



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Tuesday, 4 August 2020**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday, 4 August 2020**

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

**The Speaker** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

*[Notices of motions given]*

## *Bills*

### **GAS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MEDICAL GAS SYSTEMS) BILL 2020**

#### **First Reading**

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

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (12:16:12):**

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Gas Legislation Amendment (Medical Gas Systems) Bill 2020. The bill delivers on the New South Wales Government's promise to introduce a robust and effective licensing regulatory system for persons who carry out medical gas work. As I said on 18 June on behalf of the Government in opposing the Hon. Mark Buttigieg's private member's bill, nobody wants to see a tragedy repeated like the one we saw at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital. As I undertook then, the Government has taken the steps necessary to provide a strong, robust licensing framework for those persons installing and working on medical gases in New South Wales. To the families of John Ghanem and Amelia Khan, on behalf of the Government I repeat my commitment that we are taking action to ensure no other families will have to endure as they have.

The bill forms a key part of the Government's response to licensed work for medical gases that are supplied in medical facilities in New South Wales. Medical facilities, such as public and private hospitals, day surgery practices and dental practices, are places where the safety of patients is vital, including in the administration of medical gases. There are approximately 214 private hospitals, 202 public hospitals, 105 day hospitals and in-vitro fertilisation [IVF] clinics, 7,247 dentists and 722 medical centres in New South Wales. They will all come within the ambit of this legislation. We recognise that these reforms will impact on a wide variety of medical facilities and industry operators. For this reason the Government has worked in partnership with industry and other key stakeholders in developing the regulatory and licensing scheme.

As I said in June, the object of the Government's bill is safety first. The bill will extend the strong compliance and enforcement powers of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017 to medical gas work, while amending the Home Building Act 1989 to establish two new licensing categories of specialist work. One category will deal with medical gasfitting work and the other with medical gas technician work. While I understand that other jurisdictions have similar provisions to regulate medical gasfitting work, those provisions do not focus specifically on the conduct of persons engaged with the commissioning of medical gas installations. In most jurisdictions, people who undertake medical gas commissioning work are largely regulated by the companies that offer commissioning services. Under the robust regulatory framework proposed in the bill, all persons in New South Wales who test, certify, verify and commission a medical gas system will need to be licensed or hold a certificate under the Home Building Act.

The final testing before use and the servicing of a medical gas system are just as important as the work required to install it. This is because these medical gas technicians can be required at short notice to service the systems and respond to alarm systems to ensure that they are operating effectively. These persons are not plumbers but are trained by gas suppliers, have many years of industry experience and are often university qualified. They work with anaesthetists in commissioning the medical gas systems. This is a most important role and therefore needs the benefit of a tailored licensing category that accurately captures this work. The use of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act will enable the Government to put in place specific obligations regulating the installation, commissioning and testing of the installation as well as requiring compliance with the established Australian standards on medical gas installation. We need all these elements in place and operating effectively.

As I noted when the Government opposed the private member's bill, a key criticism was of the clear lack of consultation on the regulatory proposals outlined in that bill. As I committed at the time, the Government has partnered with key stakeholders representing all areas of the medical gas industry and listened to their feedback. This bill and its policy proposals have already been the subject of significant targeted industry consultation. The Government has facilitated the feedback of stakeholders through the release of a consultation paper and a draft of the bill, and held three comprehensive roundtables. We have carefully considered the feedback received and listened to the voices of 20 key stakeholder groups across the medical fraternity including gas suppliers, gasfitters, plumbers, dentists and training providers. Importantly, we have also actioned a large amount of that feedback directly through this bill. I am confident that this bill responds to a significant proportion of those submissions, either through further refinements or through broad regulation-making powers affording us the scope to make refinements under the regulations following further consultation with stakeholders.

I turn now to the substance of the bill. The Government's response to the private member's bill committed to extending the strong compliance and enforcement powers of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act to medical gases, while amending the Home Building Act to establish a new category of medical gas licensee. The Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act already provides the heads of power to put in place specific conditions and obligations for workers in this important field, as well as being able to apply strict compliance requirements and strong enforcement powers. The bill delivers on the Government's commitments by not only creating a new category of medical gasfitter, the person responsible for installing the medical gas installation, but also a new category of medical gas technician, the person who works in a medical facility with the responsibility of commissioning and servicing the medical gas installation. The bill achieves this by introducing amendments to the Home Building Act to create two new categories of "specialist work" in the definitions and to the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act by introducing a new licensing regime for medical gas installation, commissioning and testing.

Schedule 1 to the bill deals with the amendments to the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017. Schedule 2 deals with the amendments to the Home Building Act 1989. The bill firstly amends the definitions in section 4 of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act to cater for the new medical gases category. Medical gases are defined as "a substance used for medical purposes and prescribed by the regulations as a medical gas." By prescribing specific medical gases in the regulations, this bill overcomes one of the deficiencies in the private member's bill by allowing the Government to finalise stakeholder consultation before prescribing specific gases and gives it the flexibility to add or remove specific gases as needed to respond to the changing nature of the industry.

I will now explain in turn each of the two new specialist categories of work—medical gasfitting and medical gasfitting technician work—that are defined in section 4 (1). Medical gasfitting work means the construction, installation, replacement, repair, alteration, maintenance of the installation or testing of medical gas installation. Quite simply, this is the work done to install the pipes and the installation necessary to convey the medical gases. This work will be required to be done by a qualified person licensed under the Home Building Act. Medical gas technicians are the persons responsible for the smooth running of the medical gas installation. They respond to alarm systems, conduct regular testing and checks, and conduct the final testing, termed "commissioning", before medical installations go live. However, they do not do repairs to the installation as this is the job of the medical gasfitter. These persons will also be licensed under the Home Building Act.

The Government is aware that anaesthetists necessarily play a part in the testing of medical gas installations with the medical gas technicians. However, the regulations will exclude medical and nursing staff from requiring a licence, as to include them in the licensing framework would create unnecessary regulatory burden. It is necessary to extend the provisions of parts 6 and 7 of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act to medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work. Part 6 deals with the accident reporting and investigations, and part 7 enforcement provisions, both of which are critical aspects of any comprehensive regulatory scheme.

The extension of these provisions is done by inserting a new part 5A into the Act specifically for medical gases. Part 5A extends the current meaning of "gas", "gas installation", "gasfitting work", "authorised gasfitter" and "serious gas accident" to include references to medical gases and gas work where appropriate. Stakeholders saw it as important that, where appropriate, the work had to be supervised and signed off by an appropriately qualified licensed person. It is therefore necessary that an offence provision be created in the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act to ensure that this important medical gas work is done either by appropriately licensed persons or under the direct supervision of the licensed person.

New section 38A in division 1 of part 5A provides that a person must not carry out medical gasfitting work or medical gas technician work, or employ any other person to carry out that work, unless the person by whom the work is carried out does so under the authority of an appropriate supervisor certificate. Those undertaking the work as a holder of a tradesperson certificate that authorises them to do the work are also required to do so under



the supervision and in accordance with the directions, if any, of a qualified supervisor. To demonstrate the seriousness of this offence provision, a maximum penalty of \$110,000 will apply in the case of a corporation or \$22,000 in any other case for a breach of new section 38A. It is most important that any work done in relation to the carrying out of medical gasfitting work or medical gas technician work be done in accordance with set requirements to ensure high standards of work and safety. New section 38B provides that a person must not carry out medical gasfitting work or medical gas technician work otherwise than in accordance with any standards or requirements prescribed by the regulations, or any Australian standards or requirements specified by the Health secretary by order in writing and published on the website of the Ministry of Health.

Australian standards will play a very important role in the legislation. Standards Australia, an independent organisation, is tasked with developing the Australian standards, which set out specifications, procedures and guidelines that aim to ensure products, services and systems are safe, consistent and reliable. Standards are developed in close consultation with stakeholders from government, business, industry and consumers, with Standards Australia facilitating the process. The Australian standards that relate directly to medical gases will be incorporated into the regulations. New section 38B sets out the standards framework and provides Parliament with clarity on the Government's intent in relation to the standard of work required. Further detail will be included in the supporting regulations, which will be developed once the bill passes the Parliament. The bill also provides the Ministry of Health a key role in issuing policy guidelines in relation to the installation and commissioning of a medical gas installation to ensure the best practice is observed in this most important area at all times.

Major penalties will apply for work that does not meet the requisite standard. This inclusion of penalties further demonstrates the importance and seriousness of licensees having to observe the requirements of the Australian standards and any policy documents issued by the Ministry of Health. In the case of an individual, a maximum penalty of \$55,000 will apply for a first offence and \$82,500 or imprisonment for two years, or both, for a second or subsequent offence, or in the case of a corporation, \$550,000 for a first offence and \$825,000 for a second or subsequent offence. In addition, an offence against new section 38B that is committed by a corporation is an executive liability offence attracting executive liability for a director or other persons involved in the management of the corporation under the provisions of section 63 of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act.

Division 2 of part 5A of the bill enables further regulatory oversight of medical gas installations. New section 38C sets out the responsibilities of persons in relation to the safety of medical gas installations. This responsibility clearly lies with the person responsible for a medical gas installation, typically the chief executive officer. New section 38C requires this person to ensure to the best of their ability that the installation is maintained in accordance with the standards and requirements that will be set out in the regulations. A maximum penalty of \$55,000 in the case of a corporation and \$16,500 in the case of an individual will apply for a breach of new section 38C.

The new provisions also capture other activities that may affect the operation of a medical gas installation. Any other work done at or near a medical gas installation must not interfere with the efficient and effective operation of that installation. Therefore new section 38D will provide an offence provision for persons doing such work to ensure that the carrying out of this work and the work itself does not interfere with medical gas installation. In addition, if a person becomes aware that their work may have interfered with medical gas installation, new section 38D requires them to immediately take reasonable steps to make the installation safe. This is another provision that is critical to the safety of persons and demonstrates that the Government has taken time to consider all aspects of this regulatory scheme. A maximum penalty of \$55,000 in the case of a corporation and \$22,000 in any other case will apply for a breach of either of those requirements.

Medical gas installations are live systems that must be maintained. Appropriate requirements must be in place for compliance arrangements, including the use and maintenance of medical gas installations. It is of utmost importance that verified testing takes place once a medical gas installation is installed to ensure it is operating correctly. These requirements may necessarily be over and above those set out in the Australian standards. Therefore, new section 38E creates a regulation-making power so that the provision can be made in relation to matters such as the testing, inspection and compliance requirements that must be carried out on completion of medical gasfitting work and the ongoing use and maintenance of medical gas installations.

These requirements will include reporting requirements such as the completion of a medical gas installation having to be formally notified to the secretary. In addition, if any work is subsequently done on an installation, that work must be recorded and reported to the secretary. Of course, the Government will consult fully, as it has done with this bill, in relation to the contents of these regulations. In investigating serious medical incidents it will be necessary for various government agencies to enter into arrangements. This will ensure that agencies can cooperate fully and use all available resources so that investigations can be conducted and concluded as quickly

as possible. That is why a new section 44 has been inserted into the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act to replace the current section 44.

New section 44 will extend the current arrangements to allow the secretary of the Department of Customer Service, SafeWork NSW, the secretary of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the secretary of the Department of Health to enter into any such arrangements in relation to medical gas incidents as well as gas and electrical incidents. The agencies will also be able to enter into information-sharing arrangements to facilitate investigations. For transparency any such arrangements will be published in the New South Wales *Government Gazette*.

Part 7 of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act enforcement of the provisions will now also apply to medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work to provide a robust investigation and enforcement framework. This provides authorised officers with a suite of powers necessary to do their job effectively, including powers for authorised officers to gather information and enter premises for investigating, monitoring and enforcing compliance and administering the Act. To support these powers the bill will amend section 53 of the Act to permit an authorised officer when entering a premises to be accompanied by a police officer or other person to assist in the investigation. This provision would allow the authorised officer to have subject matter experts present.

New section 68A is inserted into the bill to provide for continuing offence provisions. The Government does not shy away from the importance of this legislation and the need for deterrence of wrongdoing. Therefore, if a person is guilty of contravening a provision of the Act or the regulations to do or to cease to do something and continues to do that action or does not comply with the notice of requirement, then they would be guilty of the offence for each day the contravention continues. This new section does not apply to an offence if the relevant provision of the Act or the regulations does not provide for a penalty for a continuing offence and will not apply to the extent that a requirement of a notice is revoked. It is intended, for example, to apply section 54 (3) of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act in relation to the issue of directions and notices by authorised officers when they inspect medical gas installations.

I turn now to the amendments to the Home Building Act 1989 contained in schedule 2 to the bill. When I spoke on behalf of the Government on 18 June to oppose the private member's bill I noted that one of the biggest concerns of the Government was the inadequate licensing framework. The bill combined work requirements and licensing procedures within the one instrument, the Home Building Act. This was inconsistent with building standards and licensing frameworks in this State and in other jurisdictions. The bill addresses three concerns by seeking to amend both the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act and the Home Building Act. The amendments to the Home Building Act are relatively straightforward but are most important as they facilitate the machinery provisions in the regulations. The powerful licensing and regulation requirements in the Home Building Act are extended to medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work.

The bill will amend schedule 1, the definitions and other interpretive provisions of the Act, by inserting meanings for "medical gas technician work" and "medical gasfitting work". Both have the same meaning as in the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act. In schedule 1, clause 1 (1), the definition of "specialist work" is amended to insert both medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work. While these amendments are straightforward, as I said earlier, the powerful provisions of the Home Building Act will then apply to these new specialist occupations. I will therefore canvass the most relevant provisions of the Act as they will apply to medical gasfitters and medical gas technicians.

First, and to clarify, section 3D of the Act provides that the provisions of the Act extend to specialist work that is not residential building work—for example, commercial and industrial specialist work such as the installation of medical gas installations in commercial premises such as hospitals. As specialist occupations, the Act establishes a number of different forms of licences and certificates. These are contractor licences, supervisor certificates and tradesperson certificates. Persons wishing to carry out medical gasfitting and medical gas technician work will be required to obtain an appropriate licence or certificate.

I will now outline some of the relevant existing provisions to provide an understanding of how they will apply to the new licensing categories of medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work. Section 4 of the Act prohibits a person from contracting to do any specialist work except as, or on behalf of, an individual, partnership or corporation that is the holder of a contractor licence authorising its holder to contract to do that work. Section 4 means that proper contractual arrangements must be entered into for medical gasfitting and medical gas technician work. Persons or corporations seeking to contract for work must be licensed.

Similarly, section 5 of the Act provides that an individual, a member of a partnership, an officer of a corporation or corporation must not represent that they are prepared to do any specialist work if they are not the holder of a contractor licence authorising its holder to contract to do that work. Penalties of up to \$110,000 in the

case of a corporation and \$22,000 in any other case apply for a breach of this provision. Section 6 of the Act contains a number of new provisions that licensees must be aware of in relation to making contractual arrangements. Section 12 of the Act addresses unlicensed work. It provides that an individual must not do specialist work except if they hold a contractor licence or as an employee of the holder of such a contractor licence. Again, penalties of up to \$110,000 in the case of a corporation and \$22,000 in any other case apply for a breach of this provision.

Part 3 of the Home Building Act will be extended to apply to contractor licences, and supervisor and tradesperson certificates for both medical gasfitting and medical gas technician work. It is by these standards and requirements that only qualified and appropriate persons are permitted to work on medical gas installations. Section 20 of the Home Building Act places a number of requirements on the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service when a contractor licence must be refused. These include that a person is not a fit and proper person to hold a contractor licence, or the applicant is disqualified by the Act or the regulations from holding a contractor licence. These are important safeguards.

When I spoke in this place on 18 June on behalf of the Government to reject the private member's bill I noted that one of the criticisms of the bill was the inclusion of the scope of work permitted to be done by the licence categories in the Home Building Act itself. I advised that this was not proper practice and this information should be included in the regulations. The private member's bill sought to extend its ambit to mechanical heating and cooling systems used in air conditioning, including heating and cooling towers that are used in buildings. I said then, and I repeat now, that this is unnecessary because it is already captured under the current licensing framework in New South Wales and it is out of scope for this bill.

Sections 20 and 25 of the Home Building Act permit the regulations to fix and provide for the secretary to determine additional standards or other requirements that must be met before either a contractor licence or a certificate is issued. The regulation will allow the secretary to set the qualification and experience component for both authorities in an order to be published in the Gazette. Through head of power provisions in sections 21 and 27 of the Act the scope of the work permitted to be done by both new categories of specialist work will be placed in schedule 4 of the regulation. This is where they belong, with all the other existing scopes of licensing work. Of course, while the wording of the scope for both categories of this work has already been the subject of in-depth consultation, more consultation will occur in the development of the regulation.

In addressing the standards and skill sets that will be required for both medical gasfitting and the medical gas technician, I have noted that these will be developed through the regulation. However, it is necessary for me to touch on them quickly in order to allay any concerns that current licensees may have. Let me assure members that the skill sets for the medical gasfitting role, which have already been the subject of much stakeholder discussion, will be based on those present qualifications required for plumbers in New South Wales. This is usually Certificate III or equivalent. In addition, any competencies applicable to medical gas installation would also need to be undertaken and the relevant on-the-job experience in the medical gas industry would also be required. The Government is, of course, aware of a separate licence category of mechanical services in Victoria and Queensland. This category commonly describes work done in relation to high-rise air conditioning and associated cooling towers and refrigeration, while also including medical gas work.

Despite calls from the Opposition, the Government has purposefully not created a separate specialist category of mechanical services work. Air-conditioning work, including work done to install, maintain and service an air conditioning system—including cooling towers, refrigeration work and roof plumbing—is already licensed in New South Wales as a specialist work category. To create a new separate category would seriously displace and possibly exclude the 9,145 persons who are currently licensed to do air-conditioning work, the 8,732 who are licensed to do refrigeration work and the 5,678 roof plumbers. The Government cannot allow that to happen to over 23,000 licensees. These persons already hold certificate III qualifications, such as Certificate III in Air-conditioning and Refrigeration or Certificate III in Roof Plumbing. The issue of creating a new separate category of mechanical services work is properly for another time. It is not for the present, when the Government is moving to create a more robust licensing and regulatory scheme for medical gases.

Following conversations with the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, who emphasised the need for medical gasfitting work to have a mechanical services pathway for licensing, I assure him that a separate qualifications pathway for this category of mechanical services work currently exists—namely, a Certificate III in Plumbing (Mechanical Services). Let me assure members that anyone who holds or undertakes this qualification, together with an appropriate on-the-job experience component, will be able to be licensed in New South Wales. All qualification pathways will be further developed in the regulations and Fair Trading NSW will consult with the industry to finalise those in full consultation. The standards and associated skill sets for the medical gas technician role are also still being settled, but they will require a high-level skill set and experience component. Of course, those

standards and skill sets have been the subject of stakeholder discussion already and I can assure members that will continue in the finalisation of the regulations.

The provisions of division 4 are also extended to the new categories of specialist work. These contain the key provisions relating to how persons are disqualified from holding an authority, the general requirements for the issue of certain authorities, and how the secretary can impose conditions on authorities. For example, a person is disqualified from holding an authority if they have been convicted in New South Wales or elsewhere of an offence involving dishonesty within the past 10 years, unless the secretary has determined that the offence should be ignored. Similarly, a person is disqualified if they have failed to pay a monetary penalty payable under disciplinary proceedings or failed to comply with a condition imposed under disciplinary proceedings. These are necessary for a comprehensive regulatory scheme.

Section 33B of the Home Building Act also places a number of additional requirements for the issue of authorities: for example, matters including persons not being debtors and not being subject to an order of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The provisions of section 33D of the Home Building Act will apply to both medical gasfitters and medical gas technicians. This section provides that a supervisor or tradesperson certificate must not be issued unless the secretary is satisfied that the applicant has the required qualifications, experience and capability. One of the key criticisms of the private member's bill was that it attempted to impose an arbitrary four years' experience component in the Act.

Section 33D allows the secretary to set the qualifications required to obtain a contractor licence or a supervisor or tradesperson licence, including any experience. This provides the flexibility necessary to tailor experience requirements for a supervisor or lower level. These requirements are approved by the Commissioner for Trading in an order and published in the *NSW Government Gazette*. They can therefore be readily reviewed and amended if necessary. The qualifications required for both the medical gasfitting work and medical gas technician work, including any necessary experience component, have already been the subject of extensive consultation through a consultation paper and three roundtables. As I have noted, they will, of course, undergo even more consultation before being finalised.

The Government recognises that the qualifications and experience component required will be very important in ensuring that persons granted authorities have the necessary skills to be able to do the work. As such, section 35 of the Act allows the secretary to obtain information from third parties in order to verify any claims made in licence applications. The Act permits the secretary to impose conditions on authorities that licensees are required to observe. These are commonly imposed under schedule 3 to the Act but can also be prescribed by the regulations or by the order of the secretary. Conditions can relate to a range of matters including requiring notification of a change of circumstances of a licensee to the secretary or placing a condition on a licence of a person who has applied for a licence from another jurisdiction under mutual recognition provisions.

It is important to note that the full disciplinary provisions of the Home Building Act will, of course, apply to the two new specialist work categories. These include the power of the secretary to investigate complaints, the issue of show cause notices as to why disciplinary action should not be taken and the power to suspend an authority when a show cause notice is served. Section 62 of the Act sets out a range of disciplinary actions that may be taken by the secretary, allowing for an escalated compliance approach, ranging from a caution or reprimand to cancellation of an authority, up to disqualification of a licence holder.

It is important to note the transition arrangements the Government has placed in this bill. The Government recognises that there may be uncertainty in the industry in the introduction of new licensing and compliance requirements. This can occur with any new legislation. Therefore, to assist the smooth transition of the regulatory and licensing requirements, proposed section 38A of the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act, which requires work only to be done by licensed persons and includes the supervision requirements, will not have effect during the transitional period between 1 November 2020 and 30 April 2021. Similarly sections 4, 5, 12 and 16 of the Home Building Act will not apply during this transitional period. These sections relate primarily to licensing and contracting requirements under the Act and will also contribute to the smooth introduction of the provisions.

The completion of the bill delivers on the Government's commitment in its response to the Building Amendment (Mechanical Services and Medical Gas Work) Bill 2020. While there is still more work to do on the supporting regulations to establish the licensing framework by 1 November, I thank Sarah Low, John Vernon, Genevieve Routh and James Haywood for producing this quality bill as well as members of my ministerial staff, my chief of staff Gavin Melvin and senior policy director Harriet Platt-Hepworth. This Government is taking a safety-first approach to the regulation of medical gases in this State. This bill reflects a new era of regulation for people currently involved in this important industry. It is about putting public safety first to ensure that New South Wales has a leading system of medical gasfitting and medical gas technician work that delivers medical gases safely to the people of New South Wales into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (COVID-19 HOUSING RESPONSE) BILL 2020**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 29 July 2020.**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (12:54:35):** I represent my colleague the Hon. Walt Secord from the other place, with assistance from the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, in debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. I say from the outset that Labor will be supporting the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme and the payroll tax changes for aged-care workers. Labor supports the bill and will move major amendments in the Legislative Council largely relating to affordable housing as well as the need to ensure companies employ apprentices to provide opportunities and jobs for residents in New South Wales at this very difficult time. Last week the Treasurer introduced the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill as a stimulus measure. Labor said from the outset that it will take every opportunity to support measures the Government brings forward during this very difficult time, and this is one of them.

The Treasurer's bill makes four amendments to four Acts which facilitates three changes: increasing the threshold for First Home Buyer Assistance to new homes and vacant land to encourage construction, facilitating the creation of new build-to-rent properties in New South Wales for the first time to create jobs in the construction sector; and providing exemptions from payroll tax on federally funded grant payments to aged-care workers as part of the Commonwealth Government's plan to encourage workers to remain in the sector by making retention payments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I draw the attention of the House to the first component, the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme. Amendments to the Duties Act 1997 will increase duty concessions available under the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme. It will increase the threshold for no transfer duty and concessional transfer duty on both new homes and vacant land purchased by first home buyers. Under the scheme, first home buyers can receive a transfer duty concession if the home or vacant land they have purchased falls under certain price thresholds. The amendment temporarily increases the concessions by raising the price thresholds for new homes or vacant land from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021.

I am most interested in the build-to-rent component. As the shadow Treasurer I have spoken publicly on a couple of occasions about my support for this initiative. We know that renters make up just under 40 per cent of the entire population that choose to rent. Unlike my generation when renting was often only temporary, people often rent now for lifestyle and economic purposes. They are choosing to live closer to where they work and are investing their money in other parts of the economy. Labor is generally supportive of this component of the bill but seek to move amendments that will place a requirement for concessional land tax treatment on build-to-rent properties to be additionally contingent on the developer providing a minimum amount of residential floor space to social and/or affordable housing.

Ironically this week is Homelessness Week. We know that one of the key elements to wipe out homelessness is the creation of additional social housing stock. All members in this place have a great deal of demand on their office every week because of the growing shortage of social housing stock. Not only is social housing and the construction of social housing stock important to reduce homelessness but also it is important for jobs that will boost our economy. Every time we build social housing we increase the opportunities for tradies and apprentices to grow our economy in local areas and communities across New South Wales. Unlike mega projects, social housing is spread across the entire New South Wales economy. Every suburb has social housing, from Auburn to Albury and from Bondi to Broken Hill. I encourage the Government to use this opportunity to reduce homelessness in communities across New South Wales, particularly in suburbs such as Auburn that has a high rate of homelessness. If we are going to provide developers with an incentive and some concessions, we also believe those most marginal in our communities should also be provided with additional housing stock. In doing so, not only are we reducing homelessness but also we are supporting jobs and boosting the economy at this very difficult time.

We will also look to move amendments in the other place that require a minimum percentage of labour force hours on construction be performed by nominated groups, such as the long-term unemployed, trainees and Aboriginals as well as the young people who we know across our electorates are unfortunately over-represented when it comes to unemployment. While build-to-rent is a new form of housing in New South Wales, this is not the case overseas. Very mature markets exist in the United Kingdom and, particularly, in the United States. It is a type of housing we need to develop and we look forward to working with the Government to do this. In terms of part C—relating to payroll tax exemptions—New South Wales is waiving the increased payroll tax burden placed

on aged-care providers due to the Commonwealth Government's funding of aged-care retention bonus payments for eligible workers providing services in residential and in-home care.

We all agree that every single healthcare worker, nurse, doctor and allied health worker on the front line is doing an incredible job. This is acutely the case in aged-care facilities where tragically—including here in New South Wales—we have seen COVID-19 spread like wildfire, doing untold damage to the lives of people in this sector, both employees and residents. We want to support the Government with proposals that will not only create and support jobs and boost our economy, but also protect our frontline healthcare workers. While we will seek to make some changes and amendments to the bill to improve it, I hope the Government views those amendments in the spirit in which they are offered—which is a spirit of cooperation during COVID-19. This spirit has seen more agreement across the political divide and a true opportunity for all of us, as legislators, to contribute and make improvements to bills that our community needs addressed and implemented to protect lives and livelihoods.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (13:04:57):** I speak in support of the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. COVID has brought on us unprecedented and unforeseen challenges. It is undeniably challenging. I acknowledge the earlier comments of my colleague Mr Ryan Park in debate on this bill for the Opposition. Our health and financial wellbeing are being tested. In the past six months we have really come a long way despite that. Everyone in our great State has done their bit. We have adapted so well—beyond expectations—to extremely difficult times.

I thank my community in the electorate of Vaucluse for its continued efforts to protect our State. Being one of the smallest seats by geography in the State, we are additionally challenged by the fact that we live and work so close together. Not only that, but we regularly welcome lots of tourists and people from across Australia who visit the area because of its natural beauty, its history and its diversity. However, that makes us particularly vulnerable during this time of COVID. I will never forget Saturday 21 March, the day Bondi Beach was shut. The beach is a magnet for tourists, people from across Australia and locals alike. Indeed, that Saturday was the first really visible step across the world and across Australia of a whole different way of living for us in New South Wales.

I thank my electorate staff for their energy, their commitment and their passion in responding to the many requests that come to us 24/7. It has been extra tough with so many people in distress. We have all done our best to serve what I think is the unique role an MP can play in a situation like this, where you are a source of timely, clear information. Personally, I have found it so rewarding to be able to serve my community in that important way through this time. I think information from a trusted source during times like these can really help to alleviate some of the anxiety of the people whom we care about in our communities.

At this stage, we are okay. We have learnt to take each day at a time, stay closer to the people we love and, more than ever, look out for one another. I think we have a particularly special duty to take care of our young people: our HSC students, first-year university students and first-time job seekers. I believe these people are the heaviest hit by the ongoing and future impacts of COVID. My heart is so heavy for them. Those of us in this House and beyond who have lived a bit longer have some perspective and wisdom that I think will carry us through this time. However, I encourage my colleagues to reach out and support our young people. They are our future, and they have been hit hard by COVID-19.

There is a long way to go. The bill that is before the House is an important commitment by the Government. I note that it is supported by the Opposition. It reflects a commitment by the New South Wales Government to help where we can. The Government has focused its efforts on two main ways to respond to COVID: first, our community's health as a priority—of course, it must be—and, secondly, our economy. Our economy not only provides us with jobs and innovation but also provides us with social purpose. I think we have understood that much more clearly since COVID. On top of the devastating impacts of the severe bushfire season, we now have COVID. We need to support our businesses and our jobs across the State to keep our economy strong.

The legislation before the House today supports the Government's COVID-19 Recovery Plan, which has six key areas. I will quickly run through them for the benefit of members. They frame our response to COVID going forward. There is our commitment to the infrastructure pipeline of \$100 billion over four years, which will drive employment. The accelerated planning process and our focus on innovation precincts will allow us to have world-leading industries and gain investment and jobs. Our focus on education and skills, in particular, makes us more nimble and will provide the jobs of the future that will rise out of COVID.

There is a focus on digitisation to serve our community with good and reliable information and to keep us safe; on boosting our advanced manufacturing industry and local supply chains so that we have a more self-sufficient economy; and finally but no less importantly on informing our financial State and Commonwealth relations and trimming down the red tape that makes us less able to serve the community. The bill is going to

support those six outcomes. It is going to reduce the tax burden on first home buyers, build-to-rent development and employers in the aged-care sector. There is a big focus on the construction industry because it is crucial to our State economy and recovery. It is our third-largest industry. In the 2018-19 financial year it contributed \$48 billion to our economy and accounted for just under 8 per cent of our gross State product. It is also a significant employer, the fourth-largest in our State, and so the bill supports that housing construction activity.

The bill will support housing affordability by reducing taxes on the purchase of new homes by first home buyers. It is the first time stamp duty will be cut for first-time buyers of new homes. They will pay no stamp duty when they purchase a new home valued up to \$800,000 and a concessional rate of duty when purchasing a new home valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million. The arrangement will be in place for one year, beginning on 1 August. We will also cut the stamp duty for first home buyers of vacant land, with exemptions applying to land valued up to \$400,000 and concessions applying to land valued up to \$500,000. The bill also makes changes to rental housing by removing barriers made by State taxes to the construction of build-to-rent developments. These are high housing developments in areas close to transport and amenities like parks. Most importantly they focus on providing good experiences for tenants through onsite services and facilities, professional management and long-term leases.

As the Opposition has noted, it is an approach that is used in many other large cities around the world, like New York. When I lived there for quite some time during the 1990s there were large condominiums that were built to rent. Indeed, that was the way most people lived in New York City. One of the barriers to build-to-rent development is the current structure of land tax in New South Wales. High tax-free thresholds make it far more profitable for a developer to sell off individual units to small private landlords than to operate a professionally managed, large-scale rental development. The bill will address the tax discrepancy by introducing a 50 per cent discount to land valuations for the purposes of calculating land tax for new build-to-rent developments until 2040. There are integrity measures, which I will not go into now, that are important to make this a sustainable change.

The final part of the bill relates to the taxation of wage payments by aged-care employers. The Commonwealth Government is funding the aged-care workforce retention grant opportunity program to support our aged-care workforce during this challenging time. Under the program the Commonwealth will make two payments of up to \$800 per employee to aged-care employers, with the retention bonus payments to be passed through to staff. Under our current payroll tax laws these payments would be regarded as wages, meaning that aged-care employers would be required to pay tax on these bonuses. Of course this is not sustainable nor desirable. The bill before the House provides an exemption from payroll tax for these payments. Members will recall legislation last year that provided a similar payroll tax exemption for additional wages paid under the JobKeeper payment scheme.

During this time frontline staff across the State have done an amazing job—our nurses, doctors, healthcare workers, police and emergency services workers, volunteers, teachers and aged-care workers, whom we are assisting through this legislation. I thank them from my heart for putting others before themselves in a way they have never had to before. The changes in the bill are incredibly important. They are major contributions to deal with the challenges facing our State. Importantly, we have a plan that we are carrying out through this legislation to keep our community safe and strong.

We all know it is not going to be easy. The recovery is not going to happen overnight. By doing this work now in this House our Government is sending a strong signal that it will take all necessary steps to support business and keep people at work not only to derive income but also to participate in the really important social purpose that work brings to each one of us every day, which we can now appreciate much more clearly than ever before. I thank my community and many across the State for their efforts and goodwill to keep us safe during COVID. I thoroughly support the measures outlined in the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (13:15:01):** In the 30 seconds that remain for my speech in debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020, I begin my contribution by referring to the latest measure in a series of COVID measures represented by the bill. I will pick up where my colleague the member for Keira finished. He noted, and I agree, the bill has four amendments to four Acts that seek to facilitate three changes: increasing the threshold for the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme for new homes and vacant land to encourage construction, facilitating the creation of new build-to-rent properties in New South Wales for the first time to create jobs in the construction sector, and providing exemptions from payroll tax on federally funded grant payments to aged-care workers as part of the Commonwealth Government's plan to encourage workers to remain in that sector by making retention payments during the pandemic.

**Debate interrupted.**

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

*Announcements***MEMBER FOR BATHURST**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and member for Bathurst a happy birthday for last weekend. I hope he enjoyed the festivities.

**BACKING THE BUSH**

**The SPEAKER:** Members will be pleased to know that our Parliament is backing the bush: buying from businesses in regional New South Wales. The new regional range, which is now available through the online gift shop, is on display in Parliament House—some members may have seen the launch display in Cafe Quorum today. I refer members to an email they will receive with further information.

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT**

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

*Bills***DIGITAL RESTART FUND BILL 2019****Assent**

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

*Question Time***ICARE**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:20:13):** I direct my question to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House when he was first told about the board of icare sanctioning John Nagle over his failure to properly declare his wife's contract?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:20:25):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. In February 2019 my office received an anonymous complaint regarding this issue. As the issue that was raised with my office had the prospect of potential corrupt conduct I acted immediately and notified the Treasury secretary in compliance with my statutory obligations as a Minister. I was subsequently advised that the Treasury secretary referred the matter to the chair of the icare board. The board engaged with the ICAC. The ICAC agreed that the board should conduct an external investigation and the investigation found the following: first, there was no evidence that the CEO influenced or was improperly involved in the decision to engage his wife; and second, there was no evidence that he intentionally deceived the board.

The board imposed appropriate sanctions for the failure to disclose as CEO and took immediate steps to strengthen those processes. The board advised all indications that the ICAC would take no further action. I accepted the board's advice and the actions that were taken as appropriate. The matter was dealt with 12 months ago in full cooperation with the relevant authorities. That is the appropriate action that should be taken by a responsible Minister in respect of this situation. In the establishment of the changes that were made to set up an independent board with an independent organisation and an independent regulator who is accountable to the Minister for Customer Service we did not shy away. We do not shy away from accountability and transparency. Actually we set up structures in place to do just that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I accept at times that comes with political challenges, but at the centre of this organisation is the care of some of the most vulnerable people in our community: injured workers.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We all know under the Labor Party that it is all care, no responsibility.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** They have zero transparency and zero accountability in relation to the processes that they set up. We, on this side of the House, are very happy. We actually promote transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to an organisation that cares for the most vulnerable workers in our society.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Point of order—

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



**Mr Chris Minns:** The Treasurer just said that he supports transparency and accountability. He just told this House that he knew about it in 2019.

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

**Mr Chris Minns:** My point of order is Standing Order 52.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will speak to the point of order.

**Mr Chris Minns:** The Treasurer knew in 2019 about this potential corruption. He sat on it for two years and backed the board in last week. This is outrageous.

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

**Mr Chris Minns:** Why would you back the chief executive last week if you referred him to the ICAC?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kogarah is already on one call to order. He will be placed on a second call to order if he continues. The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The actions I took were exactly in line with what responsible Ministers should do—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —in relation to allegations that come across our desks. Immediately when I received that advice I referred it to the Secretary of NSW Treasury. When it comes to accountability and transparency, we not only promote it but we have set in place a statutory review of the actions that need to be taken to ensure that transparency does not just occur today but in perpetuity in relation to the scheme.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. Treasurer, have you finished your answer?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I have.

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:25:38):** No, he has not finished, because I have more questions for him. I ask a supplementary question. When was the Treasurer first told about John Nagle's undeclared trip to Las Vegas, paid for by a multimillion dollar contractor to icare? When was the Treasurer first told about that?

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is responding to a serious question in a serious fashion and not attacking the Opposition. He will be heard in silence. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:26:24):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. As part of its role as a public financial corporation [PFC], as part of the normal course of operations icare staff are required to periodically provide updates to my office on their travel. All international travel with respect to icare is approved by the independent icare board and is required to be disclosed in its annual reports. Right across government members of departments, members of State-owned corporations and PFCs travel as part of their duties from time to time. I think they spend around \$300 million a year on travel, although probably not anymore—that is a budget saving—but that occurs in the ordinary course.

I accept the concerns and issues that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition, by the *Four Corners* program and also by *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Today, in relation to those issues that have been raised, I can inform the House that along with Minister for Customer Service Victor Dominello, in terms of transparency and accountability in relation to this independent body, the Government will bring forward the statutory review that it established to look into the operation and performance of both the service provider and the regulator after a five-year period. The decision we have made today is that we will bring forward and expand that statutory five-year review into workers compensation. The review will be expanded to include a root-and-branch examination of issues such as the one that has been raised in the question.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129. The question was specifically when he knew about the CEO's trip to Las Vegas. When did he know—that is the question. That is what he has to answer.

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is being generally relevant to the question. He referred to that earlier.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The review will be expanded to include a root-and-branch examination of Insurance and Care NSW to ensure public confidence in the New South Wales workers compensation scheme. The review will be headed by—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: He is not answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I have just ruled on that. As I said, the Treasurer addressed that earlier and he remains generally relevant.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The review will be headed by retired Supreme Court judge the Hon. Robert McDougall, QC, and will be assisted by NSW Treasury and the Department of Customer Service. Importantly, unlike those opposite, who ran a workers compensation scheme into the ground, we have on this side of the House—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Treasurer was asked a very direct question. When was he told?

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold my earlier ruling.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The review will look at the operations structure, finances, management and culture of the workers compensation scheme and will report back to the New South Wales Government. Mr McDougall has been specifically asked to include within the scope of the review those matters raised by *Four Corners* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* in recent weeks that are of significant public interest. They include the structure and the sustainability of the Treasury Managed Fund and the Nominal Insurer workers compensation scheme.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** They also include the relationship between icare and the regulator and the operations, the culture and the governance of icare, including the effectiveness and the accountability of the independent icare board. The State Insurance and Care Governance Act, as I have said, requires that the Minister—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: We are here to hear his answer to the question, which was when did he know about the trip to Las Vegas?

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer will continue.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** As members know, the Act requires the Minister—and we established it for this very reason—to conduct a review of the Act as soon as possible from the date of five years. Unlike those opposite, we will provide an independent person to provide independent advice on this independent body which the Government will act on.

#### ICARE

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:31:19):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. In light of shock revelation after shock revelation at yesterday's inquiry, and the Treasurer's revelation today that he referred a matter to ICAC, does the Treasurer stand by his words to Parliament that icare's board and executives do "a superb job and should be applauded"?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira has a habit of interjecting between questions and responses. He should not do that. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:31:55):** Unlike those opposite, who are all care and no responsibility, members on this side of the House have built in independence to provide oversight and advice to government to ensure that the workers compensation scheme is providing the support that injured workers right across our State need. We had a system that was almost insolvent under those opposite, with a triple-A credit rating at risk. As I have always said, on this side of the House we do not run surpluses for the sake of it; we run them so that we can provide the support that is needed for people right across our State. Whether that is in relation to the workers compensation scheme or the budget, at the end of the day strong financial management leads to great outcomes for the people of our State. If we look at the success—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I can't believe you think you are going to get away with this. You don't know what is coming.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I say to the Leader of the Opposition, if you look at the success and the outcomes of the scheme, what we measure as success, particularly when it comes to the workers compensation scheme—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —is extra support for injured workers, low premiums for businesses right across the State and solvency. You cannot help people if you do not have a strong financial position, and strong financial management and social outcomes are two sides of the same coin. When it comes to the scheme that we turned around, members opposite opposed the changes every single step of the way. In 2011 and 2012—some of

them were not here then—they opposed the reforms under Greg Pearce which brought the scheme back on to a sustainable footing. The changes we made in 2015 provide greater independence, better regulation and better oversight of the scheme.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: The Treasurer has not mentioned "superb job" or "applauded" once in his answer.

**Mr Paul Toole:** You haven't mentioned the standing order.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** It is Standing Order 129. I thank the Minister. The Treasurer is not answering the question. Last week he came into this place applauding the board and telling us what a superb job it was doing. Why is he not backing it today?

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is being generally relevant.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** If you look at the changes that icare made in relation to those 2015 changes, you will see it brought back extra support for some of the most vulnerable injured workers in our society, which was politicised by those opposite. It reduced premiums—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —to the lowest levels since the 1980s. Importantly, as part of that in terms of the superb job that has occurred—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question asked specifically whether the Treasurer stands by his comments that the board and executives did a superb job and should be applauded. Does he stand by them—yes or no?

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is being generally relevant.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member takes a point of order as I had just mentioned the word "superb". Because not only that, when it comes to workplaces right across the State, we have incentivised them to have better work practices. Better work practices lead to lower premiums—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** I have just ruled on that point. The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** This is about the Treasurer's comments to this House backing in the board and executives.

**The SPEAKER:** I have given the Leader of the Opposition latitude. She will resume her seat.

[*Interruption*]

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** When it comes to the 800 members of icare, who provide incredible support every single day and put injured workers at the centre of the scheme, that is exactly what it is all about. Those opposite come to this Chamber and raise these concerns yet their own party president—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** They were so fair dinkum they had their own party president as a member of the board who still remains their party president today. Do not come in here and politicise the workers compensation scheme, an independent body that will be reviewed by an independent person by bringing forward the statutory review.

