



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 4 March 2020

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 4 March 2020

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Bills

BETTER REGULATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUSHFIRE RELIEF) BILL 2020

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Victor Dominello, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (09:44:25): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Better Regulation and Customer Service Legislation Amendment (Bushfire Relief) Bill 2020. This bill makes important amendments to provide fee relief for people affected by disasters like the current bushfire crisis. The impact of the bushfires in New South Wales has been catastrophic. Over 2,500 homes and 250 facilities and their contents have been destroyed. A further 1,000 homes and 200 facilities have received significant damage. The New South Wales Government has acted swiftly to support bushfire-impacted communities. It has invested more than \$1 billion over the next two years to rebuild bushfire-affected communities. The Government has acted to ensure that people affected by the bushfires do not have to pay to replace important business documents, including certain licences, certificates and permits.

Service NSW has been an outstanding success story of the New South Wales Government. Since Service NSW was established in 2013, it has gone from strength to strength. Service NSW is the one-stop shop where eligible customers can apply for refunds and waivers across more than 30 transactions delivered by the New South Wales Government, covering areas such as replacement driver licences, vehicle registrations and birth certificates. The Government has also announced six months of relief from council rates for anyone who has lost their home or small business in the recent bushfires.

The Government continues to look at other ways it can support people impacted by the fires. As the Minister for Customer Service, I recently approved waiving annual liquor licence fees on properties damaged or directly impacted by the fires. I expect the Department of Customer Service will have this new fee waiver in place in the coming weeks. Earlier this year Service NSW established the Customer Care program, which is the centrepiece of its response. Through Customer Care, Service NSW is delivering wraparound case management-style services to make it easier for customers to access the various services that are available from governments and charities. Customer Care specialists are providing personalised support to help guide people and businesses through every step of their recovery journey. As at the end of February, around 7,000 customers had registered for the service.

Other highlights of the Government's response, delivered through Service NSW include that over 1,600 impacted businesses have been assisted through the Business Customer Care program, providing personalised business concierge services to help businesses in their recovery; over 6,000 people have accessed the online Disaster Assistance Finder to help them understand the services available; over 1,700 volunteers have received the volunteer firefighter payment, with close to \$6.5 million in payments made; over 700 businesses have applied for small business grants, with over 100 approved and close to \$2 million in payments made; over 700 fire-impacted customers in isolated communities have been served by Service NSW's mobile service centres; and close to 14,000 customers have called the Service NSW contact centre with fire or flood inquiries. This is all being delivered through Service NSW as the single front door so that people and businesses only need to go to one place to get the support they need. To understand just how important this support is to people affected by the bushfires, I will read an email received from a Service NSW customer:

Thank you for your special care and absolute efficiency dealing with me and our property that we lost in the New Year's Eve fires at Malua Bay.

To be honest you have been the first person in 8 weeks that has made me feel better and able to move forward in rebuilding our home and our life.

My husband and I have left so many messages with council, insurance companies etc and in most cases nobody has got back to us or dealt with our next move like you did.

Once again, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and wish you all the best in everything you do.

Service NSW has quickly stood up these programs and services to respond to the needs of affected customers and proactively meet their needs. The aim of the bill is to make the process of waiving fees simpler for the various government agencies involved through more consistent processes, with Service NSW as the front door. The bill also harmonises 14 legislative schemes within the Better Regulation and Innovation portfolio. Schedule 1 makes amendments to laws that regulate associations, co-operatives and over 800,000 home builders, property agents, motor dealers and other professionals. The amendments harmonise existing statutory powers. They will also allow the regulations to provide for relief by inserting a consistent power to waive, reduce, refund or postpone fees in each of the 14 schemes. The secretary will be able to use this power to provide relief in special circumstances and in response to financial hardship.

The bill will provide a consistent power for all four forms of fee relief. It will simplify administration and provide equity across the 14 schemes, ensuring access to targeted relief when it is needed most. The bill will support the current commitment to replace important business documents free of charge. It will also allow for reductions, refunds and postponements. If someone needs to renew their licence but cannot meet the application deadline, the bill will allow the fee to be reduced. If the bushfires destroyed their office and they no longer want the office to operate, the bill will allow for the refund of the fees already paid.

To support implementation, schedule 1 will insert transitional provisions into the 14 schemes. These provisions will take the amendments to be valid from 18 July 2019, the date of the first natural disaster declaration for the North Coast bushfires. The bill will omit parts of the Fair Trading Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2018 that will no longer be necessary. This Act contains provisions that will allow the pro-rata refund of licence fees from 1 July 2020. The bill inserts broader regulation-making powers, making fee waiver powers consistent across the portfolio. As a consequence, the amendments in the Fair Trading Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act that are yet to commence will be superseded by the provisions in the bill.

I now move to the amendments to the Service NSW (One-stop Access to Government Services) Act 2013 outlined in schedule 2. The amendments will clarify the power of Service NSW to waive, reduce, postpone or refund fees on behalf of government agencies during special circumstances, which include a declared natural disaster or state of emergency. The amendments will also enable the customer service functions, which detail the functions that Service NSW performs, to be prescribed by regulation. This means that Service NSW can stand up new functions, programs and services that support customers.

The amendments will further enable Service NSW to deliver transactions and services on behalf of the Government where there is no clear government agency owner. The amendments include transitional provisions to make absolutely clear the circumstances in which fees can be waived, reduced, postponed or refunded or payments can be made during the recent bushfire crisis. The New South Wales Government has acted swiftly to support people affected by the bushfires and the bill will ensure we can continue to do so in the face of any future disasters and emergencies, with the support of more consistent and standardised legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

EVIDENCE AMENDMENT (TENDENCY AND COINCIDENCE) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 3 March 2020.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (09:53:43): I speak in support of the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I thank the Attorney General for introducing the bill. Yesterday several members spoke about personal situations and the fact that we all want children to be protected and that those who do the wrong thing to be punished in the appropriate way. The bill amends the Evidence Act 1995 to facilitate the greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly in child sexual assault proceedings. I will talk more about how the bill does that shortly.

A New South Wales-led working group was established by the Council of Attorneys-General [CAG] in early 2018 to develop a reform proposal that could achieve the royal commission's objective in Uniform Evidence

Law [UEL] jurisdictions, which include New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth. A comprehensive reform proposal and a model bill to implement the proposal were developed by the working group, in consultation with expert legal and academic stakeholders. In November last year the attorneys-general agreed to implement the model bill to amend the UEL. New South Wales is the first jurisdiction to introduce a bill to do so. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 will also be required to enact two additional supplementary reforms agreed by the CAG. Those will be progressed in the next justice legislation amendment bill, which is anticipated for introduction to Parliament in mid-2020.

The bill amends the test for the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence. Under section 97 of the Evidence Act, in civil or criminal proceedings tendency evidence is not admissible unless it has 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. Proposed section 97A (2) (a) and (b) provide that in such proceedings tendency evidence about the defendant's sexual interest in a child or children or about the defendant acting on a sexual interest in a child or children is presumed to have significant probative value. Judicial discretion is retained, 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 sets out a number of matters that the court would 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 into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse and issues in recent case law. The royal commission showed us the terrible failures of governments and non-government institutions to protect children. The courage of survivors in coming forward has given us a unique opportunity to make criminal justice reforms to better protect children and to facilitate prosecutions for child sexual offences so that 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 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 Sex Abuse. As to the policy intent of the bill, I will deal first with tendency evidence. That evidence is:

- (1) Evidence of the character, reputation or conduct of a person, or a tendency that a person has or had, is not admissible 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. Coincidence evidence is evidence that two or more events occurred and such evidence 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 might be 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 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's *Criminal justice* report recommendations 44 to 51, which 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. The Government has already introduced significant criminal justice reforms in response to the royal commission. Those reforms include legislating a maximum life sentence for an offence of persistent child sexual abuse. This penalty recognises the devastating and lifelong impact of such abuse on victims and also the community's expectations around the punishment of such offenders.

The reforms also include the introduction of new offences for failure to report and failure to protect against child abuse. These offences are aimed at preventing abuses from occurring in the first place and ensuring that if they do the future risk to victims and potential victims is mitigated. Further the reforms include: requiring courts not to take into account an offender's good character when sentencing for historical offences where their reputation facilitated the offending; requiring 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; and the introduction of 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.

The bill provides supplementary reforms to support the admissibility of evidence, including around where a court is determining the probative value of tendency or coincidence evidence. A court is not to have regard to the possibility that the evidence may be the result of collusion, concoction or contamination. That can be assessed by the trier of fact after the evidence has been admitted in the proceedings. Proposed section 98 (1A) confirms that evidence from two or more witnesses claiming they are victims of offences committed by a person who is a defendant in criminal proceedings which is adduced to prove, on the basis of similarities in the claimed acts or the circumstances in which they occurred, that the defendant did an act is a type of coincidence evidence.

In speaking in support of the bill, I once again thank the Attorney General for bringing it forward. As I said, several members, in their contributions to the debate, have spoken about their experiences and the fact that we need to continue to protect our children. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been heavily considered in all of the proposed legislation. The new provisions are set to commence on 1 May but will not apply to proceedings the hearings of which have already begun. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (10:02:50): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Liverpool, Hawkesbury, Heffron, Myall Lakes, Prospect, Kiama, Goulburn, Manly, Newtown, Albury, Tweed, Terrigal, North Shore and Dubbo for their important contributions to the debate on the Evidence Amendment (Tendency and Coincidence) Bill 2020. I will address some particular matters that have been raised in the debate by members. First I will address comments that were made by members relating to what was said to be the complexity of the law in the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence.

I agree that this is a complex area of law. As the member for Liverpool and the member for Heffron alluded to, questions about the application of the tendency and the coincidence rules in criminal proceedings have been considered by the High Court on a number of occasions in recent years. Indeed, these issues have repeatedly arisen in the particular context of the prosecution of child sexual abuse offences. Introducing legislative amendments to part 3.6 of the Evidence Act 1995 may be seen as increasing complexity as any change will lead to further consideration and interpretation by the courts. However, this cannot be avoided if we accept that the law needs to be amended to facilitate greater admissibility of this evidence, in light of the clear and compelling findings of the royal commission in this respect.

The law is already understood to be complex and has generated significant jurisprudence in the context of child sexual abuse prosecutions in particular. This bill will clarify a number of issues regarding the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence and, in particular, the admissibility of tendency evidence in child sexual offence prosecutions, including issues that have been litigated before courts in recent years. It also provides clear guidance to courts on the probative value of certain tendency evidence and matters that would not ordinarily diminish that value. In this way, the bill may assist to resolve existing difficulties with the use of this evidence, including delays occasioned by litigating these issues in court.

I also note that, unlike the approach proposed by the royal commission, the bill retains the framework and language of the Uniform Evidence Law. This avoids unduly increasing complexity with the introduction of new and untested concepts. In all likelihood, the admission of tendency and coincidence evidence will continue to be litigated. This is already the case, as this kind of evidence can be of significant importance in criminal proceedings. I anticipate that the bill will not unduly increase the complexity of this area of the law or lead to unnecessary litigation. Rather, the bill will clarify the admissibility of these types of evidence and, in particular, tendency evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions to give effect to the findings of the royal commission.

The member for Liverpool and the member for Heffron suggested that jurisprudence has already lowered the bar for the admissibility of this evidence. However, the issues with the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence that were identified by the royal commission have been completely resolved by recent High Court decisions. The recent High Court decisions of Bauer and McPhillamy reveal that the case law has not necessarily settled in favour of an approach that always facilitates greater admissibility of tendency evidence, particularly in the context of multiple complainant cases. Achieving the objectives of the royal commission's recommendations requires legislative reform in order to provide clear guidance to the courts on the probative value of tendency evidence in all child sexual offence proceedings. The royal commission explicitly considered whether legislative amendment was needed after the decision in *Hughes v The Queen*. The royal commission said:

Although the High Court's decision in *Hughes* addresses the meaning of "significant probative value" and resolves the difference between New South Wales and Victoria in how it is applied, we do not consider that it has resolved all the difficulties we have

identified. It is not clear to us that the majority's statement of the test for admissibility provides sufficient guidance for trial and appellate courts to be able to apply the test consistently with each other in an area of the law as "vexed" as this.

The royal commission also said:

Even if the majority's statement of the test for admissibility does give sufficient guidance to trial and appellate courts, it does not address the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence to the extent we consider is necessary in order to prevent injustice to victims of child sexual abuse, including institutional child sexual abuse, who seek justice through the criminal justice system.

The issues identified by the royal commission have not been completely alleviated by more recent case law. In *The Queen v Bauer*, the High Court, in a joint judgement of Chief Justice Kiefel and Justices Bell, Gageler, Keane, Nettle, Gordon and Edelman, clarified the position in relation to single complainant cases. The court stated:

In a single complainant sexual offences case, where a question arises as to whether evidence that the accused has committed one sexual offence against the complainant is significantly probative of the accused having committed another sexual offence against that complainant, there is ordinarily no need of a particular feature of the offending to render evidence of one offence significantly probative of the other. In *Bauer*, the High Court also commented on the position in relation to multiple complainant cases, stressing that "there must ordinarily be some feature of or about the offending which links the two together", and referred to some "common feature about the offending". In *McPhillamy v The Queen* [2018] HCA 52, the High Court, in a joint judgement of Chief Justice Kiefel and Justices Bell, Keane and Nettle, stated that where tendency evidence relates to misconduct with a person or persons other than the complainant "it will usually be necessary to identify some feature of the other sexual misconduct and the alleged offending which serves to link the two together".

As I said earlier in the debate, the difficulties associated with the operation of the first limb for tendency evidence in child sexual offence matters stem, in part, from a perceived requirement of what was expressed previously as a striking similarity between the tendency evidence and alleged conduct of the accused person in order for the evidence to have significant probative value. Although the courts have shifted away from the requirement of a striking similarity, the decisions in *Bauer* and *McPhillamy* make clear that in multiple complainant cases "some feature of the other sexual misconduct and the alleged offending, which serves to link the two together" is required generally for this evidence to be found to have significant probative value. The royal commission was critical of decisions that follow this general line of reasoning, querying why any particular level of similarity between incidents of proven or alleged child sexual abuse was required in order for tendency and coincidence evidence to have significant probative value.

The bill seeks to respond to the concerns of the royal commission and its findings, particularly in the context of multiple complainant cases, by reflecting the royal commission's dominant conclusion in this regard, mainly that tendency evidence sought to be adduced in multiple complainant cases should be seen to have significant probative value even with no particular similarities between the tendency evidence and the alleged conduct as "the two most important similarities are already present—sexual offending against the child". The bill directly engages with the royal commission's findings and the objectives of its relevant recommendations, including in the probative value of this evidence in both single and multiple complainant cases. Legislating on that issue will also go some way to futureproofing the Uniform Evidence Law from shifting case law. It will assist to dispel common myths and misconceptions about the probative value of certain tendency evidence, which may otherwise continue to be perpetuated in case law.

I note the comments of the member for Liverpool, the member for Heffron and the member for Prospect about the scope of the application of provisions of the bill. I will explain why new section 97A will supplement the application of the first limb of the test for admissibility in relation to tendency evidence only. New section 97A is confined in its application to tendency evidence in proceedings involving child sexual offences rather than to both tendency and coincidence evidence generally because the majority of the material research and reasoning that underpinned the royal commission's findings in this respect related directly to evidence adduced for tendency purpose in child sexual offence matters.

In particular, the evidence that the royal commission heard from experts and survivors about sexual offending against children enhanced its understanding about the tendencies of offenders who sexually offend against children and identified some of the myths and misconceptions that new section 97A (5) will dispel. There is also a greater need for targeted provisions in relation to tendency evidence in child sexual offence proceedings to address previous and emerging issues relating to this type of evidence, particularly in the context of child sexual assault matters. This is evident in their higher degree of attention directed towards tendency evidence by the royal commission and in case law—for example, in the recent High Court cases that I have mentioned. Further, the specific issue that I previously discussed regarding the problematic requirement of a striking similarity or link in respect of tendency evidence does not arise in the same way in relation to coincidence evidence, which inherently relies upon the similarities in events or circumstances.

I turn now to the proposed amendments to section 101 of the Evidence Act 1995. As the member for Liverpool noted, the reform to the second limb of the test and the relevant supplementary reforms will apply to both tendency and coincidence evidence, and in all proceedings. The bill will amend the second limb to require

that tendency evidence or coincidence evidence about a defendant that is adduced by the prosecution cannot be used against the defendant unless its probative value outweighs the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant in all criminal proceedings. Removing the requirement for the evidence's probative value to substantially outweigh any prejudicial effect on the defendant or unfair prejudice on the defendant will strike a more appropriate balance between the competing interests of admitting tendency and coincidence evidence with significant probative value on the one hand and ensuring on the other hand that defendants are not in danger of unfair prejudice.

The majority of stakeholders consulted supported reforming the second limb for a number of reasons, including that, like the royal commission, they considered that its current phrasing creates an undue asymmetry or imbalance in the assessment of whether evidence with significant probative value should be admissible, which is unfairly weighted towards exclusion. The particular language proposed in the bill was also supported by stakeholders, that is, changing the terms of the test to "the danger of unfair prejudice to the defendant". This change largely reflects the form of words already used in section 137 of the Evidence Act 1995. The expressions "prejudicial effect" in section 101 and "unfair prejudice" in section 137 have been held to convey essentially the same idea but stakeholders favoured a consistent approach to wording. Given the broad support for these amendments expressed by stakeholders, the bill will make the changes to section 101 in all criminal proceedings.

I will now address the comments by the member for Prospect and the member for Newtown in relation to application of parts of the reforms to child sexual abuse prosecutions rather than, for example, sexual offence prosecutions more broadly. As I explained previously during the debate, the amendments proposed in the bill to section 101 of the Evidence Act will apply to criminal prosecutions generally and not only to child sexual offence prosecutions. The new section 97A proposed in the bill is targeted at proceedings involving child sexual offending. The reforms arose out of the important and groundbreaking work of the royal commission. For that reason, the bill draws upon and reflects the findings of the royal commission, which necessarily relate to child sexual abuse.

The proposed targeted provision, in particular, is underpinned by a number of royal commission key findings. These include, first, the high probative value of tendency and coincidence evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions even where there is no "particular level of similarity between incidents of proven or alleged child sexual abuse" as "the two most important similarities are already present—sexual offending against a child". The findings also include the particularly high propensity of offenders who sexually abuse children and the body of evidence demonstrating that a single offender often commits child sexual offences in vastly different circumstances. As offenders may abuse different victims—for example, children of different genders or ages or in different ways—requiring similarities like that is problematic. The targeted provision in new section 97A will provide that evidence of a defendant's tendency to have or act on a sexual interest in children is presumed to have significant probative value unless the court determines that the tendency evidence does not have significant probative value if it is satisfied that there are sufficient grounds to do so.

Not all of the matters set out in new subsection 97A (5)—matters that the court cannot take into account when determining whether the tendency evidence does not have significant probative value—would translate easily to sexual assaults against adults. The matters that are listed address particular myths and misconceptions about the probative value of tendency and coincidence evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions. I am pleased that, through a national working group chaired by New South Wales, Uniform Evidence Law jurisdictions have agreed to implement the changes consistently. However, I acknowledge the concerns expressed by the member for Prospect and the member for Newtown that consideration should be given to the expansion of those reforms to sexual assaults against adults.

The Government undertakes to review the operation of the amendments and to consider the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in adult sexual assault proceedings by 30 September 2022. Over the course of the royal commission, the subsequent two-year long process of considering the test for admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence and reaching agreement with all Uniform Evidence Law jurisdictions on the legislative amendments in this bill, legal stakeholders and experts expressed a diverse range of views about potential reforms. Some opposed increasing admissibility; others suggested more radical reform. Members have touched on some of those views and some of the key issues raised in their contributions to this debate. There is no doubt that we could continue to consider the complexities and challenges of this area of law and discuss these diverse views long into the future.

The New South Wales Government and attorneys-general from all other Uniform Evidence Law jurisdictions considered that in light of the findings of the royal commission the law should be reformed to facilitate the greater admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence. We need to act. The approach to doing so proposed in this bill strikes the right balance in allowing for increased admissibility while protecting an accused person's right to a fair trial. This bill will significantly reform and strengthen New South Wales' evidence law in relation to the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence so that it better reflects community

expectations, protects children and helps survivors of child sexual assault obtain justice. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Ms Jenny Leong.

Consideration in Detail

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

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:22:06): I move The Greens amendment No. 1 on sheet c2020-006B:

No. 1 Review of section 97A

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert after line 38—

[4A] Section 199

Insert after section 198—

199 Review of section 97A

- (1) The Minister is to review section 97A to determine whether—
 - (a) the policy objectives of the section remain valid and whether the terms of the section remain appropriate for securing those objectives, and
 - (b) the application of that section should be expanded to cover other sexual offences, including sexual assault.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 2 years from the commencement of that section.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 2 years.

Firstly, I apologise for the rushed nature of these amendments. While we seek to get amendments drafted through Parliamentary Counsel, which I credit for the work it does, sometimes things do not happen according to the schedule of members in the House. I thank all members for their patience and for their collegiality on this work to this point. The amendment sought by The Greens relates to a review of section 97A of the proposed Act. It is important to clarify this and I trust that we will adjust the bill accordingly with the amendment that is being considered. I acknowledge up-front the commitment of the Attorney General that the Government will undertake a review of and consider expanding these coincidence and tendency changes to the Evidence Act to include other types of sexual offences.

Not all members in this place spend their time looking into the details of the Evidence Act but when we listen to members' contributions in the second reading debate we may hear them describe a situation and think, "At this point they must be talking about sexual assault on women and the low rate of convictions." Then our ears prick up, we listen and we realise that what we are actually implementing—as the Attorney General has set out—are the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. But it is impossible to hear the Attorney General give reasons why we are making these changes and not think of the incredibly concerning low rates of convictions for sexual assault and other offences when it comes to women.

I say "women" because it is important to remember that while sexual assault offences occur to all adults, in the case of the 25,837 people who reported that they were victims of sexual assault in 2017, 82 per cent of those were women. It is important to recognise that due to extreme levels of under-reporting, which is due in part to low conviction rates, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] estimates that only 9 per cent to 14 per cent of sexual assaults are actually reported to the police. Those numbers are completely unacceptable by anyone's measure. We are talking about over 25,000 people a year who report being victims of sexual assault, as recorded by BOCSAR, yet that is estimated to be between 9 per cent and 14 per cent of the assaults that actually take place. There is such a low level of reporting, in part because there is such a low rate of convictions.

The most common outcome for a victim reporting a rape is for the report to be withdrawn. There were 52,396 sexual assault incidents reported in New South Wales in the 10 years from January 2009 to December 2018. We know this is unacceptable. I never thought I would refer to him in this place but everyone from Prime Minister Scott Morrison to me, The Greens member for Newtown, knows that the failure to address the overriding inequalities of women in society as a result of the fear that we hold because of the enormously high rates of sexual assault, sexual violence and domestic violence means that our ability to participate in society

without fear of recrimination or violence is limited. If there is anything that members can do in this place to try to address this, then we should take action.

The bill deals with incidents that do occur. As we heard the Attorney General outline in relation to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, these incidents often occur or almost always occur in private. It is one person's word against another and there are very low conviction rates. This is absolutely true and they are absolutely the findings of the royal commission. The evidence is also clear when it comes to sexual assault offences more generally. This is something that we can rectify. As I have said, I acknowledge the Attorney General's commitment that the Government will undertake that review.

This amendment seeks to put this review into legislation. While there may be a commitment from the Government to undertake that review, if members in this Chamber are genuinely committed to doing all that they can to prevent sexual assault and sexual violence not just against children but also against women and against all people in New South Wales, then there is absolutely no harm in the amendment being added. I appreciate that this is model legislation, I appreciate that this is based on something that all States will implement and I appreciate that this decision was made by the attorneys-general of the States who came together and agreed on this. This is not an attempt to amend and broaden the legislation right now because I appreciate that we need to make the changes as per the royal commission's recommendations. But this amendment is not controversial. It says:

- (1) The Minister is to review section 97A to determine whether—
 - (a) the policy objectives of the section remain valid and whether the terms of the section remain appropriate for securing those objectives, and
 - (b) the application of that section should be expanded to cover other sexual offences, including sexual assault.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 2 years from the commencement of that section.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 2 years. We know that is not controversial because we just heard the Attorney General make a commitment that the Government was willing to undertake that review. While I have faith in the Attorney General's commitment to pursue this review, instead of this commitment in a speech The Greens asks that it be put into legislation so that our intentions are clear to stakeholders and to the community. We should do everything we can to show that we are acting in a way that will stop women from facing violence in our community. We should do everything we can to show that it is not okay for women to live in fear of being assaulted. Conviction rates are low because many women do not ever report their incidents; they do not ever go through that process because the system is stacked against them.

While I will not go into why the system is stacked against them, I will say that every small act that we make in this place to show that we are 100 per cent committed to ending violence against women is an act that shows that we want women to come forward and report. It shows that we believe women and that we stand on the side of women. It says that if women are raped, assaulted or the victims of a sexual offence, we in this Parliament will stand on their side and add our weight and our power to their stories and experiences. The only way that we can stop the surge and crisis of male violence against women is by taking every single action that we can to strengthen our laws and ensure that we are expanding them to protecting women.

I ask that we strongly consider putting this amendment into law not because it will make any substantive difference—if we take the Attorney General at his word that he intends to review it—but because putting things in law matters. It is a strong and powerful message to women to say that we are not going to make them go through a royal commission into sexual assault and violence against them only to find that in five or 10 years' time the commission recommends exactly the same thing that the royal commission into child abuse recommended. It is a powerful message to say that we are going to pre-empt that by doing it now. At the moment women throughout our community and our society need strong messages from our lawmakers that we have had enough of violence against women and that we are doing everything we can to try to stop it.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (10:31:30): The Opposition supports the amendment moved by The Greens. The expansion of the changes to sexual assault legislation is consistent with the position put by David Hamer, the professor of evidence law from the University of Sydney whom I quoted in my contribution to the second reading debate. Precipitancy in changing the legislation today is not something that I support but there certainly needs to be a lot more work done in this area. Whilst it is outside the leave of the bill, one thing that ought to be considered is the introduction of specialist sexual assault and domestic violence courts. That is

something Labor has been talking about for a number of years. Those are the sorts of things that also need to be considered in this space. In the meantime, Labor is happy to support the amendment merely on the basis that it is calling for a review.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Liverpool. I ask that in future he waits until I call him to the podium before commencing his speech.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (10:32:30): The Government does not support this amendment. I do not doubt for a second the legitimate basis on which the amendment is sought. It is well intentioned and the sentiments about the abhorrence of violence against women and their children that the member for Newtown expressed would be broadly supported by all members in this Chamber. But this is model legislation. That is not necessarily the be-all and end-all because there can be slight differences in model legislation. There are slight differences in the Evidence Act around uniform evidence law proceedings. But there has to be a compelling reason to legislate this rather than note the Government's undertaking.

That is not an undertaking by me personally: Attorney generals come and go. It is an undertaking by the Government to have a review within two years. There is no compelling reason to have disparity between uniform evidence law jurisdictions on a point like this when a review can and will be undertaken. That is the first point: the need for uniformity. This model law has been a long time coming because it has been thrashed out to the nth degree with various stakeholders, including attorneys-general of the Uniform Evidence Law jurisdictions. The model law in the proposed bill should stay as it is. The second point, as I said in my speech in reply, is that the Government undertakes to review the operation of the amendments by the whole bill and to consider the admissibility of tendency and coincidence evidence in adult sexual assault proceedings by 30 September 2022. That undertaking will perform a review that is more holistic and broader than the review proposed in the amendment of the member for Newtown.

The amendment of the member for Newtown suggests a requirement that the Minister review section 97A to determine two things: first, that the policy objectives and the terms of the section remain valid; and, second, whether that section should be expanded to cover other sexual offences, including sexual assault. The review that we are undertaking to provide is a review of all those amendments, not just section 97A, and also of whether coincidence and tendency evidence needs to be reformed in relation to sexual assault more broadly. The review that the member for Newtown proposes focuses only on section 97A, which deals with tendency evidence. The amendments are primarily a number of deeming provisions about matters that are to be taken into account when working out the significant probative value and the presumption that there is significant probative value from evidence of an interest in children and acting on that interest.

The review proposed by the member for Newtown omits, firstly, looking at coincidence evidence and, secondly, looking at the balancing exercise between tendency and coincidence evidence on the one hand and unfair prejudice to the defendant on the other hand. While the review that the Government undertakes will look at everything, including tendency evidence, my preliminary view is that it is more likely that coincidence evidence, rather than tendency evidence, will be of interest in adult sexual assault matters. The tendency evidence provisions are about the propensity, tendency or state of mind for an offender to act in a certain way. Where this broad range of evidence applies in relation to adult sexual assault, it is more likely that other complainants will come forward and say, "Me too". This is more likely to be in a coincidence evidence context than in a tendency evidence context. The review that the Government is proposing will be broader than the review proposed by the member for Newtown and is more likely to look at the subject matter of greater interest.

The other question will be the balancing exercise because whenever this sort of evidence comes up an accused is likely to say, "That is unfair". The problem in this area of law has been not that the evidence is irrelevant but that the courts have traditionally taken the view that juries think it is too relevant and put too much weight on it. That is the unfair prejudice. The review that we are undertaking will be holistic. It will look at all aspects of those amendments, not just the ones identified by the member for Newtown. We will look further at whether there is any scope for reform in relation to sexual assault more broadly. Without expressing a view about whether there is scope, my preliminary view is that if there is, it is unlikely to expand section 97A. It is likely to do other things in relation to coincidence evidence or the balance in section 101. For those reasons the Government, while commending the good intentions of the member for Newtown, does not support the amendment.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:38:10): I will respond briefly to the Attorney General's comments. On that last point, as I acknowledged when I first spoke to the amendment, this has been quite a rushed process with Parliamentary Counsel. But I think the intention is clear in terms of what we are trying to do. I think there is a genuine debate as to whether or not the tendency or coincidence measures would be more relevant, depending on the circumstances of the situation. If we look at the Me Too movement, we see that issues of coincidence may be the case. But if we look at the ongoing escalation of men's treatment of women in certain circumstances, we

see that tendency may also point in that direction. If that is what is stopping us here, I would be more than happy for the Attorney General to move a different amendment that broadened the bill to reflect that.

I do not need to own this amendment. I need to ensure that we are showing our commitment to women. I need to ensure that we are looking at the idea of broadening this bill to limit the impact of violence against women. I note that this morning a vigil for Hannah and her children was held outside Parliament House. I acknowledge that the Attorney General was there. Many of us stood in the rain; we are probably now in different clothes than those we arrived in because it was very wet. Hayley Foster from Women's Safety NSW said that we do not need sentiments any more. I appreciate that the Attorney General acknowledged that every member in this House would recognise and probably agree with the sentiments that I expressed. The issue is that we do not need sentiments anymore. We need power, we need laws and resources and we need people to use their power to stop violence against women.

The reason behind wanting to put this review into this piece of legislation is compelling. This is model legislation, as the Attorney General said. He also said that there can be and are slight differences in the Evidence Act "but there needs to be a compelling reason". I do not want to get inflammatory or emotional about this but over 70 women being killed in the last year as a result of domestic and family violence, which is at the heart of the sexual assault and violence that happens to women in our community, is compelling enough evidence for a slight change to the model legislation. I do not know how much more compelling a reason needs to be to put in our law something that explicitly recognises that this is an absolutely massive crisis and problem in our society that at some point we need to step up and address. I do not know how much more compelling we need to be.

The reality is that every woman in this Chamber has walked down the street and felt unsafe, knowing that at any point they could be one of those statistics. We all know—and I refer to everybody in this Chamber, the people watching or listening and the staffers—that that is a reality, that at any point in time we could be one of those statistics. And we know that there are solutions. This morning standing outside this place in the rain we heard expert after expert telling us what the solutions are to stop violence against women. One of the things they said is that the legal system needs to believe women. We need to make sure that our justice system is on the side of women when it comes to these issues. I am not pretending that this tiny little amendment is going to make a massive amount of difference to these things. It is not the main thing anyone is asking for. All I am saying is that right now, at this moment, in this time, we have the ability to make a small change to something we are doing in order to say, "This is not business as usual."

Together, across party lines and political views, we need to recognise that this is a whole-of-society problem that we need to fix. There is nothing less business as usual than the Attorney General slightly amending and fixing up this amendment so we can put it into law. That would say to women across this State that we are not going to do business as usual because we know business as usual has meant over 70 women have been killed in the last year. If that is not compelling evidence, then I do not know what compelling evidence is. I appreciate we might need to take time and, if there is an ability to do so, set aside the consideration in detail to allow us to consult and see whether this is possible. But if there was one clear message to tell the people that this is not business as usual, then making this small change would be an indication that we are willing to work across party lines to do things in the interests of women.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that The Greens amendment No. 1 on sheet c2020-006B be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes39
Noes47
Majority.....8

AYES

Aitchison, J
Barr, C
Chanthivong, A
Daley, M
Finn, J
Harrison, J
Kamper, S
McDermott, H
Mehan, D (teller)
Park, R
Saffin, J

Atalla, E
Car, P
Cotsis, S
Dib, J
Greenwich, A
Haylen, J
Leong, J
McGirr, J
Minns, C
Parker, J
Scully, P

Bali, S
Catley, Y
Crakanthorp, T
Doyle, T
Harris, D
Hornery, S
Lynch, P
McKay, J
O'Neill, M
Piper, G
Smith, T

AYES

Tesch, L
Washington, K

Voltz, L
Watson, A (teller)

Warren, G
Zangari, G

NOES

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

Ayres, S
Bromhead, S
Conolly, K
Coure, M
Dominello, V
Gibbons, M
Hancock, S
Johnsen, M
Lindsay, W
Pavey, M
Preston, R
Saunders, D
Singh, G
Stokes, R
Tuckerman, W
Wilson, F

Barilaro, J
Butler, R
Constance, A
Crouch, A (teller)
Donato, P
Griffin, J
Hazzard, B
Kean, M
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Provest, G
Sidgreaves, P
Smith, N
Taylor, M
Upton, G

PAIRS

Hoenig, R
Lalich, N
Mihailuk, T

Davies, T
Elliott, D
Williams, R

Amendment negatived.

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

Clauses 1 and 2, and schedule 1 agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

FIREARMS AND WEAPONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CRIMINAL USE) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 26 February 2020.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (10:51:50): I lead for the Labor Opposition in debate on the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. I state from the outset that we support the legislation. In the years following the Port Arthur massacre, Australia has made sweeping changes and reform to firearm laws to ensure that police around Australia are empowered to remove illegal firearms from the streets and from homes. Since those changes to gun laws were implemented, not only has the removal and heightened regulation of those weapons stopped mass murders in their tracks—until recent years, with the tragic deaths of families in Western Australia and Queensland—but also they have significantly reduced other firearm-related crimes, such as murders, and the risk of suicides from firearms.

The tragedy is that those who carry firearms do so against the law and often with the intent to cause harm. More importantly, there is increasingly a risk that illegal firearms may fall into the hands of those with a predisposition to violent extremism who will use them to unleash terror in the public domain. Those who illegally source firearms are often violent criminals and it is important that New South Wales police officers have the legal capacity to deal with them and their illegal firearms before they do harm. The bill amends the Firearms Act 1996 to ensure the powers of New South Wales police are enhanced to meet that risk. The bill aims to create a new offence of knowingly taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts and provides that

the offence will include being in possession of a firearm precursor for the purpose of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part. This means that police are able to remove the means of making firearms from those who would wish to illegally produce them. That includes motorcycle gangs, organised criminals and violent extremists.

It also deals with the capabilities of modern technology. Modern technology makes it easier to manufacture parts. A quick search of the internet will elicit sites that state, "How to (Legally) make your own Off-the-Books Handgun. Build a Glock 17 using parts from the internet." The existence of third parties providing frame kits that can be modified to create usable weapons with rotary tools, drills, sandpaper and flathead screwdrivers makes the detection of those weapons and their removal from the community harder for police. An ongoing risk is 3D printing. As this technology becomes more sophisticated, the simple weapons currently being produced will become more lethal.

The proposed changes will allow police to take not only the means for making firearms but also the knowledge so that they can seize both data and software. Importantly, it is not just the detection of the weapon or the firearm part that represents the risk to the community but also the means to manufacture those weapons, which needs to be removed. There is no requirement that a weapon is manufactured. For police to act, it is only necessary that the means to manufacture a weapon exists. Schedule 1 to the bill outlines the "Offence of taking part in unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts". The bill makes no changes for those who hold a lawful licence. The authority conferred by a firearms dealer licence still includes the manufacturing of firearm parts for those firearms to which the licence applies. It states:

Schedule 1 [3] makes it an offence (with a maximum penalty of imprisonment for 20 years) for a person to knowingly take part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part knowing that the manufacture of the firearm or firearm part is not authorised by a licence or permit under the principal Act. The term *takes part* includes the possession of a firearm precursor for the purposes of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part.

The bill further states:

A firearm precursor is defined as any object, device, substance, material or document used or capable of being used in the process of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part (including computer software or plans).

As I outlined, under this schedule it states:

The offence will apply regardless of whether a firearm or firearm part is actually manufactured. Double jeopardy provisions are included to ensure that a person is not liable to be convicted of both the new offence and another manufacturing offence under the principal Act that relates to the same or substantially the same act.

It further states:

Schedule 1 [3] also authorises a police officer to seize and detain any firearm, firearm part or firearm precursor (including a computer or data storage device on which a firearm precursor is held or contained) that may provide evidence of the commission of the new offence and to require persons to provide assistance or information in accessing the information held or contained in the things seized. The forfeiture provisions of the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act* will apply in relation to anything seized under the proposed section 51K.

Schedule 1 [10] provides that the new offence of taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of a firearm or firearm part is to be prosecuted on indictment only.

The bill makes amendments to the powers of police to search a person who is subject to a firearms prohibition order for firearms or firearm parts. Those search powers may also be exercised in relation to any other person who is present on the premises. Police powers to search, without a warrant, any person subject to a firearms prohibition order came into effect on 1 November 2013. A person subject to a firearms prohibition order must not acquire or possess a firearm, firearm part or ammunition and must not use a firearm. Currently the firearms prohibition order gives police the right, without a warrant, to stop, to search and to enter premises to ensure that they do not have a firearm, ammunition or parts of a firearm.

The powers enable police to search for any firearms a person subject to a firearms prohibition order might be carrying, as well as to look in places under the person's control or management where a firearm or related item could be hidden. The amendment authorises a police officer to search persons, other than the subject person, who are present on the premises occupied by or under the control or management of the subject person and to search any vehicle, vessel or aircraft situated on those premises and not just those occupied by or under the control or management of the person subject to a firearms prohibition order. Schedule 1 [7] states:

The provisions of the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002* relating to the conduct of personal searches will apply to the searching of persons for firearms, firearm parts or ammunition under section 74A of the principal Act.

The amendment also requires the police to announce that they are authorised under that section to enter premises and to give any person who is present an opportunity to allow entry. The bill will make it clear that the powers of a police officer in connection with firearms prohibition orders may only be exercised if reasonably required to determine whether the person has committed an offence arising out of the making of that firearms prohibition

order. It also confers seizure powers on police officers in relation to this new offence. It authorises a police officer to seize and detain any firearm, firearm part or ammunition found in conducting a search under section 74A of the Act that the officer suspects on reasonable grounds may provide evidence of the commission of an offence relating to a firearms prohibition order. The amendments also require firearms provision orders to be reviewed every 10 years by the Commissioner of Police.

Firearms prohibition orders may be issued for a range of reasons, including character and conviction for an offence involving violence or specific reasons such as apprehended violence orders or domestic violence orders. This review would seem a reasonable inclusion. The bill also makes other miscellaneous amendments in connection with the operation of enforcement of firearms prohibition orders, including enabling firearms prohibition orders made under the law of another jurisdiction to be enforced in New South Wales. It also includes an offence of taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of prohibited weapons and parts of prohibited weapons. Overall the bill aims to make New South Wales a safer place, to empower police to remove the risk of illegal weapons and their manufacture and to ensure that those who are currently subject to firearms prohibition orders are properly supervised. The Labor Opposition supports the bill.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (11:00:30): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. In my electorate of Wollondilly there is a large number of people with licensed firearms. There are two shooting clubs—one in Hilltop and one in Silverdale—that I have been to once or twice. They are very professional outfits and they do everything by the law. There is another shooting club in Berrima in the Goulburn electorate, which is just on the border of my electorate. The bill contains amendments to the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and to give effect to the Ombudsman's review of police search powers under a firearms prohibition order. The impact of illicit firearms in the community is often hidden but is significant. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission 2016 report entitled *Illicit Firearms in Australia* highlights the risk from technology and the more unusual types of firearms:

Firearms such as single-shot pen guns, key ring guns and submachine guns are still believed to be illicitly manufactured in Australia.

We sometimes glorify the old pen gun being manufactured by Q in a James Bond movie but this is a real thing. Those guns can do damage, inflict harm on people and result in death. The manufacture of firearms such as pen guns would involve components—or "precursors" as they are described in the bill—that may be likened to normal everyday objects. The new offence of taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms will capture when those precursors are put together knowingly to make a firearm. The new offence includes the broadest concepts of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of illegal manufacture, including financing, providing premises, participating, assembling parts or the acquisition, possession, use or supply of firearms or prohibited weapon precursors.

The offence will not apply to firearms dealers or armourers or those commercial enterprises that are permitted to manufacture firearms or prohibited weapons under existing legislation. Quite a lot of armourists live in the electorate of Wollondilly and they do everything by the letter of the law. The offence would apply regardless of whether a completed or functioning firearm or prohibited weapon was identified by police. As we all know, criminals can be creative. The Government needs to make sure that our laws are as robust as possible. Possession of everyday items will only contribute to an offence when it is for the purpose of taking part in illegal manufacture and the person knowingly does so. The joint Commonwealth and State review of the Lindt cafe siege raised the issue of illegal firearms:

The illicit market includes those firearms:

...

