The generosity received by Weddin Shire's businesses, community groups and individuals has allowed the Country Education Foundation to support local youth in need of financial assistance to reach their goals through further education. The Grenfell branch has already held its interviews for its 2020 scholarships and we look forward to seeing more graduates in the coming years.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE BUSHFIRE APPEAL

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:50:46): I recognise Janette Chapman, Gillian Summers and Sam Worth who coordinated a massive drive in response to a Rural Fire Service bushfire appeal in January. What was initially expected to be a couple of car loads of donations became four trucks as Newcastle responded with thousands of dollars' worth of goods, including water, medical supplies and sunscreen, based on a list provided by the Rural Fire Service support team. While it is no secret that Novocastrians are giving, it takes a great effort to manage such a response. Janette, Gillian and Sam certainly stepped up. On behalf of all Novocastrians I give a great thanks to Janette, Gillian and Sam for their generosity of time and spirit. I am sure the recipients of the goods were extremely grateful and Newcastle is proud.

MOREE TENNIS CLUB

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:51:43): I congratulate eight young Moree tennis players who participated in and enjoyed great success at the first Junior Development Series tournament in Gunnedah on 23 February this year. Emma Maunder, Alice Maher, Chloe Flegerbein, Kianah Randall, Jack Rogers, Emily Maher, Lauren Appleby and Dejan Dujlic were the Moree tennis players who competed against 130 other players on the day. Chloe and Lauren won the open women's singles and the under-14 girls' singles draws respectively. Emily finished runner-up in the under-10 girls' singles and Dejan made it to the quarterfinals of the under-10 boys' singles. I congratulate and commend every player for their efforts and for their advocacy and representation of the Moree Tennis Club. I congratulate the club on its support of the next generation of tennis players in the Moree region.

SPENCER RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:52:42): On behalf of the people of the Central Coast and also the people of New South Wales, I applaud the Spencer RFS for its contribution to the bushfire efforts over the challenging summer. It was fabulous to finally join the Spencer RFS to celebrate not its Christmas party, not its flood party, but its recovery party on the weekend. There is a fantastic facility at Spencer. A feast was laid out on the basketball court—which was lit up for a party—by the chefs and others in the community for the RFS. Those members of our community managed incendiary drops from helicopters that basically protected the whole of the Central Coast. They were fabulous across November and December as the back-burning took place to protect the whole community. They were up north and then they were down south after the fires went through Gosford. I thank Jock Ross, the previous captain; and Alison Wade, the deputy captain who managed so much. I thank everybody from the Spencer RFS.

VISSLA CENTRAL COAST PRO SURFING COMPETITION

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:53:48): The Vissla Central Coast Pro surfing competition took place from 25 February to 1 March at Avoca Beach in my Terrigal electorate. Our local community is so lucky to host this world-class surfing event. It is a QS3000 event and for the first time ever both male and female surfers have parity for their prize money. That is absolutely outstanding. I acknowledge the local surfers who took part: Caleb Tancred, Molly Picklum, Sandon Whittaker, Finn Hill, Lennox Chell and many more. They had the home ground advantage in competing against international surfers. This is the fifth consecutive year our region has played host to the NSW Pro Surf Series. It is an enormous boost to local tourism through accommodation, retail and the great Central Coast hospitality. My wife, Jill, and I were there on Saturday; it was a fantastic event. The waves were breaking and the weather was perfect. I also acknowledge from Surfing NSW CEO Luke Madden and communications manager Ethan Smith. They have done a great job.

GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S CRICKET

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:54:56): Since 2015 there has been a 25 per cent increase in the number of women playing cricket in Australia, and the inner west has been spearheading the growth of girls' and women's cricket across Sydney. Girls' teams are well-established at Ashfield Cricket Club, Marrickville Cricket Club, Summer Hill Cricket Club and the Randwick Petersham Cricket Club. These clubs run programs for girls of all ages, providing players with female role models and the skills to build their confidence and abilities alongside the boys. Inner west teams also play in a girls-only competition in New South Wales called the Thunder Girls Cricket League. Female sports stars inspire girls to stay active in sport and help to curb the dropout rate, which sees one in two girls quit sport by the age of 15. I pay tribute to sportswomen like Ellyse Perry and Alyssa Healy from the Australian Cricket Team, who continue to inspire girls to get involved in the best sport on earth. I congratulate the many clubs across Sydney's inner west that show that sport is for everyone. Cricket is a great sport. It is not just a girls' sport or a boys' sport; it is for everyone.