#### ICARE

**Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (14:37:02):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. The Treasurer spoke today about honesty and transparency. He was asked 12 times about icare last week. Why did the Treasurer not reveal to the House that he knew he had referred the CEO—his own CEO—to ICAC? Why did he not reveal that last week?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:37:26):** I reject the proposition.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. I remind members that the start of a question is not a time to interject.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I was asked about whether I received information and, as a responsible Minister—as Ministers on this side of the House know—the appropriate action to take is to refer that matter to

your secretary, which is exactly what occurred on that occasion. The advice that we received back after an internal investigation by the independent icare board in relation to that matter was that the ICAC had advised the independent icare board that the matter had been concluded. That is the advice that I received and that is the appropriate action that is required. That is why on this side of the House we want to have a strong workers compensation scheme. We will not use injured workers as political pawns in political games. I am very confident that we have a strong scheme in this State. If there are actions that need to be taken they will be taken.

But the facts are these: as I said, the lowest premiums, premiums that incentivise strong workplace behaviour, a scheme on a solid, long-term financial security with a funding ratio of 101 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition talks about misleading the House. The only person who misled the House last week was the Leader of the Opposition, who came in here with outdated advice, not verified and wrong. We now have the lowest level of workplace fatalities on record, more benefits for injured workers, an average of \$200 million in claim payments per month over the past year, 99 per cent of liability decisions made in seven days or less, 95 per cent of service requests answered within 24 hours. My job as a responsible Minister is not to do what is politically expedient; it is to do what is right.

I accept the concerns that have been raised by *Four Corners*. I accept the concerns that have been raised by *The Sydney Morning Herald*. It is certainly my view that I want to have a workers compensation scheme in this State that has public confidence and continues to provide strong support to injured workers right across the State. The scheme, compared with where it was under the Labor Party, is in a significantly better state. We on this side of the House are not going to play politics. I will work with the Minister for Customer Service in relation to bringing forward the statutory review, which we built into the legislation to make sure there is transparency and accountability. We promote transparency. Those opposite hide behind it, just like they hid behind Kaila Murnain and Aldi bags full of cash; just like they hid behind the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane. They were shamed into coming out, given his links to the Communist Party. They were shamed into coming out in relation to that. We will always stand with the injured workers of this State. They always have the support of this Government, and they will continue to do so.

#### ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (14:41:37):** My question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. In reference to the HumeLink and EnergyConnect upgrades to the electricity network by TransGrid that affect my electorate and the south of the State, will the Minister ensure appropriate, meaningful, face-to-face consultation with all those affected indirectly or directly by the infrastructure and give genuine consideration to alternative routes?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:42:12):** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question and for the great work that he continues to do for his community in Wagga Wagga. I would also like to start by acknowledging and thanking the local communities that have raised these very important issues with the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Goulbourn. I acknowledge that the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Goulbourn have had meetings organised for them this evening with TransGrid to get a full briefing on these very important issues. These projects are critically important for the future of our State and we need to ensure that we bring affected local communities with us. I want to find ways to absolutely maximise the benefits of new energy infrastructure but do so in a way that respects the concerns of local communities and seeks to work with them.

As many in the House today would be aware, we are facing a lot of change in our energy system. Four of our five existing power stations are retiring over the next 15 years, taking large amounts of generation and capacity out of the grid. These must be replaced before they close to avoid price spikes and also blackouts. So this infrastructure is critically important to the future of our State—they are non-negotiables. As many would also be aware, the new energy infrastructure is being built across many parts of the State, including the Central West, New England and, of course, at Cooma with the Snowy Hydro project.

The Snowy Hydro is one of the greatest achievements in our State's history, delivering cheap, reliable power to New South Wales for over 45 years. That is why the Government is backing the great work that is happening to develop Snowy 2.0. Snowy will be able to deliver another 2,000 megawatts of clean, reliable power to the people of this State—power that is critical to replacing our retiring generators over the coming decade. What it also means is that once Snowy 2.0 is completed we will have 6,000 megawatts of cheap, reliable, clean energy going into the system and able to be delivered into the market. That is enough dispatchable electricity to match about the capacity of Vales Point, Eraring and Bayswater. So this is critically important for the future of our energy system in New South Wales. In order to ensure that we get that electricity to market we need to build the transmission infrastructure to make that possible. HumeLink is the new interconnector we need to access that additional capacity. HumeLink is essential not only for Snowy 2.0 to dispatch its power to the grid, but also for

getting more power out of the existing Snowy Hydro generators, which are currently constrained by the lack of transmission capacity.

I note the member also asked about EnergyConnect, which is another interconnector proposed to connect the New South Wales grid to the South Australian grid. EnergyConnect will allow the State to open up the South-West Renewable Energy Zone [REZ]—our third REZ in New South Wales—and together with HumeLink provide a continuous flow of energy from the South Australian border all the way to Sydney. Together TransGrid advises that these projects will support over 2,700 jobs—jobs that are now more important than ever as our regional communities recover from the devastating impacts of COVID. Both of these projects are in the early stages of planning and assessment. I stress at this point that no final approval has been given for the route of either of these projects. We have one of the most robust planning systems here in New South Wales to look for every opportunity to maximise the positives and minimise the negatives of the route design to ensure that genuine consultation takes place with local communities.

Both projects will be subject to the robust assessment requirements under the New South Wales Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, ensuring the highest quality assessment and scrutiny. The projects will also require additional approval from the Commonwealth under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Under these processes there are statutory requirements for consultation, including a minimum 28-day public exhibition, and a requirement to give genuine consideration to alternative route options. My colleague, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, will be responsible for overseeing the planning of these projects, and I can assure you this is a responsibility he does not take lightly.

With regard to community and stakeholder engagement, TransGrid has advised me today that it has conducted more than 1,800 direct contacts with regional stakeholders and landholders since late 2019, ranging from council briefings, meetings with directly affected landowners, phone calls and direct correspondence via email. TransGrid has also engaged directly with 363 affected property owners. Regarding Energy Connect, TransGrid has conducted more than 2,400 engagement activities since November 2018. This program has included more than 350 face-to-face meetings with directly and indirectly affected landholders, local government, industry groups, and members of State and Federal Parliament.

#### *Committees*

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

#### **Reports**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** As Chair: I table the report of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission entitled *2020 Review of the Annual Reports of Oversighted Bodies*, report No. 1/57, dated 4 August 2020. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** As Chair: I table the Legislation Review Committee reports entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 17/57*, dated 4 August 2020, and *Legislation Review Digest No. 18/57*, dated 4 August 2020. I move:

That the reports be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding *Legislation Review Digest No. 16/57*, dated 16 June 2020.

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

#### **Wentworth District Health Facility**

Petition calling on the Government to provide the Wentworth district with a fit-for-purpose facility that will accommodate full-time doctors, allied health providers and like services in order to support the community in the recruitment and retention of practitioners and thereby contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of the Wentworth district citizens and ensure the longevity of the local hospital, nursing home and pharmacy, received from **Mrs Helen Dalton**.

*Motions*

**DOMINIC PERROTTET, TREASURER**

**Censure**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:49:59):** I move:

That this House censures the Treasurer for:

- (1) Putting his own ambition ahead of his ministerial responsibilities, by covering up the unprecedented financial mismanagement at icare.
- (2) Covering up icare's appalling governance, which allowed executives to award plum taxpayer-funded contracts to their family members and take an undeclared junket to Las Vegas.
- (3) Defending the icare executive team by saying they "do a superb job" and "should be applauded", even as they collected massive bonuses while underpaying workers and driving icare's financial position into the ground.
- (4) Failing to do the right thing by sacking the icare board and paying back 52,000 sick and injured workers their \$80 million in stolen wages.
- (5) Letting down the 326,000 businesses and three million workers who rely on icare.
- (6) Misleading the House on several occasions to cover up his negligence and incompetence.
- (7) Demonstrating beyond any doubt that he cares only about his own ambition to be Premier and not his responsibility to look after sick and injured workers across New South Wales.

It has been eight days since *Four Corners* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* aired allegations regarding icare, the Government's workers compensation agency. If we think about all that has happened in those eight days there have been news stories after news stories, there has been question after question in the House, and there has been evidence after evidence presented to the Treasurer, for which we have not received appropriate, nor truthful answers. We bring the censure motion to the House today because the Treasurer has failed time and time again to do the right thing and bring to the House the true situation with icare, which is his duty as a Minister of the Crown. When the Treasurer is asked a question in this House, he is required to answer that question. But he has not done that. Icare has been answerable to him and only him. It is his baby. He is the father. He is accountable. Only he has managed and had oversight of icare, and he is responsible for the mess that icare now presents. We vividly recall when he walked into this House in 2015 and said:

We have created the best workers compensation scheme this State has ever seen.

That is bunkum, and we know it. We know that this is not the best workers compensation scheme. Right now it is the worst workers compensation scheme in the country. When the Treasurer moved from Finance to Treasury he decided that he would take his baby icare with him. He designed it so that he is the only person responsible for icare and its misdeeds. Today we hold him accountable and we censure him. We hold him accountable for underpaying 52,000 workers \$80 million. We hold him accountable for not having a plan to pay them back. We hold him accountable for an \$850 million loss this year. We hold him accountable for misleading Parliament time and time again.

We hold the Treasurer accountable for saying the scheme is in surplus when it is actually in deficit. We hold him accountable for mistruth after mistruth after mistruth and for disrespecting those 300,000 businesses that depend on the scheme and the more than one million workers who need its protection. We hold him accountable for icare's dodgy contracting. We hold him absolutely accountable for the referral to ICAC, and we know that he and he alone is responsible for that. Last week we asked the Treasurer 12 questions. He had every opportunity on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to tell us about this, but he did not because it was a cover-up from the very beginning. Only now with pressure, to the point where he sees no way out but to launch a statutory root-and-branch review, does he walk into the House and reveal the truth.

We hold the Treasurer accountable for every one of icare's misdeeds because it is on his watch, and his watch only, that this incompetence, wilful misconduct and bloated executive salaries and bonuses have occurred. Can we honestly say that the top seven executives at this agency deserve to earn more than the Prime Minister? No, we cannot because we have seen what they are capable of, as revealed by *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the ABC and by us in this Parliament. Make no mistake: The icare board needs to go and Dominic Perrottet is the only person who can sack them.

Treasurer, we censure you today because you have covered up disaster after disaster at icare. You have put your own reputation and ambition ahead of your responsibilities as a Minister of the Crown. You have failed to answer questions asked in this Parliament day after day after day. As the Opposition we get one go at coming into this Parliament and putting evidence before you, and we did that day after day. I did not stand at this lectern and ask questions without the proper evidence to back them up. I told the Treasurer that we have the evidence. I warned him that there was more to come. Day after day I warned him and still he walked into this Parliament and he backed up icare because that is what he does. His ambition is so important to him that he cannot see the responsibility he has as a Minister of the Crown to the citizens of this State, including those 300,000 businesses and more than one million workers.

The Treasurer does not care about sick and injured workers. He named the agency icare but he does not care. That has become bleedinly obvious over the past week because he stands here and boasts about his record of setting up this "great agency" and says "look what Labor did". Labor cared about the workers and we fought this every step of the way because we knew this is where we would end up. The Treasurer has ignored this crisis. He has denied it, he has downplayed it, he has made light of it and, yes, he has spun it. Treasurer, we do not accept the commentary that you have given to the Parliament today. We do not accept your excuse. We do not accept your statutory root-and-branch review. That is not good enough, Treasurer.

Many of the things that have come to light in the past eight days have come through the upper House. Our colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, a member of the Legislative Council, has pursued this matter for eight months because he, like every single member on this side, cares about the workers in this State. He cares about a workers compensation scheme that will protect people because that is what it should do. We should not have to stand here and ask questions because it should be at the heart of the scheme that people are protected and valued. They are not. They are not because the Treasurer does not care. The only thing he cares about is his grand ambition to be Premier. When he struts in here like a rooster, he is thinking that everyone is going to look at him and see the next Premier. Let me tell you, Treasurer, that you are not fit to be the next Premier. You are not fit to be the Treasurer and you are not fit to oversee an agency that is responsible for so many important people in this State.

I remind the House that this is a man who had regulators warning him. He had Treasury chiefs warning him. He even had his Cabinet colleague Victor Dominello warning him. He had the regulator, Carmel Donnelly, warning him. Warning after warning after warning and he did nothing. He failed to act. That on its own is deeply disturbing for a Minister of the Crown. The Treasurer had evidence put before him and he had people come to him and say, "You should be aware that this agency is in trouble. You should be aware that there is misconduct and incompetence at your agency." What did he do? He did nothing. When asked about it, he simply brushed it off. It is not good enough, Treasurer. You are a Minister of the Crown and the responsibility rests with you. When people warn you, which is what has happened with icare, you are expected to act. You did not act.

It is important to note the first line of the Treasury brief that was addressed to the Treasurer in May. The Treasurer said that icare was in surplus and it had a funding ratio of over 100 per cent. That was wrong, Treasurer, and you knew it. We have the Treasury brief—which I told him we have—which shows the net result was a loss of \$2 billion for the period ended 31 March 2020. The funding ratio is 98 per cent. When I brought that up in Parliament, the Treasurer mocked me. He said, "Oh, it's only 98 per cent!" What he forgot to say is that the board-approved target is operating in the range of 110 per cent to 135 per cent. That is not a matter to be scoffed at, Treasurer, not at all. Return-to-work rates are the lowest among all insurers. The Treasurer walks in here and boasts about return-to-work rates being a measure of success for icare. Let me tell you, Treasurer, return-to-work rates are the lowest of any insurer. That is not me saying that; that is your Treasury telling you that.

I mentioned Carmel Donnelly. We are so fortunate to have her because she will not be pushed around by the Treasurer. She warned the Treasurer. She wrote to the Treasurer three times in nine months to raise her concerns about the goings-on at icare. She continues to have grave concerns about the agency's functioning. What did the Treasurer do with all those warnings? Did he do anything? No, he did not do a thing. Did he demand an explanation? No, he did not. He just walked into this place last week and thought that he would get away with it. Treasurer, you are not going to get away with this. As the stories piled up and as the accusations against the board mounted, as they did last week and yesterday in the parliamentary inquiry, the Treasurer just said, "There is nothing to see here."

Misleading Parliament used to mean something. Misleading Parliament used to be a grave offence that this Parliament took seriously. But those on the other side think they can do whatever they want and nothing is going to happen to them. Carl Scully resigned for much less. The Treasurer has misled Parliament. That, on our side, is a grave offence because when we walk into this Parliament we hold our responsibilities as legislators very, very dearly indeed. On Saturday we learned that the Treasury Managed Fund, which is the workers compensation fund for about 335,000 State employees, needs a \$4 billion bailout to cover its losses. That is bad. But it comes at a

time when this State faces a terrible financial situation. The Treasurer has told us that with what little information he has actually given us.

We know that there are people without jobs. We know that this State has provided the lowest stimulus package of any State during this pandemic. We know that there are blowouts in major projects. We know that the Government is cutting the wages of public sector employees for no reason at all—well, that is what we thought. But that \$4 billion bailout of Treasury funds is \$4 billion of taxpayers' money. That is money that people right now hold very dear to them. They expect that the Government will make decisions in their best interests at a time of significant crisis, and that is not happening. Again, did the Treasurer even think about mentioning that last week? No, he did not. He did not think about mentioning it because he does not think he owes this Parliament an explanation. He does not think he owes the Parliament the truth.

The Treasurer answered 11 questions on this issue last week and never once mentioned ICAC. He never once mentioned that he had made that referral to ICAC. He had every opportunity to do so last week but he covered it up. I say to the Treasurer today: If we have to censure you every day this week we will do so because you will take responsibility, you will sack the board, you will give a fulsome explanation to this House and you will act, finally, like a Minister of the Crown. On this side of the House, we actually know the people this impacts. When he stands there and he bluffs and blusters and fibs to this House, which is what he has done, I want him to think about those people.

Clayton Barr passionately told the Treasurer of people he had met who had contemplated suicide because of this scheme—and he got thrown out of this House. On this side of the House on a daily basis we see people who are broken and in despair, people who have let down their families because they simply cannot go to work. They do not have a scheme to support them. The Minister has a responsibility, both as a Minister of the Crown and as the Treasurer of this State, to help every single vulnerable and broken person in this State. But the Minister does not do that. He will never be the Premier of New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the House of the procedure under Standing Order 114: the member named, being the Treasurer, 15 minutes; four other members, five minutes; response by the member, 10 minutes; and the mover in reply, 10 minutes.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (15:05:10):** As I said in question time, the only person who has misled this House this week has been the Leader of the Opposition and on advice that she has received following last week's question time in relation to the financial position of the scheme, as then supported by icare in their advice, and advised in relation to that advice that the Leader of the Opposition had, being outdated and not presented, has continued to maintain for political purposes the view that somehow the financial position of the scheme was incorrect. Workers compensation is a fine balance. It is a balance between getting three things right. The first thing is to make sure that injured workers across this State get the support that they need. The second thing is that we have premiums that are low so that businesses can invest and employ more people. Finally, that we have a scheme with a strong funding ratio.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out correctly that at times the scheme has a high solvency ratio. I remember as the finance Minister in budget estimates the regular concern, the genuine concern of Mr David Shoebridge in relation to the workers compensation scheme. He was concerned that the scheme's solvency ratio was higher than it should be and therefore further support should be provided to injured workers since the changes we made back in 2015. In relation to that, and I have spoken to Mr David Shoebridge on those matters, we wanted to get rid of the jockeying between premiums and support for injured workers who seriously needed it.

Since that period of time, as a result of the financial strength in the scheme, we have been able to provide extra support for those people who have been affected by child sexual abuse, we have been able to provide extra support for firefighters on the front line who have been affected—that legislation that went through either last year or the year before—and obviously more recently in relation to the impacts of COVID-19. That is why we have strong financial management to the scheme: so that we can provide the support as those issues arise over time.

The very essence of creating the independence, which we set up through separating the regulator from the service provider, ensures transparency and accountability. It ensures that reviews occur on a five-year basis to make sure that if changes are required they are to support the most seriously injured workers in this New South Wales. The employees, over 800 public servants, in icare are provided incredible support, particularly, those who are most injured in New South Wales. When you go back to those times—and I do raise the scheme as it was presided over by those opposite—when a scheme is substantially in deficit and it loses connection with those people it is meant to be set up to serve—

**Ms Kate Washington:** You have underpaid them by millions of dollars—



**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We made substantial changes to ensure we built service delivery around injured workers.

**Ms Kate Washington:** And you don't even have a plan to repay them.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I will respond to the interjection. In respect of the payments issue, underpayments and overpayments, which has been revised down, that was a matter that pre-dated icare and identified by icare and is in the process of being addressed. The reality is, those changes would not have been picked up but for the change. Then at every step of the way when this Government came to office in 2011—the member for Maroubra, I am sorry the member for Cessnock, was probably the only person in this House who was there when the 2011-12 changes were brought in—we took the scheme from the verge of insolvency to a scheme that was financially viable into the future. We have seen under the Labor scheme in Victoria what happens when a scheme is not managed well—less opportunity is provided for workers right across the State.

It is my view, and the Government's view, that the changes we made in 2011 and 2012 went too far. That is why, as a result of the reforms that we introduced in 2015, we brought back a number of support packages for those injured workers, particularly those most vulnerable, including substantive reforms to dust diseases because we know that they are some of the most vulnerable people right across our State. Once again we only really hear about workers comp from those opposite. We know the Leader of the Opposition raised it in her maiden speech and has not raised it since. The member for Cessnock came to this place and ran a scare campaign against some of the most seriously injured workers in our State.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

It was not factual because he came into this place and apologised, when Labor was once again given notice that that assertion was incorrect, that the Dust Diseases Board was not being abolished. At the time the Bernie Banton Foundation, in respect of the cultural change in bringing the injured worker to the centre of this scheme, said:

... the maintaining of current levels of benefits and services, along with streamlining the application process, can only be seen as positive ... The fact the proposed advisory committee [will] for the first time give victims' support organisations a direct input on how victims are helped, will be of significant benefit to those who are suffering.

There was significant consultation with injured workers and for the first time in a long time workers compensation in this State was not seen as a political punching bag. We had a government that listened to the needs and concerns of injured workers. The Government listened to what they had to say about a constructed workers compensation scheme around their needs and their wants. Now let us look at the undisputed facts. We have the lowest premiums since 1987 and we have driven a premium that many in the business community have struggled with because what we have achieved is ensuring those businesses that have a great track record in relation to workplace injuries and workplace fatalities have lower premiums off the back of that.

**Mr Michael Daley:** That has always been the way.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member for Maroubra should know, but does not know, that that was a substantive change that we made in the 2015 reforms.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The scheme has solid, long-term financial security with a funding ratio of 101 per cent, despite the economic downturn of drought, fires and COVID-19 and the support that we have provided in relation to additional areas that have come up. That is what you do if you are running a scheme properly. It is true that the scheme's 26-week return-to-work rates have fallen but they have fallen across the board for all insurers and across jurisdictions. It is a fine balance: encouraging workers to return to work while giving those who cannot return to work the support they need.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the members for the electorates of Port Stephens and Auburn that they are on two calls to order. They will be called to order for a third time if they continue to interject.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I am incredibly proud of the work done by the over 800 people of the public service in icare and the fact that New South Wales now has the lowest level of workplace fatalities on record. I am proud of the greater benefits for injured workers, with an average of \$200 million in claims payments per month over the past year. Injured workers now have greater input on their treatment and work plan than they ever had under Labor. Some 99 per cent of liability decisions are now made in seven days or less.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** That might not mean much to those members opposite but it means a lot to those who are in the scheme. Some 95 per cent of service requests are answered within 24 hours; 93 per cent

of calls are answered in 60 seconds or less; 90 per cent of new claims are allocated on the first day of their receipt. Injury management plans are completed on time in 90 per cent of applicable claims. There has been an 82 per cent increase in immediate resolution of injured workers' requests and a 41-day reduction in wait times from six weeks to five days. The scheme has realised consistently positive net customer satisfaction ratings, 26 points higher than that of Labor's WorkCover scheme administered by the member for Maroubra. It is a system that puts injured workers first and remains financially sound.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I remember when I first became finance Minister the correspondence that we regularly received relating to matters and concerns from injured workers. My firsthand experience is that whilst workers compensation is always a challenging and difficult area, the negative feedback has reduced and the positive feedback has increased. I will read out some of those stories to members. Martin has run a gardening business for 40 years. Early in 2019 his body gave out, leaving him in a state of despair. He began to feel shooting pain right down the left side of his body. A disc in his back had caused nerve damage to his left leg, leaving him in excruciating pain. He stated:

I thought I was finished, and my GP told me to retire. My case manager Rhiannon was my guardian angel throughout the claims process and, really, I don't know where I would be today if not for her.

I relate to members another case study of a seasoned martial arts practitioner who considered himself to be reasonably fit. When he injured himself in a workplace accident, he was surprised by the physical impact it had on him. In March this year he stated:

icare really helped get me back into the workforce. I didn't want to retire but didn't know what my options were. With icare by my side it was like winning the lottery. There were so many people willing to help.

In November last year I received the following correspondence. When a fire broke out in December 2018 Trevor was one of the first responders on the scene. Whilst on the scene he fell awkwardly and tore his tendon in his right knee. He wrote:

It will never be perfect, but I am so happy that I was covered. In fact, I was advised by my case manager that the injury is covered for life. My experience with icare has been excellent and volunteers can rest easy that icare is there to help.

I refer to another matter in relation to somebody who was training horses. While he was playing in a tournament his mare was bumped by another horse and tripped. This man received several fractures in his right ankle and a ligament was ripped off the bone. The secretary of the club he worked at stated:

I contacted icare straight away and our case manager was so helpful in managing the claim. She was very good explaining sometimes complex things to us and then approved visits to specialists as she could.

These case studies are the stories of the people this scheme helps every single day. They are people those members opposite never meet. They are people whom we met and established—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Have you met them?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Yes. In fact, when establishing the scheme we set it up to build that support for the people who are in it, to take out the politics and bring in that independence. Another case study stated:

icare was tops and I am grateful to them. They handled my claim quickly and with ease.

It goes on to state:

Others have said I have been very lucky and highly motivated and can't praise icare enough.

While there are always challenges in the scheme, these are the facts. The facts are that by almost every single measure this scheme is in a much better state than it was under those members opposite. The scheme has low premiums and more support for injured workers and the scheme is financially able to help those who need it.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (15:20:06):** I support the censure motion. I will tell the Treasurer a story about one of my constituents I have dealt with. I will call this constituent Dave for the sake of today's story. Dave was a small business operator who worked in tyres. He employed a handful of local young people. Of course, as a small business operator he was paying into the scheme and doing the right thing but when he got injuries, mainly to his back, he got himself back to work pretty quick smart because it was his business. He did the right thing.

Eventually in his late 30s his body just gave out and he had to shut down his business. Dave's marriage has broken down as a result of the constant pain. He takes some of the most significant painkillers. Dave cannot get out of the house to attend functions for his children or even his ex-wife's mother's funeral. Dave cannot go out of his house to socialise because he is not physically up to it. The only time he sees friends is when they come around

to his house. Dave has had to sell all the furniture in his house, so fundamentally when his friends come around now they sit on a milk crate. Dave has some days where he is so physically sore that he cannot get out of bed, which means he ends up laying in his own mess—his urine and faeces. He is cut off the scheme because he is at 20 per cent injury. Treasurer, that is the scheme we are talking about.

I appreciate that the Treasurer has his stories. The story I have just given about Dave reflects that of dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens of people whom I have met with and written to the Treasurer about. The Treasurer has signed off on the correspondence in response saying that everything is as it should be. I think that members need to understand that the scheme we currently have in New South Wales—your scheme, Treasurer—is failing some of the State's most vulnerable people. It failed the thousands of people who were cut off the scheme when the Treasurer made the changes and cut off the tail. For the benefit of members, the "tail" involves the most difficult, complex and physically damaged people in the State. They are the ones who were cut off. It was retrospective. Prior to 2011 and 2012 people had been given the choice to take a lump sum payment or stay on the scheme for the rest of their life. They made a decision that being on the scheme for the rest of their life was the safest course of action. They could have taken a lump sum payment but they did not. The Treasurer's Government changed that scheme in cutting off the most damaged in our society.

One of the changes that the Treasurer dared to make reference to in this House was brought about by then Premier Mike Baird, who was forced to watch a story on *A Current Affair* about a gentleman with a prosthetic who was less than 15 per cent injured because it was the bottom half of his leg. His prosthetic had become unsuitable. His story was plastered on Channel Nine and the front page of the newspapers, which embarrassed former Premier Mike Baird and led to one of the changes the Treasurer talked about in this House. It was not a change made because the Treasurer fundamentally thought that the person needed better care but a change that came about because of his embarrassment.

I will finish on a question to the Treasurer, to icare and its board, its general manager and everybody else associated with the scheme. What has changed since Monday of last week? The Treasurer and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] already knew about everything that has been spoken about in this House concerning icare. A matter was referred to ICAC, there had been investigations and the Treasurer received reports from KPMG that used all that language. The only thing that changed in the past seven days is that the Treasurer has been caught out. The misconduct has been revealed and suddenly the icare board is willing to accept the resignation of its CEO. That is the only thing that changed. In conclusion I acknowledge Brett Fitzpatrick. In 2018 the Treasurer received a report from an employer that states, "Sometimes it's cruel to be kind and you have to hit them in the hip pocket." That is the scheme over which the Treasurer exercises supervision. For that reason I support the motion.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will remain silent.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:25:47):** We are very fortunate to live in a country that has a legal system, a rule of law and a political system that does not yield to guilt by accusation.

**Ms Kate Washington:** What about retrospectivity? What goes against the rule of law?

**The SPEAKER:** I give the member for Port Stephens a final warning not to interject.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The rule of law that applies in this country requires substance to underpin an allegation before anybody is held responsible. Having listened to the Leader of the Opposition's speech, we get a very clear idea of the gap between accusation and substance and the absence in this motion of any substance.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Swansea and the member for Port Stephens they are on two calls to order. If interjections continue, one of them will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** If the Treasurer and Minister Dominello truly thought there was a scintilla of truth to any particulars of the motion, would they have commissioned an incorruptible person and one of the best legal minds of the State, the Honourable Robert McDougall, QC, to conduct a root-and-branch inquiry? I do not think so. I do not think that is the action of someone who is scared of transparency.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wollongong will cease interjecting. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the first time.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** On the other hand, for 18 months it was widely known in Labor circles and by the General Secretary of the Labor Party, Kaila Murnain, that \$100,000 in illegal donations were being made to the Labor Party. Was there any revelation of that fact by any of the Opposition members who are now shouting across the Chamber very disrespectfully, Mr Speaker? Was there any transparency on that occasion whatsoever? No, there was not. The total lack of substance underpinning this motion was revealed by the Leader of the Opposition when she said in relation to the Treasurer " ...icare was answerable to him and only him."

When the Government inherited a WorkCover scheme that had a \$4 billion deficit it also inherited a workers compensation scheme in which the functions of the regulator and the operator were combined. The Treasurer decided that the regulator would be SIRA and the operator would be icare and he set up an independent board to oversee icare. Unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the nature of the board's responsibility. One of the icare board members who was responsible for the chief executive officer of icare, Mr Nagle, was none other than Mr Lennon, who is President of NSW Labor. What a revelation!

Mr Lennon was responsible for every decision collectively made by a board from which he did not resign during the relevant period. It is interesting that Jodi McKay cannot remove the Treasurer but she could have removed one person whom she says did the wrong thing—Mr Lennon. If the Opposition Leader truly believes the allegations that have been made, why did she not remove Mr Lennon? He is still the President of NSW Labor but if he is so corrupt and incompetent, why is he still in that position? Why does the Opposition Leader not remove him from that position? The reason is very simple: The Opposition Leader does not believe these allegations. She does not believe there was any incompetence of the board. She does not believe that the Treasurer has done anything wrong. This is all about politics. But the problem is that Mr Lennon is still Labor's leader.

**Mr Michael Daley:** I am glad I am not paying for that defence.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:30:48):** The member for Maroubra would agree that on a number of occasions Labor members warned Government backbenchers to be careful of the trick, which is knock, knock, knock, "Can you please do this speech on the censure motion?" The ones who are desperate to be promoted to the front bench reply, "Yeah. This is my chance." Dopey is the one who always does it, yet he is still not on the front bench. I want to know this: What happened in the last week? One week ago today the Treasurer of New South Wales said in this House, "The icare team and the executive icare team do a superb job." Within one week we lost a board member and a CEO but found a referral to ICAC. Now we have legislation for a root and branch review. None of those things were known to the Treasurer last Tuesday.

I encourage all members to take misleading Parliament pretty seriously. Members who were Ministers in previous governments know full well and take very seriously that they are charged with the responsibility to not mislead Parliament. There have been several previous occasions when Ministers have returned to the House because they may have misspoken or misquoted a figure. They would make a personal explanation and set the record straight. I ask Government members to tell me this: Why on 12 separate occasions last week could the New South Wales Treasurer not explain the referral to ICAC and the concerns he had over icare while expressing full confidence in icare, yet today announce a root and branch review by a judicial officer? That series of events occurred in one week. People say that a week is a long time in politics but that is unbelievable.

**Mr Paul Scully:** What will happen next week?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The member for Wollongong makes a good point. What will happen next week? Labor Opposition members take their role as legislators and what we say in Parliament seriously. As legislators we also understand that at times Ministers make mistakes and get things wrong because they are human beings. But the right thing to do is correct the mistake in the House. That is what every other Minister of the Crown has done under previous governments of all political persuasions. This is not a weekend Liberal Party convention when people make rah-rah speeches about how great they are. When members speak in the New South Wales Parliament's Legislative Assembly it matters—particularly when a member is asked a series of questions about financial viability and conduct of an agency for which that member, and that member alone, is responsible.

Taking accountability for your actions is important. Last week on 12 separate occasions there was an opportunity for the Treasurer to correct the record. He could have made a personal explanation. Today he revealed that he knew very well about the issues in relation to the ICAC; in fact, he knew a long, long time ago. Despite repeated questions from the Leader of the Opposition, the Treasurer refused to divulge any of that information to the House. As the Treasurer and as a Minister of the Crown, he has done the wrong thing. He has misled the oldest Parliament in the nation. It is a serious issue. We will pursue this issue every step of the way not only because we believe in accountability but also because we believe in sticking up for injured workers who have been treated appallingly by this Government.

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

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (15:36:05):** Another sitting week and yet another tawdry tactic from an Opposition that is desperate for oxygen and relevance. This is not the way to do it. The achievements of icare far outweigh anything that existed when those opposite were in Government. That is not to say it is perfect but it is hardly surprising that there will be errors in a scheme that is worth \$32 billion with over 900 employees and deals with 70,000 workers compensation claims each and every year. It was icare itself that identified the historical overpayments and underpayments of injured workers, most of which occurred prior to the creation of icare.

Those opposite fail to recognise any of this. They say the board was negligent and should be sacked. As other speakers have mentioned, the board included none other than Mark Lennon, the President of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party. In fact, there is nobody on the board who has served longer than Mr Lennon has. How do those opposite justify their outrageous criticism of the icare board? Are they claiming that Mr Lennon was not competent? Are they saying that Mr Lennon was corrupt? Labor cannot seem to accept that one of the great reforms that the Treasurer made was to split the regulatory and administrative functions of workers compensation.

This Government created the State Insurance Regulatory Authority and purposely placed it into a separate department. Thus the service delivery and regulatory aspects of workers compensation would be located in two different bodies. This was unlike the old Labor scheme where WorkCover included both functions, with the obvious conflict of interest such an arrangement would create. Remember this, Labor had two workers compensation regimes. The first one ended up more than \$2 billion in debt. The second one ended up more than \$4 billion in debt. It would have had to increase premiums by up to 28 per cent with the attendant loss of 12,000 jobs across the State. Labor's WorkCover was so bad its chair resigned, stating that the parlous financial situation was the direct result of Ministers Tripodi and Daley.

Labor has some nerve criticising the reforms of our Treasurer. Labor presided over a scheme that approached insolvency and delivered worse outcomes for workers and yet they have the temerity to preach administrative virtue. Since 2015 the insurer has made the biggest transformation to workers compensation in over 30 years. It continues to correct the legacy of poor behaviours across the scheme. Icare is the first to acknowledge that it has not always got it right. Icare has focused on remediating the issues identified during the core transformation period. In the last few years this Government has achieved more in the workers compensation space than those opposite ever did while in Government.

Icare has delivered lower employer premiums, better outcomes for injured workers—whom those opposite claim to care about—and a sustainable financial model. At the end of May 2020 the funding ratio is 101 per cent in a like-for-like comparison with other schemes. Labor's scheme had an unsustainable 85 per cent funding ratio. Premiums have been reduced by \$90 million for 17,600 employers and \$69 million in premium payments have been placed on hold. Premium rates have been kept on hold to support business during these difficult economic times, saving business \$325 million. There is now more than enough financial capacity to support injured workers for decades to come, unlike under those opposite.

It is not just about raw numbers and financial viability, it is about the people. The priority remains a long-term sustainable return to work for injured workers and their employers. That is at the heart of this fiscally responsible system with a social conscience. Labor's system was neither. The motion before us today is outrageous and is the height of hypocrisy from Labor. The Treasurer should be applauded for his vision and foresight in creating icare and the benefits it has delivered to thousands of our most vulnerable workers. This motion should be rejected as emphatically as the people of New South Wales rejected those opposite.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (15:41:09):** In response: I support the comments made by the member for Miranda and the member for Ku-ring-gai. I reject this motion and I leave it to the judgement of the House.

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:41:22):** In reply: Unlike the Treasurer, who just had an opportunity to defend himself in the House yet again, I intend to use my 10 minutes because I have much more to say about his incompetence and negligence. I acknowledge the member for Keira, Ryan Park, and the member for Cessnock, Clayton Barr, for their contributions to this debate. I thank each and every Labor MP who believes deeply in our role as the Labor Party to make sure that we have an economy that works and jobs for people, that those jobs are safe and people are protected and that businesses have the protections they need. This scheme has failed to meet those requirements in every way.

We are not here discussing the role of the scheme. We are here discussing the Treasurer and his inability to lead this scheme as the Treasurer of this State and as a Minister of the Crown. His response to this crisis has had nothing to do with injured workers. It has had nothing to do with the State's finances. It has had nothing to do with making good and proper decisions as a Minister of the Crown, as is his responsibility. Every decision he has made and every word he has uttered in this Parliament has been about one thing and one thing only and that is protecting his reputation and his ambition to be the next Premier of this State. No-one walks into this House and struts around more than this guy. The censure motion before the Parliament is something that Labor feels strongly about.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What about Ryan?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai and the Treasurer will remain silent.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** The members opposite find this motion a laughing matter and that brings me back to why for them it is never about injured workers. It brings me back to the strutting rooster that sits on the other side of the House who is the Treasurer and who has misled this Parliament time and time again. The member for Cessnock and the member for Keira spoke today about the 12 questions asked of the Treasurer last week and the four questions asked of the Treasurer today. Today we found out that the Treasurer did know about the ICAC referral and it was he, in fact, who made that referral. The question he refused to answer was in relation to the Las Vegas trip. That question asked of him was when he knew about the Las Vegas trip that was taken by the icare CEO without approval and paid for by a contractor to icare. This is a CEO to the largest agency in this State, a \$32 billion agency. We expect better from the CEO of such an agency. I will ask that question again and again of the Treasurer. I expect that when he leaves this House and he fronts his next media conference he will face that question again.

This Treasurer has failed to answer questions in the House this week because he knows it will impact on his reputation. That is why he avoided answering the question on the Las Vegas trip and why he refused to answer the question or reveal his referral to ICAC last week—because it is all about him. This is about his ambition. It is about making sure that accountability does not stick to him. It is about making sure that the lives of injured workers are not his first and foremost thought when he makes decisions. If this Treasurer cannot be trusted to walk into this place and tell the truth, he cannot be trusted to fix this. That is why we made several calls of the Treasurer today. We said to him that he should take full responsibility. As the member for Keira said, he should make a full explanation, give a full account of himself and the board, and take full responsibility. The second thing we asked was for him to sack the board. He has not done any of that because he does not want it to stick to him as Treasurer as he seeks to pursue his ambition to be Premier.

The truth is that the job he is doing right now in regard to icare and the decisions he is making are just too big for him to handle even as Treasurer. The decisions he has made are based on incompetence. He is negligent: I have put that case before the Parliament today. He set up this system and he watched it fail. He allowed it to fail and he did nothing to stop it. For all of his strutting around in front of the media and his sitting back on swivel chairs at the National Press Club pontificating about his tax policy and white papers on Federation reform, the real truth is this: When a real and serious and immediate problem has emerged in his portfolio he has shown himself completely and utterly incapable of fixing it. Ministers of the Crown have to fix it. They have to put their ambition and their reputation aside, and the Treasurer has not done that.

Everyone knows that he wants to be Premier but these past eight days have shown why he can never have that role. As the member for Maroubra said last week, there is an Uluru standing between him and the premiership and it is of his own making. Day after day he has backed the board. Day after day he has backed the CEO. Day after day he has refused to provide truthful answers to the questions that we have asked. He has told a story to this Parliament, day after day, that suited him. It was not the truth and every single person on my side of the House—and I believe the majority on the other side—actually knows that.

He has nothing to offer injured workers. He has nothing to offer families across this State who go to work every day expecting that there will be a safety net for them in the form of the workers compensation scheme. There is no plan to pay back injured workers. There is no plan to support them. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] has called him out on that and said that it is not good enough, but again he thinks he is just going to get away with it. The Treasurer has let down front line workers and all workers across New South Wales. He has disappointed them. He has abandoned them. He has walked away from them. If he does that as Treasurer, he will do that as Premier.

Let me explain why this censure motion is so important to us as the Labor Party. We simply do not bring this or any censure motion to this Parliament lightly, because we know that we do not have the numbers and we know that members opposite will vote against it no matter what they think of the Treasurer—and many are questioning his judgement. I was in the lift with a couple of them this morning and while we were social distancing they raised this very issue: Why on earth has he tied himself to the board and CEO of icare? In the debate on this censure motion we have seen the passion and commitment of the member for Keira and the member for Cessnock. I also acknowledge the member for Maroubra and, of course, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey in the Legislative Council.

Each of us who has spoken in this debate feels really strongly about it because we are the Labor Party and our role is to support workers and businesses across this State. That is what we do. We support businesses to grow and to thrive and to create jobs. We support workers who depend on a workers compensation system that works—and this one does not. I thought the member for Cessnock gave an extraordinary account of his very personal dealings with people who have been let down by this scheme. I thank him for that. But I will say that each and every person on the Labor side has a similar story. Each and every person here has had someone come into their office to tell them their personal story that has devastated their life and that of their family. These are not case

studies; these are real stories. They are personal stories that mean something to members on my side of the House and should mean something to the Treasurer.

I want to give the workers and employers of New South Wales this guarantee: We are not going to give up on this. When I say to the Treasurer that he does not know what we have and there is more coming, I stand by that—because there is a lot more coming. Treasurer, you had every opportunity today in this debate and in the questions I asked—as you did last week—to provide a proper account of yourself and the operation of this agency, and you failed to do that. That is an indictment on you as a Minister of the Crown. As the member for Keira said, if we have to, we will ask question after question. We will not give up. We will bring a censure motion every single day of this sitting week, if that is what is required. We will keep asking the questions that the Treasurer should have asked of the board of icare. He should be asking these questions, not us, but he has failed to do that and he has failed to give an explanation to this Parliament as to why he failed in his duty as a Minister of the Crown. That is why we seek to censure the Treasurer. That is why we seek to bring this very serious motion to the House condemning him as a Minister of the Crown.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....37  
Noes .....47  
Majority.....10

#### AYES

Aitchison, J  
Barr, C  
Chanthivong, A  
Dalton, H  
Doyle, T  
Harrison, J  
Hornery, S  
Leong, J  
McKay, J  
Minns, C  
Parker, J  
Voltz, L  
Zangari, G

Atalla, E  
Car, P  
Cotsis, S  
Dib, J  
Finn, J  
Haylen, J  
Kamper, S  
Lynch, P  
Mehan, D (teller)  
O'Neill, M  
Scully, P  
Warren, G

Bali, S  
Catley, Y  
Daley, M  
Donato, P  
Harris, D  
Hoenig, R  
Lalich, N  
McDermott, H  
Mihailuk, T  
Park, R  
Tesch, L (teller)  
Washington, K

#### NOES

Anderson, K  
Berejiklian, G  
Conolly, K  
Coure, M  
Dominello, V  
Greenwich, A  
Hancock, S  
Johnsen, M  
Lindsay, W  
Pavey, M  
Piper, G  
Roberts, A  
Singh, G  
Stokes, R  
Tuckerman, W  
Williams, L

Ayres, S  
Bromhead, S  
Constance, A  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Elliott, D  
Griffin, J  
Hazzard, B  
Kean, M  
Marshall, A  
Perrottet, D  
Preston, R  
Saunders, D  
Smith, N  
Taylor, M  
Upton, G  
Wilson, F

Barilaro, J  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Davies, T  
Gibbons, M  
Gulaptis, C  
Henskens, A  
Lee, G  
McGirr, J  
Petinos, E  
Provest, G  
Sidgreaves, P  
Speakman, M  
Toole, P  
Ward, G

#### PAIRS

Crakanthorp, T  
Saffin, J  
Watson, A

Evans, L  
Williams, R  
Sidoti, J

**Motion negatived.**

*Bills*

**STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (COVID-19 HOUSING RESPONSE) BILL 2020**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:03:24):** As I was saying before the debate was interrupted, the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill seeks to make three changes: increasing the threshold of the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme to new homes and vacant land to encourage construction; facilitating the construction of new rent-to-buy properties for the first time in New South Wales, again to create jobs in the construction sector; and providing exemptions for payroll tax for aged-care workers as part of the Commonwealth Government scheme to retain workers in the sector. As the member for Keira indicated, Labor will support the homebuyer and payroll tax exemptions—sensible suggestions on behalf of the Government—as it has supported other measures in the current environment. But Labor will be seeking to make some amendments to the rent-to-buy scheme.