- manufactured or reactivated by backyard operators.

...

The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) estimates there are more than 250,000 long arms and 10,000 handguns in the grey and illicit firearms market. The durability of firearms ensures that those diverted to the illicit market remain in circulation for many decades.

This discussion led to recommendation 9 of the final report:

The Commonwealth and the States and Territories should give further consideration to measures to deal with illegal firearms.

That is exactly what we are doing in New South Wales today. We are futureproofing our illegal manufacture of firearms offences and ensuring that anyone taking a step in illegal manufacture may be guilty of an offence. This is not a new concept. New South Wales already has drug manufacture offences that provide for "taking part in". South Australia has had a similar provision in place in relation to firearms since 2015. Firearm deaths in Australia remain a low and noteworthy event mostly related to organised crime, including infighting between criminal gangs

and, most tragically, domestic violence. But we must continue to be vigilant to ensure that people who have a gun in their home have it safely secured so there is no easy spontaneous access to it and ammunition. People should have genuine and legitimate reasons for possessing a firearm and they should have no current or prior history or criminal record that makes that possession a danger to anyone else.

Some key amendments in the bill include a future focus on how firearms are being used in crime as new technologies emerge and preparing the legitimate firearms market for the digital world. As soon as any new device can be deliberately misused to commit a crime, to manufacture illicit items or to bypass usual law enforcement techniques, we have to ensure that we have the laws to respond to it. Firearms and weapons continue to be a domain where emerging technologies can pose the highest risk to the community. The New South Wales Government needs to ensure that its law enforcement response is up to date and ahead of the curve. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:07:18): I speak in debate on the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. I am very pleased to support the bill. In fact, I support any bill that supports the law enforcement activity in New South Wales, the New South Wales police, the Crime Commission and any other agency that daily takes on organised or disorganised crime. I am pleased that this piece of legislation has come before the House. It is a piece of modernising legislation that reflects changes to our law that will help law enforcement take on organised crime, especially in New South Wales. It also targets individuals who are prepared to use firearms in our community illicitly and illegally in ways that hurt our communities.

The Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 has two main sections. It will create a new offence making it illegal to take part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearms parts. It will also clarify and bolster New South Wales police powers relating to firearms prohibition orders. Illicit firearm manufacture is quite interesting. I am the member for Prospect living in Greystanes. We have never had a drive-by shooting but we have had arrests of individuals who have manufactured firearms. It is not true to think that those issues are far removed from daily suburbia in western Sydney or other parts of New South Wales or that they are just a regional issue or happening in bike gang clubhouses.

Criminals will do whatever they can to get hold of firearms. Individuals and tradesmen have the skills to make firearms of all persuasions and use them against honest, decent citizens in robberies or to take the law into their own hands and shoot other criminals. It is not up to them to do such things. They are not the jury and they are not law enforcement; it is up to us and the organisations that support democracy and the judicial process, not them. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report entitled *Illicit Firearms in Australia* stated that between 2004 and June 2016 some 13.7 per cent of illicit handguns traced by police were manufactured in Australia, with the intention of illegal use. It is one of the most prevalent ways for criminals to obtain handguns. The bill will ensure that those involved in the illegal manufacture of firearms can be charged with the new offence of "taking part in the manufacture of firearms", which will be inserted into the Firearms Act 1996 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998. The offence will impose a jail term of up to 20 years imprisonment for:

- (1) A person who—
 - (a) knowingly takes part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part, and
 - (b) knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the manufacture of the firearm or firearm part is not authorised by a licence or permit,

That broadens the reach of the existing legislation, which states:

A person who manufactures a firearm is guilty of an offence under this subsection unless the person is authorised by a licence or permit to manufacture the firearm.

Under those amendments it will become illegal to not only manufacture a weapon but also take part in manufacturing a weapon without an appropriate licence or permit. As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services said in his second reading speech, this is an important change that will allow charges to be brought against those manufacturing illegal weapons without having to prove that a functioning firearm was the end result of the manufacturing process. The offence extends to those who supply financing, facilities or blueprints used for the manufacture of illegal firearms. The amendment is important because it is one thing to catch the tradesmen or craftsmen who create illegal firearms, but we need to get the whole network—those who finance it and support that person. That is what the legislation does. The amendment makes clear that the offence only applies to those knowingly taking part in the manufacture of weapons. It will not apply to those who unknowingly take part in the manufacture of such illegal weapons.

The bill will also amend the Firearms Act 1996 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to empower police to seize firearms, firearm parts and firearm precursors that a police officer believes, on reasonable grounds, may provide evidence of an offence relating to the manufacturer of firearms. Further, the amendment will enable police to compel the provision of passwords or codes to access data related to firearm precursors contained in computers

or electronic devices. That is an extremely important reform because it acknowledges that manufacturers of weapons are using the most modern technology, and now our legislation is keeping up with them.

The amendment sets a maximum penalty of \$5,500 and/or two years' imprisonment for failing to comply with directions under the subsection or for providing information that is knowingly false or misleading in relation to a direction under the subsection. The requirement that passwords and codes be provided is especially important given the rise in 3D-printed weapons and the threat that they pose to our community's safety. Prohibition orders are an important part of legislation. Firearms prohibition orders enable police officers to seize any firearm, firearm part or ammunition found in a search if they reasonably suspect that someone is in possession of an illegal firearm or firearm part that may provide evidence of an offence.

The legislation also recognises firearms prohibition orders from other jurisdictions prescribed through regulation as if they were orders made under the New South Wales Act. Organised crime constantly crosses borders in an attempt to evade jurisdictions. So having that amendment in this legislation is extremely important. We must be able to follow organised and disorganised crime into any part of this country and overseas. The requirement that firearms prohibition orders be reviewed after 10 years will be inserted as proposed section 73A of the Firearms Act 1996. The amendment is important for procedural fairness.

Firearms prohibition orders are an important element of the ability of the NSW Police Force to disrupt organised crime and ensure that dangerous criminals are not in possession of firearms. However, the orders curtail an individual's freedom, allowing for searches of an individual that would normally require a warrant. It is critical for purposes of public confidence that the orders be applied fairly and that they are used appropriately. Under the provision, firearms prohibition orders must be reviewed by the commissioner within six months of the 10-year period that an order has been in place.

The amendment also makes a critical change by amending section 74A of the Firearms Act 1996 to allow police to search not only a person with a firearms prohibition order but also those who are on the same premises and are reasonably suspected of being in possession of a firearm, firearm part or ammunition. Further, the amendment will also allow police to search any other vehicle, vessel or aircraft on the premises for firearms, firearm parts and ammunition. That is important to ensure that those with a firearms prohibition order are unable to avoid a thorough search by simply passing off any weapons, ammunition or any part of the weapons-making process to an associate to hide.

It is particularly important for organised crime figures and gang members who may have associates who are willing or able to be coerced into hiding weapons on their person or in their vehicle during a search. The bill will also insert proposed section 74AA into the Firearms Act 1996, allowing police to seize any firearm, part or ammunition found during a search conducted under a firearms prohibition order. I congratulate the Government on this commonsense reform, which will allow police to better gather evidence for successful prosecutions. *[Extension of time]*

Mr Geoff Provest: He is praising the Government.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT: It makes a nice change, doesn't it? It is good to see that the Government is finally stepping up and doing the important things. If the Government continues to do that to support the NSW Police Force—especially if it listens to what the Police Association of NSW is saying—then I am happy to support it. The insertion of section 74AB into the Firearms Act 1996 is one of the most important amendments in the bill. Several Australian jurisdictions as well as New Zealand have introduced firearms prohibition orders.

Currently those subject to firearms prohibition orders in another State are able to enter and reside in New South Wales to avoid the increased scrutiny and searches that come from a firearms prohibition order. As I mentioned, organised crime, especially that based in the Australian Capital Territory, is simply hopping across the border and coming into New South Wales to avoid prohibition orders. They should not be able to hide anywhere and I am pleased that the legislation will extend across to New Zealand. By recognising interstate and New Zealand firearm probation orders, the NSW Police Force will be better able to ensure community safety and stop interstate criminals from hiding in New South Wales to avoid searches.

The bill will help bring New South Wales in line with other Australian States as legislation regarding firearms is strengthened across the country. Consistent laws are important to ensure that dangerous criminals do not simply move their activities across State lines to avoid possible prosecution. It is critically important that New South Wales continues to review and reform its laws to keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous criminals and that appropriate penalties are put in place for those who possess or use illegal weapons. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (11:19:06): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020, which targets criminals and criminals who use

firearms. The bill gives the law-abiding citizens of New South Wales greater satisfaction that the Government is targeting criminals and criminals who use firearms, and it gives the police more powers to target criminals and criminals who use firearms. The object of the bill is to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to create a new offence of knowingly taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts and to provide that the offence will include being in possession of certain matter—referred to as a "firearm precursor"—for the purposes of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part.

Further objects of the bill are to confer seizure powers on police officers in relation to the new offence; to require firearms prohibition orders to be reviewed every 10 years by the Commissioner of Police; to provide that the power of a police officer to search a person who is subject to a firearms prohibition order for firearms or firearm parts may also be exercised in relation to any other person who is present on the subject person's premises; to make it clear that the powers of a police officer in connection with firearms prohibition orders, including search powers in relation to persons other than the subject person, may only be exercised if reasonably required to determine whether the subject person has committed an offence arising out of the making of the order; and to make other miscellaneous amendments in connection with the operation and enforcement of firearms prohibition orders, including enabling firearms prohibition orders under the law of another jurisdiction to be enforced in this State.

The bill amends the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to create a similar offence of taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of prohibited weapons or parts of prohibited weapons and amends also the Firearms Regulation 2017. The amendments will strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and give effect to the Ombudsman's review of the police use of firearms prohibition orders search powers. Strengthening provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons is an outcome of the Lindt cafe siege review in November 2015. The now Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management agreed to a review of the adequacy of legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms.

In relation to police powers for firearms prohibition orders, in August 2016 the Ombudsman's report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers* proposed legislative recommendations on how the police administer and serve prohibition orders. In many respects the provisions of the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 relating to the illegal manufacture of weapons mirror those of the Firearms Act. It is logical that when a criminal commits an offence using a firearm they may equally use a prohibited weapon. The Government recognises the overlap of the two regimes. While the Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management initiated a review of illegal manufacturing for firearms offences only, the final report of that review referred to both firearms and weapons in order to encompass those jurisdictions which do not distinguish between the two in their legislation.

The new offence includes the broadest concepts of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of illegal manufacture, including financing, providing premises, participating and assembling parts and the acquisition, possession, use or supply of firearms or prohibited weapon precursors. The offence will not apply to firearms dealers or armourers or commercial enterprises that are permitted to manufacture firearms or prohibited weapons under existing legislation. The offence will apply regardless of whether a completed or functioning firearm or prohibited weapon was identified by police. The offence clearly assists in targeting criminal groups that are found with firearms or prohibited weapons and the equipment or materials to manufacture them. Possession of everyday items such as a hammer or a metal file only contributes to the offence when it is for the purpose of taking part in the illegal manufacture and the person knowingly does so.

A person can only be convicted or acquitted on the same evidence for only one of the manufacturing-related offences in the Act. Prohibited weapons are, in the main, items that would not be found in an average garage. Knuckledusters, bombs, grenades, flails or concealed blades are not going to be made by the man in the street; they are made by criminals who wish to use them in their turf wars or to deliberately harm or intimidate their victims. With these new offences, a criminal found with only some elements of the item will now be held accountable for what they are doing, even without a finished product. These are important laws. They target the people who should be targeted. They encompass all the steps in the manufacturing process and ensure that a criminal cannot avoid penalty when providing the money or the location for the activity. Being one step removed will no longer be a protection.

I turn now to the powers relating to firearms prohibition orders. The bill clarifies the powers contained in the Firearms Act 1996. The provisions include the following: making it clear that it is lawful to conduct a search immediately following the service of a firearms prohibition order but only after the subject of the order has been provided an opportunity to immediately surrender all lawfully held firearms; empowering police executing a search to search any other person whom police reasonably suspect to be in possession of a firearm, part or ammunition; extending the powers to search a premises to also enable police to search vehicles, vessels or aircraft

situated on the premises; providing that a firearms prohibition order issued is reviewed by the NSW Police Force 10 years after the date it is served; and making it clear that the legislative safeguards that relate to personal searches are applied.

Firearms and weapons generally continue to be a domain where emerging technologies can pose the highest risk to the community. Criminals can be creative; we need to make sure our laws are just as creative. We have seen numerous examples of illegal weapons and parts of firearms coming into the possession of criminals that not only are being manufactured here in New South Wales but also are being sent to criminals through the mail and by other means. Firearms can also be created using 3D printing. Legislation has to constantly keep up with the latest technology that criminals use, and that is what this legislation does. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (11:28:31): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. The bill contains amendments to the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and to give effect to the Ombudsman's report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers*. It is a sad reality that there are people in our community who seek to illegally gain access to firearms for criminal purposes. Such criminal activity makes schemes such as the firearm prohibition orders critically important to ensure that police have the capacity to intervene and protect our community for those who seek to do it harm. One does not need to look for examples to illustrate the importance of firearm prohibition orders. There are regular media reports of searches relating to firearm prohibition orders that have led to illegal firearms and related items being seized and legal action being taken.

In December 2019 the NSW Police Force advised that Strike Force Raptor North had charged a member of an outlaw motorcycle gang with a range of offences and had seized many items on the State's Central Coast. The action followed a firearms prohibition order and weapons prohibition search. In that matter police seized two firearms, three knives including a trench knife, knuckledusters, handcuffs, an extendable baton, a PVC air cannon, fireworks, explosives and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Prohibited drugs were also seized. Such items should not be in the hands of criminals. As long as criminals seek access to such firearms, we must ensure that our firearms prohibition order powers are strong enough and as clear as they can be, therefore ensuring that police can take appropriate action to make our communities safer.

Another example of what can be uncovered during a firearms prohibition order search was reported by the NSW Police Force in February of this year. During a firearms prohibition search at a property in Clandulla between Mudgee and Bathurst, police located a number of firearms allegedly hidden in the bull bar of a vehicle. Police advised that two firearms were seized—a Winchester .22 calibre rifle and a side-by-side double-barrelled shotgun—as well as ammunition and a silencer. As I mentioned, police allege that the firearms were concealed within a bull bar. That is just one example of the lengths that criminals will go to to hide their firearms and the adaptations they will make to try to work around a firearms prohibition order. Therefore, our laws must be equally adaptable.

When we are faced with such examples, I am thankful that we have strong laws relating to firearm prohibition orders which permit police to search the person, homes and vehicles of people who are not fit to hold firearms and ensure that these people are not in possession of those items. The bill maintains the strength of our firearms prohibition order laws and ensures that there is clarity in important matters concerning the searches. The bill ensures that the framework for a person, property and vehicle searches is fit for purpose. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that firearms regulations strike the right balance between public safety and minimising the burden on law-abiding firearms owners.

A key principle of the National Firearms Agreement [NFA] and the New South Wales Firearms Act 1996 is that firearm possession and use is a privilege conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety. Like the firearms laws in other Australian States and Territories, New South Wales firearms laws are based on the National Firearms Agreement. The NFA was originally drafted to develop, and now maintain, the fundamental aspects of the regulation of firearms in this country, namely, that firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety; that firearm owners be licensed; that individuals have a genuine reason to possess a firearm; that firearms be registered; that personal protection is not a genuine reason to possess a firearm; and that permits to acquire are needed for the acquisition of each firearm.

Law-abiding firearms owners accept the privilege and take their responsibility seriously with respect to the conditions of their firearms licence. The real concern is illegal firearms which in the hands of brazen and hardened criminals are a clear and present danger to our community. Police continue to target illegal firearm activity. Prior to being issued with a firearms licence permit, applicants undergo a range of criminal and suitability checks for all firearms to be registered. The processes are subject to strict legal and legislative provisions. Owners are also required to have a separate permit for each firearm they seek to acquire. They must demonstrate that they have a good reason for acquiring the firearm.

Police conduct regular checks to ensure compliance with firearm ownership conditions. Each licence application is rigorously assessed on its merits and ability to meet the strict legislative requirements particular to the licence type sought. The great majority of people who own a firearm comply with the strict regulatory framework. The New South Wales Government also works with other jurisdictions to ensure sound national positions, a national system of identifying firearms, a solid customs and import policy and consistent legislation to avoid jurisdiction shopping across borders. The Government will continue to do all it can to ensure a safe and secure New South Wales. In conclusion, firearm prohibition orders are an important tool for the NSW Police Force in responding to criminal enterprise. The State and I commend the measures in this bill to ensure that they will remain effective for years to come. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (11:36:49): I contribute to debate on the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. I note the overriding principles of the legislation about firearm prohibition orders and the manufacturing of firearms. The objective of the bill is to reduce the availability to and opportunity for criminals to be able to manufacture firearms and, in essence, to deter criminals. Under section 51J the bill provides significant penalties of up to 20 years' imprisonment for a person who takes part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts.

I appreciate the briefing I had with the Minister's staff and I am awaiting a briefing with the Minister but I felt it was important to put my contribution to this debate on the record. As a licensed firearms owner, I have concerns about some elements of the bill, specifically section 51J. I do not have any issue with criminals being punished and sent to jail. I appreciate the object of the bill. I understand that amendments to the bill may be moved in this place or the other place. I am concerned about the potential unintended consequences of the bill on law-abiding firearms owners. I will give a few examples. Section 51J states in part:

51J Offence of taking part in unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts

(1) A person who—

- (a) knowingly takes part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part, and
- (b) knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the manufacture of the firearm or firearm part is not authorised by a licence or permit,

is guilty of an offence.

On the face of it, that sounds reasonable. In section 4, Definitions, of the Firearms Act 1996 a "firearm part" means:

... a barrel, breech, pistol slide, frame, receiver, cylinder, trigger mechanism, operating mechanism or magazine designed as, or reasonably capable of forming, part of a firearm.

The list does not include all firearm parts. It does not include sights, screws, mechanisms that form stocks or other mechanisms that form part of a firearm. I read Minister Elliott's second reading speech very closely. It is clear that this bill is not designed to target law-abiding firearm owners who, by and large, do the right thing. To go through the process of getting their firearms licences, firearms owners are probably some of the most law-abiding people in the State. For example, they must show that they do not have any history of domestic violence and their criminal record is closely scrutinised before a licence is issued. It is clear from the Minister's second reading speech that the intention of the bill is not to capture those law-abiding people, the registered licensed firearms owners.

The issue I raise relates to unintended consequences. It is clear from the Minister's second reading speech that a dealer is allowed to manufacture parts in the process of dealing firearms. A licensed firearms owner may wish to replace the stock on their firearm, replace a bolt handle with a larger bolt or repair something that may be damaged, for example, the front sight of their rifle may be knocked off or damaged. My predominant issue relates to people in the country who may be isolated by the tyranny of distance from a local gunsmith or firearms dealer. They may need to go to their garage or shed and weld on a front sight. They may wish to reduce the barrel length of their rifle from 26 inches to 24 inches, which is lawful. But technically they could be caught up in this legislation because they are not a dealer. This offence carries 20 year's imprisonment. This is a significant piece of legislation and the penalties are severe.

As a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and a lawful firearms owner, I want to ensure that the interests of law-abiding firearms owners are protected as best as they can be. I ask the Minister in his reply to address the following scenarios so that his comments are on the record in *Hansard*. Would a fully licensed, law-abiding firearms owner be subject to criminal sanctions if, for example, they reduce the barrel length from 26 inches to 24 inches, they fit a new Aftermarket grip or stock to their rifle or they reduce the length of the stock by reducing the length of pull? Sometimes people remove a recoil pad or insert a recall pad onto a firearm, which can increase or decrease the length of pull. Members in this House who are not firearms savvy or do not own

firearms may not have any idea what I am talking about. But that is important in the accuracy of guns not only for sporting shooters but also for recreational and target shooters.

A further question I ask the Minister to address is: Would someone fitting Aftermarket stocks or sights in their garage be captured by this legislation for manufacturing firearm parts? These issues are vague in the legislation. I would hate to see a law-abiding person who is trying to make a repair or an adjustment to one of their firearms get caught up in this legislation and be accused of making firearm parts for which they could potentially face 20 years' imprisonment. Those are some of the issues of the unintended consequences that I ask the Minister to address in his reply. I will not speak to the weapons prohibition orders or the firearms provision orders because I believe they are reasonable in the circumstances.

I accept that we must protect the community. As a former police officer, I appreciate the need to protect the community from criminals and prevent them from accessing firearms. But we need to ensure that law-abiding firearms owners—who are licensed, who are registered and who are doing the right thing—are not caught up by this bill. That should be on the record and the legislation may require amendments in that regard. Proposed section 51J (3) includes a definition of "firearm precursor", which is new to firearms legislation. Precursor definitions have been around for a number of years in drug legislation in relation to the obtaining of precursor ingredients for the manufacture of methamphetamines or other illicit drugs. To my knowledge, this is the first time that "firearm precursor" has been stipulated in firearms legislation. In the bill "firearm precursor" is defined as:

... any object, device, substance, material or document used or capable of being used in the process of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part, including (but not limited to) the following—

- (a) moulds for making firearm parts,
- (b) milling, casting or rifling equipment,
- (c) digital blueprints within the meaning of section 51F,
- (d) computer software or plans.

The definition of "firearm precursor" is fairly vague. It could include a substance as benign as an oil that a lawful firearm owner may have to oil a drill in their garage. I also ask the Minister to address this issue in his reply so that there is clarity around the issue and people know where they stand. [*Extension of time*]

We do not want to see law-abiding, licensed and registered firearms owners potentially facing 20 years' imprisonment because they have modified or repaired one of their firearms. I support the bill overall but those issues need to be canvassed and explored. I appreciate the need to keep up with technology. Previous speakers have talked about 3D printing to manufacture parts. Nefarious criminals, illicit crime gangs and bkie gangs who are involved in criminal activities such as the distribution and manufacture of firearms should be punished for these offences and go to jail. I am strong in that belief but there needs to be a balance. The Minister said that this legislation is not intended to criminalise legitimate firearms owners. His words were:

This bill does not criminalise legitimate firearms owners but is one more step by this Government to keep the community safe from illegal firearms and those who manufacture, possess and, most importantly, use them.

I note the presence of the Minister's staff. I ask that the Minister take on board the issues I have raised and address them in his reply.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (11:48:11): It is a pleasure to speak in favour of the New South Wales Government's proposed amendments to the firearms and weapons legislation through the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020, which was introduced into this place by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. David Elliott, on 26 February 2020. As the member for Orange acknowledged, staff from Minister Elliott's office are present at the back of the Chamber. I commend them for their efforts in assisting to bring this bill before the House today. This is a criminal law bill that revolves around the day-to-day operations of the NSW Police Force. I congratulate and commend all of those officers of the NSW Police Force who execute the powers and functions of the firearms prohibition orders. I also commend them for the great work that they do each and every day.

I note that crime statistics from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research that have been released today show that out of 17 major crime categories only two categories have increased. Domestic violence is one of those two categories. The increase in domestic violence offences is actually a heartening sign in the sense that it shows an increase in the reporting of domestic violence offences. It is important to note that more people are now coming forward. There is confidence and security in knowing that the police will tackle and investigate those matters and put those offenders before the court. There is now far more comfort found by those unfortunate victims of domestic violence. Of course, there is much more work to do and I am sure the NSW Police Force and the Government will continue pursuing that avenue.

The Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 will amend three Acts: the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998. The bill possesses two core functions: first, to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons; and, second, to clarify police powers for the use of firearm prohibition orders, also known as FPOs. The Lindt cafe siege review established that it is necessary to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons. In November 2015 what is now known as the Ministerial Council of Police and Emergency Management agreed to a review of the adequacy of legislation in response to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms.

The new offence contained in this bill defines the broadest possible concept of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of the illegal manufacture of firearms. This includes financing of such manufacture, providing the premises for manufacture, participating in the manufacture itself, assembling the parts of firearms or acquiring, possessing, using or supplying firearms or prohibited weapons precursors. The member for Orange indicated that the concept of precursors in firearms legislation is innovative and draws on the successful use of such concepts in other areas of the criminal law. This offence will not capture nor apply to firearms dealers, armourers or any other commercial enterprise that is permitted to manufacture firearms or prohibited weapons under the existing legislation. To ensure that all stages of firearm and prohibited weapons manufacture are covered by these amendments, this offence will apply regardless of whether a completed or functioning firearm or prohibited weapon was identified by police.

Proposed legislative recommendations made in the NSW Ombudsman's August 2016 report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers* deemed the clarification of police powers necessary with regard to how police administer and serve FPOs. Such clarifications will be made through a number of amendments to the Firearms Act 1996. First, the amending provisions in this bill will make it clear that it is lawful for police to conduct a search immediately following the service of an FPO but only after the subject of the FPO has been provided the opportunity to immediately surrender all lawfully held firearms. Second, the amending provisions will empower police who are executing a search with the capability to search any other person found on the premises who police might reasonably suspect to be in possession of a firearm, part of a firearm or ammunition. Third, the amending provisions will extend the powers to search premises, enabling police to also search vehicles, vessels or aircraft situated on the premises. Fourth, the amending provisions will ensure that any FPO issued is reviewed by the NSW Police Force 10 years after the date that it is served. Finally, the amending provisions will make clear that the legislative safeguards relating to personal searches are applied.

The bill has a particular context for me as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Justice. In supporting the terrific work of the Minister and his team, I regularly engage with those tasked with managing the licensing of firearms in this State. This bill will instil in those officers of the NSW Police Force the confidence that they deserve to have, knowing that the decisions they make in the licensing of firearms will be the greatest determinant in the quantity, quality and distribution of firearms in this State. As the Minister correctly identified in his second reading speech, a lot has changed since the 2012 publication of the Australian Institute of Criminology's paper entitled *Firearm trafficking and serious and organised crime gangs*. Since that time the NSW Police Force has been monitoring and contending with a rise in the domestic manufacture of improvised firearms as well as three-dimensional printing and machine milling of firearms. The new offence of taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts will respond to those so-called innovations in criminal weapons manufacture. This offence will capture those individuals who produce fingerprint-proof polymers, moulds for parts such as handgun grips and milling equipment used for the illegal manufacture of firearms.

It is essential that there will be no requirement for the NSW Police Force to provide evidence that a functioning firearm would result from the manufacturing process. Put simply, those parts, equipment and precursors of firearms should not be made. It should be enough that those parts are found in locations where the intention to manufacture firearms can be established. Under the provisions contained in this bill, our Police Force will be able to take action against individuals on the basis that they knowingly participated in the manufacture of illegal firearms. The 2013 review conducted by the former acting NSW Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan, AO, established the sound basis for the enhancement of firearm prohibition order search powers for police. The reforms that resulted from that review—the amendments contained in the Firearms and Criminal Groups Legislation Amendment Act 2013—were introduced with the purpose of increasing the capacity of our police to respond to and prevent serious crimes, particularly those relating to the use of firearms. [*Extension of time*]

Under the 2013 Act police have the power to search an FPO subject's person, vehicle and premises without a warrant. These searches are permissible on the basis that they are reasonably required to determine if the FPO subject has committed an offence relevant to the possession of a firearm, firearm part or ammunition. The New South Wales Government has considered the feedback it has received from police who suggested that FPOs have been a highly effective tool in reducing crime and gun violence. FPOs prevent firearms from coming into the

possession of individuals who may later use them for gun violence. FPOs have also played an important part in the suppression strategies used against outlaw motorcycle gangs and other organised criminal groups. The Ombudsman's statutory report to Parliament confirmed that police have largely targeted the cohort that Parliament intended when it introduced the ability to conduct searches under the FPO search powers.

This bill implements the recommendations made to the then Minister for Police and the Attorney General. Those recommendations also have the support of the NSW Police Force, given their adoption of those recommendations in relation to training and related procedures. Our communities should be confident that our police are committed to ensuring that search powers are used appropriately and in accordance with the law. Our communities should also feel safe knowing that FPOs and related search powers work to disrupt the market for illegal firearms. Quite simply, this means that fewer firearms end up on the streets of our communities.

I am pleased that this bill will satisfy an important law enforcement priority, namely, that those without valid reasons for possessing a firearm, firearm part or ammunition cannot possess them at all. Such persons might include target individuals, outlaw motorcycle gangs and other organised criminal groups as well as other serious offenders. At a national level, Commonwealth government departments such as the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission [ACIC] are in possession of intelligence that indicates that there are increasing numbers of groups trafficking firearms with motorcycle gangs and organised crime groups. This is in addition to these groups seeking access to firearms and continuing in their existing drug trade activities.

The ACIC data indicates that between 2008 and 2016, 36.8 per cent of the firearms traced were linked to or seized from individuals associated with high-risk criminal groups. FPOs therefore remain a key disruption technique to keep firearms out of the hands of such criminals. It is clear from the drafting and the sound basis for this bill that its core components relating to the manufacturing offence and the FPO provisions have been part of various and ongoing national discussions. This bill builds upon the great work of the NSW Police Force in cracking down on illegal firearms manufacture and the criminal use of illegal firearms. This bill will ensure that we have as consistent an approach to illegal firearms as possible across the country, thereby limiting criminals' capacity to jurisdiction hop and shop.

These are important amendments that ensure our State accords with a nationally supported approach to the illegal manufacture of firearms and futureproofs those laws against new technology, equipment or methods. As the Minister said, to all those looking to make or use an illegal firearm, rest assured that the Government is committed to ensuring that our police have the powers they need to find, search, arrest, prosecute and bring to justice those offenders. Once again I congratulate the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and particularly his senior policy staff who are in the Chamber today on their good work in putting together and drafting this bill. I commend the bill to the House and encourage other members in the House do likewise.

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:01:53): I thank the Minister for agreeing to discuss the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party [SFF]. Yesterday we met with some of the Minister's staff and Deputy Commissioner Hudson from the NSW Police Force. Deputy Commissioner Hudson acknowledged that the concerns we are raising are valid in that we could see perverse outcomes from this bill with law-abiding people, who are not the target of this bill, inadvertently being caught up. Everything we do with firearms should be based on public safety. That should be the underlying principle that we aim for.

The objective of these laws is sound in its intent to target the criminal manufacture of firearms, precursors and all of the things that are covered in the legislation. Firearms law should always be transparent and procedurally fair and contain the elements of natural justice. The fact that we are raising these concerns indicates that we have legitimate concerns about the wrong people being targeted through these laws. When bills are being drafted, often the intent does not translate into reality. We have many examples of law-abiding firearms owners having their livelihood destroyed and their reputation damaged due to a suspension of their licence and seizure of firearms pending a court date. The matter is then thrown out of court because the prosecution has been overzealous or the mens rea or intent cannot be made out.

The SFF does not want criminals to have any access to firearms. The criminal use of firearms threatens public safety. The illegal use of firearms increases fear of crime, unfairly tarnishes the good name of law-abiding firearms owners around the State and adversely affects a legal industry, legal sports and legal activities which involve some of the most law-abiding people in our communities. Collectors—and I am one—have firearms that are hundreds of years old. Often, due to the age of these firearms, parts need to be made to keep the actions or mechanism functioning. You cannot order a part for a 200-year-old to 300-year-old cap-and-ball firearm. The value of these firearms is largely determined by the fact that they still operate as they were intended to. If they are non-functional, their value is lost. I can tell members that 200-year-old and 300-year-old cap-and-ball firearms are not used in the commission of crime.

I will tell members about Bob, who is a retiree living in Dubbo. Bob is a prolific collector and custodian of some amazing Australian history. Bob lovingly cares for his historical arms with museum-style care. Bob displays these very old firearms that he has taken care of at shows to share them with other people. This means the firearms are handled and actions are operated or opened to check the firearms are unloaded. If Bob had to replace a failed spring in one of these old firearms and bent a piece of spring steel to make the part, would this Parliament be happy to see Bob charged and have his licence suspended and his most prized possessions taken from him? What does that have to do with public safety?

Let's consider a farmer living 200 kilometres north of Broken Hill. He loses the front sight of his .22, a transition-fit dovetail—which means it is squeezed in between two bits of metal and falls out from time to time. He has the skills and tools to make a replacement part. Would we want to see this farmer caught up in laws designed to capture criminal syndicates? Would we want him to drive a 14-hour return trip to Dubbo to seek a simple repair which he has the parts and skills to do himself? Remember, even if never convicted, such a person would have his licence suspended and firearms seized. He would be denied access to the tools he needs to do his job for as long as it takes for the matter to get to court. How does that benefit public safety?

My colleague from Orange, Phil Donato, touched on the issues with precursors. Anything could be a precursor. A misinterpretation of how this should be applied and of the intent of the bill could see any law-abiding person charged, their licence suspended and their firearms seized while awaiting court. My colleague also touched on clay shooting. I am from a family of clay target shooters. When it comes to left-hand and right-hand stops, sometimes the stop needs to be changed to allow a leftie to use a right-handed gun. Depending on the size, the build, the length of the arms and the length of the neck, the length of pull needs to be adjusted. The comb needs to be adjusted depending on the type of clay target shooting, whether that is down the line, sporting or skeet. They are all different fits of gun.

The idea that people participating in a legal sport could be caught up in this legislation by their modifying or making a part is abhorrent to me. And do not say it does not happen. There are plenty of examples where law-abiding people go to court and are never convicted but they have to go through the associated embarrassment, reputational damage, cost and inability to use firearms for the legal purpose they have been licensed for. I have no comment in regard to firearm prohibition orders. Police need the powers to be able to target criminals. Good laws should minimise perverse or unintended consequences. We have the opportunity to make sure this is the case with this bill. I conclude with remarks from Fred Kahn that he made before the American Bar Association in 1978:

I believe that one substantive regulatory principle on which we can all agree is the principle of minimizing coercion: that when the government presumes to interfere with peoples' freedom of action, it should bear a heavy burden of proof that the restriction is genuinely necessary ...

In the case of criminals, yes. In the case of law-abiding people, we need to ensure that people with no criminal intent are not perversely caught up in these laws.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (12:07:39): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 and I thank the Minister for proposing this bill. In particular, I support the new provisions proposed to strengthen the New South Wales response to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons. The proposed offences in the bill, set out as section 51J of the Firearms Act and mirrored as section 25E in the Weapons Prohibition Act, will ensure that appropriate legal action can be taken against people who knowingly assist the illegal production of firearms.

Members will be aware that the Firearms Act 1996 provides the framework for the lawful possession and acquisition of firearms in this State. It is based on the National Firearms Agreement. Under the Firearms Act a person can apply for a licence if they wish to possess and acquire firearms. The Act also provides the framework for the legal manufacture of firearms under the authority of a firearms dealer licence. This bill will not affect licensed firearms owners and dealers who do the right thing and comply with the law. However, people operating outside the law and engaging in the illegal manufacture of firearms place our community at great risk. That is why it is important there are strong, robust offences in place to ensure that when people are involved in the illegal manufacture of guns—either for themselves or for on-supply to criminals—they are held to account.

Consider the following situation. Police raid an outlaw motorcycle gang's premises and locate a range of materials that are clearly associated with a pistol manufacture operation. They might find plastic moulds with indentations in the shape of a pistol grip and a range of items associated with moulding plastics and metals. In that case, it is obvious there is only one thing going on: A pistol is being manufactured, with the likely intention that it would be used in further criminal activities such as armed robberies or drive-by shootings. Such criminal firearms manufacturing has no place in New South Wales. The community would quite rightly expect police to take swift action to disrupt the activity and charge people with manufacturing offences. Now, with these new laws, they can. This new offence achieves that by ensuring that every person who is knowingly taking part in the illegal

manufacture can be held to account. The relevant items can now be seized and serious charges can now be laid. All involved, whether directly or indirectly, should be brought before the court and dealt with accordingly.

The new offence will also assist in the context of homemade guns, for example, a homemade machine gun. Under the current provisions, there may be a situation in which a person is caught in the act of manufacture, with all of the different parts laid out in front of them but not actually assembled. Because a fully functioning firearm had not been completed, the police might, depending on the situation, have difficulty commencing legal action under the current laws. This bill overcomes such a loophole and ensures that there is nowhere to hide for those taking part in illegal manufacturing. The bill makes clear that you are committing a serious offence if you are involved in the illegal manufacture of firearms. Criminals involved in this practice should have nowhere to hide and there should be no technical loopholes to prevent law enforcement agencies from taking appropriate action. The bill ensures that will be the case.

I am pleased to note that the new offence adopts the language of "take part" to ensure that it is broad enough to capture the full spectrum of enabling activities that lead to the manufacture of a firearm. It is important that the person who supplies the plans can be held criminally responsible, even if they never touched a firearm part. Similarly, a person who finances a manufacturing operation should be charged with an offence relating to the illegal operation. "Take part" is a concept already used in the context of the illegal manufacture of a prohibited drug and it is appropriate to adopt in the context of firearms. However, the bill does not go too far in this regard. Innocent, genuine businesses that have taken steps to ensure that they are operating within the law have nothing to fear from this new offence.

In particular, the two mental elements set out in section 51J (1) strike the right balance: An offence is only committed if you are knowingly taking part in the manufacture of a firearm and you know or ought reasonably to know that the manufacture of the firearm or firearm part is not authorised. I think the many law-abiding citizens and businesses in New South Wales who operate within our firearms regime will accept that laws need to be tough on those who are knowingly involved in the illegal manufacture of firearms. Such conduct has no place in this State and we owe our law enforcement agencies our support in cracking down on rogue enterprises that flout the law and enable criminal activity.

The number of recorded non-fatal shooting incidents for the 2018-19 financial year was 170. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 118 non-fatal shooting incidents were recorded. Statistics on firearm offences may relate to a crime committed with a firearm, such as a drive-by shooting, or to regulatory breaches. For example, for the 2018-19 financial year NSW Police Force figures show 98 incidents of unlawfully discharge a firearm and 32 incidents of discharge a firearm into premises. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 there were 65 incidents of unlawfully discharge a firearm and 28 incidents of discharge a firearm into premises. In the 2018-19 financial year there were only nine incidents of shoot with intent to murder. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 there were seven shoot with intent to murder incidents.

There are a number of firearms regulatory-type offences for which legal actions were commenced in the 2018-19 financial year. In total, over 3,200 legal actions were commenced for offences under the Firearms Act and Firearms Regulation. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019, 2,463 legal actions were commenced for offences under the Firearms Act and Firearms Regulation. I remind everyone that unless there are specific circumstances during a firearms amnesty, possession of an unregistered firearm is an offence. It is not possible to determine the number of registered—as opposed to unregistered—firearms used in the commission of a crime, as only in a tiny percentage of matters is a firearm recovered and the serial number of the firearm recorded.

In the 2018-19 financial year, 364 incidents of assault, homicide, intimidation, kidnapping or robbery were recorded as involving a firearm used as a weapon. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019, 189 events of this type were recorded as involving a firearm used as a weapon. Police seized 811 handguns in 2018-19. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 police have seized a further 658 handguns. Some of these may be returned to their rightful owners, but we know our regulatory regime is working well. Police are doing the work of targeting illegal firearms and keeping them off our streets. Raw numbers of firearms in New South Wales can only tell us so much. Good laws, smart enforcement and compliance by licensed shooters, dealers and collectors are the key to keeping our community safe from gun crime. [*Extension of time*]

Just today, 4 March 2020, I note that eight people from an outlaw motorcycle gang were charged following investigations into several public place shootings and other criminal activity on the South Coast. This followed a number of reports of shots fired into several homes and a number of altercations in which firearms were involved. After those incidents, detectives from the South Coast Police District commenced inquiries, along with detectives from the State Crime Command's Criminal Groups Squad. During the course of the investigation, detectives received information about alleged drug supply, extortion, assaults and fraudulent bushfire claims against a charity organisation. Following extensive investigations strike force detectives, assisted by Strike Force Raptor, executed:

two search warrants at Sunshine Bay and Batehaven; three crime scene warrants at Long Beach, Sunshine Beach and Mogo; and a firearms prohibition order at Malua Bay from 7.30 a.m. yesterday.

The use of the firearms prohibition orders shows the importance of those orders in disrupting individuals alleged to have been involved in criminal activity. Law-abiding firearms owners take their responsibility seriously and accept the privilege with respect to the conditions of their firearms licence. The real concern is illegal firearms, which in the hands of brazen and hardened criminals are a clear and present danger to our community. I commend the police for continuing to target illegal firearm activity, and this bill will assist them in doing so. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:19:00): I speak on behalf of The Greens on the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020, which bill seeks to create a new offence of knowingly taking part in the unauthorised manufacture of firearms. This new offence seeks to address the growth in the domestic manufacture of improvised firearms as well as 3D printing and machine milling of firearms. The bill seeks to create seizure powers in relation this offence. It seeks to require firearms prohibition orders to be reviewed every 10 years by the Commissioner of Police as well as to heighten search powers. It provides that the power of a police officer to search a person who is subject to a firearms prohibition order for firearms or firearm parts may also be exercised in relation to any other person who is present on the subject person's premises. It allows for firearms prohibition orders issued in another State to be enforced in New South Wales.

The Greens support the bill as we recognise that it is a strengthening of regulation of firearms in this State, and that should be welcome. However, I place on the record that we note it represents yet another bill in this place that seeks to expand police powers and search powers. The Greens are looking at this closely. We may move amendments in the Legislative Council to address the ongoing increase and expansion of police powers and search powers. While we absolutely support the strengthening of the regulation of firearms, we need to be careful and review closely any expansion of police powers when it comes to searching citizens in New South Wales.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (12:20:52): A fundamental role of government in a civil society is to pass and enforce laws that protect property and persons within its jurisdiction. The Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 is consistent with that role of government and the constitutional imperative of this Parliament under section 5 of the New South Wales Constitution Act 1902, which is to pass laws for the peace, welfare and good government of New South Wales. The bill has come forward as the result of a national review led by New South Wales and approved by the ministerial council. This should not surprise anybody because the Coalition has a proud legislative history with regard to the protection of our community from the dangers of firearms—most notably the Howard Government's reforms in 1996, which have been most recently followed by the Left Labour Ardern Government in New Zealand following the Christchurch massacre. Since leaving Parliament, the Hon. John Howard, OM, AC, has described his gun laws of 1996 as one of his greatest achievements in more than 12 years of leading our national government.

