



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday, 15 October 2020**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday, 15 October 2020**

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

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

*[Notices of motions given]*

*Personal Explanation*

## MEMBER FOR DRUMMOYNE

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans) (09:44:05):** By leave: Last night the member for Blue Mountains and I had a respectful and candid conversation regarding our interaction on 18 June 2020. That interaction was the subject of a notice of motion during the last sitting period. I have always maintained that there was never any pursuit or bailing up of the member. However, having spoken with her, I accept that the member genuinely felt intimidated during our interaction. She accepts that that was not my intention. The member for Blue Mountains and I were able to come to an understanding that a heated debate did occur in the Chamber and spilled out into the corridor. Therefore, for any anxiety or concern felt by the member during our interaction, I apologise unreservedly. I hope to continue, and look forward to continuing, our mutually respectful professional relationship.

*Business of the House*

## BUSINESS WITHDRAWN

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** By leave: Following the statement by the member for Drummoyne, I withdraw business of the House notice of motion (general notice) No. 1246 [Member for Drummoyne].

*Bills*

## ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020

### First Reading

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

### Second Reading Speech

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (09:46:56):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to speak to the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The bill proposes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013, the Driving Instructors Act 1992, the Photo Card Act 2005 and consequential amendments to the Fines Act 1996 to support improved road safety and customer outcomes, reduce red tape and increase the effectiveness of Transport for NSW as a regulator. The review report was tabled on 13 October 2020 and found that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid, and the terms of the Act meet the community's needs and are considered appropriate for securing its objectives. Turning to the details of the amendments proposed arising from the recommendations of this review, currently section 9 of the Act provides the criteria for determining whether an offence is a first, second or subsequent offence for the purposes of the Act.

Section 9 of the Act underpins the operation of the penalty regime that is applied to driver licence disqualification periods, imprisonment and mandatory alcohol interlock orders. On the advice of police and the Chief Magistrate's office, an amendment is proposed to remove the ambiguity regarding the current operations provision and to further clarify how first and second or subsequent offending should be determined to ensure that repeat offenders are sentenced accordingly. The proposed amendment will clarify that any reoffending period should be measured from the date of the offending conduct rather than the date of conviction, which is currently used in determining sentencing. In addition, similar offences to those in New South Wales provided for in other Australian jurisdictions may also be considered equivalent offences when making this determination.

The amendment will provide discretionary decision-making powers for courts to allow magistrates to consider whether or not a similar offence in another jurisdiction, such as driving whilst disqualified, should be determined an equivalent offence. The bill also provides a series of amendments that will strengthen existing compliance and enforcement provisions to support Transport for NSW regulatory activities. The first of these

amendments proposes to increase the statute of limitations for proceedings for limited and specific offences under the Act and regulations from six months to two years. Currently, proceedings for a breach of the Act or its regulations must generally be commenced no later than six months after the date on which the alleged offence is committed. Transport for NSW has encountered difficulties in completing investigations for serious and complex matters within a six-month time frame, especially for matters related to driver licence fraud and rebirthing or cloning of motor vehicles. There is already an exemption for camera-detected offences, which provide a 12-month period to account for the additional time taken for processes associated with driver nomination.

There are a number of other serious offences where an increase in the statute of limitations is also required to satisfactorily complete an investigation and gather the required evidence to launch a prosecution. These offences include serious driving offences under the Act involving death or injury. Increasing the statute of limitations to two years for these types of offences will align the Act with provisions contained in similar legislation, including the Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW), the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016 and the Marine Safety Act 1998.

The next amendment will insert a new provision to expressly authorise Transport for NSW to commence proceedings for certain offences under road transport legislation. Currently the Act does not expressly provide for a specific party to commence such proceedings. Creating a new provision in the Act will enable Transport for NSW as an entity to commence proceedings for an offence against the Act or statutory rules, rather than having to rely on section 14 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This is obviously going to enable the department as an entity to prosecute a person in its own right, which is consistent with practices used by other government agencies who have similar compliance and enforcement responsibilities.

The bill will also amend the Act to clarify how Transport for NSW manages the application of demerit points to novice drivers. Under the Act Transport for NSW is required to maintain a demerit points register. This amendment will clarify the demerit points incurred by a novice driver cannot be used in the application of a subsequent administrative licence sanction against that driver following an appeal in the Local Court. This change will clarify the policy intent to ensure that drivers who choose to appeal a licence sanction in the courts are treated equally regardless of the appeal result. It is also proposed to amend section 59 of the Act to clarify that Transport for NSW is to take into account any period of roadside suspension previously served under a police imposed sanction when imposing an administrative licence sanction for an offence. This proposal is consistent with the provisions of section 206B of the Act that requires the courts to consider any period of roadside suspension when determining a disqualification period for an offender.

Section 271 of the Act will also be amended to remove the requirement to publish decisions to waive fees for services in the *Government Gazette*. Currently any decision made by Transport for NSW to waive fees is published on the websites of Transport for NSW and Service NSW, which are typically where customers choose to access information on these matters. This amendment will reduce red tape and provide customers quick and easy access to important information when decisions are made to relax certain fees, particularly in times of emergency such as bushfires, drought and other unforeseen circumstances.

To improve customer outcomes and support the priority of Tell Government Once it is proposed to amend section 57 of the Act to permit Transport for NSW to release a photograph to other government agencies with the consent of the customer and to NSW Fair Trading for the purposes of issuing tattoo parlour licences. To simplify and modernise the Act section 22 of the Act will be amended to remove the requirement for a register of orders made under the Act to be maintained by Transport for NSW. This requirement is redundant as the orders are also published in the *Government Gazette*. It is also proposed to remove certain provisions under the Act regarding the service of penalty notices as these duplicate provisions in the Fines Act 1996.

I turn now to amendments proposed in the Act that were identified outside the statutory review process but incorporated in this bill for efficiency and timeliness. These measures are very important and I think members will agree with them. The first of these amendments will create a statutory rule-making power in the Act to manage offensive imagery or slogans displayed on a vehicle. This will allow Transport for NSW to impose a registration sanction on the vehicle when the offensive material is not removed. This amendment will align New South Wales laws with other jurisdictions that have already taken action to stamp out offensive advertising on motor vehicles. I think most members would agree, with some of the offensive vehicles we have seen on the road, that this amendment is designed to get consistency across the Commonwealth.

To improve the integrity of information maintained by Transport for NSW it is also proposed to create a power to allow Transport for NSW to use information held in these databases to update customer information for the purposes of exercising its functions, including its maritime functions. This change will also deliver customer benefits as it will eliminate the need for a customer to provide the same information to Transport for NSW on multiple occasions. Section 55 of the Act will also be amended to clarify that a photo image contained in a proof of identity document such as a passport is not a photograph as provided for under part 3.5 of the Act.



This will confirm the policy intent that a proof of identity document that contains a photograph such as a passport is not inadvertently deemed to be a photograph, which is subject to the protocols associated with protection of stored photographs under part 3.5 of the Act. This amendment will remove any uncertainty about how photo images on proof of identity documents are to be managed by Transport for NSW and Service NSW.

It is proposed to amend the Act to expand the current vehicle sanction scheme to enable police to impound a motor vehicle or confiscate the numberplates of a company registered vehicle used to commit certain serious driving offences, including high-range speeding. This amendment will ensure that people driving company vehicles who commit serious breaches of the traffic laws will be held accountable for using a vehicle to commit reckless driving behaviour. It is also proposed to amend the Act to increase penalties for companies that fail to nominate or correctly identify drivers for camera-detected offences.

Statistics provided by Revenue NSW indicate that in the 2019-20 financial year there were around 7,000 occasions where a company did not nominate the driver responsible for a camera-detected offence committed in a company registered vehicle. That means almost 7,000 drivers who committed these offences were not identified and therefore could not be held accountable for their driving behaviour through the application of the demerit points or even a licence sanction. That is not acceptable. There is no doubt, given the serious road safety implications of this type of behaviour, that this is an important step forward. As a result it is proposed to amend the Act to increase the amount of court fines for offences under the Act for a company that fails to nominate or supply information required to identify a driver who commits a camera-detected offence from 100 penalty units, or \$11,000, to 200 penalty units, or \$22,000.

In addition, the vehicle registration regulation will be amended to allow Transport for NSW to immediately commence registration suspension action against companies that fail to nominate these drivers. I think members will agree that is a welcome move. Finally, to improve the ability to identify drivers nominated for camera-detected and parking offences it is proposed to amend both the Road Transport Act and the Fines Act to mandate the need for the responsible person for a vehicle to provide both the drivers licence number and date of birth of the offender at the time of nomination. The Act currently provides an exemption for a person who does not know and could not, with reasonable diligence, have ascertained the driver's name and address. Those due diligence provisions will be expanded to capture circumstances where the drivers licence number and date of birth details cannot reasonably be ascertained.

Sadly, over the last five years there has been a total of 2,408 casualty crashes involving overseas licence holders, including 36 fatalities and 574 serious injuries. The next amendment is proposed to improve the management of overseas drivers in New South Wales by providing the police with the power to issue a notice to an overseas driver withdrawing their visiting driver privileges at the roadside for three months when detected speeding by more than 30 kilometres per hour. In the case of an overseas driver who has outstanding penalty notices recorded in his or her name for offences totalling 13 or more demerit points, the Act will be amended to provide that the driving privileges may be withdrawn for a period of 14 days. The police will also submit a question of fitness report to Transport for NSW to consider further action if they form the view that the action may be warranted and in the interest of public safety.

The Driving Instructors Act 1992 will also be amended to remove the requirement for police to conduct an interview and to provide a report to Transport for NSW. This procedure duplicates the process for a Working With Children Check, which is a mandatory requirement under section 10 of the Driving Instructors Act 1992. This change will streamline the process and reduce the administrative burden for police and for customers applying for a driving instructor licence while continuing to ensure that appropriate checks are in place as part of the driving instructor licensing process. Finally, to support the Government's priority in making it easier to do business, an amendment will be made to the Photo Card Act 2005 to allow Transport for NSW to use and release information, including photographs, held in the register if release of the information is for the purpose of the issue, use or verification of a digital photo card.

The Government is making a number of important and serious amendments to the Act following the review. As I have indicated, some did not form part of the statutory review but in the interests of streamlining processes and improving road safety they are significant amendments to the legislation. They will give great outcomes for the people of the State. I urge all members to support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **MARINE POLLUTION AMENDMENT (REVIEW) BILL 2020**

### **First Reading**

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

## Second Reading Speech

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (10:00:42):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Marine Pollution Amendment (Review) Bill 2020. The purpose of the bill is to amend the marine pollution legislation to implement the findings of the statutory review of the Act, which gives rise to the effect of Australia's obligations as a signatory to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, commonly referred to as MARPOL, which is designed to protect our waters from pollution from vessels. The amendments in the bill are designed to improve consistency of coverage across New South Wales for vessels; to strengthen the protection of New South Wales State waters from pollution, and in particular sewerage pollution; to streamline and simplify the Act; and to update the Act to align with national and international best practice in shipping and port operations. The New South Wales Marine Pollution Act gives effect to five annexes, with air pollution covered by the Commonwealth only.

I will now explain the key amendments outlined in the bill. The statutory review noted that under current legislation different pollution requirements apply for vessels in coastal waters compared to vessels in inland waters, and they apply under different Acts. To address this the bill will broaden the application of the Marine Pollution Act to cover all State waters, including inland waters such as the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Darling rivers and estuaries, as well as coastal waters and all port waters. This change means consistent standards for vessels will apply across all New South Wales waters. It is designed to improve the further consistency of the marine pollution legislation with MARPOL and Commonwealth legislation. The Marine Pollution Act will also now apply to recreational vehicles that are currently only covered under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. The effect of this change is to make clear in the Act the administrative requirements for some recreational vessel owners, which are not very onerous.

It is well known that, on the whole, recreational vessel owners want to do the right thing. These requirements serve as a reminder about managing garbage properly and what to do in the event of an oil spill when people are out enjoying the incredible waterways of this State. We want to keep things user-friendly with straightforward messages and easy-to-access information on what boat owners need to do. Recreational vessel peak organisations were consulted on these changes and they indicated their support for measures to protect the New South Wales marine environment. Those organisations will continue to be engaged to develop clear and appropriate materials to explain those requirements for everyday recreational boaters. Nobody wants to harm our waters.

An important part of the Marine Pollution Act is its coverage of sewage pollution. Untreated sewage poses serious risk to human health and the marine environment. The Marine Pollution Act prohibits the discharge of untreated sewage into our waters. To strengthen the provision of sewage pollution, the bill introduces a new offence. It will be an offence for vessels to have defective, altered or modified sewerage systems that can allow illegal discharges of sewage. I emphasise that this is a preventative measure to enforce sewage requirements before a pollution incident actually occurs.

Two other Act amendments will assist with strengthening the protection of the environment. One allows the State to take the proactive measures of requiring pollutants like oil to be removed from vessels that are derelict, abandoned or out of commission to remove the potential for a pollution incident before it occurs. The second is to remove the prerequisite that the State must determine that the vessel is likely to depart New South Wales waters before it can be detained to recover costs from responding to a pollution incident. This power can be used in situations where the vessel is unlikely to pass State borders, such as when the vessel is damaged or in distress.

The bill also includes amendments to streamline and simplify the Act and updates to align with national and international trends in shipping and port operations. All of the amendments I have outlined were identified during the statutory review of the Act and were consulted on with industry stakeholders, recreational vessel users, the public and the relevant government bodies by the department. The proposed amendments were outlined in a discussion paper for public consultation, which was advertised on government websites, as well as in newspapers such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Over 90 stakeholders were directly contacted to notify them of the review and meetings were held with key stakeholders to explain the proposed changes. Eight submissions were received and no concerns were raised about the objectives of the bill.

The Government is committed to working with industry and the community during implementation of these amendments to the Act to make sure that any administrative requirements are user-friendly and that the boating community is aware of the marine pollution prevention measures. Ultimately, this is about having robust laws that prevent and effectively address pollutions from vessels regardless of whether those vessels are inland or in the open sea environment. It is about harmonisation with national and international standards. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Budget*

**BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2019-2020**

**Debate resumed from 6 August 2020.**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (10:06:50):** I speak to the issue of mental health and the investment by the Government in this space. Mental health is a topic that we as a society are becoming more ready to discuss and act on. Every single life lost to suicide is one too many and we acknowledge that more needs to be done. In 2018 the Government announced almost \$90 million to deliver a new blueprint for suicide prevention in New South Wales. Consultation with the public, which fed directly into this strategy, was held in the town of Cootamundra, in my electorate. The final result of the consultation marked a new beginning for the State's journey towards zero suicides. It is an issue for which there is no one solution. We need to pull together as a community and keep an eye out for each other.

We need to make sure that if we see a mate who seems to be doing it tough that we are not afraid to step in and, if necessary, access the support services that the New South Wales Nationals in government have been providing. Over the past 12 months, as part of the \$700 million Statewide Mental Health Infrastructure Program, the Government has begun planning to do a number of things. One of those is to deliver specialised beds for mothers and their babies in a public hospital setting, which will allow new mothers who need a hospital admission for their mental health care to stay with their baby. We committed to spend an extra \$23.5 million over four years to expand the capacity of Lifeline and Kids Helpline, and as a result of COVID we are seeing an even further investment than that. Finally, I report that the Young High School mental health in-reach nurse program is really delivering for the town of Young and the high school students in my electorate.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (10:09:01):** It gives me great pleasure to talk about the budget and its impact on The Entrance electorate. It is often said on the Central Coast—but less so now than perhaps when I was first elected—that it would be better if a member of the Government represented the area because more would get done. The proof is in the pudding. We are certainly getting a lot done from opposition in The Entrance electorate. Even though we do not always fall in line with the Government's plans, the support my community has shown me in the campaigns that we run certainly makes sure The Entrance gets what it deserves. There is no more obvious example than the upgrades being carried out at railway stations around The Entrance electorate, particularly at Tuggerah railway station.

Members and my constituents will recall the number of times they were told by both the Minister for Transport and Roads and his predecessor, who is now the Premier, that there would never be lifts at Tuggerah station because it already has a ramp. Again and again, my community were told no. But before the last election, due to our campaign, the Government finally came to the party and committed to install those lifts. I understand that, as we speak, it is doing early planning works as part of the last budget. Works are already commencing at Ourimbah railway station and Niagara Park railway station. Preparatory work is also underway at Lisarow railway station and Narara railway station. That means that, in the not-too-distant future, upgrades will be finished at all railway stations in The Entrance electorate. It will then be the only electorate on the Central Coast where all railway stations have been brought up to accessibility standards that are suitable for the whole community in these modern times, as the people expect and deserve. So I am pleased to see that.

The benefit of being in opposition is that I get to pick and choose which projects the Government puts forward that I wave through without comment or which I try to modify. Ourimbah railway station is a good example of this. The Government came up with a design for Ourimbah railway station that was great and included lifts, but it wanted to destroy the war memorial located there.

**Mr Greg Warren:** That is right.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** The shadow Minister for Veterans was helping me with that last week. The Government's design involved destroying the war memorial but installing the lifts. So it was an odd situation, where it would provide something that was needed but destroy an historic part of the Ourimbah community—one of the oldest communities on the Central Coast and the oldest in The Entrance electorate—in the process. Being in opposition, this was a gift! So my community got together and said the Government should not do that. We rallied, we lobbied and in the final design, having handed it over to the builder, the Government was told that the preliminary design could be modified easily to preserve the war memorial in its current location while also installing lifts. So that is what is going ahead.

Our campaign continues, because we have now protected the war memorial but we need it conserved. It has been there for a long time without receiving much tender love and care. It needs some work. I look forward

to getting the Government to agree to that work, because it is on Transport land so Transport for NSW must agree for the work to go ahead. So far, it has been a bit slow in doing that but I look forward to the work going ahead, with the support of my community, so that the war memorial is conserved to a level we expect for such a memorial in our area. I have observed the Pacific Highway upgrades going on around Lisarow railway station at the moment. The benefit of being in opposition is that I can be critical of those projects, whereas members opposite are in straitjackets and have to say everything is great. They cannot criticise anything, no matter how dumb a project might be.

Everybody is happy to see the Pacific Highway upgraded at Lisarow. However, looking through the detail, I noticed that the Pacific Highway upgrade would result in the loss of a number of informal car parking spots around the railway station, which is located right next to the highway. Before the upgrade, many people parked informally on the Old Pacific Highway as well as on verge of the Pacific Highway. One arm of Transport for NSW says that it is going to upgrade the highway and whatever happens around the railway station is not its concern. It says that its job is just to widen the road. It does not talk to the other arm of Transport for NSW, which is responsible for railway stations. That is where the local member and community come in to say that this is a dumb design and to query parking arrangements at the railway station.

Through persistent effort and appropriate criticism—rather than the blind applause that we hear from Government members for projects like this—Transport for NSW has committed to remove no more informal parking spaces when the Pacific Highway is upgraded. This goes against the original design—which members opposite supported without the local member running a critical eye over the plans, with the backing of the community, to make sure that when the project is finished nothing is lost and a better result is achieved overall.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Bills*

### **NSW JOBS FIRST BILL 2020**

#### **First Reading**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I postpone notice of motion (for bills) No. 1 [NSW Jobs First Bill 2020] standing in my name on the *Business Paper*.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (PECUNIARY INTERESTS DISCLOSURES) BILL 2020**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Warren, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:17:09):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Transparency and integrity in local government is not only paramount for public representatives; it is something that the community deserves and requires as a certainty. That can only occur if we have a full, transparent and accessible disclosure process. That is not the case at this time and I will go into more detail later, drawing on examples, to explain why that is. As members will be aware, the object of the Local Government Amendment (Pecuniary Interests Disclosures) Bill 2020 is to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to require returns disclosing interests lodged by certain persons with the general manager of a council under a code of conduct to be published on the council's website.

It does this by inserting new section 440AAC, which requires councillors, designates and designated persons who have lodged with the general manager of a council a return disclosing interests required under a code of conduct to publish the return on the council's website. The return must be published within 14 days of the lodgement with the general manager. The home page of the council's website must have a prominent link to the page of the website on which the returns are published. In new section 440AAC "delegate" is defined to mean:

... a person to whom a function of the council has been delegated under section 377 of the Local Government Act 1993.

"Designated person" is defined to mean:

- (a) the general manager of the council, or
- (b) a person occupying a senior staff position in the council, or
- (c) a person, or a person of a class, prescribed by the regulations.

The publication of returns disclosing interests under the code of conduct is more specifically:

- (1) A councillor, delegate or designated person who has lodged with the general manager a return disclosing interests required under a code of conduct must publish the return on the council's website.
- (2) The return must be published within 14 days of lodgement.
- (3) The council must ensure there is a prominent link on the homepage of the council's website to the electronic page on which the returns are published.

With that more formalised and put in more specific terms, I would like to elaborate further on the importance of this bill and why I think all colleagues should support it. Ultimately, clause 4.21 of the Model Code of Conduct as prescribed under section 440 of the Local Government Act 1993 and clause 180 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 require councillors and designated persons to make and lodge with the general manager a disclosure of interests return in the form set out in schedule 2 to the code, disclosing the councillor's or designated person's interests as specified in schedule 1 to the code.

That is what is in place at the moment, but the reality is there are some unclear regulations in place whereby councillors or other required persons can do their declaration but they do not have to disclose it in a manner that is easily accessible for local communities. Ultimately there are provisions in place in some councils where they have to make an appointment to go and meet with the councillor or the director to view the disclosure. That is not consistent with community expectation and it is not consistent with what I feel and the New South Wales Opposition feels is consistent with the integrity that we require in local government.

Of course clause 4.27 of the code says that information contained in returns made and lodged under clause 4.21 is to be made publicly available in accordance with the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, otherwise known as the GIPA Act, and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009, which is known as the GIPA Regulation, and any guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner. The GIPA Act and schedule 1 to the GIPA Regulation currently prescribe the returns of the interests of councillors, designated persons and delegates as "open access information".

Section 6 of the GIPA Act requires open access information to be made publicly available on a council's website unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information or it would impose unreasonable additional costs. Information access *Guideline 1: For local councils on the disclosure of information contained in the returns disclosing the interests of councillors and designated persons developed under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)* issued by the Information Commissioner relevantly says:

- The returns should be made publicly available on the council's website ... unless there is an overriding public interest against [the release]
- The fact that a return of interests is open access information is a factor in favour of disclosure in balancing the public interest

It is proposed, though, by introducing this bill that the publishing on council websites of the returns of pecuniary interests of councillors and designated persons be mandatory and easily accessible—for example, via the direct link, as I have previously stated, on a council's home page. In order to achieve this the requirement was to introduce this bill to ensure that communities can have that certainty. Ultimately it makes clear through legislation what each and every one of us has to do in this place. Transparency, as I stated earlier, is key to ensuring communities have faith in their elected representatives at every level, including ours and of course including local government. They need to know that representations made by their local elected representatives are motivated by the interests of their community and not that of self-interest.

Access to information regarding councillors' pecuniary interests is convoluted and difficult to obtain in many cases. I will draw the attention of the House to an example in a media report which I will go into detail on which outlines how some councils do not have an appropriate process in place to ensure certainty, faith and integrity for their local community. This bill is quite simply about increasing transparency and accountability and providing communities with that instrument. It is not just about publishing on a website; it is about making information easy to find and not hiding it away in an obscure section of a council's website or making it too difficult for community members to find and review a particular representative's disclosure. We know that the State Government updated council governance rules in early August but at that time it was a missed opportunity and the Government failed to ensure councils were required to make pecuniary interests easily accessible to the public. I said at the time:

The rules and regulations around councillors' disclosure of interests are as transparent as a muddy river. Right now they can be buried in a mountain of paperwork and council minutes that could take you days to find.

An ABC article in August of this year reported less than a third of councils in and around Sydney had made registers easily accessible online. As an example there was a council—and out of respect to those communities I will not detail the specifics of those councils—in which some councillors late last year voted to keep their financial and pecuniary interests register off the council website. I do not find that acceptable at all. I do not think

it is consistent with community expectation. It has an adverse effect on the integrity of public representation and local representation that must be amended, which is what this bill seeks to do. In the interests of transparency, this is not a decision councillors should be able to make.

As we know, every one of the 128 councils in this State is overseen, legislated and regulated by the State. It is our responsibility to provide those councils with the direction, the leadership and the appropriate laws in place so that their communities have that certainty and faith of integrity. Further to that example, a staff report recommended not putting the details on the website as redacted information would mean the "return has considerably less value". Again that is not the point. The issue is about transparency and accountability. A former ICAC investigator was quoted in an ABC article in August as saying redacting was "as good as not complying at all" in relation to disclosures.

There are privacy concerns, but declaring financial and pecuniary interests and making them public to ratepayers, local communities, families and businesses should be part and parcel of being a local councillor. I am a former councillor and mayor myself. I took it upon my own professional standards to ensure that all my disclosures were up to date and easily accessible at any time for any community member. To the point, I remember at a particular time I had a link to my social media pages as well to ensure that the community had that certainty and faith. We are not proposing today that councillors do that, but I know there are many good councillors. The overwhelming number of councillors in this State are good, honest people who do the right thing. This is not about that. This is about putting a law in place to provide certainty for the community. The reality is that there are some councillors—a small minority—who are not. The overwhelming majority are good local people who just want to serve their community and they do a fantastic job, at times without recognition, in a very tough and occasionally unforgiving environment.

Holding a position on council is a privilege, not a right. We are privileged to be here to serve those whom we are honoured to represent. It is the same for local councillors, and I know our Federal colleagues feel the same way. Ratepayers have a right to know whether there are any mitigating factors that determine councillors' decision-making. Sadly, as I referred to before, there are some councillors who take advantage of holes in the current legislation and subsequent regulation. A councillor was reported for allegedly failing to disclose an indirect link to a party colleague she voted against reporting to the corruption watchdog. The council voted to censure the councillor for breaching the code of conduct by failing to declare that interest, related in part to a matter involving another councillor. Had the bill been in place that conflict would have been alleviated.

In a further example, another councillor allegedly failed to declare interests in at least 11 companies that might be involved in property developments. An investigation was launched by the Office of Local Government but the findings have not been released. I call on the Minister to release those findings and make them public. The community deserves to understand what has happened and to have faith in the integrity of the process. The Office of Local Government has not confirmed whether the investigation has concluded. Ultimately, we do not know where that investigation is up to. This is not about me and it is not about politics; this is about people in the community who deserve certainty about the integrity of their public representatives. Right now they do not have that, and they deserve it. During budget estimates hearings earlier this year the Minister for Local Government said:

I do not have the power to speed up the investigation or demand that the details be released.

I do not concur with the Minister. We need the Minister to provide leadership and direction. She can do that today by supporting the bill. Good things are always achieved by working together. This is an example of how we can work together to provide faith in integrity and certainty for local communities across the 128 councils in this State. The public deserves to know whether the relevant councillor's decision-making was in their best interests or that of their community. At best, it leaves many serious questions unanswered. Members in this place know that communities—rightfully—can take somewhat of a dim view of their public representatives. Having provisions of this nature in place is a step towards alleviating that.

Earlier this year there was an ABC report—I am happy to speak about it in the House as it has been made public—that Sydney councils are flouting transparency rules around the financial interests of elected officials, prompting the requirement of intervention by the State. The ABC analysis found that less than one-third of local governments in and around Sydney have made their interests registers easily available online, as required under guidelines introduced a year ago. The disclosures are designed to share the financial interests of elected officials and senior staff. Geoffrey Watson, SC, is a barrister and public integrity advocate who served as counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption during a string of political scandals. He said that compliance with the rules was critical. I concur with Mr Watson. He went further, and stated:

How else can a member of the public make any relevant judgement as to whether or not their local government authority is motivated by the right objectives?

I again concur with Mr Watson's observation. Disclosures by some councils, such as Strathfield, Mosman, Northern Beaches and Hunters Hill, are available only by visiting the council building—and that is after a request has been made. Another category of disclosures is available by request only. A number of councils already have them available online. I acknowledge that Blue Mountains, Canada Bay, Georges River, Inner West, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Parramatta, Waverley and Willoughby councils have their disclosures available online. It can be done and it should be done for the integrity of local communities.

In conclusion, I call on every member of the House to read and consider the bill and to consult with their local community to gather feedback. I believe the overwhelming feedback they will receive is that we must put every instrument of transparency in place to ensure people have faith in their local representatives and their integrity. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ROADS AMENDMENT (TOLL-FREE PERIOD) BILL 2020**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 15 September 2020.**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (10:37:33):** On the last occasion I spoke in debate on the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020 I referred to NorthConnex. I said that, unlike claims the Government sometimes makes in the media, Labor does not oppose NorthConnex. In fact, we welcome it and we have been waiting for it. But we are asking for a toll-free period. We have not specified whether that should be a week, a fortnight or a month. That is up to the Government to decide. I note that the Minister for Transport and Roads said there are contracts in place. This piece of infrastructure is running particularly late and I wonder whether the contractor is liable for penalties as the road will not be opening when the Government said it would. Before the 2019 election we were told that the road would open early in 2019. Then it was mid-2019, late 2019, mid-2020 and here we are getting towards the end of 2020 and the latest estimate is it could be opened in a few weeks.

When I drove to Sydney on Monday I noticed that the electronic signs designating the lanes are working, so hopefully we are getting close. People want to start using this road. But we have two main concerns. Obviously, for safety reasons people need to get used to how the road will operate in terms of current infrastructure, with the M1 at one end and the M2 and Pennant Hills Road at Carlingford. With traffic coming from the Central Coast the way it is, particularly in peak hour—and the member for Lake Macquarie, who is in the chair, would know this as well—coming down the "big dipper" people are already trying to get into their heads which lane they should be in and whether they are going to go down Pennant Hills Road or whether they are going to go onto the Pacific Highway. They will now have a third choice, which will be NorthConnex.

The NorthConnex access lanes are on the far left-hand side. It will go from one lane into two, which is good—I confirmed that with the NorthConnex team—but those two inside lanes are often taken up by heavy vehicles. Faster vehicles or normal cars coming down the hill will be in the outside lane—in the third lane. Those drivers will have to get their heads around slowing down to the speed of the traffic and moving across two lanes in order to get into the lane they will need to be in to access NorthConnex. Before, they could stay in the outside lane and continue straight on to Pennant Hills Road. So it will take a little bit of adjustment for people, who may think, "Oh, there's a toll. It's going to cost me X amount of dollars. I have to make sure I'm in the right lane if I want to use it." There is a whole lot of thinking to be done. All we are asking the Government for is a toll-free period so that people have that adjustment time. If we want people to use the road then we obviously want them to be able to try it out first, because there is a cost.

I will talk a bit about the cost. When Labor put out a press release on 15 September the toll charge at that time, which was set on 1 July, was \$7.91 per single journey for cars. For trucks and buses, the charge was \$23.73 for a single journey. For someone using the road on a normal day, the charge is \$15.82 return, which is on top of the tolls that they would already pay. If they travel on the M2-M7, for example, they will now have \$15-plus cost per day on top of that amount. If they are travelling to the city via NorthConnex, they may have the tolls for NorthConnex, the M2, the Lane Cove Tunnel and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. An extra \$15 per day makes a big difference to people's budgets. Over a 48-week year—taking into account that people have four weeks annual leave and assuming they are using the road all the time—it will cost them \$3,796.80 extra per year just to use that particular piece of infrastructure. That is not an inconsiderable cost, so people should have the opportunity of a toll-free period to decide whether the time saved—estimated to be 15 minutes—is worth the extra money taken out of their budget. They will only be able to know that if they get to try it out. [*Extension of time*]

For truck owners, and particularly private truck owners, a return journey each day will cost \$11,390.40 on top of the tolls that they already pay. Again, that is a significant cost. I met with owner-drivers when the Transport Workers' Union held its protest at Observatory Park at Pennant Hills. They said that this cost is not inconsiderable;

it is a major cost on top of what they already pay. Trucks and buses are in a more difficult situation because they have to use the road unless they are a dangerous vehicle, in which case they can continue to use Pennant Hills Road. All other heavy vehicles will be forced to use the new road; they will not have a choice. That is different from many other roads that charge tolls. But things got worse. Those were the charges on 1 July. On 1 October the toll went up for the fourth time since the road was announced, and the road has not even opened.

So there have been four toll increases before the road is even open. For cars, the charge went from \$7.91 at 1 July to \$7.99 at 1 October. It had been \$23.73 for trucks; it is now \$23.97 for trucks. Over a year, again, that adds up. But it gets worse because we know that NorthConnex tolls will go up by 1 per cent every quarter for the life of the 28-year contract. Surely, with the costs that are going to be put on motorists, a toll-free period is not too much for the general public to ask. Labor had a lot of support from people on the Central Coast saying they think that is fair and reasonable. We should not have had to move a private member's bill to force the Government to do this; the Government should have done it anyway. The Government has done it on other roads in the past.

This is not unique; it has happened before. But particularly for all those commuters north of Sydney who travel every day, this is going to be a major cost. Yes, it will save them 15 minutes, maybe—unless there is congestion in the tunnel, I suppose—but they cannot even get a toll-free period at the start. We ask the Minister to reconsider his position, look at the long-term revenue that will be collected—which will increase every quarter, year on year, for 28 years—and say to people, "Okay, we're going to give you a week, a fortnight, a month of a toll-free period so that you can try it out and start to understand how you can use it safely. You can try it out to see how it will affect your budget." We think that that is more than fair and reasonable. Given that we are also in COVID times and these costs will come when we want people to start commuting back to work and back to the city, a toll-free period could act as an incentive to help that along.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:46:39):** I speak on behalf of The Greens in debate on the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020. As well as enforcing a toll-free period for any new toll roads opening in New South Wales, the bill stipulates that the private corporations that lose revenue during a toll-free period can and should seek compensation from the Government for the duration of that toll-free period. That decision is left to the discretion of the government of the day. As my Greens colleague Ms Abigail Boyd said in the other place, The Greens will not oppose the bill. But, as she set out clearly, there are very serious concerns about this approach. She said:

A holiday from a toll on a privatised road is like a try-before-you-buy marketing scheme delivered on behalf of the toll road operator.

And it is paid for by the New South Wales Government. She went on:

It could have the unfortunate effect of encouraging people to use toll roads when they would otherwise use public transport due to the comparatively lower cost. Once people give up commuting by public transport and get into their cars, it is very difficult to get them back onto public transport. Who would benefit from habits being changed in favour of using toll roads? Again, it is the private operators of those toll roads.

They would be the ones who benefit. The Greens' view is that this legislation does not really hit the mark. Instead, it skirts the edges of a deeper and more systemic problem with privatised toll roads and the collection of privatised tolls on behalf of private corporations. This bill would potentially have the unfortunate side effect of inducing further demand for toll roads instead of moving people out of private vehicles and onto public transport. It is effectively a government cash handout straight to corporations.

We need to recognise that people at the moment are doing it tough and that they have been sluggish with big tolls in the middle of a pandemic. I appreciate that more and more people are choosing to drive because of safety reasons. That said, we need to look at the bigger picture. The issue of tolls is complex and it is important that we consider why successive governments in New South Wales have locked our communities into these private, polluting toll roads in the first place. Whilst The Greens do not support private toll roads that fleece commuters, there can certainly be a role and a place for tolls that are progressively taxed and directed back to the Government, which this bill fails to recognise. As my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd said in the other place: Not only can our Government not redirect the tolls raised on our roads towards other infrastructure projects that benefit everyone in the State, but also every action by our Government to alleviate the burden on poorer families has the nasty side effect of helping the profits of private road operators.

Tolls, per se, are not the problem; the privatisation of our major infrastructure projects is. The fact that road users in New South Wales are forced to pay more and more of their money on toll roads is a symptom of a much more serious and concerning disease: the privatisation of State assets. The result of privatisation is a self-inflicted inability of our Government to provide relief to the people of this State when they need it without, at the same time, sacrificing scarce State revenue to line the pockets of private companies. The problem, or question, is: Why has there been bipartisan support by the old parties and an obsession by successive governments in



New South Wales to build private, polluting toll roads? In his second reading speech the Labor member who introduced this bill in the Legislative Council said:

Research by the University of Sydney's Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies found that Sydney has more kilometres of toll roads than anywhere else in the world.

On behalf of The Greens in this place and in the other place, it is important for us to put on record that this regrettable situation is due in no small part to the willingness of New South Wales Labor to support privatised toll roads in this State—especially the \$20 billion WestConnex and its planned offshoots, including a new western harbour tunnel and more tunnelling for privatised single-vehicle transport into the North Shore and beyond—and, prior to that, its obsession with toll roads when it was in government. What our community wants and needs is world-class public transport. The Greens recognise that road transport has a role to play, but we must recognise that the way we deliver it in the interests of our community and our State is not by privatising toll roads so we lose control over them.