Why is that? It is because in ordinary circumstances a construction-led stimulus package would be a strong step towards making sure we get the economy back on track. It gets construction workers employed in a range of trades, gets money into their pockets and increases their household spends. But, of course, our current circumstances are not ordinary. We have not only a demand side contraction but also a supply side reduction because—for very good public health reasons—we have real restrictions on other businesses and other parts of the economy that limit the available supply that organisations can provide. The circumstances also have an impact on demand. When there are restrictions on the number of people who can attend a restaurant or venue there is a contraction of supply in the retail or hospitality sector. There is also a contraction in demand because of the number of people who simply cannot get through. While construction only is a good way of stimulating economies ordinarily, in these circumstances we have to do more. We have to make sure that the construction part of the stimulus package expands to more people so that more people can share in the benefits.

I hope that this stimulus package is better than the others in terms of the support that it provides to organisations and individuals in the Wollongong electorate. Part of the reason I am speaking in the debate on this bill is that it would be remiss of me not to express the frustrations of businesspeople and their employees who feel that many of the stimulus measures that the Government has already announced have come up short. If the Treasurer had shouted the bar you would have been disappointed because instead of coming back with a full schooner he has come back with a light beer shandy. He provided \$440 million in land tax relief. Less than \$3 million went out the door. That is a long way short. He was forced to rebadge and extend the Small Business Grant scheme after denying more than \$350 million in support to struggling small businesses.

To put that in context, in the Wollongong local government area there are nearly 16,000 businesses. They are not evenly distributed throughout the local government area, but if we were to assume that a third of them are in the Wollongong electorate we would be disappointed to find that only around 200 of them were able to share in the benefits of the first round of the \$10,000 grants in the small business stimulus package. When I asked some questions about it I found that 216 businesses in the Wollongong local government area had received grants of up to \$10,000 when the funding was announced—for a total of only around \$2 million in support to eligible small businesses. Why is that the case? Because the eligibility criteria were so narrow that many businesses could not share in it. Doubling down on that, when it was rebadged and a further \$3,000 was provided to businesses to start up again, many of them did not know about it. Again, I hope that this bill does a whole lot better in extending its benefits to businesses in the Wollongong area.

I said earlier that we would seek to make some amendments to the bill in the other place, particularly around the rent-to-buy scheme and how it can be improved. We have come up with some simple measures because we think that it should go further. In the current environment the construction stimulus should be enhanced to make sure that as many people and businesses as possible can benefit from it. I hope the Government seriously considers our suggestions, be it by legislative amendment or in the regulatory structures that underpin the bill, because we think additional construction activity should be aimed towards the delivery of social and affordable housing.

Wollongong has a great demand for social and affordable housing because it is one of the least affordable cities for rental properties not only in New South Wales but also in the country. The demand to move to Wollongong, which I welcome, is so strong that it is pushing people out of the market because they cannot find an affordable place in which to stay. That is why we encourage the Government to think about how it can extend this measure to affordable and social housing. I have not touched on this before, but the Government can also add



to the scheme by extending it beyond new builds and getting into the market itself. It could engage in construction and maintenance activities to get more people into social and affordable housing, which it should have been doing for a long time.

I also encourage the Government and local government to have a good look at the proposals that have been put forward in some bills to make sure that they are taking full advantage and using as many New South Wales products and services as is possible. The labour aspect is good: using trades from New South Wales is fantastic because it gets money into the economy. We should also look to use materials from New South Wales in the new builds. That could come in the form of softwood timber for framing construction or steel frames and products made of locally produced steel for roofing such as Colorbond. Why is that? Because for every \$1 million of steel bought from New South Wales around \$1.87 million is added to our economy, and that supports 16 full-time equivalent employees. Largely, they are employees in Wollongong.

Wollongong has missed out on many of the stimulus measures that have been introduced. It is the third biggest city in the State and yet in the 49 projects that the Government has fast-tracked under the COVID arrangements Wollongong has received none. There has been nothing in the Illawarra. That is a great disappointment to me. But we can make sure that other measures have flow-on and spillover effects into the Illawarra economy by using local steel products. We can ensure that some of the stimulus measures spill over into regional economies that are recovering from bushfires and droughts by using our fine timber products made from wood that has been sustainably harvested in New South Wales. I encourage the Government and approval bodies to make sure that not only is this construction-based stimulus measure well founded but also that it extends into social and affordable housing. I hope those bodies also take the opportunity to look towards products and services from New South Wales and ensure that they are incorporated. It is only when we maximise the benefit and employment multiplier of every dollar spent as a result of these stimulus measures that we will reduce unemployment and deliver the jobs that so many people are desperately looking for.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (16:12:32):** I support the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. I thank the Treasurer for bringing it to the House. The bill seeks to amend legislation to provide increased transfer duty concessions for first homebuyers to further support housing affordability and housing construction during a time when the pandemic has had substantial impacts on the economy and the citizens of New South Wales. The bill will make further amendments to provide land tax reductions, surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax exemptions for eligible build-to-rent properties. This will work to reduce the tax discrepancies that currently exist between build-to-rent and build-to-sell properties. Additionally, the bill will exempt certain Commonwealth Government funded retention bonuses for aged-care workers from payroll tax, which will directly remove a discouragement for employers to apply for and give those payments to employees.

The bill complements the State's current recovery plan in response to COVID-19. As well as focusing on protecting the health and wellbeing of the community, the New South Wales Government is also committed to supporting the economy by ensuring that jobs are kept through businesses staying in business. The bill endeavours to keep the most vulnerable members of our community, our older citizens, safe and protected through aiding the Federal Government's aged-care worker retention bonus. It will also stimulate the creation of jobs and assist in driving economic recovery through directed support for the residential construction sector. The bill assures that taxes will not obstruct quality care for the older members of our community, or the recovery of the State's economy. It comes at a crucial time as it is well understood that the pandemic has had significant effects on Australia and on New South Wales communities.

A second wave of outbreaks in Victoria also raises uncertainty regarding the economic impact it may have. Therefore, the introduction of this bill is timely and complements the New South Wales Government's commitment to ensuring the economic recovery of the State. The economic impact of COVID-19 has put thousands of businesses in New South Wales under immense financial strain and has also left thousands of New South Wales citizens out of a job. One sector that has been hit hard by the pandemic's economic impact is the construction industry, which is currently the third largest industry in the State in terms of gross value added. The recovery of the construction industry will be fundamental to New South Wales' economic recovery, as currently the sector employs about 376,000 workers in the State.

At present, 16 per cent of businesses across all sectors that are on JobKeeper are construction businesses. The Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed that almost 4 per cent of construction jobs in New South Wales were lost between March 2020 and June 2020, with construction employment anticipated to fall further over the next 12 months. In response to these complications, the bill seeks to support housing construction activity. Its measures can be readily implemented, and will support direct and indirect job growth in urban and regional areas. The proposed changes, through supporting jobs in the construction industry, will generate benefits that will transfer into the broader economy.

The bill will cut stamp duty for first homebuyers of new homes that are valued at between \$650,000 and \$1 million. Furthermore, when first home buyers purchase a new home that is valued at up to \$800,000, they will not pay stamp duty, and a concessional rate of duty will apply when purchasing a new home that is valued at between \$480,000 and \$1 million. First home buyers who have already purchased homes that are valued at below \$650,000 will continue to be exempt from stamp duty. For contracts exchanged from 1 August 2020 the increased concession will be in place for one year. For first home buyers of vacant land, stamp duty will also be cut. Land valued at up to \$400,000 will be exempt and concessions will be applied for land valued at up to \$500,000. These proposed changes will support housing affordability and housing construction as they will reduce taxes for first home buyers purchasing new homes.

Because the bill targets new homes, it will support the demand for new construction, which will essentially have a domino effect on jobs, spending and the economy. With the concession being limited to one year, it will provide effective and timely support for the construction sector. It will motivate buyers to take advantage of the concession sooner, therefore maximising the stimulus effect. Up to \$31,335 can be saved by first home buyers when they buy a new home valued at up to \$800,000. Moreover, first home buyers who purchase new homes that are valued at between \$650,000 and \$1 million will greatly benefit under the new policy.

The New South Wales Government's expansion of the first home buyer concessions in 2017 complemented the Government's commitment to improving housing affordability for New South Wales citizens. It has been successful so far, with over 93,000 first home buyers benefiting from the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme since July 2017. This has resulted in \$1.4 billion worth of savings in stamp duty collectively. The package has significantly assisted first home buyers in my electorate, with Liverpool being one of the suburbs in Sydney that has recorded the most savings in stamp duty. These new proposed measures will encourage home ownership for even more people in and around my electorate and the State.

The proposed changes also relate to rental housing. The bill works to remove obstructions to constructing build-to-rent developments that are caused by the State's taxes. Build-to-rent developments are constructed purely for the purpose of providing rental accommodation. They comprise high-density developments that create high-quality rental housing. These developments provide better security for tenants due to their ability to better accommodate long-term leases. Currently, land tax is levied on the total value of land held by any single entity, excluding the tax-free threshold for the first \$734,000 in land value. A higher rate of tax is also payable for landholding valued at over \$4,488,000. Due to this outline, it means that a higher rate of tax is paid on rental housing held in single-entity ownership and managed professionally, contrasted with equal housing held by retail investors in divided ownership. This therefore allows it to be more profitable to sell off a development as a separately owned dwelling than to try to operate a professionally managed rental development.

The proposed changes will seek to address this issue, with the introduction of a land tax reduction for build-to-rent developments. The bill introduces a 50 per cent discount to land valuations for the purpose of calculating land tax. The discount applies to new build-to-rent developments for up until 2040, ensuring a period of certainty for investors. It will directly support new construction, especially during this difficult time. To facilitate this, the reduction is available only to the build-to-rent developments that have started on or after 1 July 2020. The bill will also introduce measures to ensure integrity and to avoid this tax discount being used for avoiding tax. A developer that subdivides land within 15 years of first receiving the tax discount will be required to repay the benefit with interest. Additionally, guidelines administered by the Chief Commissioner of Taxation will provide further details of the build-to-rent land tax policy. They will contain details of what constitutes a build-to-rent development to ensure transparency and certainty.

Both elements of the bill so far are specifically created to encourage the creation of new housing for the citizens of this State. The proposed measures will significantly contribute to improving housing affordability, which will also work to support job creation in the future. As we know, COVID has posed a great threat to vulnerable members of our society—our older citizens. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that the aged-care sector is looked after and well prepared during this difficult time to support and protect those members of our community. The Federal Government announced funding to the aged-care workforce to aid that support. The Aged Care Workforce Retention Grant Opportunity Program comprises two payments from the Federal Government of up to \$800 per employee for aged-care employers. These payments will be passed on to staff. The first payment was given in July 2020 and the second will be given in September 2020.

At present in New South Wales, those payments would be considered wages and therefore would require aged-care workers to pay tax on them. Workers would be unable to reap the full benefits of these bonuses. As that is not the purpose of the grants, schedule 4 to this bill provides an exemption from payroll tax for the retention bonuses to eliminate the deterrent for aged-care employers to participate in the program. This mimics the legislation passed in the House earlier this year in relation to additional wages paid under JobKeeper. The proposed changes will do the same for aged-care workers receiving the Federal Government's bonus payment. It

will support the high quality of care given to older citizens of the community during this difficult time. It is essential that we support the aged-care sector and work to protect residents from the effects of COVID-19. The proposed changes in this bill will work to assist New South Wales get on the road to economic recovery. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:22:50):** I contribute to the debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020 specifically to address the amendments to the Payroll Tax Act 2007, which exempt from State payroll tax payments made under the Commonwealth Government's aged-care workforce retention grants program. The Labor Opposition supports the exemption of aged-care retention bonuses from payroll tax; however, notes the overall limitations of the scheme proposed by the Liberal and National parties. The COVID-19 pandemic has put our aged-care system on a knife's edge. As we know, older people are particularly susceptible to the virus, and protecting aged-care settings from infection is crucial.

In the United States and Sweden, there have been cases where up to 80 per cent of residents in aged-care settings were infected and subsequently died. Closer to home, at Anglicare Newmarch House, 19 residents lost their lives after 34 staff and 37 residents were infected. Six people died at BaptistCare Dorothy Henderson Lodge following the infection of 13 residents and five staff. Most recently, a staff member tested positive at Ashfield Baptist Homes in my electorate, which caused considerable distress to staff, residents and their families. Thankfully, just yesterday that home was given the all clear. It is important to remember that the people living in our aged-care facilities are more than just statistics. Each of them is a deeply loved and valued member of families and communities, and those we have lost to COVID-19 are deeply missed.

The deaths at Newmarch House and Dorothy Henderson Lodge are being investigated by the New South Wales Coroner and the aged care royal commission; however, the indications are that they may have been sadly avoidable. We know that ensuring priority testing, the supply of personal protective equipment [PPE], the provision of proper training and paid pandemic leave are crucial to controlling infections. The Fair Work Commission's decision to award many aged-care workers paid pandemic leave is an important one. It will mean that workers no longer have to choose between public safety and putting food on their family's table. However, to ensure its full effect, it must be expanded to include casual workers. This decision may assist to manage one of the greatest challenges we have faced in managing outbreaks in aged-care facilities: critical staff shortages.

Staff shortages have crippled facilities as more and more aged-care workers are forced to quarantine after being exposed to COVID-19. This is leading to gaps in care. Critically important functions, like facilitating communication with families, are often falling to the wayside. Aged-care providers warned the Federal and State governments for months that staff shortages put residents at risk. The chief executive officer of Anglicare, Grant Millard, has argued staff shortages hobbled the response to the outbreak at Newmarch. In an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* he described 20 April as the facility's "blackest" day:

On that day, across the 24 hours, we had only nine registered nurses when we were looking to deploy 28, which is what we have now. There were eight or nine agencies we were working through; they just couldn't supply that many people."

The Prime Minister described workforce issues as a massive challenge in managing the unfolding emergency in Victorian aged-care services, where there are currently 1,089 active coronavirus cases in more than 80 facilities. Defence Force personnel are being deployed to cover night shift duties and elective surgeries are being suspended to divert nursing and medical staff into aged-care facilities.

Truthfully, the loss of good workers from the aged-care system was a problem long before this pandemic. In October last year a national worker survey conducted by the United Workers Union and the Health Services Union revealed that 40 per cent of aged-care workers were planning to leave the sector in the next five years because of stress, being overworked and underpaid. Ironically, 75 per cent reported that one of the key reasons they were overworked was due to chronic understaffing. The chief executive officer of Aged and Community Services Australia, Patricia Sparrow, agreed urgent action is required. She said:

We can as a country decide that we are going to prioritise and resource aged care so we can have the number of staff that we want to have to deliver the care that we want to deliver and the care that communities are expecting.

The former chief executive officer of the Aged Care Guild, Matthew Richter, argued that the workforce needs to increase by over 150 per cent by 2050 if we are to "keep pace with the changing needs of senior Australians". In another study, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation noted that in the 13 years leading up to 2019, chronic understaffing saw a 400 per cent increase in "preventable deaths" in aged care, including hundreds of deaths from falls, choking and suicide. One can imagine the sigh of relief from the sector when on 20 March the Commonwealth Government announced a \$446.6 million package to support the industry, including a \$234.9 million COVID-19 "retention bonus" for aged-care workers. Initially the Government promised \$800 after tax per quarter, paid for two quarters, for direct care workers and two payments of up to \$600 after tax per quarter

for those who provide care in the home. An additional \$78.3 million also was provided to residential care to support continuity of workforce supply.

This announcement was broadly welcomed as a much-needed injection of targeted funding into the aged-care system, with the express aim of bolstering the dwindling aged-care workforce. However, the gloss was quick to come off and we can see why when we look at the detail. Firstly, peak bodies and unions joined to criticise the retention bonus as "divisive" and "unfair," given that it leaves out critical workers like those who work in the laundry, as well as cleaning or catering staff. Any resident or family of a resident in aged care knows just how important these workers are to their overall care and quality of life. Rightly, the Health Services Union pointed out that every worker in the aged-care system is on the front line of the fight against COVID-19, with cleaners and support staff critical to protecting residents against infection. Denying cleaners and other aged-care staff access to this retention bonus is an insult. During a pandemic, it seems to me rather stupid.

In May I joined with the shadow Minister for Health, Ryan Park, in writing to the Federal Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians and to the New South Wales Minister for Health and Medical Research. We asked that the bonus be expanded to include laundry, catering, cleaning and other support staff in aged care. Aged-care workers were then aghast to discover the Federal Government had backtracked on its promise that the payments would be tax free—it announced in June that their bonus payments would in fact be subject to taxation—which would leave them hundreds of dollars out of pocket. I am very pleased that the State Government is moving to exempt the retention bonus payments from payroll tax.

The Commonwealth Government has opted to pay the bonuses to aged-care providers, who will then pass on the payments as wages to employers. That is a good thing. Under the current arrangement, businesses would be liable to pay payroll tax on these amounts. The Opposition supports this amendment because it will ensure that is not the case and that no further burden is carried by aged-care operators during the pandemic. This is particularly good news for the smaller independent and not-for-profit providers across this State. This amendment also signals that the Treasurer agrees that when the Government assists workers with one-off payments such as this, the taxman should keep his hand out of their pockets. I hope that he will pick up the phone to his Federal counterpart and ask him to honour his original promise to aged-care workers and exempt the bonus from taxation.

I take this opportunity to also briefly note the other amendments contained in the legislation. Firstly, the stamp duty exemption for first home buyers for new homes valued up to \$800,000—up from \$650,000—and on vacant land worth up to \$400,000. I note that the stamp duty concession threshold will also be raised to \$1 million. This will definitely be welcome news for those seeking to purchase their new home, particularly when prices are lower than usual, and I acknowledge that the measure is designed to underpin our construction industries. While Labor does not object to the measure, I note that it is a far cry from the far-ranging reform of taxation that the Treasurer continues to talk about in the media. I appreciate that these are unprecedented times, but it strikes me that the Treasurer does not seem to get it that people are currently dipping into their savings or into their superannuation to keep food on the table and or a roof over their heads.

The Treasurer has introduced a bill that will assist new home buyers, but it does not deal with many of the other problems that are confronting families across New South Wales. I note that a number of the other measures that have been introduced have fallen well and truly short. A number of previous speakers on this side of the House have raised those deficiencies. When we look back at the pandemic, and as the economic aftershocks come through, let us say that the decisions that we have made in this place served to protect and support everyone in the community; that we stood up for the vulnerable and for the extraordinary front-line workers who put their lives and the lives of their families on the line to protect us. Let us say we got our priorities right, reimagined a better society and built a fairer economy that serves everybody. I support measures that serve to advance the interests of vulnerable people in our community, workers across the economy and, in particular, our hardworking workers in our aged-care sector.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:32:46):** It is a pleasure to speak in favour of the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020, which was brought to this House by the Treasurer, who I must commend for his excellent work in steering the State's economy through what is a very difficult time. The bill does three things. First, it temporarily increases the price threshold for the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme. Secondly, it provides for reductions in and exemptions for eligible build-to-rent properties. Thirdly, the bill provides for a payroll tax exemption for certain bonus wages that are funded by payments under the aged-care workforce retention agreed opportunity.

At first blush, the bill contains only three minor policy adjustments for State revenue. However, that is far from the situation, as these three adjustments will have an immediate and notable impact. The policy changes will provide a considerable boost to the economic activity of the State as we come to terms with the impact of the pandemic, as well as ensure that those charged with caring for some of the most vulnerable people in this State also receive the support they deserve as they discharge their important duties in their employment.

The first of the three changes contained in the bill is a temporary increase to transfer duty concessions for first home buyers, which will support housing affordability as well as housing construction at a time when the global pandemic has had significant impacts on the people and economy of New South Wales. Under the First Home Buyers Assistance scheme as provided for in the Duties Act 1997, first home buyers can receive transfer duty exemption or concession if the home or vacant land they have purchased falls under certain price thresholds. The bill amends the Duties Act 1997 to temporarily increase the price thresholds for the transfer duty exemptions and concessions as they apply to new homes and to vacant land from Saturday 1 August 2020 through to 31 July 2021.

In line with the priority of firstly stimulating the economy, the price threshold will remain the same for the purchase of existing homes. For the purchase of existing homes under \$650,000 no transfer duty is to be paid and for the purchase of existing homes between \$650,000 and \$800,000 only the concessional rate of transfer duty applies. Importantly, for the purchase of new homes by first home buyers, the transfer duty exemption threshold will increase from \$650,000 to \$800,000 and only the concessional rate of transfer duty will apply to new homes purchased for \$800,000 to \$1 million. For the purchase of land for first home buyers, the transfer duty exemption threshold will increase from \$350,000 to \$400,000 and only the concessional rate of transfer duty will apply to new homes purchased for \$400,000 to \$500,000.

The amendments contained in the bill will be welcome news to young people and families in my electorate of Seven Hills and right across greater western Sydney as well as the rest of the State. They will ensure that they have every possible incentive to build or to have built their first new home. The increased demand for new residential dwellings will be great news for the tradies, the men and women of the Seven Hills electorate who go out each and every day contributing to the building of this great State and the economy right across western Sydney and further afield. It will certainly connect with those in the building industry, making sure that their employment can remain stable as we go through these difficult times. The formulae for calculating the concessional rates of transfer duty applicable to the purchase of new homes, existing homes and vacant land by first home buyers is provided for in the bill under proposed new section 78AA.

The second of the three changes contained in the bill provides for land tax reductions, surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax exemptions for eligible build-to-rent properties. This will have the effect of reducing the existing tax discrepancies between build-to-rent and build-to-sell properties. The bill amends the Duties Act 1997, the Land Tax Act 1956 and the Land Tax Management Act 1956. These amendments will have two effects. Firstly, they will provide a land tax concession to apply until 2040, which means that the value of land on which certain build-to-rent properties are constructed is, for the purposes of assessing land tax, to be reduced by 50 per cent. Secondly, these amendments will provide for exemptions from and refunds of surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax payable in respect of land on which build-to-rent properties are situated.

Land tax is currently levied on the total value of land held by any single entity, excluding the tax-free threshold for the first \$734,000 in land value. A higher rate of tax is also payable for landholdings valued over approximately \$4.5 million. This structure means that a higher rate of tax is paid on rental housing held in single-entity ownership and managed professionally compared to identical housing held by retail investors in divided ownership. This makes it more profitable to sell off a development as separately owned dwellings, or off the plan, than to attempt to operate a professionally managed rental development. The land tax reduction provided for in the bill for build-to-rent developments aims to address this particular issue while including safeguards to prevent potential avenues for tax avoidance.

The bill provides a land tax reduction on eligible build-to-rent properties by allowing a 50 per cent reduction, for the purposes of calculating land tax payable, of the land value until 2040. To encourage new development, the reduction is available only where construction of the build-to-rent property commenced on or after 1 July 2020. The safeguards provided for in the bill will be stated in guidelines. The guidelines are expected to include provisions around compliance with relevant planning and development standards, minimum lease conditions that must be offered to tenants, a minimum number of units and the ownership and management of the build-to-rent property. This not about providing a loophole for the ownership structure and sale purpose of new residential property; in fact, it is about closing one. It is about ensuring that there are no disincentives to build new build-to-rent residential properties, without creating any incentives to create a false ownership structure merely to benefit from the provisions contained in the bill.

The bill also prevents build-to-rent properties that obtain the land tax reduction from being subdivided within the first 15 years. This will prevent developers from avoiding tax by claiming to operate a build-to-rent property for a short time and then seeking to sell off the separate units. If a build-to-rent property is subdivided within 15 years the owner will be liable to repay the amount of the land tax reduction obtained, with interest payable on the amount. Of course, it is right to include this provision in the bill. Members on this side of the House want to see building and construction and an increased supply of housing, not just the opening of loopholes.

Furthermore, the bill provides for exemptions from surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax for build-to-rent properties that are eligible for the 50 per cent land tax reduction until 2040. This broadly brings the existing exemptions available for builders of new build-to-sell developments and makes them available to builders of build-to-rent developments. An owner can claim this exemption either as an exemption or a refund.

Similar to the land tax reduction, the bill contains provisions that will prevent property developers from picking and switching, in terms of the ownership structure of their new property developments, and encourages them to pick and stick for a period of 15 years. Specifically the bill will prevent build-to-rent properties that receive surcharge exemptions from being subdivided within the first 15 years and therefore minimising their land tax liability. If a build-to-rent property is subdivided within the 15 years, there is a liability for a surcharge refund and exemption obtained to the date of sale or settlement, with interest to apply and payable on the amount as well. Again, this is the correct way to go. It is clear from the bill that the Government is attempting to enact appropriate economic incentives to ensure our State's economy recovers from the pandemic and the masked recession, without providing any perverse incentives for property developers to get a tax break. [*Extension of time*]

The third and final of the three changes contained in the bill is to amend the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to provide that certain wages paid or payable to employees that are funded by the Commonwealth program known as the Aged Care Workforce Retention Grant opportunity are to be exempt from payroll tax. At the moment the Commonwealth funds two aged-care retention bonus payments for eligible workers providing services in residential and home care settings. The funding will be provided under the Aged Care Workforce Retention Grant opportunity to aged-care employers to pass on to these workers as wages—one for last month, July 2020, and one in September 2020. Without an exemption, the aged-care employer would need to pay payroll tax on the bonuses paid to those workers.

The bill provides an exemption from payroll tax for these payments so as not to dis-incentivise aged-care employers from participating in the program. A similar exemption was provided for additional wages paid in the JobKeeper scheme. In doing so, it will support the provision of the highest quality care for our older citizens to protect them from COVID-19. However, it also signals our State's full support of workers who are tirelessly out there in the aged-care sector every single day. It is right that we are ensuring that those who are caring for the most vulnerable groups in our State do not themselves get left behind in the pandemic. Finally, I congratulate the Treasurer, his team and his office for the preparation, carriage and oversight of this bill. As I said, although this bill appears to make seemingly minor changes to State revenue, it will provide a considerable boost to our State's economy at a time when we need it most. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:44:52):** On behalf of The Greens, I speak in debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendments (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. At the outset I make the point that the bill, despite its title, does not really respond to the immediate housing needs of our community as a result of the current pandemic. The Government has taken and could take many actions to respond to those housing needs, particularly the needs of renters, including putting an end to unfair no-grounds evictions, increasing protections in standards for renters as well as ensuring that the people of our State are not slugged with massive rental arrears debt. The bill has no specific provisions that mandate security of tenure or affordability or that set out standards for amenity or other protections for tenants that we would want to see to incentivise construction of rental accommodation with a view to addressing rental insecurity and rental stress faced by so many people in our State during this particularly intense and precarious time.

As members have heard, this bill will make various amendments to certain State legislation by providing tax concessions under the First Home Buyers Assistance scheme for certain build-to-rent properties and tax exemptions for other payments made under the Commonwealth's Aged Care Workforce Retention Payment opportunity program. In relation to schedule 4 to the bill, which is the aged-care element of this bill, the amendment is necessary to ensure that the Federal Government's program can be effective by removing the disincentive for employers to pass on the Commonwealth grant to workers. The Greens support that element of the bill. In relation to first home owners, The Greens are looking very closely at the increased concessions with a view to proposing amendments in the upper House to expand the scheme to include upgrades of existing properties to meet sustainability and energy efficiency standards. Combined with retrofitting old buildings to make them more environmentally sustainable, the inclusion of upgrades will be another way to create jobs and will reduce the cost of utilities in the process.

The build-to-rent elements of the bill will provide a 50 per cent discount on land valuations for the purpose of calculating land tax until 2040 for newly constructed build-to-rent property developments; provide an exemption for a surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax payable for foreign investors in build-to-rent property developments; provide guidelines that set out further details regarding build-to-rent land tax policy including requirements around minimum leasing conditions; and ensure that if a developer takes advantage of the discount they are required to pay back any discount with interest if they subdivide the land within 15 years of

receiving the discount. While The Greens support the Government's stated rationale for developing build-to-rent properties as a positive option that will offer diversity and options for renters involved in long-term rental agreements and will contribute to affordability, as the Treasurer stated in his second reading speech, we strongly believe that the bill as it stands does not deliver on those outcomes.

The bill is being framed as a measure to improve regional affordability and security of tenancy to help people at a time of financial insecurity due to COVID-19. However, it will in fact be a gift for which corporate investors and property developers have been lobbying since long before COVID-19 emerged. This proposal is a disingenuous attempt to sell a money-for-nothing scheme for big overseas investors as a relief for tenants who are feeling the economic pressure of COVID-19. But the fact that this bill has been presented without measures for delivering to renters affordability, security of tenure or amenity gives the Government's game away. The real reason for this bill is to facilitate a build-to-rent sector and a new asset class sold through managed investment funds. In other words, it is a scheme to benefit investors rather than tenants.

Furthermore, due to low demand in Australia for this financial product, The Greens understand that around 75 per cent of investors are likely to be foreign owned. That means a majority of profits from these development projects will not help our local economy and will not provide more security to renters in our State but will provide a lot of additional profit and benefits to entities across the globe. The Greens will move amendments to ensure that significant tax discounts that are being offered to incentivise developers actually result in developments that offer renters longer term housing security and affordability. I acknowledge up-front the work of the Tenants' Union of New South Wales on this bill and in relation to other recent critical changes and for standing up to protect the rights of renters. Due to the pandemic, the people of New South Wales are facing unparalleled levels of unemployment and the largest economic downturn since the Depression.

The removal of restrictions on evictions on 15 October will result in an increase in evictions due to the inability of tenants to pay high rents or rental arrears. However, this already is happening: A July article in *The Guardian* reported an immediate increase in the number of cases being filed in the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal after lifting the 60-day stop on evictions. In the last two weeks of June, 784 applications were filed compared to 554 in the previous two weeks. Meanwhile recent analysis of Rental Bond Board data shows a significant increase in the number of landlords taking back a full bond at the end of a tenancy. Damages rarely take up a full bond, so this indicates there likely has been an increase in claims for rental arrears or break fees during the COVID period when the tenants were compelled to end a tenancy when the rent was unaffordable due to their loss of income, despite negotiations with landlords.

It is clear that there is a chronic shortage of social and affordable housing in New South Wales. Calls for massive investment in public and social housing developments are now coming from all across the housing sector in our economy. We certainly need to deliver on public and social housing. But affordability and insecurity in the private rental market also is a serious issue. Even though there are reports of rents falling, so too the amount that people earn is falling. A May 2020 report by Compass Housing Services shows that the levels of rental stress pre-COVID indicated an urgent need for housing reform. One of the key findings of the report is that there is a large and growing number of people who cannot afford to buy or who do not qualify for social housing. They have no option but to cut back on essentials so that they can manage to pay rents that are in excess of what they can afford. Is that where build-to-rent comes in? Will it actually deliver?

When former Minister Pru Goward announced the first build-to-rent project in New South Wales, the aim was to deliver social, affordable and private housing on Elizabeth Street in Redfern in the Newtown electorate. Under the nation's first mixed tenure build-to-rent model, we were told that renters and social housing tenants would be among the first to benefit from this development. We heard Ms Goward say that build-to-rent was the newest initiative in a nation needing a social and affordable house building program. However, it emerged that the plan will deliver only 30 per cent social housing and 10 per cent affordable housing from a total of 351 apartments. I note that there is no dedicated Aboriginal housing in that mix.

Obviously any increase in social and affordable housing is welcome but the scale of the housing crisis we are facing means that more needs to be done. Despite the bill being a new iteration of the build-to-rent proposal we see no reference to affordable housing or social housing in the mix. What we see instead are tax breaks for investors and developers. At what point will we see an end to a housing policy that seeks to offer more and more tax breaks for developers, landlords and owners as opposed to actually delivering on affordable homes for people. Given all the concerns I have expressed, I turn now to outline the parts of the bill that The Greens will seek to amend in the upper House. [*Extension of time*]

Given all of these concerns, it is essential that significant amendments are made to this bill if it is to be a housing response. My Greens colleague Abigail Boyd and I, in consultation with the sector, have been working on moving amendments in this regard. I note the Tenants' Union shares many of our concerns, particularly around rents being affordable and that tenants need to have security and protections in the context of this build-to-rent

scheme. I urge the Treasurer to consider and support The Greens' amendments to deliver on this COVID-19 housing response. While we may not agree on the bigger picture prospect of a build-to-rent scheme, it is essential that if we are going to proceed with it that we provide protections and supports to tenants so it delivers on the intention of the bill, as outlined by the Treasurer. The first amendment relates to issues around the idea of high-quality builds and the minimum standards being set for those builds to build resilience into our housing to deal with the climate crisis and extreme weather, to reduce utilities costs and to increase the quality of life and wellbeing for those in the building.

This also needs to include consideration of amenity. I thank John Engler and his team at Shelter NSW for speaking to us about this bill. They are very keen to see amenity considered as a key requirement, including consideration of the location, not building a massive high-density high-rise apartment next to a busy highway and making sure there is enough sunlight, as well as sustainability measures. We will be moving amendments around minimum lease conditions. The need to include affordability as part of the build-to-rent projects is an essential element to move forward and offer these developments in a way that will meet the needs of renters in New South Wales.

Affordability must be based on a tenant's income, not on 75 per cent of market rental rate, or rents will still be beyond the affordable reach of many. As Shelter NSW noted, these build-to-rent units, as new dwellings, will automatically have a higher market rent, which is yet another reason why using this formula is a concern and rent should be calculated instead on income. If the aim is to provide a higher security of tenure then there must be amendments, changes and clarification around security of tenure and assistance for people who need to break longer leases set out in the bill. We need to have options provided for different lengths of leases. The reasons for a minimum scale of building to qualify for the build-to-rent properties is unclear. Unless there is a very good reason that has not yet been articulated then The Greens will be moving amendments to open this up for others, besides big investors and developers, to access this incentive if they wish to do so.

It seems equitable to do so, but also a better way to ensure delivery on the aim, which is to provide more housing options. Tenant participation is crucial to ensure this type of housing works for people. Community housing providers have tenants' representatives as do public housing providers. Owners and renters living in strata buildings also have mechanisms to participate in decisions made about the building they live in. The same is needed for people who will be living in build-to-rent properties. The Greens believe there is scope for these amendments in the bill. I ask the Treasurer in his reply to respond with how this can be managed in a single building where to rent is the only form of tenure in that building. Tenant participation improves the way communities work together, especially living in high-density areas, and this is an area of improvement that is not addressed in the bill. It must be addressed to enable this reality.

The final area I wish to address is schedule 3 [2] 9E (3). The Greens will seek to amend the word "guidelines" to "regulations". Members may note that it currently refers to guidelines rather than regulations in relation to many provisions referring to minimum conditions for building standards and other measures. It is crucial that there is accountability when looking to outsource the provision of housing to private developers. That process must provide security and support through accountability. The bill states there is no requirement for the guidelines to be made publicly available. It is crucial to have transparency and oversight of the guidelines and regulations beyond the passage of this bill.

The Greens will be moving to amend the guidelines to ensure that they are set out as regulations. The aim must be to ensure that everyone in New South Wales has a place to call home. We must do all we can to offer protections for renters and not just handouts to developers. It is crucial to recognise that there are many ways to solve the housing crisis in this State, but it must be driven first and foremost by the provision of safe, secure and affordable accommodation. That must be the driving priority in our decision-making.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:58:44):** I speak to the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. I will focus on the changes to the Duties Act 1997 and the amendment to increase duty concessions that are available under the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme that will be entered into during the period from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. The Government has a strong record in supporting first-time buyers. In 2017 the Government responded to the challenge of housing affordability for first home buyers and increased first-time buyer's support by increasing the maximum value of properties eligible for tax concessions from \$650,000 to \$800,000.

It expanded the tax concessions to apply to existing properties as well as new properties. Since July 2017 more than 93,000 first home buyers have taken advantage of the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme. Collectively, they have saved more than \$1.4 billion in stamp duty. On top of this more than \$250 million has been provided through First Home Owner grants during the same period. This bill will support housing construction and housing affordability by further reducing taxes on the purchase of new homes by first home buyers. Stamp duty will be cut for first home buyers of new homes valued between \$650,000 and \$1 million.



Purchases by first home buyers of both new and existing homes valued below \$650,000 will continue to be exempt from duty. This increased concession will be in place for one year beginning from 1 August 2020. The bill will also cut stamp duty for first home buyers of vacant land with exemptions applying for land valued up to \$400,000 and concessions applying for land valued up to \$500,000. This increases the current support, which provides exemption for land value up to \$350,000 and concessions for land valued up to \$450,000.

**Debate interrupted.**

*Public Interest Debate*

**COVID-19**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services)**  
**(17:00:57):** I move:

That this House acknowledges the efforts of business, the community, and the social services sector and their staff to remain COVID safe.

I move this motion today to recognise the efforts of business, and social and community services across the State to be able to continue operating in a COVID safe way. As a local member I understand that 53,000 businesses have registered as COVID safe and 227,000 COVID safety plans have been downloaded. These efforts are so important to keeping us all safe and healthy and saving lives during this difficult time. I know that so many businesses have had to close during this time and we think of those who have invested so much and given up so much during this extraordinary pandemic. This week is also national Homelessness Week. I particularly want to thank all of those who have reached out and spoken out about the importance of this issue. I acknowledge the incredible work that social and community services are doing to continue delivering their essential services to the most vulnerable people in our community during this challenging time.

More than 2,750 families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have been helped to achieve safe and stable housing despite COVID-19. This is thanks to the Government's work to prevent and respond to homelessness during the pandemic by working in close partnership with the social and community services sector, which have been on the front line of this pandemic. As the local MP for Kiama I particularly acknowledge and thank services in my area including St Vincent de Paul, Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra, the Illawarra Southern Youth and Family Services, CareSouth, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Lighthouse Community Care, Wollongong Emergency Family Housing, Shoalhaven Women's Resource Group and Shoalhaven Youth Accommodation Limited.

The Government has worked hard to keep our clients and front-line workers safe during this very challenging time. It is not something that the Government has done on its own—far from it. There has been a tremendous amount of collaboration and commitment from so many working together across the sector. I acknowledge the specialist homelessness services, community housing providers, the Department of Communities and Justice staff, and the NSW Land and Housing Corporation, all of which have rapidly adapted their approach to delivering services safely. I also acknowledge the sector peak organisations that have worked hard to shape and implement the sector response to COVID-19.

Initially I met with each of these groups weekly and then as required throughout the COVID crisis to ensure an ongoing and regular dialogue, to share updates from Government and to work through any challenges together. It is a bipartisan group and includes many from across the divide. I acknowledge Steve Kinman from the Association of Child Welfare Agencies, representatives from the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation [AbSec], and the inimitable Narelle Clay from the Australian Services Union. She is a close friend whom I know is admired by those on both sides of this House. I also acknowledge Elena Katrakis from Carers NSW, Gemma Rygate from the Centre for Volunteering, Mark Degotardi from the Community Housing Industry Association, Magnus Linder from Churches Housing, Delia Donovan and Clare Gardiner from Domestic Violence NSW, Julie Hourigan Ruse from FAMS, and Katherine McKernan from Homelessness NSW. I particularly highlight Katherine's efforts to enlist more government investment for homelessness services. She has been an absolute champion.

I also mention Can Yasmut from the Local Community Services Association, Renée Carter from My Forever Family NSW and Joanna Quilty from the NSW Council of Social Service. She is a constant source of advice to me and someone whose work and service I deeply appreciate. I also mention Karen Stace from National Disability Services, Thomas Chailloux from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Greg Corrigan from the Public Service Association of NSW, John Engler from Shelter NSW, Leo Patterson Ross from the Tenants' Union of New South Wales, Freya Conomos from Youth Action and Pam Barker from Yfoundations. I also acknowledge shadow Minister the Hon. Penny Sharpe and shadow Minister Ryan Park. Penny, or her office, have been on these calls as well and I appreciate the opportunity to engage with her. I am sure that all colleagues would agree that

this is not a time for politics; it is a time to work hard and get results. That is exactly what we have been committed to doing.

Homeless people, especially rough sleepers, are already some of the most vulnerable people in society. The Government is working with its partner organisations towards the Premier's Priority target to halve street sleeping by 2025. Without a safe and stable home, rough sleepers cannot practise social distancing or self-isolate and have limited opportunities to practise good hygiene. We know that many of these people also have complex health issues that make them more susceptible to illness, particularly upper respiratory issues. That is why getting rough sleepers off the street, into temporary accommodation and then into permanent housing has been such a strong focus for me, the Government and the community sector. Far from scaling back our front-line services, we have rapidly expanded our assertive outreach across the State, all while staying COVID safe. From March 2020, after initially starting in Sydney, Newcastle and Tweed, we moved into 36 local government areas. More than 1,100 assertive outreach patrols were conducted across 53 local government areas by July this year. This reflects the strong passion and commitment to reducing street sleeping across our State from the partnerships between our local housing and homelessness services, health services and community groups.

The Government has invested more than \$70 million in new and expanded initiatives to prevent and respond to homelessness during COVID-19. The commitment of \$34 million on 27 March to boost temporary accommodation and private rental subsidies has meant that more than 1,200 rough sleepers have been rapidly placed into temporary accommodation across New South Wales. This was supplemented by an additional \$10 million to support charities, including providing food relief through Foodbank and OzHarvest. Additional funding was also provided to Neami National to continue to support people placed in temporary accommodation and to help them secure appropriate housing. On 8 June the Government announced \$36 million for the Together Home project to provide housing and wraparound support to those who need it. I thank the Premier, the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier, the Government and all members of the House for their support of these programs.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:08:04):** I thank the Minister for his speech and his acknowledgement of our side of the House working together with the Government. However, I will raise some issues. We have repeatedly asked the Government to do a number of things. We join in acknowledging the efforts of businesses, the community and the social services sector to remain COVID safe. COVID-19 has taken an extraordinary toll on our community. Members of NSW Labor extend our condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives. We also extend our profound and enduring gratitude to our State's highly skilled and dedicated healthcare workers and community sector workers. We thank them for their exemplary work.