As I have said often in this place previously, the leadership of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition at a State and Federal level in Australia on gun control legislation is in stark contrast to the United States of America, where both Left and Right administrations have failed its citizenry on gun control, causing the capacity for frequent mass murder and violent crimes in the nation. It is a blind spot of our close American ally, which enjoys a generally free democratic and free enterprise society like ours, that is created by the second amendment to its Constitution, which was made over 200 years ago. It should be repealed as having no relationship to modern life and freedom.

A necessary prerequisite to freedom is a safe and orderly society, which this bill is directed towards. Laws directed to the control of gun sale and licensing should not be allowed to be easily circumvented by the manufacture by criminals of firearms, especially when the capacity to do so has been enhanced by new technologies like 3D printing or machine milling of firearms. This principle and the necessity for clear and appropriate police powers in conducting firearm prohibition order searches underpins this legislation. The bill currently before the House is part of a series of legislation by the Government over the past nine years that has been directed towards community safety and facilitating the police force's important role of keeping communities safe.

It is for these reasons that I speak in support the bill. The amendments relating to firearm prohibition order powers in the bill build on the improved search powers introduced by the Government in 2013. The 2013 reforms delivered enhanced means to tackle gun crime. Since then the Government has been proactive in ensuring that laws are effective and useful for our police in their response to serious and organised crime. Other reforms the Government has enacted include the introduction of serious crime prevention orders in 2016. These provisions are designed as a tool for law enforcement to use to prevent further offending, to help dismantle criminal enterprises and to break up the network of other parties that support and cover up offences committed by criminal groups. When issued by the court, a serious crime prevention order imposes tailor-made conditions on persons or organisations to prevent those assisting criminal groups.

At the same time the Government introduced public safety orders that enable police to prevent people attending places and events where they pose a serious safety risk to public safety. These orders, commenced in March 2017, are being used by police in responding to potential risks to public safety. The Government has also introduced legislation designed to ensure that criminals are deprived of the proceeds of their crime. Most recently amendments were made to facilitate the participation of New South Wales in the national unexplained wealth confiscation scheme. New South Wales was the first jurisdiction to participate in the scheme, which will make it harder for gangs to exploit jurisdictional differences to circumvent asset confiscation and unexplained wealth laws. This scheme is in addition to the existing money laundering laws and criminal asset confiscation regimes in New South Wales.

In addition to those provisions, the Government has greatly strengthened terrorism laws, including preventative orders. The sample of legislative amendment shows that the Government is committed to ensuring our legislation gives law enforcement the tools they need to disrupt and dismantle organised crime at all levels. The bill before the House is consistent with that aim. It will make sure that police have clarity in their powers when ensuring that people subject to firearm prohibition orders do not have firearms in their possession. It will also make sure that our manufacturing of firearms offences are purpose built to ensure that anyone facilitating this criminal practice can be held to account. These vital tools will enable police to disrupt organised criminal enterprises that seek to obtain and use firearms. Schedule 1 [3] of the bill contains two provisions, which I will discuss in detail. I refer to proposed section 51J and proposed section 51K of the Firearms Act 1996. Proposed section 51J is very broad in its ambit, and deliberately so. It states:

51J Offence of taking part in unauthorised manufacture of firearms or firearm parts

- (1) A person who—
- (a) knowingly takes part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part, and
 - (b) knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the manufacture of the firearm or firearm part is not authorised by a licence or permit,
- is guilty of an offence.

The provision has real teeth because it has a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment. Proposed section 51J (2) makes clear that taking part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part includes broad conspiracy-like provisions. It states:

- (2) For the purposes of this section, a person takes part in the manufacture of a firearm or firearm part if—
- (a) the person takes, or participates in, any step, or causes any step to be taken, in the process of that manufacture, or
 - (b) the person provides or arranges finance for any step in that process, or
 - (c) the person provides the premises in which any step in that process is taken, or suffers or permits any step in that process to be taken in premises of which the person is the owner, lessee or occupier or of which the person has the care, control or management, or
 - (d) without limiting paragraph (a)—the person possesses a firearm precursor for the purposes of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part. A firearm precursor is defined in subsection (3).

I note that the member for Barwon had some concerns about the breadth of the firearm precursor provisions. I point out that contrary to the examples he gave, under the provision a firearm precursor must be for the purposes of the manufacturing of a firearm or firearm part. The member for Barwon was drawing attention to parts of firearms, which could quite legitimately be in the possession of a licensed firearm user, but they were not parts which would be directed to the manufacturer of a firearm or a firearm part. So the member for Barwon's concerns were not well founded and are not a reason to oppose the bill. I note that in proposed section 51J, subsections (6) to (10) deal with offences under sections 50A or 51F, relating to manufacturing offences. Subsections (6) to (10) make it clear that there cannot be any double jeopardy or that the offence under section 51J cannot act oppressively to people who have been charged for other offences under sections 50A or 50F. They are very important provisions because it is not appropriate that legislation be passed by this House that would create a double jeopardy or act oppressively. [*Extension of time*]

The New South Wales Government has a strong record of making amendments that are needed by our law enforcement agencies to respond to serious and organised crime. As I have already demonstrated, the bill is another step in the right direction and will ensure that our law enforcement agencies have legislative tools that are robust and fit for purpose. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:31:37): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020, which is an important step forward. The bill amends the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to strengthen the provisions relating to the

illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons and to clarify police powers for the use of firearms prohibition orders. Strengthening those provisions is an outcome of the November 2015 review of the Lindt cafe siege. The Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management agreed to review the adequacy of the legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms and to clarify police powers for firearms prohibition orders. In August 2016 the Ombudsman report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers* proposed legislative recommendations relating to how police administer firearms prohibition orders [FPOs].

In strengthening the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons, the new offence includes the broadest concept of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of illegal manufacture, including financing, providing premises, participating, assembling parts, acquisition, possession or the use or supply of firearms or prohibited precursors. The offence will not apply to firearms dealers, armourers or commercial enterprises that are permitted to manufacture firearms or prohibited weapons under existing legislation. The offence would apply regardless of whether a completed or functioning firearm or prohibited weapon was identified by police.

The bill clarifies powers under the Firearms Act 1996 relating to firearms prohibition orders. Those provisions include: making it clear that it is lawful to conduct a search immediately following the service of a FPO but only after a FPO subject has been provided an opportunity to immediately surrender all lawfully held firearms; empowering police to execute a search of any other person found on the premises whom police reasonably suspect to possess a firearm, part or ammunition; extending police search powers to enable police to search vehicles, vessels or aircraft situated on a premises; providing that a FPO is reviewed by the NSW Police Force 10 years after the date it is served; and making clear that legislative safeguards related to personal searches are applied. The bill will not only impact criminal activity but also ensure that no external stakeholder will suffer.

In the past I have had the privilege of doing night shifts with my local police force in general duties covering tag operations, highway patrols and so on. The Tweed electorate is in a unique position. Across the street we have the fifth largest city in Australia, commonly called the Gold Coast. Many would argue that our front door is in Queensland and our back door is in New South Wales. Each day some 60,000 vehicles cross the border. Former Queensland governments took a very hard stance against organised crime, forcing convicted outlaw motorcycle club members to wear bright fluorescent pink outfits in the prison system, which I assume would have gone down extraordinarily well. We have seen changes to laws in Queensland and many, including the Queensland police association, believe some of the legislation that was initially in place has been watered down.

There was concern from some on our side of the border that Queensland had cleaned up all of its outlaw motorcycle gangs because the gangs had moved south and now Queensland has no problems whatsoever. That is a falsity. Most of those outlaw motorcycle gangs run very lucrative drug trades. Just because they do not wear a patch does not mean they are going to pack up shop and move elsewhere. I compliment the NSW Police Force for the very proactive stance it has taken. In those days, Jeff Loy, who was an assistant commissioner at the time and is now one of our deputy commissioners, took a very strong stance. From time to time he was incensed when reading media reports coming from the other side of the border. We saw a number of clubhouses dismantled in the Tweed and people were arrested. Unfortunately we suffered one or two murders involving outlaw motorcycle gangs, or OMGs as we call them. Time and again our local police clean up the mess created by those people coming from Queensland. Honestly, we feel like we should put up a rabbit-proof fence to keep them out.

The point I am trying to make is that the local police I have worked with thought it was great that the Government was strengthening the firearms prohibition orders. As soon as those people stepped over the border, the FPOs gave our police the power to search everyone in a car. As a result, the police were able to arrest people on outstanding warrants for possession of illicit firearms. Unfortunately the M1, or the Pacific Highway as we call it down here, is probably a main artery for drugs being taken north. I note that this new legislation enables the search of vessels. Believe it or not, the border doglegs 30 degrees to the north so that the New South Wales jurisdiction starts 11 nautical miles off Surfers Paradise, where there just happens to be a major shipping lane coming into the Port of Brisbane. It is pretty easy for anyone involved in illegal activities to get from the Tweed or anywhere on the Gold Coast to the boats.

I have seen the effect that shutting down those outlaw gangs has had on the volume of drugs being transported. It behoves all members in this place to give police the reasonable and necessary powers to keep us safe. We do not want another incident like the Lindt cafe siege. We do not want to see people shot down in the street. When I was police secretary I attended a police medals celebration at Ingleburn. I was amazed that we were not allowed to leave because although there were a dozen police cars in front of the venue a drive-by shooting had occurred at the end of the street. It just goes to show how brazen those criminals are and how much we should focus on giving police the appropriate powers to keep us safe. That is why I fully support the bill.

I must add that I am absolutely amazed that Queensland has not even mooted going down this path. I note that the Northern Territory has. I call on the Queensland police Minister, the Hon. Mark Ryan, to have a look at this sensible legislation and to give his police the powers they need. Currently Queensland police have a non-pursuit policy for traffic offences. A few years ago two armed offenders were followed by police all the way from Brisbane Airport through very heavily populated areas down to the New South Wales border, a distance of around 90 kilometres. When they got to the border our local police stopped them and the offenders fired about five shots at them. We are sick and tired of cleaning up the Queensland Government's mess. We want Queensland to keep its criminals on its side of the border and to deal with them appropriately. I support this legislation 100 per cent.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (12:40:41): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. Firearms in this country and in many other countries around the world are heavily regulated because they have a potential for danger that other items in our society do not have. Two years ago I visited Port Arthur in Tasmania. Decades after the massacre happened there, the scars of that tragedy still sit within that community. The bill amends the Firearms Act 1986, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons and to clarify police powers for the use of firearms prohibition orders.

These are important pieces of legislation and we are making an important change to them. Strengthening provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons was an outcome of the Lindt cafe siege review in November 2015. The Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management agreed to a review of the adequacy of legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms. We are starting to see now 3D printers and other technologies appearing in our society at a very affordable level, making it possible for people to make weapons at home that contribute to the illegal manufacture of firearms.

Debate interrupted.

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

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a warm welcome to Gabriel Metcalfe, the CEO of the Committee for Sydney, guest of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and member for Pittwater. I also welcome guests from the Lake Macquarie University of the Third Age—Pamela Finlay, Robyn Grant, Marjie Walker, Annabelle McLellan, Susan Wicks, Maureen Turner, Christina Grant and Anne Mills. I had the pleasure of running into them with the member for Lake Macquarie. They are his guests. I acknowledge participants in the Introduction to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Public Sector Seminar. This morning I met with the participants and I hope they have enjoyed the program today. I thank the Government Whip, the Opposition Whip, the member for Newtown and the member for Lake Macquarie for presenting at today's seminar.

Rulings

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

The SPEAKER (14:15:35): I advise the House that pursuant to Standing Order 92 I have responded to The Nationals member who raised a matter of privilege not suddenly arising, relating to the member for Murray. I note that there is no precedence granted by me as the Speaker.

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.

Announcements

DEATH OF ROBERT WILLIAM JOHN CHRISTIE, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I inform the House of the death on 2 March 2020 of Robert "Bob" William John Christie, a former member of the Legislative Assembly, who served as the member for Seven Hills

from 19 September 1981 to 3 May 1991. On behalf of the House, I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

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

Question Time

NUCLEAR ENERGY AND URANIUM MINING

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:17:31): My question is directed to the Premier. Yesterday the Deputy Premier said that The Nationals will support the bill in the upper House lifting the ban on uranium mining and nuclear energy in New South Wales. Is that now the official position of the Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:17:56): I welcome the report of the upper House committee that looked into the matter. As I understand it, the Government has until September to respond to the report.

Ms Jodi McKay: The Deputy Premier has responded.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It might be news to the Leader of the Opposition but the Deputy Premier has been talking about this for about two to three years. I can always rely on the Leader of the Opposition to take three years to ask me a relevant question on a particular topic. The Deputy Premier has been proudly indicating his position on this matter for a long time.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question relates specifically to comments made yesterday by the Deputy Premier when he said, "... the National Party will support his ... bill in relation to lifting the ban on mining uranium and nuclear energy." Is that now the official position of the Government?

The SPEAKER: The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As the Leader of The Nationals, and Deputy Premier said, this was a party position passed at his conference. It is actually the National Party position.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure if he was asked the Leader of The Nationals, and Deputy Premier would give the same answer as I am.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As the Deputy Premier also said, there is a process. The Government has until September to respond.

Mr Chris Minns: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What is the point of order, Mr Speaker?

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

Mr Chris Minns: The point of order is that the Premier is not answering the question and the Deputy Premier is running the Government. The Premier should admit it in question time today.

The SPEAKER: I place the member for Kogarah on two calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I say to those opposite that they should get a better strategy for question time. They should ask me questions that matter to the people of New South Wales and not come up with this rubbish.

BEST IN CLASS TEACHING PROGRAM

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:20:52): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is supporting students and schoolteachers across the State?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21:05): I thank the member for East Hills for her question. I acknowledge that before she became formally involved in politics she was P&C president of one of the largest schools in her electorate. She did a wonderful job representing her school community. I know

she is passionate about education, as are all of us in this place. We know that providing an opportunity for every student in this State ensures a strong future. Today I was pleased to stand alongside the education Minister to launch an exciting program that will lift standards and enhance results in the classroom, which is what we are after. Today we announced a new program called Best in Class, in which 50 of our best teachers have been identified to transfer their secrets, learnings and experience—

Ms Prue Car: That's one teacher for every 44 schools. Good job!

The SPEAKER: The member for Londonderry will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think the member for Londonderry is the shadow Minister for Education. Given that she has interjected, I remind her that this Government has employed more than 5,300 new teachers. Over the next four years we will employ another 4,500 new teachers. Opposition members can talk the talk but they do not walk the walk. They never do. But I digress. The policy announcement that we made today enhances—

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Londonderry that I will place her on three calls to order if she continues to interject.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In particular, I thank the principal and students of the brand-new Inner Sydney High School who attended today. The students, who are in year 7, represent the cohort who will benefit in the future from this important policy. It is also important to acknowledge that our State school system has amazing teachers. Based on evidence and the results they are getting for their students, many of them are far outdoing a number of their peers.

Mr Clayton Barr: Which results? Is it NAPLAN or HSC?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I always thought the member for Cessnock cared about education.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to say that today we were also joined by Eddie Woo, who members know is an outstanding mathematics teacher. He is heading the maths unit component of the team of wonderful educators. I had the pleasure of meeting with Ania Sarlej, an English teacher at St Marys Senior School; Clare Cotton, a PDHPE teacher at Fort Street High School; Livia Bolanca, who teaches English at Birrong Girls High School; and Natasha Watt, a maths teacher and former deputy principal of Woonona High School, which had the biggest turnaround in HSC mathematics results.

Those are the types of teachers we want to provide peer support to other teachers. Through the New South Wales Government's Bump It Up program, which sought to lift our standards and our results in NAPLAN, we honed in on those schools that we felt were not doing as well in their results as were their peers in the same community. We deep dived and worked out the teaching methods those teachers were using and we then allowed those teachers to pass on their learnings to teachers in other schools. Rather than feeling any level of angst, the teachers warmly received the peer-to-peer support. I commend all of the teachers who have been exposed to the program. It is proving to be extremely successful.

The Best in Class program that we announced today is part of a number of measures we are introducing to lift standards for all of our students in New South Wales. Your success should not be determined by your postcode. Your success should be determined by how hard you work and by how passionate you are about what you want to do. Hard work and passion should be the only determinants of anyone's success in New South Wales. That is something that the Liberal-Nationals feel very strongly about. This is about equality of opportunity. It is about making sure that every student, no matter their pathway, no matter their outcomes and no matter what they hope to achieve, has the ability to be their best. I reiterate the three key reforms which our Government is focused on. The first is decluttering the curriculum. For 30 years the subjects that have cluttered the curriculum have meant that the core competencies are missing out. We need to get back to our core competencies.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We also need to make sure that we lift standards in the classroom. That is what today's announcement— [*Extension of time*]

As we know, the interim report of the curriculum review has come out and the final report will come out in April. The Government will have more to say about that then but decluttering the curriculum is a key plank of

our reforms. The second key plank of our reforms is lifting standards in the classroom. That is where today's announcement is critical.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When we have good teachers who are able to support other good teachers it helps to lift standards across the board.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Londonderry to order for the third time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The third plank in our reforms relates to pathways. We want to make sure that students have an easier transition to TAFE or university.

[Opposition members interjected.]

If the members opposite cared about advanced manufacturing, future jobs or evolving industry they would care about the pathways for students. But, as I have said before, when they were in government they closed schools. When they were in government they let every type of institution in education fall into disrepute. Our Government is the party for education. We are the party for students and we are the party for better success in the future.

NUCLEAR ENERGY AND URANIUM MINING

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (14:27:55): I direct my question to the Minister for Energy and Environment. Given the Minister said, "There are cheaper, safer ways to deliver reliable energy than large-scale nuclear," will he confirm if supporting lifting the ban on uranium mining and nuclear energy is now the official policy of the Government?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:28:28): I thank the member for Port Stephens for her question. I will confirm exactly what the Government's policy is: cheaper reliable energy for the people of New South Wales. We will be technology neutral about how we deliver that. We will not be ideologically driven, unlike the members opposite. We will focus on delivering the State's first-ever electricity strategy. The strategy is important because it sets out the framework to do exactly that: deliver cheap and reliable energy for the people of New South Wales.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will continue. He is only 30 seconds into his answer.

Ms Kate Washington: Is he going to be the first environment Minister to support nuclear energy?

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

Mr MATT KEAN: I am going to be the environment Minister who delivers cheaper reliable energy to the people and the businesses of New South Wales, and the Government has set out how we will do that in the NSW Electricity Strategy. The strategy will see New South Wales deliver 3,000 megawatts of renewable energy to the grid by setting up and delivering the nation's first renewable energy zone in the electorate of the member for Dubbo. That is how you drive down wholesale prices in New South Wales.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 59. The Minister's tedious repetition is irrelevant and off the point.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order under Standing Order 59. The Minister will continue.

Mr MATT KEAN: I am talking about the Government's strategy to deliver cheaper reliable energy to the people of New South Wales, which includes modernising and transitioning the grid by delivering new infrastructure like interconnectors and transmission lines. That will bring online projects like Snowy Hydro. When the HumeLink is completed, it will immediately deliver 500 megawatts of renewable electricity into the system.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question has nothing to do with Snowy Hydro. It was about the Government's position and whether it has lifted the ban on nuclear energy and other related matters with uranium.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being relevant to energy policy, but he has not used the word "nuclear". I imagine he will do so in the next couple of minutes.

Mr MATT KEAN: In answer to the member for Port Stephen's question, the cheapest way to deliver reliable electricity into the system today, not according to me or anyone else but according to the CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator, is firming renewables. That is according to the levelised cost of electricity per the *GenCost 2018* report.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. The question relates to the policy. I am now completely and utterly confused about what the Government's policy is. Is it renewables or is it nuclear? Who is in charge—Gladys or John? Does the Minister like him or not like him? What is the Minister's policy on energy: renewable or nuclear?

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. She has used her discretion for the day. The Minister will continue his answer.

Mr MATT KEAN: The reason the Leader of the Opposition is confused is that she has not been in the country throughout summer. That is the reality. How was the haggis? The reality is that the Government's policy is about delivering cheaper reliable energy into the system and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The Minister clearly wants to debate this matter and avoid answering the question. If the Government's position has changed, what is the Premier or the Deputy Premier's position in relation to nuclear energy in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: The member for Campbelltown should read the standing orders because he has referenced the wrong one. There is no point of order under either Standing Order 73 or debating the question. I ask the Minister to use the word "nuclear" at some stage in the next minute.

Mr MATT KEAN: The Premier has already clarified the Government's position on nuclear. The policy is that we will do what it takes to deliver cheaper reliable energy into New South Wales to benefit businesses, to benefit families and to benefit households in this State.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I am finding it very difficult to hear the Minister with all the noise in the Chamber.

Ms Yasmin Catley: I have been very quiet.

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

Ms Yasmin Catley: If the Minister wants to deliver cheaper energy, then he should rule out using nuclear because he knows it is the most expensive.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Swansea to order for the third time. The member will resume her seat or she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr MATT KEAN: For those interested in nuclear energy, let me be very clear: Nuclear may have a role to play in the State's energy mix in the decades to come but right now the cheapest way of delivering electricity to the system is renewables backed up by gas and hydro. With batteries coming down the cost curve, that is the way to deliver cheaper reliable energy into the system. That has been set out in the NSW Electricity Strategy. I refer to the Premier's previous answer. This Government will deliver cheap and reliable energy. That is our focus.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:34:39): I address my question to Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade and responsible for drought recovery. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on how the Government's drought package is supporting those in need?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:35:05): I thank the member for Dubbo for his question about drought. It is an important question. This afternoon we have focused on energy. Can I refocus everybody's energy to the drought that we are facing in regional and rural New South Wales? As we look out the window today we see rain. We have had rainfall right across the east coast and in the coastal areas and especially in Sydney in the Warragamba catchment. We could easily think that the drought is over but in regional and rural New South Wales the drought is not over. A lot of our water storage facilities are still at record lows. Areas like the Central West, especially around Bathurst, have received only between 10 and 15 millimetres of rain. The drought continues.

Even though we have gone through a summer of hell with the fires and this Government's focus is on dealing with the fires and the recovery, it is important that we also let our farmers know that we have not forgotten about this intense drought. This drought is not only hurting farmers and impacting on them behind the farm gate but it is also impacting on regional and rural communities. We need to be mindful of the ripple effect across the supply chain and across the sector because we do not want to talk ourselves out of the market. At the same time

we need to make sure that we are focused on and delivering for our great farmers in regional and rural New South Wales.

I previously updated the House that last week I had the opportunity to spend some time on the road visiting farms, together with the member for Goulburn and the member for Cootamundra. I popped in to say hello at one of those farms where they crop for a living. They got about 30 millimetres of rain and that gave them a little bit of hope. Then they got an additional 30 millimetres of rain, so they decided that the time was right to plant out a crop. But they are taking a risk because they need follow-up rain. To give the House an understanding, during the whole of 2019 Chris Groves' farm received only 170 millimetres of rain. During this last rainfall over the last three or four weeks it received about 70 millimetres. Before that, in 2018 it received 300 millimetres. That is not sufficient in the running of a farm and to make sure there is enough water to be productive. The average rainfall in that area is normally around 600 millimetres. Clearly, even though it is raining here in the catchment and 1,200 millimetres fell in Warragamba Dam, it is not happening across the State.

The picture painted by Chris Groves was that when things are going well farmers are able to put money aside, invest in infrastructure and do the best they can to droughtproof their properties. But this drought has gone on and on. A lot of our farmers have been dipping into their savings and borrowing. In some cases they have borrowed to the absolute maximum. The clear message is that even if the drought broke today it will be a two-year turnaround before these farms recover and these farmers get back on their feet. In simple language, even though this drought might break, there will be a cash drought affecting the ability of farmers to get back on their feet and invest in their farms. As I said, that ripple effect goes beyond the farm gate. A lot of local businesses are carrying debt on behalf of our farmers. When farmers are not doing well they are not spending money in the community and the ripple effect impacts on small businesses and the local economy. That is why the New South Wales Government has committed, as we always have, first and foremost to support our farmers.

In recent years the Government has invested in excess of \$3.9 billion in drought support and water support in this State. That is possible because we run our budget in the black. When we run surpluses for a rainy day—or in this case a non-rainy day—we are able to respond to crises. That is no different to the summer that we have just had with bushfires, when the Government had the ability not only to announce money but also to see money rolling out in excess of \$2 billion at a State level to support our communities. Our communities are seeing investment. The \$450 million in loans from the Farm Innovation Fund have been received by 2,350 people.

The loans are for building infrastructure to assist farmers to manage their land and water. Hopefully in the future that infrastructure will droughtproof their properties. The Government has provided freight subsidies to support farmers to get their feed and fodder in. Those subsidies mean that in one way we have carried the burden, as we have when we have waived Local Land Service fees, water levies and registration on trucks. Those are little things on their own but when combined as a collective \$3.9 billion went into either water infrastructure or drought support for our farmers. *[Extension of time]*

I want to make it clear in the House today that those subsidies and that level of support continue because of this Government. Everybody who needs support will continue to see support. Furthermore, we are going into budget preparation and we will announce our budget midyear. At the heart of this year's budget will be support for our farmers in dealing with drought. This drought is not over. This drought needs the focus of this Parliament, this Government and the community. I encourage those who live in Sydney to visit the regions and buy from the regions. We need your support. We need people to come and visit and spend money in our local economies. More importantly, I want to make sure that when we progress out of this drought we have the ability to give our farmers the resources they need to quickly get back on their feet. The quicker we return to good stock levels, the quicker the economy will bounce back and the better the news for regional and rural New South Wales.

I note that the recent unemployment figures show that this State's figures are the lowest in the country, running at 4.5 per cent. That is well below the 5.1 per cent national average when it comes to job numbers. Regional and rural New South Wales outperformed every other region in this country. Despite all the issues we are facing—drought, floods, rain, fires and the impact on tourism—we are still seeing resilience at a regional and rural level. That clearly shows what happens when we invest in the regions, back regional communities and back primary producers and sectors like mining, tourism and advanced manufacturing. Those sectors are so important. It is also important to support industries like the timber industry to make sure that regional and rural communities have a better local economy. We want people to live in the regions, and for them to do so they need jobs. We need to build the infrastructure for that to happen, and that is the focus of this Government. The pipeline of infrastructure over the past nine years has seen a clear focus and record investment in regional and rural New South Wales. Going forward, we will continue to back our farmers and our regions.

NUCLEAR ENERGY AND URANIUM MINING

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (14:42:10): I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier confirm that lifting the ban on uranium mining and nuclear energy is now the official policy of his Government, given that yesterday he firmly committed The Nationals to support the One Nation bill in the upper House?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:42:34): I will not be lectured to by the Labor Party about backing minority parties. Let's not forget the deal it did with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. The Minister for Energy and Environment rightly pointed out that the fundamental focus of any government, especially in this country, is on downward pressure on pricing and cheaper, affordable, more reliable and cleaner energy. We all want to see that investment. That is why it is possible to have a policy about being technology neutral or technology agnostic. But to be truly technology neutral we have to allow the market to respond. If those opposite want to talk about nuclear, let us go back to the last election. In my electorate the Labor Party campaigned against me because for the past three years I have been a big supporter of nuclear energy. I will explain why in a minute. I campaigned for three years—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order? The Minister is being relevant.

Ms Jodi McKay: It is Standing Order 129. Is nuclear now the Minister's official policy, as a government?

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being relevant. The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: At every election forum the Labor Party would press me to rule out having a nuclear reactor in the electorate of Monaro. I said, "No, I can't do that." If I did that I would be a hypocrite, like a certain member of The Greens from Tasmania who did not want wind farms in his own backyard. I said, "No, I can't rule out a nuclear reactor in the Monaro," and I went from a 2 per cent margin to a 12 per cent margin. I trust the Australian people to understand and learn from this journey that we are on. We are not talking about Chernobyl or Fukushima or Three Mile Island. We are talking about the iPhone of reactors—small, modular reactors that are affordable and will appear on the horizon in the next decade. Imagine if I said to the gallery, "We can achieve baseload energy with zero net emissions and have the ability for clean power." Plus, of course, Australia has the largest stockpile of uranium in the world. We are the second largest exporter of uranium in the world. We already bring back waste. We have a nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights for nuclear medicine. At the same time, somehow we want to talk about being technology neutral and rule out—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is being highly relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Mr Ryan Park: To a question that asked can he confirm a policy around nuclear energy?

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is speaking highly relevantly and has indicated he is getting there.

Mr Ryan Park: So he cannot commit to it?

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier will continue.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This is not the nuclear reactor that Homer Simpson operates in *The Simpsons*. It may be the nuclear reactor that Lisa will operate in *Simpsons 2.0*. Look at the technology; look at the advancement. This is the iPhone of reactors; it is affordable and it will appear on the horizon in the next decade. On top of that we can build an industry that builds reactors and an industry that takes waste. Where does the waste in France get buried? The waste in France gets buried in the Champagne region. If it was a problem, they would not bury it in the Champagne region.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The royal commission in South Australia showed that a uranium waste facility over its 125-year life span would deliver South Australia \$450 billion to its economy. That is a real opportunity to build a new industry under an energy source—

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier will continue. He is being relevant.

Mr Clayton Barr: Deputy Premier, is there a more expensive form of power than nuclear?

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Cessnock from the Chamber under standing orders for the remainder of the day.

[The member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 14:49 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We always say, "Let's make it technology neutral and let the market respond." If nuclear energy is too expensive the market will not respond. But why rule it out? Why ban it? We have an opportunity to lead here. Can I answer the question? The Nationals, a very intelligent party, at its last conference endorsed as its party position to support nuclear energy and to lift the ban in this country. That is the position of The Nationals. As leader of the party I will advocate and promote our party policy. We live in a democracy. I am entitled to do that. But I respect that the report that was handed down this morning will go through the Cabinet process and of course there will be a Government response, which of course The Nationals will play a role in. *[Extension of time]*

For those in the public gallery who want to learn about small modular reactors, jump on the website of a company called NuScale out of the United States. They will probably deliver a small modular reactor [SMR] to the market by 2026. The Russians and the Argentinians will probably get an SMR to the market by 2023. So in this decade we will see new technology—

Mr Chris Minns: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: If it relates to relevance I do not want to hear it. The Deputy Premier is being highly relevant.

Mr Chris Minns: What if I have something the Speaker has not thought of?

The SPEAKER: Then tell me what is the point of order.

Mr Chris Minns: I just want to say that the Latham bill is not just about small nuclear reactors; it is large scale as well.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to make comments. The Deputy Premier will continue.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The report pointed to and I take note of the fact—from the energy Minister and others who have spoken on this—that the market will respond. For a country like Australia with a small population, large-scale nuclear reactors probably will not be affordable. I accept that. That is why we cannot bury our heads in the sand and not look at a small modular reactor if we can deliver it in an affordable way. No longer does it need to be near water. It can be inland; it can be sand cooled, gas cooled or air cooled. It has shutdown technology. It recycles its fuel rods better than we have ever seen before.

There is the ability for this nation to have an energy source that is sought all over the world. All over the world they use nuclear energy: in the United States, in Europe, in France and in Germany. Right now 450 nuclear reactors are in operation across the globe, with another 100 in planning stages. As a nation, we have a resource that will underpin our economy. We can move away from coal to a clean fuel rod. To those who fight against climate change, who say that we are in a crisis and that we need to get to net zero emissions quickly, here is my question: Are you using climate change as a Trojan Horse against fossil fuels or will you back nuclear energy?

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:49:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on how Special Disaster Grants are helping farmers recover from bushfires?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (14:50:05): I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question and acknowledge the work she has been doing to support farmers affected by bushfires in her electorate and more broadly in the southern part of New South Wales. I acknowledge all members of this House across all sides of the Chamber who have been doing such a terrific job in supporting not just farmers but everyone in their communities who has been impacted by the bushfires during this terrible bushfire season. I am very proud to say that the New South Wales Government is providing a full range of support to primary producers in particular that have been impacted by bushfires. We have heard the Deputy Premier in his answer in this question time talk about a range of drought assistance, including the loan packages and other significant rebates that are available. In terms of the bushfire support, the Special Disaster Grant—Bushfires for primary producers is available and being administered at the moment by the Rural Assistance Authority.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: But 25 per cent of people are not eligible. They are getting refused.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I note the interjection of the member for Maitland, Country Labor for Maitland. I was wondering, how did that Country Labor conference go in Singleton at the weekend? I am still waiting to hear anything from that conference about bushfires or drought.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. The question is about bushfire relief and that is the important thing here, not to make political points.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Twenty-five per cent of people have not been helped. Eleven farmers have got your drought assistance out of 10,000.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time. The Minister will continue.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: That was a wonderful point of order from Country Labor for Maitland, who does not support the farmers' right to farm. To correct the member for Maitland, who talked about 11 farmers, for the Special Disaster Grant—Bushfires, so far 672 farmers have been approved.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: It's a different grant.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: No, it is not a different grant. You are getting confused again between loans and grants. I tried to explain this to you over three hours in estimates on Monday and you still do not understand. There is a difference between a loan and a grant.

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order: The Minister should not be yelling across the Chamber. He should be directing his comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: I am happy for the Minister to respond to interjections, but he should direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Mr Speaker, there is a huge difference between a loan and a grant. Since the member for Maitland interjected, I am happy to take the House through the facts. The Special Disaster Grant—Bushfires is up to a \$75,000 grant that is payable direct to farmers who have been impacted by bushfires. So far \$39.169 million has been distributed in the 42 days that the program has been open. That is on average \$932,000 a day going into the pockets of farmers who have been impacted by bushfires.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: What about those who have been fighting for seven months?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Again I have to explain that it does not matter whether you have been affected by fires seven months ago or last week, you get the grant and it takes three days from your application being received to the money hitting your bank account.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maitland will remain silent.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Three days from the time of receipt to the time of the money hitting people's bank accounts—this is cash which farmers are using to repair damage on their farms, whether it is fencing, sheds, livestock or anything that has been impacted or damaged on their properties by fire. In response to this crisis, the Rural Assistance Authority has increased staffing numbers fivefold to now 120 staff on hand processing these applications on a double shift. They start at eight o'clock in the morning and work through till 10 o'clock at night, manning the phones and processing applications. You can shake your head; you have never damn well been there. You have never gone there and had a look. You have never talked to any of the staff. You are not interested. You are too busy changing your name from Country Labor to Labor. What about thinking about farmers for once?

Ms Lynda Voltz: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I will pre-empt the point of order and ask the Minister to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: As I was saying, the bushfire disaster grant is a crucial tool that farmers are utilising in great numbers to make sure that they can get the assistance to start the journey of repairing their properties. In addition, farmers continue to have access to a range of other low- or zero-interest finance programs through the Drought Assistance Fund, the Farm Innovation Fund and, of course, the Commonwealth's special disaster loans for bushfires, which are primarily targeted at small business operators. Farmers have a range of options that they are accessing at the moment to get the assistance they need. I am very pleased—and so are members on this side of the House—to provide the resources to farmers in the most timely manner to help them get back on their feet but also to bolster the resources of our agencies that are responsible for delivering the support, whether it is the Rural Assistance Authority or Service NSW, which is administering a range of programs to support people, including farmers. [*Extension of time*]

Local Land Services still are visiting farmers with their biosecurity officers and district vets, checking on the welfare of farmers as well as livestock. Department of Planning, Industry and Environment staff have delivered over 400 kilograms of sugar syrup to apiarists who have had a lot of their resource destroyed in bushfires, whether directly through loss of hives or by the areas where they had their hives located being decimated by fires. Support is being provided to the horticulture industry and to our commercial fishing industry through fee waivers for their second instalment fees this year. We are committed to helping farmers, whether they are on the land or in the ocean. We will continue to do so and continue to work with the Commonwealth to make sure that these schemes are simple and easy to access so people can get the access they need and get it quickly.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:57:11): My question is directed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Would the Minister welcome a nuclear power plant in her electorate of Oxley?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (14:57:31): What I would welcome for the residents of Oxley is the cheapest, safest and best electricity. What I would also welcome is the opportunity to have a conversation and a debate and not be told by Sussex Street how to breathe and live. What I respect and I admire is the ability of the National Party leader to create a national conversation about the opportunities in relation to mining. Why in the hell would we stop New South Wales from having the ability to use part of a resource that we have 40 per cent of on this planet? Why would we stop that opportunity?

Mr Chris Minns: Point of order: It is not a conversation. You are supporting the bill.

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

Mr Chris Minns: You are supporting the legislation.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: There is no bill, you idiot.

Mr Chris Minns: There is. Mark Latham has a bill. Read the newspaper. Barilaro, fill her in. Fill her in, you idiot.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The Minister will resume her seat.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: There is no bill in this Chamber.

Mr Chris Minns: There is a bill, you idiot. There is one.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Kogarah that when I am on my feet and he continues to call out he is in danger of being removed from the Chamber immediately. I will not have him removed immediately, but I call him to order for the third time. I remind the member for Londonderry that she is on three calls to order.

[Interruption by members]

I am on my feet! The Minister was baited. There was an inappropriate response, but I will give her some leeway because the member for Kogarah was out of order.

Dr Hugh McDermott: This is the new standard.

The SPEAKER: It is not a new standard.

Dr Hugh McDermott: There is no standard.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Prospect to order for the third time. The standards are clear.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: We all witnessed that outburst at the member for Kogarah. Surely you can see that it deserved a call to order when everyone on this side, for a lot less than that outburst, would have immediately been called to order.

The SPEAKER: Both the member for Kogarah and the member for Oxley called each other "idiot". I put neither of them on a call to order for that.

Mr Chris Minns: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kogarah will resume his seat. I put the member for Kogarah on a call to order for continuing to yell out when I was on my feet. I ask both members to withdraw that reference to each other.

Mr Chris Minns: I withdraw it.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: I cannot.

The SPEAKER: I can only ask. I note the Minister has refused to withdraw her comment. The Minister will continue with her answer.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Government members will remain silent.

Mr Greg Warren: Further to your ruling, Mr Speaker, the Minister and the Government are flouting it and treating you with contempt.

The SPEAKER: It was not a ruling, it was a request. The Minister will continue.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: As I was saying and as the Deputy Premier has pointed out, The Nationals do have a policy in relation to nuclear energy and uranium mining, as we are entitled to and as our party members are entitled to. We are not the same party but we are a good government serving the people of New South Wales and creating the opportunity for debate and dialogue—not being told by Sussex Street how to think and what to do.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for The Entrance to order for the first time. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was very clear: Does the Minister want a nuclear power station in her electorate or not?

The SPEAKER: The Minister was asked the question as a Minister, not as a member representing an electorate.

Ms Yasmin Catley: She is the Minister for water.

The SPEAKER: I understand that. The Minister is answering the question in the broad context of her ministry rather than as the member for Oxley. In that context I am happy for her to continue in the current vein.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: I know that my community wants me to do the best thing by them at all times. Having good conversations and being able to ensure that we do the right thing by New South Wales is what they want me to do, and I will stand by that position.

COVID-19

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:02:42): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. Will the Minister update the House on COVID-19 in New South Wales?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (15:03:07): I thank the member for Holsworthy for her interest in the issue of novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. I recollect the member's inaugural speech back in 2011 when she talked about improving the health of the community. She has shown consistent support for particularly Sutherland Hospital and, along with Mark Coure, St George Hospital. Well done and thank you. It is important that the hospitals we have worked so consistently to improve have achieved that improvement because right now we are facing some challenging times. I will go back over in more detail from yesterday and remind the House where we have got to. We now have 15 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus. It is timely to remind ourselves that it has only been a little more than 60 days since the first person came into Australia carrying the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, which was back in January.

A 30-year-old gentleman arrived on 6 January and brought the virus with him. On 15 January, shortly after he arrived from Wuhan, he developed symptoms. A 50-year-old gentleman arrived from Wuhan on 20 January. He reported developing symptoms shortly after arriving. A man in his 40s arrived in Sydney, again from Wuhan, on 18 January. He developed symptoms five days later on 23 January. A female in her 20s arrived on 23 January and developed symptoms the day after. They were the first four people.

Since that time a number of other people have presented. A male in his 40s from Iran, which was a change in direction. First of all we had people from China, particularly Hubei province and Wuhan specifically, then we started receiving people from Iran with symptoms developing shortly after they arrived. The first person was a male in his 40s who arrived on 22 February and had symptoms two days later on 24 February. A woman in her 50s arrived from Iran on 23 February and developed symptoms a day later. A male in his 30s returned from Iran on 29 February and had symptoms one day later on 1 March. The eighth person was a female in her 40s. Her case was notified on 29 February. That was one of the first cases in New South Wales, indeed in Australia, that showed on-soil transmission. She had not travelled but her brother had come from Iran.

The ninth was a male in his 50s who is a healthcare worker at Ryde Hospital and we are now aware that man is a doctor. We have been tracing his contacts. Just a few minutes ago it was confirmed to me that 30 doctors who had reasonable contact with him are being traced; 12 of those had close contact. He had contact with 24 nurses, of whom 21 had close contact. It has expanded now to 37 patients, 21 of whom have been contacted so far. It is an evolving situation in regard to that particular gentleman. The tenth, which the Premier announced yesterday, was a male in his 30s who had departed Tehran on 28 February and arrived in Sydney on 1 March. He came in on Qantas flight 82, sitting in seat 32A. He became symptomatic on the flight and we are currently tracking down the people who were sitting in the two rows in front, two rows behind and two rows on either side of him.