Is this bill simply a ruse, disguised as concern for commuters and other users who are being forced onto these privatised toll roads? Is it a way to say, "Oops, sorry we failed to oppose these privatised, polluting toll roads when they were being built and now you are being slugged with massive costs to get where you need to go so we are going to offer you a toll-free period just to help you get through"? After supporting more and more privatised toll roads—or at least failing to oppose them—it is slightly disingenuous and, to say the least, a little disappointing that New South Wales Labor members now stand in this place, years later, calling for a toll-free period. They now pretend to care about people being hit with hefty tolls when they knew that tolls slug people in their hip pockets because of the private profits and private interests of those building the toll roads. New South Wales Labor has been part of enabling and facilitating the wholesale privatisation of road transport and toll roads in this State.

The Greens have stood strongly against the New South Wales Government's neoliberal obsession with toll roads for many, many years. It has showered billions of dollars on willing conglomerates to slash and burn tunnels and roads through our suburbs, locking us all into decades of tolls, which—as the member in the Legislative Council noted when he introduced the bill—are increasing at about 4 per cent annually. The Greens have long echoed the many calls for real investment in world-class public transport across the whole State and a vision for world-class public transport. Why are we seeing instead a concerted program to force people onto more and more polluting toll roads and off our public transport and active transport systems? Serious issues with the process used to prioritise some of the toll roads are most clear in relation to WestConnex. When speaking to this bill, my colleague in the Legislative Council said:

WestConnex, the latest in a long line of privatised toll roads in Sydney, is perhaps the best example of the insidious obsession with privatisation by successive governments and the impact it has had on the commuters forced onto those roads.

Two investigations by the Auditor-General into the project exposed that the public interest benefits, the ability to deliver and the financial risk were not properly established. This is now being played out as the company with most of the toll concessions in this country, Transurban, is in financial strife. This Liberal-Nationals Government sat on recommendations for amendments to the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act that would have given people whose homes were compulsorily acquired fair compensation, and hundreds did not receive fair compensation as a result of this privatised toll road disaster. In September 2016 then finance Minister Dominic Perrottet revealed in a budget estimates hearing that 1,713 properties had been acquired for infrastructure projects in the past four years and that 111 properties were yet to be acquired for the WestConnex project. How many of the people concerned received just compensation and were treated with dignity and respect?

The complete failure of successive governments in New South Wales to take note of the global trends when it comes to building toll roads is beyond belief. Global trends clearly show that many countries are removing toll roads and investing in efficient public transport. We know that building more toll roads induces more traffic—especially if alternative options are not provided for commuters, as is the case in so much of Sydney, especially western Sydney. Toll-free periods may sound good but what does that mean in terms of compensation to private companies? What does that mean in terms of public money going back into the hands of private companies? Some toll roads, like the M8, are not even being used at present. Recent messages sent to me have pictures of toll roads like the M8—which is part of WestConnex—virtually empty, with drivers avoiding them in droves.

We know that trucks are rat-running through local suburbs to avoid paying the high tolls and that people are doing it tough by choosing to sit in traffic in congested areas rather than pay tolls. This is a lose-lose scenario. Privatised roads are not in the public interest. The public needs fast and accessible public transport, not these white elephants. The reality is that we do not know the details of the contracts for the private toll roads. We do not what the big penalties are should any government build an alternative transport option that would offer commuters another choice, particularly in western Sydney, and stop them using the private toll road. What kind of money and compensation would we have to pay? As I said, The Greens will not oppose this bill because we recognise that, sadly, massively polluting toll roads are a reality in this State right now. But we put on record our

objection to the idea that we are coming in after the fact to try to resolve this problem when we should have stopped privatised toll roads in the first place.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (10:56:43):** I speak against the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020, which seeks to introduce a compulsory toll-free period at the opening of any new toll road in New South Wales. Let me say from the outset that there is some ambiguity in the bill that would lead to difficulty in administration were it to become law. There are no provisions that allow the Minister to declare or prevent the Minister declaring the removal of a toll-free period. There are also no provisions to mandate any dispute resolution process between the State and the toll road operators. Furthermore, in negotiating compensation where there is no agreement between the parties, the bill will enable the Minister to unilaterally declare by order an extension of the concession deed duration. However, the bill does not clearly define how the Minister should determine that agreement on compensation cannot be reached.

Even if it were to be defined, there are also no factors for the Minister to consider in making a determination on the length of an extension of a concession. Additionally, where compensation is provided in terms of an extension of a concession, this is unlikely to be appropriate for the provision of a toll-free period at the beginning of a concession, and would not allow a motorway operator to meet its immediate financial obligations. Without the bill, the State has the ability to negotiate a toll-free period with each concession. This bill would have a defined period and the discretion to exercise. It is also important to note that toll-free periods can be used in commercial negotiations. Also, while Labor has claimed in the other place that this is about motorists' safety, the bill does not consider congestion issues and the potential impacts on the wider transport network.

Traffic analysis from Transport for NSW found that motorists would have experienced increased congestion if tolls were not introduced as soon as the new M4 and M8 were opened. Outcomes for motorists and the wider transport network should be considered on a case-by-case basis before a decision is made to implement a toll-free period. The bill seeks to force the State to be rigid in terms of toll-free periods, reduces commercial flexibility, and ignores potential congestion and wider transport network impacts. On the other hand, the New South Wales Government's approach enables the cost of construction, maintenance and operations of a road to be recouped over time, with the private sector absorbing the biggest initial costs. This lowers the overall burden on taxpayers, freeing up capacity to invest in other essential services such as hospitals, schools, public transport and our police. Tolls on motorways have been shown to accelerate investment in major roads, delivering travel time savings and lowering operating costs, which boosts economic growth.

The bill seeks to override current commercial agreements that have been made with the State, leading to reputational damage to the State in existing arrangements and future contracting arrangements. Trust would be lost in the State's ability to be held accountable against agreements it has entered into. This would lead to higher costs on future projects because bidders would price in such risk or choose to not compete for future projects. Flexibility would be lost on the State's current ability to negotiate on toll-free periods, on the ability to consider congestion issues and the impact on the wider transport network if such a toll-free period is mandated for the opening of all new toll roads. Sydney is the best city in the world in which to live, and we are helping people get to where they need to be sooner by delivering a record infrastructure build with an integrated transport network designed for the future. New tolls are applied only where users receive a direct benefit. In the case of NorthConnex, that means bypassing 21 sets of traffic lights along Pennant Hills Road and providing up to 15 minutes of travel time savings for motorists.

I note that almost 60 per cent of motorists spend less than \$10 a week on tolls, but drivers who spend an average of \$25 a week over a year are entitled to free registration as part of the New South Wales Government's toll relief scheme. Drivers who spend an average of \$15 a week or over are entitled to half-price registration. We have also announced a new scheme that would see drivers towing caravans, boats and horse floats eligible for cheaper tolls. The scheme will work by providing a rebate on the larger recreational vehicle tolls to bring the cost in line with regular cars. In addition to this, Transurban is providing free tolls for people who have had their employment or hours impacted by COVID-19. With all of this in mind, it is safe to say that the Government will not be supporting the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:02:06):** The Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020 would require the Minister responsible to institute a toll-free period on any new toll road opened in the State. For my constituents on the Central Coast it would mean immediate relief when the soon-to-be-opened NorthConnex comes into operation—we are told it will be very shortly. That would be a good thing. Toll roads are expensive. For my constituents who travel to Sydney for work it will be a major impost. Before October the single journey rate to Sydney for a car was \$7.91; for trucks it was \$23.73. That went up 1 per cent in October, under what is, I guess, a pretty sweet deal for the operator for that toll road—Transurban—whereby the toll to be charged keeps going up even though the road has not quite finished yet. We have been promised that road for a while on the Central Coast. I do not know if there was any collusion in it, but I remember that before the last State

election Transurban was out in the community shopping around the idea that this road was going to open very soon and it was working very hard with the State Government—not the Opposition—to get it going. That never went anywhere on the Central Coast. They reckon the road is about ready to go now.

I know there are a lot of people in my electorate who may like to use the new tollway; however, they are concerned about the impost that cost will have on their finances. It would help them to try the toll road before they make a final decision. The Minister came into this Chamber and said he had the power to do it. He did not explain how he had that power and how he could exercise it, but why would he not just do it? In the absence of that, this bill is an appropriate way for the House to respond, to offer some relief to people in New South Wales from toll roads. I note the comment by The Greens member for Newtown and I largely support what The Greens are saying. This bill is a palliative to a situation we have got ourselves in over many years, whereby we have determined that the private sector should be providing most of these public infrastructure projects. That comes with a cost. That is why the Premier is using words like "toll mania". She was transport Minister when a lot of these contracts were first written up. She, more than most members in this House, is responsible for the current toll mania, which sees Sydney being the most tolled city in the world.

The people of New South Wales pay the highest road user charges in the world. We got ourselves into this situation because we determined that we could not do it without the private sector, but the private sector is not going to jump in and help unless it gets a return. It wants a return over a shorter period than any State ever needs to repay the debt it is sometimes necessary to enter into with building these big projects. The private sector is never going to do it unless it can get a profit back to its shareholders in a human time frame. The State does not have that problem. The State can monetarise its debt over a very long period—over generations—the way we did with the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We did not pay off the bridge until 1988.

The Liberals, under Greiner, made a big thing about paying off the Harbour Bridge, saying "We have finally done it!" They got down there at the base of the bridge with a big cheque they paraded around to show everybody that they were finally paying it off. They implied that years of Labor mismanagement had got them into it, and if only a conservative government had been in place we would have paid it off sooner. The media gave them a big rap for paying it off. But what did that Government do? It retained the bridge toll, and then put it up! The State needs a steady stream of income to keep funding road projects, but it can sustain a lower repayment over a longer period to do that, and that is better for the community. The private sector can never do that.

I truly wish that what might come out of our consideration of toll roads in this debate is a reconsideration of how we build these things—whether there is not a better way; whether it is not better to fund these things through the public purse and monetarise the debt over a longer period. People say we have been able to reduce taxes as a result and that people have more money in their pockets, but the money is coming straight out of their pocket and into a private operator providing essential public infrastructure. We have moved to a regressive taxation system. We have moved from a system where people paid tax progressively—those on lower incomes paying a lower rate of tax while those on higher incomes pay a higher rate of tax.

We have cut those taxes and really flattened it, but in their place we have given people a user-pays system where a cleaner or store worker in my electorate travelling to Sydney on a toll road pays a much larger percentage of their income on that road—or on public transport, for that matter—than does an accountant or a professional working in a white-collar occupation in the centre of Sydney. "User pays" is regressive taxation, and it has gone too far in this country. We really need to have a look at that in the totality of things. In that sense, this bill is a palliative to that problem, but it is a necessary one giving some immediate relief while we have a bigger think about fixing the system overall.

When you think about where these things are targeted, for people on the Central Coast travelling to Sydney there is not an awful lot of choice. You cannot choose a different route to Sydney. They have pretty much got one way down to town. If a business or client you are working for knows you can get to their location quicker if you use the toll road, they will expect you to use it. It is not enough to say that people have a choice: They can use the toll road, pay the money and get to their destination more quickly by missing 21 sets of traffic lights, or they can use the old road for free.

That is not the reality for a lot of people, especially if they are motor transport drivers or truck drivers doing deliveries. There will be an expectation that those people will use the toll road and that will have to be built into their costs. They have to absorb a lot of the expense from their own income as much as possible. In many ways there is not much choice provided by having the toll road option next to the free option. People will be forced to use the toll road. Having a toll-free period is a good way of offering some relief to the community, which is why this bill should be supported by the House. In the longer term this House and the general public should be considering ways in which to fund public infrastructure that does not involve such aggressive user-pay charges being applied to the people of this State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (11:11:07):** I oppose the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020, which seeks to introduce a compulsory toll-free period at the opening of any new toll road in New South Wales. This bill is pure tokenism. It is tinkering with a contract that has been written and agreed to already and investments that have been made in the past. This bill is pure political tokenism by the Labor Party for a temporary sugar hit of popularity. This bill will make no real difference to the circumstances of people. The New South Wales Government is delivering the largest infrastructure program in New South Wales' history through its transport projects that involve expenditure of \$57.5 billion over four years. This investment will deliver a better connected roads and transport system that will make it easier to move people, goods and services around the State's cities and regions, and trips faster, safer and more convenient. That is certainly true of completion of the motorway network.

For too many years we have had a fragmented system of motorways in Sydney. The roads do not connect, they do not allow a free flow of medium- and longer-term travel on a continuous motorway network and they do not remove traffic from the local roads system. Because of the investment made by this Government, when that transport network is completed finally heavy longer distance traffic will be taken off local roads, which is a benefit for everybody. Soon NorthConnex will open and there are other motorway connections in the pipeline. When completed, a comprehensive motorway network will expand right across the Sydney metropolitan area resulting in a significant improvement in the amenity for residents within the local road networks by removal from local roads of medium and longer distance traffic. Let us not forget the massive infrastructure backlog this Government inherited from the previous Labor Government, which promised 12 rail lines but delivered only half of one of them in 16 years of government.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** You have been in government for 10 years. I think your script is a bit outdated.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting and cease calling out across the Chamber.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** This Government's list is impressive.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** The member for Canterbury will come to order.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** I am happy to draw comparisons. The former Labor Government built the M5 East with insufficient capacity, consigning motorists to some of the worst congestion in the country until this Government delivered the M8. When it comes to toll roads under Labor, we all remember how well that went: Both the Lane Cove Tunnel and the Cross City Tunnel operators went broke. In contrast, this Government has widened the M2, widened the M4, opened the new M4 and the M8 and will soon open NorthConnex. Progress is also being made on the M4-M5 Link Tunnels and the Rozelle Interchange. Those roads are important additions to a transport network that will give back time that is no longer spent in traffic.

There has been comment in this debate about the user-pays principle. There is a degree of user pays being applied to the motorway network. It means that those who benefit most from the motorways also contribute more than others. It is significant that this Government is not asking people who do not use the motorways to kick in. We know that toll operators are prepared to enter into long-term arrangements with the State, owing to the State's reputation as a reliable contracting partner. The bill seeks to overwrite existing commercial arrangements that have been agreed to by the State. Overriding existing commercial arrangements will have a negative impact on the State's reputation as a reliable contracting party. We all remember how Labor trashed the reputation of New South Wales as a place in which to do business when in government by cancelling projects and squandering hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars. Now, from the Opposition benches in this House, the Labor Opposition wants to trash this Government's reputation.

The result of that will be that contracting parties are likely to price that risk into future contracts with the State or choose to not enter into contracts with the State at all. That would lead to higher cost of delivering future infrastructure projects for the people of New South Wales. That is certainly not in anybody's interest. To lock in toll-free periods guarantees a temporary distortion to longer term traffic patterns. It would delay the bedding down process during which road users become familiar with the new arrangements and determine which is the most convenient or appropriate route for them to take. Road users cannot become familiar with traffic flow patterns if there is distortion based on a temporary price embargo. All road users benefit from greater predictability that comes with actual use of the motorways, observing new traffic flows, becoming knowledgeable about the roads network and working out which option is best for them. Some motorists will try the motorway one day and try the toll-free local roads alternative the next. They do that for a couple of weeks to decide what works best for them. Where they are going and the time of the day will influence their decisions.

Clearly, the sooner people can rely on that experience and make a better judgement for them, the better off they will be. The sooner motorists get used to the road and to making the right lane selections and so on in a

predictable manner, the sooner will traffic flow smoothly to everybody's benefit. A temporary distortion in that process delays the time in which motorists become used to the motorway system and make their choices sensibly. Understandably, no-one particularly likes paying tolls: The Government gets that. Most people accept that that is reasonable when there is value in saving time, saving running costs and less frequent traffic disruptions, and when an alternative toll-free option is available for them to choose.

The Greens member for Newtown posed a totally fake choice between roads and public transport. This Government is building both at record levels because the people of this State need and deserve both. The Government has built the Metro North West, is building the Sydney Metro City & Southwest now and the Sydney Metro West is in the pipeline. There have been light rail projects in the city's south east that will be extended to Parramatta and Newcastle. The South West Rail Link was completed by this Government and there will be a North South Rail Line between Badgerys Creek airport and the Main Western line. Those projects are huge public transport investments and dwarf anything provided by the Labor Governments in 16 years. Labor built half a rail line in 16 years whereas this Government is building rail lines right across the metropolitan area and improving regional public transport. It is not a choice between roads and public transport: The Government is doing both. The people of New South Wales deserve both. Under this Government, the people of New South Wales are getting both.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** The member for Coogee will cease interjecting.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** If this bill is passed, contracting parties will seek to recover their full investment over the contract period and there is nothing surprising about that. By temporarily delaying the payment, in the end the road user is not better off: They will still pay the full amount. This bill is tokenism. It is an attempt to win some short-term popularity to position Labor as though the former Labor Government did not support toll roads. The Opposition knows that toll roads are the only way to accelerate investment and provide road networks that otherwise would not be available for the people of New South Wales, and this Government is now delivering on road transport projects.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I note the member for Canterbury is very keen to contribute to the debate. She now has an opportunity. I call the member for Canterbury.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (11:19:06):** What the member for Riverstone said is all fake news. Throw in the line about 16 years. Now they have a record of 10 years and they have to live with that record.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** And we have delivered. Guess where the North West Rail Link came from? Guess who built it and guess who opposed it?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I will have a lot to say about the Sydenham to Bankstown conversion, and also how the former member for Wagga Wagga is in ICAC and what he knew about matters in my area.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** The member for Riverstone will cease interjecting. The member for Canterbury will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** My hardworking colleague the Hon. John Graham introduced the bill and debated it in the other place. I congratulate him for his considered work. This is a good and sensible idea. I also thank him for coming to Kingsgrove in my electorate a few months ago. At that time the Hon. John Graham, the Leader of the Opposition Ms Jodi McKay, the member for Rockdale Steve Kamper, the member for Kogarah Chris Minns and myself spoke to Mr Reid, an owner of a plumbing company, about how expensive the tolls were. Mr Reid has a number of vans that travel between Botany and Kingsgrove—across south-west, inner south and inner west Sydney. I have lived in the Canterbury-St George region all my life so the roads are familiar to me, and well travelled in respect of public transport and driving.

It was a tough time for the Greiner Government prior to the opening of the M5 East. The Wolli Creek reserve was left for decades because it was dedicated to be a road. The community in that area fought hard to see that the tunnel went underground. There were huge disputes and rallies. There was a small office in Bexley North, the M5 East drop-in centre. I felt for the public officials who had to listen to a lot of the concerns of environmental groups and local constituents. The road finally opened in 2001—nearly 20 years ago—under the Bob Carr Government. I recall that the congestion along Forest Road, Bexley, was phenomenal. Prior to the tunnel being built it was truck after truck all along Forest Road and the Princes Highway.

Both the member for Kogarah and the member for Rockdale have said not only in this place but also in the media that Forest Road is now going back to the level of congestion of 20 years ago. I note that the member for Kogarah has a petition, and so do a number of other my colleagues from south-west Sydney. In recent times I visited the area to buy a few things and I can vouch that the traffic was phenomenal. The purpose of making the M5 East toll free was to ensure a productive economy, for people to be able get to the airport and to our ports on

service roads and to increase services on our public transport system. The tunnel was also about removing those trucks and heavy vehicles on roads such as Forest Road, Stoney Creek Road and Kingsgrove Road—which both the member for Kogarah and I share in our electorates—Canterbury Road, Burwood Road, all the way into the city. The M5 East made a huge difference.

The member for Oatley and others well know the difficulties when coming from Penshurst, Mortdale or Menai onto Forest Road in navigating those suburbs. Twenty years ago the best thing since sliced bread was making sure that we had that tunnel. That is why I am urging the Government to support this toll-free period. It makes sense. I have heard the arguments from the other side, but as the local member I can vouch that the traffic at the moment is phenomenal. People are late for work, school children are arriving late to school and the congestion is unbearable. People in my electorate are not going to pay a new toll for an old road. We understand the viability of new infrastructure and the purpose of tolls. There has to be a mix of roads and public transport, but to place a toll on an old road is disgraceful.

The Government is saying that this is fantastic, that people are going to get a cash back. My community is saying, "Stuff you. We are just going to drive on service roads." The problem is children are going to schools at Kingsgrove, Belmore Boys and Canterbury Girls, and people are going to work and the airport using the service roads, which is causing congestion, adding time and stress. Our bus drivers and our truckies are suffering. I acknowledge the fantastic work of the Transport Workers' Union led by Richard Olsen. On a personal note, I thank all the truck drivers who have done a phenomenal job dealing with the difficulties in relation to the border community issues. I acknowledge the owner-operators and truckies' campaign, patience and the work they do. I also thank my colleagues from south-west Sydney who have put out petitions, which had thousands of responses in a couple of days. That should send a signal to the Government that placing a toll on an old road does not make sense. I urge members to support this toll-free period bill. It is sensible and practical. I urge the Government to reconsider—a toll on an old road is outrageous.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:28:53):** The people of the Central Coast are not really aware that they are about to be smashed by the new toll on the NorthConnex, being charged by private-for-profit operators on an expressway to get to work. Today I am urging the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, Mr Adam Crouch, to support the coast, not just with boardwalks across the beaches—that the community does not necessarily want—but to support the changes to the law to curb this toll mania in New South Wales.

We want him to support the toll-free period bill that passed in the Legislative Council 23 votes to 17. While coasties are looking forward to getting to work faster, we are looking forward to getting from Newcastle to Melbourne without traffic lights—as I am sure you are, Mr Temporary Speaker Piper. We are not looking forward to 80 bucks a week to get to work on the NorthConnex. That is 4,000 bucks a year. They might be giving us a little tidbit with our registration discount but 4,000 bucks a year out of a coastie's pocket, especially at this time, is just too much. Even less happy are our truck drivers who will be hit with a \$400 a week bill for driving on this road. They have no choice. The toll-free option is not an option for our hardworking truckies.

We are ecstatic that there is finally a solution to the dangerous Pennant Hills Road. I am glad that drivers have a choice to drive on either road. The poor old truckies have no choice. They have an additional \$400 a week with the tolls. This Government has already smashed and continues to smash western Sydney by introducing a toll on a road that has finished being tolled—it is a road tax. It is just toll mania by this Government. I point out that under Labor motorists were offered a toll-free period of a month when the M7 Westlink motorway was opened and the Liberal Government campaigned on a promise in the lead-up to the last election. Coasties will not get the benefit of that.

I would like to see the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast commit to supporting coasties. Today the rest of the members of this House from the Central Coast are calling on the Government to back this bill. We want a toll-free period to be in place before NorthConnex opens in the coming months—and we do not even know when that will be. Once gazetted this would have immediate effect ahead of the expected opening of NorthConnex—possibly in December, but who knows. This toll is about more privatisation of road manufacturing and it is a tax on the road. As the member for The Entrance pointed out, New South Wales is the most taxed State in Australia and it was overseen by the Premier when she was the transport Minister. It is a statement about the way in which this Government goes about long-term investment by privatisation, flogging off assets that belong to the people and paying private organisations to charge us, the people, to use our own roads.

The other thing I would like to challenge the Liberal Government on today is the calculated ongoing toll cost increases. The cost of private expressways is set to rise for decades by a minimum of 4 per cent per annum, which is a 50 per cent increase in toll prices over 10 years, a doubling in 20 years, and further increases after that. For lower and middle income families already suffering from the new normal of low or no wage increases, particularly those living near the edges of our major cities, such as on the coast, these runaway private toll increases will grow to be a lifestyle crushing burden. While our national debt is low we should have better financial

arrangements for building and full ownership of public toll roads. We need to improve the traffic flow across Sydney and beyond.

The member for The Entrance spoke of the Sydney Harbour Bridge model. We built it in public hands, we held onto it in public hands and we paid it off. It is possible. This would result in significantly cheaper toll prices in comparison to those existing with private operators. It is those costs that are pushed directly onto the user. It reveals the failure of the privatisation experiment in New South Wales. More than \$60 billion of publicly held assets have been pawned off in this State since the Liberal Government came to power. Whilst the Government refuses to act on increasing property prices, families are forced further and further out into new suburbs beyond my electorate and into the member for Wyong's suburbs in order to afford owning their own home.

They then have to commute into Sydney to work the jobs to pay for these homes and the lifestyle they want to live. It is poor planning overall. Currently, we have a private member's bill calling for increased work from home in the public sector, but I assume the Government will not support that either. Four weeks ago, when the planning Minister was speaking to the media, he was ordering public servants back to work in their Sydney offices. We now have an increase in COVID cases and unhappy workers from the coast commuting 20-plus hours a week in the car or the train with a future of hundreds of dollars a week in tolls. This is all because we have a Government that needs to meet its contractual obligations to private companies that need to shore up their earnings at the expense of the community.

Every time a government privatises something it is the buyer that wins and the community that loses. Privatisation has become the easy way out for conservative governments the world over: The New South Wales Liberal Government is one of the worst offenders. It has created intergenerational inequality that our society will never be able to mend. It has created a precedent that says government cannot and should not build or own vital infrastructure and assets, and that will hurt our nation for decades to come. Simultaneously, it has gutted the public service of knowledge and experience, and put it into private hands just to make sure it is even harder to provide the vital checks and balances on how government money is spent when it is handed over in the billions to private companies.

So many of our residents on the coast do not have a choice but to commute dozens of hours a week just to make a living. Through no fault of their own they will soon be forced to pay thousands of dollars more a year just to make ends meet. The ignorance shown by this Government to the lived experience of so many in my community is disgraceful and unfair. Coasties, I expect you will get used to it. I do not think the member for Terrigal will stand up and support his community. I thank the Transport Workers' Union for bringing to our attention the cost to the truckies. Truckies are doing an amazing job supplying us with the resources we need. They spend hours in the workplace. It is a tough place to be. They will be spending 20,000 bucks a year in tolls—money that will not go into their pockets. A lot of those truckies live in my community. I thank my colleagues Labor leader Jodi McKay and the shadow Minister for Roads, the Hon. John Graham, for introducing this bill to assist drivers to adapt to the new routes, to save money during these challenging COVID times and to prevent last-minute dangerous decisions as they find new pathways to Sydney from the coast. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (11:36:28):** I will speak in debate on the Roads Amendment (Toll-Free Period) Bill 2020. I note the object of the bill is to amend the Roads Act 1993 to require the declaration of a toll-free period for an unspecified length for every new tollway opened to traffic. I ask members to think of residents who live along the corridor of the M4, particularly the residents of Penrith, Mulgoa, Parramatta and those who live in Londonderry, Prospect, Granville and Auburn. I would like you also to think of the residents in Oatley and East Hills who live along the corridor of the M5 and the residents of Rockdale, Bankstown, Campbelltown and Wollondilly. When they wake up in the morning do you think they wake up and say the prayer, "Dear Lord, thanks for this day and thanks for the tolling I am about to receive"?

Do you really think that those residents get up in the morning and say that prayer? Absolutely not. Let us face it, we are the most tolled city on the planet. No matter where you go you are tolled, and you are tolled hard and fast by this government. You only need to look at the carnage on the M4 since the reintroduction of the toll on the M4. The former Labor Government took the toll off the M4 because it had paid for that road: It was paid for, completely finished, done, dusted. What does this Government do? It reintroduces the toll. That is not fair.

As you are travelling from the west to the east some of those residents that I mentioned along the M4 corridor pay that toll. If you enter the M4 at the Cumberland Highway and you are driving east, as you get towards Merrylands, on the left-hand side, you have the Burnett Street on-ramp. The traffic on the left-hand side builds up before you actually get to that on-ramp. Then, if you are travelling eastbound, you have to watch out for motorists who are hitting the brakes because they have realised that there is a toll up ahead.

What do those motorists decide to do, and rightfully so because times are tough? They decide to take the Church Street exit because paying that toll could mean the difference between feeding their family or not. That

means every single day, whether it is in the morning, the afternoon or at night, the cars along that corridor are banking up. People reversing out of their lane after realising that they have to pay a toll has resulted in the unfortunate deaths of motorists. Past that point, for those of us who can afford the toll, the M4 is a clear run. The new M4 East past Church Street is a pretty good run for those of us who can afford it. People might get off at Silverwater Road or go through to the new M4 East, but hardly anybody uses the new M4 East. Why? Because it is costing motorists thousands.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** How much?

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** It is costing them thousands of dollars. It is a lot of money. Once upon a time, motorists who got on the M5 at King Georges Road and headed towards the airport did not have to pay for it.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** Is it free?

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** It is not free anymore. Motorists now have to pay for a road that the former Labor Government built. I acknowledge that the transport Minister said that the former Labor Government built the M5 and then it clogged up, but the times are a-changin'. Why put a toll on a road that has already been built? Fair dinkum. Could anyone imagine the uproar if the residents of Cabramatta and Lansvale had a toll reintroduced on the Lansdowne Bridge? Under this Government, that could happen. In the 1800s when Lennox designed the bridge and it was built, the Government at that time tolled the residents for about eight years. But guess what? The toll was stopped and now the bridge is the main thoroughfare and gateway to the city from the Hume Highway. Imagine that! This Government says, "No, that's it. We're introducing the toll." The bill gives motorists the opportunity to have a toll-free period. We want to give them that choice.

Let us look at the NorthConnex. We can only look at it because we cannot get into it, despite the fact that it was supposed to be opened a year ago. We do not know when we will be able to get into NorthConnex at all, but there is going to be a toll on it. Motorists travelling to the Central Coast are already very uneasy because they do not know whether the thing is going to open, so they go around to Pennant Hills Road. What does the Government do? It says, "Right, we'll charge you a toll. And if you're a truck driver then you've got to go through. If you don't, we'll sting you with a fine." This Government is all about reaching into the pockets of motorists and taking every ounce of coin people have.

I commend the Hon. John Graham from the other place and the Leader of the Opposition for bringing the bill into this place because it makes sense. There is a global pandemic, and thousands of motorists and residents in our constituencies have lost their jobs. They are looking for work. If they live in my electorate of Fairfield, they have a choice: they can either go down the M5 or they can go through to the M4. Either way, they are going to be tolled—and they are going to be tolled on roads that either did not have a toll to start with or have had a toll reintroduced. We are asking for equity. We want fairness. We want a fair go for all.

I love the Government's rhetoric on this, particularly from the transport Minister, to use an alternate route. If people use an alternate route they will clog up Parramatta Road, King Georges Road, Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road. Whatever road they choose will get clogged. More cars on suburban roads means there will be more maintenance to do later on. Does the toll money go towards that? No, it does not. This Government sold the poles and wires for a song. It has sold off everything, but it tells us that the silver lining is that it sold those assets so that it could pay for infrastructure. The Government will build the infrastructure, but at the same time it will slug you. It will sting you. It will toll you. Government members will talk about former administrations, former governments and tolls. We get that, but at a time when people need the money in their pocket the most, the Government should give them an alternative. It should give them a fair go.

I would like to know more about future road openings. When is NorthConnex opening up? When is the hessian cloth coming down from the signs located eastbound on the M2 and southbound on the M1? When are motorists going to be able to use this "NorthConnex" that is not connecting anything at the moment? There are only flashing lights and a security guard who sits in his HiLux with his flask of coffee and his high-vis vest. No-one can exit stage left if they are heading south because they cannot use the road. [*Extension of time*]

If the Government is going to open up infrastructure like the Sydney Gateway in 2023, the M4-M5 Link as part stage three of WestConnex in 2023, stage one of the M6 in 2025, the M12 in 2026 and the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link in 2026, it should support the bill. It should give motorists the opportunity to get used to the infrastructure that is being built so that they can make up their minds about whether they will use it. I again thank the Hon. John Graham and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this important bill to the House.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (11:47:42):** I offer a brief contribution to the debate on the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020, which was introduced by my colleague the Hon. John Graham in the other place and by the Leader of the Opposition in this House. The bill is actually about fairness. It is about not increasing the cost of living during an economic recession and about being focused and



united in serving the people of New South Wales. Unlike the Liberal Party, which is constantly dealing with internal bickering and self-inflicted crises, NSW Labor is focused on the issues that are important to the people of New South Wales. It was Labor that led the debate on making masks mandatory on public transport. It was Labor that led the debate on the icare scandal. It is Labor that has championed environmental causes in New South Wales for decades, including protecting our endangered and precious koala habitats. It is Labor that is focused on the bread-and-butter issues of families who are struggling financially during this crisis.

At a time of unprecedented unemployment and economic uncertainty, when people are facing cutbacks to their working hours and conditions, the Government's response is to slug motorists on the M5 East with a new and unfair toll. The Government will not even give motorists on NorthConnex a fair go. Instead, it will stitch up a corporate deal that further penalises motorists at the worst possible time. I do not expect many members on the other side to understand this issue. After all, in their government-paid limousines they would never see a toll bill. There is no toll on Military Road from Mosman, but there is a new one on the M5 East—a road which is used by tens of thousands of south-west Sydney motorists every day. In 2000, the M5 East opened as a freeway under the Labor Government and it had been toll free until recently. Under this Liberal Government, motorists are now paying more than \$3,300 a year in tolls for the same old road.

This bill that was introduced by my colleague in the upper House acknowledges the unfairness and inequity of this Liberal Government's agenda. Rather than giving to those most in need during this pandemic, all this Government does is take, take and take. It takes \$6.95 each way from motorists on the M5 East, all the while robbing our nurses, firies, paramedics and teachers—the very people who use the M5 East—of a much-needed pay increase. That is a double whammy for the hardworking people of south-west Sydney. How can we get the economy moving again when people are sluggish up to \$3,000 a year to drive on a road that is no better than the one that they have been using for the past 19 years without a toll?

The bill is about bringing back fairness for motorists. Labor will always stand for fairness. That is why we will always stand up against toll operators whose sole motivation is to do backroom corporate deals with this Liberal Government to line their coffers at the expense of motorists. The bill is also an opportunity to curb the toll mania that is in the DNA of this Government. You will pay, pay and pay. You will pay more, you will pay now and you will pay forever. South-west Sydney motorists have had enough. Over the past few months some of my Labor colleagues and I have been running a petition on this issue, and the response has been overwhelming. Residents are fed up, and if I were the member for Holsworthy, the member for East Hills, the member for Oatley or the member for Camden, I would be very worried. The Coalition is already divided and on shaky ground. Joining members on my side of the House in supporting a bill about fairness may be an opportunity for them to save their jobs. Anything less would be a betrayal of their constituents. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (11:51:58):** Like my colleagues, I support the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020. My good and learned friend the member for Macquarie Fields finished his contribution by talking about fairness. We have had a number of debates about fairness in general. We have also had a number of debates in particular about fairness of tolling and its affordability, as well as the broader issues of transport and making lives better. That is what fairness is. Fairness means giving everybody the same opportunity. All members of this place, regardless of which community or party we represent, must be committed to creating a sense of fairness in this State to give everybody the same opportunity to live their best lives.

We understand that tolling is a major issue, and it greatly affects people in my electorate. As I have said before in this place, the M5 and M8 motorways that recently opened might make life easier by providing extra lanes, but they force people onto the surface roads. People who used to travel between Bexley Road and King Georges Road—which might not seem like much but is about three kilometres—are forced to pay a toll where there was no toll before. To avoid it, drivers clog up the traffic by continuing on Bexley Road and driving through Campsie in my neighbouring electorate of Canterbury. King Georges Road, which was already one of the busiest roads in Australia, has become busier. I ask the Minister to go at any time of the day to the intersection between Canterbury Road and King Georges Road to see how long it takes him to get there.

When we talk about fairness we talk about using the State's assets to create a better life for everybody. People often refer back to the assets that were sold in 2015 and were the highlight of that year's election campaign. The Coalition Government went to that election saying that it wanted to sell the poles and wires because it wanted to make life better for people by building roads and infrastructure. As MPs, we do a fair bit of driving. Every time I drive past a site for a new road there is great big signage that says, "This is a project funded by the New South Wales Government". I note it does not say that it is funded by asset sales that used to belong to the people and there is going to be a toll. However, the signage always says that the new road is taking traffic—and more specifically trucks—off local roads. I would be interested to see if that was the case.

Three or four weeks ago the member for Kogarah posted some fantastic video footage on his social media channels that was taken at about three o'clock in the morning on Forest Road, which connects to Stoney Creek

Road. Trucks were flying through. There was not one every one, five or 10 minutes; there was a conga line of trucks. I do not know how many people are using a toll road at three o'clock in the morning, but why are trucks being pushed onto suburban roads? It is because this Government has set the toll with providers at \$20-plus. If I am a truck driver who has to look after my family and every dollar counts, I am not going to take that toll road. What does that do to the standard of people's lives? What does it do to the person who, at three o'clock in the morning, is trying to get to sleep? What happens when there is screeching from vehicles braking? Things like that have a big impact, so why are we still charging trucks the same to travel on a toll road when no-one is on it? Surely we could look at other things.

