



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday, 10 November 2020

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 10 November 2020

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ROUTINE OF BUSINESS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business on Wednesday 11 November 2020 prior to 2.15 p.m.:

- (1) At 1.00 p.m. the Speaker takes the chair.
- (2) Giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices), for up to 10 minutes.
- (3) Government Business.
- (4) At 2.00 p.m. Committee Reports—Take-note debates, for up to 15 minutes until 2.15 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Wednesday 11 November 2020 to permit the resumption of the adjourned debate and the passage through all stages, at that or any subsequent sitting, of the Bushfires Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 and the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020.

Motion agreed to.

[Notices of motions given]

Bills

STRONGER COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 22 October 2020.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (12:17:35): On behalf of the Opposition I speak to the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. In the main the Opposition supports the bill. I note that it proposes to amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 and the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. The bill contains several amendments which go some way towards addressing some of the concerns of those who work in this sector and those who are victim-survivors of domestic violence [DV], as well as the expectation of communities that we strengthen our laws around the prevention of domestic and family violence.

Many of the proposals in the list of amendments appear to be justified. I will run through some of those quickly. The bill proposes to include "harm to an animal" in particular circumstances as part of the meaning of "intimidation" and to include that as part of the definition of domestic violence. The bill also contains an amendment to look at the situations in which our police force and our police officers issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders, also known as ADVOS. The bill proposes to allow for certain ADVOS to continue for up to two years after a term of imprisonment is completed or for another period that the court specifies to acknowledge a need that has not been addressed in our laws, which for some years many of those in the sector have been calling for.

The bill will allow for a court, in the interests of justice, to grant leave to vary or revoke an indefinite ADVO. It will make clear that an ADVO prohibiting the destruction of property also includes the prohibiting of the harming of animals. This particular prohibition has been the subject of much discussion in the media and the domestic violence sector of late, and it is a good proposed amendment. The bill also provides that a judge can advise a jury in domestic violence cases when there is an absence or delay in making a complaint in order to provide context around why survivors of domestic violence often delay due to the nature of the emotional response

in those situations. In the main, I support the primary intentions of the bill to increase the safety of victims and improve responses from police and the courts. I acknowledge that there has been a substantial cultural shift in this space over the past couple of decades, but we still need to go further.

I also acknowledge that the bill strengthens provisions around damage to property by extending the definition of an apprehended violence order in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 relating to the destruction of or damage to property of a protected person, which is taken to be specified in every order to include the harming of an animal. The introduction of provisions regarding harm or threats of harm to animals acknowledges the role that animal cruelty can play in intimidating victims to exercise control over their lives and the lives of their children. At its core, this bill—and others that deal with the prevention of domestic violence—includes the protection of children and animals on ADVO applications. These orders provide a critical form of civil protection for children impacted by domestic violence and should also be extended to pets, which are often part of the family.

In its position paper entitled *Police Domestic and Family Violence Policy and Practice* published on 7 November 2020, Women's Safety NSW noted that when we regard provisions within law in relation to a defendant's contact with their children, we should always be reminded that a parent's right to have contact with a child should not override that child's safety. That protection should also extend to animals, which are also part of the family. We see in the statistics and in the anecdotal evidence that there is an inconsistency in police responses to children's safety, and that is an ongoing issue that must be addressed. Given the role that animal cruelty plays in intimidating victims to exercise control over their lives and the lives of their children, it is good to see that this bill extends the meaning of "intimidation" as defined in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to include "harm to an animal in particular circumstances".

Domestic violence reforms must always reflect the nature of domestic violence dynamics. As many members know from cases in their electorates, domestic violence may span years or decades of a relationship. Physical and sexual abuse are extremely harmful and can be life threatening. Emotional and verbal abuse and other forms of coercive control can be equally devastating. Often they are invisible and are almost always part of the cycle of abuse. Protection should extend to all victims who seek protection and safety from domestic violence, including those requiring an ADVO, and should not be limited to victims of a domestic violence offence.

I have consulted the specialist domestic violence sector and I share the sector's concerns about some of the bill's provisions and its call for the strengthening of provisions in some areas and for the implicit incorporation of trauma-informed principles that are victim-survivor focused. In his second reading speech the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence said that the bill and its amendment components were part of government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. I hope members engage in a healthy, robust debate about strengthening some of the bill's provisions so that it goes some way towards what is required to protect women, children and families who experience domestic violence. The bill does not go all the way.