To show how this is such an evolving situation, late in question time yesterday I was advised of a male in his 50s who had returned to Sydney from Singapore—the first case we have had come from Singapore—on 28 February. He became symptomatic on his flight as he was travelling. Yesterday after question time I attended the Health ministry to present a press conference at 4.00 p.m. As I sat down to take some notes I was presented with the latest pathology which showed another two reports, this time a 60-year-old female who had returned from South Korea and another person in their 60s who had come back from South Korea on 23 February and was diagnosed on 3 March. [*Extension of time*]

Later that day we had a female who had returned from Japan. Last night more people were highlighted. One was a male in his 30s who had returned from Iran on 1 March and a woman in her 50s who undertakes nursing duties in the Dorothy Henderson Lodge nursing home, which is part of BaptistCare. There are three facilities on those premises. About an hour ago I was advised that they had done corona virus checks on some people in the two other lodges that are in that same area. I am very pleased to advise that although they double-checked, because those people had respiratory conditions, they were clear. This is the sort of thing that can happen. They took very cautious steps but those people seem to be clear.

We still have two cases that we are looking into at the moment, particularly out of Dorothy Henderson Lodge. I report to the House that a 95-year-old lady who lived there passed away. Out of great caution we have caused pathology to be undertaken, which Health has done. There is one other gentleman, who I believe is in his 80s, who is now in hospital with suspected coronavirus. Hopefully I will be able to report to the House about that in due course. I say to the community that it is progressing, as it is progressing across the world. It is definitely not a time for panic; it is a time for calm. It is a time for the washing of hands, coughing into your elbow and behaving as normally as you can. The additional factors of panic are not making it easy for health staff. There is no reason to be panicky. Go about your business calmly and we will get through this together.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:10:33): My question is directed to the Premier. In April 2018 the Government committed to prepare a bill to protect whistleblowers who disclose to the ICAC the following recommendations from the parliamentary committee on the ICAC. Last year the Premier made a commitment to deliver this bill by December 2019. When will this important bill be introduced?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:11:00): I thank the member for Balmain for his question and for his interest in the matter. I acknowledge his timely asking of the question because it is entirely appropriate. The Government had intended to have introduced this legislation already but I want to update the member for Balmain to say that the Special Minister of State in the other place, Minister Harwin, is currently working closely with my department, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and also the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee, which includes the Ombudsman and the ICAC, on implementing the reforms, which were recommended, as he knows, in two reports released in 2017. The reason it is taking longer than anticipated is the complex legal issues, which I am happy to go through.

As indicated in the Government's response to those reports, which it tabled in the following April, the Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that whistleblowers receive appropriate protections in the future, and of course we want to remove the inconsistencies between the protections that apply to people making voluntary disclosures to the ICAC and other bodies as well. We want to make sure there is consistency. A bill is being drafted to implement the Ombudsman committee's recommendations. It will also address the problems identified by the ICAC committee in accordance with the principles of making it simpler for public officials to make public interest disclosures, improving the protections and remedies for those who suffer detrimental action as a consequence and continuing to protect the reputation of individuals against defamation and discourage public disclosure of confidential information as well. It is important that these guidelines drive what will be in the final bill.

The steering committee is being closely consulted during the development of the bill, which represents the first substantial rewrite of the Public Interest Disclosure Act since its commencement in 1994. It is a big piece of

work that we are undertaking. There are a number of complex issues that the Government needs to work through, such as differences in the two reports and ensuring consistency, which I already mentioned; consideration of the impact of recent Commonwealth amendments to the Corporations Act for the protection of whistleblowers and ensuring consistency—that was a new addition that we have to consider—and identifying best practice in other Australian jurisdictions for consistency as well.

We are absolutely committed to resolving these issues and to getting it right, which is why it is taking a bit longer than we had anticipated and because there has since been additional material we have had to consider in view of these principles we want to adhere to. I thank all the members of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission and members in this place who were on the ICAC committee for their work to support the Government's efforts on this issue. It has been quite a cross-party involvement. I thank members of the Public Interest Disclosure Steering Committee. I hope this addresses the reason we are at the stage we are. The member for Balmain can have full confidence that the Government is doing all of its due diligence to make sure the bill is in the right form when it comes to this place.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:14:10): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's transport agenda?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (15:14:24): I thank the member for Terrigal for his question. I will zero in on the important issue of road safety, which is affecting every community across the State. There is no doubt that when we look at what happened last year on the State's roads—over 350 lives lost and more than 10,000 people hospitalised for more than one night in a State health facility—we have a major problem. We must try to find ways to resolve this situation. Very sadly, already this year the road toll stands at 57. That is not just a number; it is 57 people whose families are currently grieving as a result of the loss of someone dear to them. It is unacceptable; we cannot continue to see this rate. With all of the advancements in technology and innovation and the efforts that my colleague in charge of regional roads, Paul Toole, and I have put in, there must be a better way forward.

Annually—usually after the Christmas period—stories appear about the state of road tolls in New South Wales. With everything happening around the State this year, this tragedy has not been clearly demonstrated to the community. It has to change. In many ways we must look at changing the government structure around road safety so that what is occurring does not continue. There has been improvement in some areas, such as the change in driver behaviour around mobile phone use. I thank the community for responding accordingly to the rollout of the mobile phone detection cameras and the work that our highway patrol has been undertaking in surveillance of this practice. In the trial period 1.2 per cent of motorists were caught using their mobile phones. When we rolled out the cameras that number dropped to 0.34 per cent. Although 9.2 million vehicles were checked through the three-month grace period before we started issuing the fines, which only started last weekend, we saw a very significant drop in the number of people using phones behind the wheel.

That said, 31,300 people doing the wrong thing is way too many. Ultimately, given the change of behaviour, if we can urge the remaining 1 per cent of people to do the right thing then everyone will be protected. If someone is distracted behind the wheel of a car travelling at 60 kilometres per hour and they look down for two seconds the motor vehicle has moved 33 metres. That is a lot of time to not be looking at what is going on around you. We must find a better way to address the road toll, which is not dropping in the way that we all want. For this reason, later this month the first of what will become an annual summit involving experts from around the world will look at ways to reduce the road toll in New South Wales. Countries such as Norway have had to make some challenging and tough decisions. Norway has been able to do it, which is why the rate of people being killed on its roads is half the rate in New South Wales.

In relation to regional areas, as the member for Bega I can say that the road toll statistics in the bush are way too high. The major factors are speeding, fatigue, drinking, drug taking and, of course, people being distracted in various forms. We will continue to work on this; we want to get the best results possible. I thank the community for its response to mobile phone usage. There has been some debate about whether there should be signs and that debate is yet to happen in the upper House. Again I thank everyone for their work in this area so that the loss of life does not continue. I am horrified that this year 57 lives have already been lost. I want to see a drop in that rate, as does the Minister for regional roads, so that families are kept together and communities are not scarred from the trauma of road accidents.

*Documents***UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 4 March 2020.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

Powerhouse Museum Ultimo

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

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

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

Owners Corporations and Short-term Letting

Petition requesting that owners corporations be given the authority to control short-term letting in their buildings, including to place limits beyond State controls or to ban the practice outright, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

201 Elizabeth Street Mixed Use Building

Petition calling on the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to refuse the proposed development of a 52-storey building at 201 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, which will adversely affect the amenity of Hyde Park and surrounding residences, overshadow the ANZAC Memorial and have significant impacts on traffic congestion, noise and liveability in the Sydney CBD, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

*Bills***FIREARMS AND WEAPONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CRIMINAL USE) BILL 2020****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:21:05): The background of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 is that the Government is strengthening provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons. As an outcome of the Lindt cafe siege review, in November 2015 the now Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management agreed to review the adequacy of legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms. The second aim of the bill is to clarify police powers for firearms protection orders. In 2016 the Ombudsman's report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers* proposed legislative recommendations on how the police administer and serve firearms protection orders [FPOs].

With regard to the proposed reforms for strengthening provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons, the new offence includes the broadest concepts of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of illegal manufacture, including financing, providing premises, participating, assembling parts or the acquisition, possession, use or supply of firearms or prohibited weapon precursors. The offence will not apply to firearms dealers, armourers or those commercial enterprises that are permitted to manufacture firearms or prohibited weapons under existing legislation. It will apply regardless of whether a completed or functioning firearm or prohibited weapon is identified by police officers.

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that firearms regulations with regard to illegal manufacture strike the right balance between public safety and minimising the burden on law-abiding firearms owners. Guns are obviously a very dangerous item in society and especially given the public perception of a gun in public, it is important we strike that balance. A key principle of the National Firearms Agreement and the New South Wales Firearms Act 1996 is that firearm possession and use is a privilege conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety.

With hundreds of law-abiding gun owners in my electorate of Coffs Harbour and tens of thousands of law-abiding gun owners across New South Wales, it is important that our firearms laws, like any other Australian State or Territory, are based on the National Firearms Agreement [NFA]. The NFA was originally drafted to develop fundamental aspects of the regulation of firearms in this country, which it now maintains, including the requirement that firearm owners be licensed; the requirement that individuals have a genuine reason to possess a firearm; the requirement that firearms be registered; that personal protection is not a genuine reason to possess a firearm; and the requirement of permits for the acquisition of each firearm. Law-abiding firearms owners take this responsibility seriously and accept the privilege, with respect to the conditions of their firearms licence. The real concern is illegal firearms which in the hands of brazen and hardened criminals are clearly a danger to our community. Police continue to target illegal firearm activity, and they will have the full support of this House in this undertaking.

In relation to legal firearms, prior to being issued with a firearms licence or permit applicants undergo a range of criminal and suitability checks and all firearms must be registered. These processes are subject to strict legislative provisions. Owners are also required to have a separate permit for each firearm they seek to acquire and must demonstrate that they have a good reason for acquiring the firearm. Police conduct regular checks to ensure compliance with firearm ownership conditions. Each licence application is rigorously assessed on its merits and ability to meet the strict legislative requirements particular to the licence type sought. The great majority of people who own a firearm comply with this strict regulatory framework but, as I said, the real concern is illegal firearms. The New South Wales Government also works with other jurisdictions to ensure sound national positions, a national system of identifying firearms, solid customs and import policy and consistent legislation to avoid jurisdiction shopping across borders. We will continue to do all we can to ensure a safe and secure New South Wales.

The second part of the proposed reforms is to clarify the powers under the Firearms Act relating to firearms prohibitions orders. These provisions include making it clear that it is lawful to conduct a search immediately following the service of an FPO but only after an FPO subject has been provided an opportunity to immediately surrender all lawfully held firearms; empowering police executing a search to search any other person found in the premises whom police reasonably suspect to possess a firearm, part or ammunition; extending the powers to search a premises to also enable police to search vehicles, vessels or aircraft situated on the premises; providing that an FPO issued is reviewed by the NSW Police Force 10 years after the date it is served; and making it clear that the legislative safeguards that relate to personal searches are applied.

In relation to firearms prohibition orders, New South Wales has been leading the country in instituting FPO legislation. Our colleagues in other jurisdictions are now doing so in greater numbers. Firearms prohibition orders are now issued in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. The bill will provide for the mutual recognition of another jurisdiction's FPO. It is important to note, as was noted earlier in the debate, that the Northern Territory has just assented to legislation creating firearms prohibition orders in that State. The Northern Territory police Minister, the Hon. Nicole Manison, has said that the new laws would make it harder for guns to wind up in the hands of suspected criminals. That State has recently had a number of significant gun deaths, hence the introduction of the legislation.

As the member for Tweed said in his contribution, it seems that Queensland has not yet adopted this legislation. I urge my colleagues north of the border to consider this legislation to bring Queensland in line with most other States in the country. I also note that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been working hard to ensure that he balances the safety of the community with allowing the possession of firearms for legitimate use. In August last year the Minister for Police and Emergency Services announced that historic and unique firearms will continue to be on display in their original form at museums across New South Wales, following a special exemption for certified museum collectors. That decision was made to ensure that the Firearms Regulation 2017 required all pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections to be rendered permanently inoperable, regardless of age, danger to the public or historical value. Community safety is always the Government's top priority but at the same time this change recognises that historic firearms items should be available for public viewing. I understand that the Firearms Registry will write to all holders of museum firearms permits to advise them of the regulatory changes and the process to apply for an exemption. [*Extension of time*]

According to the NSW Police Force figures, a total of 446 firearms were stolen in New South Wales in the 2018-19 financial year. That is 446 too many. But this represents only 0.04 per cent of the total number of registered firearms. The country areas of northern, southern and western regions recorded the highest numbers. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 271 firearms were stolen. The majority of firearms stolen, approximately 96 per cent, were category A and B firearms. In the same financial year 62 firearms were reported as lost or missing. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 33 firearms were stolen. The theft of firearms is, of course, a major concern for the NSW Police Force and all thefts are thoroughly investigated. Given that this bill will impact only criminal activity, no external stakeholder consultation will occur.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:34:24): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. I acknowledge the excellent contributions of the member for Wollondilly, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Camden, my good friend the member for Seven Hills, the member for Goulburn, the member for Tweed, the member for Ku-ring-gai and the member for Coffs Harbour. The bill includes two key reforms. First, it strengthens provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons. The new offence will include the broadest concepts of knowingly taking part in a step in the process of illegal manufacture, including financing, providing premises, participating, assembling parts or the acquisition, possession, use or supply of firearms or prohibited weapon precursors. Secondly, the bill clarifies powers under the Firearms Act 1996 related to firearms prohibition orders [FPOs]

I understand one of the reasons for this bill is that it is in response to the Lindt cafe siege review. As an outcome of that review, in November 2015 the now Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management agreed to a review of the adequacy of legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of firearms. That has led to this bill coming before us today. The bill also contains amendments to the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms and to give effect to the Ombudsman's report entitled *Review of the police use of firearm prohibition orders search powers*.

Firearms prohibition orders are one of the most successful tools available to our fantastic police to disrupt and respond to illegal firearm possession by criminals. FPOs are not a new concept. The Commissioner of Police has had the power since 1973 to make a firearms prohibition order against a person who in the public interest is not fit to possess firearms. Around 10 years ago there was a spate of drive-by shootings, with increased reporting and headlines relating to public and drive-by shootings. People right across New South Wales, but particularly in Sydney, have heard of lots of reports of shooting offences over the past decade and there was evidence that these offences, unfortunately, were escalating. This Government took action to ensure police had enhanced means to tackle gun crime. Police can use the existing laws and powers but they will have the ability to effectively search those people served with an FPO. Whenever criminals choose guns as the means to not only commit crimes but to also resolve their internal wars the community is at risk. Criminals have no consideration for the consequences of their actions.

I note that the member for Seven Hills has entered the Chamber. I acknowledge his contribution to debate on the bill. I also acknowledge his service as a former police officer with the NSW Police Force. He knows firsthand the damage that can be done by illegal activity involving firearms. In 2013 the powers available to police were strengthened under the Firearms Act 1996 so that police could search individuals who are the subject of an FPO. The power to search was a key missing component of the FPO regime. To give true effect to the prohibition, police must be able to check that the subject person is complying with the order. The 2013 powers gave police the ability to ensure that criminals do not have firearms in their possession after the FPO is ordered. The strengthening of the old FPO provisions has been one of the Coalition Government's greatest successes in combating serious and organised crime. Former Premier O'Farrell reiterated in the second reading of the 2013 bill:

This bill will equip the NSW Police Force with powerful new weapons to help tackle criminals with guns ... in particular to target gun crime across Sydney. I say again: Nothing in this legislation affects legitimately licensed gun owners. Nothing in this legislation should concern innocent citizens of this State. This legislation will concern those who are involved in criminal activities involving guns. This legislation will ensure that those people have no place to hide.

The orders are directed at outlaw motorcycle gangs, organised criminal groups and serious crime offenders who have no legitimate reason whatsoever for possessing a firearm, firearm part or ammunition. It is important to note that the orders are not directed at legitimate firearms licence holders or permit holders and that the provisions in the bill do not impact the law-abiding shooting community who do the right thing. According to my local police force, there are more than 1,500 registered firearm holders on the Central Coast alone. The majority of those people do the right thing. They keep their guns in the correct safe with the ammunition stored separately. As I have outlined, the bill does not impact responsible firearms owners who are doing the right thing. During the course of an FPO search it is not uncommon for police to seize other items, including drugs, explosives and other prohibited articles. Therefore, maintaining strategies that target criminal groups and individuals involved with illicit firearms is a key law enforcement priority. The FPO legislation confers strong powers. However, they are applied to a very small section of the criminal community and not to the general public.

Between 2014 and 2019 the number of FPOs has increased and averaged 947 per year. The number of searches per year, including vehicles and premises, has increased from around 500 to over 3,000 in 2018-19, with 116 legal actions in that year for offences related to the breaching of FPOs. Those increases send a strong message to criminals wanting to use firearms that they will be found, caught and prosecuted. Under section 74B, the 2013 amendments required that the NSW Ombudsman keep under scrutiny the exercise of powers conferred on police officers under that section for two years after the provisions commenced. On 31 August 2016 the former

Ombudsman provided the then Minister for Justice and Police with a copy of a report entitled *Review of police use of the firearms prohibition order search powers*. The report states:

... it appears that police have largely targeted the cohort of people Parliament intended when conducting searches under the FPO search powers.

The report also states:

... the evidence does not indicate that police have generally exercised the FPO search powers in a manner that was oppressive or abusive.

The report made 15 recommendations about possible changes to legislation and internal procedures and practices when New South Wales police officers use the FPO search powers. Those directed at the NSW Police Force regarding training, operating procedures and documentation have been implemented. The bill gives effect to the remaining recommendations supported by the Government. The bill ensures that the search powers are used appropriately and with procedural fairness. In summary, the amendments relating to FPOs in the bill include the following. First, the bill includes a requirement that the FPO subject has an opportunity to immediately surrender all lawfully held firearms or ammunition before police take any action. [*Extension of time*]

Secondly, it makes it clear that it is lawful to conduct a search immediately following the service of an FPO to ensure that the subject is complying with the order. Thirdly, it empowers police executing a search to search any person found on premises whom police reasonably suspect to possess a firearm, part or ammunition. Fourthly, it clarifies the police search vehicles, vessels and aircraft situated on premises that are under the control or management of the FPO subject. Fifthly, it provides that an FPO issued is reviewed by the NSW Police Force 10 years after the date it is served and continues unless it is revoked following the review.

Sixth, it makes clear that the legislative safeguards under the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 [LEPRA] that relate to personal searches are applied to FPO person searches. Seventh, it mirrors the provisions that relate to search warrants in LEPRA with regard to notification and use of reasonable force and empowers police to seize any firearm, firearm part or ammunition found. Finally, it makes clear that the regulations may provide for mutual recognition of interstate and New Zealand FPOs and consequentially amends the regulations to recognise FPOs in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

It is important to note that a review of the report and the NSW Police Force experience of the use of FPO search powers indicates that the police have not treated the FPO search powers in a cavalier or heavy-handed way. Rather they have been exercised judiciously and responsibly. That is borne out by the material contained within the review. FPOs are a disruption technique. The objective of deterring people from engaging in illicit firearms activity or firearms-related crime is central to the strategies employed by the NSW Police Force to keep the people of New South Wales safer and to target hardened criminals. Firearms and weapons generally continue to be a domain where emerging technologies, new materials, new ideas and the means to implement them can pose the highest risk to our community.

I congratulate Minister David Elliott on bringing the bill to the House and on his judicious service. I also acknowledge the great work done by Tom Watson, who is in the gallery this afternoon, in drafting the bill. He should be very proud that the bill ensures that the good people of New South Wales are protected from illegal activity by organised crime. We on the Government side of the House fully support the ongoing use of FPOs by the NSW Police Force to crack down on illegal activity and keep the community safe. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (15:43:55): I support the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for introducing the bill. I also thank Tom Watson for his hard work in bringing it together. I state from the outset that I have a firearm licence, as do many friends and neighbours of mine. Guns are very important to people who live on properties in rural and regional areas for feral animal and vermin control. I grew up around firearms but the vigilance and regulation relating to firearms now is significantly different to when I was a young fella, which is good. We used to drive around with rifles on a rack on the back of a ute and they were displayed in living rooms for all to see. But now our world is a much different place. Unfortunately, illegal firearms and weapons made specifically to maim and kill are an all-too-real concern and go to the crux of this bill.

The bill will amend the Firearms Act 1996, the Firearms Regulation 2017 and the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998. First, it will strengthen the provisions relating to illegal manufacture of firearms and prohibited weapons and, secondly, it will clarify police powers for the use of firearm prohibition orders [FPOs], which we have heard about. There has been discussion around what those two actions will do. This discussion started after the review into the terrible Lindt cafe siege in 2015. The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management agreed to a review of the adequacy of legislation to respond to new technologies concerning the illegal manufacture of

firearms. In 2016 the Ombudsman's Report entitled *Review of police use of firearms prohibition order search powers* proposed legislative recommendations on how the police administer and serve firearm prohibition orders.

It is difficult to get the balance right in any legislation. On the one hand it is an attempt to keep firearms out of the wrong hands but on the other hand it must allow people to hold and store firearms for legitimate use. That is certainly a concern that is raised in regional areas like mine. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been working extremely hard to ensure that he gets the balance right. In August last year the Minister announced that historic and unique firearms will continue to be allowed to be displayed in their original form at museums across the State, following a special exemption for certified museum collectors. That change means the NSW Police Force commissioner can make exemptions from the requirement for museums to make pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections permanently inoperable regardless of their age, danger to the public or historical value.

The main focus of the change will always be on community safety but there needs to be some level of understanding about those historic items. It is recognised that historic firearms and associated items should be available for public viewing. I understand the Firearms Registry will write to all holders of firearms museum permits to advise them of the regulatory change and the process to apply for an exemption. I am sure all who have not done that yet will certainly do so and we will continue to see the preservation of historic military firearm collections right around regional New South Wales. Those collections are a great boost to tourism in regional areas and it is great news for those who own or run museums. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that firearms regulations strike the right balance between public safety and minimising the burden on genuine law-abiding firearms owners.

A key principle of the National Firearms Agreement [NFA] and the Firearms Act 1996 is that firearm possession and use is a privilege which is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety. Like other Australian States and Territories, New South Wales firearms laws are based on the National Firearms Agreement. The NFA was originally drafted to develop and maintain the fundamental aspects of the regulation of firearms in this country including that firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety, the requirement that firearm owners be licensed, the requirement that individuals have a genuine reason to possess a firearm, the requirement that firearms must be registered, that personal protection is not a genuine reason to possess a firearm and that permits to acquire are needed for the acquisition of each firearm.

Law-abiding firearms owners take this responsibility seriously. They realise it is a privilege to own firearms and accept the conditions of having a firearms licence. The real concern is illegal firearms, which present a danger to our community. Police continue to target illegal firearm activity with vigilance. Prior to being issued with a firearms licence or permit, applicants undergo a range of criminal and suitability checks and all firearms must be registered. Those processes are subject to strict legislative provisions. Owners are required to have a separate permit for each firearm they seek to acquire and must demonstrate that they have a good reason for acquiring each firearm. Police conduct regular checks to ensure compliance with firearm ownership conditions. Each licence application is rigorously assessed on its merits and ability to meet the strict legislative requirements particular to the licence type that is sought.

Those changes apply to everyone. The conditions for owning a firearm differ to when I was growing up but fair and reasonable people are happy with the changes. It is and should be a rigorous process. It works well, particularly in regional areas. Police do a great job of ensuring that all firearms owners have safes in good condition and that their firearms and ammunition are stored separately. The great majority of people who own firearms comply with the strict regulatory framework, which is not targeted at them but at the crooks. The New South Wales Government works with other jurisdictions to ensure a sound national system of identifying firearms, solid customs and import policies and consistent legislation to avoid jurisdiction shopping across borders, which can be a concern. We will continue to do all we can to ensure a safe and secure New South Wales.

While New South Wales has been a leader in the country in instituting FPO legislation, our colleagues in other jurisdictions are now doing so in greater numbers. Firearms prohibition order legislation is in place in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. The bill will provide for the mutual recognition of any other jurisdiction's FPO. It is timely to note that the Northern Territory has just assented to legislation creating FPOs. The Northern Territory police Minister has said that the new laws will make it harder for guns to wind up in the hands of suspected criminals. Recently in the Northern Territory there have been a number of significant gun deaths; hence the introduction of that legislation. It is good to see another jurisdiction is realising the importance of those orders and is cracking down on the illegal use of firearms and organised crime.

According to NSW Police Force figures, a total of 446 firearms were stolen in New South Wales in the last financial year. That represents 0.04 per cent of the total number of registered firearms. The country areas of northern, southern and western regions recorded the highest numbers. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 271 firearms were stolen. The theft of firearms is a major concern for the NSW Police

Force and all thefts are thoroughly investigated. It is a major contributor to rural crime across my region and across the Far West. Rural crime investigators have made a concerted effort to make a dent in this to ensure that crooks know that they will be caught. Tracing the source of those thefts is really important.

Everyone who is in possession of an unregistered firearm is committing an offence unless there are specific circumstances, such as a firearms amnesty. There have been extremely successful amnesties in recent years for people to hand in their unregistered rifle, gun or firearm without penalty. It is difficult to determine the number of registered as opposed to unregistered firearms in crime. Only a tiny percentage of matters have a firearm recovered with a serial number that has been recorded. I again thank the Minister for introducing the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:54:05): I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for bringing the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 before the House. When the community of Albury talks about firearms, one name in particular always comes up: the late Tim Fischer. Mr Fischer did many things for which he is remembered with affection in my part of the world and the Federal electorate of Farrer, ranging from his military experience at the time of the war in Vietnam to his abiding passion for all things railway. But his work on gun laws is his most powerful legacy from which every Australian continues to benefit.

It has been 24 years since the Coalition introduced gun reform laws during the period of rawness and grief that followed the Port Arthur massacre. Mr Fischer was the senior person representing regional Australia in those debates and his leadership was crucial when taking on the immense challenge of channelling that community grief into a commitment to introducing life-saving legislation. Let us not forget that this was a time when gun licensing and gun reform were not always popular subjects to raise. Nevertheless Mr Fischer took to the streets to persuade Australians—in particular regional Australians—to rise to the task. His vision turned out to be correct and Australia is a safer society than it might have been otherwise.

In considering the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020 we are looking to safeguard that legacy. Part of that legacy is an approach that recognises that we are not dealing with a static product category. Firearms develop, needs change and the balance shifts. With this bill the Government is fine-tuning that balance to accommodate emerging realities. I welcome that this bill is the product of a working group that includes representatives from all Australian States and Territories and from New Zealand. The working group proposed an approach by which the offence of illegal manufacture of firearms would have a broader application and new technologies could be captured.

The report of the national review that was led by New South Wales with input from all jurisdictions was approved by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management. Thus the bill before the House today is the end result of a nationally endorsed and comprehensive review process. In New South Wales we look to the National Firearms Agreement and the Firearms Act 1996 as our starting point. Within that framework are the fundamental principles that firearm possession and use are a privilege and that the overriding need is to ensure public safety. As the Minister noted in his second reading speech:

... law enforcement agencies have continued to see a growth in domestic manufacture of improvised firearms, as well as 3D printing and machine milling of firearms.

Proposed section 51J (2) of the bill provides new offences that meet the need to catch new materials and technologies. It is focused on those who knowingly take part in a step of the process of illegal manufacture. This could include letting those activities take place on their premises, the financing of illegal manufacture, the supply of firearms, possession and acquisition. Locating illegal weapons activity is one thing but removing the firearms, parts and associated items is another. Proposed section 51K (1) deals with this by giving our police the power to seize firearms, firearms parts and firearm precursors. Subsections (2) and (3) of proposed section 51K provide police with the power to direct a person to provide assistance or information to an officer who is seizing or detaining those items that relate to the offence. Here the bill refers to the ways in which criminals seek to hide their tracks via passwords, login codes, digital credentials and other forms of security or encryption. The detail is in the data. This is a wide net of actions but they are all actions that support an industry that is based around doing harm.

The bill makes clear that these offences do not apply to firearms dealers, armourers or those commercial enterprises that are permitted by current legislation to manufacture firearms or weapons. It is important to ensure that our efforts are focused on those who are involved in criminal activity and are not to the detriment of law-abiding Australians. As the representative of a regional electorate, I always look to see that legislation does not unfairly place a burden on farmers and on those whose day-to-day realities may be far removed from the urban worker. We have a system of registration and licensing and of demonstrating a need to acquire a firearm. Our society requires applicants for a firearms licence or permit to undergo a criminal history check. The applicant

must be a person who is suitable to own weapons. A separate permit is required for each firearm that a person seeks to acquire and police undertake checks to monitor compliance.

There are many steps in the process of firearm ownership but I believe that most owners have over time come to understand how the steps work together to ensure our common safety and that firearms are held by those in our community who have a genuine need for them. The bill ensures that the existing provision in new section 8 (1) relating to the authority attached to a firearms dealer licence includes the authority to manufacture firearm parts. The authority of the firearms dealer licence is clearly designed to include manufacture of parts for the legitimate manufacture of firearms and reflects the firearms dealer definition in section 4 of the Act. However, the authority is not clearly attached to firearms parts in section 8. As a consequential amendment, that will be clarified.

That shows beyond doubt that the new offence does not apply to licensed firearms dealers who manufacture parts within the authority of their licence. Likewise, the second part of the bill that deals with the clarifying of powers under the Firearms Act 1996 provides that a person subjected to a firearms prohibition order [FPO] must be given the opportunity to surrender any lawful firearms, firearm parts or ammunition in their possession before action is taken against them. I appreciate that this bill does not criminalise legitimate owners of firearms. The focus of these reforms is on those who seek to involve themselves in illegal manufacture and in making a profit from activities that present a genuine threat to the safety of our communities. I support the bill.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:01:26): I support the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020. New South Wales has the best gun laws in not only the country but also the world. Our gun laws and the ways that we protect our citizens from gun violence are the envy of many countries. New South Wales has been leading the country in instituting firearms protection order legislation and our colleagues in other jurisdictions are now doing the same in greater numbers. Firearms prohibition order [FPO] legislation is in place in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. To that end, the bill will provide for the mutual recognition of an FPO from another jurisdiction. It is important and timely to note that the Northern Territory has just assented to legislation that creates FPOs in that Territory.

Northern Territory Minister for Police Nicole Manison said that the new laws will make it harder for guns to wind up in the hands of suspected criminals. The Northern Territory has recently had a number of significant gun deaths, hence the introduction of the FPO. It is good to see another jurisdiction realise the importance of these orders in cracking down on the illegal use of firearms and on organised crime. I note that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been working hard to ensure that he balances the safety of the community with allowing the possession of firearms for legitimate use. In August last year the Minister announced that historic and unique firearms will continue to be displayed in their original form at museums across New South Wales, following a special exemption for certified museum collectors.

The change means that the NSW Police Force commissioner can make exemptions from the requirements for museums to make pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections permanently inoperable. That decision was to ensure that the Firearms Regulation 2017 required all pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections to be rendered permanently inoperable regardless of age, danger to the public or historical value. Community safety is always the top priority of the New South Wales Government but at the same time the change recognises that historic firearm items are available for public viewing. I understand the Firearms Registry will write to all holders of museum firearms permits to advise them of the regulatory changes and the process to apply for an exemption. At the time Gunnedah Rural Museum firearms curator Trent Donoghue supported these changes. He said:

We're thankful for the commonsense approach taken by the NSW government. These changes will ensure the preservation of historic military firearm collections.

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that firearms regulations strike the right balance between maintaining public safety and minimising the burden on law-abiding firearms owners. A key principle of the National Firearms Agreement and the New South Wales Firearms Act 1996 is that firearms possession and use is a privilege, conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety. New South Wales firearms laws, like those of other Australian States and Territories, are based on the National Firearms Agreement, or the NFA. The NFA was originally drafted to develop and now maintains the fundamental aspects of the regulation of firearms in this country, namely, that firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety, the requirement that firearms owners be licensed, the requirement that individuals have a genuine reason to possess a firearm, the requirement that firearms be registered, that personal protection is not a genuine reason to possess a firearm, and that permits to acquire are needed for the acquisition of each firearm.

Law-abiding firearms owners take this responsibility seriously and accept the privilege with respect for the conditions of their firearms licence. The real concern is illegal firearms which in the hands of brazen and hardened

criminals are a clear and present danger to our community. Police continue to target illegal firearms activity. In terms of legal firearms, prior to being issued with a firearms licence or permit applicants undergo a range of criminal and suitability checks and all firearms must be registered. Those processes are subject to strict legislative provisions. Owners are also required to have a separate permit for each firearm they seek to acquire and must demonstrate that they have a good reason for acquiring the firearm.

Police conduct regular checks to ensure compliance with firearm ownership conditions. Each licence application is rigorously assessed on its merits and ability to meet the strict legislative requirements particular to the licence type sought. The great majority of people who own a firearm comply with this strict regulatory framework. The New South Wales Government also works with other jurisdictions to ensure sound national positions, a national system of identifying firearms, solid customs and import policy and consistent legislation to avoid jurisdiction shopping across borders. We will continue to do all we can to ensure a safe and secure New South Wales.

According to NSW Police Force figures, a total of 446 firearms were stolen in New South Wales in the 2018-19 financial year. This represents 0.04 per cent of the total number of registered firearms. The country areas of northern, southern and western regions recorded the highest numbers. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 271 firearms were stolen. The majority of firearms stolen in 2018-19 were category A or B firearms, long arms, at approximately 96 per cent. In the same financial year 62 firearms in this category were reported as lost or missing. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 33 firearms in this category were stolen. The theft of firearms is, of course, a major concern for the NSW Police Force and all thefts are thoroughly investigated. Police also help gun owners to understand the value of safe storage arrangements to reduce opportunistic thefts. Tracing the source of illicit firearms and those used in the commission of an offence remains a significant issue in Australia. The diversion of firearms to the illicit market occurs by a number of methods. Theft is only one of these.

The number of recorded non-fatal shooting incidents for the 2018-19 financial year was 170. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 a further 118 non-fatal shooting incidents were recorded. Statistics on firearm offences may be those related to a crime committed with a firearm, such as a drive-by shooting, or those related to regulatory breaches. For example, NSW Police Force figures indicate 98 incidents of "unlawfully discharge a firearm" in the 2018-19 financial year and 32 incidents of "discharge a firearm into premises". In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 there were 65 incidents of "unlawfully discharge a firearm" and 28 incidents of "discharge a firearm into premises". There were nine incidents of "shoot with intent to murder" in the 2018-19 financial year. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 there were seven "shoot with intent to murder" incidents.

There are a number of firearms regulatory-type offences for which legal actions were commenced in the 2018-19 financial year. In total, over 3,200 legal actions were commenced for offences under the Firearms Act and the Firearms Regulation. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019, 2,463 legal actions were commenced for offences under the Firearms Act and the Firearms Regulation. I remind everyone that unless there are specific circumstances during a firearms amnesty, possession of an unregistered firearm is an offence. It is not possible to determine the number of registered as opposed to unregistered firearms used in the commission of a crime, as only a tiny percentage of matters have a firearm recovered and serial number of the firearm recorded. *[Extension of time]*

In the 2018-19 financial year 364 incidents of assault, homicide, intimidation, kidnapping or robbery were recorded as involving a firearm used as a weapon. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019, 189 events of this type were recorded as involving a firearm used as a weapon. Police also seized 811 handguns in 2018-19. In the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 police have seized a further 658 handguns. Some of these may be returned to their rightful owners. We know our regulatory regime is working well and police are on the job of targeting illegal firearms and keeping them off our streets.

Raw numbers of firearms in New South Wales can only tell us so much. Good laws, smart enforcement and compliance by licensed shooters, dealers and collectors are the key to keeping our community safe from gun crime. I note that just today, 4 March 2020, eight people from an outlaw motorcycle gang were charged following investigations into several public place shootings and other criminal activity on the State's South Coast. I note this followed a number of reports of shots fired into several homes and a number of altercations where firearms were involved. After these incidents, detectives from South Coast Police District commenced inquiries along with detectives from the State Crime Command's Criminal Groups Squad.

During the course of the investigation detectives received information about alleged drug supply, extortion, assaults and fraudulent bushfire claims against a charity organisation. Following extensive investigations, strike force detectives assisted by Strike Force Raptor executed two search warrants at Sunshine Bay and Batehaven, three crime scene warrants at Long Beach, Sunshine Beach and Mogo, and a firearms prohibition order at Malua

Bay from 7.30 a.m. yesterday. The use of the firearms prohibition orders shows the importance of these orders in disrupting individuals alleged to have been involved in criminal activity. That is why I support this bill. I commend the Minister for bringing the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (16:31:57): I speak in support of the Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020, which amends the Firearms Act 1996, the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 and the Firearms Regulation 2017 to strengthen the provisions relating to the illegal manufacture of firearms or prohibited weapons and to clarify the police operations when conducting firearms prohibition order searches. I will quote some numbers in relation to firearm registration and legal gun ownership in the Tamworth electorate. I say at the outset that law-abiding registered gun owners are not the ones causing problems. The problems come from outlaw motorcycle gangs, illegal firearm use and people who do not have a licence for their weapon. In the Tamworth regional postcode, 2340, there were just under 17,000 guns between nearly 3,000 owners. That high figure does not surprise me, particularly given the region's rural setting and the nine recreational gun clubs located within the Oxley local area command. That police command has the most licensed guns of any in the State: around 16,000.

The just under 6,000 licensed gun owners in the Tamworth electorate are law-abiding citizens who do the right thing. We need to crack down on those who do the wrong thing and bring the remainder into disrepute. The bill deals with offences of taking part in the manufacture of firearms and will ensure that any person who plays any part in producing an illegal firearm will be subject to a criminal offence. The many gun clubs across the Tamworth electorate do a fantastic job of providing the opportunity for those who enjoy the sport to take part in it. Those gun clubs—for example, the Boggabri Gunnedah Gun Club—have invested significantly in clay target and skeet and those forms of the sport and, in fact, hold State and national competitions. That occurs not only at the Boggabri Gunnedah Gun Club but also at gun clubs across the Tamworth electorate.

The member for Clarence referred to Gunnedah, which is in the Tamworth electorate. Museums across the State and, in particular, the Gunnedah Rural Museum have a significant number of historic weapons on display. It is a significant part of their display. The issue of having those guns taken down was brought to my attention by the firearms curator in Gunnedah, Trent Donoghue. Together we took the issue to the police Minister, David Elliott, who took the matter forward. As a result of our representation to the police Minister, in August last year we announced that historic and unique firearms will continue to be on display in their original form at museums across New South Wales, following a special exemption for certified museum collectors.

The Gunnedah Rural Museum is a fantastic museum. I encourage anyone heading to Gunnedah to go and have a look at the museum, which takes in the history of agriculture right from the start to where we are today. You can see that a lot of the ancient machinery—particularly the equipment used during droughts, when people were trying to create dams and banks and weirs to assist them during those dry periods—bears a resemblance to the machinery still in use today. In agriculture, while the decades pass and the times change, equipment and its use and purpose are very similar. Hence the display of historic guns and weapons and not only from a military period, which we need to recognise. Being ex-service personnel and as a military man, having spent six years in the Royal Australian Air Force, I pay tribute to and honour those who fought to make this country the great country that we live in now and the democracy that we enjoy. It is only fitting and right that we pay tribute and homage to them through displaying their uniforms and the weapons that they carried to keep this country free.

It is great to see the transition. Many clubs and town halls across the electorate proudly show the weapons or war memorabilia of those who served from their small communities—quite often just a handful who served from a very small community. They went to war and were lost to families and to history but their names shall be forever remembered. With that is the memorabilia, whether it be parts of the uniform or a weapon that is proudly on display as part of a war memorial. With Anzac Day coming up again, I note that one thing that this Government has done well and will continue to do is provide grant money for the restoration of war memorials right across this great State. As a returned serviceman, when applications come through I take great pride in ensuring that war memorials across this State are updated and are a fitting tribute to the honour of those who fought for this great country.

I was pleased to be able to partner with Trent Donoghue of the Gunnedah Rural Museum to take this forward for museums across the State. Lithgow has a great museum with historic weapons and unique firearms on display. I was also pleased to partner with Lithgow museum and take to the Minister a sensible approach so that through the museums we can continue to honour those who served. The change meant that the NSW Police Force commissioner can grant exemptions from the requirement for museums to make pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections permanently inoperable. The requirement in the Firearms Regulation 2017 required all pistols and prohibited firearms in museum collections be rendered permanently inoperable regardless of age or whether it was a danger to the public or had historical value. Community safety is always number one, as the member for Clarence has said, but I congratulate the Minister on thinking ahead and saying, "Let's have

some common sense wrapped around this decision." The Firearms Registry will be writing to all holders of firearms museum permits to advise them of the regulatory changes and the process to apply for an exemption.

Given the number of firearms registered to legal gun owners in the Tamworth electorate, sometimes there is a need to change the registration classification of a particular firearm. If someone is going to purchase a firearm, obviously they need to acquire a permit. I respectfully say that perhaps we could look at investigating the processes of the Firearms Registry in relation to the time it takes to process applications. If there is one thing that comes across my desk as a local member it is the challenges of dealing with the Firearms Registry and the time taken, whether that relates to re-registration, classification or obtaining a licence. I know there are many primary producers, particularly on farms where sons and daughters are coming into the farm business, that need a firearms licence as part of their farming operation and an application has taken sometimes a little too long. I respectfully ask the Firearms Registry to consider putting processes in place to expedite the applications of those seeking to have legally licensed guns, to get its registration process up to speed and to make any necessary changes. I commend the police Minister for bringing this legislation forward and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2019-2020

Debate resumed from 27 February 2020.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:24:08): I was last talking about the active transport program. The New South Wales Government and Roads and Maritime Services has provided a grant of \$151,200 through the program, with the council required to provide an additional \$80,650 towards the project. Creating a pedestrian link between Tahmoor and Picton High has been in the planning for many years and now the funding has been allocated to start working on it. The Government is committed to working with councils to make walking and cycling a more convenient, safe and enjoyable transport option. I am delighted that the State Government has been able to partner with Wollondilly Shire Council in this exciting community project. We want to support more accessible, livable and productive towns by targeting investment in areas where these short local trips occur. It will help reduce congestion on the roads as well as increase the health of residents.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has saved households more than \$800 million over the last year through a raft of cost-of-living measures, including cheaper green slips, the \$100 Active Kids and Creative Kids vouchers and free rego. Service NSW is providing an outstanding role in assisting residents with cost-of-living savings. My electorate will have access to its mobile vans at Warragamba, Balmoral and Tahmoor. I believe the vans are heading there in the next few weeks. That has been happening on a regular basis. This is another great initiative by the Government and I thank Minister Dominello for his great work.