On 26 March the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, wrote to Premier Gladys Berejiklian and raised a range of issues. We acknowledge that some inroads have been made, but we have continuously called on the Government for a community sector industry fund to ensure continuity of service delivery, to secure jobs and to ramp-up services for people in need. We have called on the Government to provide guaranteed paid leave for all workers in an industry that involves a significant amount of insecure work. However, the Government has not done anything. We are calling on the Minister to make a commitment. Despite repeated calls to free up workers by relaxing the strict key performance indicators [KPIs] and reporting obligations during the pandemic and allowing them to meet the community's needs, the Government has done nothing. There are many other issues with respect to personal protective equipment and the facilitating of applications for thousands of people to receive devices. We are calling on the Government to do more. Fortunately, the New South Wales community sector is full of experienced, dedicated, hardworking people who serve the needs of their community. As the member for Canterbury, I am eternally grateful to them, particularly as we have a very large multicultural community.

Preventing a higher death toll in New South Wales has come at an extraordinary but necessary cost. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods. There are travel restrictions and things are very difficult for families. These measures are necessary to keep us safe from COVID-19, but they will work only if everyone complies. That is why we have been calling for very strict measures—in particular, our leader has called for the mandating of masks—but everybody has to do the right thing. My concern over the past few weeks has been that the Government has dropped the ball with respect to compliance and enforcement. After many calls from the Opposition the enforcement of COVID safety measures in New South Wales has fallen primarily on the NSW Police Force, assisted by other public agencies. We have seen that ramp up over the past week.

Remaining COVID safe presents a particular challenge for the social services sector. Many organisations have been confronted with a triple threat. Firstly, they have had to change the way that they provide services in order to reduce transmission risk and keep staff and clients safe. Secondly, they have experienced an increase in demand for services. Thirdly, they have seen their revenue dry up as difficult times mean individuals and corporations must cut back on charitable donations. Despite the challenges, dedicated and hardworking staff have done an exemplary job. However, while people throughout the community have been working hard, the

Government needs to do more. In particular, it needs to make masks mandatory on public transport as well as in supermarkets, shopping centres and places of worship. I encourage all hospitality premises to mandate that their staff wear masks.

The Government also needs to engage better with multicultural communities. One-third of the population of our State was born overseas, and on the most recent census around 300,000 people reported that they do not speak English at all. COVID-safe information can change hour to hour and day to day, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are missing out on vital information. That is why Jihad Dib, Jo Haylen and our leader Jodi McKay have been acting as strong advocates every day, championing the need for a coordinated response from the Government. Service NSW, the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service and Multicultural NSW all need to work together to ensure that local familiar multicultural leaders are advocating strongly on behalf of the community and pushing the COVID-safe health message. I urge the Government to increase COVID-safe assistance to hospitality businesses.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:13:14):** I thank the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services for bringing this motion to the House that acknowledges the efforts of businesses, the community and the social services sector and its staff to remain COVID safe. The social services sector is certainly one that we really need to think about and focus on, particularly given the vulnerable state that many people might find themselves in when interacting with those service providers. Stress and a feeling of helplessness often occurs anyway, and it certainly heightens during a pandemic. But there are some real positives to come out of this. Lots of support is being provided in different ways and some real shining lights need to be highlighted, such as the Orana Support Service. That organisation provides a broad range of support for adults and families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, including those experiencing domestic violence. Tina Reynolds and her staff do an outstanding job in very difficult circumstances.

Given, as mentioned by the Minister, that it is national Homelessness Week, it is a good time to shine a light on an organisation that is doing things a little differently and achieving some outstanding results. One of the exciting innovations that Tina launched when she took over the organisation was the Meals on the Main initiative. It is fairly simple. Essentially it is a free weekly community barbecue aimed at providing a meal every Wednesday night to those who might otherwise struggle to find affordable and reasonably nutritious food. It started in October of last year and, due to its popularity, it grew so much that it was forced to move from its original location, which was Macquarie Street, the main street—hence Meals on the Main—to a nearby park. It received plenty of support and food from local businesses, which was important and helped make it feel like a real community effort.

Sadly, things have had to change a bit in that space. It was basically a buffet where people turned up, lined up, got a feed, grabbed a bit of whatever they wanted and moved on. In times like this that is not really possible but where there is a will there is a way. Individual food packages are now being prepared every day to make sure that no-one is going hungry. People also have the ability to pop in during the day and grab a pie or a sausage roll and a drink and sit in a COVID-safe environment to eat. The organisation has adapted very quickly from what it was used to dealing with, which was offering a buffet-style service to people en masse. I was lucky enough to serve a couple of times, including at Christmas. It is a great experience to interact with people who you know are doing it tough but who appreciate every single thing that is provided to them. It is great work by Orana Support Service to change the way it normally operates and be COVID safe at this time.

It is through the great work of organisations like Orana Support Service and Compass Housing Services that we are continuing to prevent homelessness and support people into stable homes. One of the stories that has been shared with me recently is of Mandla. He is an Australian resident, though originally from South Africa. He was staying with his wife in Orange; however, sadly the marriage broke down. Mandla left the house with only his suitcase. He became homeless. He started wandering the streets and looking for a place to stay. He slept in the park and basically lived out of his suitcase. Thankfully he was referred to the Orana Support Service for support and, through Orana, found crisis accommodation. He was offered a bed in Sturt House, the men's refuge. Mandla is an enrolled nurse and needed to renew his registration. Orana, thankfully, again was able to help with that and put together a resume so that he could start applying for jobs. He is now working with LiveBetter Community Services in Dubbo and has also been assisted into a private residence. It is a fantastic result and the sort of outcome we hope and look for in every case. These outcomes are only possible because of our hardworking community services sector.

The Minister has spent time with me and met with many non-government organisations on my patch, including the Orana Support Service. Others include Marathon Health, Compass Housing Services and Mission Australia. They are just some of the amazing community service providers in the region that have continued to deliver their essential services during COVID-19 while keeping their staff and clients safe. These organisations have been the backbone of support for the most vulnerable members of our community during this pandemic. They provide services for homelessness, as I have talked about, housing support of all kinds, support to vulnerable

children and families and support for people with a disability. They are integral service providers. I say well done to everyone in that field and I thank them for everything they do.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (17:18:21):** I speak this evening to support my colleagues and particularly the member for Kiama, and Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, for bringing to the House this public interest debate on the need to remain COVID safe. Make no bones about it: At the turn of the clock hands after midnight at the end of December 2019, not anyone in this Chamber or anyone in this State could have predicted what we are going through right now. No-one would ever have predicted that we were to go through months of uncertainty in our electorates—families, businesses, community groups, organisations and the entire community—or go into lockdown. New South Wales has come out of lockdown but we are at a point where we could return to where we were a few months ago.

I thank the Minister for bringing this debate forward. I will make my comments as a member representing a place that has had its fair share of scares when it comes to COVID-19. Local schools with significant populations have had to shut as well as establishments. A cluster emerged related to businesses in south-west Sydney and in my area, the Fairfield local government area, as a result of the COVID-19 infection. Many social service groups are doing a great job. Their *modus operandi*, the way in which they deliver services, has changed. Volunteering groups have struggled to keep up the number of volunteers on their rosters because many of the volunteers are elderly and have not been able to support their chosen community group.

It is an understatement to say that businesses in the area have struggled. They are doing the best they can. In the area that I represent many of the owners of small businesses come from non-English speaking backgrounds. As the member for Canterbury eloquently put it, in this ever-changing pattern of information, many businesses are struggling first of all to provide services to the local community but also to make ends meet. That is on top of the fact that they now have to be COVID safe. Many of them are doing a great job. However, these businesses and organisations require more support from Government. It cannot simply be left to the NSW Police Force, who have done a great job, or the Australian Defence Force, to enforce COVID restrictions. There has to be a whole-of-government approach so that no-one is left behind and ultimately no-one loses their life as a result of contracting the coronavirus. I implore the Government that if we are talking about the wearing of masks, then let us get serious and start providing them in the community. People have struggled enough financially. Let's get the masks out there.

Members will have heard it said over the last few weeks and months that we are all in this together. And we are all in this together. We are all anxious. I do not think there is anyone in this Chamber who is not suffering from a little bit of anxiety, tension and stress as a result of the services that we provide to our community because we do not know what is around the corner. Let us do this right and get the message out there. As the member for Holsworthy knows, the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre along with CORE Community Services came together in a Zoom meeting in support of the communities in our areas to basically say that communities need more messaging. Not everyone has access to social media or the internet. We need a concerted approach to, as they say, flood the market with messaging, whether it is through radio or TV. Let us not take the approach of, "It is on social media or the internet." We need to do more than that. We need to get back to the basic message so that people are safe. Once again I thank the Minister and all the contributors to the debate. I thank the member for Dubbo for his contribution as well. Let's do this together.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:23:34):** I speak in support of the motion moved by the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and, importantly, the member for Kiama. I know that the Minister is aware of the impacts COVID has had on my local community and many other local communities right across the State and that he and his department have been hard at work helping people. In May the Minister and I did a virtual electorate visit where we spoke to the Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre, Turbans 4 Australia and the Shepherd Centre about the ways that COVID has impacted the work they do and how they are responding to and coping with the challenges of these very strange times. I am grateful that my electorate was able to cope so well and responded so early.

As many in the House would be aware we have recently been hit by the Casula cluster, which has caused significant impact to many. I am proud of how many of our locals quickly followed the NSW Health advice. They came together to get tested and self-isolated, they practised good hand hygiene and used hand sanitiser, and importantly they have all been practising physical distancing of 1.5 metres. I am happy to see that so many have followed the NSW Health advice issued over the weekend to also wear masks when in high-risk public settings, such as indoors where physical distancing is hard to maintain or there is a higher risk of transmission, and during attendance at places of worship as well. These measures have been and continue to be paramount in ensuring that transmission of this disease is limited.

This week is National Homelessness Week, as the Minister mentioned, and in the context of COVID-19 it is an opportunity to recognise the incredible work that housing and homelessness services are doing to make sure

that vulnerable people can continue to access the help they need. The fact that more than 2,750 individuals and families, including 230 former rough sleepers, have been helped into safe and stable housing during the pandemic reflects the way that the sector and its staff have responded and adapted to the challenges of COVID-19. That also includes 850 households who are now renting homes in the private market, including young people helped with Rent Choice Youth, and women and children escaping domestic and family violence who have been supported through Rent Choice Start Safely.

I also welcome the announcement of the \$36 million Together Home project, which is being delivered in south-west Sydney by Argyle Community Housing, Evolve Housing and the Hume Community Housing Association. Together Home uses a respected Housing First model to transition people from temporary accommodation into secure housing. It works and it provides access to services people need to maintain their tenancy, improve their health and wellbeing and move towards training and employment. It builds on our efforts to support people who have been sleeping rough during COVID-19 and whose risk was elevated due to existing medical conditions that the Minister outlined, such as the limited ability to self-isolate or practise social distancing.

I commend the New South Wales Government for its investment of over \$70 million to prevent and respond to homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on the new Together Home project. This will help to achieve the Premier's priority to halve street homelessness in New South Wales by 2025—an important goal. We know that small businesses are the foundation of our economy and I am glad to see the Government has provided support for them during this time, including a grant to help workplaces to become more COVID safe, or to meet the cost of safely reopening or upscaling operations. This funding can be used on fit-out changes such as plastic barriers at checkouts, staff training and counselling, which is important, cleaning products and additional equipment necessary to comply with social distancing or other public health measures.

I have seen it work in my electorate and I congratulate The Shop Cafe in Hammondville. Most members who visit me get to meet Kelly and Fish and get a great cup of coffee. They have put in measures to help us all stay COVID safe. They saw me after the Crossroads outbreak and said, "Should we go back to doing takeaway only now?" It means that they missed out on income, but they helped keep our community safe and I thank them for going the extra mile to do that. As the member for Fairfield mentioned, we had a fabulous Zoom meeting with the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre. We learnt that translation is important in different ways to reach out to our communities. I thank NSW Health and Multicultural NSW for joining in on the meeting. They were very helpful. I again thank the Minister for highlighting the importance of these services during this particularly difficult time.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:28:41):** I also thank the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and member for Kiama for bringing this public interest debate to the House. I thank him also for the work he has done to support homeless and vulnerable people across New South Wales during these challenging times. He has probably had a tough job convincing his party to open up the purse strings to deliver to those deserving people in our community who need this help.

*[Interjection]*

I am just a crystal ball. The far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 in the past months have required an extraordinary sacrifice—not just by the member for Kiama. It has required ingenuity on the part of front-line workers, businesses, educators and all those working in the community sector, as well as families and individuals. I especially acknowledge our older Australians and thank them all. There have been countless challenges, but the silver lining for me—and I am sure for many others—has been to see the incredible adaptability and skill shown across local businesses, together with the willingness of our communities to support each other through these difficult months. I share the story of a local mum who letterboxed elderly neighbours to ensure they had enough groceries and someone to talk to each day, even if it was just from the front yard. I have had a beautiful retiree—other people have helped her—make it her mission to check on over thousands of over 70s in our community. Between her efforts and our own we were able to call almost 5,000 people to connect them to local supermarkets, pharmacies, services, online shopping and just to have a chat. I thank those over 70s who are resilient in the community and have their plans in place to look after themselves.

Many local businesses went out of their way to say thank you to our front-line workers in many different shapes and forms. They helped out in their homes, delivered cupcakes, flowers—you name it. I know that our front-line workers are being acknowledged and looked after. I also acknowledge our deaf community, who are disadvantaged even more by not being able to participate, as we all move towards wearing masks to protect our community. I urge them to keep smiling with their eyes. They are still a very important part of our community. It is incredibly important to acknowledge in this debate that a fundamental aspect of being COVID safe is the link between mental health and our long-term wellbeing. The future potential mental health and mental wealth of our nation and communities must be a priority among competing demands in this pandemic. We know that job security is paramount in achieving this.

Long-term forecasts for employment are hardly reflecting the sunshine and rainbows that the Federal Government has spoken of when it discussed the bounce back of our economy. Our young Australians at the start of their careers are expected to bear the brunt of high unemployment numbers. Young people on the coast and across the State need to have hope for their futures on the horizon during and beyond COVID. This will require a much greater investment by the Liberal Government in vocational education to develop those jobs for the future, and an intentional investment in young people and all people's cognitive and emotional wellbeing. One of Australia's top mental health experts, University of Sydney Professor Ian Hickey, said that the Liberal Government's decision to not support universities with its pandemic measures is unfathomable because they and TAFE are crucial social and skills support in times of great uncertainty.

Professor Hickey says that social dislocation caused by the pandemic is terrible for mental health. Worse still is the chronic stress of an unknown future. I call on the Berejiklian Government to take action and support the tertiary education sector across New South Wales. Over the past weeks we have seen that our fabulous world-leading universities have had to make massive staff cuts. The long-term consequence of a downturn in Australia's higher education sector cannot be understated. How many great minds will be lost from our academic institutions? Now, more than ever, we need intelligent, adaptable and well-educated people to help ensure a successful path to Australia's future in a post COVID world.

I thank everyone who has made adjustments and will continue to make adjustments to be COVID safe across New South Wales. I thank all our community organisations for their creative and enthusiastic work to keep our community safe. I highlight what the member for Canterbury said, and I also fear for our older communities. Today I spoke to the Minister for Multiculturalism's office asking for more support to get information out there, even to the Central Coast, which does not have a great number of people from diverse communities living in isolation. We have to make sure that the message is clear. I continue to encourage everyone to shop local. I send my greatest condolences to all those who have lost family members. We have a great responsibility ahead of us to keep our community safe.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:33:52):** I strongly support the motion and thank the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and member for Kiama for bringing it to the House. It is important that the House thanks and acknowledges the work of people who are on the front line of keeping our State COVID safe and ensuring there is compliance.

As members would appreciate, the Sydney electorate is highly and uniquely susceptible to the health and economic impacts of this pandemic. The inner city is home to populations of people who are homeless and to large public housing estates. Most residents live in densely populated apartments in close proximity to each other, sharing small spaces such as lifts and corridors. Inner-city residents have less private open space and rely more on the public domain for recreation. The inner-city's retail and food and beverage hubs depend on people from other areas working in the city. The late-night trading, hospitality and creative arts sectors are based in the city and those sectors are especially impacted by the pandemic.

I am grateful for the swift and effective actions of the New South Wales Government, the City of Sydney, businesses, large and small, the social services sector and the community as a whole for their strong focus on compliance and for supporting each other through this unprecedented time. As it is Homelessness Week, I highlight the work that is being done to support some of the most vulnerable people in the community. Early in the pandemic a task force was created—including the Department of Communities and Justice staff, City of Sydney staff and homelessness service providers—to rapidly support people in need. We saw excellent collaboration and increased funding for emergency or temporary accommodation. New wraparound services were introduced, long-term accommodation was provided through social or community housing providers and the health needs of rough sleepers were addressed. As the Minister has outlined, we have seen record spending to save and change lives.

Given the interconnected nature of Sydney's rough sleeper population, we can only imagine the tragedy that would have occurred had there been a COVID-19 outbreak among the city's homeless population. Instead, the exact opposite occurred, with many rough sleepers having life-changing experiences, and being provided with safe and supported housing—many of them for the first time. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for his leadership on this front. I also acknowledge the Lord Mayor of Sydney and the City of Sydney for their strong support—including financial support—as well as the many service providers who played key roles.

I highlight the work of the Kirketon Road Centre in Darlinghurst, which provided COVID-19 testing services specifically to rough sleepers and other vulnerable groups. During the recent growth of the cluster in Potts Point the centre expanded its services to the wider community and to additional sites. In addition, I thank the Wayside Chapel, Lou's Place, Sydney Streetlevel Mission, Rough Edges, HopeStreet and so many other providers that have excelled in a challenging time. I also include The Haymarket Foundation for providing medical and case work support to rough sleepers and the Holdsworth Community centre for the support it has provided.

The New South Wales Parliament and Sydney Town Hall—two historic institutions that usually host high-profile events—have used their catering facilities and services to provide food relief to those who need it. Working with OzHarvest and 60 community organisations, as well as its own Meals on Wheels program, the City of Sydney has been delivering over 20,000 meals and 1,500 staples bags a week to people in need. I thank my many constituents for looking after each other during this time despite the stress so many in the community are experiencing. For many, that has occurred online.

I acknowledge Facebook community groups such as Darlo Darlings, Potts Pointers and Pymont Locals for sharing information and spare supplies, and helping each other get on with life during this very abnormal time. These platforms are sharing information about where you can get hard-to-find or important supplies such as cloth masks. During the initial lockdown, many people were contributing to their neighbourhood through projects such as Buy Now Shop Later, where residents could buy ahead of time to support local businesses or pay for an extra meal or drink so that the business could stay open, pay staff and provide services to someone in need. A number of community pantries have been established.

These social platforms have been critical in getting out up-to-date information about community transmission, which in the past week in Potts Point has been so important. I am grateful to Potts Pointers and Darlo Darlings for joining me in getting messages out about the need for the local community to get tested, isolate, distance, wear a mask, and wash hands. These actions would have saved lives, jobs, and businesses. There is still more work to do to ensure we are a COVID-safe community, but I am seriously encouraged by the work of the Government, the City of Sydney, the business sector, the social services sector, and the community at large for responding so sensibly and seriously to this pandemic. I commend the motion.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (17:39:01):** In reply: I thank all colleagues and friends throughout the House. Seven different members from seven very different electorates made outstanding contributions. I thank the member for Canterbury for her comments. I acknowledge her remarks on compliance; that is certainly one of the challenges being faced by the front line. I simply say that it is important that we continue to follow health advice. I think that has been one of the reasons that our State has been so successful, and it is important we continue to maintain our focus on following the expert advice. I appreciate that parties will call for things, but that focus needs to be respected. But I thank the member for her comments.

I thank the member for Dubbo for, particularly, his reference to the Orana Support Service and Tina Reynolds, who does an exceptional job. I have seen the hard work of the member for Dubbo in his electorate; it is absolutely inspiring. I was so pleased to hear my good friend the member for Fairfield mention the changing nature of support services, how challenging it has been and how people have coped. He was the first member in this debate to mention volunteers and how important they have been. I know that the State's 2.1 million volunteers hear him and appreciate his comments, and I thank him.

It was wonderful to be with my wonderful friend the member for Holsworthy and Parliamentary Secretary on those Zoom visits and to see how hard she works. I know that she and her office have been under a lot of pressure, particularly with the Casula cluster. Speaking to her on the phone that day, I heard that calm sense of strength that is so resonant in her. I know that she was providing important leadership to her community at that critical time. I thank my good mate the member for Gosford for mentioning the Deaf community, in particular—I know that will be greatly appreciated—and for the comment about the letterboxer. I thought that was a wonderful story. I highlight for members the [emergency.volunteer.org.au](https://emergency.volunteer.org.au) website that we established to connect organisations with volunteers. That was a great example of work that was inspirational. Many people went out and did what they could. That was a wonderful story to share with the House during these times. I hope that if COVID does one thing, it brings neighbours and communities closer together.

I thank my wonderful friend the member for Sydney for his comments about the impacts in a place like Sydney—particularly the housing and health impacts in inner-city areas and, of course, the challenges that we face with compliance. There are not too many members in this House who are more passionate about homelessness and housing than is the member for Sydney. He has been an absolute champion and advocate, more so than anyone else that I have seen in this place at this time. The very first visit I made as a Minister was to Lou's Place and the Wayside Chapel with the member for Sydney. I was really pleased to make those acquaintances and to see his good work. I join with him in acknowledging the City of Sydney and particularly its Lord Mayor for her great work, and also all the councils around the State. I thank all members for their participation in the debate tonight. I know we have a long way to go, but I thank everyone in this House, including the Premier, for their wonderful leadership.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (COVID-19 HOUSING RESPONSE) BILL 2020****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (17:42:53):** By targeting new homes, the measures in the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020 will support demand for new construction, which will have flow-on impacts on jobs, spending and the economy more broadly. That will be complemented by the measures to support the build-to-rent sector to ensure that construction work continues to flow. By limiting the concession to one year, the bill will provide timely support for the construction industry. The one-year limit will maximise the stimulus effect by encouraging buyers to take advantage of the concession sooner. On the border, getting buyers into their first homes requires a meeting of the right economic stimulus measures with the existence of an active and substantial construction industry. First homes in the Albury and border region are not expensive by capital city measures. That has a fair bit to do with the strength of border construction businesses, which over the decades have flourished thanks to inexpensive land prices and a flow of first home buyers.

It is timely to provide some information to the House on the home building industry along the border with Victoria. This bill is a response to the COVID crisis and is tied particularly to measures to support the home building industry. The impact of COVID, combined with the border crossing restrictions, makes for a highly challenging environment. As members would know, construction workers can obtain border crossing permits from the New South Wales Government, but the movement from Victoria is signalling tighter restrictions on that side of the Murray River. If squeezed too hard to the point of making construction unviable in the cross-border region, it would put the viability of thousands of small businesses and the jobs of thousands of residents under threat. Approximately one month into the border closure, the construction industry has remained in action and builders have committed themselves to complying with social distancing, rigorous hygiene practices and the requirements of Federal, New South Wales and Victorian safety regulators in order to work in a COVID-safe manner.

Master Builders Australia and the New South Wales and Victorian Master Builders Association have played a valuable role in the education of its members and providing a COVID Safe checklist to its members and the industry in the region to reinforce the message about the vital importance of continuing to work in a COVID-safe manner. In my meetings with border builders and member organisations, it has been strongly put to me that restrictions have the potential to blunt the positive impact that government stimulus measures such as the home builder grants are having in the cross-border community. I take a moment to thank people like Steven O'Donoghue, Ross Mitchell and others who have been working hard to support the construction industry on the border.

In speaking on the impact of restrictions, I note that this is day two of the wider, severe Victorian lockdown restrictions and details of its support package for businesses are already known in the border community. This is day 28 of the New South Wales border restrictions and the same cannot be said for this State. For all the faults Victoria arguably has made during the COVID crisis, it has been quick to let border businesses know financial help is coming. I have confidence from my discussions with the New South Wales Government that support will be provided to border businesses impacted so heavily by border closure, permits and business disruption. But part of me also asks, "Why not today?" For some days I have been speaking and meeting with employers in Albury and with Ministers in Sydney on this very matter. Please let us address this concern of so many businesses and make it happen. The need is now. The time is now.

Between July 2019 and May 2020 \$305.9 million in building and construction activity occurred in the Albury-Wodonga region alone in the residential building sector of the industry, without taking into account commercial and civil construction. Over the same period the number of building approvals for new houses in Albury was 306 and apartments 45; in Wodonga 260 houses and four apartments—a combined total of 615 new dwellings. On the issue of employment, we are looking at approximately 8 per cent of the border workforce or about 7,400 jobs in small builder and tradie businesses on the New South Wales side alone.

Today we welcome the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020 for both its compassionate response to the needs of first home buyers and for its support of our tradies and small builder businesses. This will bring money directly into our regional towns and cities, stimulating and supporting local economies and jobs. I encourage all members to bear in mind the way border restrictions interact with today's incentives so that we may ensure the local border home construction industry survives COVID-19 and border restrictions and builds these new homes, particularly for those having the confidence to make the bold step into home ownership, with all the fiscal and personal stability this can bring to our State. I support the bill.



**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:48:26):** I speak to the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2019. This bill is being presented by the Treasurer as a stimulus measure. Labor notes from the outset that the Government has done more work to undermine the economy of this State by slashing public sector wages than on the economic stimulus measures, which seem to be an afterthought. We should not be surprised because this is the same Government that decided it would buy vacant apartments from property developers as an economic stimulus measure during the COVID-19 pandemic. That was not a stimulus measure. It was a bailout for big business and it did not create a single new job.

The bill before us seeks to achieve three outcomes: to increase the threshold on first home buyer's access to financial assistance so that they might buy or build new homes; to create new build-to-rent properties in New South Wales; and to provide payroll tax exemptions on federally funded grants payments to the aged-care sector. Labor notes the first and third elements of the bill and I trust my colleagues will speak to them in due course. As Labor's shadow Minister for Building Reform and Property, my attention and focus is on the build-to-rent proposal which is enacted by this bill.

Labor supports housing affordability measures that will make it easier for workers and their families to secure long-term housing near their jobs. Housing is a basic human right. It should not be out of reach for working-class people and we cannot have a situation where essential workers must spend 15 or 20 hours a week on motorways or on public transport just to reach their place of work. Renters should be able to call their house or apartment a home. The only way this can be done is if they have security of tenure in their home and know that they are there for the long term.

The build-to-rent measure in this bill does a number of things including provide a 50 per cent discount to land valuations for the purposes of calculating land tax until 2040 for newly constructed build-to-rent developments; provide an exemption from surcharge purchases duty and surcharge land tax payable for foreign investors for build-to-rent developments; provide for guidelines that will set out further details regarding build-to-rent land tax policy, including requirements around minimum leasing conditions; and ensure that if a developer takes advantage of the discount they are required to pay back any discount with interest if they subdivide the land within 15 years of receiving the discount.

Build-to-rent should be a positive development in the sector by providing diversity of housing options for renters but we caution that the ambition of better tenant experience and affordability are not necessarily guaranteed by this bill. The measures outlined earlier occur entirely on the developer side of the ledger with intangible benefits hopefully flowing through to the tenants. Labor would like to see accountability and clear guidelines for how affordability and a better tenant experience can be delivered through this development model than would so far be on offer from the Government. These can be done through guidelines or regulations and, if required, by legislation in due course through the Better Regulation portfolio.

Labor will seek amendments to this bill which place a requirement for concessional land tax treatment on these new build-to-rent properties to be contingent upon providing a minimum amount of residential floor space for social and affordable housing and requiring that a minimum percentage of labour force hours on construction be undertaken by nominated groups such as apprenticeships, trainees, the long-term unemployed and workers requiring reskilling as well as Aboriginal jobseekers and other people who experience barriers to employment. After all, when we are using public money there should be a public good and a social outcome.

I reiterate that these are very weak and timid economic stimulus measures in the bill that depend on the private sector to do all of the heavy lifting in this health and economic crisis. Labor has been calling on the Government for many months to take the lead on a construction and procurement boom across the State to keep people working. Labor wants the Government to build and upgrade public schools and public hospitals. In many examples Labor simply wants the Government to fulfil its election promises to build and upgrade schools and hospitals. Government money spent on Government projects which prioritise local workers is the only way to quickly and effectively stimulate the New South Wales economy. This bill will not create that stimulated environment. The bill depends on the interests and goodwill of the private sector to deliver anything in the way of economic stimulus.

However, the Government's track record with similar measures is very poor. For example, we know that the land tax relief for landlords and tenants has delivered only \$2.7 million from the \$440 million allocation. I repeat that to members: The land tax relief for landlords and tenants has delivered only \$2.7 million of the \$440 million allocated. We know that the Small Business Grant scheme needed to be rebadged and extended after \$350 million was denied to struggling small businesses. We also know that only half of eligible New South Wales businesses were provided payroll tax relief—almost 20,000 businesses from more than 50,000.

The track record of the Treasurer here is very poor. It is most definitely not the time to be a scrooge. What his track record lays bare is that in all too many instances the money set aside for various relief measures is purely

theoretical. It is less real than Monopoly. The money might be budgeted for, but the real counting going on is being done on it never being delivered. It is all just an accounting trick. In a context where the Treasurer is slashing people's wages in the middle of a recession he should be held to account for his weasel words around economic stimulus. He should be held to account for using the cover of COVID to deliver windfall gains to a handful of property developers instead of providing real support and the real economic stimulus that is needed. He should be held to account for rigging these schemes with so much red tape that most businesses are either not eligible or not interested in participating. Labor supports the measures in the bill. We just wish it was being delivered by a Treasurer and a Government that could be trusted to actually deliver the outcomes that they have promised.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:57:11):** I contribute to debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020, which amends four Acts and seeks to do three things. It is presented as a stimulus measure in response to the economic downturn due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The bill will amend the Duties Act 1997 to increase duty concessions available under the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme for certain agreements and transfers that are entered into during the period 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. It amends the Duties Act, the Land Tax Act 1956 and the Land Tax Management Act 1956 to provide a land tax concession to apply until 2040, which is that, for the purposes of assessing land tax, the land value on which certain build-to-rent properties are constructed is to be reduced by 50 per cent.

Secondly, it provides for exemptions from the refunds of surcharge purchaser duty and surcharge land tax payable in respect of land on which the build-to-rent properties are situated. Thirdly, the bill amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to provide that certain wages paid or payable to employees who are funded by the Commonwealth program known as the Aged Care Workforce Retention Grant opportunity are to be exempt from payroll tax. I will confine my comments to the provisions directed at build-to-rent housing. When we talk about build-to-rent housing we are essentially talking about the private sector building properties—usually high-rise, high-density buildings, such as flats and units—specifically for rental purposes, where one owner or a group of owners will own the whole complex, renting it out to the general public. In this context it differs from the general and traditional provision of private rental property in the country, where a small landlord owning maybe one or two units will rent them out to tenants.

It is a fragmented market at the moment. It is a market characterised by the flipping of properties for capital gain, which disrupts the intention of providing long-term rental to people in the private rental market. It is characterised by both little new investment in new rental properties and the buying and selling of existing homes and the churning of tenants to obtain rental gain and capital gain. It is accepted wisdom that the tax regime is the thing that hinders build to rent on a larger scale by the private sector. In this regard, the Treasurer noted:

One of the barriers to build-to-rent development is the current structure of land tax in New South Wales. To mitigate that tax discrepancy the bill—in an Australian first—introduces a 50 per cent discount to land valuations for the purposes of calculating land tax. The discount applies to new build-to-rent developments until 2040. By limiting the benefit to new developments the measure will help support new construction during this difficult time. Providing those benefits until 2040 ensures a period of certainty for investors, with the greatest benefit flowing to those who start building sooner.

As far as it goes, this is a good thing. I think the bill will produce more rental housing, and that of itself is a public good. However, we should be doing more. I note a *Sydney Morning Herald* article of 7 June 2020 by Caitlin Fitzsimmons entitled '*Make it your own*': *NSW push to boost build-to-rent housing*. It refers to some of the current build-to-rent projects out there that are near completion. One of those projects is Mirvac's recently completed build-to-rent project at Sydney Olympic Park, one of Australia's first. The article states:

Adam Hirst, general manager of build to rent at Mirvac, said tenants at the new "Liv Indigo"—

That is the name of the development—

at Olympic Park would start moving in this month and could stay as long as they like if they met the conditions of their lease. The agreements give tenants the right to renew on a rolling one-year basis.

On the face of it, the build-to-rent model as proposed by Mirvac would appear to provide a high degree of security of tenure for renters. However, the article goes on:

Liv Indigo has 315 apartments ranging from studio to four bedrooms. The starting price for a two-bedroom apartment is \$615 a week—higher than the typical rent for a two-bedder in the area estimated by SQM Research.

It is certainly not affordable rental. That is the weakness of the bill. We could do more, especially under the current economic downturn, when people are already in rental stress in this State due to the private sector dominance of the rental market, which has produced an unfair outcome for most people seeking to rent a property because either they choose to do so or cannot afford to buy a property. While I do not oppose the incentives that are contained in the bill and the aim of increasing the amount of rental units available in the market, we could do more in terms of providing more affordable housing. If the private sector is to be given incentives that take from the public purse it should also be providing a social good. The bill could contain provisions that required the private sector to

allocate a certain percentage of those build-to-rent units to the affordable market or social housing market. That is something that is quite within the power of this House to do.

My other concern relates to some parts of the bill that relate to the definition of a build-to-rent property. Schedule 3 item [2] seeks to add new section 9E to the Land Tax Management Act 1956 and refers to build-to-rent properties being defined by guidelines. It states that the guidelines may include provisions with respect to the circumstances in which a building is taken to be a build-to-rent property, including the planning or development standards, the minimum lease conditions, the minimum scale and the nature of the ownership, et cetera. I cannot recall the Treasurer saying how the guidelines will be developed and there is no stipulation for their development in the bill, but the guidelines are to be approved by the Treasurer. In the past couple of days the Treasurer has not inspired confidence in his ability to approve anything concerning the State.

Why does the bill provide for guidelines? Why not have regulations that can be brought before the House and disallowed if they prove to be inappropriate? That is a weakness in the bill commented on today by the Legislation Review Committee. I encourage the Treasurer to respond to that point during his reply and to address this question: Why is there no minimum standard of affordable housing when a build-to-rent concession is granted to the private sector? Although this bill represents a step in the right direction it falls well short of what this House could do to provide more secure and affordable housing for the people of New South Wales. The bill is directed at the interests of investors, not at the interests of the people of New South Wales who need an affordable and secure home.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (18:06:19):** My comments on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020 will be brief. I often have conversations with many community leaders, parents and grandparents about one thing that keeps them awake at night, which is: How will our kids and our grandchildren get into the housing market? When my parents came to Australia over 50 years ago the great Australian dream was to own a home. In our household it was seared into our brains that we had to work hard, save a deposit and buy a house. It was thorough conditioning because owning one's home is so important. In the early seventies, when my mother was a factory worker and my father was a painter, they were able to buy a home and were able to pay for it in under seven years. Currently and unfortunately that huge feat is unable to be equalled by general income earners.

I turn now to discuss the ability of essential service workers to obtain a home. How do police officers, public servants, teachers or nurses manage to acquire a home in metropolitan Sydney? The answer is that they do not live in metropolitan Sydney. Instead they commute from either the Central Coast, the Illawarra or greater western Sydney. If the areas in which they work are up to 10 kilometres away from where they live, they have to undertake a long daily commute, which makes life very difficult for their families, particularly if they have young children. Meanwhile they save up to acquire a home in metropolitan Sydney. It is unfortunate that the Government really has done nothing in the housing affordability space. Between 2012 and 2015 I was the shadow Minister for housing and Labor was very successful in establishing an inquiry into housing affordability and the supply of public housing. It was an extensive inquiry that received hundreds of submissions over a long period. The committee made more than 40 good practical recommendations.

NSW Labor held a housing affordability and homelessness forum and we continue to hold roundtable consultations, which have become very difficult during the pandemic. All sectors of the housing industry should not be competing against each other. The supply of housing is holistic and the Government should adopt a coordinated housing strategy to provide key worker housing, community housing, social housing, affordable housing, and housing that meets the needs of growing families, newly married couples and single parents. When I was the shadow Minister in 2011 I was devastated that there was so little statistical information about a new phenomenon—the number of women who were about to retire and who were not fortunate enough to have a lot of superannuation.

Some of those older women were homeless and were forced to live in remote communities, in a car or in a shed, or were couch surfing. Many of those women had worked all their lives, but because they had experienced different life challenges they had very little superannuation. They experienced great difficulty. The Government has earned an F for fail in the provision of affordable key worker accommodation and social housing. It is quite incredible that the Government promotes its efforts in social housing whereas it has provided too many concessions to private enterprise. The Government should have worked very hard with the community housing sector.

The report of the upper House points out that there are many not-for-profit charitable organisations that have accumulated land, but they do not have capital to become builders. The inquiry's report encouraged the State Government to create partnerships with charitable organisations and the Federal Government. Federal Labor did some incredible work in the affordable and public housing space when in government under the guidance of then Minister Plibersek. That resulted in an increase in activity to provide social housing over a short period. The

Government should bear in mind that a lot of people who occupy public or social housing properties are being supported to reach the next stage—home ownership—which currently is the missing stage.

I believe the Government has done absolutely nothing to provide affordable, social and public housing. Instead of patting itself on the back, it should be doing more. While the bill does not go far enough, it is good that the Government is providing stamp duty relief for first home buyers, which will provide some support to the housing construction industry. I reiterate the message of our Premier and our Labor leader about compliance and enforcement during the pandemic. Everyone should be doing the right thing to ensure that our housing construction industry is sustained and that workers are able to continue with their jobs. I have pleaded with the health Minister and the Treasurer to fund more construction and social infrastructure. With the member for Summer Hill and the member for Lakemba I am conducting a campaign to upgrade the Canterbury Hospital. While there is ample mediocre development in our communities, social infrastructure has not kept pace with increases in population. I urge the Government to allocate funds for housing construction and social infrastructure in the next State budget.

I acknowledge that the uncertain economic situation we face means that people will be reluctant for some time to make the commitment to buy a new home. I hear from local businesses that those who like to get into the market, and those who are being supported by mum and dad or grandparents, are all finding it very uncertain. We call on the Government to provide that certainty. I acknowledge that the Government will not tax payments that the Commonwealth has made to retain aged-care workers. In recent weeks in Victoria the importance of aged-care workers has been highlighted. I acknowledge the exemplary job that they are all doing. It is vital that highly skilled and dedicated workers in this sector are retained to keep vulnerable people safe.

This bill does not go far enough. There is unprecedented hardship and uncertainty. As the member for Canterbury I know—and the member for Lakemba and others in our region know—that our multicultural communities with high numbers of refugees and a high number of underemployed people will suffer. They are suffering now. They are not able to access JobKeeper, JobSeeker or other Government benefits. They rely on charity. Some sections of our community are very poor and they are suffering. This pandemic will make their lives worse. I urge the Government to accept the amendments that Labor puts forward and to do more in the area of housing affordability.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (18:16:26):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020. At the outset I thank all those in my electorate who have worked hard, suffered and sacrificed to help us get through this pandemic. That includes the emergency services staff, the health staff, and our aged-care workers and front-line workers, as well as those in hospitality, retail and essential services. I acknowledge the tremendous efforts of business owners who have basically adapted to stay operating and keeping staff in jobs—they have reinvented themselves with new ways of doing business. I acknowledge the impact the border closure has had on my community. I thank those such as the sporting clubs that have acted to reduce travel to New South Wales from the border region.

Finally, I thank all of those who are continuing to try to do the right thing by keeping their distance, washing their hands, staying home when sick and not travelling unnecessarily. I support the bill and I acknowledge the Government has made and is making efforts to support and stimulate the economy through these extremely difficult times. First of all, there is no doubt that the housing sector is worried about its future. For example, in Wagga Wagga pretty much from the start of the pandemic planning for new facilities and homes came to a halt. That means that there will be fewer buildings built at the end of this year and a real downturn. It has been reported that the housing industry in Wagga Wagga has suffered a \$19 million downturn in the financial year just gone. We have a strong building industry in Wagga Wagga and it has never been more important than in our quest to reach a population of 100,000. I welcome the Government's initiative in this regard. I thank Opposition members for their constructive input.

I note the comments made by the member for Keira regarding social housing. I believe there is a real opportunity. In Wagga Wagga the number of houses available for social housing has declined in recent years at the same time as waiting lists remain high. Investment in social housing, built with the right planning and support services—that is absolutely critical; it is not just a question of putting up houses, it is a question of supporting the residents of those houses with the right programs and the right design—represents a chance to improve the social fabric of our society and stimulate the economy at the same time. It is part of a vision of growth of a safe supported community. In this respect I note the recent announcement by the Minister for Housing of an expression of interest for the redevelopment of one of our suburbs in Wagga Wagga, Tolland, and I look forward to its progress. It is an important initiative.

I have said I support the bill and I acknowledge the efforts of the Government to stimulate the economy, but I point out an area that I believe has been overlooked and that is the sole traders, the mum-and-dad, couple-run businesses that have been ineligible for the New South Wales Government small business grants. I have spoken

previously about Peter and Jill Lees who run the Junction Motor Inn, Wagga Wagga. It is a mum-and-dad business. There was clearly a big downturn in their income. They were not eligible for the small business grant, which would have made a huge difference to them. They do most of the cleaning, administration and labour themselves. They are the heart and soul of what small business looks like.

Unfortunately, they were both listed as business owners and the combined working hours of their staff was not sufficient to qualify them for support. I wrote asking the Government to reconsider, but that had no luck. I acknowledge the intent of the bill and the intent of the stimulus. I believe a lot could be done for these small businesses. I ask the Government to address the needs of those who have fallen through the cracks in the system. In summary, I support the bill. I look to the Government. We must work together through this pandemic. We look to the Government for the right sort of support, not just a handout, but a stimulus to the economy. The Government has provided that with this bill and I support the bill.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (18:20:49):** I speak to the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (COVID-19 Housing Response) Bill 2020, which takes in three key areas: the First Home Buyer Assistance grants, the payroll exemption on aged-care providers and the rent-to-build scheme. Any assistance to first home buyers and aged-care providers is always welcome. I am saddened that the bill fails to address the \$2,500 landlord assistance for COVID financially affected tenants, as recommended by the other place. Many tenants are facing challenges right now and \$2,500 would have helped many of those tenants who are financially challenged by reduced hours or loss of work.

The Government has also failed to support many businesses. The member for Wagga Wagga spoke of businesses that had fallen through the cracks. I add that in my electorate there is a business that undertakes cleaning of tourist boats, which does not satisfy the criteria for a small business grant. The Government has a list of businesses that are entitled to apply and as it is a cleaning business it does not qualify. It is straightaway knocked out because most tourist boat operators are not presently operating and therefore do not require cleaning services. It is a specialised business. Their income has dropped by 80 per cent to 90 per cent. It does not look like it will recover. At the same time it is not eligible for the stimulus package.