CHICKENSTOCK 2020

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:56:07): From 20 to 22 March Bland Shire will be hosting Australia's most epic chicken festival in West Wyalong. After two successful years, this year Bland Council has launched a specific flavour-themed event with a musical twist: Chickenstock 2020. The main event, Chicken Tonite, will include a wide variety of chicken dishes from around the globe and the region's first chicken nugget-eating competition. There will also be chicken races, chicken cooking demonstrations, competitions and giveaways. The Yasgur Farm Experience is the headline act and will be playing featured music from Woodstock 1969 for locals and visitors to enjoy while experiencing this epic festival. Well done to Bland Shire Council on this entertaining initiative. Be sure to put Chickenstock 2020 in your diaries for what I am sure will be an unforgettable weekend.

JUDY COX

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:57:18): I congratulate Hillgrove's Judy Cox on her recent retirement after 20 years of service as the custodian of the Hillgrove Rural Life and Industry Museum. The Hillgrove museum tells the story of the rise and fall of a once-vibrant goldmining town that into the twentieth century was bigger than the city of Armidale. The museum also tells the story of the everyday lives of the people who did—and still do—call the village of Hillgrove home. I commend Judy on her many years of service to the community as a vital custodian to the unique and rich history of Hillgrove.

COASTIES' BUSHFIRE APPEAL

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:58:19): It may be small but one of the ways I have personally supported the bushfire recovery effort is by helping the Coasties' Bushfire Appeal. It was a fantastic event with over 120 people attending a fundraising dinner, including Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, the Hon. David Elliott, the Hon. Taylor Martin and me. A phenomenal amount of money—\$49,786—was raised through the gala dinner and the charity auction. This means each Rural Fire Service volunteer family who lost a loved one will receive \$8,297. Additionally, \$24,893 will go towards buying information technology packages for regional RFS stations on the Central Coast. I thank a number of people for their involvement: Marita Said and Michael Hayes from Reef Restaurant, Kiryn Clay, Wamberal Rural Fire Service Captain Angela Burford, the fantastic Superintendent Viki Campbell from the RFS, Dr John Irvine, Sue Dengate and the incomparable Gareth McCray, whose idea it was to put this dinner on. I congratulate them all on a wonderful outcome.

OWEN HARPER AND TAYCEE-LEA JONES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I wish to inform the house of the recent acknowledgement of Owen Harper and Taycee-Lea Jones who have recently been awarded citizens of the year in Taree. During the bushfires of late last year Taycee-Lea and Owen gathered together a group of volunteers to deliver pods of water to the RFS volunteers. Owen and his team then followed the firetrucks into the fire front and took water to the farmers and people on the more remote properties. Groups under Taycee-Lea and Owens guidance delivered food, fuel and clothes and water to local halls in the first weeks after the fires. Thank you Owen and Taycee-Lea for what you have contributed to the community at a time of need.

BANKSTOWN SPORTS NETBALL CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I was delighted to attend the official opening of the 2020 Netball Season on 8th February 2020 with Bankstown Sports Netball Club, also marking the Clubs' 60th year. Along with the commencement of the season was the official opening of the new training grounds at Bankstown City Sports Complex. I would like to thank Bankstown Sports Netball Club's executive including President Ashleigh Renton and Secretary Michelle Boulais for extending the kind invitation to celebrate this memorable occasion. I acknowledge Mr Mark Condi, CEO of Bankstown Sports, Mr Richard Phillips, Vice President Bankstown Sports, and Ms Carolyn Campbell, CEO of Netball NSW and Bankstown Sports Director for their attendance and support of the club. I wish the best of luck to the Bankstown Sports Netball Club in the upcoming season.

LAKESIDE GOLF CLUB, CAMDEN WINNER OF 2019 METROPOLITAN CLUB OF THE YEAR

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I would like to congratulate Lakeside Golf Club in Camden who won the 2019 Metropolitan Club of the Year Award at last year's NSW Golf industries Awards. The award recognises excellence in course management and financial management as well as the Club's contribution to golf in the community. The club, operated by Wests Group Macarthur, is actively engaged in fund raising activities such as the Pink and Blue day, with members raising funds for cancer awareness. The Club also runs ongoing community-centric golf programs such as 'Get into Golf for Seniors' Business Ladies Golf, Junior Golf Development program, and Golf for Girls. In the last 12 months Lakeside Golf Club has contributed over \$124,000 to the local community and local sporting clubs. Congratulations to Wests Group CEO Tony Matthew and all his staff on their success.