The provision of transport infrastructure across my electorate is a key issue and I will be pursuing it as a matter of importance. During the last election campaign I was able to secure promises for several projects and I am pleased to say that allocations for these projects were made in last year's budget. Wollondilly has the potential to be the tourism hub of New South Wales. The Southern Highlands, as everyone knows, is already a wonderful tourism location but closer to the centre of my electorate lies a sleeping giant that is about to be woken. That giant is the reopening of the Picton-Mittagong Loop Line for heritage trains between Thirlmere and Colo Vale. During the last New South Wales election campaign I fought hard and with a successful petition, great public support and a strong media campaign I was able to secure \$5.5 million to bring this dream alive.

The loop line is a 34 kilometre single track built in the 1860s. It has not been in use for 44 years. It has the deepest rail cutting in the Southern Hemisphere located at Hill Top. The recent bushfires went through the area where the loop line will travel. I am working and fighting hard to have this project fast-tracked to help boost morale to bushfire-affected communities in Buxton, Balmoral and Hill Top. This funding will allow heritage trains to use the entire length of the track between Thirlmere and Colo Vale, delivering an amazing tourist experience and, more importantly, helping drive more customers to local businesses and create more employment opportunities.

The NSW Rail Museum at Thirlmere is one of the best museums in the country and welcomes around 60,000 patrons a year. This project will value add to the museum and in the future will hopefully rival and eventually topple a similar steam train attraction known as Puffing Billy in Victoria, located in the Dandenong Ranges just east of Melbourne. The line currently attracts 480,000 patrons a year and, with further investment from State and Federal governments, by 2027 will attract 730,000 patrons a year, which is a huge economic boost. I am sure that the benefit to my electorate from the allocation of this project in this year's budget will have financial and tourism benefits long into the future.

The provision of additional rail services on the Southern Highlands line is a critical matter. I have personal experience of this service. An election commitment was made to examine the provision of a rapid bus service as a supplement to the rail system. This will enable residents of the electorate to be able to access more effective public transport options for their daily commute. The plan is for a rapid bus service from parts of my electorate to link with the suburban electrified rail network at Macarthur station. Further, \$5.5 million has been allocated for the upgrade of Mittagong station where works have now commenced and will provide two new lifts to improve access to the station platforms; improved amenities such as new ambulant toilets and a family accessible toilet; a new pedestrian crossing from Regent Street to the station; a formal bus stop next to Regent Street at the station entrance; and upgrades to station pathways, CCTV, lighting and signage.

As part of the planning approval process, the local community is being given a chance to provide feedback on the *Review of Environmental Factors*, which outlines the plans for this project and any potential impacts on the local area and how these will be managed. I attended a public information forum in Mittagong and received excellent feedback from the residents about this project. I welcome the New South Wales Government's \$50 Opal weekly travel cap, which will take effect in the Wollondilly and Southern Highlands areas on Monday, saving regular public transport users up to \$686 a year. The decision to slash the current cap by around 20 per cent will help to ease cost-of-living pressures for rail commuters in the Wollondilly electorate. Adults will pay no more than \$50 a week. The concession cap will also be reduced from \$31.60 to \$25 per week. This has been received well by Wollondilly residents.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:32:08): I am sorry that I missed the first 28 minutes of the speech of the member for Wollondilly. It shows a level of passion for his community on the part of the member. It also shows the difference in approaches to and perspective of the budget, which is something I will explore. I start by saying that we are talking about a budget that was delivered almost a year ago. It goes to the way this place operates that despite members making small contributions to matters pertaining to the budget in private members' statements, a substantive debate on the budget has not taken place in this House. Now here we are a matter of weeks out from the 2020 budget and for some of us this is our first opportunity to make our substantive contribution to the 2019 budget.

This reflects that the independent Parliamentary Budget Office is a fleeting thing within the New South Wales system. Unlike other States and Territories and the Commonwealth where there is a permanent budget office, the opportunity to examine the budget and to present detailed policy proposals, to have them costed and worked through and to comment and reflect on them in this place is not afforded to us. I also reflect on the fact that we are discussing the 2019 budget, a budget delivered almost a year ago, in a very different context from when it was delivered. Yesterday the Reserve Bank cut interest rates by 25 basis points to 0.5 per cent. Anyone who thought we would be facing a day 10 years after the global financial crisis [GFC] with interest rates still at such low levels would be very surprised.

When I was working for the then Minister for Small Business in the Federal Parliament, Dr Craig Emerson, and looking after the Small Business portfolio during the global financial crisis, we would have been very surprised if someone had told us that a decade later we would still be facing the same record low interest rates and in fact cutting them further here and in the United States at the same time. Overnight the United States has cut 50 basis points in its interest rates. The Reserve Bank Governor reflected yesterday that the coronavirus outbreak has clouded the near-term outlook for the global economy and there will be some growth impacts in the first half of 2020. There is an uncertainty as to what that is creating.

Anyone who has been to the supermarket lately in need of particular items of necessity, whether it is toilet paper, hand sanitiser or the like, would see that the shelves are empty. That reflects on the motivations of consumers when it comes to these sorts of situations. There is a creation of speed, rapid response, confusion and concern in the general populace, which is almost as contagious, perhaps more than, some would argue, the coronavirus, given that we have seen very few cases in New South Wales to date. It is that sort of consumer sentiment that we must always be mindful of and that the then Rudd Government and later the Gillard Government were seeking to target when it came to addressing the GFC and its impacts in Australia.

It is that sort of consumer sentiment that the Government must reflect on as it formulates its budget for 2020. The Treasurer has already tried to get out in front of the fact that the numbers will look pretty grim when he hands them down. His much-talked about surpluses—which, to be honest, were really fictions of accounting creation because we still have a structural deficit—will soon be a thing of the past. The debt bomb that would have seen a turnaround of \$39 billion in the net debt of New South Wales over the life of the four years of the forecast in the forward estimates in the budget will be exacerbated; there is no doubt about it. While the Government seeks to look to opportunities to raise revenue through privatisation—no matter how Orwellian its term "asset recycling"—it cannot hide behind the fact that in the half-yearly budget update the surplus was revised

down from \$1.02 billion to \$700 million, in part because of stamp duty revenue, in part because of GST revenue, a general lack of confidence in the economy and the impact of the ongoing drought.

That will not be enough for the Government to hide behind in getting things done in areas such as the Illawarra, because in conjunction with that write-down in revenue comes the blowout of Sydney project budgets. I will run the Chamber through a couple of those blowouts that are happening at the moment. They include the Sydney Light Rail, which was originally scheduled to come in at \$1.6 billion but came in at \$2.9 billion. It was also a year late—a year late and \$1.3 billion over budget. The Sydney Metro City & Southwest blew out by \$3 billion, from \$12.5 billion to \$15.5 billion. I appreciate that the transport Minister might have apologised for a \$3 billion blowout but in days gone by a \$3 billion blowout—in fact, even a \$3 million blowout—would have seen a Minister's head roll. Not content with that, WestConnex has also blown out from \$10 billion to \$16.8 billion. For those of you at home doing the maths, that is a \$6.8 billion blowout—again, in the Transport portfolio.

But wait, there's more, as they say in the classics: a \$225 million blowout on the high-rise Arthur Phillip High School, a \$116 million blowout on the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct and a \$100 million blowout on the Sydney Football Stadium, which brings the total blowout on the Sydney Football Stadium to nearly \$1 billion. Then, of course, there is the Deputy Premier's favourite project, the \$1.5 billion Powerhouse Museum move. For those members who were not doing the maths, and I am sure that the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services was doing the maths because he knows that is \$13 billion. That includes two projects that have been given special consideration of late by the Deputy Premier. Apparently there is a bit of a feud going on in the Government around some projects and the Deputy Premier thinks that putting \$1.5 billion into the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from the inner city to Parramatta and the blowout in the cost of the Sydney Football Stadium—a round figure of \$2 billion between them—means that \$2 billion is not going to other parts of the State and other parts of the economy.

I touch on that because in communities such as my own of Wollongong, we are a large regional city that, unfortunately, under this Government and under the 2019 budget is not treated with the level of respect that a city of our size and importance to the New South Wales economy deserves. When things started to taper down in July and I saw that the GST revenue was coming off and that the property market was slowing, we could tell that a general slowdown in the economy, as well as revenue in New South Wales, was imminent. I wrote to the Treasurer just after the budget and suggested that the slowing economy needed some assistance from the Federal Government. He called for the Federal Government to help fund more infrastructure.

I suggested a number of projects that might assist Wollongong in particular. I noted to the Treasurer that Wollongong had been left out in the cold in the 2019 budget but that this was an opportunity for him to make amends. I touched on five areas in particular. They had not featured in the 2019 budget but it is important that they feature in future budgets and future priorities of the Government going forward. One was bringing forward and fast-tracking—pardon the pun—the upgrade of Unanderra Station. I appreciate that when the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, who is in the Chamber, was Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra he provided the funding for the upgrade of that station with much fanfare, after 10 years of him and others resisting. He finally committed; he relented to the campaign led by me and our community to have fair access to their local station.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. I do not think my actions or otherwise are relevant in the context of this debate. If the member would like to talk about the lack of investment over 16 years of his Government at Unanderra Station—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have heard enough.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I will comment on the point of order in a minute.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will return to the leave of the debate, which is budget estimates.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: It was about an important project that was not in the budget but was an election commitment and is something that could be brought forward in the Illawarra to make sure that local people have the opportunity. The next time I turn up at Unanderra Station I would love nothing more than to see a sign—the sign that was there under Labor and taken down by this Government—with a date ready to go. At the moment we do not even have any date as to when the community consultation on the review of environmental factors might occur. We were originally told early 2020 and more recently were told maybe the end of March. I will be keeping a close eye on that because this is one of the local projects that could have used local fabricators and local steel from the fantastic BlueScope Port Kembla Steelworks and it would have meant jobs for local people.

Another option I suggested to the Treasurer was the refurbishment of the ghost ward at Wollongong Hospital. It would cost \$1 million to get more than 20 beds back into service at Wollongong Hospital. As members

might appreciate, Wollongong Hospital has been under some pressure and is now one of the busiest emergency departments in the State. It certainly has one of the longest wait times for people presenting to emergency outside of Sydney. When the Government was approached—and we explored this recently in estimates—by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District for \$1 million to get an extra 35 beds into Wollongong Hospital to refurbish the ghost ward, which would take real pressure off Wollongong Hospital's emergency department and the staff who are doing a fantastic job but who often do not have the places to put people, the Government said, "No thanks".

I ask members who are listening and those looking at this later to reflect on the fact that \$13 billion has been spent on budget blowouts and we are talking about \$1 million. We need more beds in the Illawarra. When it was brought up in estimates in September last year, as Dr Lyons said, there were "two capital investment" programs and "neither of those was on our program for capital works." The Government managed to find a couple of million dollars for the maternity ward, which is welcome, but the fact is that \$1 million for a ward refurbishment of 35 beds was a bridge too far.

I mentioned earlier that there are multiple perspectives on the one budget and that the member for Wollondilly had been extolling what had been delivered to his community because he is a member of the Government. We remember that that comes at an opportunity cost to other communities. We now face the fact that Wollongong Hospital will remain under pressure for the foreseeable future—hopefully that is corrected in the upcoming budget—all for the sake of \$1 million. Again, \$13 billion blown on budget blowouts; \$1 million unavailable. I reckon that probably one less team-building exercise in the Department of Health could have paid for this; certainly a few less overnight conferences could have contributed.

Another suggestion I had for the Treasurer was the upgrade of the Wollongong entertainment centre. I am sure that the member for Kiama, the Minister, would back this in. He understands that an upgrade to the Wollongong entertainment centre 22 years after it was first built by a Labor government is well overdue. Twenty-two years for that sort of facility is well and truly beyond its life and it is certainly in need of an upgrade. The member would welcome the fact that part of that upgrade program is to improve the toilets so that there is proper disabled access and to improve access to the facility itself because 22 years ago we were not thinking about those access issues in the way we should have been.

Recently I was able to release to the world a hidden report that I hope the Government reflects on when it is contemplating the upcoming budget. It did not contemplate it in the 2019 budget, the 2018 budget, the 2017 budget, the 2016 budget, the 2015 budget or the 2014 budget after a draft upgrade plan was provided to the Government in 2013 which showed that back then for the cost of a mere \$28 million—it would be two, three or four times that now—we could have had an upgraded centre. We could have had more tourism opportunities in the Illawarra. We could have been delivering more events and conferences at the fantastic Wollongong entertainment centre, which would have meant not only more people coming to Wollongong for business but also more people returning to Wollongong in the future. Importantly, it also would have been the catalyst for other investments.

Other investments are sitting there ready and waiting for someone to give them the green light or a signal that the green light is going to be given for an upgrade of the entertainment centre and that will mean even more jobs. In an area that is always looking for economic diversification and more local job opportunities, that is the sort of thing we need. I stand here today and I will stand up every single opportunity I get to promote more jobs and more opportunities for the people in the Illawarra. It is great that we are close to Sydney and that we can travel to Sydney for work but many of the 23,000 people a day who do that from the Illawarra would absolutely love to be able to live and work locally. I will always stand up for those local jobs.

Another suggestion I put forward to the Treasurer which did not make it through to the budget—hopefully it will make it through to a future budget—is the upgrade of Picton Road and improvements to the South Coast rail line to ensure that those important links between the Illawarra and our economic future in south-western Sydney and our current economic activity in the Sydney CBD are taken care of. When you sit on the cusp of \$1.3 billion in projects just up the road and just beyond the escarpment, you realise that your economic opportunities and job opportunities come from south-west Sydney, both from people travelling to south-west Sydney for work and from people from south-west Sydney travelling to the Illawarra for work and for recreational opportunities. That is the great link that we have to build; that is the fantastic link that we have to try to maximise at every opportunity.

There are only 70 cities in the world that have a research-led, world-class university, a multilingual skilled workforce, a deepwater port and access within an hour to an international airport. Wollongong is one of those 70 cities. We must ensure that there are not only transport links by road and rail to the Sydney CBD—and I look forward to whenever it might be that a report on the investigation of work on the fast rail is finally released because it still remains shrouded in secrecy—but also road links through Picton Road and Appin Road and a rail link into the new Western Sydney Airport. We must maintain that link. If we lose that, we lose real opportunity.

As Infrastructure Australia, Infrastructure NSW and others have said, if the Illawarra is isolated because it does not have those transport links available it will be an absolute curb on growth. It would be criminal for any government to ignore the facts and to ignore the reports that it has had time and time again that suggest there has to be real investment in those infrastructure links heading north, south and west from the Illawarra to make sure that we are part and parcel of our economic future. I suggested that and to date I do not think that I have even had a response from the Treasurer. I had one other suggestion: to improve social housing activity to ensure that local tradespeople are in work. [*Extension of time*]

My suggestion was an acceleration of maintenance and energy efficiency upgrades for social housing for two reasons. Sadly, in many places in the Wollongong electorate the social housing maintenance backlog is considerable. In the southern suburbs of Wollongong around Berkeley, Lake Heights, Warrawong and other places, real and genuine investment is needed because social housing has not had the upkeep it should have had. By seeking to accelerate that maintenance backlog, by at least doubling that social housing maintenance, we can address some of those concerns and give people who really deserve it a decent house to live in. Give their house a coat of paint, fix the doors, fix the windows and improve the lights and make their house a safer, tidier and better place to live in.

We should also take the opportunity to ensure that we have done everything possible to improve the energy efficiency of those homes not only for the good and sound reason that it will help to reduce the electricity bills that tenants face—because they have very little capacity to control their bills—but also it will help to reduce our general carbon emissions from electricity generation and consumption. The Sustainable Buildings Research Centre at the University of Wollongong is a fierce advocate for investing in energy efficiency upgrades, particularly retrofits, and has done some fantastic work around what can be done in older housing stock. It must be remembered that less than 2 per cent of buildings in Australia are torn down and rebuilt each year. That leaves a lot of energy-inefficient buildings out there that people are living in and paying quite considerable electricity bills that they cannot do anything about.

We should always be mindful of the fact that when we are looking at these sorts of opportunities, when we are looking at energy efficiency programs and when we are looking at getting solar panels onto the roofs of houses, renters are part and parcel of that deal, whether they be in social housing or in private housing, because they have the least control and the least capacity to change and landlords have the least financial incentive to make those investments in those properties. A widespread program throughout the Illawarra of social housing maintenance and social housing improvement, particularly targeting energy efficiency, not only would be a boost to the local economy by making sure that local tradespeople are employed and providing an opportunity for those tradespeople to put on more apprentices but also would provide an opportunity to give people in the rental market some control over their electricity bills.

I will also touch on a couple of things in my capacity as shadow Minister for Natural Resources. Tucked away in the last budget was the Government's plan to undertake a scoping study into the sale of the softwood plantation assets of the Forestry Corporation. I acknowledge the strength of the community backlash in those timber-dependent communities and the strength of the Australian Workers Union and the Public Service Association in making sure that this was front of mind for people when they had the opportunity to raise issues. To be perfectly honest, the job that faces timber-dependent communities as they recover from bushfires has meant that the Government, sensibly, has abandoned that privatisation. However, there is still more to do.

As I said at the start of my contribution, the circumstances for the upcoming budget are very different from those when the 2019 budget was delivered. One of them is the aftermath of the bushfires over the past six months or so from the North Coast to the South Coast. The Leader of the Opposition and I have put forward a temporary assistance package to support the timber industry. When the shadow Cabinet met in Tumut recently, it suggested the plan to the Government, including measures that the Cabinet has not taken. Included in that plan is the appointment of a forestry recovery commissioner who will work alongside bushfire recovery people to convene an industry recovery task force to guide the recovery of timber-dependent communities. The package seeks to guarantee the replanting and re-establishment of forestry plantations, particularly prime plantations in south-east New South Wales.

The plan calls for a financial package to support mill operators so they can afford additional personal protective equipment that they will need in dealing with burnt timber and the additional wear and tear that will cause to some of their capital equipment. The package will ensure that they can manage their cash flows in the immediate term when they are considerably busy in salvaging timber and also over the next couple of years when some of that timber will be gone. The Opposition has also called for a government contribution to the cost of fencing repairs for properties adjoining Forestry Corporation properties. It is a sensible and logical option which will take a bit of pressure off people who adjoin Forestry Corporation properties and ensure that they have good

fences in place. Perhaps the Government could even consider contributing up to \$5,000 per kilometre in fencing for those properties, as the Victorian Government has done.

The Opposition has also asked for repair of damaged roads and the infrastructure that supports the Forestry estates and a weed and pest eradication program. In softwood plantations destroyed by fire—I encourage members to visit them if they have not done so already—the first thing one can see growing back after the recent rains are blackberries, which popped out of the ground straightaway. They look great but they are terrible when it comes to keeping our Forestry plantations in good order. They can become a fire hazard in the future.

Debate interrupted.

Public Interest Debate

TAFE NSW

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:57:12): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises TAFE is an incredibly important and highly valued public education institution.
- (2) Acknowledges the critical role TAFE plays in ensuring economic prosperity during the current skills shortage.
- (3) Does not support the privatisation or franchising of TAFE, further cuts to TAFE courses, the closure of any TAFE campuses or any increases in fees for TAFE courses.

I start with the objectives of the TAFE Commission. The Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990 states:

... the TAFE Commission must:

- (a) ensure that it provides technical and further education services to meet the needs of individuals and the skill needs of the workforce ...

That was written about 30 years ago but rings true today. Nobody will deny the importance of TAFE, how highly esteemed it is and its value to our society at large. Only today members heard the Premier say that she represents the party of education. I remind the Government of its record when it comes to education, particularly in the TAFE and vocational education space. As I said the other day, the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power in 2011 having signed agreements that it would protect TAFE. It seems that once its members sat on Government benches they forgot everything that they had said. They stand for nothing. Let us have a look at some of the figures. Compared with when the Government came to power, today there are 175,000 fewer students enrolled in TAFE, 5,500 fewer teachers and staff and 30 per cent—about 33,000—fewer apprentices.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr JIHAD DIB: All that is against a backdrop of a skills crisis and the Government trying to destroy TAFE. The skills shortage is not just in the building industry; it is in hairdressing, air conditioning, carpentry and other areas. The Australian Bureau of Statistics states that last year in some areas—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wollongong will come to order. His party colleague is speaking.

Mr JIHAD DIB: —less than 30 per cent of TAFE positions were filled. That tells me that people do not have the opportunity to get trained and take up jobs. The jobs are there, the shortages are there but the Government wants to wipe out TAFE. That is its clear ideology. Make no mistake, this is not some thought bubble. It is a deliberate process by the Government to completely destroy the highly regarded public TAFE system. There has been report after report, all trying to help the Government find a way to say that it wants to do away with TAFE. The Government has opened it up to the private market. Of course, there are some industry providers and not-for-profits that are fine. But what about the shonks who see education as a way to make money? What about the dodgy providers that just tick and flick? That is all they do; there is no real quality control. That is the same way some of our building industry is falling apart.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I have not even got to the opportunities yet. With the bushfires, there is an opportunity to rebuild and use TAFE as the body to train and put on more apprentices.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Clarence will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: In some regions with an unemployment rate of up to 20 per cent, we can give a chance to our young people to study or work. I turn to the TAFE review, which was announced last week. During question time I almost called in the lifesavers because every time the Opposition asked a question about TAFE the

Government members were drowning. They could not answer the questions. We asked, "Will you privatise?" They said, "We are not sure." We asked, "Will you rule out cuts?" They said, "Not sure." We asked, "Will you rule out TAFE campus closures?" They said, "Not sure."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: We asked, "Will you rule out job losses?" They said, "Not sure." At the end of this debate the Opposition will put the Government to task. We will ask Government members to vote for not privatising or franchising TAFE. The Premier talked about privatisation in terms of sell-off. This is privatisation in terms of funding and delivery. There are lots of ways to skin a cat. I would not put it past this untrustworthy Government to find a way to do that.

[Government members interjected.]

That is their response. When they do not like something, that is what they do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: The Opposition had to bring on this debate because we have not heard from the Government. We asked a question but the Government does not answer it. I have an enormous amount of time for David Gonski and Peter Shergold but I have to ask: Where are the terms of reference? What sort of review does not have terms of reference? What is the ulterior motive of this Government? Does it see education and TAFE as a zero-sum game? Does it want to cost shift it to somebody else? Does it see this as an opportunity to walk away from its responsibility to provide a great public education that supports communities, regions and young people? We will continue to fight. We will fight together with the students, with the parents, with the teachers and with the mighty union movement because members on this side of the House believe in TAFE. On this side of the House we believe in jobs for now and jobs for the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I ask all of those members who keep interrupting to vote with us because this motion commits them to the belief that TAFE is worth fighting for, that TAFE is worth rebuilding and that TAFE is the way of the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. A number of members are on three calls to order, including the members for the electorates of Londonderry, Prospect, Kogarah and Swansea. I do not need to put these members on another call to order before I remove them from the Chamber. I will not hesitate to do so. I remind members of Standing Order 52. The member for Lakemba, who was being interrupted during his speech, has a right to be heard in silence, as does every member in this House. I call the member for Mount Druitt to order for the first time. I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the first time. I call the member for Tweed to order for the first time.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (17:05:52): I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (3) Congratulates the Government on its review of vocational education to provide better outcomes for students and to meet the skills needs of industry.

It is a great pleasure to speak about TAFE in this Chamber today. No-one is more committed to TAFE than I am. In fact many members will know that I was a TAFE teacher and my father was a TAFE teacher for his entire working life. TAFE is in our family's DNA. Once again Labor members are trying to play politics with TAFE. Shame on them. I condemn Labor for playing politics rather than focusing on our students and our industries, which we are delivering for.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Clarence will come to order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am focused on making TAFE the gold standard in vocational education and training [VET], not just the gold standard in New South Wales or Australia but right across the world. The VET gold standard should be TAFE and will be TAFE. When it comes to TAFE we are focused on the best outcomes for our students and our teachers. New South Wales has a world-class economy and a world-class economy needs a world-class workforce.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Gosford will come to order. I call the member for Rockdale to order for the second time.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That is what is so important about TAFE because TAFE will deliver that world-class workforce for the State. The Government is dedicated to improving the pathways for our students. When they go to school we want students to be able to make an equal and alternate choice. Some 50 per cent of students ask,

"Will I go to university?" But what happens to the other 50 per cent? We want to give them the informed option of a rewarding VET career. As we know, the world of work, industry and technology is rapidly changing. We must prepare for those changes. TAFE must be prepared because its role in our economy is vital. Jobs, technology and our system have to change to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Gonski-Shergold review was announced last week by the Premier. This is a great opportunity to look at our training centre and see how we can take responsibility for the evolving needs of our industries. I make clear to the House that this review is not about privatisation. TAFE will remain a comprehensive public provider of training services.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minister does not need the assistance of the member for Kiama.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Times have changed. Once upon a time TAFE would teach how to fix typewriters. Today it is teaching cyber security at Wagga Wagga campus. We know that we need to adapt.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The Government is committed to TAFE. In fact in this year's budget there is \$1.85 billion for TAFE.

Mr John Sidoti: That is an increase.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Up 3.1 per cent. The 2019 annual report shows staff numbers are up 6.8 per cent.

Mr John Sidoti: That is an increase.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That is absolutely an increase. We are investing \$137 million in capital works this year. In addition we are investing \$61.7 million to Connected Learning Centres.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gosford will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Members on the other side of the House have called Connected Learning Centres shopfronts.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wyong will come to order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Members of the Opposition have said that there are no real teachers at Connected Learning Centres. Let me be clear, go out and see Connected Learning Centres. We have real campuses, we have real teachers and we support TAFE. Labor members should be appalled by their attitude. Members on this side of the House support TAFE; the members opposite do not support TAFE.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba will come to order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It is very sad that they are playing politics. My advice to Labor is clear—

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: My advice to Labor is clear: Stop playing politics, stop playing games, stop trash talking our teachers and focus on TAFE as the gold standard in VET education.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba will come to order. Has the member for Lakemba finished his contribution to the debate?

Mr Jihad Dib: I have.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:11:15): Members in this place should have no problem with the words and the sentiment of the motion moved by the member for Lakemba. Congratulating the New South Wales Government for the work it has done on TAFE for the past nine years is not a consideration, given the cuts it has made and the decimation it has wrought on the fantastic TAFEs across New South Wales. Generations of proud tradies and skilled workers across the coast and across New South Wales thank TAFE for their solid vocational education. Now they are living the dream as well-trained adults on the coast. They hate to see that TAFE has been pulled out from underneath their community. We know that this Government does not care about TAFE. It continues to do everything it can to strip and undermine TAFE. It continues to take away the valued courses, to make pop-up shops and to shred this fantastic backbone of our society which we believe in.

There is no way that we can congratulate the Government on a \$41.7 billion cut from education and training, on 165 teachers being sacked in my area across the Central Coast and Hunter or on the 5,700 TAFE teachers—whom members of the Government have praised—who are now out of work across New South Wales. These cuts have also hurt a number of students who are enrolled in TAFE. Government members do not want to put another cent into TAFE. The carpets at Wyong TAFE had to be pulled up due to this week's rain. The lifts

have been broken for months on end at Swansea TAFE, so students with disabilities have not been able to attend their courses.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Oatley will come to order.

Ms LIESL TESCH: We are waiting for a pergola at Gosford to be fixed. TAFE is collapsing under the lack of investment. We know that without investment TAFE has to flog its resources up and down New South Wales. The member for Coogee said that the car park at the TAFE in her electorate was sold off to fund its programs. Shame! The Government has given Singleton college to the high school, so there are no longer any practical TAFE classes there next year. Automotive students who attend that campus four days a week do not know where they will go next year to get these hands-on classes.

Scone is one of the most beautiful TAFE campuses in New South Wales—it is one of our most beautiful colleges—and the Government has just put a Connected Learning Centre in the town. Do not sell this land to pay for fixing up our TAFEs. Do not sell off our TAFEs. The Government has already exchanged money for the Crows Nest TAFE, which is now a high school. What a disaster. I support the motion moved by the member for Lakemba. I do not support the privatisation or franchising of TAFE. I do not support any further cuts to TAFE courses, the closure of any TAFE campuses or increased fees for TAFE. Premier Berejiklian and Minister Lee are out of touch. The Premier and Minister made the point that TAFE teachers would design TAFE courses with industry experts. This has been going on for decades.

Industry loves TAFE and it wants to see more investment in TAFE, not less. One of the fantastic leading industries in my electorate is so disappointed by the cuts made to TAFE on the Central Coast that it is actually doing its training in house. That is privatisation at the industry's expense because of the Government's neglect of the Central Coast. Industry loves TAFE teachers. People in industry do not want to be teaching TAFE students who are working in their workplaces. They want trained teachers to teach their students. TAFE teachers are already working to design niche or bespoke courses. We need to let the Premier know that courses were designed by TAFE teachers in consultation with contractors working on the Metro North West line. Teachers from TAFE designed the high voltage safety awareness course that hundreds of contractors working on the Government's infrastructure project completed. It is already happening. Those opposite do not need to say that they are going to deliver it like this; it is already working.

My partner was a TAFE teacher who taught shipbuilding. Regional New South Wales values this industry because we have a great coastal community. TAFE used to have two classes: one in Newcastle that serviced the North Coast and one in Wollongong that serviced the South Coast. Kids used to come to those classes when they were delivered there. Under this Sydney-centric Government we now have two shipbuilding courses in the centre of the city. What use is that to our regional fishing, sailing and yachting communities? Another important factor that is hitting my community hard and I am sure is hitting lots of regional communities hard is the crazy cost of TAFE courses. The cost for a bricklaying apprenticeship has gone from \$838 to \$3,500. People in my community can no longer afford to go to TAFE, which has been decimated under this Government.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (17:16:42): I contribute to the public interest debate. As a former TAFE teacher I know the importance of TAFE to our community. As a government we are absolutely committed to TAFE as a comprehensive public provider and we are committed to resolving the skills shortage facing this State. But as a government we must always look at making our vocational education and training [VET] system even better to meet the skills needs of today and the future. That is why I am proud that the Premier has announced a review of the vocational education system in this State, which will be led by David Gonski and Peter Shergold.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that our education system is prepared to deliver the skills that industry wants and that will provide future jobs. The Opposition has appallingly alleged that the review is about privatisation. The Premier and the Minister have made it clear that that is absolutely incorrect. We want to overcome any bias in the community between TAFE and VET, promote better integration and pathways for students into TAFE and bring in more industry partnerships to boost the great work that TAFE already does.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the member for Swansea that she is on three calls to order.

Mr LEE EVANS: I am disappointed that instead of supporting better outcomes for students the Labor Party wants to once again use TAFE as a political football. It is clear that its members simply do not understand TAFE and the training system more broadly. If they did they would realise that this Government is delivering when it comes to skills training in this State. We are delivering 100,000 fee-free apprenticeships. We are delivering 70,000 fee-free traineeships. We have delivered 30,000 fee-free TAFE scholarships to mature age workers who are looking to re-skill. I understand that this takes the total number of fee-free courses to almost 700,000 over the next four years, which is a great result for our communities.

This Government is also committed to building a stronger TAFE that provides more for the front line. We are committed to providing more frontline TAFE teachers. I have been advised that in June 2019 there were 5,827 full-time equivalent teachers, which is an increase of 6.8 per cent from the previous year. We are building on this through our funding of 525 training and assessment scholarships, which will support industry professionals to teach at TAFE. This investment in teaching for the future will open up new opportunities for students to get high-quality, hands-on training from industry experts in areas of skill shortage. New teachers will help shape and nurture the next generation of tradies, childcare workers and hospitality staff for those vital industries that keep our economy and communities running.

It is no surprise that Labor does not want to give credit to the Government when it comes to TAFE and vocational training. During the last election the member for Maroubra proved that Labor does not have a clue when it comes to TAFE. He said Labor would spend \$3 billion on TAFE if elected to Government but according to the Parliamentary Budget Office the actual figure was only \$25 million—not even 1 per cent. Unlike Labor, this Government will continue building a stronger TAFE that is focused on the needs of today and the jobs of tomorrow. We are the party for education and we will continue to prioritise the delivery of the highest quality education system for all. We will continue to focus on better outcomes for students, no matter what silly games the Opposition wants to play.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (17:21:09): I feel privileged to contribute to the public interest debate on the enduring importance of TAFE to our public education system. I thank TAFE for the incredible contribution it makes to our State and our economy and I condemn this Government for the brutal cuts it has undertaken to TAFE over the last nine years. The worst is yet to come as those opposite look at privatisation, franchising, increased fees, staff cuts and campus closures. I was 17 years old when I went to TAFE to become a qualified tax agent and accountant. Back then, people with accounting certificates from New South Wales TAFE were well respected and were favoured within the profession over university graduates because the skills they learned were much more practical and relevant to the workforce.

Quite frankly, the move away from vocational education—in large part due to a lack of support by the State—has been totally unproductive, even in a white-collar sector like mine. Like so many of my generation, I know just how important TAFE is because it was central to my education and my career. Because of my TAFE education I was able to have a successful career in the accounting and financial services sector for 30 years and to build a business employing dozens of professional staff. I will forever owe a debt of gratitude to my TAFE teachers for giving me the opportunity to succeed and I formally thank them in the House today for everything they did for me.

What those opposite have done to TAFE and what they are lining up to do in the near future is disgraceful. Any member opposite with a sense of decency, rationality or even a vague care for the economy of New South Wales should be appalled at what is happening to TAFE. For nearly 200 years TAFE has been gradually enhanced by successive governments, dating back to the founding of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in 1833. Sadly, all it has taken is nine years of hopeless mismanagement and dereliction of duty by those opposite to bring this treasured institution to its knees.

When it comes to TAFE the primary task of this Government seems to be the running of a business, with the provision of education coming a distant second. We would be horrified if we did a comparison of what TAFE offered students some nine years ago with what is being offered today in terms of courses and student numbers. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has made an attempt to turn TAFE into a property holding company. If it is not shamed into backing down, I am worried there will be nothing left by the next election. By the time those opposite are done, they will be handing out McTAFE franchises at your local Service NSW.

Anybody with a local TAFE in their community would know that over the last few years teaching and support staff have been squeezed out by stealth. They are dedicated professionals who love their jobs, love their students and care deeply about the valuable public service they provide. They give so much to all of us—they certainly gave a great deal to me—and in return those opposite have treated them terribly. For years TAFE staff have faced the constant pressure of budget cuts, administrative restructures and redundancies. TAFE departments have increasingly been forced to rely on contractors, often bringing back the same people they forced out. It is a disgrace. It is becoming clear that the Government's endgame is to move out of vocational education entirely.

To be perfectly honest, it is a great shame that this Government is abandoning vocational education when its members could get so much value out of many of the great courses offered by TAFE. I have taken the liberty of signing up a few of those opposite to TAFE. I am sure once they see the quality of the education it provides they will realise just how valuable TAFE is to all of us. It was an obvious choice for the Treasurer: A Diploma of Accounting will finally teach him the difference between a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet. A Diploma of Project Management promises to teach the Minister for Roads and Transport how to manage time frames, quality and projects costs, potentially saving the State billions of dollars in overruns and blowouts. Sadly

for the Deputy Premier, TAFE does not offer nuclear engineering. A Certificate III in Tourism will teach the Minister for Police and Emergency Services all about the joys of travel in Europe. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members will cease having conversations across the Chamber.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:26:43): I was inspired by the member for Rockdale. I am going to frame that speech and hang it next to the Gettysburg Address.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us get on with the debate. Order! I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Those opposite have a misconception that we on this side of the House do not enjoy or love TAFE.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Mount Druitt to order for the first time.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: We on this side love TAFE, especially the country members who come from towns where there is no university and the only further education opportunity for our kids is TAFE. The shame of it is that Labor loves to mislead when it comes to TAFE and, quite frankly, tells lies. Those opposite accuse the Government of closing campuses when it is actually opening up campuses across the State.

Mr Jihad Dib: But you've closed campuses. It is a fact.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: I can inform the member for Lakemba that last year in my electorate we opened up a Connected Learning Centre. It was \$4 million and, no, it does not have a blackboard and a teacher with a cane; it has modern facilities that the modern student wants. That is exactly what they want today.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Swansea for the last time. If she interjects again she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Those opposite like to call the Connected Learning Centres shopfronts but I know they make a difference. Students in Yamba, where the Connected Learning Centre was opened, never had an opportunity to go to TAFE unless they could catch a bus. As we know, public transport is very difficult in regional communities. Now they can focus on getting an education. Thanks to those facilities we are able to connect students from across the State so they can study close to home. They do not have to go far away. That means those kids can learn a profession or a trade locally. That is why we love TAFE in country areas: We train our kids for local jobs and that is what is important to us. The fact that Labor wants to politicise those centres is disgraceful.

[*An Opposition member interjected.*]

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Talk to the hand! Labor's attitude undermines community confidence in TAFE.

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

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Labor is devaluing the work done by TAFE across the regions in this State. It is devaluing the training being delivered to students and adding to the bias against skills and training. Opposition members are doing that every day. I am proud to be part of a government that is investing an additional \$61.7 million for another eight Connected Learning Centres around rural and regional New South Wales. But it is not just the campuses that are subject to the misleading Labor scare campaign. Those opposite accuse the Government of cutting courses, despite the fact that it continues to add courses right across New South Wales.

I can advise the House that this semester TAFE in my community at Yamba has Certificate II in Kitchen Operations, Certificate IV in Ageing Support, Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management, Certificate IV in Leadership and Management, and Certificate IV in Property Services, which is real estate. That is at the Connected Learning Centre. Those students are training for jobs that are right in our community and for which there is a demand. TAFE has added the Certificate II in Baking and Certificate III in Horticulture at Trenayr and the Certificate II in Engineering at Grafton. The fact is that TAFE NSW has always added and removed courses based on industry demand. It is nothing new and has happened for as long as TAFE has existed.

Labor wants to play politics by making the accusation that the Government wants to increase TAFE fees, despite the fact that the Government is delivering 100,000 fee-free TAFE and VET courses over the next four years. The Government is delivering 100,000 fee-free apprenticeships. This takes the total of fee-free VET and TAFE courses to be offered by this Government over the next four years to almost 700,000. That is many more than the number of courses that those Opposite ever offered. They clearly do not let the facts get in the way of a good story. Their most desperate claim is that the Government wants to privatise TAFE. They say that the review is about privatisation, which the Premier and the Minister have made clear is absolutely incorrect. The

Government is committed to TAFE remaining a comprehensive public education provider. It is disappointing that Labor does not support students. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If members do not want to listen to the debate, they should leave the Chamber. If they do not leave the Chamber I will have them removed.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:32:28): I contribute on behalf of the crossbench members and The Greens and wholeheartedly support the motion moved by the member for Lakemba. We do not support the amendment that would congratulate the Government. We do not support that amendment because, unfortunately, the tale of what has happened to TAFE NSW under this Government in the last decade is a tale of how to destroy a national institution in a few easy steps. First, gouge it of funding, then cut jobs and restructure, casualise the workforce, change the workers' union and make a sham of their enterprise agreement, keep the workers embroiled in a salary process that takes years, and move from being a universal and free institution to fee paying and private.

Obviously we could talk about the gouging of funding for hours. The New South Wales Government has gutted the TAFE system and cut around \$140 million in funding since 2014. Nationally over the last few decades governments have attempted to privatise TAFE, directing government funding to private for-profit providers. The cost of TAFE and vocational education has shifted from governments onto students through loan schemes and a failure to adequately resource our national provider. TAFE remains the worst funded education sector in the country and it has been cut by more than 40 per cent in the last nine years. The damage inflicted on the sector, particularly as a result of underfunding and attempts to privatise, has eroded the viability of colleges and undermined confidence in the system.

[*A Government member interjected.*]

Ms TAMARA SMITH: These are not my statistics. I have not made them up.

Mr John Sidoti: So where are they from?

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I am happy to provide you with the resources.

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

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Enrolments in the sector have declined alarmingly in the past four years. At the same time fees have increased by 245 per cent. The second step in destroying a national institution is to cut jobs and keep restructuring. Let us recap. How did the restructure in 2015 go? First, the Government did not put an educator or a teacher at the helm; it put an ex-Defence Force officer at the helm. It decided that TAFE teachers do not know what they are talking about and it started to ramp up its pursuit of private deliverers in direct competition with TAFE and then it funded them so it could outsource any responsibility and any of the work. The restructure created a monolithic model as opposed to a model of community-based institutions meeting the needs of their communities. Government members decided, "Workshops? No! Let's have shopfronts where there are computers and work terminals and you can get a desktop trade."

The Government made hundreds of full-time equivalent teaching positions redundant and it employed casual and part-time teachers whose workload is so far beyond their hours that they are too distressed and too distracted to mobilise and take industrial action. And let's face it, if they are up they will be fined by Fair Work Australia, which they are now conveniently placed under as a workforce. Now let us look at the restructure in 2019. Just before Christmas the Government cut 70 staff and contractors from the TAFE NSW IT group. To recap, in the 2015 restructure the Government got rid of vocational education workshops and classrooms across the State and replaced them with virtual learning hubs and shopfronts that are 100 per cent reliant on IT. Then just before Christmas it sacked 70 IT experts. But wait, there's more. The 2019 restructure impacted a total of 196 roles at the public training provider, including 91 permanent staff.