I know that the criticism from the Minister towards the bill centred on the fact that it would set things up for three months and he did not want people getting used to one thing for that period and then having to pull the pin. But three months is better than nothing. Why can we not be creative, go to the next step and look at the ways we can make things a bit easier? That could involve tolling at different times to make sure that we get trucks off the roads—as the signage untruthfully says these projects already do. People cannot afford it. I will give the example of my father. The member for Canterbury knows him well. He is a rotund man who looks a bit like Santa Claus. He is a lovely guy and I am very proud of him. In fact, I put on record that I love my dad.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** I love your dad too.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Thank you. He is very nice. He is a gentleman. My dad helps my brother at his car wash in Zetland and he gets there on the M5 from King Georges Road. He has been doing that for years—mainly because mum needs him out of her hair and out of the house, otherwise he drives her insane. He travels every day from King Georges Road to Zetland, along the same road he has always travelled. About three weeks ago Dad rang me up. Firstly he blasted me because he says that I should ring him every day; I told him that I would try for once every couple of days and I would do my best, but I digress.

What he rang me up about was that he did not realise that he no longer got a cashback on the same road that he has driven for many years. I reminded him of the Facebook post that I had put up that he liked and I asked him whether he knew what he was liking. The point is that he could not believe that he is now paying \$14 a day to drive on a road that he has driven on for many years. And what is he doing it for? He is going to help out my brother. So he said that he had found out other ways to get to Zetland. He is a pensioner, so he is always looking at ways that he can get to where he needs to go more affordably. My brother then did the right thing: He bought him a toll pass and told him not to worry, because he is driving to help him. There would be hundreds and thousands of other similar examples from people who are travelling on those same roads.

I believe that every member in this place wants to make people's lives better. But how do we do that? How can we have a situation where there are haves and have-nots? How can somebody say, "If you don't want to pay the toll, take the free road instead"? Hang on a second. These roads belong to us as a State because they were built from the sale of our assets. Why should people have to make a choice between doing something they cannot afford or using a road where they have to sit in a whole heap of traffic?

As awful as it has been with COVID, for a while the traffic was not too heavy. People were saying the roads were a bit lighter. People are now getting back to work and doing other things and we are starting to see that traffic again. For example, when I drive past the M5 I see the line-up of people outside. Just before the toll gantry on the M4—which I think is at Church Street, but I could be wrong—a massive line of traffic always goes back at least a kilometre at any time of day. What does that tell us? It tells us that people cannot afford to pay the toll. They are having to make a choice between paying tolls of potentially up to \$3,000 a year, which they could otherwise put towards their kids' sporting fees or buying a takeaway meal as a family or making sure that they can have the things they want. To a family, \$3,000 is a lot of money and it can make a difference. We have to start quantifying it in terms of things like a new pair of shoes, some clothes for a special event, some equipment for school or something that will actually make their lives better.

It is really patronising and wrong when people who have to choose between either buying things that are important to their family or taking a toll road are told, "Well, if you don't want to pay the toll, take the surface road." I know there are different support measures, including rego relief. But if I have to pay \$3,000 to be able to get a \$250 discount, that is not really a good investment. It is like tricking people. As I said, this legislation is a step in that right direction towards giving people toll relief. The argument that we cannot do this because we do not want people to be trained into having it for free does not wash. I live in the real world; I understand that we have to pay for certain things. But let us not set the bar so high that people have to make a choice between travelling on a road that they need to take—bought by the sales of their assets—and giving up something their family wants or needs.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (12:02:01):** Along with my colleagues I support the Roads Amendment (Toll-free Period) Bill 2020. I acknowledge my colleague in the other place the Hon. John Graham for introducing

the bill. In the electorate of Auburn we have a huge problem, and it is an economic problem. Members on the other side of the Chamber constantly ask why we don't talk about economics. Well, I will say some things about the economics of the Auburn electorate. We have the second highest unemployment rate and the second highest homelessness rate in the State. We have the largest cohort of single mothers living in poverty in metropolitan Sydney. We have the largest number of refugees without an income and the largest number of people on Safe Haven Enterprise visas. According to reports, we are going to be the hardest hit when JobKeeper and JobSeeker finish. That is the economics of Auburn.

What do we get out of this Government? The only thing we get is tolls and taxes. That is the reality. Every time the Government builds a piece of infrastructure, the people of western and south-western Sydney get hit and they get hit hard. If those opposite think the people of the Auburn electorate can afford \$16 a day to use a road then they are absolutely wrong. The people of Auburn do not have the ability to pay. We know that because people from South Granville and Guildford are coming through Auburn, Berala, Regents Park and Lidcombe. At any time of the day our roads are gridlocked.

Members opposite talk about Parramatta Road. The planning Minister is at the table. I ask him where all the cars are that are meant to have come off Parramatta Road. The intersection of Parramatta Road and Silverwater Road is gridlocked at nearly every hour of the day. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to get the 1.5 kilometres from Lidcombe Centre, where my office is, to that intersection because every vehicle is avoiding the toll roads. People are avoiding those roads because of the taxes that members opposite have put on our local residents, making sure that our communities take the pain for every single decision that they make.

They do not give us schools. We still do not have Sydney Olympic Park high school. They do not give us bike lanes. In the inner city people have had bike lanes built around their toll roads. Show me the bike lane that has gone onto Parramatta Road. It is not there. It is wall to wall vehicles on every single road in my electorate. It is a disgrace that members opposite talk about fairness and equity and say, "You can have it all." The people in my electorate do not get anything. They get absolutely nothing. Every statistic shows that the people in my electorate are the people who members opposite should be looking after first, but they do not.

They do not build the schools. They do not build the infrastructure. They take away our trains and they put tolls on our existing roads. One road has now been tolled twice by Liberal governments. Those roads were built by Labor governments without tolls on them. The M5 East was built without tolls. If you want to get on at Bexley Road and get off on King Georges Road it now costs seven bucks. It now costs money to travel along two kilometres of public road that was built with public money by a Labor government and that everybody used to be able to use for free.

Labor built the M5 East with two lanes both ways with no toll on it whatsoever. Those opposite cannot build anything without putting a toll on it. That is the difference between Labor governments and Liberal governments. Members opposite have no economic management ideas except to hit western Sydney and south-western Sydney with every single toll they can come up with. Meanwhile, every part of my electorate is wall to wall high-rises. The Carter Street precinct has 5,500 dwellings and the planning Minister has just given authority to put another 700 on that site. But is he putting the school in? Where is the school that was in the master plan?

**Debate interrupted.**

## **LIQUOR AMENDMENT (RIGHT TO PLAY MUSIC) BILL 2020**

### **First Reading**

**Bill received from the Legislative Council, introduced and read a first time.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. John Graham, MLC, advising that the member for Canterbury will have carriage of the bill in this House. I set down the second reading of the bill as an order of the day for a future day.

### *Announcements*

### **ANDREW SCIPIONE LIVE SCREENING**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind members of today's live theatre screening of former NSW Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione, who will speak on lessons for leadership. I advise members who intend to take up this opportunity to arrive at 12.20 p.m. for a 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. screening. I further advise members who would like to attend to contact the Speaker's office.

*Motions***NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK URALLA BRANCH**

**Debate resumed from 24 September 2020.**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (12:08:26):** A couple of weeks ago I moved this motion, so I will not repeat it—

**Mr Adam Crouch:** You should.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** No, I won't, because I have a lot to say about these buggers—there is another "B" word I could use for them—that are destroying the social and economic landscape of rural and regional New South Wales. A really concerning attitude has been displayed over a number of years whereby corporate Australia—the boys' club—appears to have decided that profit is worth far more than people. In droves they are turning their backs on the small, rural communities just when they are needed most.

In particular, I am talking about the big four banks—Commonwealth Bank of Australia, National Australia Bank, Westpac and ANZ—which all seem to think it is alright to withdraw face-to-face services and close branches in the midst of a drought, or even under the cloak of a pandemic. It worries me that there seems to be a distinct lack of goodwill among these once-great institutions that generations of people across the State, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales, not only relied on but also trusted. Sadly, gone are the days when the local bank manager was like one of the family.

The latest example of this bastardry—that is exactly what it is; absolute bastardry—occurred in July this year when I was approached by Uralla Shire Mayor Michael Pearce and the new general manager, Kate Jessup, who were concerned that the NAB branch in Uralla was planning to use the restricted hours implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic as a scapegoat for closing the branch for good—just never reopen it. To give context to the stupidity of this proposed closure, we need to understand the make-up of Uralla. It is not some deserted backwater, one-horse town where nobody lives but a vibrant, prosperous community with a cross-section of young families and older retirees. Only a stone's throw from Armidale, it is one of the fastest growing centres anywhere in northern New South Wales.

It is a town that the New England Highway runs directly through the heart of and whose boutique retail and hospitality sectors have transformed the shire into a daytripper's dream. On Saturday and Sunday one cannot get a park on the main street. I can tell members that because I often go to a shop called The Pie Mechanic to get a Moo & Brew pie, which is very good. Many people pull in to soak up the town's heritage and locally grown food and beverages. Against the odds, this remained the case right through the toughest drought in the town's living memory when it almost ran out of water. It had arsenic in its water supply and the community was on bottled water for five consecutive months.

So why close the bank? The silence from NAB when it was asked by council about its intentions for the future was deafening—nothing, nada. At the time, I noted in this place the great irony of NAB's motto, "More than Money", and called on the company to put those words into action and step up, reopen its doors and continue supporting those who have stood by them for decades in the Uralla community. NAB is crucial to the development of Uralla's economy—as any bank is to any community, but particularly in rural and regional areas. Business operators should not have to find the time each day to travel to Armidale—a 50-kilometre round trip, which in rural terms is not huge, but when running a business any time away is enormous—to deposit takings or make withdrawals when they have a functional branch, or should have a functional branch, on their main street.

Of course, we know a lot of people do online banking but Uralla has a large population of older people and farmers out of town. Let's face it, telecommunications outside our town centres in rural areas is not that good—knock, knock, Barnaby Joyce, fund some towers. Those people still bank the traditional way, visiting the bank to make face-to-face deposits or withdrawals. The banks like to make a song and dance when they make a donation to the local footy club but they do not appreciate it when the heat is turned on them and public opinion is not in their favour. If the banks do not see value in customer loyalty, they sure as hell do in public opinion. No sooner had I given notice of this motion in July, than the communication channels suddenly opened. It was like a conversion on the road to Damascus.

We have suddenly turned around. After months of unanswered correspondence, suddenly there is an announcement—a press release goes out the same day that NAB will be reopening its branch on Monday 17 August. And it did. I suppose I should recognise NAB for listening to the community on this occasion—eventually. But this is just one instance in a long line of banks choosing to exit the Northern Tablelands electorate. In 2018 NAB gave its customers in Bingara only two months' notice before it completely shut its doors and walked away. The same year Guyra lost its Commonwealth Bank branch. If it was not enough for those towns to lose

another business and gain yet another empty shopfront, what about the local jobs that go as well? Those familiar faces whom we trust with our hard-earned dollars and who give us empathetic financial advice when things are tight have been replaced by an app or a machine in the wall or—God forbid—a call centre overseas where they cannot even speak English.

The removal of these jobs also means the removal of incomes from our country towns. It means dollars that are not being spent at the local shop or retail outlet, and certainly not the local cafe. Do not get me started on "redeployment"—ripping a job from a branch in a small town only to send it to a nearby regional centre. That does not cut it. That is not what we are about either. I utterly condemn what the banks are doing. They must change their attitude or we are going to walk away from them in droves.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (12:14:36):** I am on a unity ticket with the member for the Northern Tablelands. That is rare. The spivs in Collins Street and Martin Place had better watch out because the people from regional New South Wales and the suburbs are uniting to condemn Australian banks—especially the big four, who have used COVID in a sneaky, sly way. Those shysters have sat there during COVID and said, "Let's use COVID and permanently close the banks." They have put up their nice little "temporarily closed" posters. In my electorate the ANZ branch in Earlwood was temporarily closed. The bank directed people to Campsie or Marrickville and shortened the opening hours. The whole of Australia is supportive; we are all in this together. However, what did the shysters do? They drew up a strategy and in the dead of night closed the bank. On 22 July I received an email notifying me that ANZ will permanently close its branch at Earlwood. It is an absolute disgrace. I wrote to ANZ CEO Shayne Elliott. I note that the banks have been smashed at the royal commission.

As the member for Northern Tablelands stated so eloquently, in the past eight months every one of us has shown goodwill—every single one of us. We have gone above and beyond the duty that is required of all citizens of Australia. I acknowledge all the wonderful citizens of New South Wales, especially my wonderful multicultural community. Everybody has gone above and beyond. But the shysters tell us there is not enough foot traffic. In the dead of night they closed the bank and the CEO did not have the decency to let me know, even after I had written to him. What will happen to our shopping strips? Businesses are struggling hard, particularly during lockdown. I acknowledge the businesses in my local community who have struggled hard. They followed the rules and adapted. Business not only in my electorate but also in all electorates did the right thing. I acknowledge all our businesses who have done the right thing.

The ANZ branch was one of very few in Earlwood. Earlwood is a commercial, professional centre. Our community is outraged that the bank closed the branch without giving sufficient notification. It used the temporary closure as a smokescreen while the shysters were laughing away in Collins Street and Martin Place. They thought they could hoodwink our communities. But our communities have hit back. My husband and I are ANZ customers. I have not once told anyone to close their account or not to hold shares. I will not operate like that. Of course we want to see our businesses thriving and our banks doing well. Everybody was giving more and going above the call of duty. But six months after being disgraced at the royal commission, the banks were temporarily closing branches knowing that in a few months when COVID restrictions were lifted they would permanently close the branches because foot traffic was slow.

What a joke. The spivs are talking to me and trying to get meetings. People who have never come to Earlwood or Campsie or Belmore are telling me—the local member—"Oh, but I've got a Google map and your constituents can catch the bus to Campsie." Campsie branch, which is one of the largest regional branches in our area, was operating for less than three hours every day during the lockdown. It was a very difficult period, but everybody was patient and everybody did the right thing. For spivs to tell me that people can just catch the bus—hang on, during the lockdown the Government was telling everybody to stay indoors, stay in their community and not to get onto public transport. My community was following the rules but was then being told by the bank, "Why don't you catch the bus and go to Campsie?" I have a large multicultural community and a lot of elderly people. I have a lot of elderly migrants who were part of the waves in the fifties and sixties. They have built our State, they have contributed to our State, they have given their all to this State. And what does this bank do? It turns around and sticks two fingers up at our community.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Two middle fingers.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Two middle fingers, as the member for Northern Tablelands said. We are on a 100 per cent unity ticket. The banks should be condemned for what they have done. It is a disgrace. I call on the ANZ to open the branch at Earlwood and to be innovative. The bank gave to the standing committee that looked into its terrible actions. It has lied. It needs to open the branches.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:21:52):** I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this motion to the House. This is a very pressing issue for many members. I have spoken on this topic in

the past. In the Cootamundra electorate we have also seen this rationalisation or, more accurately, erosion of commercial services in our communities. In this Chamber I have spoken about the closure of bank branches in towns like Temora, Grenfell, and Ardlethan, and about how the loss of those face-to-face services disproportionately impacts on the elderly and vulnerable in our communities. I am proud that since I raised this issue, we have seen no further closures of National Australia Bank branches in the Cootamundra electorate. I note today the changing attitude of the NAB to our fellow rural communities in the north of the State, as pointed out by the member for Northern Tablelands.

There is something fundamentally wrong with corporations that will happily report profits in the billions, even during a global pandemic and recession but that are equally happy to remove jobs from small communities and force people to drive hundreds of kilometres to access face-to-face services. In the first half of this year the big four banks—the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Westpac, ANZ and NAB—reported cumulative cash profits, after tax, of just over \$8 billion. There is no excuse to close bank branches in small rural and regional communities. This issue transcends party politics; it impacts on every member who represents a small community or a metropolitan community such as Earlwood. In the bush, it is about our elderly people and those with mobility issues, who cannot simply get in a car and drive to big centres like Wagga Wagga, Armidale or Tamworth from small towns like Ardlethan and Uralla.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Or Campsie.

**Ms STEPH COOKE:** Or Campsie. It is about those who cannot access the internet or who have low digital literacy, but who are increasingly being directed by enormous companies to access their services online instead of in store. And it is about our banks recognising that our small communities are worthy of investment. Agricultural land prices are at record highs. Decentralisation and working from home is proving people do not need to be in a skyscraper to undertake many office jobs. These are communities with resources, with potential, and with growth industries at their heart. Other sectors see the value in rural and regional areas; why not the institutions that we trust with our savings?

I expect the remaining network of rural and regional bank branches across the State to be maintained. The arguments the banks have made for closing those branches simply do not stack up when pitted against their profit reports. I told this Chamber 2½ years ago that it was simply not good enough and that the closure of a bank branch—the loss of just one job or one family leaving—is a tear in the fabric of a community's existence. I also said then that I was weary of a commercial world where profits come before people. NAB's motto is "More than money". I urge NAB and all other banks to show they truly understand that message. I commend the motion to the House.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:25:35):** I support the incredibly important motion of the member for Northern Tablelands and make a brief contribution to echo the sentiment of this Chamber today about the removal of bank branches—even in my own community—and the impact that has had on service provision in my electorate. Having spent a significant proportion of my own life on my family farm in Bannister, I know firsthand that closing local bank branches in regional communities can have a much more devastating impact on those who are further disadvantaged by things like a lack of internet access, which then diminishes access to internet banking. Unfortunately, it seems that no community is immune to this crisis. My community has recently lost bank branches in three suburbs: Randwick, Charing Cross and Coogee. For the locals who bank with those branches—some for decades—the loss of the branches has left them without access to one of society's essential services. Many constituents who have written to my office to tell me about these closures often express to me that they feel forgotten and unappreciated and sometimes express feelings of powerlessness, anger and deep betrayal.

Most certainly, the loss of local branches is felt more deeply in the towns and villages of rural and remote New South Wales. However, it is also deeply felt in sections of my community. Constituents of mine who are elderly, frail or less mobile, parents with young children and many business owners who fill the shops and commercial spaces around lost branches have felt that loss very acutely. It is notable that each of the branches that have recently closed in my electorate are branches of the major Australian banks, which are often referred to as the big four. I take this opportunity to recognise the great work that is being done by the Clovelly Community Bank Branch to support our community during this very tough year. This community owned and run bank has kept its doors open throughout the pandemic and has actually increased its provision of essential banking services to the community.

I thank the Clovelly Community Bank Branch for the work that it is doing while the big four have been turning their backs on locals. Local bank branches are essential. They allow for thriving local business districts and communities. Once they are lost, there is a dramatic impact on the community that flows through to other services and businesses alike, as well as hugely detrimental impacts on local business and community morale. Banking is an essential service. In light of the closure of the National Australia Bank's Uralla branch and several bank branches in my own community, I believe that a conversation about the merits of a public bank in New South

Wales is again worth having. It is a government's role to provide essential services to the community. With the closure of these branches and so many more, we see that the private sector is failing many communities around New South Wales. The Government should investigate how it might provide an alternative.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (12:28:44):** It is with great pleasure and, in a way, a degree of bittersweet sadness that I support the motion of the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales on bank closures. I have some experience in this field inasmuch as the NAB is closing its Dungog branch on 11 November, being Remembrance Day. We know what NAB will be remembered for in this instance. I wrote to NAB and asked it to reconsider its position. Its response was that the building had been closed and the new owner did not want it there. So find somewhere else in Dungog; there are other options. Recently the ANZ Bank in Scone—which is a town double the size of Dungog—announced that from March next year the bank will close. Scone has a population of 5,500 people, not 50.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** They'll take their money.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN:** The banks will take their money. I have experience in this field and my suggestion to the greedy bank executives—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Spivs.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN:** That is one way to look at them, yes. It is well known that in a former life I was a financial planner for 25 years before I came to Parliament. During my financial planning career I bought into what was called a multi-site retail banking franchise. At the time, the Colonial State Bank set up a franchise model for retail banking that was highly successful and profitable for the franchisor, and to some degree the franchisees. Importantly, it provided a very personalised level of service to customers of its branches. The model worked. I had a number of branches over the years in Maitland, Cessnock, Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone. I had a kiosk in Green Hills at East Maitland. I also oversaw an agency in Gloucester, which was at the IGA supermarket for a time.

I employed a financial planner to replace me. I also employed a mobile lender and that mobile lending unit was so successful the franchisor ended up taking it over at a corporate level. Nevertheless, we offered a personalised service to people. We visited the clients at their workplace, home or wherever. It is still like that in suburban areas. But towns that are situated 10, 15, 20 or 30 kilometres away from each other and have no transport cannot get a face-to-face service and the necessary transactions cannot occur. I suggest that the greedy bank executives, who are only worried about shareholders granting their bonuses, look at other models of service delivery for their customers in rural and regional areas, in particular, that will work and be profitable for everyone.

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:32:54):** I support this very sensible motion. It is all about customer loyalty, particularly in the bush. Like other electorates, Wallsend is suffering from bank closures in areas with poor public transport. In fact, the closure of the Westpac branch was considered so important that it made the front page of the *Lambton Local* community newspaper. A few years ago when another bank branch closed in New Lambton Westpac promised it would never close its branch because it was there for the community. Guess what? This month it will close its New Lambton branch as well as its ATM. We in Wallsend feel Uralla's pain.

We all know that people shop online. But statistics I acquired accidentally from Westpac show that people like a bricks-and-mortar bank—especially the elderly, the disabled and people who do not have access to good public transport. As the member for Upper Hunter said, sometimes people do not have transport services to get them to a bank. Walgett, where I lived for a long time, only had a NAB branch. It was open for just a few hours. Walgett is 103 kilometres from Coonamble. Imagine how difficult it was for workers to get to a branch that was open for only a short time. They could not get there. I fear for people in the bush more than any of us.

In the Wallsend electorate the Newcastle Permanent closed its Cardiff branch. The Greater Bank closed its branch in Jesmond, which is a central hub for buses. The Westpac branch in New Lambton is closing, together with its ATM. The Commonwealth Bank has temporarily closed its Wallsend branch—just like it is temporarily closing branches everywhere. It seems to me that "temporarily" is a euphemism for "We are using COVID to retreat from our loyal customers". It is very sad that banks are doing that. We understand COVID makes a difference, but that is more reason for the banks to remain open than to close. Across the electorate, 28 per cent of my constituents—or more than one in four—are not registered for online or phone banking. The figure increases to 45 per cent for people over the age of 70 years. So one could say that half the people in Wallsend who are aged over 70 do not use online services, yet more bank and building society branches are closing.

When building societies first opened they talked about providing a service for customers in their community. The Newcastle Permanent Building Society is closing all branches but at the same time it has fabulous television advertisements promoting itself for donating to Surfest in Newcastle—almost every event is held on the beach in Newcastle because it sounds glamorous. It does not donate to Dungog or Wallsend because they are

not glamorous. The Newcastle Permanent is not showing any loyalty to our community. I ask the banks, particularly Westpac at New Lambton, to reopen their branches. The building in New Lambton is vacant and has space for the branch. On behalf of all members who have spoken in this debate, I say we care about our communities and it is time the banks started caring about them too.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (12:36:56):** By leave: I support the motion moved by my Nationals colleague the member for Northern Tablelands, the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, the Hon. Adam Marshall. I urge all financial institutions in New South Wales to consider the impact on communities when making decisions to reduce services in branches and agencies in regional New South Wales. The impact of COVID-19 is already resulting in changes to banking operations in the country. Branch operating hours are being shortened, branch sizes are being reduced drastically, staffing levels are being slashed and customers are being compelled to use online banking services. They have to wait on the street to enter a branch.

These changes are having a negative effect on our communities. Access to vital services is not always available. The safety and security of customers is compromised. Bank staff are losing their jobs and the elderly and those from lower socio-economic demographics are being unfairly disadvantaged. The bricks-and-mortar financial institutions are crucial to the economic recovery and stability of regional communities as we come back from the devastation of drought, bushfires and now a worldwide pandemic. Access to local bankers with local knowledge who understand the needs of their local community provides assurance and confidence in financial stability into the future.

When the world around us is in disarray, the local bank has always been the rock of stability in our towns. Customers who are struggling from day to day know they can walk through the doors of their local bank and see the face of someone who knows, understands and can help them in the good times and the bad. That is not something a stranger's voice over the phone or an internet bot can possibly achieve. The future economic stability of our regional communities is reliant on reliable access to banking. How can a local coffee shop in a small town possibly operate successfully when the internet is down, the EFTPOS machine is not working and the grey nomads come into town, drop in for a cup of coffee and do not have any cash? Can they duck up to the local bank or local ATM and withdraw some cash to purchase their coffee? No, they cannot.

How do those small businesses survive? Small country towns are filled with residents who lived in a time when money was money, when it was in their hands or in their wallet—not a plastic card. Let me tell members: I am not just talking about the older generations. I know quite a few people who still only operate with cash. How will it go cashless? How will that affect them? How will not being able to go to the bank and withdraw their pay each week impact their wellbeing due to these tough times? Is it fair to expect people to change their way of life just for the almighty bottom line?

How does the local mum-and-dad business continue to operate safely when it needs to store its daily takings either on site or at home until the local bank is open in three days' time? How do those owners sleep soundly at night knowing they have thousands of dollars, which could encourage crime and devastation for their business or family? Why should these business owners have to leave their home town to deposit their daily takings? Who will pick up the kids from school and keep the doors of their businesses open if one of the owners has to drive to the bank before it shuts at three o'clock? What happens when the business owner goes down to their bank to deposit the daily takings and the size of their branch and number of tellers is so reduced that, in these times of COVID, they have to sit out on the street and wait for their number to be called? How is that providing safety for the business owner and security of their money?

We see slogans all the time from the banks, "More than money", "Your world, your way", "Every generation should live better than the last", "CommBank can". How about this slogan, "Let us make it more than money"? Let us remember that not all worlds are the same—our world, our way; not your world, your way. Let us consider that every generation should live better than the last. Let us strive for the motto that if CommBank can then maybe we can. Let us believe we can continue to grow and progress as a global society without forgetting our foundations. Shame on those who close small regional centres. We want regional communities to thrive and survive, not go into decline.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:41:32):** By leave: I make a contribution in support of this motion on the National Australia Bank Uralla branch and thank the member for Northern Tablelands for moving it. As he said in his opening speech, once upon a time we looked with respect on the "big four" banks. But the royal commission showed a very different story when it came to those banks. It showed profit above integrity. It showed their unconscionable conduct. It showed that they did not care about people, but purely about profit. When they start charging fees to dead people, you know there is a real problem. Notwithstanding the royal commission, two years after it some banks were still charging fees to dead people. I thank the former National



Party member in the Senate John "Wacka" Williams who, when initially calling for a royal commission, was booed and people said that he was an idiot—but how right he was.

As other members have said in this debate, with the banks it is not just about the bottom line and not just about profits; it is also about that social responsibility, and that is where the banks are lacking. The banks have to start looking at their social licence to do business in Australia. They have to start looking at communities. In a sense, we are forced to bank with banks to keep our money safe. One of the worrying things is that legislation may come through at a Federal level whereby we will not be able to make purchases with cash, therefore forcing us to deal through banks and bank transfers. The banks are looking at bringing in zero interest and minus interest. In other words, you have to have your money in the bank and you are going to lose money by having it there, but you have no choice because you will not be able to purchase things over a certain amount of money.

I look at my electorate of Myall Lakes and what has been going on with the banks over the past few years. In Wingham, with a population of over 5,500—then on top of that you have the hinterland—the Commonwealth Bank closed in 2020 and the National Australia Bank closed in 2017. The St George Bank branch closed just recently, Westpac's branch is closed and the ANZ branch is closed. In Bulahdelah, the Commonwealth Bank and the Holiday Coast Credit Union branches have closed. In Tuncurry, the National Australia Bank branch closed—well, so what? It is forcing people to bank with it by going to Stockland, which is over the other side of the bridge in Forster. The Commonwealth Bank on the main street of Forster also moved to Stockland.

Towns have been left without banks, such as Old Bar, which has a population of over 4,500. It is a town with a significant aged population. Those people are therefore forced to go to Taree, some 13 kilometres away. For those who cannot drive, they are forced to somehow get into Taree to do their banking. In Nabadah, with a population of over 1,300—plus the Wallamba district—there is no banking at all. All the banks have left Bulahdelah, which has a population of 1,400 plus the outlying districts. The community there has got together with the post office and they have post office banking there with a community bank—I think it might be the Bendigo Bank, but it may be another bank. But there is certainly banking through the post office there. What is the choice for Bulahdelah? If people there need to bank with one of the big four banks it is a 45-minute drive up to Taree or an hour's drive down to Raymond Terrace. Once again, how can aged people and those with disabilities get to those big centres to do their banking? There is no public transport in many regional areas, and it is just impossible.

The banks have walked out. They have put profit above their social responsibility, so much so that they can provide the service at a cost neutral to them—in other words, there would be no cost for them to provide the service—but because there has to be profit they are not willing to do so, forcing people to go to other centres to do their banking. How hard is it for a small business that receives cash during the course of the day and has no bank to drop the money in the night safe? This has real impacts on communities. It is ongoing. The banks have got to wake up to themselves. I commend the motion. Shame on those banks.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (12:46:14):** In reply: I thank members for the electorates of Canterbury, Cootamundra, Coogee, Upper Hunter, Wallend, Tamworth and Myall Lakes, who have contributed—as one, really—to this debate. In the time that I have I will briefly reflect. I thank member for Canterbury for her very passionate and strong advocacy on behalf of her community. It is an absolute shame what has happened to the people of Earlwood with the uncaring attitude of the ANZ Bank closing that branch and forcing people to travel further afield. It is the height of arrogance that it refuses to listen and yield to community needs in that region. I hope the member for Canterbury's campaign eventually bears fruit for her community. The Canterbury electorate has a very strong and passionate advocate in her.

The member for Cootamundra told the House about the ANZ branch closure in Temora, and National Australia Bank closures in Grenfell and Ardlethan. Sadly we see too many of those smaller communities missing out. The member for Coogee actually gave the House a little bit of hope about how the community of Clovelly has responded to the challenges by establishing the community banking system there, which seems to be working well. Similarly, the member for Upper Hunter noted that whilst the NAB branch is closing in Dungog there are potentially other ways that communities can be a bit creative in responding to this to provide an alternative as a financial banking service, rather than relying on the traditional "big four".

The member for Wallend noted Westpac closing its branch at New Lambton, despite its promise it would not. Sadly, none of us is surprised, which is a mark of how lowly regarded those financial institutions now are. The member for Tamworth's support and strong advocacy on behalf of his communities was certainly valued, and the member for Myall Lakes—erudite as always in his contribution to this House—spoke about the impacts of the royal commission. He is right that it really did show that the emperor has no clothes when it comes to the big four banks. He also spoke about the shameful closure of the NAB branch in Tuncurry, the Bulahdelah bank branches and the fact that Old Bar—a community of nearly 5,000 people—has no face-to-face banking services.

This is an issue that is beyond politics. Sadly, among all 94 members of this House there is not a community represented that would not have had a branch close or significantly reduce its hours. Given the mega profits posted each year by the banks, all for the benefit of their shareholders, it is shameful. As far as I can see, these days it is a case of the banks putting shareholders above their customers whereas, even in my parents' time, it was exactly the other way round. The days when the local bank manager was seen to be part of your family and you knew they had your best interests at heart sadly have disappeared. You felt you were part of the bank and that it valued you. But that is no longer the case.

Sadly, people are just a number on a piece of paper by which the bank can enrich itself and its shareholders through dividends. That is being done at the expense of too many communities. As we have heard during this debate, it is not just the smaller bush communities that are copping it in the neck but also metropolitan centres. The banks' behaviour has been shameful and deplorable. Their behaviour has been exposed as such, yet they have not learned their lesson. If the banks continue to behave in that manner, more banks, like the Clovelly Community Bank Branch of the Bendigo Bank, will spring up. The banks will be not only without clothes but also without customers and profits.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **KINGSWOOD PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)**  
(12:51:01): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kingswood Park Public School on its participation in the 20 Day Kindness Challenge.
- (2) Notes the students and teachers of the school will have a new challenge to complete each day.
- (3) Notes the aim of the challenge is to create and encourage a culture of ongoing kindness and thoughtfulness within the school community.

It is a privilege to move a motion about Kingswood Park Public School, which is a fantastic school in the northern part of my electorate. There is a wonderful school community in the North Penrith area and this particular school has a profound influence on its local community, which is a dynamic and growing part of Penrith. It is fantastic that Kingswood Park Public School really wants to invest in the school's culture. The kindness challenge emanated from the school. The program invites students, teachers and the community to join in and embrace kindness and learning by being kind to themselves, others and the environment.

Kingswood Park Public School identified that it wanted to do a lot more work around developing a positive culture of kindness in the community by displaying and accepting kindness, being mindful and showing compassion and gratitude. Teacher Melanie White suggested and delivered the proposal to all staff at the school to participate in the 20-day kindness challenge that encourages the school community to be kind to themselves, each other and the environment. The proposal was welcomed and implemented across the school. Each day there is a new challenge for students, teachers and the community. It is fair to say that Kingswood Park Public School embraced the challenge enthusiastically.

The daily challenges included tasks such as picking up rubbish around the school, writing a poem about someone who is important to you and giving it to them, providing positive reinforcement, playing with someone new at lunchtime whom they had not met before, and donating a toy to someone in need. The student leadership team made daily announcements over the school public address system to tell everyone what the challenge was for that day. Teachers adjusted their programs to allow time for students to complete the challenges—for example, the students had five minutes in the morning to discuss what they were grateful for and in the afternoon they made bookmarks and cards for other members of the school community.

Melanie White received a number of emails from staff and parents stating their appreciation for the fantastic work associated with the challenge, giving recognition to the work she had undertaken in changing the daily program, commenting on introducing the kindness challenge to the school, and observing that the challenge had helped to strengthen the relationship between parents and staff. We know how important it is for parents to buy into a school community. Additionally, Melanie indicated that teachers took great pride in observing the work undertaken by the students, such as giving thankyou notes to staff in the office, school cleaners and the canteen staff. The teachers were pleased to note all those wonderful gestures of kindness.

Throughout the challenge, the school underwent a shift in its culture. The challenge has helped to build a strong sense of connection and has improved relationships among the students and teachers, and the school's presence in the community. This has resulted in a positive and very healthy learning environment that supports

the wellbeing of everyone in the school—students and teachers alike. The school also intends to change the structure of the school to adopt a more positive attitude and behaviour in respect of learning criteria by including gratitude, mindfulness and positive actions towards themselves, others and the environment. I have heard from a number of different people but I think it is important to record in *Hansard* some of the feedback from the students who participated in the Kingswood Park Public School Kindness Challenge. Breanna Lee in kindergarten said:

I liked it because you have to be kind to EVERYONE! I drew my teacher a picture and it made her feel happy.

Storm Matthews from year 2 said:

It was fun because people did kind things to me like letting me in front of a line and playing with me at lunch time.

Kiara Jackson in year 4 said:

I liked the kindness challenge because it got people thinking about how they could be more kind. I also liked it because the community could participate.

Having children in year 4 already starting to think about how they can make their community a better place definitely demonstrates the benefits of the Kingswood Park Public School Kindness Challenge. Saif Shah in year 5 said:

It was good because we learnt how to communicate and be kind to each other. I liked how they had a challenge for the students, teachers and community. This meant that we could all participate and do our part to be kind.

The feedback from parents was that the Kindness Challenge brought parents and their children much closer together. The Kindness Challenge is a fantastic opportunity for a school to step outside the day-to-day curriculum and create a really fantastic and positive culture in the community. Every single day we see students and families exposed to messages that are often full of anger and aggression through social media, television and newspapers, yet the kindness challenge has been an opportunity for a school to embrace kindness. It is a fantastic example of the caring attitude that exists in this wonderful school in my community.

There has been wonderful leadership from teachers at the school. I have no doubt that the school's leadership team embracing the challenge led students to participate in the challenge. Participation and accepting the challenge has ensured that the teaching environment at Kingswood Park Public School continues to go from strength to strength. The Government has supported the school throughout my term in Parliament. Recently the Government introduced new upgrades to the school, which has created a better teaching environment. Beyond the Government's funding for bricks and mortar and sports fields, the school has taken charge of its own culture. It is creating an incredibly positive learning culture. Kingswood Park Public School has adopted and embraced kindness, and is better for it.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:58:00):** At the outset, I commend the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney for moving such a nice motion in the House. Members often spend a lot of time debating matters that are not pleasant. We can learn a lot of lessons from kids. When I saw the motion on today's *Business Paper* I realised it was something I wanted to talk about. I congratulate the Minister and the school on what appears to be a terrific culture. The Minister spoke about the 20-day Kindness Challenge. It is no secret in this place that my career was in education. It is fair to say that often my heart is still there. One of the most enjoyable things that members of Parliament get to do is visit schools. When I read about acts of kindness and see acts of kindness I think there is so much we can learn from the way schools operate.

Many times, people like to take pot shots at schools and talk about something that has gone wrong. Unless people have walked in the shoes of the staff, the students and the school community, they do not understand the complexities of what happens in a school. Kids carry an invisible backpack containing their family situation and their own personal situation. Great leaders, great teachers and great schools can make an impact on those children and the community. They can have a positive life effect.