Recently the Government issued a discussion paper on coercive control that makes a number of suggestions for better rules and enforcement of apprehended domestic violence orders. Many of the proposals in that paper go beyond the scope of the bill. When it considers that paper and the views of the community, the joint select committee and this House should go a step further and strengthen a number of provisions that are not currently within the scope of the bill. I will go through some of the Opposition's proposed amendments. I acknowledge the good and tough work done in the specialist domestic violence sector in dealing with a number of very difficult issues in that space. I seek the Minister's response to the concerns raised by each of the Opposition's amendments.

The first concern relates to open court and court closures. The bill provides that certain parts of domestic violence proceedings in which a complainant gives evidence must be held in closed court unless a court directs otherwise. The only exception to the entitlement of a domestic violence complainant giving evidence in closed court is if a complainant chooses to waive that entitlement. Open courts should never be on the basis of the election of the defendant. I would like the Minister to respond to that point. The second concern relates to access to audiovisual links and other alternative arrangements. That must be the entitlement of the victim.

The Opposition proposes that the bill be amended to provide domestic violence complainants with the entitlement to give evidence using alternative arrangements or by alternative means, including audiovisual link in certain domestic violence proceedings. Many courts do not have the resources to allow that to happen. Legislation must be accompanied by adequate funding, adequate technical resources and training to ensure that courts can comply with that requirement and make it a legitimate option. Instead of video link being the exception, the legislation should make it the standard and the norm. The domestic violence sector's view is that only the complainant should be able to waive the entitlement to give evidence by alternative means. The sector also points out that there must be statutory review provisions for monitoring access, data collection and evaluation. Questions need to be asked, including: How many times is audiovisual link requested? How many times is it granted? What is granted, audiovisual link or screens? That information needs to be collected.

The Women's Legal Service NSW, Women's Safety NSW, Domestic Violence NSW and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia have all provided good feedback regarding the protection of witnesses. The protections must be extended to relevant witnesses appearing in domestic violence offence proceedings, apprehended violence order proceedings and prescribed sexual offence proceedings. Extending this provision to all apprehended domestic violence proceedings, not just those related to a domestic violence offence, as well as to associates of domestic violence complaints or complainants in prescribed sexual offences must be considered.

In relation to the amendment regarding judges' warnings, changes to the warnings given by judges that better reflect the dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on victims are incorporated in this component of the bill to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide for a warning that may be given by a judge in relation to domestic violence offences. Schedule 2 [7] and [11] provide that in a trial of a person for a domestic violence offence, if evidence is given or a question is asked of a witness that tends to suggest the absence of or the delay in making a complaint about a domestic violence offence, the judge is to give a warning about that delay or absence. A judge must not warn the jury that the delay is relevant to the victim's credibility unless there is sufficient evidence to justify such a warning. The warning may be combined, or given twice, if both a domestic violence offence and a prescribed sexual offence are alleged to have been committed by the person against the complainant.

This is an important part of the bill. There needs to be a context included in the training of those in the criminal justice system and police who respond to domestic violence offences. In order for the schedule to make sense there must be investment in resources for training. Some of the changes in these Acts eliminate current ambiguities, allow for clearer police powers and strengthen protections for victims. By way of example, schedule 1 [3] provides that a prohibition or restriction specified in a provisional order must not decrease the protection afforded to the protected person. If a prohibition or restriction decreases the protection, the prohibition or restriction is of no effect.

I turn to changes to and clarification of the definition of police initiated apprehended domestic violence orders. A police initiated order means a final apprehended violence order or an interim court order where the application for that order was made by a police officer or a police officer was a party to the application proceedings for the order. Our police are on the front line when they respond to domestic violence offences. It is critical to acknowledge that we must enable our police through training and resources to respond to the many complexities that they might find in a domestic violence offence and the process thereafter through the justice system. I hear many stories, and I am sure other members do. We tear our hair out when the police respond to a family and get caught up in hurdles in the court system, or there is complete inconsistency in their response.

We must enable our police to respond which requires training and accountability mechanisms to be put in place. There must be comprehensive training for police in domestic and family violence issues. Accountability mechanisms must be put in place for police practices. I like to point out to many of the domestic violence committees in regional areas with whom I meet that, when those who work in this space are completely caught up in the angst, frustrations and hurdles within a system, there has been a cultural shift in police responses. When I hear that repeated to me time and again I often relay my experience as a little girl of the difference when police receive training and respond with a compassionate heart and when they do not. The police would turn up to my home and say to a very violent and drunken father that they would take him to the pub for a couple of drinks "until she and the kids calmed down".