DIVERSITY IN THE MACQUARIE FIELDS ELECTORATE

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—One of this country's greatest strengths is its diversity. Australia is a welcoming country and I am proud that the spirit of inclusivity is strong in my electorate of Macquarie Fields. There are many local organisations that are committed to the important ethos of mutual respect. The Multicultural Society of Campbelltown is a prime example. The society's Multicultural Boishakhi Mela will be held on April 4 at Campbelltown Sports Centre to celebrate the beginning of the Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Punjabi, Sri Lankan and Pakistani calendar new year. This festival is a major drawcard for communities all over Sydney and I send my best wishes to the organisers for another successful event. The Multicultural Society

of Campbelltown is not alone in its commitment to fostering harmony in our community. Other examples include the Teej celebrations hosted by the Macarthur Region Nepalese Community; the annual Macarthur Multicultural Children's Festival; and Sto Nino Association of Macarthur which recently celebrated its 23rd anniversary and the Fiesta of Santo Nino. I applaud these organisations for reminding us that our community is strengthened and enriched by our diversity.

TED CARY

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge renowned small business owner and Como butcher Ted Cary on his retirement. Ted has worked at the Como butcher shop since he was just shy of 15, having retired at the age of 86. Opened by Mr Cary's father in 1926, Ted's old-fashioned approach to cutting meat, with whole carcasses on display around a single butcher's block, left many locals feeling as though they were taking a step back in time. Up until his recent retirement, Ted continued to work six days a week, slicing customers' meat to order and wrapping it in butcher's paper, on which he would work out the price with a graphite pencil. A local legend, many of Ted's customers are fourth generation family members that know him by name. For decades, Ted carried on his father's legacy, with the shop emanating the same charm as when it was first opened and meat would be delivered to customers on horseback. I extend my best wishes to Ted for a well-deserved retirement.

NEWCASTLE MUSLIM ASSOCIATION DONATION TO RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Ms SONIA HORNERy (Wallsend)—I would like to congratulate the Newcastle Muslim Association for organising to donate \$2342.50 to the Cameron Park Rural Fire Brigade. I would like to thank Newcastle Muslim Association President Salwan Amin; Sheikh Mohamed Khamis, Imam of the Wallsend Mosque; Assistant Treasurer Abdus Samad; trustee Bikash Paul; and everyone who donated to help our beleaguered local RFS branches after this horror summer. This is just the latest example of the members of the Newcastle Muslim Association demonstrating their generosity and community spirit in the Wallsend Electorate, and another example of Wallsend residents supporting our fires and those who have suffered throughout the bushfire crisis. Nathan Freeman, captain of the Cameron Park Brigade, and Evan Gardiner, Maintenance and Community Engagement Officer, arranged an opportunity for Association members and their families to come along and have a look at the truck and equipment—a great time for the kids! Thank you once again to the Newcastle Muslim Association and their members for helping our local firefighters.

GOURMET GANMAIN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Congratulations to another successful year of Gourmet Ganmain hosted by the Ganmain Markets. Held in the Victory Gardens Gourmet Ganmain hosted over 60 stalls showcasing the regionals amazing food and wine industry and the talents of many local artisans. The day also included a BBQ run by the local Men's Shed, live music and entertainment for the kids making it a perfect day to get outdoors and celebrate all this wonderful area has to offer. Gourmet Ganmain has been a fantastic platform for local producers in the Shire to create brand awareness and help put Ganmain on the map. Well done to Bron Hatty and all the volunteers who help make this event such a success with 100s of visitors from the region and the wider Riverina area.

ST BRIGID'S DAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise St Brigid's Day and especially the event held at Casula on 8 February this year. This was a cultural event to mark St Brigid's Day and to celebrate the creativity and impact of Irish women upon society through music and the spoken word. St Brigid, sometimes referred to as the patroness of Ireland is the woman equivalent to St Patrick. This particular event was organised by the Consulate-General of Ireland in Sydney. Consul General, Owen Feeney, and Vice Consul Rory Conaty were present at the event at the Casula Powerhouse. Those contributing to this event included Gabrielle Carey; Daniel Browning; Anne Casey; Aine de Paor; Julie McFarland and Cliona Molins. The contributions included music, poetry, history and acting. The presentations stretched from a biography of St Brigid to excerpts from Finnegans Wake, the harp compositions of Turlough O'Carolan and there was much more.