The Minister spoke about acts of kindness. What a great challenge to make in 20 days. I hate to let out the secret, but there are always acts of kindness in schools. It is nice that there is a focus on 20 days. I particularly love some of the things that the youngsters said, which the Minister highlighted. One of the nicest was the kid had said, "someone was my friend" or "someone let me go in front of them in a line". Not everybody is surrounded by people at school. There is always a kid, or a few, who does not quite fit in, who sometimes might be the outcast, who sometimes might not enjoy lunch and recess because they have come to the realisation there are not many people around them.

There was this lovely thing that I started to see in primary schools when I was visiting them in a previous role. It was a friend seat, a bench seat that a kid would sit on and would say, "Hey, could someone come and be my friend?" They would then spend the rest of that lunch or recess together. That teaches us more than the lesson about being a friend: It is a life lesson. That life lesson is highlighted by what the Minister was saying. If you can do something to make somebody's life better, then you just do it. In creating a sense of kindness we create a better

world. Rather than tell young people how they should be, maybe in a situation such as this we should learn from young people and say, "This is how we should be." The Minister spoke a lot about culture and the importance of culture in a school. When I was a school principal I made it clear that I wanted to shift the paradigm of the way we looked at kids. I strongly believe that everybody is inherently good. Somewhere along the line things happen that make people do bad things or something in their life changes the way they are. Everybody is inherently decent and good; unfortunately they do not always get to be that way.

A lot the focus in schools was on the kids doing the wrong thing. The kid who mucks up in class, the kid who turns up late, the kid who does not bring his or her pens or pencils. We focus on what they are doing wrong, but we do not focus enough on what they are doing right. We do not catch the kid doing the good. We do not catch the kid doing the right thing. If you can create a culture of positivity you encourage more positivity and encourage people to start searching for those things. People will make mistakes. I am not living in some fantasy world. There will be consequences and those consequences should never be diluted. But if we start catching people doing good, we encourage people to do good: It has a strong infectious effect.

When young kids are writing cards to people who are stuck at home because of COVID, visiting aged care centres—back in the day when they could—donating to food drives to help those who are less fortunate, helping at feeding the homeless initiatives, putting their arm around a kid who has just fallen over or standing up for a kid who has just been bullied, wanting to make a difference to the school that they are in, to the world that they live in, we know we are on the right track. If it means we have to formalise it by setting the 20-day kindness challenge—as this terrific school Kingswood Park has done—then we will focus on these particular things. We are teaching about life and there is so much more to that.

Why is kindness so important? We are living in tough times and kindness is important for everybody. There are people who are stuck at home who do not know what the future holds for them. There are people who are stuck with no idea of what tomorrow will bring. Just imagine what a difference that kindness makes. Whether it is the stereotype of helping somebody across the road, helping somebody with their shopping bags, paying for the person behind you in the coffee line, being polite, being pleasant or bringing in someone's rubbish bin, or whether it is a smile, a wave, a "How you going?", or a conversation, those things do not cost anything, but what you get in return is a huge amount of value. That is how we create a better society.

We look for the worst in each other all the time. But there is so much good. There is so much better than what we sometimes see, but we do not shine the light on that. When we learn from children and school communities how to live a better life, then I think we need to take note. I will finish off with one example of kindness. If you can keep the kindness happening, what a difference it makes. When COVID first materialised there was panic buying. In the shopping centre where my office is, there is a Woolworths downstairs. Toilet paper became the most important commodity and there was panic buying. An elderly gentleman had come to buy toilet paper, which he could not get.

When he came back the next day he still could not get it. Amanda, who worked at Punchbowl Woolworths, noticed he had been in two days in a row. When a supply came in, she grabbed toilet paper and a few other things. She put those things aside for him and would not let him pay for them. She delivered them to his house. That act gave this person a sense of kindness. It might not have been the biggest thing that had happened to him, but it spoke of her heart. If we all speak to our hearts, if we look into the hearts of children and practice not random acts of kindness but continual acts of kindness, we will have a better world. I commend the Minister and thank him for bringing such a nice motion to the House.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (13:05:32):** I thank the Minister for moving this motion. I acknowledge the words from the member for Lakemba as well. It is a good time to be focusing on this 20-day kindness. Innately the negative is easy; the positive is more difficult to convey. This 20-day challenge at Kingswood Park will show us what we can lead towards. A number of schools across the Dubbo electorate run a range of positive initiatives and strategies to help create and embed that culture of kindness and thoughtfulness that we are talking about. It is nice to see. From a school perspective there is a general idea around supporting students and communities to embrace that culture, and promote the understanding of and empathy towards others by taking part in evidence-based programs at school that are student centred.

A number of these positive initiatives and strategies are having a noticeable impact on students' social and emotional wellbeing and also their resilience, understanding and acceptance of others. I thought it would be nice to share a few examples from my region. At Orana Heights Public School, stage 3 students have completed a learning unit titled Happiness. The idea is to provide an opportunity for teachers to talk to students about kindness, and ways they might support and show kindness to others. The students were inspired and engaged to reflect on and act out different ways to be kind to those in their immediate lives, but also others around them. The unit enables students to focus on growth, mindset, kindness and the wellbeing of everyone. The students worked

towards the recognition of a special day on 2 October, Wear Yellow and Smile Day. It is a great initiative. Well done to the school and the students involved.

The public school at Ballimore has been implementing a mindfulness program across the whole school. The Smiling Mind program is delivering the positive outcomes and benefits of mindfulness, to support student engagement in learning and that positive emotional wellbeing we talk about. The long-term goal is to provide the students with tools to achieve positive mental health outcomes not just while they are at school but throughout their lives. The Smiling Mind information is being shared by the school with the broader school community, including through newsletters and social media, to further support students through building resilience. At Mudgee, the Cudgegong Valley Public School has implemented a Kindness Crew. Students make and give welcome cards to new students as they come into the school. The program has assisted new students to build peer connections and to quickly experience that feeling that they belong, are known, valued and cared for. For the Kindness Crew, it provides a further opportunity for students to acknowledge and be kind to others through engaging in that positive, goodwill activity.

Hargraves Public School has hosted a resilience program where students perform random acts of kindness. Students place hearts on a dedicated chart, recognising when someone demonstrates kindness to another. Through the program students have learnt about core values, such as being kind to others. Pretty simple stuff, but it says a lot. At Wellington Public School students speak about their highlight of the day, how they focus on positive conversations and ask questions of fellow students focussing on R U OK? as a part of a positive living skills program. Again, the program has resulted in a really good integrated approach towards developing strong social and emotional education, awareness of others' feelings and the power of acting thoughtfully. Through programs and initiatives like the ones that have been mentioned in the PDHPE syllabus, schools are certainly providing students with the opportunity to enhance and develop resilience and connectedness and the ability to learn to respectfully deal with others. As we have heard, negative is easy. Highlighting the positive takes effort and we will certainly need to make the effort.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (13:09:53):** It is a pleasure to speak to this motion and I thank the Minister for bringing it before the House. I thank also the previous speakers. One of the privileges of this role is to see our schools in action. Across my electorate the school communities that I visit are impressive in the positive cultures they set. In supporting this motion I recognise and congratulate Kingswood Park, but I also congratulate the schools across my electorate on the good work that they are doing. In conversations with Jayne Gill, the education director for our area, she mentioned that Lavington Public School was undertaking the kindness project. That was no surprise to me because Brett Davies and his team at that school absolutely impressed me with the culture of positivity and their ability to imbue the children with a sense of kindness, gratitude, empathy and care.

It is important to give our kids these values, but it does come from the top. That is why it is important to recognise the principals, the teachers, the staff and the parents who all work together for these projects. The member for Dubbo spoke of these challenging times. During the first lockdown earlier in the year the principal of Corowa Public School, Sharelle Bailey, together with her teachers, dressed up in fun clothes, got in their cars and travelled to the addresses of their students waving and yahooping out the window to let the kids know that they were still there and still cared. It is one of the privileges of this job to hear those stories as I travel around. One cannot be anything but impressed by the principals and staff and their values.

As a vet I love to see companion animals and pet therapy at schools. I acknowledge Emma Andrews at Jindera Public School and Sharelle Bailey at Corowa Public School. Last week I was at the preschool at Urana where they have a beautiful pet therapy dog. That is so important because it is teaching our kids about kindness, care and empathy—important values to bring to the fore. I acknowledge Paul Smith and the team at Albury North Public School. They have been reaching out to Victorian students as penpals. One of the students wrote that their favourite part is thinking how the penpal will feel when they receive the letter. They enjoy making other people feel accompanied in these difficult times. In conclusion, I draw to the attention of the House that our HSC students will be sitting their exams very shortly. I place on record my best wishes. The community stands by you, and your teachers and parents stand by you. Give your best, but know that we are proud of your efforts in what has been a challenging year. I thank the Minister for bringing the motion to the House.

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (13:14:10):** In reply: I thank the members who have contributed to debate on the motion supporting the 20-day Kindness Challenge at Kingswood Park Public School. The member for Lakemba, who led for the Opposition, is a passionate educator and former school principal. He understands the importance and value of creating a positive culture in the school environment. It is always fantastic to hear from the very kind member for Dubbo and the kind member for Albury who are always trying to improve the culture that exists in their communities. As members of Parliament they work incredibly hard and very closely with their schools. Both members have shared fantastic examples of what is occurring in their communities in regional New South Wales.

Kingswood Park Public School is an incredibly important school to me. As I listened to the members speak of experiences in their own communities I remembered being an AFL development officer, giving classes on the oval at Kingswood Park Public School. Later in the term I will be able to go back to that school to see the new synthetic playing surface that the Government has funded for that school. The grounds have changed in the time since I taught the drop punt and the handball on the school grounds, but nonetheless it is a school making an amazing contribution to the local community. We have heard that the 20-day Kindness Challenge has brought out the best in both students, teachers and the school community. It has also drawn the wider north Penrith community into the Kingswood Park environment.

It has been a great opportunity to talk about creating a positive culture across schools. The school has embraced a number of the programs that the Government has put in place. It has been a recipient of significant funding through the resource allocation model. It is a strong school. It has embraced the Bump It Up program and students at Kingswood Park Public School have been able to improve their education results due to the commitment of teachers at that school and the support that the school has received from the Government. This is a motion about the students who took on a 20-day challenge to be more kind and support people across their school community and to find the opportunity to positively affirm the great and good things that people are doing in their community. It has been nice to listen to members of Parliament talk today about kindness.

I know that the Temporary Speaker is hugely supportive of the concept of professional development for members of Parliament. Having listened to this motion today I cannot help but wonder whether the students at Kingswood Park Public School should be part of the parliamentary professional development program. There may be something that members could learn from the 20-day Kindness Challenge that the students have participated in. It is an incredibly diverse multicultural school. They have learnt how to hear each other's different experiences. I have no doubt that we could all learn from that sometimes when we are debating important issues of State. A big thank you to Kingswood Park Public School for putting kindness first and leading the way in the Penrith community. Their work in the 20-day Kindness Challenge has made their school community better and they have made the Penrith community better as well.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

#### *Question Time*

#### **DARYL MAGUIRE, FORMER MEMBER FOR WAGGA WAGGA**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:16:22):** My question is directed to the Premier. Daryl Maguire has today given evidence to ICAC that he sought your guidance and reassurance on solving his major financial problems. Will you admit that you were his sounding board for corruption?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:16:42):** The question put by the Leader of the Opposition is both extremely offensive and wrong in every single way, and I ask her to withdraw it or else say it outside.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It has been said under oath.

**The SPEAKER:** Does the Leader of the Opposition have another question?

#### **DARYL MAGUIRE, FORMER MEMBER FOR WAGGA WAGGA**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:17:09):** My question is directed to the Premier. Today Daryl Maguire confirmed he told you that the land at Badgerys Creek that Louise Waterhouse was lobbying for was the same land he thought would clear his debts. That was corrupt. You knew it. Why did you refuse to report it?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:17:29):** I refer again to this question, which is wrong and highly offensive, and I say to the Leader of the Opposition: Either withdraw it or say it outside.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** This was given in evidence today.

**The SPEAKER:** The answer has been completed. Does the Leader of the Opposition have another question?

**MEMBER CONDUCT**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:17:50):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given your refusal to answer when I asked yesterday, I will ask it again. Are you aware of any other members of your Government who are taking commissions from property developers? You cannot refuse to answer it again.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:18:08):** I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that this investigation is being undertaken by the ICAC and not the Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I point out to the member for Kogarah and the member for Rockdale that their leader is trying to ask a question. The member for Baulkham Hills will remain silent.

**THE HON. GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:18:44):** My question is directed to the Premier. You said you did not know Iwan Sunito, but you did. You said you did not know what UWE was, but you did. You said you did not know your office was used to lobby property developers, but you did.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Ms JODI McKAY:** You said you did not know Daryl Maguire stood to profit from a property deal he was lobbying for, but you did.

**The SPEAKER:** I will take the point of order.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** How can the people of New South Wales trust you?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Is the Leader of the Opposition deaf? Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will have the chance to ask her question again in a moment. What is the point of order?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 128. I have taken a very restrained approach to objecting to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, but like all previous questions this question contravenes Standing Order 128. It contains argument, inference, imputation, expression of opinion, hypothetical matter and is disorderly.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** To the point of order: The Attorney General has appeared for people within the Independent Commission Against Corruption in hearings previously.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** What is the point of order?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I am speaking to the point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** I know what the point of order is. I want to hear the Leader of the Opposition speak to the point of order.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I am speaking to the Attorney General's point of order. Perhaps the member for Wakehurst should pay attention.

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

**Ms Jodi McKay:** The content of my question is evidence given within the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is on the record at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I am entitled to ask a question in relation to evidence given at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It comes back to whether the people of New South Wales can trust this Premier and I have put to this Premier evidence given at the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** This is not speech time. Where is your point of order?

**The SPEAKER:** I was happy to give the Leader of the Opposition the chance to speak to the point of order.

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** She is out of order.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** That was a speech.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wakehurst and the Treasurer are not helping. In the context of Standing Order 128—

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** I am happy to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The question would need to be asked again. I could not hear it.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I am happy to refresh your memory.

**The SPEAKER:** Please rephrase the question to potentially take into account the objection. Not having heard the whole question, my tendency is to think that you were making assertions rather than referring to evidence.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Can I show you the question?

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy to have a look at the question. If you are prefacing a question with actual facts that have been established then please phrase it in that way and do not make assertions or statements of fact that might be contested.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** This is the evidence given by the Premier at the Independent Commission Against Corruption this week.

**The SPEAKER:** I will listen to the question. I ask members to remain silent.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is evidence confirmed by her at ICAC.

**The SPEAKER:** Let me hear the question.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** The Premier knows what the question is.

**The SPEAKER:** But I do not, and I did not hear it.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Everybody else did.

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

**Ms JODI McKAY:** My question is directed to the Premier. You said you did not know Iwan Sunito, but you did. You said you did not know what UWE was, but you did. You said you did not know your office was used to lobby property developers, but you did.

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

**Ms JODI McKAY:** You said you did not know Daryl Maguire stood to profit from a property deal he was lobbying for, but you did. How can the people of New South Wales trust you?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:23:05):** I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition has asked the question because she asked the question and answered it herself. She already has the answer so I do not know why she is even asking me. She has answered her own question.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Opposition can clutch at any straws they like. The truth is I have done nothing wrong and the people of New South Wales know it.

#### THE HON. GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (14:23:44):** I direct my question to the Premier. Daryl Maguire told the Premier about his dealings with Chinese-owned company United World Enterprises [UWE] in three separate phone calls on 24 August, 30 August and 1 September 2017. That is three times in a week. Why did the Premier lie to ICAC on Monday by telling it that she did not know what UWE was?

*[Interruption]*

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** I will answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has indicated that she is happy to answer the question. Under normal circumstances, I would not allow that question. But given the Premier has indicated she will answer, I give her the call.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:24:37):** I will let that question speak for itself. I provided assistance as a witness on Monday in great detail. I was forthright and direct, much to my personal detriment, but I had to do it because it is in the public interest. I say to the people of New South Wales that every day that I have been in this place, since 2003, I have worked hard—my guts out—for the people. I will continue to do that. I never have and never will do anything wrong, but I will work my guts out for the people of this great State.



*Sessional Orders***QUORUMS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that, for the remainder of 2020 sittings, the following procedure will apply for the establishment of a quorum under Standing Order 41—

41. If a Member states that a quorum is not present in the House:

- (1) The Speaker shall count the House.
- (2) If a quorum is not present the bells shall be rung for 4 minutes and the Speaker will allow a further 10 minutes for all Members to reach the Chamber.
- (3) The Speaker shall direct that the clock be stopped for the time taken to establish the quorum.
- (4) Members shall present themselves for the counting of the quorum by entering the left and right doors to the Chamber from Speaker's Square and each Member will exit via the Chamber side doors to the Speaker's corridor and the Wentworth Room.
- (5) If after the allowed time a quorum has not been formed, the names of the Members present shall be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* and the Speaker shall set down any business then before the House as an Order of the Day for a later time and adjourn the House until the next sitting day.
- (6) If the next sitting day has not been appointed, the House shall adjourn to the next succeeding business day.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Private Members' Statements***TOLL ROADS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:27:38):** The newest addition to the toll road world emerged around two months ago with a totemic statement from the Premier, who announced that there were so many toll roads being built across our State that it was in fact "toll mania". The Premier was crowing about the Government's spate of toll road infrastructure throughout the city, seemingly suggesting that this was a bonanza to be greeted with affection and celebration by the taxpayers of this State. But the M8 and the recently tolled M5 have elicited deep anger from the people of St George and Kogarah. The \$20 each way truck fee has meant that thousands of trucks are not using the road at all. Instead, they are rerouting around the toll road onto local streets.

Major logistics and trucking firms in the west have informed workers that they are not to use the toll road because it is too expensive. As a result, thousands of trucks are pouring onto surface roads in my electorate at unprecedented rates. A truck driver from the west recently told me that Stoney Creek Road and Forest Road are the M5, except it is free because no-one else uses it in the evenings. That is the definition of insanity. A \$3 billion hugely controversial and costly road, built using taxpayer funds, is exacerbating surface traffic instead of reducing it—which is what we were told was the purpose of the tunnel in the first place. It reminds me of the episode of *Yes Minister* when Jim Hacker is told that the most efficient public hospital in England is the one without any patients.

The Government's response to this deplorable situation is equally ridiculous. While being interviewed on Triple M by the Moonman, the transport Minister said, "Look, don't worry about these tolls. They are fine because commuters have the option of taking surface roads." Therefore, presumably, they are faced with an Adam Smithian choice. It is an absolute farce. Drivers on the M5 have been using that road for free for 20 years. Being pushed onto surface roads is now considered a choice by the Government. Alternatively, drivers can pay a \$6.95 each way toll. That is equivalent to \$3,000 a year if they use the road every day of their working life, with that amount not including toll fees on the Eastern Distributor or any other toll road they may use. The bottom line is that only an out-of-touch government would impose a \$3,000 annual toll on a family, and then tell them not to worry about it because it is "toll mania" and that at least commuters can use surface roads if they do not like using toll roads.

If frontbench Government members did not have drivers and government limousines, they would have never imposed these tolls on Sydney drivers—not in a million years. If they had to pay them, these tolls would not have been introduced. It is heartbreaking to hear stories from people in my electorate who live on these major arterial roads who are desperately trying to sell, move, renovate or leave their family homes to escape the noise and chaos that has been brought by the M5 and M8 toll increases. It is not too much of an exaggeration to claim that the inundation of trucks is destroying their wellbeing. Thousands of them have contacted my office, desperately hoping to see whether this Parliament can do anything about it. Unfortunately, the only response from the Government is that drivers can expect a 4 per cent increase—on a toll that many already cannot afford—each year for the next 20 years.

From my understanding of Treasury's scoreboard the last time I checked, inflation would be zero per cent or potentially 2 per cent after that over the forward estimates, but certainly not breaching 2 per cent over the next decade—and maybe even half that amount. Inflation will be at least less than half that amount. What possible justification does the Government have for lifting the toll by such an extreme rate every single year? Western Sydney has not received anything like the amount of heavy infrastructure investment from this Government compared to the north and the east of the State. That is just the truth. All the area has received is toll roads, and an inability to pay for them.

We need public transport, but the then transport Minister—now the Premier—made a deliberate decision to put desperately needed capital into toll road expansion, after which presumably the Government would privatise that same toll road company. Presumably, this was to plug a hole in the dramatically receding revenue lines after the privatisation of the electricity companies. It is a busted model. It was never going to work. Now we know who has been sent the bill—the families of western Sydney.

#### **SUTHERLAND HOSPITAL KIOSK COMMITTEE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (14:33:31):** Twenty-nine April 2020 was not only the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing at Kurnell and the meeting of two cultures; it was also the sixtieth anniversary of the Sutherland Hospital Kiosk Committee. The kiosk committee operates a wholly volunteered and self-managed kiosk at the Sutherland Hospital in Caringbah. The profits generated from the kiosk are used to purchase medical equipment for the hospital. This year alone the committee is looking at purchasing around \$200,000 of medical equipment, bringing its total purchases to around \$3.4 million. This is an incredible achievement and has benefited tens or hundreds of thousands of citizens in the Sutherland shire.

In recognition of the support that the kiosk committee receives from staff throughout the hospital, the kiosk committee decided to spread the funding of medical equipment across as many wards and departments within the hospital as possible. The committee aims to purchase equipment for units and wards right across the hospital. This year the committee is buying equipment such as an FM30 fetal monitor for the birthing unit, a bladder scanner for the Coinda department, a cardio strider for the cardiac rehabilitation unit and three cannulation chairs for the oncology day unit. These pieces of equipment contribute to the ongoing improvement of services at Sutherland Hospital.

Recently the health Minister, Brad Hazzard, visited Sutherland to announce the allocation of \$7 million to purchase a new MRI unit. This is on top of the previously announced \$81.5 million in funding for redevelopment of operating theatres and new endoscopy suites. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of quality hospital facilities. We are so fortunate in New South Wales to have dedicated nurses, doctors and hospital staff working across the State already. The assistance from the kiosk committee is so valuable and so gratefully received in maintaining high-quality and operational facilities. The kiosk committee provides the opportunity for shire locals to volunteer time and support for their local hospital. It has had a lasting impact on those it has reached and the wider community through various fundraisers and projects.

I speak not just on my own behalf but also on behalf of the member for Heathcote, who is in the chair this afternoon, and the member for Miranda, who is at the table this afternoon. I know how important Sutherland Hospital is to their communities and how grateful we all are for the volunteers who work in the kiosk committee. Pre COVID there were around 80 volunteers working in the committee. Of course, any committee requires hardworking officials and I acknowledge the committee's president, Warren Watkins, who has been involved with the committee for around 13 years; treasurer, Shirley Chirgwin, OAM, who has been a longstanding supporter of Sutherland Hospital generally and the committee in particular; and all the volunteers who have helped over the years.

Many are long-running volunteers—for example, we have seen over 35 years of service from Helen Kerr, who was acknowledged in the local paper a couple of years ago. It is unfortunate that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the committee has not been able to celebrate its sixtieth anniversary in the way its members had hoped. The committee has had to deal with COVID-19, which means many volunteers have missed their usual interaction with staff and fellow workers. It is a great achievement to be supporting our local community for 60 years. Sutherland Hospital is, of course, a community hospital. Its foundation was the result of community activity and community lobbying 60 years ago. That selfless spirit of donating and volunteering is still alive and kicking in the Sutherland Hospital Kiosk Committee. I thank all of the volunteers. I thank all of the officials. I look forward to their invaluable contribution for many years to come.

**ROD MCDONAGH****ANNALISE ROBERTSON**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (14:37:57):** I congratulate local surf lifesaving stalwart Rod McDonagh on a milestone. He has been re-elected for his twenty-third stint as president of the South West Rocks Surf Life Saving Club. Rod was elected at the club's annual general meeting in September, meaning he has been at the helm for almost a quarter of this proud club's existence. I am very familiar with Rod and the South West Rocks Surf Life Saving Club, and can vouch for its excellent committee. They are a well-respected team within the community and Rod has been a key factor in ensuring this support.

Talking about families, Rod lost his dad, Ray, in January 2019 after a short and vicious battle with cancer. Rod has taken on that sense of service from his father, and the history and their love of the surf lifesaving movement. But the really exciting thing about Rod is the committee that supports him and the team that gets behind him. Whilst he first joined Cape Hawke Surf Club at Forster in 1979, he then moved to South West Rocks for work in 1981 and joined the Rocks club and began his rise through the ranks, becoming an integral part of Surf Life Saving NSW. He was first elected in 1997 when the previous president stepped down and since then has held a few different roles on boards, including president of the Mid North Coast Branch.

Rod, like many—including me and my family—credits surf lifesaving as being an important part of his life throughout the decades. Rod remembers starting in the nippers when he was aged just six or seven and making his way through the cadets then the seniors. He also travelled overseas as an official and to compete—and, I think, to have fun. As with many community organisations, locals will know Rod's time as president of the club has not always been easy. It has been a lot of hard work and a lot of hours, but there have been many success stories. The club was one of the first in New South Wales to get a liquor licence, it held the country championships four years in a row—my family and I enjoyed each of those times and my kids participated; it was a great event—as well as State championships and Australian championships. For a small country club these are significant achievements that only come through really hard work.

I know Rod and the South West Rocks team were on beach patrol during the recent school holidays and like many clubs in the electorate and in New South Wales they are now gearing up for a busy summer ahead. Last season mid North Coast surf lifesaving volunteers dedicated 25,000 hours, performed 48 rescues and provided first aid to 188 people. With a COVID-19 environment presenting new challenges the main priority for the lifesavers at our beaches will remain ensuring the safety of the volunteers and everyone in the community. I acknowledge the work and the investment the Government has given to the drone program—lots of reports on local beaches of increased activity with some of our bigger species in the water. I mean sharks.

The work we have done with drones and the training we have done with young people to understand what they look like and how we can evacuate a beach is very important. In fact, I was on patrol three weekends ago. I also say that for WaterNSW, which wants me to do a water test. I said, "I've got my bronze medallion, which is still current." But anyway, I digress. The issue is that there is increased activity. We saw it ourselves and the inflatable rescue boat was out there exploring and making sure swimmers were safe. It is an area of concern and heightened activity—you only have to talk to a surfer or a surf club member to understand that.

I also acknowledge Macksville High School year 12 student Annalise Robertson. I congratulate Annalise on being awarded the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement. Annalise is an exceptional and motivated student who has a diverse range of talents and is highly deserving of this award. I know Macksville High School has a fantastic reputation on the mid North Coast and has had some excellent students who have gone to the top of their careers in Australia and even Japan and America. Annalise is highly deserving of this award. I know her teachers are very proud of her achievements—as she should be too.

I wish Annalise and all year 12 students the best in the upcoming HSC examinations. It has been a tough year for them but, as I say to my daughter who is also doing year 12, we have had the chance to spend more time with her—very special time. There probably have been fewer parties for them turning 18. I am not sad that she will not be going to school this week but I know she is, as are probably a lot of other students. But adversity can bring out the best in people. I advise them to take these opportunities, do well and be proud. They live in a wonderful country with great opportunities and they have their whole lives ahead of them to catch up on this terrible year.

**BEVERLEY PARK GOLF COURSE**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (14:43:02):** I draw to the attention of the House the concerning behaviour of Georges River Council in relation to impending litigation in the Land and Environment Court regarding the construction of the Beverley Park Golf Course fence. For several years members of the local

community in Beverley Park have been objecting to the construction of an imposing fence around the suburb's golf course, which they feel would impact significantly on the suburb's amenity. In spite of this Georges River Council provided the landowners' consent for the development to proceed and the community has been fighting the development application [DA] process ever since.

On 18 July 2019 the Georges River Council Local Planning Panel unanimously refused the development application, citing extensive shortcomings in the proposal including a failure to obtain landowners' consent for all lots affected by the works; a number of technical issues, with the application in breach of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation, including a failure to include a detailed site plan; a lack of relevant information being submitted with the application, such as there being no survey plan, no detailed assessment of the impact of the proposal on flora and fauna and no assessments of the visual or social impacts of the proposal; no consideration to the management of acid sulphate soils on the site; inconsistencies with the zoning objectives of the site being for public recreation; inconsistencies with Georges River Council's tree removal policies; and, finally, failure to establish that the proposal is in the public interest.

Despite this damning assessment the proponents have chosen to appeal the decision to the New South Wales Land and Environment Court, subjecting local ratepayers to further anxiety and expense. The matter was previously listed for an onsite conciliation conference on 7 April 2020. However, when COVID-19 hit the hearing date was vacated and the conciliation is now scheduled for 16 November 2020. Due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 the court is currently not allowing residents to attend or provide oral evidence at onsite hearings. The many residents who would like to attend and speak are concerned that their voices will not be adequately heard in the current proceedings. Given the history of Georges River Council's behaviour regarding the proposal they are concerned that the views of the community will not be advocated for without their presence.

The conduct of Georges River Council regarding this proposal has been questionable at best. The council appears to have initially provided the landowner with consent to the proposal without seeking a resolution of councillors, despite the controversial nature of the proposal. When local residents discovered that the existing area occupied by Beverley Park Golf Club extended several metres beyond the area it had leased, and as such the proposed fence location would be in a public road reserve, council officers recommended to the council that a lease be granted to the golf course for these road reserves. More than 100 residents attended the November 2019 meeting of Georges River Council to oppose this plan. The lease was unanimously rejected by the 13 councillors in attendance on the night. Given this kind of behaviour, residents are justifiably concerned that council officers seem intent on approving the fence, in spite of the ongoing community opposition that has been demonstrated again and again.

I call on Georges River Council to seek an adjournment of the conciliation conference until the current COVID-19 restrictions ease to the point where residents are able to once again provide oral evidence to the court at an onsite hearing. This matter has been causing stress and anxiety to the residents of Beverley Park for a number of years. At this last hurdle they deserve to have the best possible opportunity for their voices to be heard. Georges River Council is there to represent local residents and ratepayers in the area. It needs to make the best efforts it can to support its community and allow them to present their opinions in these proceedings, particularly given the past conduct of the council.

#### TRIBUTE TO CARROL HOJEL

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (14:47:40):** I pay tribute to the life of Carrol Hojel, who sadly passed away on 4 October 2020, and to offer my sincere condolences to her husband, John, her children, Anthony, Bradley and Melinda, her mother, Dulcie, her family and friends. I attended Carrol's funeral this week and was comforted to know how loved and respected Carrol was as a daughter, mother, grandmother and friend. She would have been so proud of the way her grandchildren recalled fond memories of their happy times with Nanna. I got to know Carrol through my association with her husband, John Hojel, superintendent of The Hills NSW Rural Fire Service. In my role as chair of the Bushfire Management Committee I have worked with John for the past 12 years. Carrol would be by his side at events and activities within the RFS. They were married for 53 years.

Carrol dedicated many years to volunteering for the local RFS. The dedication and quality of her service to the RFS is recognised by the many distinguished awards she received, which included a life membership of the communications brigade, as well as the National Medal and the RFS medal for over 25 years of service. Carrol's role within the communications brigade at the RFS was of great importance and conducted very diligently. She ran the after-hours communications with her husband, John, and was promoted in no time to communications captain. Carrol's volunteering also extended beyond the RFS and she was involved in her community in many ways. One example was her assistance with the Galston High School debutante ball, which she put much effort into even the year after her daughter, Melinda's, debut. Carrol thought she could improve on the previous year's effort.

Aside from her volunteering, Carrol had a busy working life and a successful career. She was a TAA hostess. She worked in the library of Patrician Brothers' College, Blacktown, and then would come home to the family mushroom farm and often work in freezing cold conditions until the early hours of the morning. Carrol gained a position as the personal assistant for the head librarian at Windsor Library. Her talent was quickly recognised by Windsor Council's general manager who employed her as his personal assistant. Her work ethic and love of learning never wavered. She taught herself shorthand and had a real interest in reading, and watching documentaries and Disney programs. Carrol would often read to her children and grandchildren, and she was famous for helping out with school projects that the children received top marks for.

I recall when John and I talked about Carrol's failing health and the need for her to receive full-time care in a nursing home. John knew he would miss her terribly, but I think he felt some comfort when I reassured him that the nursing home at Quakers Hill, where Carrol was going, was an excellent facility. I could speak firsthand, because I had a close family member who was well cared for at the same nursing home. That conversation was seven years ago and this week John made a point of mentioning that members of the family would continually visit Carrol throughout those entire seven years. Her funeral was truly a recollection of a woman who made such a contribution to those dearest to her; to John as a loving wife and constant companion, and to her children and grandchildren who were her greatest joy. Carrol dedicated her life to her family and her community. The skills she taught and the wisdom she passed on to her children will ensure that her amazing qualities continue through them. She was highly respected and admired in the community, and she led by example. She will be greatly missed. My thoughts are with John, and all her family and friends.

### **BATHURST ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (14:51:46):** I bring to the attention of the House a number of projects in my electorate that are all about creating jobs locally. First is the old Wallerawang Power Station. For a number of years we have talked about how to revitalise the old power station site, bring it back to life and create jobs in the local community. New South Wales Treasury, Bettergrow, Energy Australia and Borg have been working very closely over the past couple of years and are able to announce that an industrial park will be created for the future. The old power station will be reused for other purposes. Bettergrow and Borg have come together on this project. They already have expertise running businesses across the State and will generate further employment in the local area.

I congratulate Energy Australia on not walking away from the site. Energy Australia always remained committed to ensure it would find somebody suitable to rehabilitate the site. It has stayed there and done that, which is important. When we talk about the decommissioning and rehabilitation work, we are talking around 60 jobs on the old power plant site over the next couple of years. Beyond that there could be hundreds and hundreds of jobs created within the Lithgow community. This is important because it means that the 450-hectare site will be able to be utilised. It has a rail siding and high-voltage electricity connection. With its location in Lithgow there are a lot of opportunities for the future.

Another project completed is the Chifley Road upgrade on the Bells Line of Road. A new rail bridge has been constructed over the Clarence on the Bells Line of Road. This has created around 47 jobs. This now means that we have the lanes approaching the rail bridge, making it safer. We have got the rail bridge that is now being constructed. But it also means that a lot of the resources and material have been sourced within the local area. Not only were 47 jobs created to work on that project on site, but also there were flow-on benefits to the wider community. The project was a two-year program. The existing bridge, which was built in 1943, has been replaced. Certainly that will make for a smoother, safer and more reliable journey for motorists who will be using this section of road in the future. This is part of our \$95 million Great Western Highway improvement package. It is one of a number of projects and packages that we have going on at the moment for the Great Western Highway which are making significant improvements for visitors and locals alike.

Tyers Park Racecourse in Bathurst is part of a stimulus package that has been announced by the Government. Last week I was fortunate to have racing Minister Kevin Anderson in my electorate. We were able to announce \$3.7 million that will go towards the Bathurst thoroughbred racetrack, which will make a number of improvements. While we are talking about grassroots racing, a lot of horses that race in metropolitan areas need to come from the country. That funding means that more stables will be located at Tyers Park in Bathurst. It also means that the track will be further improved. It will be widened by about three metres, with stables and stalls to be constructed. It is a worthy investment that will improve not only racing in the local area, but also activity within the local economy. It will create 40 jobs with the work that is being undertaken. I thank the Minister; the chairman of Racing NSW, Russell Balding, who was there; Michelle Tarpenning; and the board of directors of Tyers Park.

In relation to health, there is the great news that Bathurst will be getting an MRI machine for the Bathurst Hospital. It is important during a time of COVID that the Government continues with its investment in health

facilities. An MRI machine and a \$4 million fit-out will make a big difference. It will mean patients will not have to travel outside the area. This is on top of the MRI work that is happening in Lithgow at the moment.

### WILLOW GROVE HERITAGE BUILDING

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (14:57:04):** Today I discuss a matter of great concern to people in my electorate and the wider area, and that is this Government's proposal to demolish Willow Grove in Parramatta, pull it apart brick by brick and relocate it to the Cumberland Hospital precinct in north Parramatta. This is not at all an appropriate way to deal with a very significant heritage building. It does not comply with any heritage guidelines whatsoever. It is not relocating history; it is erasing it. For a number of years many people in my electorate have raised this issue with me. Surprisingly, because it is not in my electorate—it is in the adjoining electorate—it is an issue of great concern to people in my electorate. They are very passionate about the wonderful history on display in Parramatta and the huge number of heritage buildings there, and they are very proud of it.

This includes people from all walks of life and all backgrounds. Whether they were born in Australia or overseas, people feel very strongly that Parramatta is a unique place with wonderful heritage that needs to be looked after. There are very strong and good reasons why Willow Grove should not be dismantled and reassembled. It is not like when someone buys a weatherboard house: They just chop it off the piers, put it on the back of a truck and drive it off somewhere else. This is an important building in an important site, and its connection to that site cannot be understated. All heritage protections in this country, in every single jurisdiction, reference the Burra Charter. That is how heritage protections in this country were developed. Article 9.1 of the Burra Charter states:

- 9.1 The physical location of a *place* is part of its *cultural significance*. A building, work or other element of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival.