That is not an appropriate response and our parliaments, laws and police now recognise that that was not an appropriate response. It is good to see that that attitude has shifted and there are more appropriate responses from some of the domestic violence liaison officers with whom I work. But the sector says that we need to go further. I move now to the calls from some in the special domestic violence sector and other stakeholders for additional reforms to increase the safe participation of domestic violence complainants in court proceedings. Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia and its CEO Karen Willis have said:

We welcome the provision for closed courts in proceedings for domestic violence offences in proposed s.289U, but this should be extended to stand-alone ADVO proceedings.

They go on to note:

We also welcome the presumption for complainants in proceedings for domestic violence offences to give evidence via alternative means and arrangements in proposed s.289V, but maintain that this option should be a right (rather than a rebuttable presumption), not only for complainants in domestic violence offences, but also for complainants in sexual offence proceedings ...

I note that direct feedback for the benefit of *Hansard* and for the Minister's response. The domestic violence sector and other stakeholders have requested consideration of provisions applying to all victims of domestic violence, not just those related to an offence, and cross-examination provisions. They question direct cross-examination of DV complainants in offence proceedings and AVO proceedings, which must be investigated further. There are

calls for cross-examination provisions to be prohibited, a matter my learned colleague the member for Liverpool will no doubt speak on; for closed court provisions to apply to ADVO applications; and for a strengthening of jury directions. The sector also asked for a review of court arrangements and practical adherence to trauma-informed practice through the implementation of designated DV and ADVO list dates, regardless of whether the defendant is represented or in attendance.

The sector also asks that comprehensive and ongoing risk assessment and safety planning before, during and after court proceedings include consideration of very practical needs: for example, how a domestic violence victim-survivor travels safely to and from court and whether they need child care. Further, I note that in some of the feedback, a review of court facilities to address safety issues—how domestic violence victims enter and leave the court and the provision of safe-room facilities—was also of concern. Rather than the complainant giving evidence remotely, they could give evidence in another venue and attend court.

We would like to see a substantial increase in funding for the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services to provide support to domestic violence complainants during hearings. All workers in the criminal justice system—including police, legal practitioners, the judiciary, support workers, court officers and interpreters—need increased specialisation for and ongoing training in sexual, domestic and family violence informed and trauma-informed practice about cultural safety, disability awareness and LGBTIQ awareness. I note the Minister's comment that the amendments support procedural improvements and aim to close gaps in the law. Domestic violence, he says—and it is true—is a complex crime because of the very personal, intimate relationship between perpetrators and victims. Cases are never clear-cut or black and white. I acknowledge the Minister's comment that reforms within the bill seek to ease a burden that many who work in the sector feel has existed for too long. There are important provisions here.

I finish by noting feedback from Women's Safety NSW that good steps are being taken in this bill. Measures are proposed for safer courts for domestic violence victims and for the proceedings around approaching court, experience within the court and beyond, but more is needed. The sector welcomed the reforms but noted that more is needed. It said quite clearly that missing from the package is the ending of direct cross-examination of domestic violence complainants by their abuser, and that there needs to be increased specialisation of magistrates to hear domestic violence matters. More importantly, substantial announcements have been made—and not just in court—about funding for domestic violence prevention and for the response to domestic and family violence, but it is not enough. It only addresses the tip of the iceberg.

We need frontline services—and I call it the "front line", with that association with war, because it often does feel like that for workers and for victim-survivors—to have access to money for caseworkers, whether they are soft entry points like neighbourhood centres, family support services or domestic violence refuges that have a feminist, specialist domestic violence framework. We know that the process is complicated, intricate and prolonged, and there are many hurdles. Women's Safety NSW has released a report, which was based on comprehensive feedback from members and survivors, on safer policing and safer courts. Even though we seem to have lost the momentum with prosecuting change in the space, I will finish with a comment by Hayley Foster, CEO of Women's Safety NSW in that report:

The reality is, we are facing a national crisis of violence against women in this country ... We need to act with urgency to put [in place the] measures we know will increase women's safety.