FAIRFIELD TET FESTIVAL

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—During the first weekend of February, the community sprung to life as tens of thousands of visitors from all different walks of life poured into the Fairfield Showground to welcome in the Lunar New Year and to celebrate at the 2020 TET Festival. Each and every year the Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA) NSW Chapter outdo themselves as they pour their heart and soul into organising this larger than life community festival which attracts visitors from far and wide to embrace and celebrate in the culture, festivities and phenomenal food on offer at the TET Festival. As tradition would dictate, attendees celebrated and embraced the Lunar New Year with traditional dances, music, games and the consumption of some of the best food you can find anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere. It's always exciting to see what new and wonderful

additions the VCA have included in each new TET Festival and they never disappoint. Each year the TET Festival grows from strength to strengths and I would like to commend and congratulate the VCA's organising committee and volunteers who continually help to make this festival a sensational success.

JOHN SHANAHAN

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I pay tribute to the late Dr. (Hon) John Shanahan, former Deputy Chancellor and council member of Southern Cross University. I had the pleasure and privilege of serving with John, getting to know him and his wife Maggie. I am so sorry Maggie and family. John battled various serious illnesses, doing so with dignity. He never slowed down. I called him our money man. Skilled in auditing, called the auditing doyen in the Australian Financial Review. One incident that John never let Chancellor John Dowd and I forget started at Sydney airport. We three were about to fly to Lismore for our SCU council meeting. John Shanahan had a turn and did not board. John Dowd and I were so involved in our conversation that we never noticed that Shanahan as we called him, did not board. When we got to Lismore we realised he was not with us. He never stopped reminding us and regaled all with this story. John Dowd and I were of course mortified. John Shanahan was a city bloke who managed to make the country his and did so with deep affection for the SCU and all associated with country NSW. He bridged the gap.

GRAHAM MOORE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I would like to congratulate & thank Glenmore Park resident, Graham Moore for his time as President of the Glenmore Park Football Club (GPFC). After five great years of service to the club, Graham has stepped down from his role as President in October 2019 due to personal reasons. Through Graham's sacrifice of time and energy, he has aided the community in coming together over their passion and love for sports. It has been my pleasure to support the club on numerous occasions and to have seen it grow into the largest and most successful club in the NFA. Although Graham will be missed dearly, I wish him all the best during this next season of his life and thank him for all he has contributed to the Glenmore Park community. Thank you Graham!

SALVATION ARMY HURSTVILLE CORPS 120TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—The Salvation Army in Hurstville recently celebrated 120th anniversary as well as the opening of its first citadel 100 years ago. The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social welfare in the world. In my electorate of Kogarah the Hurstville Corps has a long and active history, supporting many local community programs, including emergency relief, financial counselling, community meals, English classes and children's and family activities. A 120th anniversary dinner was held at the end of last year in conjunction with the Australia Chinese United Business Association Federation, which used the occasion to raise funds for the Salvation Army's bushfire appeal. Thank you to Captain Sean Li, Hurstville Corps Officer and the organising committees for putting on this dinner in honour of the Salvation Army in Hurstville, and the ACUBAF for the invitation to participate in the celebration.

MARDI GRAS

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—On the 16th of February, I had the privilege of attending the Rainbow Labor NSW stall at the Mardi Gras Fair Day. Fair Day showcased a number of Australian queer performers, promoting up and coming LGBTQI+ artists who are reshaping the Australian music landscape. The celebration of the LGBTQI+ community, and of artists from the LGBTQI+ community, is such an important step in advocating for full equality before the law, and events like these play such a crucial part in achieving that. Fair Day was a fantastic success, with tens of thousands of people from all across not only Sydney, but New South Wales, Australia, and globally, coming together to celebrate the how our diversity strengthens and enhances our community. I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy Mardi Gras, and to congratulate the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras organisers and all of the Mardi Gras volunteers on what I'm sure will be a fantastic event!