Options that allow the retention at the place should always be fully investigated beforehand. We have not had that investigation. What we have had is a flawed environmental impact statement [EIS], which is now outdated, for a building that will no longer be built. The Powerhouse Museum is not being moved from Ultimo and the EIS is for a building that has significant flooding constraints and needs to be redesigned. The redesign should be done in a way that retains Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace in their current location. The idea of relocating Willow Grove to the middle of the psychiatric hospital facility in north Parramatta is ridiculous. There has never been a private maternity hospital located in the middle of that psychiatric hospital. The hospital itself has huge heritage significance.

The Government cannot just rewrite history by moving buildings around. The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union has raised very valid questions about the costing of \$10 million to pull the building apart and put it back together again. It is a rendered Victorian brick building. It is not easy to pull apart and reassemble. But once you do, you have not got Willow Grove; you have got a pile of heritage building materials. It is a completely invalid way of retaining the history of that site. Parramatta has a fascinating and unique history relating to colonial women that has not been properly acknowledged. The treatment of Willow Grove is yet another example of how that history has not been given the recognition that it deserves. Elizabeth Farm is the oldest European building in Australia. It is located in Rosehill, a very short walk from the centre of Parramatta.

The Female Orphan School was established in 1818, along with the Female Factory, which housed female convicts. Thousands and thousands of Australians are descended from the women who were incarcerated in that building. The Parramatta Girls Home is incredibly significant, including for Aboriginal women. It is a site of significance to the history of the stolen generations. On that note, I add a comment from the Dharug Strategic Management Group about its views on the relocation of Willow Grove. The group is very annoyed that it has not been properly consulted throughout this process as the traditional owners. They have referred to it as a place which, unlike most colonial heritage buildings in Parramatta, holds no history of colonial violence, incarceration or denial of Dharug people and their neighbours. Rather, Willow Grove reflects a shared history of care and nurture.

### TRIBUTE TO KEITH IAN GRAY

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (15:02:19):** With a heavy heart I inform the House of the passing of a valued citizen of the Baulkham Hills electorate, Mr Keith Ian Gray. I dedicate these comments not only to the memory of Keith but also to those who were inspired by his warmth, compassion and community service. Keith Grey was born on 5 January 1952 in Queensland where he excelled in school and sport. Soon after leaving school Keith joined the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, where he showed tremendous promise. At the tender age of 19, Keith was sent to Honiara in the Solomon Islands on a two-year secondment to help educate the locals on banking practice and operations. It should be noted that

Keith was the youngest employee ever selected for an overseas posting. He returned to Sydney and transferred to Orange. After being home for less than a year, he was seconded again—this time to Papua New Guinea for two years. Keith loved his job. However, he also loved the races and decided he would try his luck as a bookmaker in the Philippines where success soon followed and he met his lifelong partner, Gloria.

Keith had many issues over many years with diabetes and was constantly having treatment for issues with his legs. One day in 2003, while in the Philippines with Gloria and their children Rae Lee, KC and Tom, Keith lay down and found he could not get back up. He was rushed to hospital. Sadly, he was misdiagnosed on several occasions. After he talked to his good mate Peter Bellemy, Peter realised it was far more serious and arranged for Keith to be rushed back to Australia. An ambulance waiting at the airport rushed him to hospital where he discovered he had contracted golden staph in one of his vertebrae. Keith never walked again.

With his family still in the Philippines, arrangements were made for Gloria and the children to come back to Australia where he called Berala home for a short while, and then displayed good sense by moving to the electorate of Baulkham Hills in 2006. Soon after that Keith and Gloria arranged for their children to join Hills District Little Athletics Club. It is through that club that I got to know Keith about a decade ago. He was always present at major events and his significant contribution to that club will never be underestimated. Keith never let the wheelchair to which he was confined control his life, and after forming a close friendship with the club's president he was soon involved in the running of the club and the straight track timing gates, not just at club competitions but also as a volunteer at zone and region level, travelling out to Blacktown to officiate.

Keith assisted the club in several ways, from keeping an eye on A. H. Whaling Reserve to providing words of encouragement to the athletes on their performance and ways to improve. Keith was subsequently awarded the President's Award for outstanding contribution to the club in 2011. Sadly, at only 68 years of age Keith passed away on Sunday night after a long battle with cancer. Those who knew Keith will remember how he impacted every person around him with kindness, compassion and warmth. His disability never got in his way and he was an inspiration not only to those who had similar disabilities but also to those of us who got to know the challenges that he faced. The world is a little less bright without Keith. He will be greatly missed. I extend my deepest condolences to his family and friends. I will attend his funeral at St Michael's in Baulkham Hill tomorrow.

#### CESSNOCK ELECTORATE

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (15:06:05):** On behalf of my community, post the Federal budget and prior to the State budget, which is about to be released, I want to talk about what is really needed in the electorate of Cessnock that I have the great privilege to represent. I know there has been much fanfare, ribbon cutting, ceremony, hard hats and fluoro vests about basic infrastructure that I say is important, but sometimes it is less important. I represent a community that traditionally consists of hardworking, low-educated people who make up an unskilled workforce. They are blue collar workers in the greatest tradition and greater sense. I represent a collection of villages, every single one of which was founded on coal. The family traditions, the relationships and rivalries that have developed across those communities have certainly stood the test of time. Many of those villages are more than 150 years old now. The people who live there still have the basic fundamental values of hard work, a decent living, a fair go and family.

Unfortunately, in 2006, 2011, 2016 the electorate of Cessnock statistically found itself in the position of being the lowest-educated community or electorate in New South Wales. Cessnock has the lowest number of people who take on studies after leaving school, the highest number of people who leave school at year 10 or before, the lowest number of people who complete year 12 and the lowest number of people who move on to a university education. The importance and significance of those facts are very much in our face as we move into the future. We have been told for the past decade or more that in the future 50 per cent of jobs and occupations will require a year 12 qualification and post-school education qualifications—tertiary, diploma, certificates, et cetera.

Sadly and unfortunately, there is a massive gap in the ability of my community to face that future because they just do not have that skillset or that ongoing relationship with education. My message to the Prime Minister of Australia, the Treasurer and this State's Premier and Treasurer is that while they may make much fanfare about a road, tunnel or bridge that is being built, which will cost them money from the very day it is opened, and more and more money each and every year, I need them to invest in people. I need them to invest in the education of the people of Cessnock right across the electorate. I need them to invest in struggling families that, with the massive stresses of finances, often fail to stay together. I need them to invest in re-engaging people with their education.

I need them to invest in the mental health of my community—their health and wellbeing, exercise, diet and risk factors that prevent disease such as diabetes. That is the investment I need. I do not need them to invest billions and billions of dollars in some vanity project that will make a difference to someone who already has

every opportunity in life. I need them to invest in people across New South Wales, particularly in regional areas and in electorates like Cessnock. As we head towards the handing down of the New South Wales State budget, I implore the Treasurer of this State to realise that putting people first will ultimately have a multiplier effect on every dollar he invests.

### **CAMDEN ELECTORATE EDUCATION AWARDS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (15:11:00):** The education Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence showcase the exceptional work that occurs every day across New South Wales public education by all aspects of the school community. I was extremely proud to see the schools within the Camden electorate perform so well at this year's awards. It truly is a testament to the hard work and resilience of these students, teachers, parents and carers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. I inform the House of the successful recipients of these awards within the Camden community.

The Minister's Award for Student Excellence this year went to two students from Elderslie High School. Cassandra McMurdo was one of these recipients. Cassandra has been described as an exceptional student who has demonstrated a strong level of academic talent as well as the admirable qualities of determination and commitment. These qualities have translated into strong leadership potential for Cassandra. As a school captain and prefect she leads by example, and has earned the respect of the student body and staff. She is described as an excellent orator, given her commitments to debating, public speaking and the performing arts. I congratulate her on what is a well-deserved recognition for her student excellence.

Another student recognised for his excellence is Lachlan Taylor, also from Elderslie High School. He has been described as a student who demonstrates academic excellence, advocacy for others and an extensive commitment to leadership. His study habits are exemplary and have translated to first place rankings in five of his HSC subjects. His commitment to leadership can be seen in the initiative he has taken as school captain and his outstanding public speaking abilities. Known for engaging all members of the school community as both a leader and exemplary student, Lachlan epitomises the values of public education. He is an excellent role model for his school community and well deserving of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement.

The Minister's Award also recognises Excellence in Teaching. I was pleased that the Head of Science at Elderslie High School, Rebecca Ferris, was recognised in this award category. Rebecca Ferris is an outstanding head teacher who has made an exceptional difference to whole school and faculty practices. Through her work on Elderslie High School's Project Innovate program, she has led science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] innovation via the integration of a range of highly engaging resources to teach and to learn. She has led this through CrossKnowledge Learning, which steps well outside her role in the science faculty. The Community Science Fair that she is responsible for is a well-regarded event that allows partner primary schools to work with the students of Elderslie High School to showcase scientific understanding. For her leadership and for going above and beyond in her role and in all that she does for the school community, Rebecca is an excellent recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

The Secretary's Award for Excellent Service is another category in which the Camden school community has achieved a lot of success. Elderslie High School business manager Denise Russell is a very deserving recipient of this award, as evidenced by the outstanding work ethic she demonstrates in improving the learning and teaching conditions for students and staff at the school. Another recipient in this category was Jessica Yell, who is a counsellor at Oran Park Public School. Jessica Yell was a prime candidate for this recognition and I am glad to see it awarded to her. She demonstrates great leadership to her school community in her support of others, as well as her capacity to understand and exemplify Department of Education policy and procedures.

Elderslie Public School parent Tracey Petruszenko won the award for Public School Parent of the Year and the school's student leadership ministries won the Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative. Tracey is a parent at Elderslie Public School who goes above and beyond to support the school as both a working mum and the president of the school P&C. She is incredibly active in her local community and the partnership she has formed has benefited everyone in the school community. I again congratulate all the recipients of the 2020 NSW Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence.

### **SOUTH WEST SYDNEY LEGAL CENTRE**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (15:16:07):** I report to the House concerns raised with me by the South West Sydney Legal Centre. The centre acts for and assists many constituents in the electorate of Liverpool. The centre itself is certainly based within the electorate of Liverpool—it is upstairs from my electorate office in the Liverpool CBD. The centre is concerned that recent Victims Services changes have created greater barriers to access for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable among their clients, most especially those who are victims of domestic, family and sexual violence. The changes were implemented in July this year. The centre readily



concedes that for those victim applicants who can easily meet the new procedural changes there may be a faster, smoother process. However, as the centre has written to me:

The clients we support and who live in your electorate are among the most disadvantaged. The new procedures create greater barriers to access for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable clients, resulting in the very scheme designed to support these clients serving to create greater disadvantage and vulnerability.

If this is the result of the changes, it is indeed perverse. An added problem is that, in relation to these clients, the recent change increases the burden for community legal centres [CLCs] such as South West Sydney Legal Centre without any increase in resources. Granted that CLCs currently operate, at best, on the smell of an oily rag, that is a particularly unfortunate consequence. South West Sydney Legal Centre has raised with me the details of the changes and how they impact upon my constituents. There is now a mandatory requirement for government-issued identification documents, including for applications that are for counselling only. This changes the previous requirement, which was for such photo ID to be lodged at the time of lodging an application for an immediate needs support package [INSP]. This has now been extended to all applications, not just those for INSPs, and applications will not be accepted for processing without those photo ID documents. As the centre states:

The introduction of ID documents at the time of lodgement as a mandatory requirement is unreasonably prohibitive and unnecessary.

The reality for some of the centre's clients is that meeting this requirement is just not practically possible. To quote the centre:

Counselling support is a basic support that is available to all victims of violence without need for supporting evidence and without time limits. Our vulnerable victim-survivor clients require urgent access to counselling for their recovery, and without counselling they face procedural barriers to accessing other victims support due to the recent changes. Many of our clients do not have access to technology and, where they do, they often present to us in the midst of chaos—living in refuges with young children, trying to get children to and from school, opening new bank accounts, engaging with a number of different service providers for themselves and for their children. Requiring these victims to send their identification documents to Victims Services, either directly or through community and/or legal service providers, is an unnecessary and unreasonable barrier to accessing this basic support.

As the CLC points out, a client can undergo an intake process with the Victims Services approved counsellor and ID verified at that stage. There is no substantive benefit in requiring the ID earlier. The mandatory notification for ID at the time of lodgement also applies to applications for financial support. The centre makes the point that for all financial support apart from INSP, applicants are required to complete and submit an acceptance of payment form and a direct credit authority. The centre argues, logically, that ID can be provided at that stage. As it explained to me:

While the timing of the requirement may appear to be an insignificant matter, when vulnerable clients seeking support must overcome significant barriers (such as safety, impact of trauma, literacy and access to information and advice) to arrive at the point of making an application in the first place, the requirement at the time of lodgement is yet another barrier. An applicant's capacity to lodge identification documents at the time of lodgement could make the difference between an application within or outside the substantive time limits for accessing support.

There is also a requirement for applicants to collect evidence of injury. There has been substantial discussion with Government and advocacy by CLCs about this issue. The reason proffered for this change is to improve the response time for recognition payments and financial assistance for economic loss. As the centre states, there is obviously a cohort of applicants who can comply with this requirement and have always been able to. However, there is a problem for other groups—for others who are arguably most in need of support. As the centre states:

... the recent changes create a significant barrier for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable—and these are our clients. Many of these clients have never reported the violence or injuries sustained from the violence due to fear, shame, or cultural expectations.

There are also issues about the distinction between the documentary requirement for the INSP and recognition payments. The changes seem to ignore the reality of the victims who are applicants in this scheme. The centre's clients are disadvantaged in a plethora of ways. These clients include single parents seeking safety, victims undergoing acute financial hardship, applicants from a culturally and linguistically diverse background requiring interpreters and those, whether or not from CALD background, who are digitally illiterate and without knowledge of or access to technology.

From a Sydney CBD office tower, the task of obtaining a blank certificate of injury form and trying to get it completed and returned to be submitted might seem simple, but it is far more complex in the real world. Many applicants will not be able to do this themselves. That means no application, or work done without funding by CLCs that are already overwhelmed and underfunded. I join the CLC in asking the Government to reconsider these changes.

### MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE PROJECTS

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:21:12):** I inform the House of a number of projects in the Myall Lakes electorate. Of course, Myall Lakes is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. It was great to go around and meet with the groups in that wonderful electorate. I was able to examine some of

the projects that are underway, have received grants or are proposed future projects. Last week I had the pleasure of hosting the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, and member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson. It was great to be at the Manning Valley Race Club at Taree Racecourse on Bushland Drive to announce \$1.2 million for new race day stalls and tie-ups. That is something the club has needed for a long time. There is a significant number of new race day stalls, so it will employ about 21 people to construct them and demolish the old ones. We have a first class course—one of six regional training and race tracks—with great public facilities. But out the back where the horses are—the stars of the show—the race day stalls were just not up to standard. It was great to be able to make that announcement.

We also visited the Manning Base Hospital, which has two new patient experience officers, Lynn Ellis and Alex Thomson-Moore. It was great to meet with those young ladies. The feedback we are getting about having these concierge information and communications people at the front of the hospital is that it is really improving services. A lot of problems are often caused by a lack of communication, and those two women are filling the gap. We were also at the hospital to open the completion of the \$40 million stage one upgrade. The first part included a new renal analysis unit, a new oncology unit and car parking. Now the second part of it is new medical imaging, with a new CAT scan and MRI machine, as well as other equipment that we have never had before, such as bone density scanners and a new top-of-the-range ultrasound. It is fantastic to see those services coming to the hospital.

We announced \$106,000 for a new pathway at Old Bar, from Old Bar Road down to Old Bar Public School. The pathway is about safety and convenience for students at the school and also for the elderly who live in the area. We also went over to the Taree Showground, where I visited the tea rooms. The new kitchen, which received a \$265,000 grant, is almost finished and the second stage of the new cattle pavilion is underway. When completed, it will be a huge undercover area available not only as a cattle pavilion but also for undercover shows and the like. I also went to the Manning Valley Historical Society's museum in Wingham to see its costume room and maintenance area that resulted from a State Government grant of \$45,000. It was pleasing to see the progress that has been made there and to see the latest exhibits of costumes and historical garments.

I also met with the new business group, Team Taree, that has begun working with the chamber of commerce and the council to assist with post-COVID recovery. The team has some really great ideas about ways in which to help business and the community in the post-COVID phase. I also met the Taree PCYC that has submitted an application to fund a bouldering wall. I noticed a number of upgrades of the building and its surrounds that had been made possible through grants of the State Government. I also visited the Manning River District Tennis Association's clubhouse in Taree. The tennis club is looking for \$3,500 to improve the surface of the courts, which are well past their use-by date and which, before long, will require total renewal.

I visited the Wallamba District Football Club in Nabiac that has built new amenities including a storage room as a result of receiving a grant of \$393,000. The club now requires \$12,000 to fit out the kitchen. It would be great if the State Government could provide the funding. I visited the headquarters of a number of other groups such as soccer, swimming and other clubs to inspect the facilities they now have and to ascertain future funding requirements for facility upgrades. For the past couple of weeks, I have been inspecting facilities in community centres of my electorate.

### STATE ECONOMY

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (15:26:19):** Abraham Lincoln, who is the greatest United States president of all time, once said:

You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

No words are ever more true than when it comes to the Liberal Party, its economic philosophy and its political spin when compared to the facts. When it comes to public economics and finances, people should not listen to what the Liberals say. They should look at what they actually do.

Taxpayers have been sold economic spin—a brazen untruth—that is not true and has never been true. Generations of Australians have been told and sold a furphy. At both Federal and State levels the Liberal Party is guilty of perpetuating the greatest economic myth of all time. The Liberals would have us believe that they are better economic managers of the public purse. They continually shout their economic war cry of cutting debt and deficit disaster. Debt and deficits were evidence of economic incompetence and mismanagement. Well, well, well, how the economic mighty have fallen, based on their own measurement.

In all reality, the Liberal economic mantra is just a cheap myth. The best way to expose a myth is to compare it to the facts because the facts never change. The fact is the Liberal Federal Government is responsible for the biggest post-war deficit this country has ever seen or ever will see—a budget deficit of \$213.7 billion, which is the largest in our history. Total spending as a share of gross domestic product remains 2 percentage points higher than revenue out to 2030-31 or borrowing \$40 billion annually. The fact is that national gross debt will

reach a trillion dollars next financial year and the fact is this debt will grow to \$1.7 trillion by 2031. I repeat: \$1.7 trillion. My argument is not about the validity of expansionary fiscal policy when it is required to sustain and support our economy because of unforeseen exogenous shocks. My argument is about double standards and economic fallacies. The facts shed light on the hypocrisy and deliberate mistruths of the Liberal Party and its economic mantra.

In dealing with the 2008 global financial crisis, gross debt under Labor was approximately \$60 billion and 12 per cent of GDP. Labor economic policy, delivered through expansionary fiscal stimulus, saved jobs, provided confidence to the market and grew our economy. But what did we hear from the Liberals? "Debt and deficit disaster", they yelled. "Wasting taxpayer money", they cried. So what do they call a national gross debt that is 30 times higher at \$1.7 trillion and 55 per cent of GDP? I call it Liberal Party economic hypocrisy and economic facts catching up with fiction. Now let me look at the facts in New South Wales. The fact is that the Treasurer will unveil a New South Wales budget next month. The fact is the budget has a huge deficit owing to an expected downturn of \$3.4 billion in GST revenue. Only last year, the Treasurer stood in this Chamber and proclaimed that enduring wealth for the State was based on negative net debt and growing net worth.

We all know that selling public assets on the cheap is what the Liberals do best. They spin it as intelligent economic thinking but in fact is really just a dumb deal at taxpayers' expense that weakens the public's financial asset base. The Treasurer failed to mention that privatisation means net debt will always be higher than if assets remain publicly owned. Not long ago the Liberals' chant was always "smaller government". The Treasurer said, "Reducing wages and raising taxes should be levers of last resort—not default options of first opportunity". And yet one year later, that is exactly what the Liberals have done. They have gone after the wages of our frontline workers because somehow an increase in wages and spending makes no positive economic contribution. Nurses, teachers, police officers, firefighters and the public transport workforce are all caught up in the hypocritical crossfire of the Liberal Government.

But some were exempt. The CEO of Infrastructure NSW got a \$65,000 pay rise. Three executives got a \$30,000 bump. And let us not forget the icare executives and their multimillion-dollar salary bill and the \$300,000 hiring cost of a US Republican operative working in the Treasurer's office—making the Treasurer's office big spenders again. This State's Liberal Treasurer is predictable. His budget next month will adopt the same trickle-down economics. The Liberal economic philosophy is a sham. The Liberals have been exposed as economic snowflakes who disappear when the light of transparency and facts is shone. It is not about smaller government. It is about effective government. But let me finish with Churchill's words:

The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.

And in the end, with the Liberal \$1.7 trillion debt, "there it is".

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (15:31:45):** Today we mark International Day of Rural Women. It is a time when we look to the millions of women around the world who live in rural, regional and remote communities and who overcome the adversities they face every day to help others thrive. It is also a fantastic opportunity to celebrate some of the amazing women who call the Cootamundra electorate home. I am constantly struck by the passion, resourcefulness, innovation and resilience of the women of the communities I represent: their ability to overcome adversity, the way they step up in times of crisis, and the way they help those in need.

Sue Gordon from Young was recognised in the 2019 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Sue has dedicated years to volunteering in the community, particularly in early childhood education and programs supporting families. Sue was a counsellor with the Nursing Mothers' Association for 10 years, has been a leader in establishing local preschools and childcare centres and on top of that has served on the New South Wales Government advisory committee for country childhood multipurpose services. She has also held executive positions with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the South West Slopes Sheep Breeders association and Young Rotary. Somehow she has also found time to serve as a director for the Young Rural Lands Protection Board.

In the south of my electorate, the Narrandera Shire Council recently farewelled one of its councillors, Tammy Galvin. Tammy is just starting out in her career of community service and is working to improve the connections between rural women. She is a founder of the Women of Western Riverina Networking group, helping to connect women across the region. She is the New South Wales runner-up in the 2020 AgriFutures Rural Women's Award with the idea of creating the Riverina Women's Connect Network and has passionately served on the Narrandera Shire Council for four years. I hope more women follow her example and stand for office at next year's local government elections.

I am always astounded when people can turn their personal loss and grief into a tidal wave of energy to help others and in Cowra there is no greater embodiment of this than Kaye Chapman. Kaye founded the Cowra Community Chest [CCC] in 2003, which helps people in the community going through illness and injury. The CCC provides financial aid and assists with expenses such as treatment, transport, accommodation, specialist fees and equipment. The CCC has raised more than half a million dollars over the past 17 years and has aided more than 250 families in the Cowra community. This is a huge achievement on its own, but Kaye has also volunteered in a grief support role with Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre for 16 years and manages the Cowra Community Markets, the proceeds of which help fund the work of the CCC. Earlier this year, Kaye Chapman was named Local Woman of the Year. It would be difficult to find a more worthy recipient.

The young women of the Cootamundra electorate are already stepping up to become driving forces in their communities, fighting for change and a fair go for the regions they love. In the past 12 months farmer Joanna Treasure was awarded the Outstanding Young Employee Award at the 2020 Cowra Business Awards, appointed a member of the steering committee for UNICEF Australia's NSW Youth Summit on Living with Drought and selected for the National Farmers Federation 2030 Leaders Program—and she is only 23 years old. Imagine the contribution she is yet to make to her community. Times of crisis often bring out the best in people; to use a cliché, diamonds are formed under pressure. I have had the honour of witnessing this first hand with the incredible response of the communities impacted and on the edges of the Dunns Road Fire just nine months ago.

Women like Sue Houstain, who rallied her community to become an army of volunteers, making and distributing thousands of meals and snack packs to fires on the front line of the Dunns Road Fire. With the coordination skills of a sergeant major, Sue turned the goodwill of many into tangible support for those who needed it most, including families evacuating their homes. These are just a few of the women from my electorate and the surrounding communities who put others first, who go above and beyond and who love the regions in which they live. They are the backbone of our communities and today, as we should every day, we say thank you for all that you do for us. Happy International Rural Women's Day.

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES OPEN GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans) (15:37:02):** As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that we look at holistic and innovative ways to support local business. In August 2020 it was announced that the New South Wales Open Golf Championship would have a new home for the next two years at Concord Golf Club, in the heart of my electorate in Sydney's inner west. The esteemed golf tournament will be played at Concord next year. Concord Golf Club has a proud history and has hosted the New South Wales Open 10 times in its 90 years. The last time it was played in Concord was in 1988 when an Aussie won the championship. His name was Greg Norman and, as we know, he went on to become very successful, winning 91 professional tournaments, including two British Open Championships and 20 on the PGA tour.

Some of Australia's greatest golfers have tasted victory at Concord, including Greg Norman who lifted the Kel Nagle Cup three times during the time the tournament was played there. I am confident we will see another star of the future lift the trophy at the Concord Golf Club very soon and I hope this tournament inspires a whole new generation of avid golfers to go out and learn golf, be active and have fun. Golf is a favourite pastime for many and hopefully this tournament will encourage female participation in the sport, as it is a great way to keep fit. Most importantly, delivering this event in a COVID-safe manner helps the local economy in my electorate. Players, spectators and visitors to the Open will need accommodation, places to eat and even to pick up a few knick-knacks here and there, just to name a few examples. The flow-on effects of the tournament will ensure a boost for the local economy and help inject some much-needed support for small businesses and local jobs. All of this while putting Concord back on the worldwide map and encouraging others to come to the electorate to experience the facilities at the golf club, as well as all that Concord has to offer.

Concord is a unique place with a buzzing hub of activity on Majors Bay Road and has some of the best cafes and restaurants in the inner west. I attended the announcement for the tournament at Concord Golf Club with the Deputy Premier, Mr John Barilaro. At the announcement, the Deputy Premier and I discussed the importance of involving regional New South Wales in the tournament and this competition will do exactly that. Players will compete in regional qualifying events to qualify for the New South Wales Open. This is exciting because the tournament will also support regional tourism, bringing much-needed funds into those economies as they deal with the impacts of drought, bushfires and COVID-19. In this era of technology, it is important that we encourage children to lead active and healthy lifestyles. A way of doing so is to encourage and inspire children to try new sports and to have fun. In my electorate of Drummoyne, we are blessed with some of the strongest local sporting clubs that have produced some very famous sportspeople.

Concord Oval is the home and training ground for the Wests Tigers. Drummoyne Oval at the eastern side of my electorate has great facilities for cricket and plays host to the Governor General's Test and women's cricket

matches. Drummoyne is also home to the water polo team, who have had many successes and the sport of water polo is growing in popularity. I have also seen AFL increase participation for both boys and girls in the area. My electorate has a remarkable reputation for offering a variety of sports for local children and families including soccer, dancing, swimming, tennis, baseball and the list goes on and on. It is now great to see golf being put on the map too. I am excited for the tournament to begin in March 2021. I am sure the suburb of Concord will play a marvellous host to our guests and do our State proud. I may be biased but I am predicting that the 2021 New South Wales Open will be the best tournament yet.

### CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:41:18):** Responsible growth, safe and supported communities and an independent voice—this was the vision for our community that I took to the electorate in 2019. With a target population for Wagga Wagga of 100,000 by 2038 and with the devastation of bushfires, drought and COVID affecting our region, never has this vision been more important. A key element of this vision is university education. It provides growth through jobs, research and infrastructure; it supports our communities with education and training; it underpins independent and critical thinking and analysis. Central to this vision is Charles Sturt University. The Charles Sturt University Act states that an object and function of the university is:

... the provision of facilities for education and research of university standard, having particular regard to the needs and aspirations of the residents of western and south-western NSW.

However, there is a question in our community: Has the university wandered from its purpose for regional New South Wales? Once a source of regional pride, there is now concern the university has become just another second tier corporate education provider. Why the concern? With the pandemic and loss of enrolments, the university has implemented a sustainable futures cost-cutting program which will result in job losses and the closure or consolidation of courses to address an underlying deficit of \$16 million which has blown out to more than \$49 million with the pandemic.

If this was not enough to cause concern, in its submission to the New South Wales upper House inquiry into the future development of the New South Wales tertiary education sector, the university raised the possibility of the Charles Sturt University Act being amended to "remove any obligation to maintain a certain number of campuses, or to have them in certain locations" arguing, as I read it, that a more flexible approach may assist universities with issues of financial risk. No wonder there are concerns about the future of regional campuses. In a letter to *The Daily Advertiser* newspaper in Wagga Wagga, Dr Henry Gardiner, a companion of the university, wrote that while he:

... has no problem with an institution such as CSU continually reviewing its campus offerings ... the suggestion that the NSW Government change the Act to allow campuses to be removed from their present locations should ring very loud alarm bells indeed.

The same newspaper, on 20 August, reported on the efforts by the Friends of CSU organisation to have Wagga Wagga representation added to the university's council. Trish Gray and Doug Hill, founding members of the friends group, have spoken with me about this. Trish Gray has said:

We need an unbiased opinion who will share what is happening in the city with the council. Only someone who is living here can know what the city needs. We just need more representation from this part of the world.

Now, there is good news: The university has acknowledged community engagement in recent planning exercises and I thank the staff who have worked diligently to improve this. I am pleased that the university has agreed to meet regularly with me, the mayor of Wagga Wagga and representatives of the Federal member's office so that all levels can work with the university to ensure the growth of the Wagga Wagga campus. The development of the Wagga Wagga special activation precinct will provide opportunities that will attract thousands of additional jobs and require additional education and research. Furthermore, the Wagga Wagga campus of Charles Sturt University could become the foremost agricultural research institution in Australia. But there is more to be done to make sure that Charles Sturt University builds on its key strength: its links to regional communities. This is the key.

The connection to and support of regional New South Wales has been a major strength of the university. It is its strongest point of difference and it is the base on which to build its future. To this end the university council must have stronger representation from regional New South Wales. I believe that at least two-thirds of the council's membership should come from regional areas. The contention that people with the requisite skills for council membership do not reside in regional areas is simply not supportable. I have raised this directly with the Minister for Tertiary Education and I have formally written to him to seek his support for the council to have a two-thirds membership from regional New South Wales. I will be pursuing this issue. As a community member and as a former student I want Charles Sturt University to be one of Australia's premier educational institutions, one that draws its strength from and enhances the life of regional New South Wales and plays its role in our communities

to ensure that they grow responsibly, are safe and supported, and have the independent advice and voice that they need to survive.

### COOGEE ELECTORATE SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:46:26):** Housing is a human right that affords people safety and dignity. Everyone has the right to a home and it is our job as parliamentarians—each of whom represents a number of people who are homeless, sleeping rough, in rental stress or insecure housing—to make sure that everyone we represent has access to secure housing and is afforded that safety and dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services ...

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, the right to housing is a right to an adequate standard of living and housing that is secure and safe and enables people to live with dignity. The three main pillars that I believe people need to have a decent start at life are health care, education and housing. Since entering Parliament last year, the single biggest consistent issue to come across my desk and through my electorate office has been housing related: 10-year waiting lists; black mould causing long-term health issues; busted sewerage pipes that take months, if not years, to fix; and women and children seeking refuge and safety from abusive partners. Of the hundreds of complaints, concerns and serious issues that have been raised with me about public housing in the Coogee electorate, one in particular stands out. Last year, while out doorknocking, I met Brad, a single dad of four kids all under the age of 11, who is doing his best. He is doing his best to provide for his kids, make sure they receive a full education, a safe home to return to and dinner on the table.

Brad works full time to make ends meet. He is a mad Souths supporter—I will not hold that against him—and his apartment was spotless. Brad had called Housing because there was mould in his bathroom and right throughout the house. When Housing eventually inspected the property the mould and moisture were so bad that they decided to remove the light from his bathroom. Five years on, the light has not been replaced. I asked Brad, "How do you wash the kids at night? How do you guys go to the bathroom?" Brad very softly said, as he is a very softly spoken man, "Oh, we just use the lights on our phones." I asked Brad why he had not complained, and he replied that he did not want to cause a fuss. Following this, I, together with my colleague the member for Keira, ran an exposé on 9News Sydney about the state of housing in my electorate.

Within a week Brad and his family were moved because the mould was so bad in his apartment that the Land and Housing Corporation could not fix it. It should not take an accidental meeting with the local member of Parliament and for both that member and the shadow Minister for Housing to be on the 6.00 p.m. news for people such as Brad to be treated with dignity and respect. On any metric that reflects Housing NSW goals the Government is failing. In doing so, it is failing vulnerable people across the State and in every single electorate, including mine. On one hand we have a housing shortage with the worst economic and unemployment crisis we have seen in decades likely to double the demand for low-cost housing in the next year alone, while on the other hand those who are fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads are treated like second-rate citizens, and denied the respect and dignity that they deserve.

Yet the best the Government has up its sleeve for job creation is to fast-track current projects in the pipeline. Here is an idea—take it, steal it, make it your own if you need to—invest in social housing. Build new stock and get local tradies in local electorates to do maintenance overhauls of all the current stock. Investing in housing is not a welfare handout. It stimulates our economy not only in the short term but also it helps to address the long-term intergenerational social issues caused by homelessness. Investing in public housing creates an economic multiplier that is felt for generations. Investing in public housing also creates jobs immediately through building new housing while also supporting local tradies by investing in the maintenance of current stock.

We need to change the way we approach our housing policy. Building and funding affordable, community housing is not a welfare measure: It is an economic lever. It is an enormous job creator and a productivity driver. Building social housing not only will allow us to catch up to our current shortfalls, but also ensures people can live with the dignity and respect that they deserve. It also creates jobs. The Coalition has such a narrow perspective when it comes to infrastructure. We build and upgrade roads and public transport under a proviso that people can get where they need to get to more easily. We value the jobs created in the process and we recognise the productivity gains. Is not building more affordable housing that enables people to live closer to where the jobs are just as good and just as important as a road?

### YASS MATERNITY SERVICES

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:51:41):** Today I will talk about maternity services in Yass. Since the closure of the Yass maternity services by a Labor Government in 2004 there have been ongoing

whispers in the community as to whether a full suite of maternity services should be reinstated for the constituents of the Yass Valley region. In November last year I met with the health Minister on this issue to address some of the concerns that had been raised during my election campaign and in my early days as a new member. The reason for this was to determine the feasibility of potentially restoring maternity services to the Yass hospital. The health Minister, Mr Brad Hazzard, listened to concerns raised from within the community and agreed to conduct a clinical service review, which was to encompass a range of factors, including local demographics, current service provision and the projections of population growth.

As with all thorough reviews there was extensive consultation within the local community. Community workshops, in collaboration with the public health network, indicated no preference for a return of maternity services—a view that was reaffirmed by the community consultative committee. Consultation also occurred with key staff, clinical experts and the broader community, all suggesting that birthing services are not a current priority for the community. The review also determined the return of comprehensive maternity or low risk birthing services at the Yass District Hospital is not feasible, sustainable, viable or safe. In the Minister's words:

Significant investment in infrastructure and workforce would be required to support the service, which is not justified by the current data, projected growth statistics, and the preference indicated by Yass women for services provided in the ACT.

It is important to remember that the close proximity of Yass to the ACT is a determining factor for the commuting workforce. Many mothers or potential mothers in the Yass Valley commute to the ACT and choose to access ACT services. Personal choice and preferences play a large role in health. I know the Yass Valley is also in close proximity to the Goulburn and Queanbeyan hospitals. Again, this comes down to personal choice and individual circumstances.

Despite the non-viability of restoring full maternity services to Yass at this time, the clinical services review has recommended trialling an enhancement of the current Yass community outreach program. What was a part-time position is now being trialled as a full-time role beginning in July 2020 for a 12-month period. This service will then be reviewed with a view to make it permanent to meet the growing needs of the Yass Valley region. The extended hours mean more support for young mothers and families in Yass and the surrounding villages. I could not be more pleased with the result. I am committed to ensuring that we are meeting the needs of the community and that we are also planning for the future.

Alongside this extension of services, the \$8 million redevelopment of the Yass District Hospital is nearing completion. The redevelopment includes a new emergency department with a dedicated ambulance entry point, an additional treatment bay, an increase in patient beds and improved facilities for the delivery of outpatient services. I look forward to opening this officially in the near future. As part of the extensive health investment by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition, we are also undertaking a major upgrade of the Goulburn hospital for \$150 million, plus a \$2.5 million upgrade of Crookwell hospital. I am proud to be a member of a government that is meeting the communities needs and providing services as a result.

## WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:55:37):** This week is Anti-Poverty Week, which is a time to highlight the very real inequity within our society. Often the people most in need of support get the least support. Even before the COVID pandemic hit, it was clear that there was a huge problem with the way our society supports and values older women. When I am out doorknocking in the electorate of Newtown I meet countless older women and I see and hear of their struggles with isolation and poverty. As younger women, they took on caring roles in their households and have now not amassed enough superannuation to be able to live in their homes.