The cost of delaying these reforms is too high. I ask the Minister to respond to each of the concerns raised by the sector in his reply. I thank all the peak organisations and services that work for and with them to improve safety and the lives of victim-survivors. I note again Domestic Violence NSW and Delia Donovan, Women's Safety NSW and Hayley Foster, Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia's Karen Willis and her team, and all of those who work in services across each of our electorates. I hope that some of these proposed amendments today and the implementation of them from here on actually will make a difference to many lives—and, in fact, save lives.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (12:46:29): It is a pleasure to talk on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. I note that the Opposition agrees with the amendment brought before the House. I note also the comments of the member for Blue Mountains about the improvement in police ability and culture in dealing with domestic violence matters over the past few years. I concur with those comments. Domestic and family violence remains one of the most challenging social issues of our time. The Government has made combating the scourge of domestic and family violence a reform priority and this bill is the next step in that reform agenda. Apprehended domestic violence orders—or ADVOs as they are known—are an important tool for responding to domestic and family violence.

These civil orders are critical to protecting victim-survivors and to reducing reoffending. They can deter and prevent behaviours such as intimidating, threatening, stalking and/or approaching protected persons. They

can also deter reoffending by increasing the possibility of detection and punishment, and restricting access to victims. In its 2015-2017 report the Domestic Violence Death Review Team recommended:

That the Attorney General consider mechanisms to ensure that ADVOs are made for an appropriate duration, including: increasing the default length of ADVOs from 12 months to a longer duration to promote enhanced victim safety; and requesting that the Judicial Commission of NSW update the Local Court Bench Book or other education and training to invite judicial officers to consider factors relevant to setting an appropriate duration for an ADVO (including any period of time an offender is in custody, to ensure that the person in need of protection is protected upon the defendant's release). The Government has responded to this recommendation by introducing a series of reforms first legislated in 2018 amending the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. This package of reforms has been implemented in stages due to the complex and specific changes to IT systems, updates to regulations and the education and training of frontline staff necessary to support the different elements of the reforms. The majority of reforms legislated in 2018 have already commenced. They include doubling the default period of ADVOs from 12 months to two years, setting out factors that the court considers when determining the duration of an ADVO and clarifying that ADVOs may be sought and made for an indefinite duration. Those reforms commenced earlier this year and are indicative of the Government's ongoing commitment to strengthen protections for victims and survivors of domestic and family violence.

Amendments in this bill complete the package of reforms by enabling two outstanding reforms to be implemented, which will further strengthen the ADVO system as a whole and reflect the Government's commitment to tackling domestic and family violence. The first of those original reforms was the introduction of a new power to enable police to urgently vary the conditions of an existing ADVO in circumstances where there was an increased risk to the safety of the protected person that could not otherwise be managed. The ability for police to vary existing orders directly was designed to ensure that urgent risk arising from a rapid or sudden change in circumstances is addressed properly to ensure that persons in need of protection suitably and immediately receive that protection through an apprehended violence order with updated conditions. Without such a power an order would need to be varied by an application to court, which may not be able to address time-critical scenarios.

However, during the course of implementation it was identified that existing police powers to issue provisional ADVOs could be used to achieve the same outcome and would fast-track implementation, reducing the need for complex and costly information technology systems changes. Therefore, the bill repeals the previous proposal and instead introduces three clarifying amendments to support the use of provisional ADVOs to urgently respond to an increased risk to the safety of a protected person where there is an order already in place: to state explicitly that the existence of an interim or final ADVO does not prevent the making of a provisional ADVO; to specify that a provisional ADVO must not decrease the protection afforded to the protected person by any existing ADVO; and to specify that where conditions between multiple ADVOs are contradictory or inconsistent, the latest in time will prevail.

Enabling police to be able to change and vary a court order is an extraordinary power. However, robust safeguards are in place that apply to provisional orders that will continue to apply here. Provisional orders can only be made where an incident occurs between the protected person and the defendant and the police officer has a good reason to believe that the provisional order needs to be made immediately to ensure the person's safety and protection. Provisional orders can only be made by a police officer with the rank of sergeant or above. Additionally, all provisional orders must be considered by a court as soon as practicable. These safeguards will ensure that this reform for the issuing of provisional orders where court orders are in place is appropriate and balanced, while ensuring that our legal framework is responsive to the time-critical scenarios where changed conditions are required to ensure the ADVO continues to provide protection to a person at risk.