CELEBRATING LAUREN DOOLEY'S CENTURY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I would like to send my best wishes to Lauren Dooley who recently celebrated her 100th birthday. She spent the occasion with five generations of her family. Food and family have always been a big part of Lauren's life. She is hailed as a marvellous cook with a flair for baking old-school treats such as cream horns, mushrooms, fruit cakes and sponge cakes, and also as an avid gardener. Lauren was married to Frank, who tragically lost his life in a tractor accident in 1963. Together, they had four children. Lauren now boasts 18 grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren! I hope your 100th birthday celebration was filled with many beautiful moments, Lauren, and I wish you many happy returns.

LEETON COMMUNITY OP SHOP

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—It is my privilege to recognise the outstanding work and commitment by the workers at the Leeton Community Op Shop. Besides the day-to-day business of the Op Shop, the store provides welfare services to help members of the community. The services come in many forms such as the work for the dole program, meals for the needy and other areas of support for those suffering and struggling in the community. The store has its own kitchen and café where, for a nominal fee, meals are served for lunch as well as coffee and treats throughout the day. They also sell frozen meals to the community. The sale of meals raises the funds to help cover costs of their welfare services and the provision of their free breakfast program. Our country's Op Shops provide a great service to those struggling in our community. The workers at the Leeton Community Op Shop are an inspiration to us all and I congratulate them on their entrepreneurial foresight to raise funds so they can provide much needed welfare services.

SRI OM CARE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—Recently, I attended a morning tea with constituents who attend functions of Sri Om Care. The organisation focuses on keeping South Asian Western Sydney elderly persons active in their communities and enjoying each other's company by hosting events and lunches. Sri Om Care now have meetings in Seven Hills at Grantham Heights Uniting Church's hall and provide entertainment for many seniors in attendance. Thank you to the Association of Golden Australian Filipinos for their cultural dances which I know the seniors enjoyed. It was great to attend this terrific event with Councillor Reena Jethi, Deputy Mayor of The Hills Shire Council. Thank you to Mr Jay Raman OAM for his invitation and his community service to multicultural affairs across Western Sydney. I note he serves as the Vice-President of Sri Om Care, President of the Hindu Council of Australia in New South Wales and Director of Auburn Diversity Services.

RAY WILLIAMS ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—It is always my pleasure to attend the multitude of School Award Presentations that occur within my electorate at the end of each year and present the 'Ray Williams Encouragement Award'. It is awarded to a student, as selected by the school faculty, who tries their very best, both at school and within the broader community. It is to reward hard work, persistence, respect for others and a positive attitude. My congratulations go out to the various winners of the Ray Williams Encouragement Award, who, this year, were:

CAITLIN KINGSTON
EVELYN THOMAS
HANNAH BUNBY
ANASTASIA KELLER
COOPER BELL
ANNIKA COLLETT
MORGAN FUGLE
MAYA LEIVA
MAX MEZZOMO
CHLOE BARNES
BRIANNA RYNEHART
BETHANY LUM
LIAM ROBERTS
CALEB LILLO
BRENDAN HILL
MARCUS CASTELLAN
LUCIA PARDON
EMMA OSMOND
DEAN WHITTAKER
LUCAS KARAM
JAIH ATHWAL
JOAN BAUTISTA
EMILY DOWTHWAITE
GEMMA YAGER
GABRIEL KOMADINA
KAYA KAPOOR
MEGAN AU
NICOLA UHLMANN
LANDEN BESTERS

GIANCARLO BELLISSIMO

I encourage them all to continue their hard work both in the classroom and the local Castle Hill Community, and wish them all the best in their future studies.

ORANGE SKY VAN

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—I congratulate the arrival of the Orange Sky van service in the Northern Rivers, and welcome the positive impact they will have upon both the members of the community experiencing homelessness, and those whose lives are devoted to helping them. There is an increasing number of people sleeping rough in and around our towns, often through no fault of their own. Many of them are middle-aged women, among the most vulnerable members of society, who are sleeping in their cars. The Orange Sky charity's volunteers provide a familiar face and consistency to people who may be facing one of the toughest times of their lives. It offers them not only laundry services and showers but a positive human connection. The conversation, support and encouragement offered are invaluable, as is the information provided that can transform a person's circumstances.