The lack of respect, support and recognition for older women needs to be called out. This is a feminist issue, an equality issue and a social justice issue, and nowhere is the problem more stark than in the area of housing. This month the *Older Women in the Private Rental Sector: Unaffordable, Substandard and Insecure Housing* report was published. In it, Dr Emma Power from the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University highlights some extremely concerning experiences that older women face in our community. Many of them have already experienced significant rental stress and homelessness. The research for the report was done prior to the pandemic, and I am sure that the situation is now much worse. The report found that single, older women aged 55 and over are hugely over-represented among Australia's poorest citizens.

On census night in 2016 some 15,000 women in New South Wales were experiencing homelessness, representing 40 per cent of the people who were sleeping rough in New South Wales—an increase of 35 per cent from 2011. Those figures are staggering. It is a direct result of the way that our society views and values women. We are subject to a number of risks that accrue throughout our lives and make us vulnerable to poverty and homelessness later in life. We know that it is harder for older renters to find adequate and secure housing. Older women are at particular risk because of a number of identified factors, including lower incomes; less secure jobs; less access to benefits like superannuation; greater loss of income and housing standards, particularly if they leave

a relationship with a man; greater risk of domestic violence; unaffordable rents; unfair evictions; housing that is inaccessible; and longer life expectancy.

For many women, while they were able to work or had a partner to share the load, they were able to manage, but without the safety nets that men are afforded, like higher wages throughout their lives and therefore more superannuation, the private rental market is out of reach for older women. As the current private rental market is characterised by unaffordable rents, unfair evictions and inaccessible housing, it is not necessarily difficult to understand why so many older women are facing homelessness. I acknowledge the Older Women's Network [OWN] for bringing the issue of homelessness and housing insecurity to the public debate. I particularly acknowledge Bev Baker, the chair of OWN. It is absolutely wonderful to have the home of that organisation in the heart of Newtown.

It is absolutely vital that we address these issues and there are clear ways we can do that. We need to permanently raise the JobSeeker payment, enable access to affordable housing, end "no grounds" evictions, quantify minimum rental housing standards and offer financial assistance to support involuntary moves that are a result of a notice to vacate or a rent increase. We know that renting costs people more money than owning a home because they have to move more often. People who are already suffering from financial insecurity have more challenges because they need to find, on average, \$1,618 to be able to move each time they are required to.

I held a feminist event this week with my colleague Abigail Boyd and we heard from older women who expressed their outrage and concern at how they often feel like they are treated as invisible and not seen in the community. Their views are often not heard and respected. This is not acceptable and it is not something that we should allow to continue. The housing stress and homelessness crisis faced by older women in this State can be addressed and we urge the Government to do so. To the older women in the community of Newtown and across the State, I say: We see you, we hear you, we respect you and we will continue to advocate for solutions to the pressures that you face due to housing insecurity, poverty and the ongoing inequity brought about by the patriarchy.

#### *Petitions*

#### **REGIONAL SENIORS TRAVEL CARD**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I take this opportunity to explain the process and rationale behind this unique debate. It is unique because it enables the public to directly bring their concerns to the attention of the House. The intent of this procedure is that the petition debate will start with a speech from a member, which in most cases will be the member who lodged the petition, followed by up to four other members, followed by a Minister in response, and to conclude the debate the first speaker will speak in reply. After all members have spoken, the House will vote on the question that the House take note of the petition. This question will in most cases be determined on the voices and be passed. However, if this is challenged by a member it may proceed to a division where the bells are rung and members vote on the motion to take note of the petition by moving to the appropriate side of the House.

The question is that the House take note of the petition.

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (16:01:34):** I am pleased to speak in support of the 11,000 people from Wallsend, Newcastle and Charlestown who signed this worthy petition. Earlier this year the Government rolled out the regional seniors travel card. It provided a \$250 prepaid Visa card to seniors living in regional areas to help with travel costs. This was very welcome news to seniors across the electorate of Wallsend. I wrote to 2,000 local seniors who were deemed eligible and provided them with application details. Sadly, over 12,000 seniors in my electorate were deemed ineligible as the Government does not classify the Newcastle local government area [LGA] as regional. Consequently, many seniors in the Wallsend electorate, who would really appreciate the support and need the support, missed out.

The Wallsend electorate is at the western end of the Newcastle LGA and the northern end of the Lake Macquarie local government area. The suburbs of Minmi and Black Hill have semirural properties and the suburbs of Beresfield and Tarro, which are 25 kilometres from the Newcastle CBD, cannot be described as metropolitan areas. Local residents were left gobsmacked that they were ineligible for the regional seniors travel card. Residents of Rankin Park, Elmore Vale, New Lambton Heights and Cardiff Heights were told they were not eligible as they live on the Newcastle side of the suburb, yet residents on the Lake Macquarie side—sometimes their next-door neighbours—were deemed eligible for the card. Go figure. One side of the street gets the card, the other side of the street does not get the card.

Beresfield and Taro residents were left fuming because they attended the Maitland Service NSW centre to apply. They were initially told they were eligible and received confirmation that their applications had been received, but a few weeks later they were told they had been rejected. Woodbury, situated in the Maitland local



government area, was eligible. The only thing segregating Beresford from Taro is a rail line—the same rail line that takes everyone to Newcastle. Newcastle is broad, though compared with surrounding local government areas it is the smallest council and the smallest cousin, with Lake Macquarie and the Central Coast much larger in size and population. Yet Newcastle was the only one excluded. Why? What is confusing is how the Government determines what is regional and what is metropolitan. Often Newcastle is considered to be neither of this to the Government. When I write to Ministers or put questions on notice regarding Newcastle issues, they are directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. So the Government classifies Newcastle as "regional", but when applying for many large regional grants it suddenly classifies the area as "metropolitan". This classification excludes Newcastle from applying for significant funding pools for key infrastructure.

Policy documents from the Government's Making it Happen in the Regions: Regional Development Framework categorically reference Newcastle within the context of regional New South Wales. Yet Newcastle is defined as metropolitan for the purposes of the Regional Growth Fund, thus making it ineligible. It is also ineligible for a range of other New South Wales funding projects, including the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund. In contrast, Newcastle is eligible for regional funds through the Resources for Regions scheme, as well as a number of regional State Government funding schemes. This inconsistency makes Newcastle residents question the Government's decisions. Why on earth does it consider them as regional, but when it comes to handing out money it considers them as metropolitan? The 11,000 people who signed this petition believe that they are regional. I ask the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to ensure that eligible Newcastle residents are included in the program.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:06:21):** I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the petition. I also thank the petitioners for their interest in this issue. More than 330,000 seniors have successfully applied for the regional seniors travel card. The card is now in operation across the State. It gives each senior \$250 to spend on fuel, taxis and NSW TrainLink train and coach services. Already we have seen more than \$56 million put back into the New South Wales economy through spending at fuel stations, as well as on taxis and NSW TrainLink services. Most pleasingly, 92 per cent of these funds have already been spent in regional New South Wales. That constitutes a \$52 million boost to regional economies that have been doing it tough over the past few years.

The card was designed to ease the pressure of travel costs for seniors living in the bush, help them to stay connected with family and friends and access other services. The boundaries of the card's distribution were drawn based on the Restart definition of "regional" as outside Sydney, and the Newcastle and Wollongong local government area borders. The Government recognises that often many regional residents only have two options available to them—driving or walking. They do not have the luxury of subsidised public transport options with the same frequency and route operations as major cities such as Newcastle, Sydney or Wollongong. Newcastle is not regional. It has an established transport network with frequent bus and train services, as well as access to other transport options like Uber and light rail.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Newcastle will have his opportunity to contribute to the debate.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** Let us consider the Newcastle Light Rail. It represents a \$650 million investment into Newcastle by this Government. It was delivered on time and on budget, and it provides turn-up-and-go services from 5.00 a.m. until 1.00 a.m. daily.

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

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The light rail runs for 2.7 kilometres through the city centre to Newcastle Beach. As of 31 July 2020 it has carried over 1.47 million passengers since opening in February 2019. The light rail is a fabulous service for the people of Newcastle. There are a large number of regional MPs, including myself, who would love to have had \$650 million spent on a light rail running through their electorates. But it does not stop at light rail for the people of Newcastle. The Government also introduced Newcastle Transport on 1 July 2017. This new model for public transport saw a single operator running multiple modes to deliver timetable efficiency, easy connections and a locally based approach to ensure the best service for customers. Newcastle Transport operates four frequent routes, providing a 15-minute service between 7.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m. weekdays. These routes meet high demand between key sites, including the John Hunter Hospital, the university, Charlestown, Cardiff, Wallsend and the CBD. Three of the four core bus routes also extend to the outer suburbs every 30 minutes. As a result of this model, 37 per cent of the population in Newcastle Transport area of operation live within 400 metres of a bus service offering 15-minute frequency.

The Government also introduced on-demand off-peak bus services from 4 January 2018. Newcastle Transport has improved bus access to Cardiff station from locations such as Warners Bay, Belmont and Swansea, and has installed bus stops at the major entrance to Broadmeadows station on Graham Road. This is a world-class public transport system and the product of millions of dollars of investment from this Government. While we are

investing in more buses and trains to improve connectivity in the regions, we know that seniors in small regional towns do not have the same transport options as those in the big cities. That is why we have introduced the regional seniors travel card, to allow this cohort to experience the support from the Government that seniors in big cities receive every day.

**Mr Tim Crakanthorp:** It depends which street you live on.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** I look forward to the card entering its second year of operation in 2021 and I encourage all eligible regional seniors to apply, if they have not already done so. So far, my constituents have been applying through my office on a regular basis. Another way that the Government is injecting money into the bush is through an \$82 million investment that will boost regional fuel stations and taxidrivars, a commitment that Labor refused to match at the last election. This funding boost to the regional economy could only happen under this Government. I note the interjection from the member for Newcastle. He was the one who complained about light rail. He has complained about every piece of progress that we have made. But still we deliver for the people of Newcastle and, more importantly, for regional New South Wales.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (16:11:43):** I apologise to the postie doing the run along Hunter Street in Newcastle. Any reimbursement that he might need for chiropractic care should be sent to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. That is how weighed down he was with post when the member for Charlestown, the member for Wallsend, along with our great shadow Minister for Seniors and Volunteers launched this petition against unfairly making seniors in the Newcastle local government area ineligible for the seniors regional travel card. I thank the shadow Minister for Seniors and Volunteers, along with volunteers, for being such a great advocate for this campaign because it goes right to the crux of cost-of-living pressures. So many people in the Newcastle local government area [LGA] struggle to put food on the table every day, especially our pensioners and older people who would have benefited so much from this card.

But back to the poor old postie. Day after day I had never seen my letterbox fill up so quickly. These petitions did not just have one signature on them: They contained sheets and sheets filled with the names of locals and visitors to Newcastle alike from as far away as the Upper Hunter, the Blue Mountains and even the far North Coast. That is how strongly these communities feel about the shameful treatment of our seniors and how incomprehensible it is that this card splits suburbs and even streets in two.

To give an example, no seniors from 75 Madison Drive, Adamstown Heights, Newcastle LGA will be eligible for the cards, yet seniors living at 77 Madison Drive, Adamstown Heights, Lake Macquarie LGA will be. I challenge the Minister to explain to this Chamber, and to the seniors of Newcastle, why these next-door neighbours should be treated differently. How can a few metres make one household's occupants worthy of help yet their neighbours not? These two LGAs share train lines and bus routes. The residents frequently traverse council lines to access shopping centres and health facilities. These people live side by side and share services. I ask again: What makes them so different that one set of residents is worthy of receiving transport assistance and the other set of residents is not?

Let us head north and talk about the suburbs of Stockton and Fern Bay. Both are separated from the Newcastle CBD by the Hunter River. Both catch the same ferry into town. Both are faced with a 20-minute drive to access the city or to connect to other forms of public transport. But if you are an eligible senior living in Fern Bay you can access a \$250 card to help with the cost of driving into Newcastle or catching that ferry. If you live in Stockton you cannot. Again I ask: What makes these communities so different? What makes this ridiculous situation even more unbelievable is that when the costing was initially done Newcastle was included. But when it came to implementation we were suddenly gone. That is typical of this Government, which tries to make things it does not like simply disappear. That is what it is in so many different classifications in Newcastle. Try getting a reasonable sporting facility grant in Newcastle—no, you have to go outside the LGA right onto the border where you are actually eligible. That is where we sporting facilities are put—on the side.

Look at other various grants and funds available and, well, it just depends on what mood the Government is in. One day you are metropolitan and on another day you are regional. But the Government wants to be a bit tight on this one. It does not want our pensioners getting the card, so just forget about it. The seniors of Newcastle are not immune to living off paltry pensions, needing to access specialist and sometimes expensive medical care or having very little in their bank accounts. They are not immune to this, despite where this disgraceful Government decides to draw its arbitrary line in the sand. The long and short of it is 25,000 Newcastle seniors have been kicked to the kerb by this Government, and they are not asking for the world. They are just asking to be treated the same as their neighbours.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (16:16:44):** I thank the member for Wallsend for this petition and I thank the petitioners for their interest in the issue. The regional seniors travel card was an election commitment by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals that has provided eligible seniors with \$250 to spend on

fuel, taxis and NSW TrainLink services. Eligibility is based on the Restart NSW definition of "regional" as outside Sydney, as well as the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas [LGAs]. The reason this definition was used is that residents of Newcastle have access to an enormous public transport network that regional residents simply cannot access in their towns. The New South Wales Government had been investing millions in boosting the public transport network in Newcastle and in many ways it is now the envy of the State.

To name a few achievements, since the new operator took the keys to the Newcastle Transport network in July 2017 on-time running targets have been met each month for the past 12 months. The new Newcastle Bus Interchange became operational on 5 July 2020. On-demand bus services were extended on 30 June 2019 to an additional 27,000 residents in the Lake Macquarie suburbs of Redhead, Jewells, Floraville, Croudace Bay, Valentine, Belmont North and Belmont. Both of Newcastle Transport's ferries have undergone refurbishment, the *Hunter* in the second half of 2018 and the *Shortland* in mid-2019, delivered as part of the Newcastle Integrated Services Contract.

And of course we have the Newcastle Light Rail, which carried its millionth customer on 5 December 2019. This amazing milestone was achieved in less than one year of operation. Light rail has clearly changed how people move around the city. While the New South Wales Government has been investing millions in public transport in regional New South Wales, the extent of those networks simply cannot compare to the world-class system that residents of Newcastle can access every day. The regional seniors card provides the State's regional residents with a leg-up to assist them to deal with their travel costs. Travel is one of the most significant household costs faced by those living across rural and regional New South Wales. With further distances to travel, country seniors rely more heavily on their cars—that means more fuel and more money.

It is clear that the cost of living is a key concern for seniors around the State. The regional seniors travel card is just one way the Government is helping people with this challenge. The card complements the suite of cost-of-living measures already announced by the Government, including an expanded seniors card and energy rebates for self-funded retirees in addition to existing rebates for pensioners and families. It has been great to see the uptake of the regional seniors travel card around New South Wales. It has been embraced by so many communities and individuals. I think of the time when Mr Neil Wright popped into my electorate office to thank the State Government for the wonderful initiative.

In my electorate of Goulburn over 9,801 people have accessed this card. We have seen more than 15,000 cards issued in the Port Macquarie LGA, more than 13,000 in the Tweed LGA, almost 8,000 in the Maitland LGA and more than 5,000 in the Wagga Wagga LGA, all the way down to more than 100 in small, isolated LGAs such as Bourke, Balranald, Central Darling and Carrathool. These seniors cannot access a light rail line, an on-demand bus service or even a heavy rail network in some cases. It is for this reason the Government is proud to support them with the regional seniors travel card, which will provide them with \$250 this year and next year to assist them with their considerable travel costs.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (16:21:13):** I speak in favour of this petition and to urge the Government to correct its transparently unfair treatment of residents of the Newcastle local government area [LGA]. At the outset I recognise the 11,000 petitioners across the electorates of Charlestown, Wallsend and Newcastle and indeed right across the State who have signed this petition, many of whom signed the petition not because they were ineligible for the regional seniors travel card, but because in fact they were and they saw the inequities of their neighbours and their friends in nearby suburbs not being eligible for it. The regional seniors travel card is a welcome relief for many elderly people in the regional areas of our State, helping to offset travel costs for a significant demographic that is often less mobile and more likely to become isolated.

I do not quibble with the people of Goulburn, Tweed, Port Macquarie or Myall Lakes being able to apply for this regional travel card. I do quibble with the fact that people living in part of one suburb in my electorate are eligible whereas their friends who live down the street are not. Unfortunately the policy's design has resulted in a blatantly unjust outcome for many of my constituents. From the outset it was clear that the policy had been poorly designed. Some elderly people who desperately needed this kind of relief could not access the travel card because they happened to be on the carer pension, a widow pension or any other payment besides the age pension. I thank the people who raised these issues and had them fixed. It is good to see the Government came to its senses and revised it but there is still a serious problem at the heart of this policy and this Government's attitude towards people who live in the City of Newcastle.

The bulk of the Charlestown electorate is located in the City of Lake Macquarie, which is considered regional. Its residents can register for and make use of the regional seniors travel card. But a significant portion of my constituents live in the Newcastle LGA and they have been left out. This Government's decision to stop classifying the Newcastle LGA as "regional" while at the same time refusing to classify it as a metropolitan LGA has left the city and its residents in a governmental limbo, unable to access or make use of grants and programs such as the regional seniors travel card.

How is it fair that residents living in one part of Highfields can apply, but residents living in the rest of the suburb cannot? How is it fair that residents in Kotara cannot access the travel card but residents in Kotara South can? Why is Adamstown excluded but residents in large swathes of Adamstown Heights are not? It is absurd that residents at one end of a street, which happens to be in Lake Macquarie, are eligible for the travel card, while residents at the other end of the street, which happens to be in Newcastle, are not. Take Princeton Avenue, or Ellerslie Road—a street that I used to live in—or a huge number of streets in the suburb of Adamstown Heights. The northern ends of those streets are in Newcastle and the southern ends are in Lake Macquarie—a street less than 500 metres long. Some people are eligible, some people are not.

Other than a quirk of local government boundaries, what real difference is there between the two ends of those streets? How is it fair that residents of a suburb of Charlestown, a thriving commercial and transport hub with relatively strong public transport links—even given the bus cuts—can make use of the travel card? Sure, public transport is better in Charlestown than it is in Goulburn, and I acknowledge that, but how is it that they can make use of the travel card while residents in places farther away, such as Minmi and Beresfield that are in the Newcastle local government area, cannot?

I thank all of the constituents who took the time to sign this petition. Many of them live in the Lake Macquarie local government area. They could already apply for and access the travel card but they saw the injustice inherent in the design of this policy and they took the time to stand up for their neighbours in Newcastle. This is exactly the kind of community spirit that makes the Charlestown and Wallsend electorates and the electorates of many members on this side of the Chamber such extraordinary places to live in and to represent in this place. I urge the Government to fix this inherently unjust aspect of the policy and reconsider its approach to the people of Newcastle.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:26:24):** I thank all the petitioners on the regional seniors travel card and the speakers on this matter. Isn't it good to see so many people supporting a National Party program that The Nationals in government have delivered for seniors in regional New South Wales? The seniors in regional New South Wales know that it is only The Nationals in government who deliver for them. The people in the mid-coast area, which is part of Myall Lakes, and of course in Hastings in the Deputy Speaker's electorate know that it is The Nationals in government who deliver for regional New South Wales.

The member for Newcastle misled Parliament when he said that Newcastle was part of the original plan. The policy was costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office before the election. The costing assumed the same definition of regional New South Wales as used by Restart NSW, therefore the member for Newcastle was wrong. He is mistaken. He has misled Parliament. The policy was delivered in line with what was promised and costed, which did not include Newcastle. The member for Newcastle knows it but he is misleading the people of Newcastle by saying that it was originally in when it was never in. He should not let the truth get in the way of a good story.

**Mr Tim Crakanthorp:** You never have.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** He has been watching Graham Richardson. He has got the book, *Whatever it Takes*, and that is the member for Newcastle. I will enlighten members a little about the regional seniors travel card. The regional card is a pre-loaded \$250 Visa card which can be used to purchase fuel, pay for taxi services or to travel on New South Wales TrainLink trains and coaches. This is about easing the pressure of travel costs for seniors living in the bush and helping them to stay connected with family and friends and to access services. As the other speakers have outlined, the card has already had an enormous impact on regional economies, putting money in tills when it is most needed. I can appreciate that the member for Wallsend and others want the card extended to their electorate given its success. It is a great Nationals policy. However, the card was designed to help seniors in regional areas with their specific transport needs.

Newcastle is not regional and, as others have outlined, it has benefited from hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in public transport by this Government. That includes Newcastle's electric rail, the \$650 million light rail line that has been constructed, our investment in a new bus interchange, the overhaul of local bus services, the introduction of more train services and better ferries, and investment in the local walking and cycling network. These provide a range of options for local seniors to access every day. They are also able to access a subsidised rate to use these services. The mid-coast area of my electorate has seen 18,949 successful applications, which amounts to more than \$4.7 million going back into the Myall Lakes economy. I look forward to delivering it in the next term.

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (16:29:40):** In reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Tweed, Newcastle, Goulburn and Charlestown. I also thank the member for Myall Lakes, although I am disappointed that the Minister did not take the time to listen to this important debate. The debate is about inconsistencies. It is about boundaries. I reckon the person from the Government who drew up the boundaries

must have done it first thing in the morning before they had their cup of coffee. They just drew a weird line across Wallsend and said, "That'll will be good enough. One half will get it, one half won't and that is okay." It is a very inconsistent rule. That is what members on this side are talking about.

The other point I make is about public transport. There seems to be an idea that if you live in Wallsend, Charlestown or Newcastle there is brilliant public transport. Half of my electorate does not have good public transport or public transport at all. For people who live in the Blue Gum Hills area there are two private buses every weekend. That is not good public transport. We are talking about investing in local regions. It would be great if you lived in Wallsend or Charlestown and you could come into Newcastle and use the light rail. Unfortunately, if you are a working class senior living in Beresfield, 25 kilometres away from the inner city, you will not be able to afford it because you did not get the \$250. We are talking about an inconsistency. I ask the Minister to tidy the boundary up. I am disappointed that the 12,000 people who signed this petition were shown disloyalty by the Minister who did not show up today. That is sad. On behalf of all of the people who signed the petition and those that missed out on \$250 that they deserve, I ask the Minister to support this sensible and logical petition.

**Petition noted.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**CAMP INC.**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:32:11):** I recognise CAMP Inc., the Campaign Against Moral Persecution, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. I make special mention of Peter de Waal, AM, and his beloved partner of 50 years, Peter Bonsall-Boone, AM. They lived together in my electorate of Balmain from 1969 until Bon's death in 2017. Unlike the 1969 New York Stonewall Inn riots, the story of our Australian LGBTQIA+ community's struggle for rights did not start in a bar, pub or inn. It began with a small group of courageous women and men who appeared in two newspaper articles in *The Australian* on 10 and 19 September 1970. They identified themselves as homosexual and agreed to give their names and be photographed. John Ware and Christabel Poll announced the founding of the Campaign Against Moral Persecution—known as CAMP Inc.—with coverage in *The Australian* describing the hopes of the organisation to:

... get rid of the numerous misinterpretations of homosexuality by encouraging homosexuals to admit that they are and discuss it openly.

In 1970 this was a truly revolutionary act. At the time sex between gay men was a criminal act. This was the case "...whether they occurred in public or in private and whether they were consensual or not." In 1957, at the age of 19, Bon was convicted twice of adult consensual homosexual minor offences after being arrested on separate occasions at a public toilet and at a Sydney train station where he went to meet other gay men. Bon's offences were expunged only two weeks prior to his death.

Beyond illegality, a social, moral and political stigma around LGBTQIA+ communities continued to exist. Violence, or poofter-bashing, was common. It was legal to discriminate against members of the community based on their sexuality. In 1972 the ABC national television program *Chequerboard*—today's *Australian Story*—approached CAMP Inc. wanting to telecast a social documentary about openly lesbian and male homosexual couples. Sue Wills and Gaby Antolovich participated, along with Peter Bonsall-Boone and his partner, Peter de Waal. Bon and Peter became the first male couple in Australia to kiss on national television—what a grand and historic achievement. Bon consequently was sacked from his church secretarial job for coming out publicly and challenging homophobia. Peter was ostracised by his previously friendly gay colleagues at P&O. The first specifically homosexual telephone helpline, Phone-A-Friend, was established in Peter and Bon's home in 1973 and, 47 years on, it still exists. Now called Twenty10 Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service, it supports, counsels, enriches and empowers the community.

The following year, 1974, CAMP established the first not-for-profit, volunteer-run coffee shop for the LGBTQIA+ community. Known as CAMP Centre, it operated at 33a Glebe Point Road in Glebe until 1981. My electoral office is on Glebe Point Road. In 1978 the now world-famous Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras was named and partly organised at a CAMP executive meeting. The peaceful parade was met with police violence, as officers without name badges punched and bashed marchers, leading to 53 arrests. At the Darlinghurst police station, marcher Peter Murphy was brutally bashed. Shockingly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* maliciously published the names, occupations and addresses of all those arrested, outing many and causing some to lose their jobs, rental accommodation and family relationships. Since then, CAMP has had a hand in almost every single progression for the LGBTQIA+ community in Australia, including the historic decriminalisation of male acts of homosexuality between consenting adults in 1984 and national marriage equality.

I also acknowledge the contributions of Alexander "Lex" Watson, a founding member of CAMP Inc who passed away in 2014. He was posthumously awarded a Queen's Birthday Honour for his work as part of CAMP and the gay rights lobby and as the first president of ACON. Today in this House I offer my sincere thanks to every member of CAMP. Those individuals made extraordinary personal sacrifices in their work, in their personal lives and in the community to propel the LGBTQIA+ movement further and open doors for others. CAMP envisaged a future where lesbian and gay people would be able to walk proudly hand in hand in this city, heads held high with pride and without fear of violence, discrimination or hate.

While we still have more to do, that vision has been realised. It takes immense personal strength to force equality out of a system of hate, prejudice and ignorance. I thank Peter and Bon and every member of CAMP for changing our city, State and country for the better. I congratulate them on 50 years, and I am sorry that Bon is not here to see it and celebrate with us all.

### **TRIBUTE TO RUSS DICKENS, OAM**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:37:11):** I pass on my respects and condolences to the family of Russ Dickens, OAM—councillor, mayor, community campaigner, vet, volunteer, passionate supporter of Blacktown and, more importantly, a family man. He is survived by his wife, Lorina. He was father to Jenny, Helen, Sue and Rowan; father-in-law to David, Andrew and Danny; and grandfather to Abbey, Macy and Ginny. Russ was a vet, but no ordinary vet. He started his veterinary hospital in Blacktown in 1966 and by the 1970s it was one of the largest practices in western Sydney. Many vets got their start with Russ. He had a special relationship with the police—particularly with the dog squad. But when animals were injured in road accidents the police called Russ first to assist. Russ's veterinary clinic was truly a 24/7 operation. In 1992 his dedication to animals and research earned him an Order of Australia Medal.

Russ was one of the first veterinarians to study disease in koalas, which culminated in his PhD. He was a founding member of the Australian Koala Foundation. Russ was a foundation member of the Animal Ethics Committee at Westmead Hospital and the Westmead Millennium Institute and was a Rotary Paul Harris Fellow. In 2014 Russ was awarded the University of Sydney's Faculty of Veterinary Science Alumni Award for community achievement and the university's overall award for community achievement. Russ served with many committee organisations, including the Salvation Army, Rotary Australia, historical associations and the Blacktown show society. I am sure that Russ was involved in many other community organisations.

Russ was first elected to Blacktown City Council in 1980 and served for 36 consecutive years and nine elections, until 2016—an incredible honour and achievement. Back in 1980 I had the pleasure of knowing Russ, both in his professional capacity as a vet when he looked after my cat, Rover, and as a councillor when he served with my father from 1980 to 1987. We then served together from 2004 to 2016. In 2014-15 Russ served as deputy mayor while I was mayor. Russ served one term as mayor in 1987-88 and three terms as deputy mayor from 2012 to 2015. Regardless of who was mayor—whether Labor, Liberal or unaligned—Russ usually served as chair of the Companion Animals Committee and had extensive involvement with the historical committees, Blacktown CBD committee and various other committees.

Russ once said of Blacktown councillors that "there have been a lot of colourful characters". I must say that he was one of them. He spent most of his time on council in the minority, but he was unashamedly a strong conservative and saw himself as holding Labor to account. I recall my first council meeting in 2004 when council considered a controversial development application for a 32-storey residential tower in Blacktown CBD. Russ extracted the item and spoke passionately against it. I supported Russ, which brought many of the other councillors into the debate in support. The final vote was 14-1. I was the one and I am still not sure why Russ voted for it. Maybe it was my argument.

Russ expressed many ideas, most of which were achieved under Labor leadership. He spoke of CBD improvements, including fairy lights and garden beds—all achieved under Labor. He supported the controversial Liberal council of 2012-14, which attempted to sell off childcare centres and 151 parks and reserves, closed Mount Druitt pool and cut back community festivals across Blacktown. We all witnessed that Russ was not comfortable with those decisions and he often made amendments to soften Liberal policies. Russ and I worked well together as mayor and deputy mayor in 2014-15, when we reversed those Liberal decisions and put the community first. Unfortunately, Russ always led the debate on the Blacktown name change; thankfully, he lost that one. In conclusion, to use Russ's own words, "Blacktown has a great future ahead of it." We thank Russ for his service to our community, for holding us to account and for creating a great future for Blacktown City. Vale, Russ Dickens. May he rest in peace.

## E-CONVEYANCING

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:42:03):** I place on record my concerns and the concerns of the people of Canterbury about proposed interoperability standards for e-conveyancing, which affect my community. While this sounds like a dry area of public policy, the e-conveyancing market is expected eventually to be worth around \$240 million per year. Conveyancing is the legal process of transferring property from one person to another. It is relied on by people who buy property, such as investors and families. For families, buying or selling their home is the largest financial transaction of their lives. In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments committed to creating a single national system to allow conveyancing transactions to occur electronically. Over the past decade, a number of reforms have taken place to roll out e-conveyancing across Australia. On 1 July 2019 New South Wales mandated that all property transactions in the State take place electronically, which Labor supports.

While the move toward mandatory e-conveyancing had some merits, an unfortunate downside is that it effectively created a private monopoly for conveyancing transactions in New South Wales. Currently PEXA is the dominant player in the e-conveyancing market. PEXA was originally set up about 10 years ago by a group of State governments and has since been privatised. While there are other companies that provide e-conveyancing services, PEXA has established itself as the dominant player in the market largely through being first and having been set up by State governments. Because e-conveyancing relies on multiple parties being able to transact with each other, consumers do not want one company to entrench itself as a monopoly as a result of network effects. The ACCC has recognised it is in a market that is worth \$240 million. On 19 June 2020 an article in *The Australian Financial Review* stated:

Australia's competition tsar Rod Sims has weighed into a battle between states over the electronic property transaction market, warning that without new rules soon to force competition, incumbent platform PEXA will entrench its monopoly ...

The article quoted Mr Sims, who said:

This is really a battle between monopoly versus competition and we've got to make the decision really quickly.

The decision Mr Sims refers to relates to so-called interoperability standards, which would allow different providers of e-conveyancing services to interact with each other. These interoperability standards are essential to allow competition. In November 2019 the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal published a report titled *Review of the Pricing Framework for Electronic Conveyancing Services in NSW*, which stated:

Although competition is emerging, the lack of interoperability between ELNOs [Electronic Lodgement Network Operators] systems is constraining its development.

The report continued:

Interoperability between ELNOs has significant potential to promote competition, as it allows each party in the settlement process to use the ELNO of their choice.

I commend the Minister for leading the call across our nation for the adoption of interoperability standards, but there are significant concerns that the standards that the New South Wales Government has pushed other States to adopt will merely replace an uncompetitive monopoly with an uncompetitive duopoly. On 7 October 2020 *The Australian Financial Review* published an article titled *E-conveyancing rules bake in a five-year duopoly*, which stated:

Policymakers set the scene for a duopoly to dominate electronic property settlements for the next five years after a confidential report they commissioned considered only two companies and ignored a third one that was actively seeking access to the \$240 million market.

In essence the model that New South Wales has advanced will require the two main companies to talk to each other. However, the interoperability standards will not create a level and open playing field where other companies can enter the market. I call on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] to consider this matter and use its powers to support competition in the e-conveyancing market. I will have a lot more to say down the track. I encourage other State and Territory governments to treat the New South Wales Government's agenda with a grain of salt.

### Community Recognition Statements

## BRAVERY TREK

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:47:20):** I commit to undertake the Bravery Trek, which is an annual fundraising event in which participants commit to walk or run the equivalent distance of an iconic military-related route, and fundraise to support the important work of Bravery Trust, a fantastic organisation that supports veterans and their families by providing emergency financial relief for essentials such as food, rent, bills, education, clothing and sport. This year the distance of the trek or run, in this case, will be 96 kilometres. That distance

equates to the full length of the Kokoda Trail. The challenge has been broken into five legs from 24 October to 23 November to complete the trek, which I am not looking forward to doing. I will be raising funds for the Bravery Trust.

#### **FAIRFIELD WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:48:26):** I commend Fairfield West Public School Community Hub for its efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic it became very clear that it was really important to have community support and connection. Fairfield West Public School Community Hub provided just that for members of the Fairfield community who were feeling isolated or disconnected. On any given day, Fairfield West Public School Community Hub provides a bridge between migrant families and their children and the wider community, providing a place to learn and share experiences. The pandemic generated extra challenges in terms of social distancing. Hub leaders worked very hard to provide support by reaching out to families to see how they were getting on and helping out with any difficulties in the online learning program, trying as best as they could to stay connected despite the physical distance. I commend Fairfield West Community Hub for being there for the parents and children during such a difficult time and providing the extra support needed at this time.

#### **LOURDES FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:49:16):** I acknowledge the Lourdes Football Club in Seven Hills, which is part of the Blacktown District Soccer Football Association and has a range of players from under five years to all-age men's and women's competitions. The club regularly wins games at its home ground at Best Road Reserve, Seven Hills. It is always fantastic to see local clubs thriving and contributing to the greater Seven Hills electorate community. Many of my constituents regularly give up their own time volunteering to hold a barbecue, refereeing or coaching players through the week. This type of community spirit is always welcome and goes a long way to improve Seven Hills for the better. I thank club president Ken Duncan, vice president Chris Brazell and the wider club executive for all their hard work in keeping the organisation running even through the coronavirus pandemic. I wish the club all the very best in their future matches.

#### **SOUTH EASTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:50:03):** I acknowledge the tireless work of the Public Health Unit of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. The amazing work of the professionals, under the leadership of Professor Mark Ferson, have been working tirelessly since January to keep our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unit has been on the front line of the pandemic, undertaking contact tracing, patient outreach and spread prevention, and working with local councils, businesses and community groups to help them stay open and stay COVID safe. Our local public health professionals do an amazing job to protect, promote, improve and maintain the health of our community. Before the pandemic and throughout, this team has provided the highest quality public health services, education, research, information and interventions to local people in a time of great stress and uncertainty. Public health does not get the funding it requires and our public health professionals do not always get the thanks and praise they deserve. I thank Mark and the team for showing me around their workplace and for the amazing job they are doing.

#### **JOHN KLEPCZAREK**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (16:50:54):** On Tuesday 29 September the Premier and I presented Mr Klepczarek with the NSW Government Community Service Award, which recognises individuals in New South Wales who have substantially helped to improve the quality of life of members of their community, above and beyond their regular call of duty. John Klepczarek was instrumental in preparing information for the community of the impending fires earlier this year. He led and coordinated the services deployment, and ensured that both the service people on the ground and the public were better informed and prepared. John also was proactive in consulting, planning and responding to the fires, and managing the coordinated response from all government and non-government services during the emergency. His proactive nature and unwavering ability to work with agencies and the wider community was a huge asset in coordinating plans and responses. His effort undoubtedly saved lives, possessions and property across the region. Thanks, John, from the entire community.

#### **MARRICKVILLE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:52:01):** I am very proud to announce that Marrickville has been named the tenth coolest suburb in the world according to *Time Out's* global ranking. This is a confirmation of what Marrickvilleans already know—we love our vibrant creative industries, open spaces, gritty industrial zones peppered with breweries, cafes and art spaces, and the hopping main streets of Illawarra and Marrickville roads. No doubt the recent decision by Inner West Council to transform Marrickville Town Hall into a live music venue will only see us surge further up the list in years to come. Established businesses like Lazy Bones, Gasoline Pony, the Henson, Two Chaps, Cornersmith Picklery, Camelot Lounge and VN Street Foods have been joined recently



by exciting new businesses like Pepitos, Titus Jones, Poor Tom's Gin Distillery, Matinee, MakerSpace and more. Marrickvilleans know that our suburb is cool because it is diverse and eclectic, but we do not want to lose what we love by having more multimillion dollar apartments. Congratulations to Marrickville. Nine more spots to go before we are at the top of the list.