That leads me to the third step in destroying a national institution: casualisation of the workforce. In New South Wales 78 per cent of teaching staff by headcount are part time. There is no time to go into the raft of flow-on issues that creates for students and teachers but they include no job security, no succession planning, no culture, a loss of voice or a casual worker may not be re-employed and an institutional knowledge vacuum. The fourth step is to change the union that workers are covered by and embroil them in a salary process that takes years and years of enterprise bargaining, which was totally ignored at the end of last year. Finally, the Government moved from making TAFE universal and free to fee-paying and private. More and more money is going to private providers so the Government can keep outsourcing what was once the greatest national provider of vocational education in this country. This is a terrible tale. It is not something members opposite should be proud of. It is not something they should celebrate. It is an absolute travesty. The more members opposite talk about loving TAFE, the sadder it gets and the harder it is to talk to teachers and students on the front line. I join members on this side of the House in remembering that teachers and students are at the heart of TAFE.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (17:37:32): In reply: I acknowledge and thank for their contributions the Minister and the members representing the electorates of Gosford, Heathcote, Rockdale, Clarence and Ballina. I kept hearing members opposite talking about how proud they were of what they have done with TAFE and saying that Labor is running a scare campaign and that they are not going to privatise TAFE. If that is the case, things are pretty simple: they just have to agree to the motion. The third paragraph of the motion is quite clear. It states that this House:

- (3) Does not support the privatisation or franchising of TAFE, further cuts to TAFE courses, the closure of any TAFE campuses or any increases in fees for TAFE courses.

That is pretty clear. Anyone listening to what members opposite were saying would think that they would completely agree with the motion. We have once again made it clear and simple: This is about supporting TAFE. It is about recognising that TAFE makes an economic contribution. It is also about making sure that we protect it. It is about not just saving TAFE but also rebuilding it to what it was. The member for Rockdale, the member for Heathcote and the member for Ballina talked about their personal experiences. Everybody spoke about what they had. But what we kept on hearing was a Government hiding behind claims of a so-called "scare campaign". This is not a scare campaign. This is the reality. The reality is that under this Government everything has been dropped.

I will pull up the Minister on one phrase. He said that they will not be privatising TAFE—so it is going to stay a public institution. The Government should ensure that all the money goes into TAFE so that courses are run at TAFE. It should not franchise out the money or make it so much easier for private providers. That is at the very heart of what this motion goes to. Every single member in this Chamber represents an electorate and has a connection to TAFE and to the fact that TAFE provides an opportunity for people to get ahead in life and improve their skills and for all of us to work better. The member for Clarence talked about his Connected Learning Centre [CLC]. He is lucky. In Chullora, in my electorate, they closed the TAFE.

We are not against Connected Learning Centres. We have a problem with Connected Learning Centres being built where there is a TAFE. If the Government wants to invest, it should invest in a TAFE. If there is a place where there is no vocational or training opportunities, the Government can put its CLC there. If Government members are fair dinkum, if they genuinely care about TAFE, they will get rid of their silly amendment, which is just self-promotion, and look at the words of our motion. If those opposite believe that they want to save TAFE and rebuild it, if they are not going to privatise TAFE, then they will support this motion. There is nothing in it that they should be worried about—unless they have a hidden agenda.

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

The House divided.

Ayes43
Noes38
Majority.....5

AYES

Anderson, K
Berejiklian, G
Conolly, K
Coure, M
Evans, L
Gulaptis, C
Johnsen, M
Lindsay, W
Pavey, M
Preston, R
Saunders, D
Singh, G
Stokes, R
Tuckerman, W
Wilson, F

Ayres, S
Bromhead, S
Constance, A
Crouch, A (teller)
Gibbons, M
Hancock, S
Kean, M
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Provest, G
Sidgreaves, P
Smith, N
Taylor, M
Upton, G

Barilaro, J
Clancy, J
Cooke, S (teller)
Dominello, V
Griffin, J
Henskens, A
Lee, G
O'Dea, J
Petinos, E
Roberts, A
Sidoti, J
Speakman, M
Toole, P
Ward, G

NOES

Aitchison, J
Butler, R
Chanthivong, A

Atalla, E
Car, P
Cotsis, S

Bali, S
Catley, Y
Crakanthorp, T

NOES

Daley, M	Dalton, H	Dib, J
Donato, P	Doyle, T	Finn, J
Harris, D	Harrison, J	Haylen, J
Hornery, S	Kamper, S	Leong, J
Lynch, P	McGirr, J	McKay, J
Mehan, D (teller)	Minns, C	O'Neill, M
Park, R	Parker, J	Saffin, J
Scully, P	Smith, T	Tesch, L
Voltz, L	Warren, G	Washington, K
Watson, A (teller)	Zangari, G	

PAIRS

Davies, T	Hoenig, R
Elliott, D	Lalich, N
Hazzard, B	McDermott, H
Williams, R	Mihailuk, T

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.*Private Members' Statements***DEBBIE ROBERTS**

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (17:48:40): I am proud to recognise this year's Camden Local Woman of the Year, Debbie Roberts. Debbie is currently the executive officer of the Camden Region Economic Taskforce, shortened to CRET. The CRET supports the economic prosperity of our region through leadership, advocacy and coordination. The CRET could not be in better hands or have a more trusted person at its helm. Debbie started her working life as a registered nurse at Liverpool Hospital where her career path of nurturing, mentoring, caring, supporting and advocating for individuals, groups and local businesses was set. Debbie has managed three diverse teams during her career. She has been CEO of two charities, Ronald McDonald House Westmead and Youth Solutions based in Campbelltown, which is a regional youth drug prevention service. Debbie is also the former economic development officer of Camden Council. Those positions all demonstrate Debbie's skills, knowledge, creativity, innovation and organisation as well as her team-oriented persona.

Debbie is also an active volunteer. She has served on the boards of the South Western Sydney Local Health District, the Rotary Club of Narellan and the Campbelltown Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Debbie was the community representative on Western Sydney University's School of Medicine Year 3-5 Curriculum Committee. She developed and implemented the youth homelessness meal program at Pete's Cafe in Campbelltown. She was also a member of the work health and safety committee at Camden Council and was a mentor to younger female staff at the council.

Debbie has been the recipient of several other awards including Rotary's Paul Harris Fellow Award. She received a Highly Commended Western Sydney University's Women of the West Award in 2011 and is a nominee for that award again this year. Debbie has also been the recipient of Campbelltown Council's International Women's Day Recognition Certificate and a Westpac Local Ruby Award and she was a NSW Woman of the Year Award nominee in 2008. Debbie has developed many professional relationships over the years with organisations, many of which she has also been personally involved with in one way or another.

Most importantly, Debbie has developed many professional relationships with the individual people that have had the privilege of knowing her. If you mention Debbie's name anywhere in Macarthur you will quickly see how admired and respected she is in both a professional and personal capacity. Debbie's warm, enthusiastic and positive personality never waivers and she is always so uplifting. Debbie is known for her above-and-beyond attitude and is tireless in her support and promotion of new businesses. Debbie's reaffirmation of existing businesses and her bringing together of businesspeople strengthens that community and brings great rewards to the local economy of Camden. I will finish with the words of Diane Gardiner, who nominated Debbie for the Local Woman of the Year Award because I cannot sum her up any better. She said of Debbie:

From the very moment I first met Debbie Roberts, back in 2013, I knew she was somebody special; somebody that was vibrant and full of life. Her passion to do and spread goodwill wherever she is is a tribute to her doing the job she loves and doing it extremely well. I was mesmerised by how much she wanted to learn and to be the best person she could be and use her knowledge and skills to benefit others.

Debbie is a much loved and respected member of each area of community. As a former member of Narellan Rotary Club, Debbie very much epitomises the true Rotarian standards. Debbie lives by the truth; is considerate and fair to all concerned; is out there building goodwill and better friendships and ensures whatever she promotes—for or to—it is beneficial for all concerned. These are good standards to live by and Debbie extolls these virtues like no other. Debbie is the finest Ambassador for Camden that its people should be proud to call her their own.

Camden residents and indeed Macarthur residents are very proud to recognise Debbie Roberts as this year's Camden Local Woman of the Year.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (17:53:49): Governments have one overarching mission: to make communities better, to improve people's lives and to increase services for the people who pay their wages. But over the past nine years in the south-eastern suburbs in the electorates of Maroubra, Coogee and Heffron the Government has been assaulting our communities. We are under attack. Overdevelopment has been foisted on every community in our area. In my area the Government is eyeing off Long Bay jail for sale and is deciding whether it should put a cruise ship terminal at Yarra Bay and wreck the last beach on the northern side of Botany Bay. The light rail has been a disaster from day one. It is \$1 billion over budget, a year and a half late, businesses have gone broke, century-old fig trees have been cut down, Anzac Parade looks like a war zone and now it is so slow that no-one wants to catch it. When it opened, an average 30-minute bus ride from Randwick to Circular Quay became over 50 minutes on the light rail. It is not light rail, it is snail rail. It is quicker to catch the train from Penrith into the city than it is to catch the light rail from Randwick into the city.

For years I have been trying to find out what would happen to our precious bus service once the light rail was operational. We have been met with complete and utter silence. On 19 February when we asked about plans for a bus service after the light rail was built we were told that one had not yet been formulated—until this document arrived: the South East Sydney Integrated Service Plan, a "sensitive" New South Wales Government draft plan for discussion purposes, January 2020. I thank the brave public servant who provided that document to us. The Government will not tell the truth but other people will. What does the document say? The document states that 16 bus routes will be cancelled, ripped up, so that people can be shovelled onto the light rail. The cancellations include routes 302, 314, 317, 373, 376, 891, 893, 377, 393, 394, 395, 397, 399 and L94 and three of the best services that Labor was very proud to introduce, the M10, M20 and M50. They will all be gone. If you catch those services now, they will be gone. In addition, 11 routes will be truncated or rerouted to make them worse: the 303, 307, 313, 316, 348, 370, 374, 391, 392, 396, and 400.

With all of those cancellations and truncations, what are we getting? Four new routes. At the moment people can catch a bus from our area into Circular Quay. When this plan is introduced people will not be able to. They will have to get off at Redfern or Kingsford or Kensington. The promise of a better public transport system has been absolutely destroyed by this Government. I remember debating the Premier in the election campaign earlier this year when she promised, hand on heart, that there would be no more privatisations. In addition to the debacle of wrecking what was a great government-run bus service in the eastern suburbs, after all this is said and done and this rubbish plan is put into effect and the light rail sits there delivering worse transport outcomes to the people of our area, the Government will sell the local bus services. If anyone wants to know how private bus services go, ask the people of Newcastle. They hate their new privatised services, which provide a much worse outcome than the government-run bus systems ever did.

The Government's argument is that it cannot run the buses in addition to the light rail. Guess what? After the light rail begins operating from Kingsford and in addition to the services from Randwick that are already running, for a few months—the Government said publicly this week—it will leave the buses running as well. So it can run buses as well as a light rail if it wants to. On behalf of the people of Maroubra—and I know my colleague the member for Coogee, who is in the Chamber, will have more to say about this tomorrow and every day after that—we have a very simple message for the Premier: Leave our buses alone. They work well, we love them. Do not privatise them and do not cancel services. We do not want to catch your light rail. It is your project, not ours. Stop tormenting the people of our area.

MACKSVILLE MARLINS SWIMMING CLUB

MID NORTH COAST VIRGIN AIRLINES SERVICE

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (17:58:57): I am very proud of our local swimming club at Macksville. It has been trying very hard to get its pool heated all year round but in the meantime it has been training its kids to State country championships level and they are going incredibly

well in the big smoke. It is always a tough gig for elite country athletes, who are pitted against the Hunter, Central Coast and South Sydney squads, which have better resources, begin training earlier and maybe do not have as far to travel to get to the local swimming pool at five o'clock in the morning. In addition, being a small club, it can often be a challenge to find four swimmers of the right age and with the speed needed to enter a team—but that can also create camaraderie and a team approach.

The Marlins are a resilient and determined squad and for the first time in a long while they entered a relay team into the championships. Jaxon White, 12, Cohen Welsh, 12, Bailey Pickvance, 10, and Kirby Welsh, 10, swam in the 12-and-under boys medley and freestyle relays. For three of the boys it was the first time they had attended the championships. "But you wouldn't have known it, each boy recording personal best times in both legs they swam. Collectively the boys took six seconds off their best time in the medley relay", Lyndel Sutton, one of four Marlin mums who campaigns hard for better sporting services and precincts locally, said. She travelled down with the team and was there to cheer on the squad.

In other results Leah Pickvance rocketed through the water in her 12 years 100-metre freestyle, earning a bronze medal and a personal best time. Leah also clocked up two other top 10 results: fourth in the 100-metre butterfly and sixth in the 50-metre freestyle. Cohen Welsh also earned a top 10 individual ranking, with a fifth in his 12 years 100-metre backstroke event. Competing in the opens division for the first time, 17-year-old Declan Sutton was up against athletes in their twenties and yet he managed some incredible results: fourth in the 50-metre backstroke and sixth in the 100-metre freestyle, with a personal best time which has seen him qualify for that event and the 50-metre backstroke at the Australian Swimming Championships in Perth in April.

Meanwhile, 10-year-olds Keeley Sutton and Kirby Welsh swam so strongly in their very first country championships that they both came away with qualifying times in the 50-metre freestyle for the NSW Junior State Age Championships, which is coming up soon. Jazmin Sutton and Darcy Welsh swam their hearts out and shaved seconds off their best times too. I also congratulate local swimming star Millie Edwards-Bradshaw, who won gold in the 100-metre butterfly and silver in the 200-metre medley with the Coffs squad. I also recognise a community petition that has started throughout the mid North Coast. A good friend of mine, Jacquie Houlden, started this petition to send a message to Tigerair-Virgin airlines that the flights that have now been announced and cancelled by Tigerair from Melbourne to the Coffs Coast will have a detrimental impact on our community. Jacquie wrote on a petition, which she started on change.org, "Let's see how many signatures we can get? As the Tiger slogan says, 'Go for it!'" She said:

I know some people say a petition doesn't do anything, but what it does do is give a clear indication of how the community feels about something.

She is absolutely right. To my communities around Nambucca, Macksville, Kempsey and up to Grafton—I know the member for Clarence is in the Chamber—this twice weekly service to Melbourne has been important for kids going to university and for Australian rules football supporters going down to see games at weekends. My family has used it a lot. I have a lot of family in Victoria and it has been an incredible and unbelievably cheap service. That may be one of the issues. Now that Virgin owns Tigerair I hope that it looks at the numbers on the petition. Already 3,489 people have signed the petition in only a week or so.

I call on the management of Virgin to look at the message from our community on the mid North Coast. We love the service. It has been very important to our kids and to our families and to the many former Victorians who have decided to live in our region—there are many of them. I officially say to Jacquie and the people behind the petition that I cannot formally submit the petition to Parliament because it is not in the right form but I am advised by the Clerks that we are working on an online parliamentary petition to take us into the modern age. I thank Jacquie and everyone who signed the petition. I respectfully ask that Virgin look at the numbers and reinstate the service in some way.

ROTARY CLUB OF CRONULLA

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (18:04:00): I am delighted to recognise the seventieth anniversary of the Rotary Club of Cronulla, which it will celebrate with a dinner on 27 March. The Rotary International website records the foundation of the club and states:

During the charter year of 1950 the newly formed Rotary Club of Cronulla decided to support the Boy Scout movement by erecting a permanent camp building for the Rovers on the banks of the Woronora River.

Les Giles initiated and organised a massive barbeque on the banks of the Port Hacking River at Audley. Enthusiasm and dedication saw 100% attendance of members and wives. Scouts manned the causeway at Audley, charging 10/- (\$1.00) to cross. The large picnic shed and ballroom were at the disposal of the club. Radio personalities of the day entertained the crowds. An authentic carnival spirit prevailed ... The \$3,000 raised was gratifying and then the real work began. Every Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning for 12 months members helped in the actual building of the camp. Rock was blasted and quarried at the site and squared

for building. The blistered hands of members attested to their hard physical labour. Timber framing for the building was prepared in Les Giles' workshop, conveyed to the river and floated across to the site by members swimming.

Seventy years on Cronulla Rotary is still dedicated to community service. It is part of an international network of 1.2 million members across the world. In Cronulla the Rotary Club is an important part of the community's life, holding important local events, helping with local charitable and humanitarian work and carrying out international humanitarian work as well. One important event, which I am happy to attend every year, is the annual Australia Day barbecue in Cronulla Park. At this year's celebrations the club raised money for farmers and regional communities in need. Another important event on the calendar is the annual charity golf day, which for more than a quarter of a century has raised money for charity, in particular for motor neurone disease research. Motor neurone disease is one of the most rapidly progressive age-related diseases known to humanity. The golf day event, among other things, helps to sponsor PhD scholarships.

Cronulla Rotary's international humanitarian work includes support for Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children [ROMAC], which facilitates life-saving surgery for children from over 20 developing countries. ROMAC is a not-for-profit humanitarian organisation run entirely by volunteers, many of whom are Rotarians. Cronulla Rotary has also been involved in supplying medical supplies for clinics in Fiji and building a medical room in a village in Fiji. Cronulla Rotary is one of the local Rotary clubs involved in the U Turn the Wheel program, which is a one-day, in-school program delivered to senior high school students in the Sutherland shire, coordinated by local Rotary clubs and supported by Sutherland council.

Another successful event that Cronulla Rotary is involved in regularly is the Pre-WWII Vintage Car and Bike Show. It is estimated that 25,000 people attend the event each year to see the pre-World War II machines, many of which are over 100 years old. This event raises money for Sylvanvale Kids Club, which ensures that school-aged children with disability are cared for after school, during school holidays and on weekends. Cronulla Rotary is also involved in fundraising for Rotary Health to end polio in the world, and Shelter Box, which arranges temporary housing for people caught in fires, floods and cyclones. Cronulla Rotary supports the Dandelion Support Network, a local and not-for-profit network that is dedicated and committed to the safety, wellbeing and development of children. Cronulla Rotary also partners with Enough is Enough, an anti-violence movement.

One can see that Cronulla Rotary is active on many fronts, both internationally and in its own backyard. I consider myself privileged to be an honorary member of this small club with a huge heart. I thank Cronulla Rotary and its volunteers for all the great work they do in the community. I congratulate the current executive, president Lyn Bates, secretary Irene Parker, treasurer Mark Ellis and others. I also congratulate the past presidents in recent years, including but not limited to Carmel Portelli-Stein, Neil Newbould, Carol Denison, Manuel Ramos, Maria Moran, Ray Moran and Irene Parker. I hope the seventieth anniversary dinner on 27 March is a great celebration and I wish Cronulla Rotary Club many more years of success to come.

BETTINA ARNDT AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:08:49): Being admitted to the Order of Australia is one of the greatest honours an Australian can receive. As always, inner west residents made a mark on this year's Australia Day list of honours, including Michael Tyack, awarded an AM for the pivotal role he has played in the performing arts; Janine Sergeant, awarded an AM for her contribution to medical administration; Bobby Mahlab, awarded an AM for her work protecting vulnerable women and for her contribution to publishing; Dr Stephen Bourke, awarded an AM for his work in archaeology; Professor Richard De Dear, awarded an AO for his work in education; Dr Sarah Midgley, OAM, for her support of the LGBTIQ+ community; and my very good friend the Hon. Dr Meredith Burgmann, AM, recognised for her contribution to the people of New South Wales and to this Parliament.

Each of these inner westies has served their community with distinction and has made a lasting impact on our State and on our country. Sadly, however, their positive and constructive contribution was overwhelmed by the decision to award an Order of Australia to so-called "men's rights" activist Bettina Arndt in recognition of her "significant service to the community as a social commentator, and to gender equity through advocacy for men". This should be seen for what it is: a slap in the face for the countless victims of sexual assault and family violence in our community and an undermining of the good work done by activists and community leaders to wipe out violence against women and to promote gender equality.

When Ms Arndt's award was announced I was contacted by a number of very angry inner west residents, furious that Ms Arndt's work would be validated by the Council for the Order of Australia in this way. The member for Blue Mountains and I co-wrote a letter to the Attorney General asking that he follow his Victorian counterpart and call on the Governor-General to seek a rescission of the award. We have not yet received a response to our letter. Meanwhile, however, the Australian Senate has overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan motion to call on the Council for the Order of Australia to rescind the award. That vote followed Ms Arndt commending the response

of Queensland Police Inspector Mark Thompson to the horrific murder of Hannah Clarke and her three children "for keeping an open mind and awaiting proper evidence, including the possibility that Rowan Baxter might have been driven too far".

At a time when the nation was in mourning for this young woman and her beautiful children, Ms Arndt opted to peddle her cruel and, frankly, dangerous politics. Ms Arndt's comments come as no surprise because previously she has taken a tour of campuses across the country—the Fake Rape Crisis Tour—where she travelled around undermining evidence-based research into incidents of sexual assault, harassment and rape. She has claimed that young women at Griffith University were being taught to be "uncaring, demanding bitches" following the publication of a list of guidelines to healthy relationships, including advice on consent. She twice interviewed a convicted paedophile and she has described paid domestic violence leave as a "racket given that there is no evidence required for a woman to claim she is a victim of violence and employers wouldn't dare question such a claim". There are also live questions around whether Ms Arndt is wrongfully claiming to be a clinical psychologist, given she is not registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

This kind of self-serving behaviour would not be so concerning if it did not have such a dramatic impact on the debate around domestic violence and sexual assault. Destroy the Joint, which tracks the deadly incidence of violence against women in our community, reports that Hannah Clarke was one of nine women killed by domestic violence in Australia so far this year. That is nine women too many. It reports that over 60 women died violently last year and 54 in the year before. Family and domestic violence is a national emergency requiring critical intervention. We need governments to step up and take meaningful action to reduce gender-based violence. We need comprehensive education around healthy relationships and consent taught from the earliest age possible and we need cultural change to end gender inequality and combat the toxic masculinity that often underpins much of this violence.

There can be no question that providing Ms Arndt with a further platform to spread misinformation and malice is contrary to achieving those important objectives. On behalf of the women in my electorate who have contacted me about this issue, I reiterate my call to the Attorney General to ask the Governor-General to advise the Council for the Order of Australia to rescind that award. I also ask the first woman to serve as the Attorney General of New South Wales, the member for Vacluse, to rethink her congratulations to Ms Arndt. Both attorneys general in this place have been responsible for programs that sought to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault in our community and they should stand up now for those women across New South Wales and ask that this award be rescinded.

COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:13:59): Recently I was joined by the Deputy Premier for a tour of drought-affected parts of my electorate, visiting the Grove family at Billimari who spoke about the difficult decisions currently facing farmers at the start of the 2020 cropping season. Despite recent rain, 99 per cent of the State remains in drought, including 100 per cent of the Cootamundra electorate. The rain has given a lot of communities some hope for the future but it will take months of sustained and widespread rainfall to break the drought. Water storages across the State are still low: Wyangala Dam on the Lachlan River in my electorate sits at 13 per cent and communities across the electorate are facing another year of critical water shortages.

Stored soil moisture levels remain very low in farming areas. While green grass has sprouted in drought-affected areas, the reality is that it is not widespread and provides limited nutritional value for livestock. Even with good rainfall, farmers face the task of rebuilding livestock numbers and putting in crops after consecutive years of failed harvests. It is estimated that there will be a two-year turnaround after the drought breaks, with ripple effects continuing to be felt beyond the farm gate among small businesses and communities. Initiatives such as Buy Regional and Buy from the Bush have been a fantastic demonstration of the Australian spirit and the willingness of consumers from across Australia and even the world to support businesses in regional New South Wales. To date the State Government has committed more than \$3.9 billion towards drought relief and water security.

Across New South Wales \$1 billion has been allocated to the Farm Innovation Fund, providing loans to assist farmers to carry out permanent capital works to build resilience and improve on-farm efficiency. A further \$100 million is available for farmers to access interest-free loans under the Drought Assistance Fund. The Emergency Drought Transport Subsidy provides farmers with relief from transport costs out of a pool of \$156 million. Emergency water infrastructure can be installed on farms using the \$12 million Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate fund. I have spoken to farmers in my electorate who have used the funding to purchase infrastructure such as a new pump to improve the capacity of farm bores. Funding support is also being provided to the transport of donated fodder and livestock with an animal welfare risk as well as for farm business skill professional development programs. Fees such as Local Land Services rates will be waived again in 2020 and funding for mental health services has been increased.

The \$170 million Drought Stimulus Package is funding major infrastructure projects in drought-affected communities to boost local economies and support ongoing growth and development. Over \$1.9 million under the program will support the development of Coolamon Industrial Estate in my electorate, creating 59 full-time jobs and 25 construction jobs over the build, ensuring that local concreters, plumbers, electricians, builders and landscapers are all in work. Under the Drought Resilience Fund, community initiatives such as Cowra New Year's Eve Beach Party have been given a helping hand. It is a volunteer-run event, bringing the local community together for a fun, family day to see out the old year and hope for a better new year. In the Cootamundra electorate, more than \$5 million in loans has been approved and almost \$1 million in transport subsidies. Statewide, water and wastewater infrastructure is also being upgraded to improve regional water security under the \$1 billion Safe and Secure Water Program.

I have announced a significant number of projects in my electorate, including new sewage treatment plants for Ardlethan, Junee, Barellan, Gundagai and Grenfell. Raising the wall on Wyangala Dam, supported by a \$650 million commitment from the NSW Nationals under the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund, will do more to improve water security in the region, enhancing our ability to hold water in periods of surplus and deliver controlled release when the water is needed. The drought is not over. While much attention has been given, rightly, to bushfire fighting and recovery in recent times and despite recent rainfall, the New South Wales Government must do everything it can to continue to support regional communities and farmers through drought. When the drought does break, we must support them to get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

FIONA JOHNSTON

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:18:57): The terrifying and relentless fire season of 2019-20 saw many Rural Fire Service volunteers working around the clock to save property and lives, not just in their local area but also all over New South Wales. Fiona Johnston of Davidson, in my electorate of Davidson, is one of such volunteers. Fiona loves serving her community and joined the Davidson RFS in 2003. Davidson Rural Fire Brigade is an entirely volunteer brigade located in Davidson on the northern beaches. Generally it protects people and property from bushfires in Davidson, Belrose, Frenchs Forest, Forestville and the Killarney Heights, an area that encompasses over 10,000 homes. The brigade has over 100 volunteers on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Since joining the brigade, Fiona has served in many operational and administrative positions, including as the brigade's treasurer and training officer as well as a deputy captain for seven years. Currently she serves as the personnel (callout) officer and is responsible for organising and coordinating the shifts and deployments of brigade members. During the current fire season Fiona has contributed up to 60 hours a week to deploy members of the Davidson brigade safely and effectively. She also participated operationally in many deployments, including as strike team offside, assisting the strike team leader to manage and deploy up to five firefighting appliances effectively. Of course, all RFS volunteers should be recognised and applauded but Fiona's unwavering commitment to the RFS is highly commendable and warrants her being singled out for individual recognition as Davidson's Woman of the Year 2020.

Many volunteers such as Fiona work full time while volunteering in various capacities. Fiona works at Logan Livestock Insurance Agency, based on the North Shore. Fiona joins a list of very worthy Davidson women, most of whom continue to make endless sacrifices to serve our communities. Some of those Women of the Year are Anne Carroll of Killara for 2009, Kathy Cowley of Lindfield for 2010, Sue O'Reilly of Forestville for 2011, Julie Sutton of Frenchs Forest for 2012, Cathy Knox of Roseville for 2013, Jennifer Anderson of Roseville for 2014, June Howarth of Roseville for 2015, Julia Eagles of Gordon for 2016, Namoi Dougall of Lindfield for 2017, Yvonne Taylor of Killara for 2018 and Kirsten Quinn of Belrose 2019. For 2020 it is Fiona Johnston of Davidson. I congratulate Fiona on joining this list of eminent wonderful women and look forward to joining her at the Premier's NSW Women of the Year Awards at the International Convention Centre tomorrow morning.

I acknowledge all those who were involved in arranging the woman of the year awards, including the Minister, on what is a wonderful initiative, one that I have actively supported since 2009 on an annual basis. I am delighted that Fiona and her mother will be there tomorrow morning to get extra recognition along with many other local Woman of the Year in each of our electorates. I urge those of us who are not actively supporting—which is a very small minority—to do so in the future because it provides an opportunity to give recognition to some wonderful women who contribute, often without much fanfare, in our local communities.

MAITLAND FLASH FLOOD

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (18:23:38): On Monday 10 February there was a flash flood in Maitland. A number of residents in my community experienced flooding of their houses or their businesses. One, Ms Karen Foster, even had a 900 kilogram tree crash down through her roof, resulting in flooding to bedrooms and putting her family at significant risk. When I got a phone call from Ms Foster at 7.30 that night I immediately

advised her to call Link2Home to try to get immediate housing. The frustration facing Ms Foster a month on is that Link2Home can only give her emergency housing for three days at a time, creating massive upheaval for her and her children. The situation has become so bad that they have been loaned a caravan by friends to live in in their driveway until the damage is repaired. It is nearly a month since this happened and her application has not been finalised or resolved. This week she was told that she still required more paperwork to be able to access the assistance that she and her family desperately need.

Another couple who have been renting their four-bedroom house for four years had sewage flooding into their home, contaminating everything in the house. The landlord's insurance assessors arrived and advised that the house was condemned and that they could not enter the house or remove any items from it because of the contamination. But the real estate agent told them that they had to continue paying rent until the keys were handed back and that the oven had to be cleaned—as if it were a normal end-of-lease arrangement. The irony is that this house was flooded in the April 2015 super storm. These tenants are scared to hand in the keys and stop paying rent in case they are put on the bad tenants database. These issues are not confined to my electorate. A man on the South Coast keeps ringing me after I visited a few weeks ago. He said, "Winter is coming. We need to get the debris cleaned up, Jenny. We need emergency housing, otherwise people are going to die." Some 80 homes have been lost in his small community of 600 people.

And it is not just about housing. I will share some of the other issues that have been raised with me as I have been travelling around the State over the past couple of months, speaking to farmers and tourism operators. I have met very few farmers who have obtained assistance through the Government's special disaster loans and grants. In question time today the agriculture Minister behaved ridiculously by trying to conflate these issues. The reality is that we were told in budget estimates that of the 10,000 farmers who have suffered from the bushfires only 11 have actually been approved for loans. Nearly one in four of the 618 farmers who have applied for grants have been rejected. It is not working.

Today the agriculture Minister said it did not really matter if people had been impacted by the fires for over seven months because the grants had only been open for 42 days. That is the point. It is quite disgraceful. People in this State are on the very edge due to this Government's inaction. It has failed to step in quickly enough to assist people to get their lives back together. Farmers have said to me with desperation in their eyes, "Jenny, I never thought I would live through droughts, fires, floods and wild dogs." Now their businesses are being impacted by coronavirus. Similarly, tourist operators have been impacted by the fires and now they face significant damage to their businesses from coronavirus. They have lost the majority of their annual incomes in the period that is most important to them in the entire year. The Government is forcing them into further debt because if they have not had fire in or on their property they lose their market and may not receive any grants.

The agriculture Minister can boast about the number of Rural Assistance Authority [RAA] workers. But after visits to 50 communities over the past two months and speaking to hundreds of people, I can tell him that they are still very thin on the ground. The farmers, tourism operators and everyone in our community who relies on them tell me they want to see these people. They do not want to talk to a call centre operator on the phone who does not understand, who has not experienced and cannot see the devastation that is in their lives. Some 2,000 homes have been lost and people have lost their farms, their tourism businesses and their jobs. We all have a role to play in the recovery. We keep being told this and we all agree. The agriculture Minister's role is to support farmers, small businesses and not-for-profits through the RAA. The Minister should stop making excuses by blaming the Federal Government and everybody else. Winter is coming, Minister. Do your part, help these people get back into their homes and get their lives back together because this one is on you.

F3 FERRY SERVICE

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans)
(18:28:38): I inform the House of a significant win that we have achieved for the community. Some may say it is ferry good news. At the beginning of the week I received notification from the office of the Minister for Transport and Roads that the proposed Transdev changes to the F3 ferry route will not be going ahead. In simple terms this means that the F3 services will continue as per the usual timetable arrangements. The announcement comes off the back of a productive week in Parliament last week where the member for Lane Cove, the member for Ryde and I met with the Minister for Transport and Roads. I also submitted a notice of a motion and made a private members' statement raising the community's objection to the Transdev proposal. My office was inundated with calls, emails and letters from concerned constituents during Transdev's community consultation period.

The positive news comes as a direct result of a huge effort where the community worked together for a shared goal. I have proven many times that I will always place the needs of my community over politics. It is a hallmark trait of a good government to listen to the people, to empathise and to understand the community viewpoint and to take that into consideration when decisions are made. It would be completely remiss of me to not acknowledge and thank the Minister for Transport and Roads for listening to me and other members of

Parliament whose electorates were directly affected by the changes. On behalf of my community, I thank Minister Constance. We appreciate his quick response and his support for our communities.

We all accept that the proposal was drafted in response to a growing need for more services on the F3 route, where patronage has grown exponentially each year. It is hard to imagine that this government service has increased by 40 per cent in such a short period of time. I remain committed to advocating for the ferry services my community deserves and I would like to see more improvements to those services. Since becoming the member for Drummoyne in 2011, the New South Wales Government's investment in public transport services has risen. I say with confidence that the public transport system in my electorate now is absolutely superior to when Labor held the electorate. Since 2011 the Government has delivered new ferry wharf infrastructure upgrades to Abbotsford, Cabarita, Chiswick, Cockatoo Island and Drummoyne ferry wharves in my electorate, with Rhodes to come.

In the past when the tides were too high or too low, people with mobility and accessibility issues were unable to access the ferry because the wharf infrastructure was fixed. Do not forget that at the time the ferry vessels were also unable to stop at certain fixed wharves if the conditions were not optimal. The upgraded wharves have now been fitted with a new pontoon-style wharf that floats in accordance with the tide, totally resolving accessibility issues. I am very proud to see that this ferry wharf infrastructure is far more inclusive for all of my community to access. The Government has made great improvements to the ferry services in our area. This is particularly evident and the advancements really do speak for themselves when compared to the mess that was left by the previous Government, when the ferry timetable was infrequent and inconvenient and services were being cancelled. Some ferry stops were removed completely, such as at Birkenhead Point Wharf.

In terms of the public transport service as a whole, the Government has improved services significantly. We have seen additional investment as a result of a better system and more services have been provided. As I said before, all of the ferry wharves have been upgraded. Additionally, all of the train stations in my electorate have been upgraded. The Government has made them fully accessible. With regard to the bus services, over the years my office has received an abundance of correspondence about services that were unreliable, inconvenient and simply did not show up. Since Transit Systems has assumed management of region 6, the feedback for services across my electorate has dramatically improved—they have improved exponentially—and additional services have been added to many of the routes, particularly the bus routes that are most relied upon. My electorate has also seen the introduction of the On Demand bridge buses, which serve a strategic and useful purpose. I am absolutely proud of the improvements we have made and I am committed to continuing to deliver reliable and convenient public transport services for my electorate.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:33:33): Today I joined with members of Parliament at a vigil for Hannah Clarke and her three children, who were all brutally, cruelly and selfishly murdered by Hannah's husband and the children's father. One can only imagine the horror. A lot of people have said "never again" and we must make that become a reality. I have attended too many events and vigils. I have heard too many declarations of "never again" over decades of work, support and solidarity, particularly with women and their children who are victims of violence and the whole package of intimidatory behaviour that goes with domestic violence at the hands of husbands, partners and fathers—the ultimate betrayal of trust.

At today's vigil we were told that a recent meeting with Ministers across Australia had asked for fresh ideas. We were told, "Please, no more of that." We have already been told the ideas that work by expert advisers, agencies with extensive relevant experience and the women who have escaped domestic violence. We do not need fresh ideas; we need a fresh focus on what we know works. We need fresh resources for these ideas, which are ideas that inform the actions and programs that work. I turn to the #march4Hannah document that outlines the seven particular requests from a combination of groups, organisations and experts around Australia. It states:

1. Declare domestic violence the national crisis that it is.
2. Call on the media to stop portraying perpetrators as "good guys pushed too far".
3. Make courts safer and more effective for DV-survivors.
4. Ensure Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) are enforced.
5. Fund critical services to support adults and children experiencing violence to escape and recover, and to assist those using violence and abuse to change.
6. Reform the family law system to put safety first before any parent's right to contact.
7. Invest in a state-wide primary prevention strategy to drive the cultural, attitudinal and behavioural change we need to see throughout our communities to end violence against women and their children.

All governments have a duty to ensure security and safety. At the Federal level national safety is primary and at the State level community safety is primary but domestic violence requires all levels of government to work together to ensure that people are safe and that women and children are safe. Imagine living daily with what I call the "terrors": Am I going to be verbally abused today? Am I going to be physically abused today, beaten or raped? Am I going to be socially isolated and kept from my family and friends? Is my odometer going to be checked—if I am lucky enough to be allowed to drive—to see where I have been? Am I going to be told I am stupid and denigrated further? Am I going to be able to escape if he goes on a rampage? Am I going to be able to keep my kids safe? Is today the day that he will murder me and my children? That is what women go through daily. As a society we are failing them.

I am told that about \$300 million is invested in domestic violence services. That is not enough. We need a lot more. Those who put together the aforementioned seven requests talk about the way family law works. It is quite secretive and it is actually very difficult to deal with domestic violence within family law. We know that in New South Wales there are some 60,000 police call-outs each year. One in four women experience domestic violence and one in five experience sexual violence, and that is from the age of 15. We know that in 2018 domestic violence murders doubled in New South Wales. We also know that in December 2017 a House of Representatives committee published its report into domestic violence and family law and that most of the report's 33 recommendations were not acted on. The Law Reform Commission also tabled its long-awaited family law inquiry report. None of its 60 recommendations have been implemented. We really have to take action to make sure this never happens again.

PROJECT FIRESTORM

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (18:38:50): It was a pleasure to visit Picnic Point Public School along with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, David Elliott, and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Sarah Mitchell, to launch Project Firestorm. We were also joined by RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Paul Baxter and members of Revesby Fire Brigade and Illawong Rural Fire Brigade. Project Firestorm is an award-winning school program developed by the NSW Rural Fire Service in partnership with the NSW Department of Education. It targets kids in years 5 and 6 and empowers them to identify bushfire challenges in their local community before developing and testing innovative solutions. The fusion of lessons about safety for firefighters and preparing people's homes that are delivered by real-life heroes and online fictional superheroes helps to attract the children's attention.

This season New South Wales has experienced unprecedented fire activity. Over 7,300 bushfires and grassfires have burnt over two million hectares. Many homes have been destroyed and sadly too many lives have been lost. Case studies within Project Firestorm will allow students to investigate and learn from the 2019-20 fire season. The program focuses on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or as we now call it STEM. Through this program students are guided through five levels of learning and exploration as they work together in groups and with their teachers to develop innovative ideas, tools and inventions to help solve real-world issues. On the day, it was great to see my own local firestormers coming up with great new ideas to help themselves, their families, our local community and the NSW RFS reduce the impact and risk of bushfires.

Walking around the classroom talking to the students, I could see many great group projects that were led by our local teachers with the support of firefighters. There was a mix of bushfire survival plans, Lego aircraft and drone models to assist firefighters to battle the fires, drawings of animal refuges, water tanks, innovative ideas—such as drones shooting sand—and detailed drawings of fireproof houses, including pipes underground, displaying amazing foresight for infrastructure. We all then put our firefighting helmets on and went outside for a fun, hands-on activity led by the Illawong RFS brigade to see how good our firestormers were at hosing down fire targets using fire hoses. The Revesby Fire Brigade also gave a hands-on demonstration of how the fire truck works and students were lucky to see how its aerial water pumper, which is connected to the tank's ladder, operates. This tool helps our firefighters fight fires from above.

Sarina Andaloro, a news reporter with Channel Seven, bravely stood in between our firestormers when they were practising hosing down their fire targets while Picnic Point Public School teacher Bill Narris took photos of the fun. When it was the reporter's turn to practise her firefighting skills she "accidentally" hosed her cameraman. Student Sam Bayley and I had a good look at the equipment on the outside of the fire truck. He and his fellow students then got inside the truck for a closer look at all the cool gadgets. Not only does Project Firestorm respect students as true agents of change in their community but the program also embraces their empathy, curiosity and imagination in understanding how bushfires affect their community and it encourages them to come up with innovative, new ideas to minimise the impact of fire.

I would like to thank Picnic Point Public School Principal Karen Sellick, teachers Mr Bill Narris, Mrs Pammie Chatterton, Miss Carter and Mrs Colusso and the students of 5/6 Samuri and 5/6 Suzuki for their involvement in the launch of Project Firestorm in the East Hills electorate. I was so impressed with our students'

high-order thinking as they explored the impact of bushfires and worked towards innovative, viable and empathetic solutions. Teachers and students, the New South Wales RFS needs your help. Your mission is clear: join Project Firestorm today.

EASTERN SUBURBS BUS SERVICES

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:43:01): I represent all those who have written to my office who are shocked about the removal of buses. Over the past two days my office has received hundreds of emails and calls from locals who are devastated by the Government's plan to cut 16 bus routes from the south-east region. Add to these the 20,000 signatures on anti-privatisation petitions that we will be debating tomorrow and it is clear that the people of New South Wales and the east want to keep each of their buses in the hands of the government. Sixteen routes are about to be cut, which will remove 1,600 services every day and over 10,000 services every week. Those buses are the 302, the 314, the 317, the 373, the 376, the 377, the 393, the 394, the 395, the 397, the 399, the L98, the M10, the M50, the 891 and the 893. Another 11 routes will be rerouted to truncate the community to the light rail.