LITTLE ATHLETICS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)—I recognise the efforts of Little Athletics NSW (LANSW) and the running of the NSW State Combined Carnival in Tamworth on the weekend. With 616 entries registered competing from 104 LANSW centres, like Cowra, Greta, the Central Coast, Sydney, and from Southern the young athletes ranged in age groups from Under 7 to Under 17. It was fantastic to see such enthusiastic young athletes doing their best on the brand new Tamworth Regional Athletics Centre. These potential stars of the future could be the next Cathy Freeman, Brandon Starc and Sally Pearson or follow in the footsteps of Jake Stein who came from Little Aths to debut for the Greater Western Sydney Giants in the AFL last year. Little Aths has a long and proud association with this region and I am proud to have been part of the process for the construction of the Tamworth Regional Athletics Centre. A big thank you to Adam Jolliffe and his team of organisers it was a fantastic weekend.

GEOFF GORDON HEATHCOTE'S 2020 SENIOR'S LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS RECIPIENT

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—I am pleased to recognise local community member Geoff Gordon in Heathcote's 2020 Senior's Local Achievement Awards. Mr Gordon is very active in the community, volunteering his valuable time and talents through his involvement in a wide range of organisations and activities. He was a volunteer at the Northern Illawarra Neighbour Aid, also known as NINA, for 13 years and held a number of key positions. Although he no longer holds these positions he is still extremely active in the community and is currently involved in the Helensburgh Men's Shed, St Vincent De Paul, is a scripture teacher, helps with community events and sings in community choirs. Mr Gordon is extremely deserving of this award, he is a selfless individual who has enhanced and enriched the lives of many in the community. It was a pleasure to host Mr Gordon in Parliament recently for a high tea, with the other successful recipient Helen Sinclair and their guests to celebrate their wonderful efforts. I congratulate Mr Gordon on being recognised in Heathcote's 2020 Senior's Local Achievement Awards and I thank him for his service to our community.

OAKHILL DRIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—I am pleased to mention in Parliament one of the great schools in my electorate of Epping – Oakhill Drive Public School, which has recently secured NSW Government funding to build a new kitchen garden. The students of Oakhill have long been cultivating the most magnificent fruit and vegetable garden. They are taught where fruit and vegetables come from, the health benefits of eating them, and how to cook them. The garden includes sunflowers, pumpkins, watermelons, lemons, limes, and even chillis. Until now, the students have used very basic cooking facilities and the garden needed a bit of work. However the NSW Government's Sustainable School grant of \$15,000 will enable the school build a brand new garden and a modern kitchen space that will be used by the students during their gardening sessions. The school's garden program also incorporates subjects like science, mathematics and geography. I want to acknowledge the principal of Oakhill Drive Public School, Betty Asmanis-Ploeg. Betty and her staff do a wonderful job, and I thank them for taking the initiative to make this happen. I can't wait to hear about how the garden and the kitchen are going, and I look forward to getting down there and sampling some of the food.

2020 CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—On Sunday, 1 March, I joined Hills Shire Mayor Dr Michelle Byrne to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Clean Up Australia Day at Fred Caterson Reserve in Castle Hill. Since the first clean up, over 17.7 million Australians have volunteered an estimated 35 million hours of their time to clean up more than 365,000 ute loads of rubbish from 185,000 locations across Australia. This initiative is an excellent way for residents to engage with their community

and take direct and decisive action on an issue with broad public support – ridding shared spaces of rubbish, beautifying the local environment, and building community pride. I commend all members of the public who joined in on the day and took to their local parks, beaches, bushlands, and streets to clean up their local environment.

ARIANA WANG, SYDNEY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I commend the highly motivated and engaged Year 10 work experience student Ariana Wang, who lives in the Sydney electorate and studies at Sydney Girls High School. Ariana spent a week with me and my office, learning about the role of Members of Parliament, the issues we face in the Sydney electorate and some of the ways that MPs can help get action and help for their communities. She was excited to see the Parliament including the Legislative Assembly Chamber and some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into making laws and setting policies and programs for NSW. Ariana demonstrated well developed understanding of many local issues and showed her keenness to make the world a fairer place and not leave anyone behind. She asked probing questions and wanted to understand why something was possible or could not be done. Ariana represents a positive and energetic new generation of actively involved young people and is an excellent ambassador for Sydney Girls High. I am sure she will be an inspiring and progressive future leader.