#### **DARREN COOK**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (16:53:25):** Local man Darren Cook is taking part in the Camp Quality Big Walk for the Little Kids fundraising campaign, which is supporting Camp Quality's services and programs to help children fighting cancer from birth to 13 years old. Darren's goal was to walk 100 kilometres in the month of October to support children facing cancer. He reached this goal in just 13 days and raised over \$1,000. What an amazing achievement. He posted a daily update on social media highlighting his progress and how the thought of helping these kids was helping to motivate him. It was one of these updates that prompted me to donate as well. The funds raised by Darren, and all those participants across Australia, will continue to support kids and their families in hospital, in their homes and at school. Camp Quality is an amazing service that seeks to assist children and families in what can be a very stressful time. Once again I congratulate Darren Cook on his achievements in fundraising for Camp Quality.

#### **EARTH SCIENCE WEEK**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:54:26):** I bring Earth Science Week to the attention of the House. I note that since October 1998 the American Geosciences Institute has organised this national and international event to help the public gain a better understanding of and appreciation for earth sciences and to encourage stewardship of the Earth. In doing so, I acknowledge the Geological Survey of NSW, which is the State's oldest continually operating government agency. I also acknowledge the work the Geological Survey of NSW is doing around geotrails. This is a recent initiative of the survey to provide a unique tourism experience by guiding visitors on a journey that is focused on an area's local geology. There are currently three geotrails in the State of New South Wales: the Port Macquarie Coastline Geotrail, the Warrumbungle volcanic geotrail and the Newcastle Coastline Geotrail. I encourage everybody to visit them. New South Wales does not have an official program of events to support Earth Science Week. I think we should, and the Geological Survey of NSW is well placed to do it.

#### **JESS HARRIS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (16:55:30):** I congratulate Jess Harris, who is a successful recipient of the Cootamundra Country Education Foundation grants scheme, which will enable her to attend a cabin crew preparation course with Aviation Australia. The Country Education Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation that helps rural and regional youth access education, training and jobs through grants, scholarships, support services and resources. Jess was presented with her cheque for \$2,500 by Mr Greg Southwell of Dawson & Partners, one of Cootamundra Country Education Foundation's major sponsors, and Mr Chris Main, Country Education Foundation grants supervisor. It is great to see our young regional and rural adults being supported and encouraged through generous sponsorship programs.

#### **HURLSTONE PARK WANDERERS**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:56:18):** A couple of Saturdays ago I was delighted to join Hurlstone Park Wanderers and be part of their last day of football. I was privileged to present the under 8s and under 9s with special medallions. I know that all members of Parliament are very happy to see our local community sport back up and running. It was wonderful to see that the fantastic campaign the community has run—especially the club, its volunteers, parents and caregivers—was successful in receiving \$200,000 to improve the lighting for evening games at Ewen Park. There is still a lot more work to be done at the park. I want the Hurlstone Park Wanderers and the community to know that I am there barracking for them and supporting them. We need a few more initiatives there. I thank the House.

#### **DR SHADI FARAJ**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:57:24):** Today I commend and thank Dr Shadi Faraj for saving many lives through his service as a qualified surgical oncologist, breast and endocrine surgeon, general and laparoscopic surgeon, and endoscopist. The Hawkesbury electorate has the pleasure of having Dr Faraj conduct surgery at the St John of God hospital, among other hospitals and locations at which Dr Faraj conducts surgery. You do not have to search far to hear the stories of countless people who credit Dr Faraj for saving their lives and who pay testament to his boundless knowledge, professionalism and respect from the moment a patient first consults with him to the surgery and rehabilitation. I thank Dr Faraj for his lifesaving service to the Hawkesbury community and constituents. I congratulate Dr Faraj on a stellar career to date and wish him continued success in the future.

### NEWTOWN ELECTORATE SMALL BARS

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:58:20):** I draw the attention of the Parliament to the ongoing struggle and resilience of the small bars in the electorate of Newtown and acknowledge their courage during this very difficult time. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the small bar scene in Newtown, Surry Hills, Redfern, Erskineville, Enmore, Stanmore, Camperdown and Petersham was second to none. But as our city went into lockdown as a result of COVID it was the small bar scene that responded first. It had to pivot to new models and maintain the vibrancy of our neighbourhoods, serving up signature cocktails through windows to walk-by customers and creating at-home options for their delicious goods to keep us going through these tough times. Sadly, the very nature of these small bars means that during the pandemic the restrictions have forced them to adapt and they are doing it tough. I give an absolute shout-out to all those running and working in small bars. I say they are a much-loved part of our inner-city night-time. Let us make sure we do all we can to keep them healthy and get them through these tough times.

### ST MARY MACKILLOP

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (16:59:22):** This 17 October will mark 10 years since the canonisation of Australia's first saint, Saint Mary of the Cross, Mary Mackillop. Mary Mackillop constantly travelled Australia by horse, coach, steamer, ship, train and on foot supporting families and communities, and gathered others to join her in her work. The legacy of her work continues in the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, which she founded in 1866 alongside the Reverend Julian Tenison Woods. Her legacy can also be found right in the heart of the Camden electorate at St Mary Mackillop Catholic Parish in Oran Park. This vibrant community, led by Father David Catterall, is renowned for living the words of its patron saint, who said, "Never see a need without doing something about it." I congratulate this community as it celebrates the tenth anniversary of the canonisation of its patron saint.

### JAMES JACKSON

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:00:20):** I congratulate James Jackson on his unopposed re-election to the position of president of NSW Farmers for a third term, and I reflect on the organisation's achievements during his tenure. James is a trained veterinarian who has been a Guyra district farmer since 1983 and an active member of NSW Farmers for more than 20 years. His time at the helm of NSW Farmers has been fraught, with drought, bushfires, floods and now COVID-19. In the face of each and every challenge, James has championed the rights of our farmers and rural communities, ensured that members remained connected and that policy continued to be driven from the grassroots up. This year, as the association entered its third century of operation, coronavirus thrust it headlong into the virtual world. Once again, NSW Farmers rose to the challenge. As shadow primary industries Minister, I greatly value the association's continued ability to identify issues affecting farmers. I thank James, his board and members of NSW Farmers for working with me to advocate for better outcomes for those who work in agriculture.

### ROSA BUCHANAN

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:01:22):** Dubbo is home to a thriving arts scene and it is wonderful to see the next generation coming through the ranks. Rosa Buchanan, a 17-year-old student at Dubbo College Senior Campus, was recently announced as one of 160 students to attend the National Art School HSC Intensive Studio Practice program. Four sample drawings were required as part of her submission, with a theme focusing on her life. Given her parents, Peita and Kent, are both heavily involved in the local art fraternity, that was never going to be an issue. In a recent story in the *Daily Liberal*, Rosa said her parents are her biggest influences. She said, "They both attended the National Art School and have always inspired me with their talent and passion for art". As well as attending the program, Rosa has also been selected to attend a series of workshops, which are scheduled for next year. Adding to the good news for Rosa, she has just been elected arts captain at Dubbo College Senior Campus for 2021. I congratulate Rosa. I am sure her future studies and career will lead her down a path she absolutely loves.

### HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:02:19):** Although it has been a couple years since I did my HSC, I remember how stressful it was walking into the testing hall for my first HSC exam. Not only have year 12 students this year had to work towards the completion of their Higher School Certificate, but also they have had to contend with the extraordinary and rapidly changing circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These students have had to shift between in-person and online learning, and contend with increased social isolation—all on top of the difficulty of preparing for their HSC exams. This has been a difficult year, but I am sure that the circumstances provided by 2020 have made this year's year 12 students resilient, flexible and ready for anything that their post-secondary school life may throw at them. I wish all year 12 students

from the Coogee electorate and from across New South Wales the best of luck for their HSC exams. I cannot wait to see what they do with the next chapter of their lives.

#### **AMAZON MOOREBANK FULFILMENT CENTRE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:03:19):** Today I speak about the team at Amazon Australia's fulfilment centre at Moorebank, the members of which have taken part in their third annual Amazon Goes Gold initiative. This is a global initiative to raise awareness for organisations to increase survival rates and find a cure for childhood cancer. As part of the initiative, the team at the Moorebank fulfilment centre wore their pyjamas to work and made a gold-coin donation, which was then matched by Amazon. A total of \$857.25 was raised by the team. This was matched by Amazon's donation, along with an additional \$15,000, all of which was donated to the Sydney Children's Hospital. The team at Moorebank did a tremendous job raising funds and awareness for such an important and worthy cause. I commend the team at Amazon Australia's fulfilment centre in Moorebank for their efforts in raising donations and awareness for childhood cancer.

#### **ARCHER HOLTZ**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:04:26):** I recognise and congratulate an exceptionally talented young man, Archer Holtz, from the Lightening Ridge-Brewarrina area. From the age of nine, Archer attended The King's School as a boarding student on a recommendation from Governor Marie Bashir. While attending The King's School Archer earned an exemplary reputation with his leaders, teachers and fellow students. He is a very kind-hearted dedicated young man who always puts others before himself. Archer recently played his first game in first grade rugby union for the Eastern Suburbs Rugby Union Football Club in the Shute Shield, which represents a long journey from year 11 at The King's School.

His rugby career has since soared. In a recent winning game against the University of Sydney, "Mr Rugby", Gordon Bray, announced Archer as the People's Champion. Archer's parents drive from Brewarrina for every game and have done so for many years—a huge vote of support for a young man. Archer's dream is to be a successful rugby player. His hard work, ethics, dedication and insight has been obtained from coaches at the Eastern Suburbs Rugby Union Football Club—Mr Pauli Taumoepeau, who is the head coach, and Ben Staunton, who has faith in him to excel. I commend Archer for his past achievements and wish him well in his future endeavours.

#### **SHERIDAN-LEE MOTBEY**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:05:26):** I recognise a community member who has overcome tremendous adversity in her personal life to then go on to achieve great things. Sheridan-Lee Motbey has been named as the Coffs Harbour and North Coast Regional Educator Winner in the 2020 Excellence in Family Day Care Awards. I first met Sheridan-Lee when doorknocking Corindi Beach with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, before the last election. We dropped into Sheridan-Lee's family day care for a quick chat about early education. A few years ago, after experiencing the trauma of a stillborn baby, Sheridan-Lee completed her diploma in early childhood education and now runs a successful home day care called Open Arms Care that offers family day care. During the devastating summer bushfires her house became a drop-off point for donations and she involved the kids in helping the community recover. The day care was also involved in helping other families during the COVID lockdown by providing them with packages of arts and craft activities. I congratulate Sheridan-Lee Motbey and wish her all the best in her endeavours.

#### **FERNCOURT PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:06:27):** The Ferncourt Public School in Marrickville is kicking goals. The school's campaign to improve safety around the school has had a big win with the hiring of a new crossing supervisor for the Premier Street crossing. It is a huge relief for the hardworking teachers and parents who have had to act as traffic cops around the school. The pedestrian supervisor will make the journey to and from school much safer. It has been one of the key issues in my recent Summer Hill school safety survey. I thank the school executive, the Ferncourt P&C and all the local parents and residents for taking the time to contribute. I am also very pleased to have learned today that the school community's requests for a security fence has been approved by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and that work will begin very shortly. The school is going from strength to strength partly owing to the fantastic work of the school's new principal, Rebecca Hollands. Rebecca is passionate advocate for public education. I know that the school will continue to grow as a part of that really strong and important community in Marrickville.

### AASHA FOUNDATION

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:07:25):** I acknowledge the AASHA Foundation, which assists seniors communities across New South Wales, particularly those of Hindi identity. The foundation works in partnership with Seniors Rights Service, Australian Government Department of Health, Multicultural NSW, the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice and New South Wales elder abuse organisations. AASHA seeks to support culturally and linguistically diverse communities and lead them to a physically and mentally healthy and happy life by providing them with resources and events full of information and advice. I thank AASHA's board of directors, management team and panel of experts for their support of multicultural communities in western Sydney, particularly in the Seven Hills electorate at Seven Hills, Toongabbie, Pendle Hill and Wentworthville.

### SYDNEY 2000 PARALYMPIC GAMES

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:08:12):** This evening I send a party shout-out to all members of the Sydney 2000 Paralympic team and organising committee and to everyone across our great State who was involved in any way in the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games. On Saturday we all will celebrate 20 years since the opening ceremony. That night is still one of the most amazing memories of my life. The Sydney 2000 Paralympic organising committee rocked global Paralympic standards by putting crowds in place that international Paralympic family had never seen before. That night we marched out not only in front of our families and friends but also in front of packed crowds, many of whom were schoolkids. They have since become employees and are now moving on to become employers. Those kids did not ask, "What is wrong with that lady?" Those kids asked, "What sport does that person play?" The Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games made our city and the way we are inclusive and respectful of people with disabilities different to what went before. The Paralympic movement is absolutely about ability. On Saturday night we will be getting together online to celebrate our fantastic memories.

### SYDNEY DOGS AND CATS HOME

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:09:15):** I take this opportunity to introduce to every member of this House an amazing young local legend, Vaughn, who is collecting bottles to donate through the return and earn machines. He is donating the funds directly to the Sydney Dogs and Cats Home. While last week I did not have any bottles to donate, it was a real honour to donate some money to Vaughn's drive. I thank Vaughn for his amazing effort. Vaughn is a former student of one of our local primary schools and currently attends St Patrick's College at Strathfield. His two-week campaign has raised over \$200 for the Sydney Dogs and Cats Home. On behalf of the entire community I thank Vaughn for the efforts he has made to raise much-needed funds for a very good cause.

### VICKI BELTON-CROWE

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:10:08):** I recognise the wonderful contribution of Vicki Belton-Crowe of the Earlwood Wanderers Football Club, who has been an integral part of the club for 23 years. Vicki first joined the Earlwood Wanderers Football Club in 1993 when her eldest son, Scott, started playing. In 1996 Ms Belton-Crowe's youngest son, Benjamin, joined the club. It was at that time that Ms Belton-Crowe started managing his team. She also coached his team from the under 7s to the under 12s. Ms Belton-Crowe also was elected as a competition secretary for a vast number of years. She held this position for a couple of years before being elected as president. In 2011 Ms Belton-Crowe was made a life member and came back as president for another term. The Earlwood Wanderers Football Club does an amazing job. The club has been in the area for decades. I congratulate Vicki.

### BONNET BAY FOOTBALL CLUB

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:11:14):** I acknowledge the Bonnet Bay Football Club for its longstanding presence in our local community. Preparing to celebrate the club's fortieth season in 2021, the Bombers continue to go from strength to strength—this year registering a club record of 630 players from under 6s to over 45s, and winning premierships in the men's under 21Bs, men's over 35Bs and men's over 35Fs. The club is committed to supporting its male and female players from the junior ranks and beyond, as well as continually improving in every area of its operations. It is little wonder that in 2018 the Bonnet Bay Football Club was named Best Community Sports Club in NSW by Sports NSW. Of course none of that is possible without the support of the dedicated volunteers behind the Bonnet Bay Football Club. I recognise Peter Burgess, John Watson, Mike Elliott, Ian Petrovski, Carla Richardson, Brett White, Kristianne Wennberg, Jeremy Hill and Nigel Wax. I congratulate the Bonnet Bay Football Club on another successful season and look forward to celebrating its fortieth next year.

**PAINT INNER WEST READ**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:12:12):** I recognise the Paint Inner West REaD, which is an early literacy program that is being run in partnership with the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre with the aim of getting young children and their families reading, singing and playing. The inner west initiative is part of a broader Paint The Town REaD campaign that spreads across five States in remote, regional and urban communities. The program is run through inner west libraries, online, and through book boxes spread throughout the community that feature books for children and babies.

The program also has a very special representative, Garranga Bumarri, who is a pelican that has laid a special egg that grows until it finally hatches when the children sing and read to it. Just a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of meeting this pelican outside the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre at the launch. I thank Enmore TAFE and community members for building the book boxes and all the families who decorated them. I also recognise the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre team, especially the manager of the community strengthening group, Elaine Macnish, and thank all those associated with the centre for their work in the community to support to promote this program and reading for young people in our community.

**DAVID STIMSON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:13:17):** On Tuesday 29 September the Premier and I presented Mr David Stimson with the NSW Government Community Service Award. The award recognises individuals in New South Wales who have substantially helped to improve the quality of life of members of their community, above and beyond their regular call of duty. David is the district officer and currently is acting as coordinator for the Southern Highlands Rural Fire Service. During the summer bushfires David was the community liaison officer for the local RFS teams battling the fires. David extensively prepared the community and informed all residents of the impending fires, as well as the action required. Owing to Mr Stimson's terrific organisation and communication skills, our community was ultimately much better prepared. His work and dedication during that time was outstanding. There is no doubt that the several meetings he held saved lives and homes. On behalf of the entire community, I say thank you to David.

**MAITLAND BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:14:15):** Few parts of my electorate of Maitland have been as hard hit by COVID-19 as small businesses, yet this is a time where they remain essential to the ongoing physical, social and economic health of our community. Today I pay tribute to the Maitland Business Chamber and its ongoing commitment to support the operators and entrepreneurs who call our city home. The chamber's activities include advocacy and engagement, events such as monthly breakfast or lunch meetings, the small business summit and marketing activities. During the coming year the chamber's activities will be directed by members of its new committee, and I welcome incoming president Shane Hamilton, vice-president Michael Maffey and treasurer Louise Lennox to their roles. Shane, Michael and Louise will work with the support of diverse group of executive members including Andrew Mason, Melissa King, Andrew Vile, Helen Oswald, Iain MacDonald, Melanie Power, Melanie Thornton, Sachin Joshi and Randeep Singh, as well as executive assistant and member liaison officer Kate Meyn-Shrimpton. We thank them for their contribution to our community.

**GULGONG MULTIPURPOSE SERVICE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:15:21):** In recent times a lot has been said and written about the doctor situation at the Gulgong Multipurpose Service—the MPS. For several months the facility has not been accessed by a doctor and that has led to relying solely on the fantastic nursing staff, along with telehealth and video services, which everyone concedes is not a viable long-term scenario. I have met with staff at the MPS, along with the town's medical centre. I have discussed the situation directly with the Western Local Health District and with health Minister Brad Hazzard. I take this opportunity to thank Sharelle Fellows and Kathy Pearson for their tireless dedication in distributing a petition throughout the Gulgong community.

During a recent visit to Gulgong I had a brief chance to discuss matters with them and I fully understand the impact felt by many after the death of Dawn Trevitt at the MPS just a couple of weeks prior. I pass on my sincere condolences to Dawn's family and friends. I gave Sharelle and Kathy my word that I will continue to work towards a resolution, and I will do whatever I can to help find a way forward and ensure that the current and future health needs of this community are met in the best possible way.

**JENNY POLIMENI**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (17:16:22):** I, too, congratulate Jenny Polimeni on raising \$34,864 over a single weekend for Ronald McDonald House. This year Jenny's son, Lui, would have celebrated his twentieth birthday, but tragically he passed away in 2016 following an on-field incident while playing rugby

league for his beloved Gundagai Tigers. To honour her late son Lui's birthday this year, Jenny decided to hold an art exhibition, *20 for Lui*, at Jugiong Hall with a series of 20 artworks telling different stories about Lui's personality. Jenny set out to raise \$10,000 for Ronald McDonald House and remarkably raised \$34,864, with all 20 pieces selling out and demand for more. Visitors as far as Albury and the South Coast travelled to Jugiong to attend the exhibition. Well done, Jenny, on this wonderful achievement

#### **ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE BRUCE LANGFORD VISITORS CENTRE**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:17:24):** The Royal Flying Doctor Service Bruce Langford Visitors Centre in Broken Hill has been ranked as Broken Hill's most popular tourist attraction by worldwide Tripadvisor 2020 Travellers' Choice. Whilst this is an outback tourist destination, it is the work of staff and volunteers who showcase the history and operations of the Royal Flying Doctor Service to the visiting public that I acknowledge in this House. The Mantle of Safety Museum showcases the world of heroic doctors, nurses, pilots and outback communities and over 92 years of aeromedical history. So many of my communities in Barwon rely on this outstanding service for their medical and allied health needs. Proceeds from the tours assist Royal Flying Doctor Service operations. Congratulations go to the hardworking team members at the Bruce Langford Visitors Centre on this tremendous effort.

#### **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:18:14):** Today, 15 October, marks the International Day of Rural Women. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the critical role that women play and their contribution to agriculture, business and community life in our rural and regional areas. We know that women living in regional and rural areas face unique challenges and it is women who are often the ones who lend a listening ear, who put themselves second and who lift up those around them when times are tough. The theme for 2020 is building resilience in the wake of COVID-19 and supporting our rural women, who are often the lifeblood of our communities and the ones who lift up those around them in tough times. The Goulburn electorate is proud to be the home of Krystaal Hinds, 2020 Rex Airlines Regional Woman of the Year. I invite members to join me in acknowledging Krystaal and all women for their generosity, selflessness and the work they do every day to help our communities recover and thrive.

#### **TURBANS 4 AUSTRALIA**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:19:16):** Turbans 4 Australia is a terrific local community organisation that supports those in need across western Sydney and right across Australia. The organisation has been of great assistance in regard to COVID-19. The members of Turbans 4 Australia have prepared and cooked countless meals for Australians and migrants who face homelessness or are short on food for themselves or their families. During the 2019-2020 bushfires the Turbans 4 Australia team were fantastic in their support of regional communities in New South Wales with food and water assistance. The team of many volunteers helped to transport 80 tonnes of food and 120,000 bottles of water to 12 towns across the North Cost and South Coast. The organisation also fundraised \$10,000 whilst ensuring that emergency services personnel were given hot meals. Turbans 4 Australia are a team of around 80 volunteers who selflessly give their time to communities across western Sydney, including the Seven Hills electorate. I thank them for their support of the Australian community during the bushfires and the current pandemic.

#### **COUNCILLOR LORRAINE WEARNE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—**I would like to recognise and congratulate Councillor Lorraine Wearne on 25 years as Councillor in Parramatta. Councillor Wearne was elected to Parramatta City Council in September, 1995 and became the first woman to be elected Lord Mayor for 2000-2001 and again for 2011-2012. She has outdone herself in her involvement in various local and community work including five years in the Australian Local Government Woman's Association during this time, winning the Parramatta Woman of the Year award in 2000 and receiving the Centenary Medal for services to Local Government. As the only other woman to ever serve as Lord Mayor of Parramatta, I appreciate what a trailblazer Lorraine has been. She has been widely respected for her ongoing dedication to the community and is a prime role model for women and men alike.

#### **JASON BELMONTE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—**I wish to recognise Jason Belmonte of Orange. Jason, now a world champion professional ten-pin bowler, whose roots in the sport commenced at 18 months of age when he, necessarily, wrangled the nine-pound-plus bowling ball with both hands in the alleys of his family's local business, Orange Ten Pin Bowl. Perhaps it was the essential two-handed bowl of the heavy bowling balls at that tender age which cemented Jason's unique, and now iconic, style which he has mastered to deliver many amateur and professional wins in the sport. Jason clocked-up his twenty-fifth Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) tour win on 4 October 2020 in the PBA World Series of Bowling XI Chameleon Championship held in the USA. Jason

defeated Brad Miller in the championship match 232-202 to claim his third career, and second consecutive, Chameleon Championship title and twenty-fifth career PBA Tour title. Jason has an astonishing record in his professional career, which commenced in 2009. Jason is a three-time world champion, having won the PBA World Championship in 2017, 2019 and 2020. Congratulations, Jason! We are proud to have you represent our nation on the international sporting stage and wish you all the best in your future sporting endeavours.

#### **BALI BOMBINGS 18TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—It was an honour to lay a wreath at the Bali Memorial on the 18th anniversary of the Bali Bombings. The Bali Memorial was erected in 2003 on Dolphins Point in Coogee to remember the 88 Australians who lost their lives in the bombings of Kuta in 2002. Included amongst the 88 were 20 local people, from across the Eastern Suburbs, all of whom have their name engraved on a plaque that sits alongside the memorial. Dolphins Point itself was renamed in 2003 to recognise and remember each of the Members of the Coogee Dolphins Rugby League Club that lost their lives in the bombings. This tragic event stays with the family and friends of all those who lost their lives, as well as our community that continues to grieve their loss. Thank you to Randwick City Council for a beautiful and fitting commemoration ceremony.

#### **RANDWICK CLUB AND COOGEE BEACH CLUB DONATE IRB TO COOGEE SLSC**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to thank and acknowledge the amazing efforts of the Coogee Beach Club and the Randwick Club for their sponsorship of the new Coogee Surf Life Saving Club Thundercat IRB. The electorate of Coogee is lucky to have some of the best and most widely-visited beached in the world, and as such, they rely on our volunteer and professional surf life savers to ensure that everyone, from locals to tourists, remain safe. This new Thundercat IRB will play a significant role in increasing the rescue readiness of the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club, in what I am sure will be a very challenging summer. This new vehicle, and the work that our surf life savers do is so essential in allowing both locals and visitors to enjoy our wonderful, natural asserts in safety. So to the Randwick Club, the Coogee Beach Club, thank you very much for your donation and ensuring our beaches remain safe this summer, and all of our surf life savers, thank you for the work you will do over this summer!

#### **HELEN BROWN**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I rise to congratulate Helen Brown of Yamba who was recently named the 2020 NSW Volunteer of the Year for the Upper North Coast as well as Senior Volunteer of the Year. Helen is a Board member of the Aboriginal Legal Service North Coast Region, and a Committee member of the Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre and has dedicated her life to helping people in need. The Clarence Valley is certainly a better place for the volunteer work that Helen has undertaken. Congratulations Helen and thank you.

#### **JORDANIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION'S CHILDREN'S ART EXHIBITION**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Great to join the Australian Jordanian Community Association and open their Children's art exhibition. The Australian Jordanian Community Association was established by a passionate group of Jordanians living in Australia looking to promote Jordan as the stable and peaceful country that it is. As they couldn't come together for the Jordanian Independence Day, the Australian Jordanian Association invited children in our community to take part in celebrating this occasion by participating in an art competition held during the exhibition to promote Jordanian culture. The event was rich with Jordanian artworks, food, informative reading materials and furniture making it a truly enriching experience and the artworks created by the children were truly inspiring. It was a great way to finally come together again. Well done Australian Jordanian Community Association.

#### **PETER SKINNER AND GEORGE BASS SCHOOL**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I recognise the tremendous contribution made to George Bass School and the local community by former Principal Peter Skinner. Mr Skinner served as George Bass School Principal since the School's inception in 2014, and his years of dedication and service have shaped George Bass School into the excellent educational facility it is today. Between 2016 and 2019, enrolments at the School increased by more than 10 per cent. Mr Skinner deserves commendation for this accomplishment, as do the faculty for their expertise, experience and passion for working with students with disability. Mr Skinner has also served as the President of the Special Education Principals' and Leaders' Association since 2015, to further advocate for the needs of disability educators, principals, leaders and students. I congratulate Mr Skinner on his new role with the Department of Education, and thank him for his commitment to the students, parents, staff and community of George Bass School over the last six years. I also congratulate George Bass School's new Principal Ms Louise Gomersall on her new role, and acknowledge P&C President Ms Jordan Kuijpers, and look forward to seeing the School and community continue to thrive under their leadership.

### CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I am delighted to offer my ongoing support for the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association, one of the many local sporting clubs in the Bankstown area that have managed to overcome the challenges posed by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. In 2019 the Association received \$30,000 through the Community Building Partnerships (CBP) grants program to renovate courts at the Roger Bowman Tennis Centre at Sefton. Like many sporting clubs across the local area, the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association was forced to suspend all competitions and tournaments at the height of the COVID-19 restrictions. However, the Association has successfully ensured the viability of local tennis through the stewardship of its Council of Management and their ongoing commitment to the sport. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association President Mr Roger Pitt, General Secretary Ms Adele English, Senior Vice President Ms Linda Wright, Chief Financial Officer Ms Rebecca Mills, Mentor and Life Member Paul Burgess, as well as all the other members of the Association's Executive, and commend them for their leadership of the Association.

### ASQUITH MIXED PROBUS

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like acknowledge the hard work of the Asquith Mixed Probus Club who have donated 330 knitted dolls to Westmead Children's Hospital. Member of the group have been knitting, stuffing and adding faces to the dolls to be given to sick kids in hospital. They do this each month on a Wednesday at the home of the convenor Barbara Williamson. They have been doing this for many years, bringing a smile to the faces of hundreds of sick kids. Thank you Barbara and her team of knitters at Asquith Mixed Probus for your generosity and giving back to kids doing it tough.

### BOBIN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND KIM MCDONALD

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to congratulate Bobin School of Arts and Vice president of the committee Kim MacDonald after they were named as finalists in the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Crown Land Manager Excellence Award and Individual Excellence in Crown Land Management award. Kim showed just how much the hall means to her during the November 2019 bushfires when she and her partner Gary lost their own Farmhouse to fire while they protected the hall with a garden hose. Kim was also key in establishing the hall as an evacuation centre and a bushfire recovery centre making it a vital rallying point for the community. I again congratulate Bobin school of Arts and Kim MacDonald and wish them luck ahead of the November 20 awards presentation.

### GALLEY IN THE GARDENS STUDENT AWARD

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to congratulate Bulahdelah Central School Student, Jake Billingham after he won the Galleries in the Gardens inaugural Student Art Award. His winning artwork 'Thanks Dad' was unanimously chosen by the judges. The piece is a three metre high drawing created using just three pencils and depicts Jake growing up while looking up to his Father. The artwork was described by the President of the Galleries in the Gardens Lesly Stevenson as a brilliant work with excellent composition and perspective. The work has also been praised by his teachers who called the piece powerful, emotive and reflective. I also extend congratulations to Jakes fellow pupils Annabella Whyman and Natasha Veith who were highly commended by the Judges for their art works and Harrison Hughes who received a certificate of merit for his piece.

### MARYLAND TIGERS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Our local sporting organisations are always doing their bit for our community and the Maryland Tigers lead by example. The Club recently held their annual charity day to raise money and awareness for Epilepsy Action Australia. The day is held in memory of Steven "Johnny" Iles and Meg Walsh. On the day, the team wore a specially designed jersey which was auctioned after the game. They donated \$1 from every beer sold on the day plus held a number of raffles. A successful day saw the club raise \$4221.50, which will be donated to Epilepsy Action Australia. They also managed to get a win over the Aberglasslyn Ants 28-14. Well done to the committee and volunteers at the Club, including President Mitch Flanagan, Peter Graham, Brad Sobczak, Scott Jackson, Jason Darr, Jeremy Lowe, Lincoln Moodie, Luke Mackay, Dylan Baker, Nicole Hooker, Emma McGowan and Hayley Lott. Thank you to the local businesses who helped out the Club on the day as well, White Line Road Marking Services and the Racecourse Hotel.

### LEMON GROVE HOTEL AND MARYLAND TAVERN

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Healthcare workers, in particular, have been at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic, working to ensure the safety of the community whilst keeping the virus at bay. Healthcare



workers, who have continued to work throughout the pandemic, have not had the luxury of working from home like many others. The Lemon Grove Hotel and the Maryland Tavern recently launched a 50% off food initiative for healthcare workers for the month of September. Both hotels offered half price food for all health workers who displayed their Health Workers ID card when having dinner. The initiative was driven by the Lemon Grove Hotel's publican Wayne Stewart, who wanted a chance to show his gratitude to those tireless healthcare workers, who put their families at risk every time they attend work. He believes a gesture like this is a small token of gratitude compared to the sacrifice healthcare workers make every time they attend their workplace. Thank you to Wayne and all the staff at both the Lemon Grove Hotel and Maryland Tavern for this great initiative.

### **BAYSIDE COUNCIL**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise the hard work of Bayside Council staff, management and Councillors as they finalise their 2020 financial statements. As some here may be aware, Bayside Council has been subject to a number of disclaimed audit opinions over the last few years, following the Council merger and the findings of Operation Ricco. The issues revealed by Operation Ricco meant that Bayside Council was referred to the Auditor General for their ongoing auditing until an unqualified audit opinion could be achieved, imposing audit requirements on the Council beyond anything I had seen in my thirty years of professional practice in financial services and accounting. I am happy to report to the house that it appears that Bayside Council is now set to receive an unqualified opinion of audit for their 2020 financial statements. This significant improvement, entirely skipping over the Council's goal of achieving a qualified audit opinion, has only been made possible by thousands upon thousands of hours of staff time in the council's finance and property departments. I wish to once again congratulate these staff for all their hard work, as Bayside Council reaches a significant milestone in turning the page from Operation Ricco.

### **ARCHBISHOP'S AWARDS 2020 – KOLIVETTE VA**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Kolivette Va of Patrician Brother's College Fairfield who recently received the Archbishop's Award 2020 for student excellence. Kolivette has made an outstanding effort to contribute to the Catholic community, both at Patrician Brother's College and in the wider parish. As a Liturgy Prefect, he has been instrumental in shaping the spiritual life of the college he attends. He also leads the college social justice group "The Breastplates" which involves active volunteering for the St Vincent De Paul outreach projects. Kolivette is also an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, serving both at College and in his own parish at Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Mt Pritchard. He is also a talented musician and uses this gift to sing in the choir as well as playing the piano for Mass, weddings and funerals. Kolivette is an extraordinary role model for his peers and I commend him for all the hard work he has done which has led to him being the recipient of an Archbishop Award 2020 for student excellence.

### **ARCHBISHOP'S AWARDS 2020 – THERESA BUI**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Theresa Bui of Mary MacKillop College, Wakeley who recently received the Archbishop's Award 2020 for student excellence. Theresa has contributed in an outstanding manner both at the college she attends and in her parish at St Mary Queen of Heaven in Georges Hall. Theresa is an altar server as well as a member of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Society. As the college Justice Captain she is responsible for encouraging students to get involved in social justice initiatives and fundraising. She is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, regularly participates in the college's Courage, Lenten and Advent programs, and is actively involved in the St Vincent De Paul initiatives. Her involvement in the community in initiatives such as donating blood, volunteering at the local aged care facility and assisting at the RSPCA show her Christian sense of duty to the people around her. I commend Theresa for all the hard work she has done which has led to her being the recipient of an Archbishop Award 2020 for student excellence.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THIRUKKURAL**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—The Electorate of Prospect is home to a vibrant Australian Tamil community. The Tamil community has a rich and ancient heritage which is celebrated annually at the International Conference on Thirukkural. The event is based on the classic Tamil text of Thirukkural. The Thirukkural, composed by Academic Thiruvalluvar, is one of the two oldest works known to exist in Tamil literature. This classic text is used as a guide to address various conflicts whilst promoting peace and harmony. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this year's Conference on Thirukkural and Multiculturalism was hosted online. The five-day Conference commenced on 20th September 2020. I was honoured to participate in the online event and joined Guests of Honour, Professor Armoogum Parsuramen, President of the International Thirukkural Foundation, Mr Thiru Thirunanda Kumar, 'Thirukkural and Youth' representative, Dr. Chandrika Subramaniyan, Conference Director and Dr Jai Ganesh, Programme Director. I would like to thank the International Thirukkural

Foundation (Mauritius) and the SRM Institute of Science and Technology, for co-hosting the informative event. I look forward to joining the Tamil community in person to celebrate their vibrant and unique culture.

#### **CREATING CANOPIES IN GREATER SYDNEY'S TREE PLANTING EVENT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On 9th October 2020, the community of Prospect gathered on the grounds of Fairfield Hospital, to plant 1200 trees to create a green canopy that will benefit patients, staff and our local community. The 'Creating Canopies in Greater Sydney' tree planting event is a fantastic initiative organised by Landcare NSW, which is committed to planting 1 million trees in Greater Sydney by 2020. Landcare NSW collaborates with volunteers, individuals, businesses and Councils that will provide for the local environment and the broader community. The event was a community wide collaboration. I joined, my colleague Guy Zangari MP, Member for Fairfield, Paul Crowe, General Manager, Fairfield Hospital and local volunteers including Brittany Dickson, Miss Earth Australia. Furthermore, the undergrowth plants were donated by the Fairfield Council Nursery. I would like to thank Dr Adrian Zammit, CEO, Landcare NSW, who was on site with his team of volunteers to plant the new trees and undergrowth plants. I thank Landcare NSW for bringing the community together and ensuring there is a focus on developing the environment and improving the communities wellbeing in Western Sydney.

#### **LAKE MACQUARIE LANDCARE**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the wonderful and vital work undertaken by Lake Macquarie Landcare Volunteer Network Incorporated under the guidance of current chairman Bob Montgomery. The organisation has been instrumental in the ecological restoration and sustainable management of Lake Macquarie's natural environment for many years. We've seen great things happen in Lake Macquarie, but without the repair of our catchment and changing attitudes towards our environment it wouldn't happen. Landcare has been central to that. The organisation has more than 800 registered volunteers in 189 groups. Each group looks after its own patch of bush, creek, lake or foreshore and also works to raise community awareness about the environmental issues facing their local areas. This year alone, and amid COVID-19 restrictions, these Lake Macquarie volunteers have planted 5343 native plants in our area, weeded 4.9 hectares of bushland and provided almost 7500 volunteers hours of labour. I congratulate the Lake Macquarie Landcare Volunteer Network and thank each and every one of their volunteers on their tireless work to ensure that both the land-based and aquatic environments of Lake Macquarie remain healthy and flourish for generations to come.