I will focus on the build-to-rent accommodation. Other speakers in this House have addressed some of the concerns with the bill. The member for Holsworthy said it would be high-quality development. The Treasurer talked about the better quality rental properties. The planning Minister was quoted in the media saying that the Government was developing new a planning policy that includes development standards for build-to-rent projects including design guidance on context, character, sustainability and amenity. That all sounds good. If we look at the current medium-density developments we see in the new growth areas—and I acknowledge the member for Riverstone is in the Chamber—classically all the developments fit into the rules for planning excellence.

Ben Pike in the *Sunday Telegraph* described two large developments in the Riverstone electorate. They are next door to each other in the suburb of Schofield. One is done by Landcom, a new estate in the City of Blacktown, and has cut concrete by more than 20 per cent, increased the grassed public space areas, apartments and terrace houses. There are 143 homes with oversize verges and threefold increased tree canopy. It is a wonderful new style development that we could all be proud of when it is completed. Right next door to it—in complete contrast but satisfying the planning requirements—is a development by The Bathla Group that Ben Pike from the *Telegraph* said resembled a row of Monopoly-style houses, with a dearth of trees. He said that there were no usable verges, no public space and the driveways are indistinguishable from the road and children are forced to play on the street because the gardens are so small. Many planners actually claim that it is the worst developed property in New South Wales. Both developments satisfy the planning requirements, but if we do not have the right rules around the build-to-rent scheme we will face many problems.

A build-to-rent property refers to a residential development in which all the units are retained by the developer and leased out rather than sold. Many members believe these developments will allow for greater rental affordability, but evidence from around the world with regard to existing build-to-rent developments suggests that rents will be more expensive than traditional renting arrangements. UK commercial property research company JLL found that on average the premiums on build-to-rent accommodation were 11 per cent higher than were properties in the local rental market. Based on the latest Domain figures, that would be like paying \$588 a week for a typical unit in Sydney as opposed to the current \$530. Build-to-rent properties could actually be more expensive. Developers market build-to-rent accommodation as having the wonderful advantages of gyms, common laundries, communal lounges, coffee shops and cinema rooms, but they overlook the living space.

Many of these properties only have about 20 to 30 square metres of liveable space, and that includes the kitchen, bedroom and everything else. Dare I say that many parliamentarians probably have larger lounge rooms than an entire build-to-rent unit. A person or family who is living in tiny personal accommodation may have access to the wonderful facilities that I mentioned, but a large proportion of the examples of this type of accommodation across Asia, Europe and the United States is less than 40 square metres. I find it ironic that this

style of living is being considered in a COVID bill. If a lockdown is ordered, build-to-rent accommodation cannot allow people to mass congregate in the very features that attract people to live in these facilities. The gyms, communal lounges and cinemas will all have to be shut during an outbreak, so a family of three or four will be stuck living in a 20-square metre apartment and not even able to use the additional facilities.

While I hear that the planning policy is to be developed, I have concerns about the actual delivery of projects like Bathla and Landcom, which I spoke about earlier. We also need to look at how this fits in with the current system. The planning figures show that in 2008 the Blacktown City Council was congratulated and told that it would have a population of 505,000 people by 2036. That was reviewed in 2014 because new areas were released. The projection was revised up to 522,000. The latest estimate as of last year is that by 2036 we will have 569,550 and by 2041 we will have 612,150 people living in the city of Blacktown. That is 20 per cent more than the State of Tasmania. In the meantime, Parramatta will have 438,350 people by 2041 and Liverpool will have 441,450. That is almost 1.5 million people in three local government areas, and it is all before we consider build-to-rent housing. We need to understand how this will fit in with the population growth of those areas.

If the Treasurer had decided to restrict build-to-rent housing to Hunters Hill, I would be really happy. There are currently 14,650 people living there and by 2036 there will be only 14,050. I am sure they would be happy to have 300 units built in Hunters Hill to increase their population. At the same time, the people of Hunters Hill recently had the lifts at their wharf fully upgraded. Compare that to Doonside station where we cannot get lifts even though more than the entire population of Hunters Hill use that station per week.

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** We are working on that, don't you worry.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** I know, but I thought I would throw it in. The Treasurer is working hard towards it, but more people use Doonside station than live in Hunters Hill, which got their state-of-the-art lifts. [*Extension of time*]

What is the State Government going to do about liveability? If we are going to have massive developments of new build-to-rent complexes, most of which are fairly large in size, we have to make sure that we have the right investment for sustainable livability in those areas. In the Riverstone electorate new schools were built but the planning was not done properly, so on day one some of the students had to move into demountables. The Garfield Road grade separation is rated as a fail by the transport department. There are long traffic delays along Windsor Road and Richmond Road. A couple of years ago when I was Mayor of Blacktown City Council some proponents of build-to-rent schemes approached me wanting to build in the very areas that are already inundated with traffic and people.

If we are going to put in these large schemes it is going to blow the population out. The developer of the new Elara housing estate is having to fund a bus service for its residents. The transport department did not even put a bus service into an area that already had about 5,000 people living in it. The Government built a shiny new hospital in Blacktown but failed to deliver any additional staff. We need to make sure that the Government provides the right infrastructure—we cannot have it dillydallying around. We need to make sure that the growth areas of Blacktown, Liverpool and Parramatta where 1.5 million people live—Blacktown having the lion's share at 650,000—have the right planning instruments to support build-to-rent accommodation in their local area.

Build-to-rent accommodation is driven by the market for the market. It is just another so-called solution that continues to allocate housing on the basis of wealth rather than social need. Earlier the member for Swansea spoke about the need for better tenancy experience and the delivery of quality developments for build-to-rent complexes. If we are spending public money there needs to be a public good and a social outcome. The Labor Party supports this bill, but we need to wait for the planning policy amendments to ensure that they reflect the Treasurer's goals. Finally, it would be nice for either the transport Minister or our wonderful Treasurer in his reply to announce a Doonside station upgrade.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (18:33:21):** In reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Keira, Vacluse, Wollongong, Holsworthy, Summer Hill, Seven Hills, Newtown, Albury, Swansea, The Entrance, Canterbury, Wagga Wagga and Blacktown, who have all spoken in this debate. This bill represents further efforts to safeguard the health of the community and support the economy through its biggest challenge in a century. It will support our efforts to keep the most vulnerable members of our community safe by facilitating the Commonwealth Government's aged-care retention bonus, and it will stimulate jobs and help to drive our economic recovery with targeted support for the residential construction sector. The bill achieves those outcomes by reducing the tax burden on the construction of new homes and on employers in the aged-care sector.

This bill will support housing construction and housing affordability by further reducing taxes on the purchase of new homes by first home buyers. Stamp duty will be cut for first home buyers of new homes valued

between \$650,000 and \$1 million. A first home buyer will pay no stamp duty on their purchase of a new home valued at up to \$800,000 and a concessional rate of duty when purchasing a new home valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million. Other first home buyers will continue to receive the existing duty exemption when purchasing existing homes valued up to \$650,000 and concessional duty for purchases of existing homes valued up to \$800,000. Stamp duty will also be cut for first home buyers of vacant land, with exemptions applying for land valued up to \$400,000 and concessions applying for land valued up to \$500,000. This increases the current support which provides an exemption for land valued up to \$350,000 and concessions for land valued up to \$450,000.

The increased concession will be in place for one year, beginning 1 August 2020, to provide timely support for the construction industry. First home buyers of new properties valued between \$650,000 and \$1 million will be better off under this policy. By targeting new homes, this measure will support demand for new construction which will have flow-on effects on jobs, spending and the economy more broadly. The new measures build on the Government's efforts to help more people in New South Wales get the keys to their very first home. But even more importantly in our present circumstances, the new tax cut will support jobs in a sector that is vital to our economy at a time when too many people in New South Wales find themselves out of work.

The second change that this bill will implement relates to rental housing. The bill will take an important step in removing barriers presented by State taxes to the construction of build-to-rent developments. Build-to-rent developments, which are built with the intention of creating high-quality rental housing, offer greater security for tenants because they are better able to accommodate long-term leases. The bill introduces a 50 per cent discount to land valuations for the purposes of calculating land tax for new build-to-rent developments until 2040. By limiting the benefit to new developments, this measure will help support new construction and development during this difficult time. Providing these benefits until 2040 provides a substantial period of certainty for investors while providing a greater benefit for those who start sooner.

The bill will also effectively extend the existing carve-outs of developers from foreign investor surcharges to include build to rent. This is consistent with the Government's existing position that while the surcharges should generally apply to foreign owners of residential land, they should not inhibit new housing supply from coming online. The bill also implements integrity measures to prevent this tax discount from being used for tax avoidance. A developer that subdivides land within 15 years of first gaining this tax benefit will be required to repay the benefit with interest. The bill also provides for further details of the build-to-rent land tax policy to be set out in guidelines to be administered by the chief commissioner of taxation, including technical details of what constitutes a build-to-rent development. Both the first home buyer and build-to-rent land tax elements of the bill are designed to drive the creation of new housing for the people of New South Wales. They will contribute further to improving housing affordability over the medium term and they will support jobs creation in the near future to help get New South Wales working again.

The third change this bill will implement relates to the payroll tax treatment of the Commonwealth's aged-care retention bonus payments. Aged-care staff are on the front line and are subject to self-isolation requirements or the inability to attend work because of COVID-19. To support the continuity of the aged-care workforce, the Commonwealth Government is funding the Aged Care Workforce Retention Grant opportunity program. Under the program the Commonwealth will make two payments of up to \$800 per employee to aged-care employers. The retention bonus payments will then be passed through to staff. The bill provides an exemption from payroll tax for these payments to remove the disincentive for aged-care employers to participate in the program.

Members will recall passing legislation earlier this year to provide a similar payroll tax exemption for additional wages paid under the JobKeeper Payment scheme. Again this change will have a double benefit. It will benefit the elderly citizens who rely on the efforts of aged-care workers every day and it will sustain workers and jobs during a time when every job opportunity is priceless. The changes in this bill form part of our State's significant effort to meet the extraordinary challenge that lies before us, to safely reopen our economy and to rebuild an even stronger, more resilient New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**DEFAMATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020****Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 29 July 2020.**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (18:40:02):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Defamation Amendment Bill 2020. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. Whilst we on this side do not necessarily agree with some of the Attorney General's more purple prose about this bill, we agree that the measures in this bill are generally desirable. They will not solve every conceivable problem in this area of law but they will make useful changes, often by building on concepts in the current legislation. The object of the bill is to amend the Defamation Act and the Limitation Act to implement nationally agreed changes to the law concerning defamation. The current law was the first national defamation scheme for Australia.

Granted in particular the realities of Australia and its current technology, it makes no sense to have anything but a national scheme for defamation law but until 2005 we did not. In a process that was led then, as now, by New South Wales, the State and Territory Ministers of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General reached agreement on model uniform defamation provisions. That resulted in the 2005 Defamation Act, which the bill before the House proposes to amend. I remember the process well and indeed participated in the second reading debate in this place on that 2005 legislation.

Most of the provisions in this bill clarify existing parts of the bill or reinstate the original intention of the legislation or build on the 2005 legislation. These provisions include the definition of excluded corporations for the ban on commencing proceedings by corporations; the provisions relating to pleading back imputations in relation to the defence of contextual truth; clarification about the identification of material in relation to the defence of honest opinion; the clarification of when an election to have proceedings tried by jury can be revoked; maintaining the ban on proceedings defaming the deceased but allowing a court to determine costs if there is a death of a party; and the provisions relating to the cap on damages.

Other proposals build on existing provisions. These include the introduction of a threshold of serious harm for proceedings to succeed; to have a process of a concerns notice before proceedings are instituted; to provide for a defence for the publication of defamatory matters concerning an issue of public interest; to provide a defence in respect of peer-reviewed matters in academic or scientific journals; and to require the court's leave to commence proceedings against associates of a defendant previously sued for defamation. The provisions to introduce a single publication rule and make associated changes to the Limitation Act are novel in Australian law, although it certainly follows an English model and in a sense that is perhaps the most urgently demanded provision that this bill provides.

Turning to those provisions that might be called clarifications, the bill maintains the general prohibition on corporations having a cause of action for defamation. There were several submissions to the contrary but I have no doubt that this prohibition is the correct principle. There were certainly attempts at the time of the 2005 legislation to allow corporations to sue for defamation. At the time a number of people, including myself, argued against such a change, pointing to what at the time was the horror proceedings known as the *McLibel* case. The damage done to a natural person's reputation by defamatory claims simply has no comparison with a corporation.

The current law bans causes of action by corporations except for excluded corporations. They are defined as a corporation that is formed for objects not including financial gain or it employs fewer than 10 persons and is not related to another corporation. The second of those limbs is replaced in this bill with the formulation that it has fewer than 10 employees and is not an associated entity of another corporation. If anything, this seems a broader definition which will thus reduce the number of excluded corporations. The bill also includes a definition of "employee" which goes beyond the ordinary meaning of employee and can include, for example, subcontractors.

This also has the potential to reduce the number of excluded corporations. Both of these changes are entirely consistent with the policy objective of generally preventing corporations from suing for defamation. The bill also maintains the prohibition in section 10 on causes of action for defamation of or against deceased persons. The policy basis for this is obvious. If a person is deceased, then they can have no feelings to hurt or have any sense of their reputation. It may be thought that this means that a court cannot make a costs order in proceedings where one of the parties dies. The provisions in the bill make it clear that a court can in fact now make such an order.

A clarification is also made concerning the revocation of an election for a jury trial. The current Act provides for a party to elect to have defamation proceedings tried by a jury. The section does not explicitly provide for whether an election can be revoked by the party once it is made. Supreme courts in different States have disagreed over whether the election can subsequently be revoked. Statutory clarity is provided in the bill on this



issue. It provides that a jury election can only be revoked with the consent of all parties or with the leave of the court on the application of a party.

There is a clarification of the current section 26 dealing with the defence of contextual truth. The current provision was intended to continue the practice under the previous statutory regime where a defendant could rely on imputations pleaded by the plaintiff. The defence operates when the defamatory imputations of which the plaintiff complains do not further harm the plaintiff's reputation because of the substantially true imputations. This is known as pleading back. In 2011 the New South Wales Court of Appeal decided that this was not permissible. This bill replaces section 26. In its new terms this section will now allow a defendant to plead back substantially true imputations originally pleaded by the plaintiff.

The current section 23 has provisions that mean the leave of the court is required to bring defamation proceedings against the same person for the same matter or for any like matter. The bill expands that requirement for leave to include close associates of the defendant such as employees or contractors of that defendant. Currently section 31 provides for the defence of honest opinion—that is, it is a defence if the matter complained of is an expression of opinion that is in the public interest and based on proper material. The provisions in the bill clarify how material relied on in this defence needs to be referred to. This is meant particularly to assist if the material is in electronic form or is common knowledge.

One of the provisions that has attracted most comment relates to the maximum amount of damages that can be awarded for non-economic loss. This has become a matter of significant debate and interest, bearing in mind cases such as *Wilson*, *Wagner* and *Rush*. Section 35 states that a maximum amount of \$250,000 as indexed can be awarded for non-economic loss; the figure is now \$421,000 after indexation. A larger amount can be awarded if, and only if, the court is satisfied that the circumstances of the publication warrant an award of aggravated damages. The changes proposed to section 35 do two main things. Subsection (2) is removed and in its place it is made clear that the maximum amount of damages are to be awarded only in a most serious case. That is, in the language used, the section sets a scale or range of payments and the maximum amount does not act merely as a cap.

The proposed amendments do not limit the court's power to award aggravated damages if it is warranted. The change that is made though is that an award of aggravated damages must be made separately to any award of damages for non-economic loss. I note the Attorney General's reference in his second reading speech to the original intent of the 2005 legislation on this point and the explicit rejection of the proposition that if aggravated damages are warranted the cap does not apply. That seems to be an accurate description of the 2005 intention. It is also contrary to the approach of the court in cases such as *Wagner*.

Another change is to require serious harm to be an element in the cause of action. There is currently a triviality defence provided in section 33. It is a defence if the defendant proves that the circumstances of the publication meant it was unlikely the plaintiff would sustain harm. Despite this, there seems to have been a significant increase in what would seem to be comparatively minor defamations that are probably better resolved in other ways. This, of course, is associated in particular with changing technology, social media and the internet. The solution in the bill is effectively to raise the bar for successful claims and adopt the English model requiring that the plaintiff prove that the publication of the defamatory matter has caused or is likely to cause serious harm to the reputation of the plaintiff. Additionally, the bill provides that this question can be determined before the trial and in a jury trial determined by the judge. It will be a threshold issue. On one view it is a strengthening or extension of the triviality defence, which clearly had not been effective.

In tandem with the changes concerning serious harm, the bill also introduces a process involving the issue of a concerns notice. The serious harm change is plainly to make it harder for plaintiffs to succeed in comparatively minor cases. The concerns notice process aims to try to have matters resolved without litigation. There is already a concerns notice process in the current legislation but the bill builds on it and expands it. It is not currently mandatory for an aggrieved person to give a concerns notice before commencing proceedings. The bill now provides that an aggrieved person cannot commence defamation proceedings unless a concerns notice is given to the proposed defendant, the imputations are particularised in the concerns notice and the period in which the proposed defendant can offer to make amends has expired. There are exceptions that allow a court to grant leave to a plaintiff to commence proceedings if it is just and reasonable to do so as the timing would contravene the limitation period. There are also provisions dealing with the form and content of concerns notices, and dealing with the form and duration of offers to make amends.

The bill also proposes changes to the defence of a failure to accept a reasonable offer to make amends that is currently provided in the 2005 legislation. The current situation is changed in several ways. The offer of amends must be made as soon as reasonably practicable after the publisher was given a concerns notice. The defence can be relied upon if the publisher remains ready and willing to carry out the terms of the offer of amends during the trial. Whether the defence is established in proceedings before a jury is a matter for the judicial officer, not the

jury. The Act currently also provides a defence of qualified privilege, which had been intended to broaden the defence of a publisher in issues that may have been of public interest. As the explanatory note to the bill points out, the current section 30 has been largely unsuccessful in its aim, granted when it was implemented in 2005.

The bill introduces a new section 29A. It aims to introduce a defence of publication of a matter concerning an issue of public interest. It is a defence if the defendant proves that the material published concerns an issue of public interest and the defendant reasonably believed that the publication of the matter was in the public interest. There is a list of factors, which is not exhaustive, of the matters that a court may take into account in determining the defence. Whether the defence is made out in a jury trial is for the jury to determine. The provision is inspired by, although not identical with, the English provision. Another provision inspired by the English legislation is the defence concerning scientific or academic peer review. Once again it is not identical with the English provision. It is contained in the new section 30A.

The final provision that I specifically mention is the single publication rule. This is achieved by amendments to the Limitation Act. In a sense this is the change that was most obviously needed. The implementation of a single publication rule is achieved by amendments to the Limitation Act. Presently section 14B provides a one-year limitation period for defamation proceedings running from the date of publication of the matter complained of. Section 56A allows for an application to the court to extend the limitation period for a period up to three years running from the date of publication. These provisions have collided with the reality of contemporary technology. For publications on the internet, publication occurs when a third party downloads a page—that is, it is not when it is posted by the publisher. Theoretically a separate cause of action arises for each download and a limitation period will run differently for each download. Thus, theoretically, defamation proceedings can be validly commenced within time, though the download was many years after the page was first uploaded. The solution is a single publication rule such as that introduced in the English model.

The provisions in the bill amend the Limitation Act in a number of ways. The one-year limitation period is automatically extended if a concerns notice is given to a proposed defendant within 56 days of the expiry of the limitation period. A single publication rule based on the English model is introduced in proposed section 14C. It is not identical to the English model in that it extends somewhat more broadly to subsequent publications by associates of the first publisher. The single publication rule provides that the cause of action accrues on the date of the first publication for the purposes of determining limitation periods and extensions of such periods. The bill also changes the provisions concerning an application to extend limitation periods. The present provision requires the court to extend a limitation period if it was not reasonable for the plaintiff to have commenced proceedings in the 12-month period. This is replaced by a provision requiring that the plaintiff establish it is just and reasonable for the action to proceed. A number of factors are listed which the court will have regard to. As I read it, the list is not exhaustive. Proposed section 73A provides that in determining the date of publication for limitation purposes, the date will be the day on which the matter was first uploaded for access or sent electronically to a recipient.

A certain amount of overheated rhetoric has surrounded one aspect of the bill. It has been claimed the bill will end crippling damages payouts and reduce the likelihood of massive payouts. It will see the end of what have been termed eye-watering sums being awarded for damages. This seems to somewhat overstate the impact of the provisions in the bill about the cap; it has been a little overegged in some of the public commentary. Some other things should be borne in mind in relation to the changes to the cap. Most obviously the cap does not have any connection with economic loss; only with non-economic loss. That still means very significant verdicts, including potentially some that publishers would no doubt find eye-watering can still occur. The Rush verdict frequently referred to was almost \$2.9 million and \$1.9 million of that was for economic loss, which is entirely unrelated to the cap or the provisions about the cap. I suppose the most eye-watering verdict was for Rebel Wilson at first instance, before it was overturned on appeal. That verdict was \$4.1million and \$3.9 million of that was for economic loss. That is a figure that would be entirely unaffected by the caps in the bill.

In addition, there is still the capacity for aggravated damages to be awarded in appropriate cases. I make it clear that I am not arguing for greater restrictions on verdicts. I am simply suggesting that some of the rhetoric has been overstated. It is still quite possible to have very substantial verdicts under this regime. Having said that, the cap will undoubtedly reduce in some of those more extreme cases the amount of non-economic loss that is granted in verdicts and it will undoubtedly lead to lower sums in some cases. Having said that, as I indicated before, the Opposition does not oppose the bill.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Private Members' Statements***BLAKE GARRETT**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (18:58:00):** I recognise the hard work, innovation and self-determination of those within our small business community. There is one person I commend in particular, and his name is Blake Garrett. At the age of 22, Blake is a bright entrepreneur who has created School Bytes, a successful administrative software program that provides New South Wales schools with a fully customisable cloud-based solution to help manage everyday administrative tasks. As of March 2020, 400 government schools across the State use School Bytes. The program allows schools to safely house student information online and to conduct a number of crucial administrative tasks, such as emailing parents and guardians directly with key information. This has improved the reliability of communications between school and carers. The program offers parents and guardians quick payment options that save office staff days of work. Finally, the software eliminates the need for users to input data manually. Student information is automatically synchronised with the Department of Education.

The program supported staff, parents and guardians at a crucial time when thousands of parents found themselves homeschooling. Using the platform, schools were able to share homework and feedback with families efficiently. Recently Blake introduced School Bytes to the innovative Amazon Web Services to scale up the program and increase exposure. Blake is passionate about inspiring the next generation by encouraging students to be curious about the tech industry. He was the keynote speaker at the 2018 Chatswood High School's annual presentation evening and is a judge with the Young ICT Explorers, a competition designed to encourage younger students to be bold and think big. I am pleased to announce that Blake has been nominated for the prestigious Awards Australia Small Business Achiever Award, which recognises his innovative thinking, sheer determination and outstanding contributions to our local community. We will hear a lot more about Blake and his achievements in the future. I commend Blake Garrett to the House.

**COVID-19 AND FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (19:01:00):** I address the growing concern in the greater Fairfield community and highlight the need for additional support for residents in south-west Sydney who have had their world turned upside down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As all members are aware, shortly after coming out of the first wave of COVID-19 lockdowns, New South Wales unfortunately fell victim to the re-emergence of COVID-19. A small cluster of COVID-positive cases were discovered in south-west Sydney, which spread slowly throughout communities by infected individuals. Shortly thereafter, the Fairfield local government area [LGA] was hit by a surge of COVID-positive cases and our local testing clinics were swiftly overwhelmed due to the rapid spread of the virus throughout the region. A vast number of residents then needed to be tested for COVID-19.

Debate ran rampant in the community when members of several local businesses and schools received COVID-positive results, and additional resources were slow to reach our community. There was mixed messaging on instructions for the community to follow and on information concerning the potential closures of testing sites. Residents throughout the LGA were often left guessing, without any clear direction on how to proceed. Despite the Thai Rock restaurant in Wetherill Park being the largest emerging COVID cluster in New South Wales, no additional pop-up clinics were placed in Wetherill Park, which left many local residents scratching their heads, as the available testing clinics in the region had extraordinarily long wait times. Hundreds of residents stood in line for hours on end or returned home without bothering to get tested. These scenarios should have been avoided. Sadly, the Government was caught napping amidst the growing pandemic in south-west Sydney.

The Labor Opposition consistently called on the Liberal-Nationals Government to provide more COVID-19 testing support and resources to south-west Sydney. Labor also identified the need for clearer messaging and information for our culturally diverse communities. The residents of Fairfield then learned that Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk had declared the Fairfield local government area a COVID-19 hotspot, denying anyone from the area access to Queensland. Meanwhile, New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian downplayed the severity of the circumstances. While our healthcare workers are bending over backwards and working to exhaustion, the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government has been slow to support our healthcare workers and our communities. Our entire State continues to receive mixed messages regarding what to do and what not to do. Government members still cannot bring themselves to enforce mandatory masks in enclosed and indoor spaces where social distancing may be difficult. One has only to look at messaging for our public transport network.

New South Wales healthcare professionals have made strong recommendations that we wear masks, emphasising that their use can prevent the spread of COVID-19 in New South Wales. Despite the overwhelming evidence and the push from healthcare professionals, the Government is reluctant to take the necessary action. Healthcare professionals continue to advocate for the public use of masks. The Opposition agrees that wearing

masks should be mandatory on public transport, in supermarkets and in shopping centres. Labor members are well aware of the tremendous benefit this would provide in preventing the further spread of COVID throughout the State.

As individuals, businesses and communities struggle to regain their footing and push through hardships before them, residents of New South Wales expect the Government to lead, and to put the appropriate policies and mechanisms in place to help us navigate the storm we continue to endure. Now is the time to act. Further procrastination will hinder the outstanding efforts of those who are doing the right thing and the efforts of the healthcare professionals who are without a doubt doing the lion's share of the work in propping up the State. On behalf of the Fairfield electorate and all members of the House, I send my thoughts and best wishes to everyone who has been impacted by coronavirus. I wish a speedy recovery to anyone who is currently dealing with coronavirus.

### **COFFS HARBOUR LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:04:00):** Julie Ferguson is the beaming public face of OzHarvest in Coffs Harbour. Julie is dedicated to the people in need across the electorate of Coffs Harbour through her important work as the local coordinator of this fantastic organisation. Julie established the OzHarvest Coffs Harbour chapter in 2014. She has volunteered countless hours collecting donated food to give to those in need in our community, including to children in schools, to ensure that no child goes without breakfast. Julie is an unstoppable force of kindness. She contributes 40-plus hours a week to her labour of love and always has a smile on her dial. Julie not only collects food but also drives the van, recruits volunteers, seeks assistance from local businesses, supervises the warehouse and manages a team of 30 volunteers. On the eve of International Women's Day in March, it was my absolute honour to name Julie the Coffs Harbour 2020 Local Woman of the Year.

The OzHarvest Coffs Harbour warehouse was bustling with volunteers and vans when I visited Julie to present her this prestigious award. Her passionate and lively local team rescues quality food for more than 50 charity partners in our community. OzHarvest has rescued more than 500 tons of food for disadvantaged local residents who are doing it tough. The volunteers help to sort, pick, collect and distribute the vast range of quality excess food from many caring local food businesses, as well as from the farmers and growers in the bountiful region that surrounds us. OzHarvest Coffs Harbour has wonderful support from local organisations, including all of our local Rotary clubs, churches, community care groups and other small businesses that care about addressing hunger while reducing food waste. What drives Julie Ferguson to do what she does? In an interview with local media, she said:

Why do I do this? It started a long, long time ago. When I was 10, I was lying in bed thinking, "Why can't all the rich people help feed the poor people?" Obviously I was in the poor people part of this equation, coming from a broken family and having a father who really didn't know how to bring kids up. But he did the best he could at the time. So us kids were left to fend for ourselves a lot of the time, so a lot of the time we were hungry, but that experience of being hungry, having no lunch in the schoolyard, watching other kids eat, watching other kids go to the canteen. I remember vividly my mouth literally watering when I would smell the food coming out of the canteen. All my life I thought, "Hold on a minute, we've got to build a bridge, we've got to build a bridge between the haves and the have-nots. We have to find a way that we can feed all the people who need it and also use the resources that we can harvest from surplus food, like from supermarkets that would normally go into landfill." Yes, it's something that I have to do and what I want to do. It's a passion, because I never want people to feel like I felt when I was a child.

In giving this well-deserved recognition to Julie Ferguson, I also pay tribute to her small army of passionate volunteers: Bob Tremayne, Royce Watkins, Michelle King, Sandra McDougall, Ian McDougall, James McRae, Amy Myers, Daniel Hopwood, Kerry Manson, John Manson, Ilona Findlay, Wendy Turnbull, Russell McGifford, Jill Johnson, Sue Bower, Cheryl Babbage, Don Kennedy, Neil Mathews, Tracey Dick-Smith, Mike Blewitt, Neil Powers, Maureen Hobgood, Sandy Harrison, Judy Smith, Nicholas Martin, Megan Singer, Margaret McDonald, Lee Albet, Annie Cook, Patrick Smyth, Elizabeth Spoehr, Suzi Clayton-Pearson, Lani Carmody, Liz Groom, Natasha Foggiato, Rebecca Mordaunt and Hailie Burgess.

There are some other special people who work alongside the team: Gai Newman from Coffs Harbour Community Village, Anna Scott from Pete's Place, Marie LoCascio from Coffs Harbour Neighbourhood Centre, Kim Towner from The Happy Frog, Shannon Johnson and Paul Stewart from Woolworths, Mark Thorn from TAFE Coffs Harbour and Meena Johnson from the Mission Australia youth refuge. Financial supporters include Dr Adrian Hekel, Anthony Jephcott, Ian Isles, Judy Isles and Aussie Home Loans Coffs Harbour manager Craig Budden. It is worth noting that OzHarvest is Australia's leading food rescue organisation, collecting quality excess food from commercial outlets and delivering it to more than 1,300 charities that support people in need across the country. I recognise and thank Julie Ferguson.

### **MANLY TOURISM & ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASKFORCE**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:07:00):** As a result of a terrible summer and now COVID, the Manly tourism industry has been decimated. Recently I formed the Manly Tourism & Economic Recovery Taskforce, an

advisory committee comprising local stakeholders from local government, non-government organisations and industry leaders. The task force will provide actionable recommendations to capitalise on any available opportunities presented by COVID. Yesterday, the task force held its inaugural meeting in a COVID-safe manner online. The people of New South Wales are doing it tough, particularly in Manly. The Taylor Fry COVID-19 Financial Impact Index placed Manly and surrounding suburbs in the top 10 per cent of Australian postcodes most financially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Contributing to this is the high proportion of white-collar professionals which, according to the 2016 census, makes up almost 40 per cent of employed locals aged 15 years and over. That is almost 16 per cent higher than the State average.

In addition, Manly's bustling tourism economy has been under significant pressure. Although more locals are staying home, staying local and buying local, we have not experienced the millions of visitors Manly would welcome during the warmer months, which would insulate businesses through the tough winter trading season. Mirroring this, suburbs from Seaforth to Curl Curl are among the seventieth to 100th decile of postcodes likely to have the highest proportion of residents receiving JobKeeper. The cumulative effect of this has meant that much of our local hospitality workforce has been retrenched, and professional and white-collar workers are under significant financial pressure and mortgage stress. The hyperlocal focus of the task force is complementary to the New South Wales Government's COVID-19 Recovery Plan and the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission.

In establishing the task force, we have developed a clear purpose: firstly, to provide strategic and practical advice to inform an appropriate response and recovery for the Manly community; secondly, to provide practical advice on a potential recovery road map for the local tourism, events and hospitality industries, acknowledging the changing restrictions across New South Wales in different industries; thirdly, to provide advice on opportunities to diversify the local economy to build a stronger, more resilient Manly; and, fourthly, to identify opportunities to strengthen and support local community groups, not-for-profits and charities to help the vulnerable in our community. To do this, we will look to leverage New South Wales Government programs and initiatives that focus on tourism, events and the local economy. I welcome yesterday's announcement from the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney that applications have opened for the Great Southern Nights music event initiative, which the task force will explore closely.

The task force will develop a list of potential recovery road map initiatives and ideas, including the fast-tracking of existing local projects and concepts, both public and private. It will also identify collaboration and partnership opportunities between various agencies and organisations, including the Northern Beaches Council. An example of an initiative that the task force will consider is Destination NSW "Now's The Time to Love NSW" tourism marketing program, which encourages people to stay local and spend local in Sydney and New South Wales. I thank the individuals and organisations that have lent their expertise to the task force. I acknowledge the Manly Business Chamber, in particular president Luke Atkins, vice-president Tracey Mietzke and executive committee members Charlotte Rimmer and Drew Johnson.

Members in this place would understand the vital role business chambers and chambers of commerce play in the vitality of local enterprise, and the Manly Business Chamber is no different. The task force is joined by the chief executives from two important local organisations: Ray Brownlee, PSM, of Northern Beaches Council, and Luke Madden of Surfing NSW. The task force is joined by the general managers of Manly's three major hotels: the Q Station, The Sebel and the Novotel. It is also fortunate to have representatives from an exciting group of both private and not-for-profit stakeholders, including the NRMA, the Bondi to Manly Walk Supporters, Business Events Sydney, the Tourism & Transport Forum Australia and Facebook Australia. I am excited to work with all of these stakeholders. I look forward to updating the House on our progress in the future.

### **BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE RAIL SERVICES**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (19:12:00):** I take this opportunity to speak about the future of rail services for communities west of Bankstown. I note that Transport for NSW has just finalised a community consultation process. It sought the views of my community with respect to the three options it is considering as a result of immense community pressure being placed on the Government. The communities west of Bankstown have experienced transport disconnection since October 2013—that is, since the inner west train line was removed from the Sydney train network under the stewardship of then transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian. I have mentioned many times in this House that removal of the train line caused incredible inconvenience to thousands of communities west of Bankstown. It disconnected communities such as Sefton, Chester Hill, Villawood, Caringbah and Leightonfield from a direct service via Lidcombe and forced residents from those stations to change at Birrong and then again at Lidcombe to connect to the inner west and the City Circle.

It has now become a big issue. The department understands that, with the Government pursuing the metro plan—the plan to build a metro between Sydney and Bankstown and subsequently remove the heavy rail—there will be a line with trains that stop at Bankstown. There will have to be an interchange and a connection for train

services west of Bankstown. Three options are now being considered. Option one is a shuttle service and no direct service. Option two—which is the preferred option—is a partial restoration of the service so that it benefits residents living in Sefton and Chester Hill and stations west of Bankstown but not residents of Yagoona and Birrong. Option three is a better connection for residents living in Yagoona and Birrong but not for those living in Sefton and Chester Hill in my electorate.

While people in my electorate welcome the partial restoration of the service, they are concerned that it is not coming soon enough. I do not understand why the Government is waiting until 2024. Given it now concedes that the connections need to be reinstated and has considered reinstating them in part, it is imperative that the reconnection start sooner than 2024. I call on the Government to do that. I thank Transport for NSW for the opportunity to make submissions. I have made many submissions and conducted a community survey in conjunction with the department's consultation process. It is clear from the surveys returned to my office that the vast majority of residents prefer option two. About 80 per cent of the feedback received indicated that the vast majority of residents prefer option two. But to me the message is very clear: Most residents want to know why the Government cannot just restore the full inner west train line.

Its removal has had an incredible impact on my community. We had a direct service from when the train line was established in 1924 until it was taken away in 2013. As a result, people are forced to drive to other train stations. It has forced people to consider other public transport options that are nowhere near the area. People who relied on an easy ride into the city and convenient connections to Lidcombe and the inner west have seen their journey times double as a result of extra connections that do not align with the rest of the train timetable. Some journeys are even longer. I thank my community and the many different organisations, including Restore Inner West Line and the Save T3 Bankstown Line organisation, that have worked hard to place pressure on the Government to restore rail services west of Bankstown.

#### **MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (19:17:00):** Tonight I announce the exciting news that \$8.5 million has been allocated for water infrastructure to secure water supplies for the Manning-Great Lakes area. Last Friday I had the pleasure of accompanying Minister Melinda Pavey to Minimbah bore field at Nabiac, where we announced the \$8.5 million package. This is on top of the \$1.55 million provided during the drought to assist with the project, which is on top of the \$2.5 million that we put in to kick it off a few years ago. The State Government has contributed a total of \$12.5 million to the project. I pay tribute to Minister Melinda Pavey for understanding what is needed. I also pay tribute to Federal Nationals member David Gillespie.

The Federal Government provided \$9.5 million for the project a couple of years ago. That is a total of \$22 million for the Minimbah bore field and water security so far. It goes to show that only The Nationals in government can deliver for regional New South Wales. Only The Nationals have that voice in government to provide for regional New South Wales. It was a proud moment to be a member of The Nats. It is a lot of money, but what do the figures really mean? The Manning River stopped flowing during the drought. The water for the Manning-Great Lakes area comes from the Manning River and is pumped into the Bootawa Dam. The Bootawa Dam does not catch water; it only holds water—80 days' worth. During the drought the Barrington River further up in the mountains stopped running for the first time in known history. That is how severe the situation was.

There were 80 days' worth of water and then the fires hit. Crews came from all over—from regional New South Wales, Newcastle, Sydney, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Victoria—to help us fight the fires. The firetrucks filled their tankers from the mains. In a matter of just a couple of weeks the water supply was reduced to 30 or 40 days of water. The community uses 22 megalitres of water a day, of which the bore field was supplying about 2½ megalitres. The dam was going down but, through the \$1.5 million that I mentioned, it was cranked up to 12 megalitres a day. At the same time, water restrictions reduced community need to 16 megalitres a day. But we were in a precarious position. The Government has listened and worked with MidCoast Council to come up with a plan that will enhance the Minimbah bore field. The hope is that it will produce 24 megalitres a day so that the area's current need can be met purely from the Minimbah bore field, and of course the Bootawa Dam.

For the Bootawa Dam and the Manning River this means that if Great Lakes residents do not draw from the dam—and therefore from the river—in dry times it will prolong the length of time that we can pump water out of the river. It also means that if we have a drought like that again we can pump water from Minimbah bore field into the Bootawa Dam and the system to look after the people of Manning Valley as well. The fund has formed part of the Government's drought response, which is providing \$54 million in funding across regional New South Wales for town water infrastructure projects, and this is on top of the already committed \$275 million for critical drought infrastructure projects and town water carting for regional New South Wales. Also in regional New South Wales the Government is looking at increasing the height of the Wyangala Dam, a new dam at

Dungowan and another area in north-western New South Wales, which will help secure water in that part of the country. I commend the New South Wales Government for providing this funding.

#### **MULGOA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:22:27):** When I was first elected as the member for Mulgoa in 2011 one of my core objectives was to bring more jobs, infrastructure and opportunities to the Mulgoa electorate. The Community Building Partnership program has been a very successful program put in place by the New South Wales Government and has supported my community in achieving goals and developing organisations for the purpose of making a positive difference in our local area. The Community Building Partnership program aims to encourage community participation and inclusion in a variety of recreational, sporting and educational environments and it has achieved this in my electorate since its inception.

Today I am delighted to announce the 2019 Community Building Partnership recipients for my electorate and highlight the projects that they are undertaking. Each of the organisations is incredibly deserving of this funding and I am thrilled to work closely with them and to support them in completing their works. I congratulate the following recipients. Nepean Food Services is receiving \$30,000 towards its new social support bus, which will assist in increasing its social support activities. I acknowledge Ditte Kozak and her team for their hard work, particularly during this period of COVID-19 and the additional challenges of social isolation and the inability to bring vulnerable people to their community facilities to have meals together and to socially connect. I congratulate Ditte on her strong advocacy on behalf of people in our community who are vulnerable. I have been proud to work alongside Ditte for many years and to see improvements to her organisation, including the industrial quality freezer equipment that we were able to supply through previous Community Building Partnership grant rounds.

Mamre Anglican School is receiving \$12,555 towards a shade structure, a shipping container for storage and a water tank, pump and fire hydrant system for fire cadet training and competitions. After the horrendous Christmas-New Year bushfires throughout our State, it is even more critical that we support young people to learn firefighting skills to ensure we have a stream of people ready to fill our ranks in the Rural Fire Service and even the State Emergency Service. Penrith Anglican College is receiving \$15,362 towards the improvement of very old and outdated playground facilities for its children.

The St Clair and District Men's Shed is receiving \$2,650 towards a suite of new finishing sanders that will add to its growing list of woodworking machines, which will be put to great use when the new shed is complete. I popped in there just two weeks ago to see the mezzanine level being built and the new kitchen being installed. The new shed has largely been funded through support by the New South Wales Government as well as private donations by companies and businesses. The St Clair Junior Rugby League Club is receiving \$125,000 towards a new car park, driveway access and spectator fence to the Peter Kearns Memorial Oval to deliver safer access and facilities. The oval is located on Solander Drive and the current configuration of vehicle and pedestrian entry and exit movements is potentially putting the safety of people at risk. Kemps Creek United Soccer Club is receiving \$15,000 towards spectator seating and a new pathway at Bill Anderson Reserve.

Anowah Community Living is receiving \$24,433 towards a new people mover vehicle which will support its client community transport program. Glenmore Park Anglican Church has utilised its \$50,000 towards the refurbishment of its car park and new line markings to deliver a safe walkway for the elderly, those with a disability and parents with prams who utilise the facilities almost daily. I note that the community outreach and social cohesion across the generations that Glenmore Park Anglican Church leads within the suburb brings a strong sense of community to the wider Glenmore Park residents. Finally, Holy Spirit Primary School has utilised \$25,000 towards the recarpeting of its multipurpose area.

I am so pleased that all of these recipients are able to improve their facilities, programs and community relationships through the New South Wales Government's generous support. The Community Building Partnership program continues to achieve its goal of promoting the building or refurbishment of infrastructure which will positively impact local communities for the long haul. I thank the New South Wales Treasurer, Mr Dominic Perrottet, and the Premier of New South Wales, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, for their ongoing support for the Community Building Partnership program.

It is often said that it is the little things that can make a big difference. Sometimes the small grants that provide a piece of machinery for a local men's shed or an upgrade to lighting that ensures people can walk safely outside a community hall to their parked cars or a vehicle that can transport people with a disability or those who are socially isolated to special events or outings are the grants that deliver above and beyond the dollar value of the grant. I look forward to seeing these projects support the wonderful organisations across the electorate which work diligently and sacrificially to support our community and see it flourish. I congratulate once again all of the Mulgoa electorate organisations on being successful Community Building Partnership recipients.