COLIN CLARK – LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF RSL NATIONAL

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I congratulate ex-serviceman Colin Clark from the Port Macquarie RSL sub-Branch who was recently bestowed Life Membership of the Returned Services League of Australia on 21st February 2020. A remarkable man who has committed over 47 years as a dedicated member of the RSL sub-Branch, Colin first became involved with the membership in 1973, serving in a number of roles in the Blacktown, Castle Hill and Port Macquarie sub-Branches. He has represented the RSL as an Alternate Delegate to the Lower North Coast District Council, Alternate Delegate to the State Congress and has served many board positions including Assistant Secretary, Welfare Officer and in recent years Honorary Treasurer which has been an ongoing role since 2008. It was a pleasure to attend a presentation of Colin's Life Membership recently among local and state dignitaries, members and friends. We were all there to pay respect to a man that not only served the RSL sub-Branch for nearly half a century but more importantly our country. I congratulate Colin for this tremendous achievement which recognises his contribution to the RSL sub-Branch and his service and sacrifice to our nation.

WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—I would like to recognise the outstanding work done by the Wollondilly Shire Council during the recent bushfire crisis and the floods. The Council went into action as soon as the bushfires started to have an impact on the Shire particularly in the villages of Buxton and Bargo. The evacuation centre in Picton and the subsequent recovery at the Council offices were put in place immediately. Council staff co-ordinated seamlessly with other agencies and volunteer groups to ensure that those who were impacted had immediate access to all the support that they needed. The leadership of Wollondilly Mayor Cr Matthew Deeth and his senior executive team was exemplary. They helped generate the sense of community that was necessary in this crisis. Only a few weeks after that Council was back in disaster recovery mode as the banks of the Picton Stonequarry Creek broke and water flooded into the main street of Picton. Again Council stood up and acted swiftly to prevent a major local disaster.

LEICHHARDT WOMEN'S COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I recognise Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre, an organisation that does remarkable work in my electorate of Balmain. Leichhardt Women's provides low-cost medical and, allied health care and counselling to improve women's health with a focus on trauma informed services sensitive to the needs of women with complex health issues or recovering from violence. The Centre opened in 1974 on International Women's Day following a concerted campaign by a group of Sydney women. Remarkably, it was the first women's health centre to be established in Australia! Today the Centre provides healthcare services to 4,000 women annually. I want to acknowledge and thank all the fantastic staff at Leichhardt Women's for their tireless work. In particular I want to mention Roxanne McMurray AM who has managed Leichhardt Women's for the past 17 years but will soon depart. Roxanne has worked hard every day to make sure that this Centre stays open to the people most in need of its services. Her service to women in our local area can't be overstated and on behalf of our community. Thank you Roxanne and good luck.

PADDLE AGAINST PLASTIC – COOKS RIVER CLEAN UP

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—The Cooks River Clean-up is an annual event bringing people from across the inner west to roll up their sleeves and fish rubbish out of the river. This year's clean-up was co-hosted

by the River Canoe Club, the Mudcrabs, Cooks River Alliance, Ocean Crusaders and Cooks River Clean Up. Paddle against Plastic is part of a 10-day intensive clean-up of the river system that has seen over 6.6 tonnes of rubbish pulled from the river in just 5 days. Everything from shopping trolleys to bicycles to plastic shopping bags were pulled from the river by volunteers on the day. The clean-up saw inner westies this year out on the river in boats or hired canoes cleaning up our waterways. Around 225 people volunteered their Saturday to paddle around and protect our local environment. Thank you to River Canoe Club for supplying the canoes on the day. And thank you to the Cooks River Association and the Mudcrabs for their ongoing environmental advocacy, countless hours that are spent year round restoring the river and ensuring it is rubbish free.

ASHLEE MAGUIRE

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise Ms Ashlee Maguire of Orange. Having experienced growing-up and living with a relative who suffers depression, anxiety and other mental illness, which impacted her life, Ashlee was motivated to do something to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and help raise funding to deliver much needed support services for her community. Ashlee is a strong believer in giving back to community, so she organised an amateur drag queen competition in Orange to raise funds to help support those in need and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues. The event, named "Having the Blues can be a Real Drag", was hosted at the Orange City Bowling Club on 15th February 2020. The crowd of attendees were entertained by a drag queen emcee, and six local competitors. Ashlee garnered strong support of generous local businesses, who donated prizes to help raise money. Inspired by the great work Beyond Blue does, Ashlee partnered her event with the organisation, directing the \$18,216.03 in funds raised at this event for Beyond Blue to support them in their ongoing effort to help those suffering mental illness in our community. Congratulations Ashlee, you're a credit to your family and to our community.