#### **ROCKDALE SUNS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron)**—I inform the House of Rockdale Ilinden Football Club's victory in the NSW National Premier Leagues on Sunday, in a determined win over the North Shore Mariners 2-1. They are now the deserved Premiers for the 2020 season. The two goals were scored by Amaury Gauthier and Alec Uroevski. Special congratulations also go to former Pagewood Botany FC; Mitchell Stamatellis and Brayden Sorge who made such important contributions to the premiership success of this fine football club. This great football club has brought so much pride to the Bayside Council community. I congratulate the players, coaches, and staff, for this huge achievement in all the difficulty faced unprecedented season. Their under 20s team have also qualified for a semi-final this weekend against Sydney Olympic. I wish their team the best of luck and I congratulate this fantastic football club once again.

#### **RESOURCEFUL AUSTRALIAN INDIAN NETWORK**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the work of the Resourceful Australian Indian Network, a fantastic organisation in my local area. The Resourceful Australian Indian Network, or RAIN, is a not-for-profit community service organisation working for the local Indian Community. They offer services for those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, as well as seniors and other members of the community. The St George area is a great example of successful multiculturalism. The work of RAIN means that the Indian community are able to connect with the wider community and vice versa. It also helps to strengthen understanding and appreciation for the Indian community in our local area. Over the years, the NSW Government has been a great supporter of RAIN, with projects including access ramps and disabled toilets to improve accessibility to the premises. RAIN have been involved with programs such as the Celebrating Diversity and Seniors Festival Grants programs. I would like to thank Dr Sudha Natarajan and the whole team at RAIN for the work they have done and continue to do in our local community.

#### **ABORIGINAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR FINALIST – SHARLENE MCKENZIE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to acknowledge Sharlene McKenzie, who was a finalist for the Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award at last year's NSW Women of the Year Awards Ceremony. Sharlene has had a significant impact on the culture at 3Bridges Community and grown the organisation's services and connection to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the local area. She is now the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander Service Manager working with Justice, Health, Housing, families, youth and schools across the St George region. Sharlene provides advice to a broad range of working parties and services on mental health, carers support, suicide prevention, community engagement and cultural knowledge. She has connected with school communities in south-east Sydney and is significantly contributing to developing community capacity. I wish to take this opportunity in the House today to congratulate Sharlene for her nomination as a finalist for Aboriginal Woman of the Year. She is a role model and mentor to many young women and I look forward to hearing of the continuation of her hard work.

### **GUNDAGAI TIGERS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Congratulations to the Gundagai Tigers who have won this year's Group 9 first grade rugby league premiership. The Tigers were successful in defeating the other Group 9 competition heavyweight team, Tumut Blues, 40-18. The Tigers played a confident, intense game, had complete control from kick-off and won the ultimate grand final prize. Three Gundagai teams competed on grand final day with reserve grade winning the Burmeister Shield and the under 16s runners up in the Sullivan Cup. The proud town of Gundagai welcomed back its teams with a fireworks display and COVID safe gathering. Well done to the players, coaches, sponsors and supporters who work so hard and contribute so much to the success of sporting competition and participation.

### **CHARLESTOWN MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—I last spoke about Charlestown and District Meals on Wheels to recognise their fiftieth anniversary last year. Now, as then, their dedicated volunteers prepare and deliver freshly cooked meals hot, chilled and frozen three days a week. Their fifty-first year has thrown unprecedented challenges at our local Meals on Wheels, but I am pleased to report that they have risen to the occasion. They have adapted to become COVID-Safe and have maintained their services to our local community despite the extraordinary difficulties we have all faced over the course of 2020. When I visited recently, coordinator Donna diligently took my temperature and recorded my visit. I met with Donna, and other workers Karen, Anne, Celia and Jenny, and learned a little about the adaptations they have had to make to continue helping our community. I have volunteered there myself, and always found it a welcoming space. My sincere thanks to the wonderful, hard-working staff at Charlestown Meals on Wheels and all of their fantastic volunteers for adapting to this year's difficult circumstances.

### **THE MELT**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—The COVID-19 pandemic brought out the inventiveness and adaptability of Hunter businesses and inventors, with a number of businesses in the region joining together with academics to develop a cutting-edge prototype ventilator. Local electrical engineering company Ampcontrol was selected by the NSW Government to produce ventilator prototypes earlier this year. Ampcontrol is a partner in The Melt at Dashworks Makespace Warners Bay. The Melt is a collaborative hub allowing ideas to become reality through access to funding, expertise, equipment and pathways to rapidly develop and market products. Important parts of Ampcontrol's prototype were designed and 3D printed at the Melt, which was established by Dantia, Lake Macquarie's economic development company, in one of my proudest achievements as Lake Macquarie mayor. Hunter New England Health, University of Newcastle and Hunter-based electrical engineering companies Safeearth and NewieVentures also assisted in the prototype's design. Together, they were able to design and deliver a fully functional emergency ventilator prototype for clinical testing in just eighteen days. My congratulations to these organisations, the staff at the Melt and all of the incredible people who worked so hard to get this prototype ready for testing.

### **ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS DAY**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge that 14 October was Allied Health Professionals Day. Allied Health Professionals Day began as an annual tradition in 2018 when two clinicians in the United Kingdom established the Day to celebrate the contributions Allied Health Professionals make to our health system. The pandemic has further highlighted how essential Allied Health Professionals are to our health system. The work they do on the frontlines help keep us and our families safe and healthy, even putting their own health at risk to do so. Allied Health Professionals Day is also an opportunity to acknowledge the work the Health Services Union New South Wales does in supporting these workers in both protecting and enhancing their working conditions. I thank all Allied Health Professionals for the work they do in caring for the sick and vulnerable, without them our state would not have been able to manage the COVID pandemic. They are the true heroes of this pandemic.

### **GERALDINE MORAN ADULT VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Geraldine Moran of Cams Wharf for being named the 2020 New South Wales Adult Volunteer of the Year for the Hunter. Ms Moran founded the Centre for Hope in 2011, which helps disadvantaged young indigenous and non-indigenous people fulfil their potential. Since its founding in 2011 the Centre has provided 3,000 coaching sessions and supported more than 4,000 students. The Centre also supports programs such as One Mob Voice Choir, Wheels of Hope and workshops to address bullying in schools. Ms Moran volunteers up to 50 hours a week to ensure the Centre for Hope can achieve its mission objective and properly support disadvantaged youth. I congratulate Ms Moran, she is a very worthy recipient of the 2020 NSW Adult Volunteer of the Year Award for the Hunter. I would also like to thank Ms Moran for her dedication to our community through her work for the Centre for Hope.

### **RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NSW – NORTHERN REGION**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—On my recent working trip to Kyogle, I met with Chairperson Lynette Zito and Business Services Officer Kirsty Freeman, of the Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW – Northern Region. During my time as the Federal Member for Page, I secured longer term funding for the RFCS. As a longtime supporter, it was lovely to reconnect and get an update on the wonderful work the RFCS does for rural and regional communities. Funded largely by the Australian Government with a contribution from the NSW Government, the RFCS offers free, confidential and impartial counselling service and advice on grants, income support, health and safety, farm debt and more to eligible farmers, fishers, forest growers, harvesters and small related rural businesses. The RFCSNR, with a head office in Lismore, delivers an outreach program in 14 locations, including Tenterfield, Casino and Grafton, and employs 16 rural and five small business financial counsellors. I acknowledge the work of the RFCS in supporting farmers, small business, families and communities in regional and rural NSW impacted by the recent drought, bushfires and COVID-19. I thank CEO Gary Goldberg and hard-working staff members Gillian Casey, Nerelle Hosking, Julie Clifford and Cindy Prowse.

### **TRISH WEBSTER – MURWILLUMBAH MATTERS FACEBOOK PAGE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Trish Webster is an extraordinary woman from Murwillumbah, who dedicates herself to her community through her role as the sole administrator and moderator of the Murwillumbah Matters Facebook page. Trish established this community-focused page in 2016, intending to create a virtual place where local people can seek information, find out about local events and ask for help. The page has more than 21,100 followers. This number is astonishing for a country town like Murwillumbah. During the major flood in 2017, which badly impacted Murwillumbah and its surrounding area, the Murwillumbah Matters became a vital communication tool and crucial connector, linking people up with the available support. It became a reliable source where people could find the latest information and advice from services, including the State Emergency Service (SES) and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM). Born and raised in Murwillumbah, Trish lives in this beautiful town with her son, Thomas. Trish is currently studying the Individual Support course at the Murwillumbah Community College. She is also involved in the RSL Oxley Day Club. On behalf of our community, I thank Trish Webster for her contribution and commitment. I am proud to call her a friend.

### **MULLUMBIMBY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the Mullumbimby Neighbourhood Centre and its team of volunteers for bouncing back from a long Covid-19 hiatus to provide meals to those who are doing it tough in and around the town. The Centre began its new life with a barbecue every Wednesday, and followed up with the provision of healthy and tasty lunches four days per week – a service known as More Than a Meal. The lunches are being served up in the Centre's courtyard in accordance with social distancing and Health Department hygiene guidelines. Credit should go to More Than a Meal co-ordinator Mel Williams, who believes the service offers community connection and the opportunity to connect with other support services, including any one of the many that the Centre offers. I wish also to acknowledge the local grocery stores and produce outlets who are supporting the service with donations of fresh fruit and vegetables five days a week.

### **BALLINA ROTARY CLUB/MOMENTUM COLLECTIVE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the initiative of the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond in collaboration with Momentum Collective in creating care packs for women and children escaping domestic violence. The care packs contain the essentials a person needs when fleeing a home due to domestic violence, including \$100 worth of goods and \$100 worth of vouchers. Momentum Collective manages the women's and children's refuge, meaning the care packs are part of a 'first response' for clients, who might need the refuge's protection for a few days or longer. The goods are designed to bridge the gap for a week, and include toiletries, books, children's games and sanitiser. Vouchers are for fuel, food and stores selling day-to-day necessities. Momentum Collective is a business partner of the Rotary Club, the two groups having common values

and a shared interest in dealing with mental health issues and domestic violence. Momentum offers an always 'open door' and is close to both the Ballina police station and hospital. With the number of homeless women and domestic violence clients significantly increasing in the past six months, the collaboration between the two groups is a timely and welcome response.

#### **ACTIVE TRANSPORT GRANTS FOR TOONGABBIE AND WESTMEAD**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—The New South Wales Government is currently providing City of Parramatta Council with a \$4 million grant to deliver new cycleways and shared pathways. More than \$630,000 will go towards the creation of a shared path and boardwalk along the southern bank of Finlayson and Toongabbie creeks at Westmead. This is the first stage of the Finlayson Creek Cycleway which will eventually link to the Parramatta Valley Cycleway through the Westmead Health, Education and Innovation District. Funds will also ensure improvements to the footpaths and kerbs surrounding Parramatta Council's side of Toongabbie railway station. The two projects are a great win for Seven Hills Electorate residents, many of whom walk or cycle to work at Westmead Hospital and for the thousands which use Toongabbie Station throughout the week. These funds and projects are part of the New South Wales Government's \$710 million investment in walking and cycling infrastructure over the next four years. This brings the government's total investment in active transport to \$1.1 billion – the largest in our state's history.

#### **BUS ROUTE 611**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—Public transport options are aplenty in the Seven Hills Electorate with 5 railway stations, many bus routes and soon to be Sydney Metro West and Parramatta Light Rail stops. I want to focus now on bus route 611 which operates from Blacktown to Macquarie Park via the M2 with stops at Seven Hills, Baulkham Hills, North Rocks and Macquarie University. An election commitment of mine was more bus routes for Seven Hills Electorate constituents in the Blacktown City suburbs of Lalor Park, Kings Langley and Seven Hills. I am happy that the 611 bus route will benefit from 170 additional weekly services beginning 25 October 2020. The additional services will see more locals able to utilise public transport to get to the education and employment hub of Macquarie Park on weekdays and weekends. I thank the Minister for Transport and Roads, the Hon Andrew Constance MP, and the NSW Government for their continued support of more public transport options for north west Sydney residents.

#### **GAVIN DOUGLAS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge Mr Gavin Douglas. On Tuesday 29th of September, Premier Gladys Berejiklian and I presented Mr Douglas with the NSW Government Community Service Award. The award which recognises individuals in NSW who have substantially helped to improve the quality of life of members of their community. Mr Douglas has shown great dedication to the improvement and service to his local community in Gunning, the Upper Lachlan Shire and wider region. Working closely with a number of organisations locally including Council, non-government associations, the State and local business, towards new infrastructure and improved services. Gunning has only seen improvement towards the fantastic community it is today thanks to Mr Gavin Douglas. He has been involved in the Gunning District Association who have made a number of improvements to the village in recent years. Mr Douglas was intrinsic to establishment of the Youth Worker Social Inclusion Pilot, arranging youth events, advocacy for the Gunning Health Service and more community issues. He is an RFS Volunteer and during the height of COVID distributed support packs to vulnerable people and families in the region. Thanks Gavin, from the entire community.

#### **RICHARD LANE**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge Mr Richard Lane. On Tuesday 29th of September, Premier Gladys Berejiklian and I presented Mr Lane with the NSW Government Community Service Award. The award which recognises individuals in NSW who have substantially helped to improve the quality of life of members of their community. Mr Lane is an active member of the Southern Highlands community who dedicates a considerable amount of time, energy and money to ensuring all children in the region have access to pursue singing. He has shared his passion for music by founding the Wingecarribee Vocal Muster to find, support and encourage emerging young vocal talent by giving them the opportunity to perform for donated prizes, including cash and music tuition. The program also extends beyond vocal performance but also assists students in music and production elements of performance. The Vocal Muster connects with business and non-government associations to make entertainment accessible throughout the community including free events and, during the peak of COVID, with a virtual concert for aged care homes. Thank you Richard, from the entire community.

### SCOUTS NSW YOUTH SAFETY EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—The protection and wellbeing of young people is central to Scouts NSW. So I am pleased they have developed a new youth safety education campaign: 'Know It. Live It. Log It. Safe fun for All'. There are many local Scouts groups in my electorate of Davidson. These groups and the broader scouting movement endeavour to create an environment where all members know they have a right to feel safe, supported and protected. This ensures they have opportunities to thrive as future leaders of our society. To symbolise the next step in their journey as a youth safe organisation, the new campaign will have an even greater impact in safeguarding youth. Young people will learn the principles of 'Know It. Live It. Log It.', and be empowered to make these behaviours standard practice. I commend the scouting movement, led by Chief Commissioner Neville Tomkins OAM, and wish them future success.

### KATHY AND MICHAEL O'DONNELL

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I draw to the attention of the house Kathy and Michael O'Donnell for their longstanding efforts to make our community a better place to live. Communities flourish when caring, creative, and passionate people come together to create spaces where we can all thrive. Ferris Lane, otherwise known to locals as the 'Magic Lane' is a wonderful example of how a once neglected space can be transformed into a useful community space. Several years ago, Kathy and her husband Michael led the community effort to convert Ferris Lane from a derelict lane into a vibrant, plant-filled community oasis. Next time you walk by the Magic Lane and sample the community herb garden or take a peek in the community library remember that spaces like this are thanks to local visionaries like Kathy and Michael. I know I speak on behalf of everyone in Annandale when I thank Kathy and Michael for bringing a little touch of magic to our community.

### BALD FOR BOOBS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise today to acknowledge a brave and courageous local Laurieton Mum of three, Jo-Anne Cummins for her efforts in raising awareness on the importance of early breast screening for women in our community. It was a tumultuous end to 2019 for breast cancer survivor Jo-Anne Cummins after the discovery of a small lump last September that ultimately changed her life. It also gave her the motivation to encourage other young mums to have their breasts regularly checked. Now well on the road to recovery, Jo is determined to spread her message to help shine a spotlight on the risk factors associated with breast cancer for women, through a localised GoFundMe campaign called 'Bald For Boobs', with all funds going to the Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon charity. In October each year we recognise Breast Cancer Awareness Month which seeks to communicate a powerful reminder for women and indeed some men, to schedule a mammogram because early diagnosis is key to stopping breast cancer in its tracks. Partnering with her close friend Amber Cassidy, the dynamic duo will coordinate a breakfast for the National Breast Cancer Foundation on 31 October at Nellz Flipz' n Chipz in Laurieton.

### KINGSWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)**—As the end of the 2020 school year is quickly approaching, I wish to offer my congratulations to the incoming student leadership team of Kingswood High School. The leadership team for 2021 includes, Captains: Kaitlyn Fleming and Liam Nelson and Vice Captains: Reva Mahroke and Hershey Talingting along with Senior Prefects: Shaun Ashbee, Mohamed Bah, Marko Cholich, Anthea Faleafga, Christine Paschke and Balqis Rishamsulkamal. Student leaders play an important role and I have no doubt these students will make positive and valuable contributions across their school community.

### JUNE CAMPBELL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—This week the decades June Campbell has given to the Returned and Services League of Australia's Women's Auxiliary have been honoured with the presentation of a Thank You for Your Service Quilt. June, who lives in Tenambit, grew up as a Legacy ward. Her father served in the RAAF during World War II and lost his life in New Guinea. June and her sister were 'Legacy girls' until they turned 16. For many years, June has volunteered countless hours to Women's RSL Auxiliary projects including the sale of Legacy badges, sewing bags for the Invictus Games and knitting poppies. She has been heavily involved with both the Maitland and East Maitland RSL Sub-Branch Women's Auxiliaries, holding the positions of Treasurer, Secretary and President through the years. June also recorded 15 years' service as State Councilor on the Central Council of Women's Auxiliaries. The presentation of the Quilt, by State RSL Auxiliary Coordinator Mrs Pauline James AM, acknowledges the ultimate sacrifice paid by June and her family. It is a most fitting gift to a woman who has devoted so much of her life to helping veterans and their families. Thank you for your service, June.

### MAITLAND PICKERS WOMEN INTO GRAND FINAL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I rise to congratulate the Maitland Pickers Rugby League Club's women's Blues Tag team on securing a berth in this year's grant final, and to wish them the best of luck ahead of this weekend's season decider. The team qualified for the 2020 Newcastle RL Blues Tag grand final with a home-turf 8-3 victory against Central Newcastle on Saturday. The Pickers Women finished the competition in second position following a closely contested season, which, as with most sporting codes, experienced great disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health orders. The 2020 blend of existing players and anew faces managed to gel quickly as a team and, according to their coach Tony Howard, has approached the season with positivity and resilience, playing each game as if it was their last with enjoyment the first priority. The Maitland Pickers Blues Tag team will now meet South Newcastle in the grand final this Sunday, 18 October, at 9.30am on Maitland's No. 1 Sportsground. On behalf of the Maitland community I send best wishes to this team of athletes, co-captains Bree Lacy and Dufour. We'll be cheering for a Pickers victory!

### HEAD START HOMES

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I would like to put on record the innovative and creative approach of Head Start Homes to help people own their own home. Head Start Homes helps people in community housing make the leap into owning their own home and no longer renting. By acting as guarantor, Head Start Homes makes it possible for people without a deposit to get a foot in the home ownership door. Their clients are sole parents, Indigenous people and people with disability, whose step into home ownership means a vacancy opens up for another person on very long housing waiting lists. I've heard directly from the Head Start Homes team about their innovative non-profit approach working in cross-sector partnerships, and am pleased to promote and support this model that opens up pathways into home ownership for more people.

### THREAD TOGETHER

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—I commend the innovative work of Thread Together, who provide new, good quality clothing and shoes to people in need. Working from their shopfront on Oxford Street Darlinghurst, Thread Together reduces clothing waste by redirecting unsold clothes to people in our community who are doing it tough. Through partnerships with businesses, community and homelessness services, Thread Together saves clothing destined for landfill and makes it available to those in need. Helping both the environment and people in need. In just eight years, Thread Together has over 40 fashion partners making regular donations and have diverted over 1,200,000 items of clothing to more than 300,000 people. Those helped include people who are homeless, young people at risk, Indigenous people, domestic violence survivors, refugees and people who've been unemployed for long periods. Having good quality clothing cannot address poverty or unfair treatment, but it can make a difference to people's lives by giving some dignity and hope, whether it's a warm jumper in winter or an outfit for a job interview that makes you feel good. I congratulate Thread Together for the commitment to the community and the environment.

### CRONULLA RSL STINGRAYS FC

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate the Cronulla RSL Stingrays Football Club on its successful 2020 season in very challenging circumstances. COVID-19 brought many challenges for the Stingrays, beginning with a delayed start to the season and a reduced number of competition games once the season commenced. Through the challenges of COVID-19 such as reduced spectators at games and social distancing, President Matt Ackerman, Vice President John Cuciti, Secretary Lauren Plummer, Treasurer David Robb and other club officials carefully guided the club and its 650 players. The Stingrays were also very supportive of fellow Shire club, Caringbah Redbacks. The Stingrays generously helped the Redbacks play home games at Solander fields as North Caringbah Oval completed renovations. The Stingrays participated in the Play in Purple campaign to raise funds for pancreatic cancer with some teams purchasing purple socks to show their support. I congratulate the Stingrays W21C for winning their competition. All players, coaches and managers should be proud of their efforts.

### CARINGBAH REDBACKS FC

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate the Caringbah Redbacks Football Club on its successful 2020 season in very challenging circumstances. COVID-19 brought many challenges for the Redbacks, beginning with a delayed start to the season and a reduced number of competition games once the season commenced. Through the challenges of COVID-19 such as reduced spectators at games and social distancing, President Andy Neudegg, Vice President Steve Smith, Secretary Elizabeth Spink, Treasurer Andy Crawford and other club officials carefully guided the club and its 440 players. The Redbacks also faced the challenge of not having a home ground for the entire season as North Caringbah Oval underwent renovation and upgrade. Thankfully, with the assistance of Gwawley Bay FC

and Cronulla Stingrays FC, all Redbacks home games were able to be relocated. I congratulate the Redbacks 18D and 35E teams for winning their respective competitions. All players, coaches and managers should be proud of their efforts.

### COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—In my first speech to this Parliament, I called for a new focus on the teaching of languages in our schools, in particular Mandarin. Learning a second language can increase a child's ability to think creatively and critically, and has the potential to provide incredible economic and employment benefits for them in the future. With a diverse and vibrant multicultural community, the St George region has a large number of community language schools. Classes are held outside normal school hours, usually at local schools on weekends. The choice of languages to learn in the St George is amazing – Arabic, Croatian Greek, Hindi, Mandarin, Spanish, Tongan and intensive English are some of the choices. Learning a language is a difficult but rewarding task, and trying to do it online is a challenge, especially for younger children. I am so glad to see community language students return to the classroom for Term 4. The 3,000 community language teachers across NSW have done a remarkable job adapting to online learning and keeping lessons going. I thank each of them for their commitment to our children, and I thank the parents who volunteer to keep these community language schools going.

### SYDNEY TIGERS INNER WEST GIRLS CRICKET ACADEMY

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The inner west is nurturing the next generation of Women's Big Bash stars with the establishment of the Inner West Girls Cricket Academy. The Academy is a partnership between the Inner West Harbour Junior Cricket Association, Canterbury & Western Suburbs Cricket Association and Sydney Women's Premier Cricket Club. The Academy is skilling up the next generation of cricketers with mentoring from elite-level coaches, access to world-class facilities, and skill development. The aim of the Academy is to broaden the pool of players seeking selection for representative teams. Girls' participation in cricket has skyrocketed across the inner west up 61% in the past 4 years. Local well-established girls' teams include Ashfield Cricket Club, Marrickville Cricket Club, Summer Hill Cricket Club, and at the Randwick Petersham Club. The inner west is the home of the first girls-only competition in NSW, the Sydney Thunder Girls League. Best of luck to the thirty inner west girls competing in the Academy's local sixers league this month and thank you to all the clubs in my electorate who are getting girls involved in the best sport in the world.

### LEGAL PATHWAYS PROGRAM

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations to the Council of the Ageing NSW, Seniors Rights Service and other advocates for older people in NSW who have successfully won their campaign to extend funding for the Legal Pathways Program. COTA NSW reports that they have been informed by the Minister for Seniors that the NSW Government will commit funding to allow the program to continue, following news earlier in the year that funding would be discontinued. The Legal Pathways Program provides support and advice to vulnerable seniors at risk of financial abuse at a time when up to 14% of older people are estimated to experience elder abuse each year. The program assists older people in our community with documents including wills, ensuring power of attorney, and appointment of enduring guardianship. It is critical to ensuring older Australians understand their legal rights and obligations and are protected against financial abuse or exploitation. I thank all those solicitors who support the program across NSW and the extraordinary community advocates from COTA NSW, Legal Aid, the Law Society of NSW and the Seniors Rights Service who ensure the legal rights of older people in our community are protected and supported.

### STUDENTS HEAD TO GAME CHANGER CHALLENGE SEMI-FINALS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I congratulate the students at Beauty Point Public School who are heading to the NSW 2020 Game Changer Challenge semi-finals! The Beauty Point Team, Annika, Anni, Olle, Holly, and Sam from 6R have put together a design proposal to solve the real world problem "how might we use technology to bring everyone in our community closer together?". The Year 6 team achieved the design thinking trifecta of desirability, feasibility and viability. This design thinking challenge is open to all public schools across the state and centres on exploring tangible solutions for a real-world problem. Students are encouraged to learn new skills and unlock powerful design thinking tools and processes, while having a whole lot of fun along the way. Congratulations to Annika, Anni, Olle, Holly, and Sam and the best of luck for the semi-finals competition in October, where they will be guided by expert facilitators and thought leaders in technology and innovation.

### TARONGA ZOO'S NEWEST ADDITION

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, Taronga Zoo has recently welcomed a new sea lion pup to the Taronga Zoo family, and now the public is being invited to pick a name for her. Under the watchful



eye of her parents Nala and Charlie, the pup made her debut at Taronga's Seal Bay just in time for the recent school holidays. Australian Sea-lion numbers continue to decline due to isolated populations, over-fishing, and entanglement in fishing debris. Taronga Zoo's breeding program is ensuring an insurance population to protect this endangered species, and is providing education to visitors regarding the importance of protecting our diverse marine life. The public now have the option to choose from two names, Amalie which is a tribute to the pup's late grandfather and Nala's father Mallie, or Kailani which is of Hawaiian origin and translates to sea and sky. Thank you to the dedicated team at Taronga Zoo, and particularly to the marine mammal keeper team for their work in caring for this endangered species.

#### **RUBY ARNOTT**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise Miss Ruby Arnott of Canowindra. As a student of St. Edward's Primary School in Canowindra, last year Ruby entered the state-wide postcard design section of the 2019 CWA International Competition for Schools, for which she was recently awarded a certificate for 2nd place. The country of study for the 2019 competition was Papua New Guinea, and required entrants to design a postcard and write to someone discussing Papua New Guinea. Ruby spent time researching activities, food, languages and geography of Papua New Guinea to help her design and create her amazing postcard which placed her 2nd among the many entries from school students across the state. Ruby's award winning postcard featured a colourful illustration of native huts overlooking a field of flowers. Ruby addressed the postcard to her mother, relaying some facts and her perceptions of geographical features and local cuisine. Ruby's creativity is inspiring, and by coincidence, quite apt; Given that international travel is presently limited due to the pandemic, Ruby's project is emblematic of our experiencing international travel and experiencing foreign destinations, temporarily being relegated to our imagination. Congratulations on your amazingly creative artwork and for inspiring our imagination, Ruby. Well done.

#### **SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRIES, FREE MEALS AND OTHER HELP**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I would like to extend a big thank you to those in the Southern Highlands who have showed incredible compassion, kindness and generosity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many services and organisations in the Southern Highlands have provided food pantries, free meals and other emergency relief for community members. I would like to specifically mention Bowral Uniting church, C3 church, the Salvation Army, South Warmer's Café, St Stephen's, Moss Vale Anglican Church and PCYC Southern Highlands. I would also like to acknowledge Dhungung Food Share which distributes free food provided by Oz Harvest to Indigenous communities and families. Thank you to all those who are looking out for their neighbour and donating their time and resources at a time when so many have been disadvantaged.

#### **SUTHERLAND WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Sutherland District Hockey Club's Sydney Women's Hockey League team for taking home the premiership. It has been an exciting year for women's hockey in our Shire, with the opportunity to participate in the Sydney Women's Hockey League and elite pathways for local female players long overdue. In the past, some of our best local talent have sought other avenues to representative status due to Sutherland's inability to field an elite women's team. This season, however, players aged from 13 to 46 came together to play the sport they love, remaining undefeated throughout the competition and defeating Ryde three to one. I recognise the entire team effort behind this outstanding achievement, including women's convenors Jo Momsen and Ruth Sannes, coaches Kristen Agius and Sarah Dredge, manager Christa Rogerson, and players Ashton Waters, Paris Barnard, Jana Dimitrovska, Amelia Domrow, Kayla Edwards, Melissa Elkin, Megan Harrison, Grace Matthews, Zara Matthews, Hannah McClung, Camille Rogerson, Felicia Swift and Jillian Wyatt. I congratulate the team for winning the premiership during their first year in this competition.

#### **PONTIFEX JEWELLERS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—During Small Business Month, I acknowledge Pontifex Jewellers who have won a Sutherland Shire Local Business Award in the Jewellery Store category. Led by Ray and Evalyn Pontifex, this family business has been operating in Sylvania since 1983 and is a culmination of the family's passion for the finest jewellery and creating special moments for people. Over a 37 year period, Ray and Evalyn have been passing down their knowledge to their friendly staff who consistently provide clientele with the highest degree of customer service. The team not only offer an extensive range of quality jewellery and jewellery repairs, but also assist clients with designing perfect pieces unique to them. The numerous awards received and longstanding clientele that continue to trust Pontifex Jewellers with their special pieces are testament to the outstanding leadership of Ray and Evalyn as well as the wonderful service of their team. I congratulate Ray, Evalyn and the entire Pontifex Jewellers family for their continued success and extend my best wishes for the future.

### VISITOR ECONOMY PLANNING AND RED TAPE REFORM WORKSHOP

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—The tourism industry our South Coast community relies on has been hard hit this year, with drought, bushfires, flood and the COVID-19 pandemic all taking their toll. It was positive to recently welcome Minister Ayres and Destination NSW to the South Coast for a workshop to ensure all levels of Government are working together to help the industry, and provide a boost to local jobs and business. The workshop was aimed at identifying the restrictions that could impede the recovery and future growth of the visitor economy in our region, and I thank Shoalhaven Council, Kiama Council, Eurobodalla Shire Council and Bega Valley Shire Council for coming together for the morning. The NSW Government to date has announced over \$8.3 billion in measures to support business and the economy in response to COVID-19, and has now relaxed its stance on non-essential travel making it the perfect time to travel in Sydney and regional NSW. Local input into shaping what recovery looks like is vital, and I look forward to continuing to advocate for the local tourism sector to ensure we bounce back from this stronger than ever.

### RSPCA NSW

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—It was my pleasure to join RSPCA NSW CEO Steve Coleman, Member for East Hills Wendy Lindsay and Member for Holsworthy Melanie Gibbons to tour the construction site where a \$12 million expansion of the facility funded by the NSW Government is underway. The Shelter has served the community since the early 1970s, looking after thousands of animals and finding them loving family homes. I was delighted to announce \$12 million last year to ensure the facility can meet the space, welfare, health and safety needs of the animals, staff, and community now and into the future. The new Companion Animal Village will expand and improve kennel and cattery facilities, allowing even more furry friends to find a home, as well as increase capacity for various educational, training and community programs. The \$12 million investment builds on a previous \$7.5 million contribution by the NSW Government to rebuild and refurbish veterinary facilities at the RSPCA centre. I thank everyone who works and volunteers at RSPCA NSW for their tireless contribution to our community. I hope these upgrades make their job that bit easier, and the lives of thousands of animals better as they wait for their forever homes.

### THE AUSTRALIAN FOUNDATION FOR DISABILITY (AFFORD)

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to speak about The Australian Foundation for Disability (AFFORD), who has partnered with the charity, Heroes with Ability, to provide some COVID-safe football training sessions held at Michael Clarke Leisure Centre. Those who attend AFFORD's Lurnea Day Programs are participating in the program, which is aiming to support individuals with disability to stay active, when it has been difficult to do so in the current climate. The sessions also encourage the individuals to learn football skills and also meet new people. The programs encourages individuals with any disability to play a modified competition of touch football that ensures that everyone gets to be a part of a team and develop their skills. It is great that AFFORD is offering this for individuals so that they can be back playing sport and keeping active, and encourages them to get involved and make a contribution to their team. Once again Mr Speaker, I'd like to commend AFFORD and Heroes With Ability for starting up this great initiative. Thank you.

### NEW POLICE RECRUITS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, I offer my congratulations to the newest recruits of the NSW Police Force. Police Commands and Districts across the State will greatly benefit from the addition of 192 police recruits. I would like to especially welcome the 3 new police recruits to Liverpool City Police Area Command, and the 7 new police recruits to Sutherland Shire Police Area Command. I commend these new recruits for completing their training successfully. It is true that they have joined the NSW Police Force at a trying time, with the State in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, I trust that these new Police officers will serve to protect our local community. I would also like to acknowledge the NSW Government's investment of \$583 million last year, which was a commitment to introduce 1500 extra police over four years in an effort to enhance community safety. These new recruits are a reflection of this commitment. Once again Mr Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the new NSW Police Force recruits, and wish them all the best for their policing careers.

### JANE ALT

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I commend Nutrien Glen Innes agent Jane Alt on being named a finalist for the Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association, Australian Community Media Agency Award. Jane has been recognised as one of the best livestock and property agents in the country for the Nutrien Glen Innes team's successful digital marketing strategy and online delivery of their livestock and real estate marketing campaigns. The next stage of the finalists is heading to Orange to face a panel of judges in October. I congratulate Jane on this being her first nomination for the Award and wish her all the best for the upcoming stage.

**LINDA FRAZER**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate Linda Frazer of Singleton who has been honoured with a Distinguished Service Award from Red Cross. This is one of the highest awards within the Red Cross organisation. Linda was recognised for her work with the Singleton branch, in particular emergency services. Linda has been a member of the Singleton branch since 1983 and has held various executive positions including President. In 2018 Linda was made Patron of the Singleton branch. Again I congratulate Linda for her honour and thank her for her dedication to Red Cross and the community.

**WARIALDA HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise the community achievements of the Warialda Hospital Auxiliary. In particular I recognise Noelle Hatcher, Jean Willmot, Ged Kennedy, Pauline Baker, Margaret Keath, and Cheryl Turner for their individual service of between ten and fifty years. The Warialda Hospital Auxiliary has provided exceptional items to their hospital such as special mattresses, lifters to help the nurses, blanket warmers, and even a vein finder. This has been an extraordinary effort of fund raising, incorporating the kind of country support that makes me very proud. This has filled the gap between hospital need and what the government can supply. Added to that is the time the Auxiliary helpers give in visiting patients to add a bit of comfort to the long hours in hospital. As much as the hospital depends on the Warialda Hospital Auxiliary, the members of the Auxiliary gain from the sense of purpose and family from the wonderful work they do. I commend the Warialda Hospital Auxiliary and give special mention to the longstanding members, Noelle Hatcher, Jean Willmot, Ged Kennedy, Pauline Baker, Margaret Keath, and Cheryl Turner for their efforts in keeping the ties of community so essential to health and well-being.

**FRIENDS OF BELGENNY FARM**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—The Friends of Belgenny Farm are a group of locals who are committed to ensuring the future of Belgenny Farm by encouraging the use, enjoyment and benefit of Belgenny Farm by the Macarthur region and beyond. They assist in improving community awareness of the educational, cultural, agricultural and historical functions of Belgenny Farm and for such other purposes as may be approved by the Expert Advisory Committee. I recently had the pleasure of attending the Friends of Belgenny Farm meeting and it was wonderful to hear of all the work that they do. In August I was with the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, the Hon. Kevin Anderson MP at Belgenny Farm to see the historic farm and discuss the economic impact of COVID19 on hospitality venues. I encourage all couples considering a wedding reception location to have a look at the wedding photos under Gallery on the Belgenny Farm website.

**WESTERN SYDNEY AWARDS FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE – PINEAPPLE MARKETING AND SOLUTIONS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Mr Speaker, recently the finalists for the GRENKE Excellence in Marketing award at the 2020 Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence were announced. These awards celebrate business excellence, tenacity, resilience and success stories of the Greater Sydney region and I would like to recognise Pineapple Marketing and Promotions for having been a finalist in this category. I wish Louise and the team at Pineapple Marketing and Promotions all the best in this award and success for the many more awards to come.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 17:21 until  
Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 12:00.**