## WESTERN SYDNEY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (19:26:45):** This evening I want to talk about an issue that is raised very frequently in the community and has been raised with me time and again, as I am privileged to represent many communities in western Sydney, which in my time in Parliament have grown from nothing to 7,000 people to 8,000 people. There are lots of challenges in these communities. The biggest challenge brought by the Liberals and The Nationals is the lack of school building in these communities. That is something that combines two of my greatest loves: my community and the provision of public education to every child in this State. It is a particular challenge in the growing communities of western Sydney, and the Government cannot seem to get it right. That is the case in areas like Ropes Crossing, in the new parts of Marsden Park and in Jordan Springs. I have spoken here many times about the campaign to get a school built at Jordan Springs.

Ropes Crossing is a particularly bad case of the Government not supporting the community and its public school. It is the most over-capacity school in New South Wales. Its permanent classroom capacity is less than 300 students. How many students are enrolled at Ropes Crossing? There are more than 800. That is 800 students in a school that is built for 300. That has meant that the principal and the staff at Ropes Crossing have to stagger lunch times. So year 2 or year 3 students who are sitting in their classrooms doing reading or maths can see other students playing. It is very challenging for teachers and a substandard outcome for young children. The school at Ropes Crossing deserves an upgrade and I plead with the Government to provide this community with that upgrade.

We are very grateful that the school at Jordan Springs has finally opened this term after years of community campaigning. I have spoken many times in this House about the Government building this school. Sadly, the Government cannot seem to realise that once children get to year 6 they have to go somewhere for year 7. There are no funds or land allocated to build a high school in this catchment area for both Ropes Crossing and Jordan Springs.

The community and I have started a campaign for a high school to be reserved in the Central Precinct at Jordan Springs for both of these communities. In the new suburbs around Marsden Park, the Government has let overcrowding get so bad that—listen to this—it is building a demountable school on the site of the new primary school that was supposed to be delivered in Elara, Marsden Park. While the community waits for the school to be built around the demountable school, the existing school at Marsden Park has gone from about 54 enrolments to near 400 in the past few years. The Government cannot say that it did not know that so many people were going to build in western Sydney; it released the land to make that happen. It has committed to and promised a new school in Marsden Park, yet there is no funding allocated for it.

In all of these new communities in western Sydney, the exasperation is palpable. They are looking to the Government to rectify the issue. It is, unfortunately, the same situation in so many communities across Sydney—not just the ones I represent, but also in places like Schofields, Gregory Hills in the south-west of Sydney, Edmondson Park and Mulgoa Rise, which is in the electorate that abuts mine. Unfortunately, the communities that I have spoken about in Elara, Marsden Park and Ropes Crossing are part of a whole swathe of communities that are waiting for schools that the Government has failed to upgrade or has committed to delivering, but has not done so. These communities in western Sydney deserve public education; in fact, it is the right of every child in this State to go to their local primary and high schools. The Government needs to provide that vital public education infrastructure for families in western Sydney.

## TARONGA CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:29:09):** I acknowledge the incredible conservation work undertaken by the Taronga Conservation Society Australia in my electorate of North Shore. It has been a particularly challenging time for Taronga Zoo's Sydney and Dubbo locations due to the COVID-19 crisis. I know it has impacted many organisations, but I am incredibly proud of the work that the zoo does on a daily basis and the efforts staff put in to maintain support for their animals and, more broadly, their conservation work regardless of this challenge.

The team at Taronga is committed to and focused on ensuring that conservation and protecting the world's precious wildlife are at the forefront of its work. We are very lucky to have Taronga Zoo in our own backyard. It allows many of us to experience firsthand the dedicated work that is undertaken by the many volunteers and staff at Taronga. Through research, education, action and advocacy, Taronga is leading vital work that supports wildlife, habitats and communities across the globe. Taronga prioritises ecological sustainability for the protection of our natural environment and has been awarded carbon neutral certification across its zoos in Mosman and Dubbo.



In partnership with the Berejiklian Government and through the \$100 million Saving Our Species program, Taronga Zoo has been able to breed and release more than 50,000 native animals back into the wild and save at least seven species from the threat of extinction. One such species is the southern corroboree frog, which I was lucky enough to meet and greet with the Minister for Energy and Environment, Matt Kean, last year when we visited Taronga to open the Wildlife Retreat. I knew a lot about the southern corroboree frog because of the wonderful Wiggles song *The Corroboree Frog*. I was surprised at how teeny-tiny they are, which just shows how much we need to do to protect these little creatures. The southern corroboree frog is a critically endangered species and the insurance colonies at Taronga are a lifeline for it. Taronga has been successful in releasing hundreds of frogs and thousands of eggs to increase wild population numbers in Kosciuszko National Park and Brindabella National Park.

Over the past few years, and particularly during the recent bushfire season, our native animals have been dealt a significant blow to their natural habitats. Taronga's wildlife response teams were among the first to support wildlife rescue attempts across New South Wales and Victoria—caring for fire-, heat- and drought-impacted animals at their zoos and hospitals. Taronga is still providing emergency care for those wildlife, including the housing and care of a population of wild koalas from the Kanangra-Boyd National Park. The Wildlife Hospital is also continuing to treat numerous animals for the effects of heat, fire and drought—including wallabies, koalas, bats requiring intensive hand rearing, and platypus rescued from drying ponds in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. I was fortunate enough to be joined by the Federal environment Minister, Sussan Ley, at Taronga's Wildlife Hospital earlier this year, where we were able to see firsthand how Taronga has been providing rehabilitation and care for the native wildlife that were impacted by the bushfires.

Experts widely agree that recovery programs or breed-to-release programs will be essential to the long-term survival of many of the species impacted by the bushfires. Taronga is a leader in delivering successful breed-to-release programs, with the essential combination of skills across science, genetics, behavioural management and animal husbandry required to breed small populations that can thrive in the wild. This year Taronga has been preparing to initiate new recovery programs for platypus, fish and frogs, and is doubling its efforts for existing programs for the regent honeyeater and the southern corroboree frog after the fires significantly affected their respective territories.

Taronga also engages in international conservation efforts, ensuring the successful breeding of many threatened exotic species. In particular, with as few as 400 Sumatran tigers left, Taronga is proud to be part of a regional conservation management plan for Sumatran tigers, including breeding, research, fundraising and community action to support sustainably produced palm oil. Other critically threatened species, such as the Asian elephant and the western lowland gorilla, are part of a successful breeding program as both species are experiencing rapidly declining numbers in the wild.

Taronga Zoo recently opened its new African Savannah at Mosman, with lions returning to their rightful place as kings of the savannah. Visitors can now come face to face with two male lions, Lwazi and Ato, along with other additions such as Kaya and Bwana, the new resident zebras. I thank all the expert wildlife veterinarians, nurses, carers, animal husbandry experts and scientists and the many volunteers who work across the two wildlife hospitals. Taronga is in a unique position to lead the rescue and recovery of Australia's wildlife, now and in the future.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:34:04):** New South Wales is facing a homelessness crisis with burgeoning numbers of marginalised people sleeping rough and couch surfing. This is evident in our cities and our towns. Indeed, we see it on street corners in this very beautiful and affluent city. In my role as shadow Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence community organisations tell me of this increasing need. The fastest growing group of homeless people is women over the age of 50. Services are being inundated yet there are no long-term solutions. Between 2011 and 2016 the number of homeless women over 55 increased by 31 per cent and from 2012 to 2018 the number of women accessing homeless services grew by 63 per cent.

According to the 2016 census New South Wales has the highest number of older homeless women. Many of these women have been victims of domestic violence and abuse. They are often single women who now find themselves unable to provide a roof over their heads. It is well known that women generally earn less than their male counterparts throughout their working lives, as they are the primary carers for children and often elderly parents as well. Women end their working lives with far less superannuation. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2017-18 financial year the median superannuation account balance for an Australian woman was \$45,000 compared to \$65,000 for men, and the average superannuation at retirement for women is \$157,000 while it is \$270,000 for men.

It is widely recognised that women have borne the brunt of this pandemic crisis, yet the Government has no plan to address the disproportionate financial impact of the bushfires and pandemic on women in this State. The ongoing shortage of affordable housing, an ageing population, the gender pay gap, the lack of affordable and accessible child care, the inequity of superannuation, the insecurity of work, a lack of support for small, home-based businesses, an increase in family and domestic violence and an array of other issues all disproportionately hurt and impact women. The failure of government to invest in women economically and socially will ensure that the growing trend of older women becoming homeless will only increase as their economic independence and stability is continually undermined by a system that refuses to support them.

Poverty and domestic violence are the two biggest drivers of this crisis, but this picture is not just about numbers; it is about real women's lives. I want to talk about Francine, a 70-year-old woman who retrained as a social worker later in life. She is a single woman who still works two days a week. Her income just puts her above the threshold for social housing; therefore, she is facing ongoing housing insecurity in the private rental market. She does not have family to call on should she become homeless. Francine faces increasing stress and anxiety as she ponders how long she can continue to work and support herself. She told me that she feels desperate.

Every way one looks at it, every way one cuts it, women miss out—women and insecure work, child care, education, rural and regional women, women in small business, unpaid labour, women as carers and disadvantaged communities. I call on the Government to particularly recognise the plight of older women who are experiencing homelessness. I also call on the Premier to commit to long-term housing solutions and other responses to prevent homelessness. I recognise the many heroes of the homeless and domestic violence sectors and their peak bodies. I acknowledge long-term advocate and president of the Australian Services Union, Narelle Clay. I recognise also the many tenancy advocates and their agencies across this State, including Ben from the Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre in my electorate.

I congratulate Homelessness NSW on its tireless advocacy, community education and support roles. Thanks to all my Blue Mountains neighbourhood centres and family support services that deal with this vulnerability every day, and the exceptional Wimlah refuge team. All of those organisations are at the front line of one of the hardest issues facing our community. I thank my colleague Jo Haylen, the member for Summer Hill, for her work with me on this important issue in her roles as shadow Minister for Seniors and Volunteers. I am sure that Madam Deputy Speaker would agree that adequate housing is a basic human right; without it we deny citizens of their dignity and participation in our democracy. To all of those people who are homeless, or at risk of being homeless, I say as someone who as a young child lived in a car with her mother, brothers and sisters for a period without the roof of a home over our heads: We see you, we hear you and we care.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MRS LOIS JOYCE LOUGHNAN, OAM**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:39:07):** With a heavy heart I inform the House of the passing of a local legend, Mrs Lois Joyce Loughnan, OAM. Lois, who passed away on 30 April this year, was a much-loved member of our community. Fittingly, a memorial service was conducted at All Saints' Oatley West Anglican Church, a parish to which Lois gave so much. Even in her retirement Lois was ever-reliable in running the seniors ministry and in many ways that was indicative of her life. Much of her brilliant 95 years were dedicated to others. I had the honour of knowing Lois personally when we sat on the board of Mortdale Community Services, now known as Jubilee Community Services, and even then Lois' kind heart, hard work and reliability was obvious to all of us.

In Lois' role with Jubilee Community Services her passion for helping the community was evident. In fact her work was influential in providing a range of specialised services to vulnerable members of our local community. Lois helped lay the foundations for programs which still exist today, including aged-care services programs, children services, mental health services, family services and community services. She was also passionate about education. She was involved in facilitating classes and groups that taught valuable skills to members of the community. In this sense Lois' legacy will live on well beyond her years. It is important that we honour her memory and never forget her contribution.

Recently I stumbled across an article written in 2003 after Lois had received her OAM. The article, which was published on the Sydney Anglicans' website, was titled "God's workers bear fruit." Sitting at the top of the article is the name Mrs Lois Loughnan, OAM. It acknowledges her work in helping to found Georges River Community Care with other Christians in the 1970s and her ongoing commitment to the organisation's management committee. At the time Lois was almost 80 years old. I would say that her loved ones may have been telling her to slow down but slowing down was never in Lois' blood.

Lois was a woman of service and reliability. In my opinion that is one of the most honourable legacies a person can have. Although circumstances prevented us from physically attending, I could not help but be moved by the readings of the memorial service. One reading in particular stood out to me. "Hearing God's Words" comes from Psalms 116:1-19. In essence, it is about servitude and readily serving others. Lois was a woman of strong

faith through word, but it was her actions that truly proved a dedication to the community, particularly to those less fortunate.

I said earlier that Lois leaves behind a community that will be weaker for its loss; however, it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the people who Lois loved most. If I may quote Lois' obituary, she was the much-loved wife of John, mother of Ian, Wendy and Sue, mother-in-law of Sue and Keith, grandmother of Ruth, Marion, James, John, Hugh, Alice, Tom, Harriet and Hal and of their partners, Claire, Reece, Will and Mel and great-grandmother of Annaliese, Liam, Chloe, Frankie, Jesse, Keira, Eliot, Maddison and Penny. Like the community, I am sure that Lois' absence leaves a hole in her family. But, also like the community, it is my hope that her legacy has inspired those around her. On behalf of the community and members of this House I thank the late great Mrs Lois Joyce Loughnan, OAM, for the service she has given us, the lessons she has taught us and the memories she has made with us. May Lois rest in peace and may her legacy be honoured forever.

#### **EDUCATION WEEK AND EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (19:44:33):** This week is both Education Week and Early Learning Matters Week. While Education Week focuses on learning in years K-12, Early Learning Matters Week shines a light on the early years of a child's life when brain development is rapid and can be supported by quality early learning experiences. The benefits that children in my electorate of Charlestown obtain from access to more than 30 early childhood learning service providers include the development of critical social and emotional skills, development of fine motor and sensory skills and fostering the development of language skills. We know that children who undertake early childhood learning do better in every area of life for the rest of their lives. The benefits of quality early childhood education do not stop there.

Australia's first comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of early childhood learning, commissioned by The Front Project and undertaken by PwC Australia, shows that for every one dollar spent on quality early learning education there is a two-dollar return over the lifetime of a child. Early Learning Matters Week is most certainly a time to reflect on the grim statistics that show that New South Wales has among the lowest participation rates in early childhood education across all of Australia's States and Territories. Despite numerous policy announcements by the New South Wales Government in recent years, this alarming statistic is not improving nearly fast enough.

Unfortunately that statistic holds true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in New South Wales who participate in early childhood learning in the year before school at a rate of just 75.7 per cent. That is a particularly shocking statistic to hear on this day, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. New South Wales is now a signatory to the new Closing the Gap targets, under which this Government has committed to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in the year before full-time schooling to 95 per cent by 2025. We have a very long way to go in order to meet this commitment, not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Charlestown electorate but also for Indigenous children across the State and, indeed, the whole of Australia.

When it comes to the affordability of early childhood learning, Charlestown parents, like those across the State, are bearing hefty out-of-pocket costs in order to have their children benefit from early childhood learning. The cost of early childhood learning in New South Wales is the most expensive in the country. The bad news about early childhood learning continues when it comes to the passionate and dedicated workforce that delivers quality learning experiences to our children. Recently I was accompanied by the Leader of the Opposition and the members for the electorates of Cessnock and Newcastle on a visit to Cardiff Community Preschool, where I met with my constituent and director of the preschool, James Petrovic.

Mr Petrovic holds a Bachelor of Education majoring in early childhood education and a Master of Early Childhood Education. He brings 19 years of experience to the role of director at Cardiff Community Preschool. It is a position he has held for 10 years. For all his years of experience and qualifications, he earns \$72,531 per year under the modern teaching award. In order to make ends meet and support his young family, Mr Petrovic moonlights as a cleaner and lectures at TAFE on early childhood education. Mr Petrovic is certainly not an isolated case. The early childhood learning sector relies on the longstanding underpayment of its workforce, which I note is 97 per cent female. On Friday my office was contacted by an early childhood teacher named Emma. She wrote:

I would love to see someone advocating for early childhood teachers' wages to increase to be more reflective of just how critical this period of development is for our children. I have seen many incredible teachers leave the profession as they simply can't afford to accept such low pay anymore.

Emma is right. The pay disparity between early childhood educators and other equivalently qualified professionals must be addressed. COVID-19 has lifted the lid on the complexity of structures that sit behind the New South Wales early childhood learning system. What we find when we lift the lid is a system that is cobbled

together, runs across every level of government and across private, not-for-profit and public sectors, is severely underfunded and is a shambles. This cannot continue. It is time for reform.

During this Education Week and Early Learning Matters Week I pay tribute to the educators in the Charlestown electorate and across the State, who have continued to deliver learning experiences to the children of this State throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These teachers, educators and workers have faced enormous pressure with not nearly enough guidance from this Government while they have continued their essential work educating and caring for our children. Whether it be in preschools, long day care centres, family day care, before and after school care, primary schools or high schools, to all of those educators who have ensured our children have continued to learn throughout this time of great uncertainty I say thank you.

#### TRIBUTE TO MALCOLM WILLIAM ROTH

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:49:40):** Tonight I recognise an amazing man who made an invaluable contribution to the Mudgee and Eurunderee communities. Malcolm William Roth passed away on 21 July after a short illness at 81 years of age. Malcolm was the dearly beloved husband of Margaret and much-loved father and father-in-law of Antony, Adrienne and Rob and Wendy and Andrew. He was also the cherished pop of his grandchildren Harry, George, Jack, Chloe and Sam. I offer my sincere condolences to all of them. While I know they will be doing things tough, I hope they realise the impact that Malcolm had on the region.

Mudgee's reputation as one of Australia's top wine production areas can be traced back to Malcolm's family, among others. As the great-grandson of Mudgee winemaking founder Adam Roth, it was no real surprise that Malcolm made his way into the industry at a fairly young age. A wonderful vigneron in his own right, Malcolm's Westcourt Wines had a strong reputation in the industry and won countless awards. The Westcourt name has strong links with the Mudgee region overall, with the property previously in the hands of Mr Du Seaton, who happened to own the 1917 Melbourne Cup winner of the same name as the property. Just one example of Malcolm and Margaret Roth's sense of community was hosting an event at the property in 2017 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Westcourt's win in the race that stops a nation. They hosted 150 guests and raised a significant amount of money for both CareFlight and the Mudgee Lions Club.

Aside from being a wonderful winemaker, Malcolm also spent a significant part of his life volunteering with the Cudgegong Rural Fire Service. I was lucky enough to join with some of the heads of the RFS last November to recognise several members for outstanding achievements, including Malcolm. He had been part of the Lawson brigade since 1953. At that stage he was only 14. He told me that night that he had been very keen to be part of the group. He was allowed in and he loved being part of it the entire time. He served as captain for 25 years and was presented with the Long Service Medal 5th clasp to recognise his 67 years of service.

Malcolm also spent 31 years on the boards of various forms of the old Livestock Health and Pest Authority. He became a director of the Pastures Protection Board in 1981 and became chair in 1989, holding that position for 24 years. He saw the organisation through its transition into the Rural Lands Protection Board in 1990, the Mudgee-Merriwa amalgamation in 1988 and the merging of Mudgee, Merriwa, Tamworth and Coonabarabran in 2009 before he retired at the end of 2013. Many of the tributes I have seen since Malcolm's passing centre on his ability as a storyteller who could captivate a crowd with his tales about life in the Mudgee region. He really was good at spinning a yarn and also enjoyed sharing his memories. Some of those tributes came from friends at Mudgee Bowling Club, including one from Ken Sampson which appeared in last Friday's *Mudgee Guardian*. He stated:

Malcolm William Roth was a member of the Mudgee Bowling Club for over 50 years and his love of the game and his personality when around a bowling club made Malcolm a very popular bowler with members and visitors.

Malcolm won many club, district and zone events, and was a valued member in all bowls teams.

He held the positions of Patron, and President of the Mudgee Bowling Club, President of the district and President of zone 5.

Again they are just some of the examples of Malcolm's involvement right across the community. Not content with being a husband, brother, father, grandfather, vigneron, businessman and farmer, he still found time to be a fundraiser, an advocate, a Rural Fire Service volunteer and an active member of different bowling organisations across not only his hometown but also the entire region. Malcolm Roth was also a staunch Nationals supporter who always had the best interests of primary producers at heart and advocated for the issues confronting our regions to be recognised by decision-makers in this very building. He was not backward in coming forward when it came to discussing a problem that he thought needed fixing but his warm, direct but endearing nature was very effective and won many people over.

Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic has stopped many people from being able to farewell their loved ones. That was the case on 28 July when a small service was held to commemorate and celebrate Malcolm's amazing life. A live stream was made available, and I have no doubt that, given his wide circle of family and

friends, he would have been watched right across the country. Malcolm Roth truly was a one-of-a-kind person, a great bloke. He had the uncanny knack of making people feel comfortable when they were in his company and he was someone that I regarded as a friend. He will be missed. Vale, Malcolm Roth.

### ST JOHN'S ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (19:54:30):** I bring to the attention of the House St John's Anglican Cathedral, which stands in the heart of the City of Parramatta and which is the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Australia. The parish was formed in 1802 and Christian worship has been happening in Parramatta since the very first months of the colony. St John's now comprises over 1,000 members drawn from and representing every culture and ethnicity in Greater Parramatta. The congregations meet in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Farsi and Gujarati; the pastors were born and educated in their respective country of origin and migrated to Australia. Every member, regardless of background, loves St John's, the heritage it represents and the unity they enjoy together.

The children's and youth ministries draw together out of the multiple backgrounds a second generation of English-speaking future young leaders. It is difficult to think of any other comparable organisation that draws together and unifies such a remarkably diverse group of people. In view of the multilingual nature of St John's congregations, for decades the church has maintained a focus on assisting new migrants and refugees with the English language. The church effectively has run an English School with classes twice weekly for 120 students who predominantly come from China, Iran, and Afghanistan. There is no requirement for Christian faith and about half of them are nominally Muslim. I congratulate St John's on its commitment to the community and also acknowledge Mrs Sue Bolton, who has led the service for the past two decades.

The cathedral itself is a State heritage asset and is recognised as a jewel in the crown of Parramatta. Present congregations work hard to preserve and enhance the value of the cathedral for future generations in Parramatta. For decades the cathedral has been open during weekdays for people to find a place of respite and quiet for prayer and meditation or to seek help—typically 7,000 to 8,000 people each year. I recognise Janice and Ron Byrne, who have overseen this service. Currently St John's envisages developing the site between Macquarie Street to the north and the railway to the south. This is an initiative of St John's Parish. The parish has experienced great collaboration with both the City of Parramatta Council and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The parish has been part of the history of Parramatta for over 200 years—indeed, since it was established—and will continue to be committed to the welfare of the city. The goals of this development are to enhance the primacy of the St John's Cathedral heritage building in a secure setting within the St John's precinct; create an interconnected space for the various congregations and preserve the cathedral itself as a State heritage asset for Parramatta; expand the capacity and facilities for ministry; strengthen the connectivity between community and parish uses within the greater civic area; and create a precinct, which will be connected to the wider Parramatta CBD and which will form a new western end to Parramatta Square. I acknowledge Bruce Morrison, Senior Minister, for his dedication both to St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta, and to the community.

### EDUCATION WEEK

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (19:58:40):** This week marks Education Week, which is a celebration of all things public schools and all the wonderful things about public schools. Like Madam Temporary Speaker and the member for Wallsend, I am a very proud product of the public education system and have had the great honour of working in the public education system. I acknowledge the presence of the former Minister for Education with whom I enjoyed many sparring sessions. But the one thing we agreed on was that public education—as well as education generally—is so important. It seems that we are involved with members who are involved with education. The husband of the member for Cootamundra is the principal of Young High School and I hear he is doing very well as the department leader, which is fantastic.

The big theme of Education Week is Learning Together. We know that there are three key factors of public education: the idea of the schools being the cornerstone of their community, the idea of schools engendering the ability not only to change but also to develop resilience within children and communities, and the idea that our schools facilitate connecting. Across the more than 2,200 New South Wales public schools, we see those factors at work every day. I have always maintained it is essential for the New South Wales community to move away from the public versus private school argument, but what we should achieve collectively is every school being a great school in which every kid has the best possible opportunity, regardless of the school and the system in which they enrol. When we address that issue properly we will create equity. Only then will we have the best possible opportunities for kids.

The argument will always be about education funding—where it is appropriate and is not appropriate. I have made very clear my belief in the needs-based funding model, which I think is the fairest possible model, and I really hope that that is achieved. If we truly adhere to the belief that every school will be a great school, we must examine what we can do to ensure that children have the same options as everybody else, regardless of where they live, and regardless of their cultural and financial background. We know that public schools do a lot of the heavy lifting and that proportionally they teach a larger number of students with learning, physical and language disabilities, and students who do not have the same resources as others.

I do not intend to make my speech a treatise on what is fair and what is not fair. Instead I want my speech to be a testimony to the merits of public education. I thank everybody who is involved in the public education system. We often thank schoolteachers, but there are others who make it happen, such as general assistants who are paid so little but who manage to make everything work, the people at the front office who do immense work, who earn only a fraction of what they could earn in the corporate world and who know everything about the local community and the school. I have walked that walk, as has Madam Temporary Speaker, and we know that schools are about much more than what happens in classrooms. Indeed, there is the invisible backpack.

When a kid walks into school, we do not know the experience that that kid has had outside school. The school may be the only place where they feel safe, valued, respected and can be themselves. Sometimes we understate the importance of those factors being associated with our schools, but those things are about building the individual. I hasten to add that that is not done at the expense of maintaining a primary focus on developing academic excellence and rigour. It must be the absolute goal of every teacher to produce the very best academically from the child who is in their classroom. I say that because I know many teachers. I know the passion and compassion of teachers is immeasurable and goes beyond simply focusing on results. Teachers know that some kids in their classroom will have come from far behind and are faced with multiple difficulties, but somehow the teachers make it happen for them.

I will quickly share one story about a woodwork teacher I worked with who taught some of the most difficult kids in the school. He managed to get those kids to produce unbelievably good work—pool tables, bedroom suites, dining tables—for their HSC. He discovered they were immensely talented and he discovered the thing that enables every child to succeed. I conclude with that story because every person has an ability. Every child, regardless of their difficulties and the schools they attend, will be able to discover their ability if there is passion and a real commitment to developing it. I thank all the teachers, all the school staff members and all those who send their children to public schools, as I do. I also thank those who believe in the public education system, such as the Public Education Foundation, and all those who want to make our world better and more equitable.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I strongly endorse the remarks made by the member for Lakemba. As a product of public schools and as a teacher who taught in the most difficult schools in New South Wales, I know we have a long way to go before we achieve equity for all children. I would love to see that.

## SECOND WORLD WAR

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:04:07):** Saturday 15 August marks 75 years since the end of the Second World War. The Australians who danced through the streets of Sydney, littered Martin Place with streamers and kicked up their heels across the country were exhausted after nearly six years of the most destructive global conflict the world has ever seen. This was a conflict that called Australians from all walks of life, at first to defend a distant imperial ally and later to repel the invasion of our own shores. There are few people still alive who can recall the sheer relief and unbridled joy the first VP Day brought. This was a war that touched the lives of all Australians and it was a victory that did not come without sacrifice. Over 27,000 Australians lost their lives and 23,000 were wounded, with hundreds dying in training and accidents, dotting our regional cemeteries with the iconic white Commonwealth war grave headstones. These six years of warfare had seen Pat Hughes from Cooma become Australia's top-scoring flying ace of the Battle of Britain. He gave his life just weeks before his twenty-third birthday. He fought so ferociously during those months of intense aerial conflict. Only two Australians would go on to individually destroy more aircraft over the next five years of the war.

Thomas Barnes from Cootamundra lost his life in the last months of the war, fighting with the 2nd AIF's Z Special Unit in Papua New Guinea. The war had led Norman Williams from Narrandera to the dangerous skies above Germany, where he huddled frozen in the rear gun turret of a Halifax bomber lighting the path for other crews to follow and shooting down nine enemy aircraft in the process. Warrant Officer Norman Williams was the RAAF's only non-fighter pilot ace of the war. It saw women like Margot Cooper serve in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force at Temora's Elementary Flying Training School, where 2,400 pilots were trained throughout the course of the war. Margot's handwritten diary was found in May this year on a supermarket floor in Sydney's north. Her notes about life at the military base, poetry and experiences have been returned to her daughter in Dubbo.

John Sullivan, a 15-year-old child, witnessed the tragedy of a Beaufighter that had refuelled in his home town of Narrandera crash into a nearby canal bank, killing not only the pilot but six ground staff who had been taken for a joy ride to see the town from the air. The generation that fought in this terrible conflict is sadly leaving us. Just last month Gundagai lost its sole-surviving Second World War veteran. Mick Heydon was 100 years old. Born in Gundagai in February 1920, he grew up at Coolac and enlisted as a private in the 129th Australian General Transport Company as a driver-mechanic. He served in Port Moresby, Lai, Bougainville and other points across the Pacific. Mick proudly marched at local Anzac Day commemorations, including just last year at the grand age of 99. Gundagai has lost not only a connection to its past but a true gentleman who encompassed the very best of what it means to be Australian.

In losing these men and women, the Anzac spirit of the Second World War generation passes from living memory to mythology. They gain a perpetual youthfulness in our memory but we lose a flesh-and-blood touchstone of the experience of living through a deadly global conflict that saw our nation in a struggle for its very survival. The term "lest we forget" is not just about commemorating those who have passed; it is about honouring a legacy of peace that was hard won by Australia's youth against foreign forces who sought to subjugate the world. It is about recognising the service of all veterans and ensuring that we do everything we can for those still living who carry the burden of their experiences in their day-to-day lives. It is about recognising what can be achieved when nations have a common goal and share resources and skills and it is about reminding ourselves of the generations of Australians who have looked at an overwhelming task with resolution, courage and mateship. May we be worthy successors to that legacy.

### COVID-19 AND FREEDOM

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:08:58):** Listening to people throughout Pittwater, a recurring theme over recent months has been fear of a loss of freedom. A loss of freedom of religion in light of Federal debates about efforts to enshrine religious freedom in Commonwealth law. A loss of freedom of political expression in light of violent protests in Hong Kong about the efficacy of the one nation, two systems accord. A loss of freedom of speech in light of public health implications of Black Lives Matter protests. A loss of freedom of movement in light of border closures and compulsory quarantine of returning travellers. And a loss of freedom of association in light of health orders prescribing caps on gatherings and mandating social distancing.

The year 2020 has seen a coalescence of attacks on western conceptions of freedom that threaten to undermine the principles of liberal democracy. It is timely in this place therefore to reflect on freedom, its nature, and its enduring importance. J S Mill wrote of freedom as an equation involving the absence of arbitrary restraints whilst accounting for the rights of others—the whole idea that one can do whatever one wants but just so long as one does not hurt anyone else. That is a pretty big qualifier, a pretty significant "but". In a pandemic the exercise of many freedoms might just hurt somebody else, somebody vulnerable. As we have seen in Europe, in the Americas and closer to home in Victoria, the whole utilitarian premise that government should look after the interests of the majority simply does not work in a civilised society. As John Donne observed, the bell tolls for all of us.

One death diminishes all of us. Each death destroys a little more confidence, erodes a little bit more of our community, incubates a little more fear. In our current crisis we need to recognise that freedom is free will tempered by moral responsibility; that in order to enjoy the freedom to worship, to free assembly, to free speech, we need to safeguard the freedoms from: freedom from want, freedom from fear; that in order to enjoy the benefits of a free society where a level of general welfare is guaranteed by the State we need to secure those conditions necessary to sustain our general prosperity. Freedom from want means that for a time we need to find new ways to engage in political free speech. Online hearings for contentious planning matters spring to mind or to engage in freedom of religion through online churches which have seen some congregations surge in numbers during the pandemic. Freedom from fear might mean that we can tailor freedom of movement so that we might enjoy a wander around our local community and leave wandering around the nation or the world for another time.

The health of our economy, even the survival of our economy, depends on us focusing a little less on our freedoms of and a little more on our freedoms from. As Milton Friedman identified, economic freedom is a precondition to political freedom. The world's poorest nations are also among its most despotic and chaotic. As Amartya Sen described, freedom is more about our capabilities, not our rights. How can a person be truly free if circumstance robs them of employment, health and education? All of these things ultimately depend upon our prosperity. In basic terms, as Sen put it, development is freedom. We cannot forget that all of the great environmental and social outcomes we desire depend upon our capabilities to secure them. Poverty is an antonym to freedom just as much as slavery is an antonym to freedom.

That is why current debates about freedom need to be framed in communal terms and not just in individual terms. Individual freedoms are only secured by corporate action. A free society is one where people care for each

other. An enslaved society is one where some people care only for themselves. None of this is new. Our forebears fought to defend the freedoms we enjoy. Our time has come to fight in our way to defend the freedoms we hold so dear today. It is ironic that to secure freedom we must surrender it. As Edmund Burke opined, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Now is the time for us to be vigilant: about washing hands, observing social distancing or wearing a mask where we cannot do so, obeying health orders and recognising that safeguarding our freedoms requires our sacrifice. While securing freedom requires forbearance for a little while, how much richer will our liberties appear, how much more precious will our freedoms become once we emerge from our current peril.

### COVID-19

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (20:13:51):** With an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in New South Wales, it has never been more important for every member of our community to comply with COVID Safe regulations. The latest wave of COVID-19 infections has reached the electorate of Prospect, with a cluster of cases related to the Thai Rock Restaurant and businesses at Stockland Wetherill Park. Further cases have been detected at Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School, forcing it to close and undergo deep cleaning. A staff member at Girraween Public School has contracted the virus.

After being informed of the first case linked to the restaurant, Thai Rock at Wetherill Park immediately closed. All staff were then tested for COVID-19 and entered isolation. Thanks to diligent record keeping at Thai Rock, NSW Health contact tracers have been able to trace customers and ensure that they receive tests when necessary and have isolated. As of today, 103 people have been identified from that cluster, which highlights the importance of businesses complying with their COVID-safe obligations. In this instance, patrons were tracked down and asked to self-isolate. However, if the staff at the Thai Rock cafe at Wetherill Park had not followed their obligations, further community transmission would have been risked because many more customers would have spent longer in our community.

It is incumbent on all of us, both as individuals and businesses, to comply with COVID-safe restrictions. Businesses must follow their COVID Safety Plans to ensure that they are keeping our community safe. In the electorate of Prospect, businesses are doing the right thing by remaining cautious. We must all take responsibility as individuals. It is all too easy for us to breach government advice and make mistakes—to reach out our hands to greet somebody, sit close to a friend or forget to sanitise our hands. We will all make mistakes over the coming months as we try to stop the spread of COVID-19, but we must all play our part by following the advice of healthcare experts and professionals and taking responsibility for our actions.

Most people have been trying their best to keep distanced and stay safe, and the intention remains to work together to slow the spread of COVID-19. We want every person and business that believes they have been at risk of COVID-19 transmission to come forward to authorities to undertake appropriate testing. We should thank those who get tested for their responsible actions. Despite the best efforts of businesses and individuals, outbreaks are likely to continue. In light of the negative media and social media attention piled onto individuals with COVID-19 and affected business, we must act with kindness and compassion. At times people have acted irresponsibly, but we all must remember how easy it is for this virus to spread. It is still possible for a cluster to form almost anywhere, even when individuals and businesses follow government advice. Despite the responsible and sensible actions of most individuals and businesses, there continues to be some bad actors—people gathering for large parties or businesses not making appropriate efforts to accurately record customer details. They are in the minority but their actions risk accelerating the transmission of the virus.

It is crucial that the New South Wales Government provides the necessary resources to Liquor & Gaming NSW, the NSW Police Force and other relevant agencies to increase inspections and ensure a rapid response to reports of COVID-safe breaches. For the western and south-western Sydney communities where the latest outbreaks of COVID-19 have been concentrated, this has been the most difficult time of the pandemic—but there is a resolve to get through this together. For months now, members of our community have come together to support each other during this health and economic crisis. Although we are facing new challenges, our community has responded accordingly by continuing to support those who have been affected. As this virus continues to circulate, we must follow the community's lead and treat each other with compassion. I thank everyone who has complied with the New South Wales Government directions. I encourage all businesses and community members to remain vigilant to the danger of COVID-19. Together, as a community, we will defeat this virus.

### CANOWINDRA SCHOOL CROSSING

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (20:18:48):** I wish to discuss the behaviour of some Government members who have placed political pointscoring ahead of progress and cooperation in the community. Since being elected to represent my constituents of the Orange electorate, I have witnessed this Coalition Government destructively oppose or vote down sound legislation and relevant motions brought to this House by any other



political party. Political pointscoring is the priority of The Nationals. Rather than constructively supporting legislation or motions for the advancement of rural and regional New South Wales, they instead work very hard to place any barrier in front of other-branded representatives. They think of themselves before they think of the community they purport to represent. The basis of my statement tonight is the recent actions by the member for Cootamundra. Members will recall that I brought a motion before the House on 14 November 2019 calling on the Government to install a supervised school crossing at Tilga Street in Canowindra for the safe passage of students who cross that busy road while walking to and from their schools. Schoolchildren face continued danger crossing that road without supervision and many near misses have been reported.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Point of order: Under the standing orders private members' statements must be about a member's electorate and not something outside of the electorate.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** There is absolutely no point of order. This is just an attempt to delay and defer my private member's statement.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** This is a matter that is outside his electorate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** In private members' statements we allow a lot of latitude on all sides. There is no point of order in this case.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** Considering that my motion was regarding the issue of the safety of children, the amendment by the member for Cootamundra was not noble, not conscionable and barren of any consideration of children—those who are the most precious and vulnerable. In her contribution on 14 November last year after she moved her amendment, the second sentence to come out of her mouth was, "When it comes to the safety of our schoolchildren there is no room for playing politics." Those are such hypocritical words. Playing politics must mean something completely different in The Nationals' dictionary, because on 21 July 2020 the member for Cootamundra lobbed unannounced into the electorate of Orange with her bureaucrats in tow to announce that she and her Government would commit to installing a supervised crossing at Tilga Street in Canowindra.

Her antithetic actions regarding this important matter of children's safety are curious indeed. If her contrary words and actions are not considered to be playing politics then I do not know what is. Using the safety of schoolchildren is no game. Petty playing of politics is potentially dangerous. The member for Cootamundra and her colleagues in The Nationals have proven that they would rather punish the community and continue to place people's lives at risk for political pointscoring.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Point of order—

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** I am disappointed in the member for Cootamundra.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** There are two parts to the point of order. Firstly, this is attacking a member. That should be done by way of substantive motion rather than in a private member's statement.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** What is the point of order?

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** It is under Standing Order 73. Secondly, this motion is about a person and not about the member's electorate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Orange will be careful to refer to electorates rather than a member. He will amend what he is going to say carefully.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** With all due respect, this is about an issue affecting my electorate and is in relation to a supervised school crossing at Canowindra. It is pathetic that members have to act as a protection racket for one of their colleagues who made a stupid decision to amend the motion. This is something that affects my electorate.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Private members' statements are not an opportunity to debate previous notices of motions.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** What standing order are you referring to?

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** It is Standing Order 73. This should be done by way of substantive motion.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** This is not an imputation, this is a fact, so Standing Order 73 is not the relevant one. But I will move on. I am personally disappointed in the member for Cootamundra. I previously held the view that she was different from many of her colleagues. Clearly she is not. She has proven to be one and the same. The feedback I have received from the electorates of Orange and Cootamundra reinforces that. Playing politics with children's lives is disgraceful. The member for Cootamundra should take a moment to reflect on her political games and consider community safety first and foremost.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Point of order: This is a direct imputation on the reputation of a person who has no opportunity to answer it. This is absolutely disgraceful.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Myall Lakes will resume his seat. The member for Orange will be careful about what he says. He will not refer to another member. We are talking about a crossing, which is important.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** This should be a wake-up call to everyone in this place to consider the people of our State instead of being so selfish as to worry about their personal political opportunity and longevity.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (20:24:48):** We have just heard an attack on a member, which is quite improper, by the member for Orange. First, private members' statements are used to talk about issues in a member's electorate and are not to be used to talk about a previous debate that has been had in this House. The member is trying to debate the previous issue. Secondly, it is not the time to make improper imputations about another member. That should be done under Standing Order 73. It is absolutely disgraceful that the member for Orange talks about another member like that in this place. He should be condemned by this House for the way he has spoken about another member of the House in a private member's statement when no-one else has a right of reply.

#### ACCELERATED INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (20:25:47):** The Riverstone electorate, along with other parts of the local government areas [LGAs] of Blacktown and The Hills, is said to benefit from new sports fields and courts, more green space and better roads thanks to the New South Wales Government's Accelerated Infrastructure Fund [AIF]. Recently it was announced that 14 projects will share in more than \$145 million through the fund, with \$75.9 million from the New South Wales Government and \$70 million from developer contributions to Blacktown City Council and The Hills Shire Council to help unlock new residential, commercial and industrial development in north-west Sydney.

The funding will help to deliver local infrastructure projects faster, with constructions to start within six months. This funding is great news for the Riverstone electorate and surrounding areas. The projects were selected on the basis that they were able to be ready to commence within the six-month time frame. The Government reached out to councils in these growth areas to determine which projects might meet those criteria and councils submitted those projects for consideration. The Accelerated Infrastructure Fund will help to close the gap between developer contributions and the actual cost of projects to support the continued delivery of new homes and employment lands in north-west Sydney.

This is a great example of the State helping local government to accelerate projects that stimulate the economy and create jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. At times we have heard about councils complaining about cost-shifting. Here we have the reverse: the State is contributing towards the costs of projects that councils were going to undertake to bring them forward in time to benefit the community. Some of the projects to receive funding include the upgrading of Loftus Street from a rural road to a full-width sub-arterial road from Windsor Road to Schoffel Street, including realigning the Windsor Road intersection, to provide better access for residents of the Grantham Farm Estate and new housing areas in Riverstone at a cost of \$14.85 million to the State Government.

Another project is providing a new regional sports park at Schofields at a cost of \$9 million, including cricket and soccer playing fields, playgrounds and amenities with integrated stormwater infrastructure. The State Government is contributing \$220,000 towards the upgrading of Rouse Road from a rural road to a standard collector road to connect Windsor Road to the new Rouse Road bridge at Second Ponds Creek, which will provide better access for the Tallawong station precinct. The upgrading of Hezlett Road to four lanes and improving intersections with Curtis Road and Gum Nut Close will happen in The Hills Shire Council area, as will the delivery of a multipurpose sporting and recreational facility at Balmoral Road Reserve, including four multipurpose fields, two cricket ovals, six tennis courts, a playground and picnic areas.

A project of interest to the people of Marsden Park is the upgrading of Glengarrie Road at Marsden Park to provide better access and egress for the residents of Elara. The State Government is kicking in \$4.4 million there. That is a particular sore point because, as mentioned earlier by the member for Londonderry, Elara is a

rapidly growing suburb. One of the issues is traffic access to the place. This is the secondary entrance to that new suburb, which council has the responsibility of upgrading. The community has been desperately waiting for that upgrade and the State Government is going to kick in to make it happen sooner so that there is some relief for the people of Elara.