Why is the Government doing this? Is it to pay for the outrageous overspend on the South East Light Rail? Is it to force people onto the world's most expensive and slowest light rail, which is an abysmal replacement for some of the best bus services in Sydney? This is infrastructure that was more than \$1.3 billion over budget, is up to 20 minutes slower than existing services, has fewer stops, and has more breakdowns and safety concerns across the network. The Government's cuts to these essential buses are clear attempts to streamline the services before it sells them off, forcing people to use the light rail—a mediocre transport system—instead.

Missing from the picture are the stories of the people who will be directly affected by the loss of these buses. On Monday Lindsay, a 76-year-old constituent of mine from Coogee, visited my office to tell her story of what the loss of the 373 bus from Coogee to Circular Quay means for her. Most weeks Lindsay takes the bus to access cultural activities in the city. Because this bus travels to Circular Quay via Museum, she is able to walk to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Museum of Sydney, the Museum of Contemporary Art and performances at the Sydney Opera House. She meets two of her friends there and these trips are a big part of their social life.

Losing this bus service will have big consequences for Lindsay. She will need to take a bus to Randwick, cross several streets and wait for the light rail to take her to Circular Quay. Coming home she will have to make these changes later at night, stretching her journey out by 20 minutes. Lindsay also mentioned that she does not feel safe changing between her bus and the light rail either at Central or Randwick Junction. If the 373 disappears it will have a huge impact on thousands of people just like Lindsay. This is just one bus and there are 16 buses slated for removal, each with thousands of regular customers with their own individual story.

There is Bianca, a small business owner in Randwick, who voiced her concerns at a community rally we hosted in December last year. Bianca's business was directly impacted by the years of light rail construction when Randwick was a no-go zone. Even now that it has finished she faces cuts to the buses that bring her clients to her hairdresser business and ensure her staff can turn up to work on time. There is Els, a Coogee constituent who came to see me to express her extreme concern and anxiety over the pending removal of her bus services. Els is vision impaired and cannot drive. She is completely reliant upon our local services for her independent travel to access her medical appointments, attend social events and engage with her community.

Perhaps the most poignant moment of our meeting was when Els shared some of the great advocacy work Blind Citizens Australia has done on her behalf. Els mentioned that Blind Citizens Australia works tirelessly to spread the message that public transport is essential in the lives of people who are blind or vision impaired. As Blind Citizens Australia says, "Public transport workers do the driving that we cannot do, taking us to connect with our communities, to our employment, education, medical appointments, as well as our family and friends." The loss of these services will do far more than just inconvenience Els. It will critically impact upon her independence, which will drastically reduce her quality of life. It is for this reason and thousands more that I am fighting to keep these vital services.

These are among the reasons community groups like Save Our Buses have been campaigning for years. They know how essential our local Eastern Suburbs buses are. They know firsthand that the removal of so many bus services will have the greatest impact on the elderly, on parents with prams, on schoolchildren, on those who cannot afford private transport and on the disabled. The buses that the Government is about to cut are our local routes taken by everyday people—buses that take people to the doctor, the supermarket, the library, the hospital and work. If these buses disappear it will be disastrous. The light rail services fewer areas, has significantly less seating capacity than our buses, is unreliable and slow and breaks down on a regular basis. It is the local people who are being put last but it is the local people who are fighting back.

MANNING RIVER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (18:48:12): I inform the House of concerns relating to the entrances to the Manning River. I said the Manning River "entrances" because it has two entrances. It is the only river in the Southern Hemisphere with a delta formation with two entrances. The Manning River has 156 kilometres of navigable waterways except at the entrances of the river. Historically the mighty Manning River had a number of boat-making businesses along the river. Large boats plied the river and supplied the colony at Taree and Sydney. The timber getters took their timber to the Manning River where it was then taken to sea and down to Sydney. No longer is that possible because of the siltation of the rivers over many years. When I moved to Taree 39 years ago there was a dredge permanently working at extracting the gravel for the gravel works at the river. That has not happened for a number of years. The community is very concerned about those river entrances.

Stebercraft, the best boat-building company in Australia, supplies boats all over the world. Even Alan Steber, with all his experience driving boats and going to sea, had the shock of his life a few months ago trying to cross the bar at Harrington. The northern entrance is the Harrington entrance and the southern entrance is Farquhar Inlet at Old Bar. Until the recent rains, the entrance at Old Bar was closed. The siltation goes in for many hundreds of metres, with sand blocking the entrance. At Harrington there is a breakwall on the northern side and then there is no water next to the breakwall. It goes several hundred metres towards Manning Point with sand and then there is a small entrance with shoals and it is extremely dangerous.

I am calling on the Government to appoint a high-level expert ministerial task force to look at the solution to the issue of the river mouths. Over the last 100 years numerous investigations, surveys and all sorts of things have been done but they have been gathering dust. There are drawings and reports from as far back as the 1880s about the Harrington entrance. The information from all of those was consolidated into a report delivered in 2018. That report said there are five options for a solution to the river mouth issues, particularly at Harrington, but what it did not say was which solution should be implemented to open the river mouths at Harrington and Farquhar Inlet. That is why we need a ministerial task force with experts in marine and coastal engineering and the building of breakwalls and so on.

Those options include a tombolo, which is a pile of rocks attached to the mainland with a sand spit, a large breakwall for Farquhar Inlet, and a training wall at the coffee rocks on the southern side of the entrance. But which one is the answer? That is why we need the ministerial task force to look at the situation and advise the Government which option should be implemented for the Harrington entrance and which option should be implemented for Farquhar Inlet. I call on the Government to bring together a ministerial task force to look at that report and the science behind it and for the task force members to use their expertise to come up with the answer for the Government and provide a solution for those river entrances. This is extremely important. The Manning River is the spine of the Manning Valley. The Manning River is the river that supplies fresh water to our dam and we need a navigable entrance.

YASS VALLEY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (18:53:23): Today I speak of some fantastic State Government infrastructure investments in the Yass Valley shire that I recently had the pleasure of opening with the local mayor, Rowena Abbey, councillors, general manager Chris Berry and hardworking staff. Thanks to the New South Wales Government's collaboration with local council, in one day alone on 11 February I took part in the official openings of a new playground and five new bridges, all within the Yass Valley shire. First up, the new and improved Coronation Park was officially opened and tested by local students of Yass Montessori Preschool. The playground was upgraded last year to create a safe and engaging space for children to learn and play. The new play equipment has been a huge success with tourists and locals over the recent summer break. The playground was made possible due to a grant of \$130,000 under the ClubGRANTS Category 3 infrastructure program. Yass Valley Council matched that funding to make the project a reality. I must say that the children of Yass Montessori Pre-School had nothing but praise for the end result, particularly the giant slide.

Next we headed to Graces Flat Road to open the first new bridge at Two Mile Creek. Then we headed to Burrinjuck Road for the new concrete bridge. On the trek to Burrinjuck it was very apparent to me the significance of that bridge upgrade due to the local topography and number of travellers to the area, including boats and weekenders. Another job well done. Both bridges were masterpieces to behold. I thank the New South Wales Government, Yass Valley Council and staff and the contractor, Tobco, for their efforts with those bridges. Throughout the day and at each of the bridge openings I heard nothing but praise from my constituents for their workmanship and engagement with the community. There was even a story of a local resident making scones and taking them to the contractors for morning tea each day throughout the build. This is what I love about rural communities.

After a quick stop at Barney's of Bookham and a fantastic lunch prepared by Margeurite we were off to open the final three bridges of the day. All three of them were on Childowla Road. The community turn-out at those openings was great to see, and included a horse who wanted to be part of the action. These projects are part of council's \$11.6 million major timber bridge replacement program, with \$2.5 million in funding under the Restart NSW Fixing Country Roads program—a program that I know is making a real difference in our communities.

All of the new bridges are assisting to futureproof the road network and will serve the community for a long time to come. I know how grateful the Yass Valley community is for the council's foresight in bringing these projects to fruition. In the coming weeks I look forward to opening a further three bridges—two on Nottingham Road and one on Horseshoe Road. I am very proud to be a member of a government that invests so heavily in our regional areas, particularly on matters that help address our connectivity and not only protect but also promote our economic prosperity. Economic growth in rural areas is critical to New South Wales to ensure the food, produce and raw materials that feed and power the State are able to move efficiently.

FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE ARTISTS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:56:55): For those who are unaware, my office has recently started a new initiative which aims to promote the arts and specifically the talents and works of artists located throughout the greater Fairfield community. The Fairfield electorate office will be home to a rotating art exhibition that showcases a variety of different works while providing our local artists with a platform to publicly display their art for all to see. For some artists this may very well be the first opportunity they receive to have their works exhibited for public viewing while others are seasoned professionals. Irrespective of their backgrounds, we want to provide the local community space to enjoy and appreciate the art that has been created by one of the many talented local artists.

The inaugural Fairfield art exhibition began in February and showcased the works of Ms Tracey Esteves, who is not only a local artist but also a local art teacher. The exhibition launch was extra special as Tracey had some very special guests present: her art students from Patrician Brothers' College, Fairfield. Tracey's students were fortunate to have received a detailed lesson about the various techniques, skills and art styles that were used to create each artwork on display in the exhibition and some inspirational words about each piece. Having grown up in Sydney's western suburbs, Tracey spent much of her childhood exploring the suburbs while developing a love of Australian culture and iconography, which inspires her works to this day and is evident in most of her pieces. When asked about her art, Tracey has said:

Inspired by truly Aussie culture, I use images that evoke emotions connecting feelings one has when identifying with being uniquely aussie. Each artwork is an honest, authentic and sometimes comedic representation of bygone eras from the Aussie cultural landscape. I want the viewer to be immersed in iconography from yesterday juxtaposed against the progression of today. My colours are bright, welcoming and draw you in to an otherwise forgotten landscape of childhood memories of times past and lost forever in the emergence of progress. Using a variety of mixed media, I use the power of outline to enhance each element in my work drawing the viewer ever closer.

I strongly encourage anyone who has the opportunity to witness Tracey's extraordinary and vibrant artworks firsthand. They are truly quite remarkable. Tracey has two upcoming exhibitions this year. The first, in May, is entitled "Solo Show" at the Thienny Lee Gallery in Edgecliff. Members will get their chance to see her works soon, as her second exhibition will be at the New South Wales Parliament in October. I commend and congratulate Tracey for her ongoing efforts to inspire and train future generations of up-and-coming local artists. I extend to her my appreciation for agreeing to be the first local artist to participate in the Fairfield art exhibition.

The Fairfield City Art Society has been chosen to exhibit its art throughout March, with the new exhibit starting this week. The society's art will be on display to the public at my office and I encourage you all to pay us a visit and see the exhibition for yourselves. It has truly been great to see the inaugural art exhibition receive such a warm welcome from the community and we have Tracey to thank for her authentically Aussie artwork. The Fairfield art exhibition is almost completely booked out for the remainder of the year. However, I encourage any local artist who wishes to have their works exhibited to not hesitate to get in touch with my office. We would be happy to have a chat. I thank all the artists for their contributions and for making the exhibition possible. Together we can help promote the arts in our local community while bringing happiness and inspiration to so many people.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (19:01:31): I do not know how many members in this place are out and about in their electorates and listening to the people in their communities. Certainly I have been out in the Orange electorate talking to a lot of people in my communities and listening to what is being said. What is often forgotten very quickly after an election is that the members of this House and of the other place were elected to represent their constituents and the community of New South Wales. There is a belief held by many in the community that politicians are out of touch and that there is a disconnect between politicians and community.

I have personally heard comments and statements made in this place that support such views and beliefs. I am sure we have all heard someone say that politicians get paid a lot of taxpayers' money and do bugger-all. We need to strive to work hard for the communities that elected us to represent them here and in the other place, for which we are paid reasonably well.

So I was astonished to hear that last week in the Legislative Council the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, had moved to amend sessional orders so that Government members could give themselves an early mark and leave Parliament by 4.30 p.m. on the Thursday of each sitting week. Parliament sits only 18 weeks of the year and in each week there are only three sitting days. If we do the maths, that is just 54 days of the year that politicians are required to be at Parliament to represent the communities in our State on many serious issues. Now the Government wants to shorten that still further. One has to wonder why and if it has anything to do with Nationals members scurrying to the Barwon and Murray electorates to make funding announcements in an effort to claw back popularity with the people they not so long ago turned their backs on and took for granted. Irrespective of their motivation, such a step has done nothing to improve the reputation of politicians, who are viewed by many in the community as doing too little for their pay.

Last week in this House was a true eye-opener for me. My colleague Helen Dalton, the member for Murray, received a telephone call from the Clerk stating that a Nationals MP had complained about her tabling and debating the petition for a royal commission into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and for a water register. The reason cited was that Helen had a conflict of interest as she had water assets. Seriously? To explain just how absurd such a complaint is, the member for Murray is the only MP that I know of who has declared on her pecuniary interests her water assets, even though she did not have to. She was and is voluntarily open and transparent. The very premise of her petition is transparency. It aims to expose those who have water interests or assets and for them to be declared like any other valuable asset or tradeable commodity.

After the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party media event on the morning of the petition debate, the Deputy Premier and the water Minister jointly published a media release saying the NSW Nationals support the petition for a royal commission into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and for a water register. If they and their Nationals MP colleagues were fair dinkum about supporting the petition, Melinda Pavey in her contribution to the petition debate later that day would have refrained from an unwarranted personal attack on the member for Murray, who was in the House doing her job by representing the interests of her community.

Ms Robyn Preston: Point of order—

Mr PHILIP DONATO: The people of her party abandoned—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hawkesbury has taken a point of order.

Mr PHILIP DONATO: What is the standing order?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Hawkesbury has taken a point of order. The member for Orange will resume his seat.

Ms Robyn Preston: It is my understanding that a private member's statement should be about the member's interaction in the community. It should not be a political statement. Is that correct?

Mr PHILIP DONATO: What is the standing order, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It is correct that a private member's statement is primarily supposed to be about a member's electorate.

Mr PHILIP DONATO: I indicated from the beginning that I am out and about speaking to constituents in my electorate. This issue is affecting many people not only in my electorate but also across regional New South Wales. If both the Deputy Premier and the water Minister were fair dinkum about supporting the petition, as their media release suggested, they would have convinced their Liberal masters to allow my call for a suspension of standing orders to allow a debate and a vote in the House on the serious petition but they did not. Why? Because the truth is they really do not support a royal commission, nor do they want a water register that will expose those in their ranks who secretly have water assets that they want to keep secret. Their press release was merely a stunt to fool the public into thinking they supported the petition.

To top it off, an anonymous MP from The Nationals reported the member for Murray to the Speaker for consideration of referral to the ethics committee. The member for Murray declared her interests and is seeking the transparency because she was reported for an alleged ethics violation. There is a reason that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is taking electorates that were formerly occupied by The Nationals: It is behaviour that I have mentioned today that the country communities have been alerted to and they have had a gutful.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:06:34): It is my pleasure to update the House on my attendance on 26 January 2020 at the Hawkesbury Citizenship Ceremony. I congratulate our newest Australians on having the wonderful honour of becoming Australian citizens. On Australia Day, 45 Hawkesbury locals celebrated obtaining their citizenship at the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery in Windsor. The new citizens came from a range of countries including the United States, Canada, China, Taiwan, Malta, Fiji, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Croatia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, the Republic of Ireland, Denmark and Italy. Those wonderful new Australian citizens made the conscious decision to become proud Australians in a land of opportunity and tolerance. It was a fitting day for our newest Australians to be obtaining Australian citizenship and all the privileges it entrusts.

The historic day marks the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet and this year marks the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's voyage and landing at Botany Bay in 1770. From that time on our forefathers and generations of migrants have come here to enjoy the values of freedom of speech, the right to worship, the right to vote, individualism, free market and the quality of life that this country offers. However, rather than just be the beneficiaries of those qualities, generations have assumed the role of guarantors and defenders of such a system. Rather than just be the beneficiaries, it is important that our newest Australians honour and upkeep the values that we Australians hold dear. I have no doubt that they will contribute to this great nation in a manner that preserves and enhances all the values that attract people from across the world to settle in Australia, especially in the Hawkesbury. We live in a democracy, unlike suppressed countries. While the recent bushfires have challenged our resilience we have pushed on, supporting each other and showing true mateship and courage at its best. It is the Aussie way.

The Hawkesbury Citizenship Ceremony was followed by the Hawkesbury Australia Day Awards. I take the opportunity to congratulate the following recipients and thank them for their value and unique and strong contributions to our community: Malcolm Bobrige was awarded Citizen of the Year, Jesse Wijnans was awarded Young Citizen of the Year, Diane Sweeny was awarded Volunteer of the Year, Madyson Disbray received the Community Arts award, Michelle New and Richie Benson both received the Local Hero award, Pink Finss Charity was awarded Community Organisation of the Year, Hawkesbury Remakery received the Environment award, Windsor High School received the Cultural Heritage award for its Hawkesbury Schools Harvest Project, Renee Hardy and Sandy Freeman were awarded All Abilities Sports Person of the Year, Madaline Boyle was awarded Sports Person of the Year and Jasper Sinclair was awarded Junior Sports Person of the Year. I extend my gratitude to their family and friends who support them in their endeavours.

I recognise and thank 2020 Hawkesbury Australia Day Ambassador Peter Frazer, who has worked tirelessly to stress the importance of road safety. In 2012 Mr Frazer's daughter Sarah was tragically killed in a roadside accident on the Hume Highway. He has since devoted his life to road safety and is the founder of Safer Australian Roads and Highways and National Road Safety Week. I thank Hawkesbury City Council for hosting the Australia Day Citizenship and Australia Day Awards. I thank North Richmond-Kurrajong Rotary and Windsor Girl Guides for hosting the barbeque for both ceremonies.

TRIBUTE TO TONY BLAIN

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (19:10:55): It is rare to find an individual with such a zest for life and determination to make a difference in their community. Tony Blain passed away on 20 February 2020 after a hard but swift fight with lung cancer. In this job you come across so many people with passions in life but you only meet a Tony Blain once in your life. His number one passion was his family—above all it was his family. There should be a picture of Tony Blain in the dictionary beside the words "tenacity" and "passion".

Tony fought for many things in our community, including advocating for parking lines, ensuring there were more spaces available for shoppers and commuters alike; a commuter bus service that consisted of minibuses picking up commuters from their suburbs and taking them to transport hubs, alleviating parking around railway and bus interchanges; working at local radio station 2SSR as a radio announcer and disc jockey, playing hits from the sixties, seventies and eighties; and instigating the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO] innovation campus, which is an initiative that will provide highly skilled and highly paid job opportunities in the Sutherland Shire. The New South Wales Government has invested \$12.5 million as the first step in creating a greenfield site at the ANSTO new innovation campus. There is already interest from around the world. Multinationals are looking to invest hundreds of millions of dollars into this job and manufacturing hub.

Finally, one of the many projects Tony was championing was a cancer drug that he was using, at considerable cost. It is now available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which was achieved one week before he passed away. Tony also represented me on the Sutherland Shire Council traffic committee until early this year, which shows the commitment of this man. Last year I organised a dinner in Tony's honour. As per usual

he was humbled but I insisted that he attend to celebrate with many friends and colleagues. On the night I remarked, "We will be standing around in the future talking about what a great bloke you were. Tonight we will tell you what a great bloke you are." That night we laughed and told tall tales and we toasted Tony, our mate. At the end of that night he was truly touched with the love in the room.

Tony also started Shire Biz with Barry Alchin and the association is going from strength to strength. He was again passionate about the work they were doing for business in the Sutherland shire. Tony's day job was owning a licensing and merchandising company. He had clients which included the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Rolling Stones, AC/DC, Neil Young, Cher, U2, Disney and Warner Bros. and many others. Another of his passions was Redfern Motor Parts, a post-war military motorbike spare parts supply company including for Harley Davidson.

On Thursday 5 March a memorial is being held in Tony's honour at Tradies Gynea in Sutherland. Unfortunately, due to my parliamentary duties I will not be able to attend. I am deeply upset about that but the New South Wales Parliament overrides any personal issues. I say to Tony's family that I know you have lost your husband and your dad and I know how much his passing will impact on all of his mates; I can only imagine how much it is impacting your lives and for that I am truly sorry. Everyone who knew Tony Blain knows we have lost one of nature's gentlemen and a true mate. Vale, Tony Blain. He has left a real legacy.

CENTRAL COAST RUNNING COMMUNITY

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:15:14): Tonight I talk about my love of running but more importantly the Central Coast running community. I thank them for the work that they do for my community. I have enjoyed running since as long as I can remember. As a young boy growing up in Kahibah in Newcastle I enjoyed nothing more than putting on my running shoes and taking off down the lane away from the house. Running enabled me to escape the problems of my youth, to work out the anger and emotion of being a teenager. I just liked it. It allowed me to explore my area and it took me on many adventures. It was an easy form of exercise for a working class boy—all I needed was my shoes and a bit of time—and I embraced it. In 1977 I read James Fixx's famous book *The Complete Book of Running*. It explained a lot of the things that I had been feeling. His philosophy of running was that it was part of your life. I guess I have made running part of my life ever since.

I do not aspire to be a good runner; I just enjoy running and want to keep running for as long as I can. That brings me to say that we have a fantastic running community on the Central Coast and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. I have tried to participate in all sorts of running groups on the Central Coast and they embody all the great things about being Australian including the social democratic spirit, which most ordinary Australians have. They welcome people and try to include everybody in the activity. I will mention them in turn, but I stress they are in no particular order.

First off, parkrun is an international running organisation that was formed in the United Kingdom in 2004. The idea of parkrun is that it is a five-kilometre time run that is held every Saturday at 8.00 a.m. or as close to it as the group can organise. It has a bunch of volunteers whose job it is to do the timing, record the results and make sure everybody is welcome and safe. It works very well. It needs many volunteers and I will mention those people in a moment. On the Central Coast we have four parkruns: my own at The Entrance and at Mount Penang, Woy Woy and San Remo. All of them were established by Naomi and Brad Rogers.

I particularly underline their names because they have done a fantastic job of establishing those parkruns in our community. They also established and encouraged a network of volunteers to continue each of those parkruns, so for me they are real heroes of running on the Central Coast. Volunteers are essential to parkrun. At The Entrance parkrun I mention in particular Steph and Adam Tall, who have been the directors for many years, getting up early in the morning and setting up all the equipment so that it is ready when people attend. The current volunteers of The Entrance parkrun are Meg Pye, Sue McConaghe, Vivien Leek, Chris Williams, Diane Greening, Cynthia Pilgrim, Scout Tall and Catherine Lewin. I thank them all.

The Terrigal Trotters is a longstanding and fantastic group on the Central Coast. They are a social group that likes to run hard as well. I enjoy attending their 6.00 a.m. runs on Saturday in front of Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club. They organise the Bay to Bay Running Festival on the Central Coast and the Central Coast Half Marathon. They are a great group. I also mention Mingara Athletics Club, which is another great running organisation. Every Tuesday evening at Mingara Athletics Club they have run meets and welcome all the community to them. I thank Margaret Beasley and Bob Graham, who is the president. They are a great group. Central Coast Cross Country meets on Saturday afternoons every week at a different location and runs between two and six kilometres. They cater particularly for children and are also a great group. There is lots to do when it comes to running on the Central Coast. Lastly I thank my dog, Gruff, who makes sure that I get up every morning. Even on those occasions when I do not feel like running he is always there to give me some encouragement. I love

all of the running communities on the Central Coast and I love the Central Coast. I encourage everyone to get active.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:20:30): Tonight I talk about gagging and how silencing the most important voices in our society threatens the future of our democracy. A few weeks ago I received a phone call from a nurse who called me from a blocked number. She tried to disguise her voice, which was quavering with fear. She sat in a car with tinted windows. All she wanted to do was tell me about recent roster changes in her hospital that put patients' lives in danger. It was important information for a local member interested in improving health services. But the nurse would not even tell me her name; instead she asked me to call her nurse X. She was so terrified of her managers finding out that she had talked to me that she could barely speak. This is how things are not in communist China but in the Riverina.

According to NSW Health, the most serious offence a nurse can commit is not harming a patient, it is neglecting a patient. It is not giving a patient the wrong type of drugs, it is speaking out on behalf of a patient. That is the most dangerous thing a nurse can do; it is the offence most likely to get her sacked. Today in Australia doctors and nurses are not allowed to express their views on health care; teachers are not allowed to speak about education; child protection workers are not permitted to express their views about child abuse; councillors cannot talk about council matters. Heck, there are even cleaners who are forbidden from talking about cleanliness.

The question I have to ask is: When did all this become normal? It was not like this when I was growing up. Isn't gagging the opposite of what is supposed to happen in a free, democratic society? When did silencing the most knowledgeable voice on every important issue become an acceptable part of a democracy? Why is it something that we now accept as a part of life? It is something that government departments have done over the past two decades. It started with government policies that state things such as, "All public comments must be made by media departments and spin doctors." Gradually those policies became stricter. Managers began to gag ordinary employees from speaking out, threatening them with code of conduct violations. Over time those policies became regulations and laws. Corporations started to copy government departments and instituted their own gags. It starts with "Don't talk to the media" and ends with "Don't talk to anyone outside the company".

Even personal Facebook and social media pages are censored by overzealous managers. It is turning us into a nation of sheep who are forced to do what we are told, even if it is wrong, because we are scared of getting the sack. Even schoolchildren, whom we once considered free spirits and we encouraged to speak for themselves, are being silenced. The local high school in my town has been experiencing lots of problems. A teacher shortage meant that more than 1,000 classes were not covered last year. Senior students wanted to see me along with their parents to express their concerns and present their ideas for change. But the school principal told them they were not allowed to do so. The teachers too have to keep their distance from the media and me for fear of losing their jobs. There is no way we are going to solve our problems, be it in health or education, if we silence the people most likely to know the answers.

We scoff at countries like Saudi Arabia and China where people are imprisoned for speaking out. But sacking someone for saying the wrong thing is not a big leap from jailing them. If we do not stand up to policies that gag and silence, we will slide down a very slippery path. It is time for regional communities to unite and fight back against the gags and for employees to band together and refuse to be bullied by code of conduct threats. It is time for voters to make this an issue and to hold gagging governments to account and make our voices heard loud and clear at the ballot box.

CENTRAL COAST INVESTMENT

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:25:00): Tonight I speak about the Sydney-centric Government and about turning some of that investment around for the beautiful Central Coast. On the Central Coast we are sick to death of budget blowouts in the city. We do not want to hear any more about the light rail blowout, the Parramatta high school that cost \$255 million too much or the overspend on a stadium that is not even built. We were promised that every cent of the \$4.2 billion Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund would be spent in regional New South Wales, including in towns such as Gosford. Yet we are seeing an increase in our population density with no additional resources from the Government. The Government is about to remove our local voices from development across the coast, just like it has in Sydney suburbs.

The Government has smashed in high-rise developments with no new schools and green spaces and very poor road planning. The Liberal Government has forced our councils to amalgamate, making Central Coast Council one of the biggest councils in Australia, with no additional funding resources. As our population increases none of the Snowy Hydro funding is currently available to the council. The Liberals promised more jobs in the construction, retail, accommodation and food service industries and yet we have seen a decrease in job creation

on the Central Coast in the last quarter and a very visible slip in youth unemployment. The Liberals promise a fast ferry every election and we have not a drop of funding for it. The Liberal Government has recently promised a faster rail, yet it will not even fund the Woy Woy underpass, which was promised in 2011. We know that under the State Liberal Government policy the Government is meant to fund the removal of level crossings because they are slowing down trains and are a risk to people on the Central Coast.

In the lead-up to budget planning I point out some of the resources that the State Government should look at funding on the Central Coast as part of the Regional Development Strategy. We need policy changes related to waterway funding. We are still waiting for the report into the Brisbane Waterways management. It is clear the drip feeding of dredging funding does not work in either Brisbane Water or Tuggerah Lakes. The member for Myall Lakes pointed out that we need a ministerial task force to look into what is going on with the Manning River. Obviously the current policy is not right. We need increased investment in health and education as our population increases, not decreases in access to great programs like the Midwifery Group Practice. We need improved connectivity within our region and improved public transport connecting the Central Coast to both the north and the south.

We need jobs stimulus on the coast. We have fantastic homegrown industries such as Borg and we need to convince them to stay in New South Wales and support them to expand on the coast when they are looking to relocate elsewhere. We need to support our great innovators on the coast. But this Government has withdrawn business support to Newcastle and Sydney. Our innovators should make a call and someone might drive up or down to give them a little bit of support. On the coast we are seeing cranes in the sky and development in Gosford. I thank those private investors and I thank both the Central Coast Leagues Club and the Gosford RSL Club for their belief and their investment in our community and the future of the coast. Where is the State Government investment that comes as it removes our local planning power and developer contributions to our council, which usually go back into our community? What investments are we seeing in our CBD roads, the bridges across Gosford and our transport hubs? Nothing.

Mr Geoff Provest: I don't know where you've been but this is not right.

Ms LIESL TESCH: The member for Tweed needs to come to Gosford. Let us invest in ways to alleviate the snail-speed traffic into Gosford from the peninsula and get people active on the coast. Let us get that bike path cracking and activate the Gosford waterfront. The Etna Street bridge is a disaster in the mornings and the Donnison Street bridge upgrade was a waste of money. Our commuter car parks are full before seven o'clock in the morning at both Woy Woy and Gosford, so much so that we are the number of people catching the train to Sydney is decreasing because the train services are also getting more overcrowded and more unreliable.

This Government stopped the bus lane development across the coast and we are already seeing the impact in traffic congestion moving from the Terrigal electorate to the train station and the expressway in both the mornings and the evenings. We would like an investment in rapid bus services from Erina to Somersby. Also let us look at the pork-barrelling Liberals' most expensive roundabout in the world in the Terrigal electorate and the funding that has been pulled from the Manns Road upgrade to build the road of gold between Wamberal and Forrester's Beach. We have seen the success of the NeW Space facility in Newcastle and how it has revitalised the city. The Federal Government has promised money and this Government has promised funding in kind. Let us see that land made available in the Gosford CBD for the university dream to come true. I believe in and will continue to fight for a prosperous Central Coast with more jobs close to home.

COMMUNITY FIRST STEP

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (19:30:06): I commend Community First Step for its ongoing dedication and contribution to supporting individuals and families in need throughout our region. It has been a pleasure to work alongside Community First Step over the years and to see firsthand the remarkable difference it makes in the lives of so many people. For those who have not heard of Community First Step, it is a one-stop shop for many services and provides a range of innovative programs tailored to ease the pressures and burdens placed on low socio-economic and disadvantaged communities. It is truly a godsend for so many families and we cannot thank it enough for the invaluable services it provides to residents in our community.

Community First Step has a vast catchment area and provides ongoing support services to communities far and wide. In recent years it has been great to see Community First Step expand its disability services, reintroduce supported independent living options and continue its support through its school intervention programs, community work order programs, out of school hours care programs, supporting volunteers programs and so much more. As our community continues to grow larger and more diverse with each passing year, Fairfield has become home to many new migrant families, youth and those with special needs. It is clear that our community benefits tremendously from the services that organisations such as Community First Step are able to provide. We are incredibly fortunate to have such an organisation on our doorstep working amongst our community. The provision

of high-quality and readily accessible services goes a long way to supporting those in need, especially young families and those with complex needs.

As we can all attest, the most successful communities are the ones that band and work together. That is something that Community First Step recognises as it has a number of programs in place to help break through barriers while promoting inclusion and cohesion amongst the community. This support is achieved through a variety of means, including communicating and liaising with the various schools, government agencies, community service providers and all levels of government services to ensure those who need help are receiving the right support when it is needed the most. As part of a working family, I too know the tremendous pressures placed on working mums and dads. There is nothing more reassuring than knowing your children are safe, happy and well cared for, especially when both mum and dad are at work.

It has also been wonderful to see the hands-on support Community First Step has been able to provide to individuals who are having difficulties accessing and utilising the NDIS system. We trust that the new systems Community First Step has in place will go a long way to making this transition much easier for clients now and well into the future. I had the pleasure of attending the 2019 Year in Review event, and I can attest that 2019 was a big year for Community First Step as it made great strides with its new and existing programs while positioning itself for a bigger and better year in 2020. I thank the board, the staff, the volunteers and the contributors who work with Community First Step and enable the organisation to continually provide and improve upon essential services and programs which are invaluable to the greater Fairfield community. I look forward to continuing to work alongside all of the members of Community First Step throughout 2020 and beyond and I wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (19:34:06): I feel obligated to praise the member for Fairfield for his ongoing Community First Step. A lot of vulnerable people and people with disabilities in our society need our support. The member for Fairfield has shown his ongoing commitment, deep understanding and compassion to support such groups. It is always good to have the support of your local member. It is amazing to finally hear a really good private member's statement. Well done to the member for Fairfield.

Community Recognition Statements

FAIRFIELD CITY POLICE AREA COMMAND

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (19:35:03): I commend the hardworking men and women of Fairfield City Police Area Command who strive continually to give their best while delivering new and exciting initiatives to engage with the community and keep us all safe. Over the years the Fairfield City Police Area Command has introduced a number of new initiatives aimed at building a stronger rapport with residents of the local community while nurturing a close working relationship enshrined in trust, understanding and a desire to support one another. I was proud to have witnessed the last BBQ With a Cop event, which iterated upon the increasingly popular Coffee With A Cop initiative but with sausage sizzle. And who doesn't love a good old sausage sizzle? I thank Bonnyrigg Men's Shed for cooking up a storm on the day. We are incredibly thankful to the Fairfield City Police Area Command for its continued efforts to keep its fingers on the pulse of the community. Keep up the great work, Fairfield City Police Area Command.

ELIJAH WILSON

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:36:02): I recognise the efforts of a young man by the name of Elijah Wilson and his wonderful achievements in the Athletics NSW Junior Championships. Elijah has been involved in athletics since the age of six and in competitive shot-put since 2017, when he placed first in the junior boys shot-put at the NSW Primary Schools Sports Association [NSWPSSA] South Coast regional athletics championships and also participated in the NSWPSSA Athletics Championships, placing nineteenth. In 2018 Elijah placed first in the 11 years boys shot-put at the NSWPSSA Athletics Championships. In 2019 he placed third at the State trials, resulting in selection for the New South Wales State team to compete at the nationals. Elijah demonstrated his determination to improve at shot-put by joining the Ginninderra Athletics Club in 2018. He has received weekly private coaching in all throwing events through the club. His effort and achievements are to be congratulated. I wish him all the very best with his future athletic journey.

BRIAN BOUGHTON

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:37:09): I acknowledge the military career of East Maitland RSL Sub-Branch Vice-President Brian Boughton and congratulate him on his distinguished and dedicated service to our nation and our community at peace and war. Brian was born in Telarah, a suburb of Maitland, and at the age of 17 joined the Australian Army. He served in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. In 1991 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. In 2004 he received the Conspicuous Service Cross, which acknowledged his outstanding achievement in the application of exceptional skills, judgement or dedication in non-warlike

situations. He brings those skills to everyday life. The accolades were recently capped by the presentation of a Thank You for Your Service quilt by the RSL NSW's Central Council of Women's Auxiliaries. The quilts are presented to returned RSL NSW personnel in recognition of their dedicated service to the welfare of veterans. I thank Brian for everything that he has done and continues to do within our community.

DENNIS MARTIN

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:38:13): Coffs Harbour Airport will not be quite the same with the departure of its long-serving general manager Dennis Martin. Since 2008 he has been at the helm and has overseen many improvements so that our airport has a solid foundation to accommodate future growth. His advocacy and passion for aviation has been lifelong but his contributions to the Coffs Coast community go beyond that. Dennis was named Coffs Harbour Citizen of the Year in 1998 and in 2017 he was bestowed a Medal of the Order of Australia. With the Rotary Club of Coffs Harbour he had a crucial role in the establishment of the Coffs Harbour PCYC in 1997. Over the years Dennis has also contributed greatly to organisations such as Camp Quality and Radio CHY FM. He will be missed at Coffs Harbour Airport. I wish him all the best in retirement.

CHEREE TOKA

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:39:02): Cheree Toka is a proud Kamilaroi woman and activist who has campaigned for years to have the Aboriginal flag flown permanently on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Cheree is also a proud inner westie and a formidable entrepreneur and businesswoman, running a First Nations-owned company providing facilities management services. Our First Nations history and culture should be celebrated on the Sydney Harbour Bridge every day of the year. However, currently the flag flies for only 15 days a year, including during NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and Australia Day. Cheree has led a powerful campaign that acknowledges the lack of First Nations art, culture and icons in public spaces across our city. Cheree's petition has been signed by over 141,000 people from across Australia and was debated in the New South Wales Parliament. I am proud that the Labor Party stands with Cheree and First Nations people and is committed to flying the Aboriginal flag on the Sydney Harbour Bridge permanently. I thank Cheree for her ongoing fight for First Nations inclusion and recognition and I stand with her.

COFFS HARBOUR HOSPITAL

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:40:00): The \$194 million Coffs Harbour Base Hospital redevelopment has entered a fun phase for local children. Primary school students and child patients in the hospital's paediatric unit were given the chance to name the massive crane dominating the skyline at the redevelopment site. The Mid North Coast Local Health District ran the competition and the winning entry came from 10-year-old Poppi Hudson from Boambee Public School. Poppi named the crane Helper and she has named the second crane, which has since arrived on site, as Helper's Helper. It was fantastic to congratulate Poppi and meet her family at the health campus and to present her with her prize, a die-cast model of the tower slewing crane. I acknowledge the Mid North Coast Local Health District board, led by chairman Warren Grimshaw, and the Coffs Harbour Health Campus staff and management, led by their general manager, Dr Theresa Beswick.

DANNY WILLMOTT

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:40:56): Tonight I sincerely thank Danny Willmott for his service as one of the trustees of the Mangrove Mountain RSL Sub-Branch. I also thank all trustees and members of the Mangrove Mountain RSL Sub-Branch for their long-held commitment to justice and integrity in the conduct of RSL business and as defenders of important community assets. I know they have fought long and hard as trustees and members for the land that belongs to the people of the Mangrove Mountain RSL Sub-Branch. At the State level there have been ongoing issues around probity of the RSL, with RSL President Don Rowe being convicted last Friday of two counts of fraud. The charges belie bigger issues many RSL members know about in the organisation. The issues have touched our local community. I thank Danny for his enduring efforts over many years to work with police prosecutors to ensure that justice is served and that community assets are protected and held for community benefit.

TINA REYNOLDS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:41:51): During this Women's Week, I recognise Dubbo's Tina Reynolds who is the manager of Orana Support Service, an organisation providing a broad range of support for adults and families who are homeless or at risk, including those experiencing domestic violence. Since taking over the organisation, Tina has launched the Meals on the Main initiative, a free weekly community barbecue aimed at providing a meal every Wednesday night to those who may otherwise struggle to find affordable, nutritious food. Since starting in October last year the initiative has grown so much that it has been forced to move from its original location on Macquarie Street to a nearby park due to its popularity. It has also received plenty of support and food from local businesses. I have had the opportunity to serve dinner there in the lead-up to Christmas. Tina is a former

Dubbo City Council councillor and Chair of the Western Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Service. For many years she has been dedicated to serving the Dubbo community. I thank her and all the staff at Orana Support Service for the great work they do.

THE FATHERS TABLE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (19:42:51): The Fathers Table is about supporting our community, especially those most vulnerable and struggling financially and emotionally in Wyong and surrounding areas. Each year The Fathers Table provides up to 5,000 free sit-down meals on Friday evenings and Sunday lunches and also 1,000 food hampers, clothing and bread. Many people do not come because they need a meal; for many it is more about being part of a community and the social aspect. The meals give them the opportunity to connect with people and providing support, encouragement and friendship.

The Fathers Table provides other support such as visiting people in hospital, helping families struggling at home, assisting people with transport for employment and emergency accommodation. It is really all about giving them a sense of being part of the local community and being valued, no matter what their circumstances. The Fathers Table in Wyong has been operating since 2012 and has people referred from Centrelink, the housing department and Lifeline to name a few. To really belong there needs to be a connection to a place and that is what The Fathers Table is all about.

BARRY SMITH, OAM

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:44:00): I congratulate North Richmond local Mr Barry Smith on receiving an Order of Australia Medal for service to local government and to the community of Hunters Hill. Mr Smith was general manager of Hunters Hill Council from 1996 until 2018. He has had and continues to provide extensive service and dedication to local government. He is a fellow of Local Government Professionals Australia NSW, where he had been president from 2014 to 2018. He was a board member of Local Government Professionals Australia from 2013 to 2018. Mr Smith was raised in beautiful Hawkesbury and attended Richmond Public School and Richmond High School. He was involved in the amalgamation of Colo and Windsor councils, which became Hawkesbury City Council in 1980. Mr Smith also contributed a lot to the Hawkesbury District Cricket Association. He held numerous positions over many years and was a life member. I extend my congratulations to his wife, Sharri, for her role in her husband's great achievement of obtaining the Order of Australia Medal and I wish both of them continued success.

CENTRAL COAST MEN'S SHEDS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:45:12): Tonight I offer a round of applause in the New South Wales Parliament to Men's Sheds up and down the coast of New South Wales for supporting the wildlife that has been impacted by the recent bushfires. It was very exciting to visit the Gosford Men's Shed and witness the industrious, enthusiastic efforts of the Bunnings employees who built a record number of nest boxes in a single day. The work that had gone on before this process is to be commended. I thank the Umina Men's Shed for its efforts in the delivery of the nest box kits. I also thank Sea Scouts and local vision-impaired man Keith Cook for helping the assembly of the kits. Keith assembled three nest boxes at his home workshop and then joined the Men's Shed on Monday. I thank Bill Eadie for dropping him home. Huge thanks to Ray Crawley of the Terrigal Men's Shed who coordinated the production and distribution of this ambitious project up and down the coast. I give a special shout-out to Bunnings, which very generously supplied the materials.