The second of the original reforms provided for an extended duration for ADVOs where the defendant was sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The duration of the ADVO was to be the head sentence for the domestic violence offence for which the offender was convicted, plus an additional two years. Those reforms were introduced to address the situation identified by the Domestic Violence Death Review Team that in some cases ADVOs expired while an offender was still in prison. This meant that victim-survivors did not have the benefit of ADVO protection when the offender was transitioning from prison to the community, a period which the evidence shows is one of heightened risk to victim safety.

Significant challenges and complexities were encountered in the implementation of this proposal, particularly to IT systems which were unable to support the reform as drafted. There was also some confusion and inconsistency about when the extended duration should apply. This bill repeals the previous proposal and instead makes amendments to section 39 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to achieve the desired outcome. At present, section 39 requires the court to make an apprehended violence order if a person is convicted of, or pleads guilty to, a serious offence. Where that offence is a domestic violence offence, the order made will be an apprehended domestic violence order.

The function of the amendments in this bill is to specify that when an ADVO is made under section 39, it will remain in force for the full sentence of imprisonment imposed at the time plus an additional two years. The court retains the discretion to set a different period if there is good reason to do so. Importantly, the extended duration will be calculated from the end date of the longest sentence imposed. This means that victim-survivors

will, as a minimum, be protected during the default duration of the ADVO—two years—after the defendant completes their sentence unless the court has a good reason to order otherwise. This will provide greater certainty to victim-survivors and help prevent the unnecessary trauma and inconvenience associated with seeking an extension during a prison sentence.

In effect, these amendments will overcome the operational complexities identified and achieve the original policy intention. In conclusion, the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 contains important amendments to provide greater protection and support to victim-survivors of domestic violence. It demonstrates that the Government's ongoing commitment to enhancing safety for victim-survivors of domestic violence and to reducing reoffending is at the heart of this Government's legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (12:55:50): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. I note that in leading for the Opposition my colleague the shadow Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the member for Blue Mountains, indicated that the Opposition does not oppose the bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 and the Criminal Procedure Act 1986.

The amendments include these proposals: to extend the meaning of "intimidation" to include harm to animals in certain circumstances in the definition contained in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act and to also make clear that the prohibition on damaging property extends to animals; to allow a court to grant leave if it is in the interests of justice to do so to make an application to vary or revoke an indefinite apprehended domestic violence order; to provide that ADVOs for certain prisoners continue for two years or another period specified by the court after imprisonment is completed; to provide that certain portions of domestic violence proceedings where the complainant gives evidence are in closed court; to provide complainants with an entitlement to use methods such as audiovisual link when giving evidence and to extend this same to ADVO proceedings that are related; to provide for a warning to a jury by a judge concerning delays in reporting domestic violence; and to ensure police can issue a provisional ADVO where there is a comparable final or interim order in place.

Most of the stakeholders and advisory groups are broadly supportive of the direction of the bill. They do point to some potential weaknesses in implementation relating primarily to resources. Domestic Violence NSW offered support for the bill but went on to say:

Instead of video link becoming the exception, the legislation suggests that it will become the norm. The practical issue here being the resourcing of the courts, in particular the Local Court system. Local Court is one of the only courts in New South Wales that could not facilitate remote listings/mentions during COVID. Practitioners, defendants and witnesses continued to physically attend court and still do. They have only a limited number of AVL suites for use during hearings. Because many are heritage buildings there are significant limitations which need to be accommodated for and AVL is often not available in regional and rural areas. Significant funding is needed to be allocated to ensure AVL facilities are installed in courts across New South Wales and officers trained to utilise them.

Domestic Violence NSW also stressed the importance of continuing efforts relating to the education and training of judicial officers and legal practitioners. Similarly, Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia welcomed some of the provisions in the bill, including the provision where any AVO made on conviction under section 39 will remain in force for an additional two years after the term of imprisonment ends. It went on to say:

However, there are a few issues that may need to be addressed. First, if the defendant is being sentenced for multiple offences one or more of which may constitute a "serious offence", and receives an aggregate sentence of imprisonment under section 53A of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, is the entire period of imprisonment taken into account or only a portion attributable to the serious offence? If the latter, how would the expiration date of that term be identified?

It also raises a further issue:

The second issue is that subsection (2) provides that the court need not make an AVO under the section if it is "not required (for example because a final apprehended violence order has already been made against the person)". If a final AVO was made at an earlier stage in the proceedings, the court may then not utilise section 39, so the person in need of protection would not receive the automatic benefit of the additional protection of two years. That additional protection should not be dependent on whether or not the final AVO was made under section 39 or at an earlier stage in the proceedings.