The funding was welcomed by the mayors of Blacktown City Council and The Hills Shire Council, Councillor Tony Bleasdale and Dr Michelle Byrne respectively, who congratulated the New South Wales Government on enabling the councils to bring forward important community projects while creating vital construction jobs. To support the construction sector, existing local contribution caps of \$50,000 in both The Hills and Blacktown LGAs, which were due to expire on 30 June 2020, will be continued through to 31 December 2020. All of those projects and a number of others that I will mention in a moment will directly contribute to a better amenity for the people of this region, who are obviously looking forward to the new infrastructure that comes as development continues.

A couple of the other projects of real significance to people in my electorate are the widening of Railway Terrace outside Schofields station and the construction of new traffic signalised intersections there to improve traffic flow; the creation of a park next to the new public school the Government is building at Farmland Drive, Schofields, which will be a shared facility between the school and the community; the widening and upgrading of Grange Avenue at its western end between Richmond Road and Bells Creek to support the development of the suburb that is about to be developed; and the upgrading of Regent Street, Riverstone to a nine-metre carriageway with a new seal to serve the Riverstone precinct. All of those areas are growing fast. The Government is using the stimulus funding to support the needs of the people of the north-west.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (20:30:49):** This week is Homelessness Week. I and many others, particularly members on this side of the House, acknowledge the important work that our specialist homelessness services are doing every day and night to try to improve the lives of those most vulnerable. This week is an opportunity for all of us to acknowledge and remember that in the communities we represent not everybody has a stable home. On any given night there are too many people right across our electorates sleeping rough, couch surfing, sleeping in unsuitable accommodation or sleeping in very overcrowded conditions. We know from the census figures that from 2011 to 2016 homelessness in New South Wales increased an incredible 37 per cent.

But this year during the global COVID-19 pandemic we as members also need to acknowledge just how incredibly important it is to have a safe place to call home. This pandemic has unveiled many inequalities: You cannot stay home and stay safe if you have nowhere to go; you cannot keep your health safe without the safety and security of a place to call home; and you need the basics of warm water and soap to wash and keep your hands clean, as we have been told to do during this pandemic. The Premier made an election commitment—which we on this side commend—to halve the number of those sleeping rough across the State by 2025. This is an election promise and of course we on this side will hold the Government to account, but 2020 has thrown us all a massive challenge. I acknowledge the member for Kiama for his collaborative approach: He has worked with me and Labor Opposition members to continue to try to improve the situation during COVID-19 for those without permanent accommodation.

I will be the first to say, as I said a little over a year ago during my contribution to debate on the budget: Homelessness is complex and it is an element of our society that we have been unable to resolve for too long. As policymakers we must and we can do better in this place. Homelessness is a symptom of a housing policy that is not working. Some may argue this is from a lack of funding or a lack of services, but the most obvious cause that every lower House member in this place understands is a lack of available social housing. An investment in social housing will not only improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our community, but it also will support jobs, create apprenticeships and create benefits to our economies right across New South Wales. Unlike investing in megaprojects, when we invest in social housing we can benefit local economies, local jobs, local tradies and local apprentices.

The reasons that have caused an individual to become homeless are not simple. The stories of those who experience homelessness are often harrowing and traumatic. I am sure many members in this place have met with homeless individuals many times. The reasons they are homeless are diverse and complex. Sometimes the reasons can be quite simple. However, the solution is never that easy. I will share the story of Erica, an 80-year-old pensioner who has rented privately for the past 30 years after she lost her much-loved husband.

Erica, who lives in the region I represent, lacks the security of a long-term tenancy and now faces a looming eviction. The property owners need to sell the property and Erica has been given notice of eviction. Erica has applied for every property in her area within her affordability. She has shared her journey of being one of 28 applicants competing for the same property. Erica has been looking for a suitable property to rent for more

than five weeks and fears she will be left with no choice but to sleep in her car. This is not what we need to be focused on. We need to ensure that people like Erica are linked with our specialised homelessness services to improve the lives of vulnerable people.

I acknowledge a number of people who do an outstanding job in our region to support those most vulnerable in our community—and I am sure the other members for the region would also acknowledge them: Narelle Clay, from Southern Youth and Family Services, who is a tireless advocate and a leading light when it comes to homelessness; Kathy Colyer from Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra who supports women in domestic violence in transition housing—I have worked with her for nearly a decade; and of course Mandy Booker from the Wollongong Homeless Hub who continues to do an outstanding job to support the most vulnerable across our region.

### COVID-19 AND BORDER COMMUNITIES

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (20:35:59):** A border closure process is a dramatic way to learn more about your community, its diversity and how people care for each other across the kilometres that separate them now more than ever. In Albury, Corowa, Mulwala, the upper Murray and the twin communities on the south of the border we can, on the one hand, be extremely grateful for the many hundreds of police and Australian Defence Force personnel who are pivotal in keeping New South Wales a safer place to live, work and run a business. On the other hand, the border community is struggling with the loss of jobs, the difficulty of looking after elderly family members, and the impacts on businesses that have already survived drought, bushfires and the first stages of COVID closures.

New South Wales-Victorian border communities have continued to show minimal COVID infections. This is testament to the protection offered by those enforcing the permits process, but equally important is the commitment of the vast majority of border residents. I can speak only for the people of the Albury electorate and say that they have dug deep and taken on the most complex web of restrictions with good grace. But there is real suffering going on, from financial to emotional and mental health. There is also a recognition, with such low virus numbers continuing week after week—it is now four weeks since the Victorian outbreaks were identified and the border closures introduced—that, in some cases, the border communities are living with a higher level of restriction on daily life than those in Sydney and Melbourne.

In my inaugural speech I spoke about the New South Wales-Victoria border in Albury being known as the "crossing place". Our identity along the Murray since Europeans arrived has been shaped by political boundaries—by lines on paper. The crossing place has become the harsh border, where decisions about sovereignty take real physical shape, where we can see what is now "in" and what is now "out". We have been tasked with being New South Wales southern boundary to limit the incursion of COVID into the broader New South Wales community. Our border pain is part of the price, part of taking a hit for the greater good. We know the border is a bulwark for the protection of the State. Of course we also benefit from the turning around of vehicles back to Melbourne. Protection has its price.

It was therefore a genuine boost to have a visit from the Minister for Finance and Small Business, Damien Tudehope, accompanied by the Small Business Commissioner. A roundtable of business leaders and representatives was held with Business NSW and provided valuable local feedback on the impacts of the restrictions on the border communities. I thank the Minister and commissioner for travelling to Albury and for meeting with business operators. I trust the information gained will work its way into government policy-making so that appropriate and substantial financial and other support is provided to border communities so they can survive the border closures and restrictions and then rebuild.

It must be understood in Sydney that many border businesses have not simply suffered from restricted access by their customers; they might quite literally have been cut off from half of them. Restrictions on border crossings imposed by New South Wales now rests in a difficult embrace with stage three restrictions imposed by Victoria on its regional citizens. According to a Business NSW economic impact survey the average weekly income loss by respondents on the border was in excess of \$8,500. Early reports from businesses in Albury show revenues and sales are down in the order of 30 per cent to 50 per cent in the first few days alone. Just 39 per cent of businesses are operating normally. Staff movements and reductions were also concerning, with respondents reducing staff by 1.2 full-time equivalents. We all want to help support border businesses that are getting hit from all sides, and we must help them.

From my perspective this must involve a mix of grants to provide cash to keep going and to keep the doors open, and incentives to keep employing people. Regional payroll tax should be considered as this is a tool capable of delivering a shot of assistance and stimulus right into the heart of each country town. That is also where extra money will be spent—in local shops and on local services. This week I am in Parliament House in Sydney, away from my community. I continue to witness the trauma. I also bear the frustrations borne by my community. I thank

my communities and acknowledge their resilience and dogged support for enduring the discomfort and dislocation of the struggle. I ask that we continue to do what a great community does and keep looking out for one another. We will look back on this time and irrespective of the outcome we will know that we have played our part.

### **MODERN SLAVERY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (20:41:14):** Modern day slavery is one of the greatest continuing plights on New South Wales and Australian society. All people have a right to live freely without fear of control or violence. Yet we continue to see the severe exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. Modern day slavery is all around us, but often sits just out of sight. People can become entrapped working in industries we engage with every day making clothes, serving food, picking crops, working in factories, even working in homes in suburbs across New South Wales as cooks, cleaners or nannies; migrant workers being paid below minimum wages and working long hours; a child bride being forced to marry her father; child labour in its worst form.

There is growing evidence that modern slavery is alive and well in New South Wales and Australia. The electorate of Coogee is home to the Sisters of Charity Foundation, which, with the Salvation Army, is partnering to help the estimated 15,000 people who live in slavery-like conditions in Australia today by providing transitional housing to survivors of modern slavery. While I am incredibly thankful for the work of the Sisters of Charity and the Salvation Army in helping to rebuild the lives of those victims, the Government's inaction to address modern day slavery in New South Wales is astounding. In 2018 the New South Wales Parliament, with wide public support, passed the Modern Slavery Bill 2018 in both Houses. It was given royal assent, but the Act has since been blocked from coming into force by this democratically elected government.

Two years later, a law that is fundamental in protecting human rights has still not come into force because of the complete inaction of the Berejiklian Liberal-Nationals Government. This is despite the fact that the New South Wales Government's own anti-slavery website had decried modern slavery as an evil affecting at least 40 million people worldwide and thousands in Australia. The New South Wales Government should be leading, not lagging when it comes to addressing fundamental human rights. Yet that is exactly what we are seeing here. Instead it is choosing to pass the buck towards Federal laws, with lower standards than that of the New South Wales legislation, which is debasing of this Parliament and all those who worked to have the New South Wales bill passed in this place.

In the clear absence of action from the New South Wales Government a number of non-government organisations are leading the way to stop human exploitation in Australia. The Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network has taken a leading position in the abolition of slavery in Australia and Australian supply chains. Catholic entities have taken the lead in ensuring that human exploitation is removed from Australian supply chains. By conducting risk assessments on supply chains and engaging with suppliers Catholic entities have been able to reduce the risk that people held in modern slavery have been exploited during the production of goods or services used by Catholic entities.

This is a step that all businesses and government agencies in New South Wales should be undertaking to ensure that they are not profiting from the exploitation of our fellow humans. The Catholic Church's action in this area is of particular importance in light of the fact that in the 2019-20 financial year the Australian Federal Police received 223 reports of human trafficking, including 92 reports of forced marriage, 40 reports of sexual servitude and exploitation, 29 reports of forced labour, 28 reports of trafficking in persons, 20 reports of domestic servitude, six reports of deceptive recruiting, four reports of trafficking in children, three reports of debt bondage and one report of direct slavery. I am incredibly grateful for the efforts of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, the Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney and Anti-Slavery Australia. The continued advocacy of those organisations is crucial to ensure that our State finally takes strong action to eradicate modern slavery.

Again I remind this House that in 2018 the Parliament of New South Wales passed legislation to help eradicate modern slavery in New South Wales. Now in 2020 we find ourselves in the grip of a pandemic that has made work much more tenuous for many thousands of people, without the legislation to protect those who are most vulnerable. Those at greatest risk of exploitation, such as migrants, refugees and temporary visa holders, are finding themselves in increasingly insecure work because of the current economic downturn. It is an absolute disgrace that the legislation has not yet been proclaimed. The time for review has long passed. Now is the time to implement this important legislation. I thank the House.

### **AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY BLACKTOWN**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:46:20):** I wish to update the House on the excellent initiatives undertaken by the Australian Catholic University [ACU] in Blacktown. In 2015 Blacktown City Council

authorised the mayor, CEO Kerry Robinson and other council representatives to hold discussions with university vice-chancellors across Australia to see which university would offer the best collaboration with the community, understand the needs and aspirations of the local people and deliver a comprehensive range of courses in the City of Blacktown to foster opportunities for all. The case for Blacktown City was clear: in excess of 18,000 enrolled university students, the third largest number of any local government area in New South Wales; population growth anticipated to reach in excess of 612,000 by 2041, which is 20 per cent larger than Tasmania's population today; and currently the gross regional product of \$18.6 billion, which is larger than 72 nations.

The ACU, led by Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Greg Craven, and Chancellor, the Hon. John Fahey, and their team, put together a comprehensive plan and vision. In March 2019 as mayor I was proud to announce that the ACU was the successful tenderer and the collaboration began. In the 200th year of Catholic education in Australia, ACU is opening its doors to its newest facility, the St Josephine Bakhita campus. St Josephine Bakhita is venerated as a modern African saint and is the patron saint against the brutality of slavery. Given that many people from western Sydney have survived persecution—starting with the Aboriginal native institutions in the early 1800s, the Stolen Generations, eastern European refugees from communist persecution, refugees from Vietnam through to modern-day African refugees—St Josephine Bakhita provides hope that transformation from suffering is possible. The ACU will be the beacon of hope in transforming people's lives.

Today the ACU has set up its student information offices and is getting ready for its first intake of students in 2021. The ACU is anticipating up to 1,000 students to enrol in a range of diploma and degree courses in the fields of education, arts, nursing, sports science, law and commerce—all of which are vital to accommodate a growing local community. The ACU has been working diligently and with great excitement with various stakeholders across the Blacktown City area. I particularly thank Paul Campbell, who has been the go-to person in connecting ACU personnel with various community, sporting, business, school and local hospital representatives. Paul's personal qualities have much credibility with local stakeholders so as to join ACU on our collective journey. The ACU has partnered with the Greater Blacktown Business Chamber by supporting events and providing guest speakers.

Deputy Head of School of Arts Dr Jennifer Carpenter is working towards opportunities for the wonderful, talented people across western Sydney in fine and performing arts. Dr Carpenter, along with National Manager of Strategic Programs Jane Caton, met with Blacktown Youth Services Association [BYSA] to get a thorough understanding of the needs of the local youth who have fallen on hard times but who are showing incredible resilience to overcome their challenges. Professor Hayden Ramsay is deputy vice-chancellor and is the coordinator for the establishment of the Blacktown campus. Professor Ramsay enthusiastically receives every idea and suggestion. His leadership will ensure that the campus will become a fantastic success and will be embedded into the Blacktown way of life. The ACU understands the multicultural and socio-economic nature of the area. It is committed to forging opportunities for the locals' thirst for knowledge and self-improvement. The ACU's charter is the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good. It fulfils this by focusing on justice, courage, integrity and wisdom. The ACU and the City of Blacktown have a common ethos and vision. This partnership will ignite the opportunities that were previously dreamed about but are now becoming a reality.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (20:51:08):** I join with the member for Blacktown in welcoming the news of the commitment that the Australian Catholic University has made to Blacktown, which is a growing area of western Sydney with a very large population of young people. It has a younger than average population. It is a great step forward to see another university coming to the region to share in the education of young people and the betterment of the region. I commend the member for Blacktown in his former role with Blacktown council for playing his part in bringing it about. It is good news for the region.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR PICKERING**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (20:51:49):** Born on Augusta Street, Punchbowl, on 22 January 1928, Arthur Pickering is remembered as a gentle soul who embraced everyone and always had his door and heart open to the world. For all of his 92 years Mr Pickering lived on Augusta Street. In 1956 Arthur married the love of his life, Patricia, at St Joseph Belmore. He would frequently reminisce about meeting Patricia at the Belmore dance hall, telling everyone that she was a "very lovely looking lady". Arthur was so proud of his family. He leaves behind his wife, Patricia; his daughters, Jane and Kerry; his grandchildren, Aaron, Lara, Cameron and Lisa; and his great-granddaughter Chloe. Being very strong in his faith, Mr Pickering would attend church at St Jerome Punchbowl every Sunday. He loved listening to André Rieu and musicals like *The Sound of Music*. A keen sports lover, he was a cricket umpire for various high schools right up until his 70s. A plumber, cabinetmaker and contract cleaner, Arthur lived and breathed Labor values and was always a passionate supporter of working people. At the very end of the day Arthur loved sitting outside with a cup of tea, feeding the birds and admiring nature. Our community is lesser for his loss. Vale Arthur Pickering.

**BILL WRIGHT**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:52:57):** I congratulate local legend Bill Wright on his tireless service and commitment to our community. After seven years as secretary of the Oatley Heritage and Historical Society, Bill has hung up his boots and taken on a new role as a member of the society's committee. Oatley truly has a great story to tell. Our local area is rich with history, icons and stories—most of them true. It is through the work of the Oatley Heritage and Historical Society that this history can be preserved and passed down from generation to generation. I look forward to continuing to receive the society's newsletters and emails to learn more about our great local area and its community. Although those letters and updates will not be sent by Bill this year, I am sure his presence in the society will act as a guiding hand for the new members of the committee. On behalf of the local community, I thank Bill Wright for everything he has done and continues to do for our community.

**PAM MEATHERINGHAM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (20:53:48):** I recognise Mrs Pam Meatheringham, a hardworking local of the Charlestown electorate. Pam lives at The Sanctuary in Redhead and has been a tireless land lease community advocate for the residents. Pam serves as secretary and treasurer of the Residential Parks Homeowners Association NSW and works with the three other land lease parks in the local area. Pam has represented residents faced with eviction and she works closely with the Tenants' Union of New South Wales in Newcastle and Sydney. Pam was commended to me by Ann Davy, who tells me that Pam has served as an advocate for about 12 years and has argued many times before the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. In a time of growing housing uncertainty, Pam's advocacy for tenants is increasingly important. Pam is passionate about residents' rights and I thank her for her hard work. Pam is one of many in the Charlestown electorate who work to improve our area. In acting to support the more vulnerable members of her community, Pam has demonstrated the extraordinary spirit that makes me so proud to be the member for Charlestown.

**BLAKEHURST VET CLINIC**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:54:46):** On 6 March 2020 I attended the grand opening of the new Blakehurst Vet clinic on King Georges Road, Blakehurst. The clinic has been running under the keen eye of Dr Hamish Bathgate and his wife, Holly, whom I have known since 2006, but recently has expanded to a new clinic up the road. The new facility will allow the clinic to better treat four-legged family members of the Oatley electorate with new operating theatre, cat and dog boarding facilities, and new clinic spaces. This new clinic is an exciting opportunity for local residents who have placed a considerable amount of trust in the team at Blakehurst Vet for the past 14 years. It is encouraging to see local small businesses continue to grow and expand, contribute to the local economy and provide opportunities for locals across the area. I thank the team at Blakehurst Vet for inviting me to the official opening. I wish it all the very best for the future.

**TRIBUTE TO KEVIN SIMPSON**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:55:34):** In this International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, I posthumously honour Kevin Simpson of the Blue Mountains. Kevin was born on 10 May 1954 in Bourke, New South Wales. He died suddenly on 15 December 2018 in Hazelbrook, doing something he loved, teaching karate. Kevin had a rough start to his life in the Far West Children's Home. Much of his formative years involved travelling with his drover father before the family settled in Cobar. Kevin worked as a nurse at Springwood Hospital over the past 18 years. He was a proud unionist and member of the Nurse and Midwives Association, and often briefed me about issues I needed to be aware of. He was loved and respected by his colleagues and patients.

Counting down the days to his retirement—through an app on his phone—Kevin would make a point of showing you anytime he could. Kevin shared his life with devoted wife, Cheryl. They had almost 33 years together. They had three beautiful children: Siobhan, Cailin and Eibhlis. Everything he undertook in life, he did with passion and joy—martial arts, golf, cycling, and camping—with family and friends. Vale Kevin Simpson, you were salt of the earth. We miss you and we salute your life.

**BRUCE WRIGHT, OAM**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (20:55:59):** Congratulations are in order for Bruce Wright of Tumbarumba, who received a Medal of the Order Australia [OAM] in the Queen's Honours List. His award marks his service to the community of Tumbarumba, and his dedication to hard work, fundraising and donating. Bruce credits the support of his wife, Colleen, for his many achievements. His journey began in 1984 when he and his family moved to Tumbarumba and became part of the community. The following year he started attending Rotary club meetings and never looked back. Bruce also served as secretary of Tumba Club, as a director on the Hyne Community Trust Board and as a councillor with Snowy Valleys Council. Through Rotary Bruce also put his efforts into various projects, including the Tumbarumba2Kokoda program, which trains students in fitness,

mateship, courage, sacrifice and endurance. His philosophy in life was, "We are leaders. If we are going to be fair dinkum leaders, we have got to say how we can do it, rather than how can we not do it." I thank Bruce Wright for his inspiration to the wonderful community of Tumbarumba.

#### **SYDNEY INDOOR MOTOX PARK DOME**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:57:45):** Recently the Sydney Indoor MotoX Park, the first of its kind in Australia, opened to the public. This \$5 million project located within the Sydney Premier Karting Park precinct is a 12,000 square metre indoor facility housed in a revolutionary, climate controlled, air-filled membrane dome. I admire and applaud the entrepreneurial spirit and revolutionary foresight of Barbara and Matthew Bartolo to provide a safe, world-class recreational dirt bike facility. It is the only all-weather indoor dirt bike riding track in Australia, which has a keen focus on safety and skills development. Sydney Indoor MotoX Dome has the capacity to be reconfigured, subject to demand, with up to three separate racetracks with seating capacity for 6,000 spectators. It will cater for varying skill levels from entry level juniors right through to professional motocross racers in elite competitions. I give my best wishes for its future endeavours.

#### **TILLY OSBORNE AND CHLOE ANDREWS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:58:53):** Two local girls from Beckom, Tilly Osborne and Chloe Andrews, have raised an amazing \$742 for the Starlight Foundation's Stream Raiser Appeal during the month of June. Each afternoon on Facebook the girls would complete challenges set by their live audience. Some of the challenges include singing and dancing, making balloon animals and doing each other's makeup blindfolded, which resulted in donations from far and wide. Both Tilly and Chloe have been appointed ambassadors for the Starlight Foundation Internet Appeal and hope to have more challenges set for the month of September to continue to raise much-needed funds for sick children. Well done Tilly and Chloe on this awesome endeavour you have set yourselves. Your fundraising for the Starlight Foundation is a credit to you both and I am sure your families are very proud, as we all are, of what has been achieved so far.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ELISABETH HILTON**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (20:59:46):** I pay tribute, as will my colleague the member for Wollongong, to the late Elisabeth Hilton, or Liz as she was affectionately known. Liz has been a long-time Labor Party branch member of the famous Balgownie branch. Liz has worked tirelessly over many years volunteering on every election day that she possibly could. She was a fierce advocate for many local issues and was very passionate about developing good education policies for our party. Liz was appointed as Deputy Warden Secretary Manager at International House, University of Wollongong, and lived on site in a small flat at the residence. In 1983 she became the manager and lived and worked there until 1987. She was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Special Award for Outstanding and Exceptional Achievement. In 2004 she was conferred a University Fellowship for her tireless advocacy and contribution to the university. Liz will be remembered by many of us. She always used to tell me to drink more because the bags under my eyes looked terrible. We will miss Liz greatly. All of us in the Labor Party know she made an enormous contribution.

#### **VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (21:00:51):** Education Week 2020 is a chance to celebrate New South Wales schools and the resilience of our school communities. This year's theme is Learning Together and pays testament to the committed efforts of all school communities that ensured that learning continued despite the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. I want to call out the schools in my electorate of Vaucluse for their fantastic work. I thank the principals, teachers, P&Cs, councils, parents and carers at Ascham School, Bellevue Hill Public School, Bondi Beach Public School, Bondi Public School, Cranbrook School, Double Bay Public School, Galilee Catholic School, Kambala, Kesser Torah College, Kincoppal Rose-Bay School, McAuley Primary School, Montessori East Bondi, Reddam House, Rose Bay Public School, Rose Bay Secondary College, Vaucluse Public School, Wairoa School, WAYS and Woollahra Public School. We so appreciate their efforts and the difference they make to the lives of our local young people now more than ever.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ELISABETH HILTON**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (21:01:51):** Like the member for Keira I pay tribute to a much-loved and highly respected member of our community, Elisabeth Hilton. Liz moved to Australia in 1963 and joined the global University of Wollongong alumni community and the labour movement in 1973. She served on the university council representing general staff from 1978-85. But she is most known for her role as the head of International House Hall and the Kooloobong residential complex. In that role she supported domestic and international students, which she continued to do for the rest of her life. Liz was also a passionate fighter for the labour movement—a long-term member of the Labor Party—who was there to counsel, assist and support many of us who came to this place. I am personally grateful for her support and encouragement. Despite trying to avoid



public recognition, Liz was conferred a University Fellowship in 2004 for her tireless advocacy. My wife, Alison, and I stopped in to see her a couple of weeks ago and as always were greeted with a huge smile and her infectious laugh. She enjoyed life, helped countless others and will be sadly missed. Vale Liz Hilton.

#### **DONNA THOMAS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (21:02:56):** I take this chance to thank a wonderful teacher who has recently finished a 45-year career in education, and it is fitting that I do so as we celebrate Education Week across New South Wales. Donna Thomas worked for the Department of Education for 12 years before starting a 33-year stint at Orana Heights Public School that has seen her fill myriad roles. Over the course of her time at Orana Heights, Donna has been a relief teacher, a full-time teacher, a librarian and an office clerk. To say she has been vital to the school is an understatement. I know her contribution is not lost on the entire Orana Heights community. To be at one workplace for such a length of time is a testament to the love Donna has had for her roles, as well as the thousands of children whose lives she has had a profound impact on over the course of her career. I thank Donna for what she has done for her colleagues, parents and students of Orana Heights Public School and wish her all the very best for the future.

#### **BRANDING BANGLADESH ORGANISATION**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (21:03:52):** I was thrilled to award the Branding Bangladesh Organisation a \$5,000.00 COVID-19 crisis grant for its great work with its food-sharing project. These wonderful people led by Abdullah Al Noman Shamim and Mohammed Zaman collected donations of food and then had chef Habibur Rahman Chomon create some masterpieces for people to pick up and take home at absolutely no cost. It was a great project. I visited the home base of the initiative in June with Councillor George Zakhia to see firsthand their great work. There were many kind-hearted people who helped, and forgive me if I do not get the pronunciation right, but they were: Salmin Sultana, Ali Ashraf Himel, Shah Newaz Alo, Nahyan D Azmal, Shakil Mollik, Arifur Rahman, Akash Dey, Opu Sarowar, Goutom Shaha, S. M. Babul Hasan Babu, Dr Lovely Rahrnan, Dr Abul Hasnat Milton, Nirmallya Talukdar, Jakir Hossain and Mohiuddin Qader. I thank them all for their great effort and kindness.

#### **HOMELESSNESS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:04:55):** I thank all the agencies in our community, both government and non-government, for their fabulous work doing all they can to support our homeless sisters and brothers across the coast during these very difficult times. I commend all those involved in our new Ready to Rent education program that starts soon at St Vincent de Paul. Thanks to Central Coast Council, with support from Housing NSW, Legal Aid NSW, Pacific Link Housing and Central Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, community members who have been living on the street and couch surfing will be supported with a number of great lessons to assist in better living conditions in the future.

Students will learn how to fill in housing and rental application forms to present to real estate agents. They will get support with achieving realistic outcomes, budgeting skills and the difference between wants and needs, living skills and tenancy responsibilities, including keeping a property in good order and what a property should look like both on arrival and departure—basically, how to be a good tenant. When the Liberal Government realises the importance in investing in additional social housing across New South Wales, instead of posh renovations, our State and nation will be a much better place to celebrate National Homelessness Week.

#### **ELDERSLIE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (21:06:04):** I congratulate Elderslie High School student representative council [SRC] for running the Thinking of You Week initiative on Friday 24 July. On this day students sold over 250 sugar cookies, with over \$300 raised for Beyond Blue. The Thinking of You Week initiative was designed to remind the students to check-in and reconnect with friends and promote positive wellbeing. I commend Elderslie High School's SRC for its commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of its student body. Well done.

#### **THE ENTRANCE BOAT SHED**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:06:44):** The Entrance Boat Shed is an historic and iconic tourist attraction on the Central Coast. Built in 1927 and still operating and servicing local tourists, the boatshed provides all that is needed for a fun-filled day on beautiful Tuggerah Lake. Current owners Toni and Terry Moon offer a range of services and products, including boat hire. The boats are historic. They are quaint, made of timber and colourfully painted, with little putt-putt motors. They are a real charm to take out on the water. The boatshed also has canoes, kayaks and paddleboards to cater for all interests, including fishing, for those who want to do something or just enjoy a day out on the water. It is a big job to keep this historic service running. I encourage all

my constituents to support the boatshed. I have hired a little boat many times. One of the most memorable days was a cruise taken with my daughter Lily and son Charlie. I hope to continue to work with the boatshed for the benefit of our beautiful region.

#### **JANNALI NETBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (21:07:50):** Netball is back for another season and so is the wonderful Jannali Netball Club. Since 1966 the club has been providing an environment where our community can come together and enjoy the benefits of playing a team sport. Amongst its initiatives, Jannali facilitates a 12-week NetSetGO program for children aged five to eight years to learn the basic skills and foster a love of netball that will hopefully remain with them throughout the senior competition. Additionally, children aged eight to 10 years play to modified rules, while mixed teams are offered for those aged eight to 12. I recognise that community sport is not possible without the committed volunteers who give their time to ensure that our local athletes reach their full potential. I acknowledge the role of committee members, including president Ashlee Green, vice-president Richard Bean, secretary Sue Phair, treasurer Katrina Harlum, Pat Barr, Rebecca Jamieson, Ashleigh Hillier, Donna Lyons, Kim Schnabel, Carolyn Green and Bronwyn Hearnden. I welcome back Jannali Netball Club and wish it all the best for the 2020 season.

#### **CENTRAL COAST MARINERS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:08:50):** Come on, Central Coast: We cannot let the mighty Mariners go. Tonight I thank Mike Charlesworth for his support of the Mariners over all these years and congratulate the club on winning its final game of the season last night. I also encourage the management of the Mariners to look very carefully at the viable model of community-owned sporting clubs around the world. The Central Coast could lead the way and show the strength of our great community by being the first Australian community to own its very own sporting club in a national league. There are many examples of successful supporter ownership teams in the United Kingdom. The Green Bay Packers NFL team in the United States is my favourite, where community members are rostered to sweep snow off the field before the game, amongst other responsibilities. Coasties and fans of the coast would have a stake in the club alongside other bigger shareholders. Whilst supporter ownership does not mean the fans run the club, as stability and sustainability is achieved through effective management by professionals, a supporter trust model could allow fans to work together on community projects within the club. We have a fantastic stadium that we want to see full and a wonderful opportunity sitting right in front of us.

#### **DAVIDSON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (21:10:00):** This week being Education Week 2020 affords me an opportunity to highlight the wonderful schools in my electorate of Davidson. There are 32 primary and high schools in the Davidson electorate. The teachers at all of those schools—public, Catholic, Jewish, Christian and independent—have done a wonderful job in continuing to engage with and educate children despite all the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 situation. There are four local public high schools: Davidson, Killara and St Ives, as well as the newly established and innovative Lindfield Learning Village. The Davidson electorate has 15 local public primary schools, including two for children with a disability. Public schools in Davidson have in recent years benefitted from big spending on school infrastructure to enhance their learning spaces and projects funded under Community Building Partnership program to deliver playgrounds and other facilities. I am pleased to also see that many schools are engaged in inspiring ecologically sound projects. Some receive New South Wales Government support under the Sustainable Schools Grants program, including for bee hotels, recycling schemes and vegetable gardens.

#### **PHILIPPINES-AUSTRALIA FRIENDSHIP DAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (21:11:11):** On Friday 22 May we had the opportunity to celebrate the deep ties and friendship between the Philippines and Australia in honour of Philippines-Australia Friendship Day. This day is a reminder of our versatile and multicultural society that encourages us to learn more about those who have come from all over the world and now call Australia home. I take this time to acknowledge the Filipino-Australian community in my electorate of Mulgoa. Many Filipino residents in Mulgoa have had a profound impact on the community and have made significant efforts to educate and include others in their culture and traditions. One such resident is Jose Relunia, who was one of the outstanding award recipients at this year's Australia Day awards for his service to the Penrith and Greater Sydney Filipino community. This year's Philippines-Australia Friendship Day may have not been celebrated in its traditional form with events and gatherings, but it was honoured and remembered by many across Australia and internationally. I look forward to next year's celebrations in the hope that we can celebrate together the strong friendship shared between Australia and the Philippines.

**ELOUERA DAY CENTRE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:12:11):** I acknowledge the participants and staff at Cootamundra's Elouera Day Centre who are busy making and selling protective cloth face coverings. Initially the masks were made as a craft exercise that was seen as a way to introduce the day centre's clients to face masks should they become mandatory in New South Wales. After the plain and patterned masks were posted on Facebook the centre was overwhelmed with orders and the sewing room has been a hive of activity. The sewing of the face coverings is mostly done by Elouera staff, with clients assisting with ironing, folding and packaging. I congratulate Elouera's Gail Lienesch and Sharon Roberts for encouraging this wonderful fundraising initiative, which benefits the centre's clients and also local residents.

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (21:13:28):** I celebrate women's football in the Sutherland Shire. Sutherland Shire Football Association boasts over 6,000 female registered players with 40 per cent of academy coaches in its elite programs being women educated and skilled through the association's coaching development program. By participating in Football NSW's Women's National Premier League and running a girls-only top tier academy the association continues to embrace the important physical, mental and social benefits of the sport for women. Following the announcement that Australia and New Zealand will be hosting the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, I was delighted to visit Sutherland Shire Football Association and meet with members of the representative first grade women's team and the association's own #getonside2023 community bid champion, Laura Cowell. As a community-bid champion Laura played a key liaison role, working closely with our community and affiliated football clubs, to develop key partnerships and communicate effectively about grassroots initiatives to actively promote and strengthen Australia's bid. I commend Sutherland Shire Football Association and Laura for their commitment to women's football in our community and getting our shire onside.

**BRAYDEN KOEVOETS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (21:14:33):** I acknowledge 11-year-old Glenmore Park resident Brayden Koevoets for his outstanding accomplishment in raising \$4,000 for the charity Cystic Fibrosis Community Care [CFCC]. Brayden was joined by his family in completing the 65 Roses challenge which required 65 squats a day. His original aim was to raise \$650. Brayden's achievement of raising \$4,000 is all the more significant because of the cystic fibrosis he was diagnosed with via a screening test when he was eight weeks old. Cystic fibrosis primarily affects the lungs and digestive system due to an abnormal amount of mucus within the lungs, airways and the digestive system. Brayden struggles with this disease every day, having to spend 90 minutes on a nebuliser machine and taking around 30 tablets daily to keep his lungs as healthy as possible. Brayden's determination and willpower to persevere through these trials on top of raising \$4,000 for CFCC is a testament to his character. I commend Brayden on the example of perseverance he has set within the community. Well done Brayden!

**TEMORA MEN'S SHED**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:15:36):** Temora Men's Shed recently held its annual general meeting and elected a new committee to take it through another year of activities. With the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions, the men's shed went into lockdown. Prior to that period of isolation, projects completed by the group included making a mobile bench for the Dirnaseer Hall, restoring wrought-iron seats and making a fire truck toy for children. These are difficult times and I appreciate the changes that are being observed by men's sheds now that their gatherings have resumed. I acknowledge the amazing Men's Shed movement, which supports the health and wellbeing of men within our communities. I wish Temora president Howard Ruth and his group all the best for a productive year.

**GOSFORD AND TUGGERAH LAKES LOCAL AREA COMMAND**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:16:30):** Tonight I thank all police who are strapping on the new body-worn cameras and taking them out into their workplaces. Whilst I can never comprehend the complexity, challenges, danger and risk associated with the amazing work they do to protect our community, I hope this technology adds another level of protection to the great work they do. I hear from my local police about their ability to de-escalate inappropriate behaviour once the person of concern is informed they are being filmed. As mobile phones and social media are being used by the public to film incidents, it will be great that police will be able to record information in real time. They also will be able to use the information to record inappropriate behaviour, making it easier to prove crime and also to use information as an opportunity to train and improve policing behaviours. I thank all members of the Gosford and Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command for all they do to protect the great Central Coast community. I will continue to campaign for more police across the coast.

**LUCIA HAMPTON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (21:17:35):** I congratulate 12-year-old Glenmore Park Resident Lucia Hampton, who recently was cast as a model for Haus Of Hagedorfer at Kidz Fashion Week, Sydney. Lucia was one of 15 children cast on the spot, out of hundreds of auditions, to participate in this year's Fashion Week shows. This event enabled her to learn valuable lessons from some of the modelling field's leading professionals. Lucia's other achievements involve being featured in *Wild Child Magazine's* top 50 most beautiful Australian child models, *Madison Fashion Magazine* and two separate features in *Katwalk Kids Fashion Magazine*. Her participation and success in those fashion events has grown her passion and love for modelling and the runway. Lucia looks forward to the Sydney regional final of Miss Fashion Week Australia, which enables the winners to qualify for the international finals, which will be held in the United States of America. However, due to COVID-19, the finals have been postponed. I congratulate Lucia on her outstanding achievements thus far in her short but likely very promising modelling career.

**HOMELESSNESS**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:18:31):** As Homelessness Week will be held next week, I take this opportunity to recognise all the homelessness services in my electorate, particularly the ones that everybody loves and supports such as Coast Shelter, which does a fantastic job of outreach. Coast Shelter is well known on the Central Coast. Everybody who experiences difficulties that lead to homelessness knows they can seek help from Coast Shelter. I give a shout-out to the Central Coast division of General Practice for the funding it has received and the service it has set up for homelessness outreach, which is a fantastic new service. We have people who sleep rough and homelessness in The Entrance electorate. This service has been fantastic in allowing me to provide homeless people with the services they need but much more needs to be done. Simply put, we need houses for our homeless people. In the meantime, I commend all those who are doing everything they can at this stage.

**TRIBUTE TO MICK HEYDON**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:19:42):** I acknowledge the recent passing of Gundagai's sole surviving World War II veteran, Mick Heydon. Mick was born in Gundagai, grew up in nearby Coolac and at 21 enlisted in the Australian Army. Mick served as a private with the 129 Australian General Transport Company as a driver-mechanic and served in Port Moresby, Lae, Bougainville and other points across the Pacific. Mick celebrated his 100th birthday earlier this year and credited his longevity to good genes, a loving wife, playing sport and lots of sugar and salt. I extend my condolences to Mick's family and friends. Gundagai has lost not only a connection to its past but a true gentleman who encompassed the very best of what it means to be Australian.

**BANKSTOWN CANTERBURY COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of Bankstown Canterbury Community Transport (BCCT) in supporting members of our local community through the current Coronavirus Pandemic. BCCT have been redirecting their resources towards delivering essential goods, such as groceries and medical supplies to the elderly and people living with disability, as well as library books to those unable to leave their home as a result of COVID-19, providing much-needed access to reading material for recreation and learning. These deliveries were a welcome relief for many vulnerable residents in the Bankstown area, who were left struggling with the seclusion and loneliness resulting from isolation, and the services delivered by BCCT have been essential in ensuring their physical and mental wellbeing. I take this opportunity to acknowledge BCCT Chairperson John Murray, Executive Officer Rachel Thompson and Secretary Ron Norman, as well as the other staff and volunteers at BCCT, and commend their tremendous contribution to our community.

**EID AL-ADHA 2020**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I express my warmest wishes to the local Muslim community for the occasion of Eid al-Adha, celebrated from 31 July to 3 August 2020. Also known as the 'Festival of Sacrifice,' Eid al-Adha is a holy Islamic holiday honouring sacrifice and is usually commemorated by Muslim families and friends coming together to pray and make charitable donations of food and other goods for those in need. Eid al-Adha is also a time where many members of my electorate of Bankstown would normally be welcoming home friends and loved ones returning from their journey to Mecca as part of the Hajj pilgrimage. However, this year has been incredibly challenging and has forced many communities to reconsider the way we celebrate and mark religious occasions. I would like to acknowledge the Muslim community, whose efforts in applying social distancing restrictions to avoid the spread of Coronavirus and preserve life, have required significant changes to many of their religious practices and traditions. I take this opportunity to wish everybody who practices the Islamic faith a happy and blessed Eid al-Adha and I look forward to celebrating the Eid Festival among my community once again. Eid Mubarak.

**RANDWICK CITY COUNCIL – BASTILLE DAY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Randwick City Council on a successful and COVID Safe Bastille Day Ceremony. Bastille Day, or la Fête Nationale (French National Day), is celebrated every year on 14 July to commemorate the Storming of the Bastille, a turning point in the French Revolution in 1789. The Randwick City Council area includes the historic and significant La Perouse. La Perouse is the initial landing place for Arthur Phillip's First Fleet in 1788, before deciding on Sydney Cove. This area is named after the French explorer, Jean François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse, who had arrived in Botany Bay just days after the British. This land also has a significant Aboriginal connection that dates back thousands of years, that plays an integral part of its story and Sydney's history. Traditionally this celebration is held in La Perouse, however this year, in order to include the entire community, the service was held online by Randwick City Council. Thanks to Randwick Mayor, Cr Danny Said for a successful and for safely celebrating the vibrant French community of South East Sydney.

**CLOVELLY SLSC**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—Our surf clubs are nothing without the countless volunteers who choose to spend their weekends and public holidays ensuring our beaches are kept safe. At Clovelly surf club a particular mention should be made towards Madeline Wheatley, the director of education as well as the trainers Bianca and Roslyn Manuel, Chris Thompson, Molly and Rebecca Cocks, Thomas Small, William Pembroke, Athenia Pascoe and Paul Farrugia who have worked all season to develop new bronze medallion squad, SRCs while up-skilling volunteers as ARTC as well as new IRB Crew and Drivers, a total of 114 awards. Many thanks must go out to the Clubs Board of Directors who volunteer their house to ensure the smooth running of the club, in particular the club President, Bryce Wilde. Thank you to all the wonderful and hardworking volunteers who keep our beaches safe.

**DR JOHN DOOLEY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I congratulate Dr John Dooley from Killabakh who has recently announce his retirement after 45 years' service as a veterinarian caring for animals both big and small. Upon graduation from university, John's first job was at a practice in Taree where he worked for three years. This was followed by locum positions abroad, before he returned to Australia in 1981 where he took up a position in Wingham. John took over the Wingham Veterinary Clinic on January 1 1983 where he has worked ever since. I understand that John has not yet had time to draw breathe and plan what is next on his agenda, however he remains passionate about mentoring veterinary students and new graduates and would like to continue doing so. I wish Dr Dooley all the very best in a well-deserved retirement and thank him for his 45 years of service to the community.

**DR PETER FELDBUSCH**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I congratulate Dr Peter Feldbusch who resides in Forster and has recently announced his retirement after 51 years of extractions, fillings and general tender, love and care for his many patients. It all started during his final years of high school where Peter considered a career in dentistry, at the time he also had a love of flying. He received a naval scholarship which paid for his final 2 years of university in 1967 and 1968. Upon being qualified he spent 2 years in Darwin which he thoroughly enjoyed. With his love of flying he befriended a pilot who worked for the Northern Territory Medical Service where he joined a doctor and nurse to help patients in remote communities. He then worked at a medical centre in Canberra which looked after the VIP's of the political world including former Prime Minister Harold Holt and former Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns. He later returned to the Northern Territory to volunteer at Aboriginal mission stations, before returning to a practice in Taree from which he retired from. I wish Dr Feldbusch a happy and healthy retirement and thank him for his 51 years of service to the health industry.