ROCCO LARIA

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (19:46:23): I congratulate Rocco Laria, who completed his Higher School Certificate [HSC] at Elderslie High School in 2019, on having his HSC design and technology major work *Wildlife Road Safety Detector* selected to be on exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum for SHAPE 2019. This year 35 students from across New South Wales were selected from the HSC design and technology, industrial technology and textiles and design courses to have their works on display. The major works explored themes including the environment, sustainability and wildlife protection and were required to have the potential to improve and change our lives in the future. It is a wonderful exhibition and one which, in partnership with the NSW Education Standards Authority, allows the talent of the next generation of designers in New South Wales to be celebrated. I congratulate Rocco Laria on his great achievement.

OMAR IDBEIS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (19:47:21): Recently I was pleased to meet with Settlement Services International [SSI] which introduced me to Mr Omar Idbeis. Three years ago Omar arrived in Fairfield. He was a refugee from Syria who immediately began studying English through SSI's Refugee Employment Support Program. Three short months after arriving on our shores Omar managed to secure an information technology

internship through Transport for NSW, which enabled him to further his language and communication skills. It was incredible to learn about all the steps Omar has taken on his journey and I am pleased to note he has since secured employment through a global insurance company. I congratulate Omar on his remarkable achievements. I also commend and congratulate SSI for all its hard work and for supporting individuals like Omar.

WESTPAC RESCUE HELICOPTER SERVICE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:48:10): I acknowledge the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Golf Day held on 21 February 2020 at the Port Macquarie Golf Club. Businesses from across the Hastings and Camden Haven shined their clubs and packed their golf balls in eager anticipation of the annual charity fundraiser for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. I thank the major sponsors for supporting this wonderful event on the golfers' calendar: Troy Pemberton and Brett Savage from JR Richards, Chris Mansfield from Insurance House, Craig Anderson from Warren Plowright Toyota, Amos Frankel from Watpac Construction, Scott Newton from Shaw Gidley and the Mid Pacific Hotel. During the event avid golfers teed off for their chance to win a new Toyota Yaris, valued at \$18,000, generously supplied by the Warren Plowright team. Community liaison officer Richard McGovern coordinated the day's activities, which attracted over 60 registrations and raised an impressive \$5,000. Richard highlighted that the cost of Westpac rescue missions range from \$6,000 to \$10,000, depending on what aircraft is required for each individual circumstance. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter is an instrumental life-saving service that gives so much back to our community. For that we extend our utmost gratitude and respect.

BECAUSE WE CARE BOUTIQUE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (19:49:17): Because We Care Boutique based in Wyong will celebrate its first birthday with morning tea on Thursday 5 March. Because We Care Boutique is the only service of its kind on the Central Coast, supporting women who are trying to re-enter the workforce by providing professional attire and support prior to interviews. The clothing and attire are generously donated from the local community to help women in need. It is run by seven volunteers and one paid worker to provide the service for women who have faced severe challenges in life and who aim to seek paid employment to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Because We Care Boutique has partnered with Northern Settlement Services, neighbourhood centres, Mission Australia, the Women's Justice Network, Wesley Mission, Job Centre, Ability Options, Max Employment, Youth Off the Street and Northlake, Wadalba and Wyong high schools. Well done to Sharyn Burgess for creating such an amazing service to the community, which supports women in the workforce who face severe challenges in their lives.

GOODSTART EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:50:17): I congratulate the Goodstart early learning centre at Green Point for its successful grant application through the New South Wales Government's community grants program. Last month I was delighted to announce \$10,000 for the preschool to deliver an Aboriginal cultural program. This will consist of the involvement of a local Darkinjung Aboriginal elder and will allow the centre to purchase cultural resources and ensure the necessary staff development. The Central Coast has one of the fastest growing Aboriginal populations in New South Wales and this sort of program is so beneficial for all involved. I know that this funding was available to preschools right across New South Wales, so I am pleased that the Central Coast is getting its fair share of funding. Congratulations to the preschool director, Sonja Taylor, and her fantastic team at the Goodstart early learning centre at Green Point. I shout out to the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Council, which does a wonderful job as our pre-eminent land council on the Central Coast.

TAMSYN GRILLET

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:51:11): I recognise Ms Tamsyn Grillet. During January and February this year when some of our east coast friends were fighting bushfires, one of my Barwon constituents was working to assist those impacted and affected by these fires. Eleven-year-old Tamsyn Grillet initially sent Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons 32 shower packs to distribute to families who were in need of assistance. She then continued to put together individual and family-sized packs until these donated items filled a large removalist box. With the assistance of her brother Bryant and Regional Express, these items made their way to the Rural Fire Service for distribution. It fills me with pride that I have such generous, caring young people in the electorate of Barwon.

RUBY BLAKE

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:51:55): I recognise the efforts of a young girl by the name of Ruby Blake and her wonderful achievements in her seven years participating in Little Athletics. With the Little Athletics season beginning in late 2019, Ruby began her participation in the triple jump and javelin. Ruby's goals for the Little Athletics season is to qualify for the State championships in four events, which is the maximum allowed for her age group, and possibly achieve another State medal. Ruby won two State medals in the previous

season, placing second in long jump and third in the 400-metre sprint. Ruby also competed in the NSW Primary Schools Sports Association State Athletics Championships in the 200 metre and 800 metre track and long jump events. It is most exciting that her Berrima Public School junior relay team made the State event, so she will be competing with three of her best friends from school. Through Ruby's determination and passion for athletics, she has made many friendships and has visited great locations and is able to reflect upon her personal improvements and achievements. Her effort and achievements are to be congratulated.

INNER WEST OUT-OF-SCHOOL-HOURS CARE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:53:28): Quality out-of-school-hours care [OOSH] is critical for inner west families and for families across New South Wales. OOSH services are much more than babysitting services to help working parents. Quality OOSH extends learning throughout the day, engages and activates kids in arts, crafts or sport and, most importantly of all, provides kids with a chance to play together after school. The former Marrickville Council was a leader in the provision of early learning education. I am pleased to see that these programs continue under the amalgamated Inner West Council. The Inner West Council continues to run quality OOSH services at Marrickville West Public School, Ferncourt Public School and Wilkins Public School. However, OOSH recently lost tenders at Stanmore and Camdenville public schools, causing significant concern for parents. I share their concern that there appears to be a push towards privatising services across New South Wales. The Department of Education's tender processes unfairly privilege private operators over community- and council-run services. We cannot let private interests creep into our playgrounds. I commend the strong community campaign from local parents and carers in opposing the recent tender of services.

GRACE TOOMEY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:54:04): As part of Women's Week I recognise proud Dubbo women and Wiradjuri woman Grace Toomey. Last year Grace Toomey was elected as Central Region councillor for the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, which is Australia's largest Aboriginal representative body. Grace worked in local government for 24 years, most recently as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer for Dubbo Regional Council. She was also a board member of the Dubbo Aboriginal Land Council for 10 years and the secretary of the Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working Party of the Three Rivers Regional Assembly. She is out and about regularly in the community and just a couple of weeks ago I saw her at an Apology Day event in Narromine with a bunch of schools from around our region. Grace continues to be a strong voice for our region. I thank her for work and encourage her to keep on going.

HAIRCUTS FOR THE HOMELESS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:54:55): I acknowledge the display of Christmas generosity demonstrated by a group of lower Hunter hairdressers and barbers during the inaugural Haircuts for the Homeless charity event in Maitland. Between 40 and 50 members of Maitland's homeless community attended the three-hour event at the Uniting Church hall, which was staffed by 11 hairdressers and barbers from Maitland, East Maitland and Cessnock. The event was spearheaded by well-known Maitland salon owner Helen Stuckings of Inspirations Hair Designs, who already volunteers every Monday night to feed people in need. She thought it would be a way to put her skills to work for a charitable cause while also spreading a bit of Christmas cheer. People who visited the Haircuts for the Homeless event received a haircut and a pamper pack of personal hygiene products. I understand that following the success of their inaugural event Helen and her peers are looking at staging Haircuts for the Homeless twice a year. What a wonderful initiative. Thank you, Helen. It is not just your hair designs that are an inspiration to our community.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:55:54): I congratulate The Hills Shire Council on its fantastic Australia Day celebration at Bella Vista Farm, which included a concert by The Wiggles and flag-raising ceremonies. I also congratulate Hornsby Shire Council on its family-oriented event at Storey Park oval, which marked the opening of the Storey Park Community Centre. At its citizenship ceremony on Australia Day, the council welcomed 63 people who formally took the pledge of Australian citizenship at the centre. I commend Hawkesbury City Council for the Australia Day event that it organised at Governor Phillip Park, which featured food, family entertainment and an emergency services display. From the Australia Day awards Malcolm Bobrige is to be congratulated on being recognised as Hawkesbury's Citizen of the Year 2020 for his work as a volunteer with the RFS for three decades. Diane Sweeney is also to be congratulated on her award for Volunteer of the Year. She has volunteered at Hawkesbury City Salvation Army for six years.

ASSOCIATION OF THE MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE AND SAN VITTORIO ANNUAL FESTA

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (19:56:58): On Sunday 17 November 2019 the Association of the Madonna Delle Grazie and San Vittorio held the fifty-ninth annual Festa at Club Marconi. It was a pleasure to

join in with the community of Roccella Ionica, Calabria, to celebrate the patron and patroness of their town. The day commenced with the traditional Catholic mass in honour of the Madonna and saint, followed by the procession of the saints by the Giuseppe Verdi Band. The official opening followed, with entertainment including the traditional musical variety show and the raffle draw. I commend association president Mr Joe Bova, secretary Tina Furfaro and the organising committee for hosting another successful Festa. Well done to all.

TERRIGAL ELECTORATE HSC RESULTS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:57:41): I take this opportunity to congratulate each high school in my electorate of Terrigal on their performance in the 2019 Higher School Certificate. As we all know, the HSC is a stressful time not just for students and their families but also for school staff. In the New South Wales school rankings Erina High School jumped up from 506th in 2018 to 442nd in 2019. Well done to principal Karen Nicol and her fantastic team. Kincumber High School rose from 462nd in 2018 to 323rd in 2019. This is the best result for any comprehensive public high school on the Central Coast. Well done to principal Brent Walker and his awesome team. At Terrigal High School the result in 2019 was 496th. Congratulations to Tania Turik and her great staff. These improved results are a credit to each teacher at our high schools and each principal who leads teachers in delivering high-quality education to Central Coast families.

MEGAN VISSER

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:58:43): It brings me great pride to recognise the work of Megan Visser, who was named New South Wales Cub Scout of the Year after her incredible fundraising efforts. Megan lost a friend to cancer who was just eight years old and this spurred her to take up the charge to raise funds to fight this dreadful disease. Megan sells candles to raise money. Her inspirational work and the work of her friends at East Maitland Scout Group truly keep the flame of hope alight. As the shadow Minister for Medical Research and a breast cancer survivor, this issue is very close to my heart: I know how important it is to have the support of those you love. Once again I congratulate Megan on this award. I look forward to watching her achievements unfold in the future. I also recognise group leader Andrew "Magic Dragon" Brown, who is such an inspirational leader to that Scout group. I look forward to seeing all of them at the annual report presentation in a few weeks.

JOY HARRISON

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:59:40): During this Women's Week I recognise Joy Harrison, a steadfast and tireless contributor to the Gulgong community. Joy is a longstanding and respected member of the Gulgong business community as a director of the Gulgong Gold Experience. She has been a member of the Gulgong Chamber of Commerce for more than 30 years. She also happens to be coordinating Gulgong's upcoming 150th year celebrations, which will be bigger than *Ben-Hur*. On top of this, Joy is also the Gulgong correspondent for the *Mudgee Guardian* and is involved in basically anything and everything to help promote the town and the entire region. She was at the recent Gulgong Show doing what she does best: covering stories and getting great photographs. People like Joy are crucial in strengthening community identity in small towns like Gulgong. Well done, Joy. You are a gem.

BARWON ELECTORATE SHOWGIRLS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:00:31): I take this opportunity to acknowledge the 2019 Wee Waa Showgirl Georgie Haire along with the 2019 Dunedoo Showgirl Hannah Yeo who will both be competing at the 2020 Sydney Royal Easter Show with the hope to be sashed New South Wales Showgirl. It is wonderful to see two young ladies from the Barwon electorate in the running for such a prestigious title. It is a real credit to Georgie and Hannah, their families and their communities. I wish both Georgie and Hannah the best of luck and I hope to see them at the show.

CENTRAL COAST GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:01:06): I take this opportunity to congratulate Central Coast Grammar School in my electorate of Terrigal on its performance in the 2019 Higher School Certificate. As we all know, the HSC is a stressful time not just for students and their families but also for school staff. At Central Coast Grammar School the overall ranking was 100th out of all schools in New South Wales. There were also 100 band 6 scores awarded to its students. One-third of its students achieved an ATAR score over 90. This is a fantastic result and one of the best in our region. I also know that upgrade work is underway at Central Coast Grammar School to deliver a number of new classrooms and facilities. This is important for a growing community like ours. As I have already said, behind every successful student is a dedicated group of teachers, office staff, support staff and more. I take this opportunity to thank principal Bill Low and his team at Central Coast Grammar School for their continuing work.

SAADI TOMA

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (20:02:05): It is always a pleasure to catch up with the former coach of the Iraqi football team, Mr Saadi Toma, and to learn about the progress of his local football academy, which is aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of both players and coaches while raising the bar for the quality of football in south-west Sydney. It is always uplifting to listen to coach Saadi speak so passionately about his desire to upskill and train those who share his love for football. Coach Saadi wishes to support the growth of football in the region with an emphasis on providing his services to those from low socio-economic communities to ensure participants have every opportunity for future success and fulfilment from the sport they love so dearly. Keep up the great work, coach Saadi.

BELMONT HOUSE

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:02:50): I visited beautiful Belmont House in North Richmond on Sunday 1 March to celebrate Foundation Day and capture the moment in time when a time capsule was interred. This outcrop of land, which is known as Belmont, was first sighted by Governor Phillip in April 1788. Congratulations to the friends of Belmont House on investing time into such a worthy heritage site. Thank you also to St John of God Richmond Hospital for its meticulous care for this outstanding building and its surrounds. Monthly tours are available via the Friends of Belmont House. Check out the Facebook page for details at www.facebook.com/SJOGRichmond/events.

FAIRFIELD RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (20:03:46): As a patron of the Fairfield Relay for Life I am always delighted to catch up with Fairfield's very own Cancer Council NSW representatives and advocates, Denise Daynes and Sinilia Radivojevic, to discuss the numerous events and initiatives that are being planned for Fairfield throughout 2020. We all have been either impacted by cancer or know someone who has been impacted by cancer in a huge way. I am so incredibly proud and thankful for the efforts of our local Cancer Council volunteers, whose work goes a long way towards ensuring that local residents have the right support, assistance and advocacy services available to them when they need it the most.

MARDI WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:04:30): I am proud to be part of a government that has helped deliver \$6.8 million to Central Coast Council to help upgrade the Mardi Water Treatment Plant. While this may not seem glamorous, it provides important infrastructure to the Central Coast and assists the futureproofing of its water facilities. I was delighted to welcome water Minister Melinda Pavey to the Central Coast to show her firsthand how proud Central Coast Council is of its water management. We spent time with Todd, who has been working for over 25 years at council with the Mardi water management. He is so proud of the quality of the water that they are delivering. We also saw how the interconnecting pipes and pumps move water from one dam to the other across the Central Coast to ensure water security. I am so proud of being able to work constructively with Central Coast Council and that the State Government has delivered \$6.8 million in funding to the Central Coast Council to upgrade the Mardi Water Treatment Plant. I again thank Minister Pavey for her support.

BANKSTOWN SPORTS SENIOR ATHLETICS CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I was delighted to visit the Crest Athletics Complex at Bass Hill on 28th January 2020, where I had the opportunity to see the Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics Club's Community Building Partnership (CBP) Grant in action and inspect the newly completed project. In 2018 the Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics Club successfully obtained a CBP grant of \$25,000 for the purchase and installation of a permanent fixed Finishlynx Photo Finish Camera system package, incorporating associated operating equipment and software, at their competition ground. The new system allows automated timing and results for a range of athletic events, which enhances and promotes the accuracy and fairness of the club's competitions. I was pleased to support Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics Club in securing this funding and I take this opportunity to acknowledge club President Mr Colin Whitbread, Executive Vice Presidents Mr Lindsay Watson and Mr Richard Kolodziej, Secretary Mr Matthew Whitbread, Treasurer Ms Margaret Re, General Manager of Bankstown Little Athletics Mr Youcef Abdi, and I commend the efforts of all those involved in the CBP grant application process. I congratulate Bankstown Sports Senior Athletics Club on realising this worthwhile venture and I wish them all the very best.

REVEREND BILL CREWS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—A War of Compassion documentary follows the life and struggles of Reverend Bill Crews, Founder of the Exodus Foundation. Reverend Crews has devoted the better part of his life to helping and providing a voice for the most vulnerable in our society. The documentary premieres this week

with funds from the project going to assisting homelessness and youth programs run by the Exodus Foundation. A War on Compassion is a retrospective of Bill's 40 years' of service, from helping those sleeping rough on the streets of Ashfield, to his work in the Calais Jungle, a refugee camp in Calais France. Reverend Crews became an ordained Minister at Ashfield Uniting Church in 1986, establishing the Exodus Foundation three years later. Bill has always been a fierce supporter and campaigner for social justice, from gambling reform, to tackling homelessness and dealing with drug addiction in our community. The War on Compassion highlights Bill's generosity of spirit, and years of campaigning for greater support for those experiencing homelessness and addiction. Congratulations to the director Warwick Moss on this wonderful depiction of Bill's service to our community. And thank you to Bill for always advocating for a kinder world.

FLORENCE CORBYN

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise Mrs Florence Corbyn of Orange. Volunteers are the pillars of our society, and none deserve recognition more than Florence 'Flo' Corbyn, who has this month has volunteered forty years of her life to the Orange Health Service Auxiliary, and what was the former Orange Hospital Auxiliary. Unsurprisingly, Mrs Corbyn is the longest serving member of the Auxiliary, and was President for seven years. A former nurse herself, Mrs Corbyn witnessed the kindness of the ladies of auxiliary in their deliveries throughout the hospital, and happily joined in to help make sandwiches, keep drinks fridges stocked, run raffles and more importantly, to be a friendly face and an open ear to many thousands of people who visited over those forty years, who needed a ray of sunshine on a dull day. Mrs Corbyn has not only given her time to the visitors and staff of the hospital over those four decades, but she has significantly contributed to the inclusion, company and friendship that this organisation has provided to the many members, which is the essence of community. Flo, on behalf of an appreciative Orange community, congratulations on your forty years of volunteering and dedication to community.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Clean Up Australia Day has been held right across the Wallsend electorate with a large number of local organisations lending a hand. Volunteers donned gloves and took to sites right across the electorate. I would like to thank all of the volunteers from the Girl Guides at Beresfield, led by Elizabeth Chandler. The staff and volunteers at Baiada at Beresfield also cleaned up and were led by Katie Hendry. Their sister site at Cardiff also cleaned up around the local area and were led by Tegan Brown. John Jackson and his volunteers were responsible for cleaning up the Station Masters Park at Cardiff. The staff at 3 local McDonalds restaurants lent a helping hand. Glendale was led by Haylee McLeod, Hexham by Alex Cutler and Wallsend by Todd Ferris. The University of Newcastle were also involved, being led by Skye Cullen and the teachers and students from Callaghan College Wallsend were led by Yvette McShane. Local residents from the Sanctuary and Sanctuary View estates also lent a helping hand and a thank you to Kandis Van Holdt for organising this. Local residents also cleaned up Ironbark Creek in Elmore Vale, led by Kara Agilas.

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL GRADUATE NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—The Member for Rockdale and I had the pleasure last week of meeting the new graduate nurses and midwives commencing their careers at St George Hospital. This is the first graduate intake for the hospital in 2020, with 58 newly graduated registered nurses, 16 specialist nurses, 4 new midwives, 6 perioperative nurses and 6 mental health nurses joining the program. Nurses and midwives are the heart of our health system. They make an invaluable contribution to our health district, and to the lives of patients and their families. The beginning of a career is an exciting milestone, and these wonderful nurses and midwives are starting theirs at one of NSW's best hospitals. I wish all the graduates the best of luck as they begin their careers. Thank you to Rebecca Tyson, Acting General Manager of St George Hospital for hosting the morning tea.

HUNTER BAILLIE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I want to draw the attention of the house to Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church who this year celebrated a magnificent 131 years of service in our community. Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church is one of the most beautiful churches in our local area, built by Helen Hay Mackie Baillie as a memorial to her late husband John Hunter Baillie in 1889 in the Victorian Gothic Revival style. Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church celebrated the birthday with a special service that included choristers from the Sydney University Musical Society and their organist Edward Grantham. Congratulations to Reverend David Tsai and the whole community at Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church.

TENTERFIELD'S PETER ALLEN FESTIVAL

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Tenterfield's second annual Peter Allen Festival was held last September to showcase what the Northern Tablelands town and Tenterfield Shire has to offer. The festival

celebrates Tenterfield as the birthplace of Peter Allen, who went on to national and international fame as a singer-songwriter, pianist and dancer. Peter gave us the classic Tenterfield Saddler, the anthem I Still Call Australia Home and the flamboyant I Go To Rio, songs which have stood the test of time. A Peter Allen Festival had been talked about for over a decade but we can thank Mayor Peter Petty, Harry Bolton and former Chamber of Commerce president Vince Sherry for turning talk into action. This trio approached Josh Moylan and Matt Sing, who deserve the most credit for taking on the mammoth job of organising the 2018 and 2019 festivals. The Mount Mackenzie Road bushfire destroyed homes and threatened properties on Tenterfield's southern outskirts on the opening night of last year's festival. I was present. The subsequent bushfire emergency impacted on the festival program but 'the show went on'. This was on top of challenging drought conditions. I hope the festival can continue because it has so much potential as a flagship event.

ANALEISE AMOS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—13 year old, Analeise Amos from Glenmore Park is an extraordinary girl whose kind heart is always evident regardless of her poor health. Analeise was born with arthrogryposis, severe scoliosis and hyperkyphosis, resulting in the need of multiple major operations beginning at just six months old. These operations include a lumbar laminectomy, to release her trapped spinal cord and a dual rod insertion, to help straighten her spine. In previous years, she has had three rod failures, with her spine twisting so abnormally it was slowly crushing her rib cage, requiring an emergency definitive spinal fusion. Westmead Children's Hospital bravely performed the surgery that saved her life. Unfortunately, her current rod has snapped and she now has a fracture requiring surgeons to replace the rods and do a whole new spinal fusion. The overall recovery period from a surgery of this calibre is twelve months. In spite of her health situation, Analeise continues to be a happy, kind and bright child, always showcasing a big smile regardless of the pain she is in. My thoughts are with Analeise and her family and I wish them all the best during this season.

DANIEL YAN

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I wish to inform the house of the recent success Daniel has had in the world of Snooker. The 12-year-old, from Wingham, is turning heads in the Manning snooker scene one year into his tutelage from Manning district snooker champion and former NSW representative player Barry Carlaw. Barry, now aged in his 70s, likens it to the 'Master and the Apprentice'. He recently played in his first teams events where he was a member of two teams in different competitions with and against adults. Daniel was successful in both sides in the respective Manning District snooker grand finals. He was not only a winner but in most cases won the respect of his opponents with good play. If Daniel continues his rapid improvement, he will look at contesting NSW junior events later in the year. Although Sydney based players have more opportunity for competition, Daniel will find it a rewarding experience and see where he needs to advance the level of his game. I would like to wish Daniel the best of luck with his future Snooker playing career.

REV BILL ROSIER OAM

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—It brings me great pleasure to congratulate The Reverend Albert William (Bill) Rosier, Ordained Minister of the Uniting Church, on receiving a Medal of The Order of Australia. Bill was awarded this honour for service to the Uniting Church of Australia, and to the community. Bill began his ministry in the Canberra Methodist Circuit in 1960. In 1966, after two years as an Army Reserve Chaplain working at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, he was appointed Chaplain, and later Principal Chaplain, to the Royal Australian Navy. He retired from the Navy after 22 years' service to become a Chaplain at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Bill now lives in Galston at Rowland Village, an RSL LifeCare village. This facility includes an Aged Care Facility, Mark Donaldson VC House. Bill continues the rewarding job of providing pastoral care to all residents across the village. He also has the honour of leading the ANZAC and Remembrance Day Commemoration Services at the Galston Cenotaph, for which the community is very grateful. Everyone who has met Bill will tell you he is a kind, gentle and compassionate man who would do anything to help the people around him. I certainly agree, and wish Bill and his dear wife, Marilyn, all the best in their retirement.

ROYALS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)—I wish to offer my congratulations to the Royals Hockey Club of Grafton who recently celebrated 40 years since its inception. The philosophy of the Club is one that all sporting clubs should aspire to, "whoever is interested is welcome" and this approach has paid off handsomely for the club. From humble beginnings of just 13 members the club is now one of the strongest within the Grafton Hockey Association and they have a strong belief in supporting and encouraging junior players and watching them come up through the ranks into the senior teams. The club is equally proud of now having women's teams as part of their club. The Club has produced a number of representative players including Peter Kelly and Matt

Lobsey who have played at international and national level along with others who have represented at state level. I wish Royals Hockey Club a very long and successful career.

KARAN GAIKWAD INAUGURAL FUNDRAISING DINNER

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—As a parent, I can only imagine the devastating pain of losing a child. Jayawant and Vaishali Gaikwad know that pain keenly after losing their son Karan five years ago to leukaemia. He was only 15. I am in awe of how the Gaikwad family, including Karan's older brother Shree, have turned their pain into hope by hosting the Karan Gaikwad Inaugural Fundraising Dinner. About 250 people packed into the Greg Percival Community Centre to raise much-needed funds for Campbelltown Pediatric Ambulatory Care, the Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre and Westmead Children's Hospital. I was moved by the unqualified love for Karan who was remembered as a happy young man with a bright future. Every aspect of Karan's life was represented at the fund-raiser: his loving family, school friends and the community who supported Karan and his family during his illness. Despite the loss of Karan, his family showed incredible strength and generosity to raise money for other children fighting cancer. I commend the Gaikwad family and everyone who supported the inaugural fund-raiser. May Karan's memory live strong in all who love him.

NEW PROBATIONARY CONSTABLES

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I recently had the opportunity to welcome eight new probationary Constables who have started at the St George Local Area Command in Kogarah. It was fantastic to meet the Constables and ask them questions about why they have chosen to join 'the Force'. What struck me was the diversity of professional backgrounds of the Constables, with the new members coming from all walks of life. One thing that was constant throughout the Constables, however, was their strong enthusiasm to get started and serve the community. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Commanding Officer Tony Cooke and the whole team at The St George Local Area Command for their consistent service. Whilst we are incredibly lucky to live in a safe and peaceful area, the sacrifices our Police Officers make to ensure our safety can often go unnoticed. Thank you also to Hurstville and Riverwood Police Stations, who are also out there protecting our local community. May we never forget how lucky we are. I wish the eight new probationary Constables all the best as they begin their journey with St George Police.

SERBIAN FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise the Serbian Festival Sydney which celebrated its 8th Annual Festival on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 February this year at Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour. The Festival, as usual, was organised by the Serbian's Orthodox Youth Association (SOYA). I acknowledge the presence at the Festival of the Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to Australia, His Excellency Miroslav Petrovic and His Grace, Bishop of Australia and New Zealand Siluan at the Opening Ceremony. I also acknowledge for the important roles they play in the Festival, John Jeremic, Treasurer of SOYA; Michael Mijatovic, Festival Finance Director; and Teodora Nogic, Festival Operations Manager. The Festival, said to be the largest of its kind outside Serbia, celebrates Serbian history and culture, including its exotic cuisine and performances such as the traditional dance named "Kolo". This was a great display of multicultural Sydney and a great opportunity for the Serbian community to showcase itself.

HELEN SINCLAIR HEATHCOTE'S 2020 LOCAL SENIOR'S ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS RECIPIENT

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—It gives me great pleasure to recognise local community member Helen Sinclair in Heathcote's 2020 Senior's Local Achievement Awards. Mrs Sinclair volunteers her valuable time and services at Helensburgh's local community organisation, the Northern Illawarra Neighbour Aid, also known as NINA. She supports individuals in the community who require transport to medical appointments. Mrs Sinclair has no boundaries and no matter the distance, she is always willing to drive locals to their appointments. In addition to her volunteer work at NINA, she also supports community members who live alone and delivers cooked meals to at least half a dozen locals every Sunday. Mrs Sinclair is extremely deserving of this award, she is a selfless individual who is always willing to help and support members of the community. It was a pleasure to host Mrs Sinclair in Parliament recently for a high tea, with the other successful recipient Geoff Gordon and their guests to celebrate their wonderful efforts. I commend Mrs Sinclair on being recognised in Heathcote's 2020 Senior's Local Achievement Awards and I thank her for her service to our community.

NARRANDERA CHRISTMAS CHEER

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I wish to congratulate Mr Gordon and Mrs Vi Bobbin who have donated \$727 to Narrandera Can Assist from funds raised during their amazing Christmas lights display at their Narrandera home. Narrandera branch of the Bendigo Bank also contributed another \$200. Mr and Mrs Bobbin

have been decorating their home since 2002 to the delight of young children, adults and visitors. The erection of hundreds of lights and inflatable Christmas decorations proved a challenge this year with the hot, windy weather but the joy it gives people makes it worthwhile. Visitors to the wonderful display are encouraged to make a donation to Narrandera Can Assist which provides valuable financial support to families who are faced with cancer diagnosis. Well done Gordon and Vi Bobbin and thank you for the smiles you put on people's faces.

THORNTON PUBLIC SCHOOL'S LANDCARE AWARD

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I would like to acknowledge Thornton Public School for its decade of conservation work, which was recognised when the school received the Junior Landcare Team Champions Award for 2019. The school launched its Junior Landcare group and environmental activities program in 2008. These provide students with an opportunity to become more aware of environmental concerns and learn how conservation plays a role in environment protection. Thornton Public School sits on 3.5 hectares of land and parts of it still contain spotted gum and ironbark forest. Some experts estimate that a couple of the ironbarks are more than 900 years old. In the time since students first started working alongside Landcare they have developed a viewing deck, regenerated bushland, created trails through the bush, introduced informative signage, recreated natural habitats and replaced weeds with native plants. Congratulations on this fantastic work, Thornton Public School. Your community, and our environment, thank you.

MITTAGONG RSL

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—I would like to recognise the outstanding work done by the Mittagong RSL during the recent bushfire crisis. The Club acted as the evacuation centre on 2 occasions. The first being when the fires in the Balmoral, Buxton, Hilltop and Yerrinbool area took hold on 19th of December. The club in conjunction with the Wingecarribee Shire Council, government agencies and volunteer groups converted the auditorium into a very effective evacuation centre. On the second occasion when the Southern Highlands' Morton bushfire in Wingello, Bundanoon and Kangaroo Valley took hold on 5th January the evacuation centre was re-established. On that night there were 749 people and enough animals to fill Noah's Ark at the centre, but again the Club was superb in everything that they did. The outstanding leadership by Club Manager Craig Madsen and catering Manager Alan Cunynghame and the service provided by their staff ensured that everyone was well looked after. In addition to the evacuation centre the club provided over 400 hot meals each day to the RFS volunteers who were fighting the fires. Thank you Mittagong RSL for your great service to the community.

2020 SENIORS WEEK CELEBRATIONS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—The Fairfield community recently celebrated Seniors Week with a number of community events held to recognise and commend the extraordinary contributions made by seniors not just locally, but across NSW. Despite the seniors making up just one sixth of our local population, Fairfield's seniors remain incredibly active while taking on their fair share of employment opportunities, volunteering, child care and carer responsibilities, with no sign of slowing down. Despite the enormous contributions by seniors in our community, their efforts all too often remain overlooked or are undervalued. I had the great pleasure of joining in with our community in celebrating at the Co.As.It Seniors Festival 2020 at Club Mounties in Mt Pritchard. The celebrations had a great community turn out with media personality Paolo Rajo hosting the event, with brilliant performances by local artists Matthew Del Cin, Roseanna Gallo and the Debellis Band. It was great to see so many deserving people sharing in an enjoyable experience and celebrating with one another. I would like to commend and congratulate Co.As.It and Mounties for hosting and recognising the invaluable contributions made by seniors throughout our community.

MOVIE UNDER THE STARS

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—This Saturday, the 1st Cherrybrook Scouts will be screening their 8th annual 'Movie Under the Stars'. This is a massive event, uniting the whole community, and drawing residents not just from Cherrybrook but from surrounding suburbs as well. The event has been a highlight of the Cherrybrook calendar since 2012, providing a free night of fun, food and entertainment. Attendance is now up to 4,000 people, and growing every year in popularity. This year the scouts are screening Toy Story 4. The Scouts' 'Movie Under the Stars' has always been focused on fundraising for local and state-wide organisations, mostly by way of gold coin donation. Funds raised this year are to be divided among organisations including the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Services and St John's Ambulance; to local schools to assist with purchase of band equipment; as well as purchasing equipment for the Scout Group, funds for leadership training, and outdoor skills development. This event is managed by volunteers from the group's leaders, local parents and local children in the Scout Programme. I will be there myself this Saturday at John Purchase Oval, and I encourage locals to come and join in the fun.

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—More children in Baulkham Hills will have access to quality early childhood education as part of the NSW Government's Community Grants program. The funding aims to increase the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds attending a preschool program. Services in Baulkham Hills and across the state were encouraged to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 to support transport initiatives such as new buses or vehicles to make it easier for children to access a service. They could also apply for grants of up to \$10,000 to invest in a range of activities like breakfast programs and Aboriginal culture classes to further encourage preschool attendance. I congratulate the following services in Baulkham Hills on their successful Community Grants application:

- North Rocks Pre-School, who will receive \$7,474 for staff development in Aboriginal early childhood education; and,
- Hillsong Child Care Centre, who will receive \$10,000 to purchase cultural resources.

We know the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits a child gains from attending an early childhood education service are incredibly valuable, and these grants have done a fantastic job to increase participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

DOING IT FOR OUR FARMERS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)—I recognise the efforts of the Tamworth volunteer organisation, Doing It For Our Farmers and the small but willing team of volunteers led by Sue-Ellen Wilkin who are still hard at working supporting about 150 farming families impacted by the unprecedented drought in 2019. Last weekend Tamworth Regional Athletics Centre hosted the NSW State Combined Little Aths Carnival. 616 entries from 104 Little Aths organisations with friends and family came to town and aside from supporting local business they donated two car loads of non-perishable goods and bottled water. There is grass growing around the region but the impact of the drought still weighs heavy. Many of the people who rely on Doing It For Our Farmers have few or no income-generating livestock. They still need a hand up and Sue-Ellen and her team are there for them. Sue-Ellen said the donations at the Little Aths' carnival were "out of the blue and truly amazing". She said many of the donations were snacks and nibbles, perfect for parents to add to their kids' school lunches. Doing It For Our Farmers is now established in Unit 1, 19 Wallamore Road and open regularly to provide important assistance to people who are still living with the impact of the drought. Thank you for your community service, it is so important and greatly appreciated.

PAM ELLERMAN

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to recognise a dedicated volunteer of the Deniliquin community for her many years of service – Pam Ellerman. Pam is one of the long-time serving members of the Deniliquin Local Health Advisory Committee, having held the position of Chair for the last 6 years, who recently stepped down from the group. Pam was an integral member in the formation of the Naponda Hospital Auxiliary which runs and operates the Naponda Community Store and monthly Deniliquin Farmers' Market. Some great initiatives have been achieved under Pam's leadership of the Deniliquin LHAC. It is volunteers like Pam with her endless enthusiasm and commitment to her community that make regional towns such great places to live. Thank you Pam for your service.

HAYMARKET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I commend the small business support and development work of the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce. This year I again attended the Haymarket Chamber's Chinese New Year event, celebrating the Year of the Metal Rat. The event was also attended by Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Federal MP Tanya Plibersek, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, Deputy Lord Mayor Jess Scully and other City of Sydney Councillors, demonstrating the chamber's strong and effective links with all three levels of government. Haymarket is one of central Sydney's most historic precincts, with a long history of Chinese residents and businesses contributing to our diverse and multicultural community and economy. Chinatown is complemented by emerging Asian communities like Thai, Korean and Indonesian, now further bolstered by international students. The Haymarket Chamber has a positive history of engaging with the City of Sydney Chinatown revitalisation projects, the State government's George Street light rail construction and of course with the largest Lunar New Year celebrations outside Asia. I thank the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce for their collaborative work to support businesses and engage with all levels of decision makers to benefit the precinct and the community.

THE SHIFT PROJECT CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—I congratulate the Byron Shire charity The SHIFT Project on the occasion of its fifth anniversary – an especially heartening occasion in the week of International Women's Day. The SHIFT Project began with the challenging goal of breaking the cycle of homelessness for at-risk women and has become a proven success with its "graduates" living independently, and flourishing as valued members of the community. Established as a not-for-profit charity in 2015, The SHIFT Project Byron Inc. is an incorporated association funded through individual and community support. SHIFT – which stands for Sustainable, Holistic, Integrative, Focused, Transition – is governed by a strategically selected and highly skilled volunteer board of directors, who all share a motivation to make a positive difference in people's lives. I wish to particularly acknowledge the work of the SHIFT Projects founder, Anne Goslett, the 2019 Byron Shire Citizen of the Year.

BEVERLEY BLACK

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate a local champion, Mrs Beverley Black. Bev was awarded with Life Membership of the Returned and Services League of Australia Auxiliary. Life Membership is an honour given to 10 members each year who display outstanding service to the League through their Auxiliary. Bev is the third lady from the Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL Women's Auxiliary to achieve this very prestigious and esteemed award. Bev is very engaged in the local community and particularly with the Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL Club. I note Bev's involvement with all RSL ceremonies put on by the Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch, the Auxiliary and the Club's management. Bev always ensures every guest has a poppy for the Remembrance Day service and a spring of rosemary for the ANZAC Day service. Well done Bev on this achievement and acknowledgement of your dedication to the RSL and our local community.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I am proud to each year host an International Women's Day event in Port Macquarie, in partnership with the Hastings Business Women's Network and the International Women's Day committee. The occasion is an opportunity to honour our local women and to advocate for fairer representation and equality for everyone regardless of their sex, age, gender or religion. This year a Garden Party to be held on March 8th at Sails by Rydges will also be a celebration of ten years of the International Women's Day event in the Hastings and on Sunday we'll reflect on past global event themes such as #pressforparity, #neveralone and #balanceforbetter. I am honoured to work alongside the members of the International Women's Day Committee chaired by HBWN President Kelly King including Louise Beaumont, Kelly Lamb, Caron Dyball, Michelle Parker, Sandra Magann, Skye Petho and Terry Sara. On behalf of the Committee we extend our heartfelt thanks to the community who over the past ten years have supported us to raise over \$84,000 for the Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services. An equal world is an enabled world – one where we celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness against bias and take action for equality.

KIAMA SEVENS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services)—The 48th annual Morgans Kiama Sevens was held last Saturday 29th February at Kiama Showground. Congratulations to Warringah who defeated West Harbour 17-14 in the Final. The Kiama Sevens is a seven-a-side knock out competition dating back to 1973. Trophies were presented to the players in the winning team. The Kiama Sevens Cleary Bros Cup was then presented to the Champion Club along with a cheque for \$12,000. I have attended this event on a number of occasions and can confirm it is a great family day out with refreshments and picnic facilities available. I knowledge the Tournament Director Mark Bryant who does a tremendous job organising this event every year. Winners of the Kiama Sevens Cup in recent years include:

2020 - Warringah
2019 - Manly
2018 - Box Hill
2017 - Warringah
2016 - Australian Rugby Legends
2015 - Manly A

SUSTAINABLE PROPAGATION PROJECT

Ms ELINI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate Gynea Technology High School on receiving \$13,110 from the inaugural Sustainable Schools Grant. The four year, \$10 million dollar program gives schools the opportunity to develop innovative hands-on projects that help students learn about environmentally sustainable practices. Led by Principal Peter Marsh, School Captains, Rhys Thomsen and Ellen Marsh, and Vice Captains, Sean Record and Reanna Fitzgerald, Gynea Technology High School's innovative 'Sustainable Propagation

Project' will implement both Stage 4 and 5 Science and Technological and Applied Studies syllabuses. Funding will facilitate the provision of a greenhouse for authentic, hands on learning experiences, where students will propagate seeds and cuttings from native trees and shrubs, as well as market garden plants for the school garden. Science students will test and monitor soils for nutrients as well as study cells and living organisms in the sustainable garden, whilst Technological and Applied Studies students will gain a deeper understanding about sustainable practice and food technologies through their ongoing involvement in propagation and cultivation. I commend Gynea Technology High School for embracing this exciting opportunity and look forward to seeing the 'Sustainable Propagation Project' unfold.

SALVATION ARMY YOUTHLINK

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—The Salvation Army's Youthlink programs work with young people in our community to build the skills and provide the support needed to succeed. Youthlink programs teach young people to drive, train participants in vocational skills, provide counselling for those with mental health and addiction issues and teach life skills to at risk youth. These programs make a crucial difference for the future of all participants, giving them the opportunity to succeed. I had the privilege of visiting the Salvation Army Blacktown where I met Elizabeth Alimeni, who is the Program Co-ordinator and Jolene Mokbel, the Clinical Coordinator for Alcohol and Drugs & Mental Health access. I learnt about the benefit these programs provide to our community's youth. One of the programs that I was very impressed with was the "Youth Mentoring" for the Weekend Warriors Leadership Program. This is an amazing opportunity for young people with a disability to be mentored by another young person on the weekends. Thanks to James Shelby, the Manager of Youthlink and the entire Youthlink team for all the work that you do ensuring that young people in Western Sydney are given the skills and support required to become outstanding citizens.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:08 until
Thursday 5 March 2020 at 09:30**