OATLEY PROBUS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I share the success of Oatley Probus Club's Annual Christmas Party, held at Oatley RSL Club. Oatley Probus Club are one of the most popular groups in our local community, with over 100 people in attendance of their Christmas Party. They are a social club for retired and semi-retired men and women, who meet monthly with interesting guest speakers. Additionally, the Club enjoy a monthly coach outing, biannual extended tours, monthly walks, regular theatre parties, special event luncheons, a quarterly magazine and much more. The work of Oatley Probus is helping to ensure that retirees remain immersed in the community. A social life is fantastic for our mental wellbeing and we can often underestimate the effect it has on people if it is taken away. As well as this, Oatley Probus have strong connections to Rotary organisations and charity groups, which means their work is further-reaching than just retirees. I would like to thank President Laurie Arthur, Secretary Lesley Mannion and all of Oatley Probus Club for inviting me to their Christmas Party. I am sure 2020 will be another great year for the Club.

MAGGIES THAI

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—I draw the attention of this parliament to one of the true stalwarts of the Newtown electorate – Maggie from Maggies Thai on Erskineville Rd, Erskineville who recently celebrated their 30 year anniversary. The one and only Maggie first moved to Erskineville and opened the restaurant with her mum back in January 1990 – at the age of 21. The site was originally a Korean takeaway and Maggie rented the space for \$280 a week. Since then, Maggie and her mum, who is now in her 80's and can still be seen helping out, have established themselves as a local institution. Maggies Thai makes a valued contribution to the Erskineville community, not only because of the delicious food but as a result of their strong commitment to our community. In the wake of the recent fires which devastated so much of our state, Maggie and her team held a Bhan Mi weekend where all proceeds were donated to the Furies. The community got around them and they successfully raised \$5300 for the RFS. Thank you Maggie.

INVERELL HIGHLANDER'S WOMEN'S 7S TEAM

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I congratulate the Inverell Highlanders Women's 7s team and their coach Dale Beattie on defeating Miami State High School in the final to take out the women's division of the 2020 Buy a Bale Drought Breaker 7s competition over the weekend. The women's Highlander's 7s team defeated the Miami State High School by golden point, four minutes into extra time to win 22-17. The competition was hosted by the Highlanders at Rugby Park and saw the men's and women's divisions competing for a share in \$10,000 of prize money. The event was also supported by local bands and caterers. I commend each of the players and their coach on this remarkable and terrific achievement and the Highlanders Rugby Club for hosting the event.

TRIBUTE TO TONY BLAIN

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—The Sutherland Shire mourns the death on 20 February of Tony Blain. Tony was a retired business owner who specialised in manufacturing and marketing for entertainers. He was a major manufacturer/supplier of Sydney Olympic Games uniforms merchandise. He was the founder and president of the Australian chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America. Tony had enormous passion for the Shire, where he lived for over 30 years. He was a member of the Council's Economic Development Committee and Heritage and Shire History Committee; a presenter on 2SSR-FM community radio; and a founder of ShireBiz eight years ago, serving as deputy chair. Through ShireBiz he used his expertise and diligence to advocate for better transport services to the major Shire train stations (helping to secure the current trial of high rotation shuttle buses); to advocate for local advanced manufacturing and technology (helping with the ANSTO innovation precinct initiative); and to help to organise numerous functions for local business people. Tony showed extraordinary courage in the face of illness. Tony is survived by his wife Jamie and children Tom and Molly.

LORETO KIRRIBILLI MOCK TRIAL TEAM

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—I acknowledge that the Loreto Kirribilli Mock Trial Team won the grand final of the 2019 NSW Mock Trial competition. I congratulate the winning team of Alexandra Butt, Amelia Quinlan, Cordella O'Loughlin, Jenna Colins, Lucinda Singhi, Meg Lonie, Charlotte Ross, and Zoe Graham who were successful in defeating a highly competitive field made up of 164 schools. In the grand final in November of last year, the team went up against Redlands at the University of Sydney's Law Faculty Moot Court, with the Loreto team acting as the prosecution in the case of alleged negligent driving occasioning grievous bodily harm. Throughout the year the team practiced for hours every week, often going into school on pupil free days and during their school holidays. Congratulations to all the girls on the team for the amount of hard work and dedication that they put in throughout 2019, under the guidance of Mr Bain and Ms Pearson, to make it to the grand final and ultimately win. Your passion, skill and tenacity shone through to beat some of the toughest mock trial teams in the state.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:02 until
Wednesday 4 March 2020 at 09:30**