**JARNA HEDLEY**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Black Hill's Jarna Hedley deserves congratulations as the recipient of the 2020 Trainee of the year in the Hunter Region Area Training Awards. These awards recognise the high calibre of apprentices, trainees and students undertaking vocational education and training. Jarna works as an Administration Officer with HunterNet Group Training. HunterNet manager, Jackie Moore said the award was fitting of Jarna's talent and commitment. Jarna is a proud product of NSW TAFE, who play a critical role in shaping the careers of people across a range of important industries that are vital to our economy. Jarna has shown that hard work and dedication really does pay off, with both her studies and her employment. Her colleagues and TAFE NSW have both commented on her high standards, willingness to learn new skills, and professionalism. Well done on your achievements Jarna. I wish you all the best with your career and future studies.

### URBAN RAW

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—An important thought that everyone should have is "how do I improve my environmental footprint?" and "How can I make a difference?" The team at Urban Raw in Wallsend, made a decision to make an environmental difference. Kiera, Aimee, Tracey, Alex, Tiarna, Lily, Cheree, Hannah and Skye, have committed to recycling everything they use in the salon to become fully sustainable. Urban Raw will be converting their chemical waste into water to be used in the environment, recycling cut hair to be made into hair booms to soak up oil spills in the ocean, recycling their soft plastics to create park benches and play equipment, recycling used foil to create new foil to use in the salon, passing on all cardboard, paper and magazines to Sustainable Salons for them to sell and donate proceeds to OzHarvest to provide meals for people in need. Well done to Kiera and the team at Urban Raw on making a solid effort to improve your sustainability, and making a positive impact on the community and environment.

### JARRYD MANUEL

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate Glenmore Park resident, Jarryd Manuel who was recently confirmed as the inaugural head coach of the Greater Western Warriors baseball team for this upcoming 2020/21 season. Jarryd has been a passionate baseball fan, player & club member for many years and is thrilled to step into this new role as a first grade team coach. In June, it was announced that the Penrith Baseball Club and Greater Western were merging ahead of the upcoming season, which would strengthen their teams and give Jarryd the opportunity to launch the first grade team into the playoff race. Jarryd is very active in the baseball community having played junior and senior baseball with the MacKillop club and representing the association as a Junior Warrior. He has been actively involved in running the Warrior's Winter Development programs and coaching the Junior Warriors at the Little League State Championships. Jarryd also took on the position as assistant head coach with NSW Country Baseball and also coached the Emerging Sydney Blue Sox. Congratulations Jarryd on this outstanding achievement! I wish you all the best.

### HANNAH DARLINGTON

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to acknowledge Erskine Park resident, Hannah Darlington who has excelled exponentially in cricket over the last two years and recently debuted with Sydney Thunder earlier this year. Growing up in Erskine Park, Hannah played for Campbelltown-Camden and grew up as a batter with little focus on growing her bowling abilities. Now, she has shifted her focus to improve her skills in bowling and is known today as one of the fastest up-and-coming female players in the game. In Hannah's most recent season, she made her WBBL debut with Sydney Thunder and also made her NSW Breakers debut in the Women's National Cricket League. In her debut game, her team won by a run against Tasmania where Hannah bowled and picked up two wickets. She is now the leading wicket-taker and plays every game. It is no doubt that she has become a vital part of the team she is involved in and all in the space of two years. Well done Hannah! I look forward to hearing of your next great achievement.

### COVID-19 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY MEETING

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend and congratulate CORE Community Services and Western Sydney MRC who hosted the inaugural virtual COVID-19 Multicultural Support & Resources Zoom Community Meeting on Wednesday 29th July, 2020. The aim of the community meeting was to engage with community groups, leaders, support workers and residents to better understand the diverse needs of our multicultural community during the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify and action any shortfalls being experienced in our region. The community forum was very well attended and boasted a number of valuable presentations and contributions throughout the evening. Communicating COVID messages was an issue of concern which was highlighted and identified as a key shortfall for multicultural communities. There was an identified need for clear messaging utilising platforms such as television and radio, rather than depending so heavily on social media and webpages as a means to disseminate information to all ages and cultural groups. I would like to thank Mr Kamalle Dabboussy of Western MRC for facilitating the meeting, Ms Shama Pande of CORE Community Services for her wonderful presentation and to CEO of Multicultural NSW Mr Joseph La Posta and my Parliamentary colleague Melanie Gibbons MP for their contributions.

### MIKE NICOLAOU

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend Mr Michael (Mike) Nicolaou who has committed to participate in an emerging biking challenge known as 'Everesting' to raise vital funds and awareness for men's mental health and suicide prevention in conjunction with The Australian Man Cave Support Group (The Man Cave). Everesting has taken off around the globe as a difficult riding challenge where riders challenge themselves to ride and climb 8,848 metres - the equivalent of Everest's elevation above sea level. Mike Nicolaou is an Everest 'Hall of Famer' with 11 successful 'climbs' under his belt, having recently completed another Everest challenge on

29th July 2020. After a short rest, Mike will without hesitation be hopping back on the bike in support of The Man Cave to raise funding and awareness throughout his journey. Mike's next attempt to conquer Everest will coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day. He will begin his journey on Friday 11th September and ride through to Saturday 12th September. I wish Mike all the very best in his upcoming challenge and extend my sincerest appreciation and admiration for his dedication towards raising much needed funding and awareness for men's mental health and suicide prevention in our state.

#### **SERGEANT SEAN PHILLIPS**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—I give mention to Sergeant Sean Phillips, who was recently farewelled from the Police Service after 33 years. Sgt Phillips, who has served in Nowra and also Ulladulla is well known on the South Coast, having undertaken a wide range of general duties and also undertaken regional support to the Tactical Support Group, weapons and snow rescue. Sgt Phillips is also a member of the Army Reserve, having given 25 years of service to our armed forces and was deployed in Afghanistan in 2008 with the Australian Reconstruction Task Force. Sgt Phillips service to the South Coast community, and indeed our nation, is greatly appreciated. I commend Sgt Phillips for his service, thank him for his selfless contribution and wish him well on his future endeavours.

#### **SUTHERLAND SES NEW BOWLOADER PUNT**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—Sutherland SES is better equipped for an emergency after recently receiving a new \$145,000 Bowloader Punt, which was delivered as part of the \$56.4 million NSW SES fleet replacement program. Minister for Police and Emergency Services the Hon David Elliot recently visited Sutherland SES to officially hand over this state of the art equipment, after it was made operational in May 2020. It was fantastic to see this lifesaving vehicle first hand with the crew giving us a look inside the vehicle. The vehicle is fully equipped with emergency warning lights and sirens, as well as communications equipment which will be extremely beneficial during times of emergency. As you may be aware, Sutherland SES is stationed at the same site as the Heathcote Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade so on the day we were even given a tour inside the Headquarters. I take this opportunity to thank the Sutherland Shire SES members for the selfless work you do during times of emergency.

#### **2020 INNER WEST ARCHITECTURE AWARD**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The new Marrickville Library has been awarded the prestigious NSW Premier's Prize in this year's 2020 NSW Architecture Awards. Since opening last year, the Library has become an epicentre for community activity, with Marrickville locals flocking to Patyegarang Place for events, programs, some of the world's best coffee, and of course to borrow their favourite books! In addition to the Premier's Prize, the Library also took out the Milo Dunphy Award for Sustainable Architecture and a People's Choice Award in the "Life" category. As the NSW Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects put it, 'this project represents a vision for the future of public architecture, as a facilitator of community engagement and a celebration of its historic and natural environment.' The Library is a powerful reminder of just how important public space and services is for local communities and sets an enviable standard in public infrastructure. Congratulations to BVN architects on their award-winning design. Congratulations to Inner West Council and former Marrickville Council for achieving the vision for the Library. And most of all, congratulations to the entire Marrickville community for their passionate advocacy of our local library.

#### **RICHARDSON CRESCENT**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Students at Tempe High School, Tempe Primary School and Ferncourt Primary School will be safer on their walk to school thanks to a new pedestrian crossing on Richardson Crescent in South Marrickville. The crossing will also give safer access to Mackey Park, Cooks River and Concordia Club. Parents, students and residents have campaigned tirelessly for a crossing for years, describing Richardson Crescent as "roadside roulette" as kids dodge busy traffic to get to the other side. Two children have been hit by cars at the location in recent years. The lack of a safe crossing at Richardson Crescent was one of the key complaints raised in the Summer Hill School Safety Survey and is just one of the many dangerous crossings across NSW that stop parents from letting their kids riding or walking to school. Thank you to the parents who spoke up about the dangerous crossing in the School Safety Survey. Thank you to Inner West Council and Mayor Darcy Byrne for getting this done. And most of all, thank you to parents, students and local residents for your passion and persistence. One more street in our community is safer for our kids thanks to you!

#### **LISMORE BASE HOSPITAL NURSES AND MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to pay special tribute to several long-serving NSW Nurses and Midwives Association representatives who have done so much to protect and enhance the rights of their fellow members at Lismore Base Hospital (LBH) and across the state of New South Wales. Stepping down from their

positions are former LBH Branch Secretary and delegate Gil Wilson, Branch President Shaen Springall, Vice President Margaret Barden and Assistant Secretary Charmaine Hoskins. Gil, Shaen, Margaret and Charmaine made a formidable team of unionists who campaigned strongly for improved nurse-patient ratios, always with a view to reducing burnout within their profession and for ensuring quality patient care in a safer workplace. As delegates, they made numerous representations to their union to improve working conditions more generally. Another local issue which they have taken up in recent years is for nurses, midwives and other hospital staff to be exempted from paid parking in the Lismore Base precinct. Gil Wilson and his comrades have been exemplary representatives for their union, the Lismore Base Hospital and the wider community. Their collective experience and wisdom will be hard to replace and I wish them well in their continuing careers.

#### **TOWN HALL-STYLE MEETINGS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN TENTERFIELD SHIRE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I hit the road recently for town hall-style meetings with constituents in Legume, Liston, Tenterfield and Torrington in the Tenterfield Shire. These meetings had to be postponed due to last year's mega bushfires and the COVID-19 lockdown period. First stop was Legume Hall, where I caught up with local farmer Glen Lamb, who serves as my representative on Tenterfield Shire Council's Traffic Advisory Committee. I thank Tenterfield Shire Councillor Gary Verri and the Liston Hall Committee for hosting me at the next meeting. A highlight in Liston was inspecting master craftsman John Burton's magnificent Cobb & Co Coach display. In Tenterfield, I had meetings with Allan McKenzie, of the Tenterfield Hospital Advisory Committee, Tenterfield National Monument Association, Tenterfield Community College, Make It Tenterfield, and Friends of Drury Lane. Torrington Hall Committee President Jan Styles hosted us for their regular Friday lunch and we were joined by local residents and Councillor Brian Murray. It was great to see the results of my previous lobbying efforts – a landline has been connected to the Torrington Rural Fire Service Brigade's shed and a Telstra mobile phone tower erected to improve communications in future bushfire seasons.

#### **WEBSTER'S GOURMET MEAT KITCHEN**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit an iconic butcher in my electorate of Epping, Webster's Gourmet Meat Kitchen. Webster's was founded in 2003 by Duncan and Sarah Webster in Carlingford. Webster's Gourmet Meat Kitchen not only centres around the customer but provides them with the best recipes and cooking methods so they can truly make the most out of their succulent meat products. Many of their sausages have taken prizes in the Sausage King Competition and received awards from the Royal Agricultural Society. They have even been named as one of the top five butchers in Sydney by the Sydney Morning Herald and have featured in the Foodies Guide to Sydney since 2005. Duncan has experience working in some of London's top restaurants like Bluebird and Simpson on the Strand as the resident butcher and has used this experience to prepare and arrange meats in a delectable fashion. Sarah has used her experience in marketing and communications to ensure the success of the business. It is a result of their teamwork that the business thrives. Keep up the good work Duncan and Sarah.

#### **WOY WOY ROTARY SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I would like to congratulate Woy Woy Rotary on the occasion of their 70th Birthday, celebrated recently at Everglades Country Club among friends and family. I am sure the event was smaller than would have been usual for such a lively group, but under the circumstances it was an excellent celebration of their achievements over the past seven decades. The club have raised funds for everything from Ettalong Girl Guides Hall, to the swimming and rock pools at South Umina, to a school in Uganda. They have also been a strong presence at ANZAC Day dawn services for decades, supplying candles and refreshments to those in attendance. Thank you Woy Woy Rotary for your notable and consistent contributions to our local community on the Peninsula, and to those further afield who I am sure are equally grateful for your support. I wish you all the best for your club's next 70 years.

#### **ELOUERA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I bring to the House's attention the extraordinary Elouera Surf Life Saving Club whose members have been patrolling Bate Bay for nearly fifty years. This family-oriented club welcomes members from five to 80 years of age, with a commitment to community at its core. During the recent bushfire season, members selflessly volunteered their time beyond Bate Bay, extending assistance to affected communities on the South Coast and undertaking patrols at Narooma. The club also celebrated a successful third season of the Yellow Fins Nippers program, which caters to children with a disability, and hosted their 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Surf Awareness Clinic to educate 298 local children on surf safety. I acknowledge the 2020/2021 club officials appointed at last week's annual general meeting, including Executive Director David Kowald, Deputy Executive Director Cameron Simpson, Director of Administration Amber Garcia, Director of Finance Rory Gillespie, Director of Lifesaving Andrew McKellar and Director of Surf Sports Peter King, and Board of Management members, Dianna Mackay, Paul Ingram, Mark Summers, Alyson Scott, Rebecca Mason, Andrew Evans and



Jackson Towns. I commend Elouera Surf Life Saving Club's dedication to community and thank members for their efforts in keeping beachgoers safe.

#### **GYMEA NETBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—Congratulations to Gymea Netball Club on 60 amazing years of championing netball in our local community. As one of the foundation clubs for what was then known as women's basketball, Gymea Girls Basketball Club was established in 1960. Today, Gymea Netball Club has grown to be one of the largest netball clubs in the Sutherland Shire, boasting a clubhouse that is the envy of many of its competitors. The entirely volunteer administered organisation facilitates netball for all ages as well as the development of player skills and mentoring for coaches and umpires. Providing these opportunities for our local girls not only promotes physical and mental health, but also develops key social and interpersonal skills. I take this opportunity to commend all volunteers, including members and parents who contribute their time to coach, manage and umpire teams across the club. In particular, I recognise the 2020 committee including President Vanessa Smith, Vice President Nicole Shobbrook, Secretary Kylie Hewitt, Treasurer Carol Gobby, Tracie Murphy, Sarah Costin, Nicole Adamson, Heather Williams, Karen Bridges, Penny Clarke, Shannon McGregor, Vicki Bird and Donna Barlow. Happy 60th birthday Gymea Netball Club and congratulations again on reaching this impressive milestone.

#### **COUNCILLOR MARIO PREVITERA**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise the late Cr. Mario Previtera, who sadly passed away in the early hours of Saturday 1st August, 2020. Mario, together with Cr. Sam Romano, were the first ever Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party candidates to be elected in any local government election. Mario was elected as a councillor for the Orange City Council in 2017, proudly representing his party and diligently serving his constituents, and the community of Orange. Mario was a true gentleman, and never spoke ill of anyone. He was steadfastly loyal, always reliable, kind natured, generous, approachable and he always had a happy and positive disposition. Mario always listened; he was a man of few words, but he knew whereof he spoke, and people took notice of what Mario had to say. Mario upheld his party's values for fishing and for freedoms by leading a campaign which successfully overturned a council imposed fishing ban at the Ploughmans Wetlands in Orange, allowing locals to continue fishing there recreationally. On behalf of my family, the Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party, and the community of Orange, I send heartfelt condolences to Mario's family, his friends and colleagues who will all miss him dearly.

#### **YEAR 12 TRIAL HSC EXAMS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge that many year 12 high school students in my electorate of North Shore are currently or are about to start their Trial HSC Exams. As many of us in the place know, this can be a difficult and confronting period for students with pressure from teachers, family and friends to do well. I want to take this time to wish each and every one of the year 12 students the best of luck as they begin their exams. We know that these exams are not the be-all and end-all of deciding what you will do for your future, however, they are important in determining how much you can achieve. There are so many support structures in places at schools and in our community for those who need assistance and may be struggling, so remember to reach out to your friends, family, and all those who may be able to assist you. Good luck to you all, study hard and practice your learning and you will be amazed at what you can achieve.

#### **LORETO KIRRIBILLI DANCING IN THE STREET**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I recognise the fantastic school and community spirit exhibited by Loreto Kirribilli through their virtual Music Festival Concert. This year auditions were held online, and many students spent countless hours rehearsing and practising and the submitting their individual performances online. Congratulations to all the students who participated in the House Choirs, and to the performing arts and IT teams for running such a successful event. I would also like to congratulate the following school houses for their achievements, Ward House who received the House Spirit Cup and the Music Festival Shield, and to Barry House who won the House Choir Song for their performance of Viva la Vida. It is heartening to see the many ways our local community has come together during this time, and in the words of Loreto School Captain Charlotte Ross, "even a pandemic didn't stop us from celebrating our school spirit". Congratulations to the Loreto school community for demonstrating that at this unique time in our history, school spirit and community can still shine through.

#### **BRIAN 'SPIKE' BALDWIN OAM**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Brian 'Spike' Baldwin OAM of Inverell for his many decades of entertaining the crowds and calling the races at horse racing meets across the New England. This racing season will be the end of an era as it

will be the first time in over 62 years that the iconic voice of Brian 'Spike' Baldwin will not be calling the races. However it is not the first time that Brian has tried to retire. In previous years when a race club somewhere across the North West needed a helping hand, Brian would almost never say no. Brian's career began by calling the trots at the showground in 1958 but even before that as a teenager calling the races at the 'All Heights' races in his hometown of Manilla. Not only has Brian added to the theatre and colour of racing with his voice but he's also proudly served the Inverell Jockey Club in various roles over his many years. Brian was also awarded an OAM in 2013 for his work in many community and church organisations.

#### **MOREE EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I commend the staff and students of Moree East Public School on the creation of a meaningful mural running along the footpath at the entrance of the School. The mural was created as part of the school's contribution to NAIDOC week this year and will also be used as a key teaching tool in the school's Connected Communities Program. The mural features a large tree running up the left footpath with various native animals while on the right the footpath teaches of the importance of biodiversity whilst also telling the story of how the Mehi River was made. I recognise Moree East Public School student support officer and artist Chris 'Uncle Bus' Roberts, senior leader Uncle Matty Priestley, Principal Lorinda Potter and reference group member Uncle Cecil Craigie on the 18 months of consultation and work that went into producing the mural. Moree East Public School should be very proud of the work they are doing to engage and educate the school and broader community on Indigenous language, culture and reconciliation.

#### **ST GEORGE AND SUTHERLAND MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I acknowledge the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation, which is a fantastic organisation that raises funds and awareness for the work of medical research in both St George Hospital and Sutherland Hospital. The Foundation was established in 2007 after lobbies for an independent body to be created that would fund and promote the work of the research community within the Hospital. Shortly after, the Scientific Advisory Committee was created and tasked with the role of selecting research projects and scholarships to be funded by the Foundation. The Foundation prioritises promising new research and emerging researchers, and has supported ground-breaking research in areas such as cancers, blood clots, lung disease and heart disease. I would like to congratulate the Foundation for their work in pioneering medical research, and would like to particularly acknowledge Chair of the Research Committee, Professor Michael Grimm, for his leadership and dedication.

#### **PHYLLIS STUART**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I congratulate Phyllis Stuart who recently celebrated her 105th birthday. A fantastic achievement! I acknowledge the many unique experience Phyllis has enjoyed over her long life, particularly her joyflight with Australian aviation pioneer Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. I invite the community to reflect on some wise words from Phyllis which are to "be patient and take life as it comes."

#### **SPARTAN GYM EQUIPMENT - SMEATON GRANGE**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I would like to recognise a wonderful story of resilience and innovation that has come from within Macarthur's wonderful business community. The COVID19 gym shutdowns saw many residents fashioning their own home setups resulting in almost all stock of fitness equipment in the area sold out within days. Seeing this and the long wait times for new stock to arrive from overseas gave Kieran Berry from Spartan Gym Equipment the idea. Spartan Gym Equipment is based in Smeaton Grange in Camden and has supported local jobs by sourcing from local Macarthur and South-West Sydney businesses in order to make their products. With stories of businesses right across the Macarthur region adapting to COVID in their own way, I commend Spartan Gym Equipment for being a wonderful example of the resilience and innovation that is found within the Macarthur business community. I thank Spartan Gym Equipment for having given Camden's active fitness community the chance to build their own home gyms with products that are locally made and thereby supporting local jobs.

#### **NORCO**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I would like to congratulate Norco on celebrating their 125 year anniversary. Norco is Australia's oldest and largest dairy co-operative. It was founded on June 5, 1895 in Clunes near Byron Bay by a group of farmers. The dairy co-operative has been supporting local dairy farmers and creating jobs in the Northern Rivers and surrounds ever since. Norco is still a 100% Australian farmer owned co-operative today. I would like to commend the resilience of Norco and all their dairy farmers who this year have been through one of the worst droughts. Congratulations on 125 years.

### NORTHERN RIVERS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I commend the Northern Rivers Community Foundation for the Recovery & Resilience Grants Program 2020. This program aims to support smaller, not-for-profit community organisations in the Northern Rivers by encouraging community organisations to become more resilient and regenerative in their approach to natural disasters and crises, such as floods, bushfires, or COVID-19. At a time when the Northern Rivers is recovering from the recent drought, bushfires, floods and COVID-19 it is now more important than ever to support resilience and regeneration in our local organisations. Our community organisations are often the first to respond to community need arising from natural disasters or COVID-19. I personally look forward to seeing the wonderful programs these grants will support.

### LOCAL MEDIA

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—There is no doubt that local media play a vital and often unheralded role in the distribution of information among our community. The recent COVID-19 crisis has highlighted just how important those organisations are. In Campbelltown and wider Macarthur region in particular, it has been a challenging few months for our local media. Workers from some outlets were stood down for a few months due to the pandemic. The pandemic also saw the print edition of one of our beloved newspapers – the Macarthur Chronicle – cease forever. However, we live in an ever changing world and local media are a great example of that. Those at the Chronicle, the Campbelltown-Macarthur Advertiser, the South West Voice, C91.3 and Good Morning Macarthur and 2MCR have, and continue to, play an enormous role in our daily lives. They hold people accountable and highlight the good news stories in our community that everyone needs to know. Quite simply, our community is much better off for the contribution our local media make. Thank you, from myself and our community, to every person involved in our local media for everything that you do.

### ANN-THERESE KING

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I recognise the longstanding contributions of a tireless community advocate in my local electorate, Ann-Therese King. Ann-Therese has been active, vocal and effective on a broad range of local campaigns from her work on Leichhardt Secondary College P&C and Westconnex to Callan Park, Dawn Fraser Baths and local heritage campaigns including preserving a church hall and its grounds for re-adaptive use as a childcare centre. Ann-Therese doesn't just protest against bad ideas, she brings constructive suggestions to the table. She spends hours wading through government documentation, planning files and media coverage to command the detail on any issue before her. She is an expert on the jacaranda tree, having produced a Master's thesis on it, and impels appreciation of these beautiful trees in Callan Park along with other natural and heritage treasures there. Like many of us, she has a family to raise, a demanding job and her own writing projects to manage, but she somehow always makes time to be informed and to mobilise the community behind important causes when needed. At the grassroots level of democracy, you couldn't ask for someone with more integrity, energy and commitment. Thank you Ann-Therese for everything you do.

### SAM FRICKER

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate Sam Fricker of Greenhills Beach on his work for a sustainable environment through TSARIAN. TSARIAN aims to create sustainable solutions to the use of single-use plastics by selling natural wheat drinking straws. Sam is also busy in Year 12 studying for his HSC and is also a talented member of the Australian national diving team. Sam showed strong entrepreneurial ability when he co-founded TSARIAN in 2019 and pitched his idea to local cafes, having the goal of supplying every local café and beverage shop. Sam sells his product via Amazon in the US and supplies cafes locally, including Mr Paisley's in Caringbah. Sam volunteers with the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce and Plastic Free Cronulla, which encourages local businesses to move away from single-use plastic products.

### CASTLE HILL SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the reopening of the Castle Hill Senior Citizens Club, who are adapting their activities such that they can operate in line with COVID 19 restrictions. The club has been active in the local community for more than 40 years, with members enjoying the opportunity to socialise and get some physical and mental exercise. Clubs such as the Castle Hill Senior Citizens Club are an invaluable part of local communities across NSW and serve an important role in keeping our seniors firmly rooted in their local area. The club meets several times throughout the week and play carpet bowls, card games and the tile game Rummikub. The club recently shut down due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, but are now operating, and I am assured social distancing and hand washing are common place. I would like to thank all who work hard to make this club an ongoing part of many people's lives, especially

Marilyn Johnson, who recently wrote to me to tell me the club is keen to continue to accept new members, and I would encourage all interested to get in touch with the club!

#### **NORDOFF ROBBINS MUSIC THERAPY**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the work done by the team from Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy, who have one of their clinics in Annangrove, in my electorate of Castle Hill. Music therapy is an important aspect of treatment plans for a wide range of people, particularly those with special needs, as it assists in addressing behavioural difficulties, developing social skills and increasing creativity and dexterity. As such, it serves an invaluable role in assisting members of my electorate who have disabilities and learning difficulties. As such it was recently my pleasure to announce \$4,499 worth of funding for the upgrade of the Annangrove facility, including the addition of sensory resources and new waiting room equipment. This is to improve the functionality and comfortability of the facility, as well as assisting in WHS practices. This was a part of the \$300,000 provided to my electorate in the 2019 round of the Community Building Partnership Grants. My thanks goes out to all involved in this facility, including Rhiannon O'Brien, the head of fundraising and philanthropy for Nordoff Robbins, who made this grant a possibility.

#### **PARRAMATTA MARIST HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—Parramatta Marist High School on Darcy Road in Westmead serves many students from the Seven Hills Electorate and beyond. Parramatta Marist is a Catholic school teaching predominately Parramatta and Cumberland district students for over 190 years. It was the first Catholic school established in Australia and the second oldest in the country. I would like to acknowledge the 2020 students leaders team including: captain Monty Duncombe; vice captain Fady Farid; Marc Caramoan; Ryan Santa Maria; Jon Arrogante; Callum Blaik; James Carr; Tyrone Donaghey; Ante Furjanic; Nash Hawkins; Keane McKenna; Joel Nohra; Dino Redimerio; Emile Saab, Tyler Sitchon and Steven Chidiac. I wish the young men all the best for their studies across the remainder of the 2020 academic year, in particular the Higher School Certificate students who have faced a difficult year with COVID-19 impacting their learning.

#### **TOONGABBIE SPORTS AND BOWLING CLUB**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—Toongabbie Sports and Bowling Club has served the community for over 60 years and it's always great to pop down and see many senior constituents enjoy their bowling. The Club was established at a meeting of the Prawn Club at the Toongabbie Hotel in early 1958. In the same year the land at the present site was purchased and the first bowling green was completed in November 1959. The Club now has many bowling greens and I was happy to award a grant from Premier Gladys Berejiklian last year to ensure flood lights were added for the bowlers benefit. The old fibro clubhouse is now a large complex which holds a bistro and community facilities. The membership of the club is around 10,000 which can be attributed to the work of its CEO Andrew Laurisden and Board of Directors including chairman David Nugent, vice chairman Duane Gorry, John Burgess, Time Heyes and David Rothery. The Club is also part of the ClubGRANTS program and assists local organisations with \$150,000 worth of grants each year.

#### **GARY WIMBUS**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to Gary Wimbus of Evans Head who recently was awarded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student of the year for his studies in his Diploma in Business Administration course. Gary, who works full time for Essential Energy has now completed his fourth diploma along with two Cert IV's and is now studying for his Masters in Business Administration. I wish Gary every success in whatever he takes on next to continue furthering his learning and skills.

#### **LIFE SAVING CLUB FUNDING**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I am delighted that three local Surf Life Saving Clubs on the Central Coast will benefit from the NSW Government's \$4 million Surf Club Facility Program. Last week I had the pleasure of announcing that Wamberal SLSC is receiving \$90,000 for the construction of storage spaces. At Avoca Beach SLSC, a total of \$59,818 will see the refurbishment of male and female amenities and change rooms. When I met up with President Garry Clarke I was delighted to hear that this work would be done by local tradies. And at The Entrance SLSC, \$57,000 is being provided to install solar panels as well as refurbish some of the older amenities. Not only do we want lifesavers to have the best possible facilities, we also know that Surf Life Saving Clubs are community gathering places used all-year-round for activities and events. I commend the several thousand surf life saving volunteers on the Central Coast, particularly from Wamberal, Avoca Beach and The Entrance. The 2019-20 season was very disruptive due to the bushfires and COVID-19, and we all hope that the 2020-21 season will allow more people—both locals and visitors—to enjoy our fantastic beaches.

### ELSIE'S RETREAT

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I am delighted to inform the House that for the first time in the Central Coast's history, our region will have its own Palliative Care Unit. On Thursday the 16th of July I stood side by side with the hardworking Elsie's Retreat Committee—Judy, Margaret, Oana and Peter—to announce that their eight-year campaign has yielded this fantastic result. The new indoor and outdoor spaces will transform palliative services for patients, families and carers. It is so important that we create the right environment with the best care but also the best surroundings too. All of the money raised by the Elsie's Retreat Committee will go towards furnishings and equipment in the new Unit. The tender is out right now and construction work on the new unit—which happens to be the former Maternity Ward—will begin later this year. It is critical that we provide families facing the death of a loved one have more choices and greater access to high quality care—and I am so proud that the New South Wales Government has done exactly that.

### GOCUP ROAD PETITION SUPPORTERS

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—For years, people in the Snowy Valleys Council area have been warning that the Gocup Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway intersection was potentially dangerous. Sadly, in May this year, residents' worst fears were realised after a fatal collision involving a truck and a car. In response to the community's concerns, I launched a petition with the aim of bringing to the attention of this House the urgent need for additional safety measures at the intersection. More than 2000 people have signed this petition, which I have now tabled. There has been a decisive and supportive reaction from the community, which underlines just how concerned people are. I would like to pay tribute to the many people and organisations that have thrown their support behind the campaign, including:

Ray "Dossie" Carr  
Michael and Liane Preinbergs  
Bernadette Walker  
Phil Barton  
Leeane Booby  
Mick Ivill  
Tumut River Brewing Company  
Tumut Newsagency  
Tumut Veterinary Clinic  
Tumut Building Supplies  
Catherine Ann's Beauty Therapy  
Batlow post office  
Batlow Bakery  
Coffee and More Batlow  
Bendigo bank  
Adelong newsagency  
Adelong cafe  
Snowy Valleys Council  
Tumut and Adelong Times  
Sounds of the Mountains

I am profoundly grateful for the support this petition has received.

### MONICA BARONE AND CITY OF SYDNEY

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate City of Sydney CEO Monica Barone and the council for success in the 2020 Minister's Awards for Women in Local Government. Monica won the 2020 Champion of Change Award, which recognises excellence in supporting women's participation. Her leadership has seen the council forging ahead with Sustainable Sydney, driving environmental, social, and renewal initiatives like Green Square, CBD light rail, the Better Buildings Partnership, coordinating bushfires support to regional councils and Resilient Sydney. The City of Sydney's Employment Diversity Award recognises the City increasing female participation in senior leadership. Since 2009, the City of Sydney has implemented a comprehensive strategy to advance women in leadership and promote full participation, including voluntary public gender pay gap reporting since 2016. The City of Sydney outperforms other Australian employers, with more women in higher paying jobs and leadership, very high return to work after maternity leave, female promotion equal to males, women in half its leadership positions, and women gaining access to higher education. Outstanding results and high levels of satisfaction on workplace flexibility, employee engagement and pay show a positive inclusive culture that well deserve recognition.

### ST GEORGE SCHOOLS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—We're fortunate to have many great schools in our area, staffed by dedicated and talented teachers. But even the greatest school will struggle with too many students and too few resources. And that is the issue the schools in St George are facing right now. According to NSW Government figures, Kogarah Public School is operating at 144 per cent of its enrolment capacity. At Carlton Public it's 127 per cent, and Hurstville Public is at 116 per cent. Our high schools are similar with Blakehurst High at 120 per cent capacity and Beverly Hills Girls at 119 per cent. Planning policies have resulted in thousands of new units being created in suburban areas, without the accompanying investment in infrastructure. But the problem is, our local schools don't have the permanent classrooms to accommodate the demand. At a time when we're looking for ways to stimulate the economy, I can think of no better way than to invest in schools and other facilities for children in the St George region.

### GRENFELL OPEN GARDENS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Grenfell Garden Club who, like so many other community groups and events, have had to postpone. The Club has made the decision to postpone Open Gardens until next year due to uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak. I appreciate what a disappointment this is for the Garden Club and all those who were looking forward to viewing some of the fabulous gardens on display. I encourage all to look forward to the possibility of the event going ahead in 2021 and hope that the coming months will bring good weather for local gardens to bloom.

### PROTECTION FOR PONY CLUBS MEMBERS

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I would like to acknowledge and thank the Berrima District Pony Club, which has many members from my Electorate, who have put to good use the personal protective equipment (PPE) distributed by our NSW State Government. Each PPE pack includes hand sanitiser, gloves, hand wash, paper towels and anti-bacterial wipes. When Covid-19 restrictions did not allow for community sport, the Pony Club provided online entertainment, which included activities, competitions and challenges, which children and members of the club were able to do at home. To further comply with COVID-19 restrictions, the Pony club has limited the number of people attending their rally days. I am proud of the members of the community in my electorate who are doing their part to keep themselves and those around them safe. During these unprecedented times it is more important than ever to ensure proper hygiene protocols. I again thank the Berrima District Pony club and all those sporting and community groups who are operating under current restrictions and guidelines.

### SERGEANT GREG DONALDSON

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I would like to congratulate and commend Highway Patrol Sergeant Greg Donaldson on his initiative to provide child car seats to struggling parents using monies raised from local businesses and NSW Police grants for Indigenous Families, rather than issuing them with a penalty notice. Whilst on duty, Sergeant Donaldson was often pulling over young mothers who were driving their children around without the correct child seats in their vehicle. After realising that he could purchase at least three child seats with the money from each penalty he was issuing, Sergeant Donaldson decided he could do something about this issue and has gone on to donate more than 240 car seats to struggling parents. Sergeant Donaldson believes that handing out fines wasn't really addressing the safety issue and in some cases the money spent on the fine could have been better spent on a proper car seat. To help roll out the program, Sgt Donaldson teamed up with local Aboriginal health services to identify parents who needed assistance before they were pulled over by police. This is a fantastic initiative by Sgt Donaldson and I thank him for his care and compassion for these struggling parents.

### JOHN SIMON

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—As National Stroke Week draws closer we are reminded of the importance of recognising the symptoms of stroke that could prevent permanent disability or sadly in some cases death if left undiagnosed. Stroke prevention advocate, John Simons from Laurieton knows only too well the devastating impacts of being diagnosed and treated for a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). In December 2019 the 76-year-old was playing a round of golf at the Kew Country Club when he noticed something was not quite right. Disregarding the situation John persevered with golf until he returned home to realise something horribly had gone medically wrong. It was 27 hours later and several scans that concluded he has suffered a milder form of stroke. Now recovered from his TIA, John is spreading his story about the dangers of stroke if left untreated, noting symptoms of balance instability, slurring speech and blurred vision as cause to seek urgent medical advice before it is too late. It is a sad reality that more than 56,000 Australian's will experience some form of stroke this year so I commend John for raising awareness on the eve of National Stroke Week held from 31 August to 6 September 2020.

### NOT ENOUGH TIME

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise the amazing accomplishments of local actor and director Diane Keogh for officially being selected by the American Golden Picture International Festival to stream her first film titled, "Not Enough Time". Filmed at the Salty Crew Café and the mock surgery ward at the University of NSW, "Not Enough Time" is a 14-minute short film that explores the difficulties in life for a young girl who is determined to achieve her goals. Renowned film writer, Diane Keogh was overjoyed that her production was selected out of 185 pictures from 50 countries around the world. She credits Director Jordan Frith and the cast starring Olivia Ward Elizabeth Turner, Rebecca Lakis-Smith, Adam Lockwood, Billy Axford, Ella Yang, Emily Barham and Melwin Nelapati for passionately committing their expertise to ensure "Not Enough Time" was a huge success. Soon to be showcased on the world stage, Diane hopes "Not Enough Time" will open new opportunities for the regional film and tourism industry by displaying local talent and the natural beauty of our towns and hinterland. I congratulate Diane, Jordan and the cast of "Not Enough Time" for breathing new life into the film industry the Mid North Coast.

### NATHAN NEALE AND ANDREW SHARP

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate Nathan Neale and Andrew Sharp of Elouera SLSC who recently rescued a struggling swimmer at Elouera Beach. Andrew, who's an elite-level board paddler and part of the 2020 NSW bronze medal-winning team, found the struggling swimmer in a rip and selflessly provided aid and calmed the swimmer. This act displays significant composure and courage. Nathan displayed great bravery by paddling out in large surf towards Andrew to help the struggling swimmer. The surf was 8ft, light was quickly fading and lifeguards had already packed up for the day. Nathan showed vast amounts of strength as he was forced to paddle out to sea twice due to the difficult surf conditions. Nathan and Andrew have been involved in surf-lifesaving for many years and utilised all their training and practise to aid the struggling swimmer. This rescue was in difficult conditions and shows large amounts of selflessness.

### BEVERLEY BELT

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)**—I recognise Tamworth community member Bev Belt for her dedication to St John Ambulance Tamworth. On Saturday 11th July abiding by COVID-19 regulations a small group of friends gathered to celebrate Bev's 22 years of volunteer service to St John Ambulance – Tamworth Division where she was presented with a service bar in recognition of her commitment, and acknowledging an inspirational woman who has given many years to volunteer work. Bev has worn many hats with St John Ambulance as an accredited first aid officer, 2IC and when the workload became too much for the small band of volunteers and it looked like the cadets program would close, Bev didn't hesitate to step in keeping the opportunity for young people to be a part of this important volunteer organisation. It is a credit to Bev that the cadets are still operating today. Bev rejoices being part of St John Ambulance including volunteering at the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Tamworth Country Music Festival and recalls her most memorable event was attending the visit by the Pope for World Youth Day as a volunteer, a special occasion for all who attended. Thank you Bev for your selfless contribution to our community.

### STEWART HOUSE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Stewart House has assisted at risk young people in our community for 90 years. Its programs support the physical and emotional wellbeing of disadvantaged children. Stewart House provides comprehensive support to young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are otherwise at risk. They provide checks on eyes, ears, teeth and skin condition, ensuring that participants can receive any health care that they require. Stewart House also provides attitudinal and skill training that positively changes the lives of participants. Emotional education is at the heart of Stewart House's mission. By teaching children to describe and understand their emotions participants learn how to self-regulate, and can improve disrupted neurodevelopment of traumatised children. This emotional education helps to ensure children do not undertake high risk behaviour as they continue to grow into adults. I would like to thank the Reverend Jay Bacik, the board members and the entire Stewart House team for their dedication to young persons in our community. They make a real difference to the lives of young persons in our area.

### COVID-19 TESTING

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—An efficient and accessible testing regime is crucial to keeping COVID-19 cases under control. I would like to thank all the nurses, healthcare professionals, support staff and security professionals helping to staff and run testing facilities in and around the Prospect Electorate. I would also like to thank the General Manager of Fairfield Hospital Paul Crowe and his Leadership Team for their work in coordinating the operation. For our residents often the easiest and safest way to get tested is in drive through

clinics. These clinics offer residents peace of mind that they will not have to queue with other potentially infected individuals. They also allow easy access, with sites in several local neighbourhoods. These testing sites are not the usual places of work for our nurses, they also require staff to stand out in the elements, in the cold Sydney winter weather. Undergoing COVID-19 testing can be a stressful and frustrating time, with health concerns and often long lines. I am thankful that we have professional nursing and medical staff to conduct testing in our community and provide reassurance to those undergoing testing.

#### **HARRIS FARM MARKETS AND BOWRAL OZHARVEST**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I would like to acknowledge the outstanding generosity of both Harris Farm Markets Bowral and OzHarvest in the Southern Highlands which have been doing all they can to help those in need. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March, Harris Farm Bowral have been donating a range of fruit and vegetables weekly to OzHarvest who then distribute these donations to local organisations to help feed those in the community who have a need. Thank you also the volunteers and all those involved in this operation to assist those who are in need during this time by supplying them with essentials. After all that this region has gone through this year with the fires, floods and now a pandemic. Generosity and kindness like this that makes a difference to those in need. The community spirit here is very much alive.

#### **ADVANCE DIVERSITY SERVICES VISIT**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Earlier this year I had the opportunity to visit the new centre of Advance Diversity Services with the Acting Minister for Multiculturalism and Seniors, Minister Geoff Lee. Advance Diversity Services is a not-for-profit community organisation that has serviced my electorate of Oatley since 1981. This organisation does a lot of great work for the community, from providing support for carers, the elderly, migrants, and the LGBTIQ+ community. It was my pleasure to introduce Minister Lee to the wonderful staff at the centre, who have recently relocated their head office from Rockdale to Hurstville. The visit allowed for an open dialogue to discuss the services offered by Advance Diversity Services, as well as ways that the Government can continue to support their organisation moving forward. I would like to acknowledge Antoinette Chow, Chief Executive Officer, as well as Ruth Fyfe, Chairperson, for their continued leadership and governance. I look forward to continuing to work with Advance Diversity Services in the future.

#### **THE WAYSIDE CHAPEL**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I wish to put on record thanks for the vital work of The Wayside Chapel, whose motto 'Love over Hate' summarises their approach to supporting the community since 1964. There are services and groups for just about anyone at Wayside, a café, community lunches, Junior Jivers under 5s, toastmasters, op shop, space for self-help groups and Kings Cross walking tours. There is help with crisis accommodation and housing, clinics for legal, health, and counselling. The Wingspan Project takes young people from "at-risk to at-promise", Aboriginal workers support Aboriginal visitors, the Wellness Program provides activities focussed on individual's recovery plans and Pathways links people into training and jobs. The Twilight Program runs late into the night. Wayside has expanded to Bondi with new services to suit that area. While COVID has meant many changes, Wayside continues to provide vital support to the Kings Cross community. I congratulate and thank the passionate and committed team of workers, donors and volunteers who provide comprehensive programs and opportunities that "see everyone as a person to be met, not a problem to be solved".

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 21:23 until  
Wednesday 5 August 2020 at 9:30.**