It also argues that the provision for closed courts should be extended to standalone AVO proceedings and not be restricted to domestic violence offences. Additionally, it argues that complainants giving evidence in domestic violence proceedings should have a right and not just a rebuttable presumption to give evidence via alternative means and arrangements. Importantly, it states:

Courts across NSW should be adequately resourced with the equipment to ensure this option is available in all courtrooms

It is also concerned at the use of the term "necessarily" in new section 294 (2) (a) and new section 306ZR (2) (a). It fears that the use of that term implies that the lack of complaint or delay in complaint may itself indicate that an

allegation is false. I also note that it further advocates for the protection against cross-examination by self-represented defendants of complainants in domestic violence proceedings and ADVO proceedings.

This is a matter that I think requires more contemplation and more work. I am interested in the Attorney General's response to the proposition that this be properly and more fully investigated. It is obviously a serious matter to prevent someone from cross-examining someone making an allegation against them. However, it has certainly been done in relation to a number of sexual offences. That principle has been established. It seems to me that going this further step is worth serious contemplation and I am interested in the attitude of the Attorney General in response. Having said that, as I have indicated, Labor does not oppose the bill.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (13:01:08): I speak in debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. Domestic and family violence is a terrible scourge that affects all parts of our State. The Government is strongly committed to combating domestic and family violence and it is a critical priority for reform. The bill provides reform that enables our legal system to be more responsive to the needs and experiences of people in regional, rural and remote New South Wales by amending the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Under that Act, which provides the legal framework for responding to domestic and family violence, apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs] are a tool of the justice system in the protection of victim-survivors and to reduce reoffending. ADVOs can deter and prevent behaviour such as intimidating, threatening, stalking and/or approaching the protected person. They can deter reoffending by increasing the possibility of detection and punishment, and restricting access to victims.

Every ADVO includes a number of prohibitions and restrictions on the person it is made against, to ensure that an ADVO is suitable to address the circumstances and the risk of the victim-survivor. Normally ADVOs are made by an application to a court, either by the victim-survivor or by police on their behalf. However, we know that the reality of domestic and family violence means that oftentimes victim-survivors cannot wait to go to court to obtain immediate and urgent protection. This is why police are able to issue provisional ADVOs without prior consideration by a court to make sure that urgent risks arising from a rapid or sudden change in circumstances are addressed promptly. This gives police the power to issue an ADVO immediately to respond to an increased risk to the safety of a person in need of protection.

Enabling police to impose such restrictions on a person's behaviour without prior court consideration is an extraordinary power. In light of this, there are robust safeguards in place that apply to the issuing of such provisional orders. Provisional orders can only be made where an incident occurs between the protected person and the defendant and the police officer has a good reason to believe that the provisional order needs to be made immediately to ensure the person's safety and protection. Provisional orders can only be made by a police officer with the rank of sergeant or above. Additionally, all provisional orders must be considered by a court as soon as practicable, and in any case no later than 28 days. It is this specific safeguard that the bill amends. It is clear that justice must be swift to be effective. As the legal maxim goes, "Justice delayed is justice denied." The requirement to list a provisional ADVO for court consideration within 28 days is designed specifically to avoid delay.

However, it has become clear that the requirement imposes significant burdens on people, particularly in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. Local courts in some areas do not always sit regularly, in comparison with courts in, say, metropolitan Sydney. In some cases, the nearest court may sit only monthly. The effect of the requirement to list an ADVO for court consideration within 28 days means that the ADVO is listed for a hearing at another court. The parties, the victim-survivor and the defendant subject to the order, may be required to travel significant distances to another court for the first hearing. At that hearing, the court is likely to refer the matter back to the court closest to the parties for further consideration at a later date.

I will provide an example. After responding to an incident that requires the immediate protection of an ADVO, police issue a provisional ADVO. The nearest local court is at Gunnedah, but because that court sits monthly, it is not sitting within the next 28 days. The next nearest local court is 100 kilometres away at Tamworth. The provisional ADVO must be listed for court hearing at that court to comply with the 28-day requirement. The parties are required to travel all the way to Tamworth Local Court for a first mention, where the matter will likely be referred back to Gunnedah for further consideration. The example shows that the current safeguard to ensure swift justice without delay is causing unintended consequences and is a significant burden on people in parts of New South Wales where the court sits more irregularly. The bill provides an amendment to directly address the problem by specifying that a provisional order does not need to be listed for hearing within 28 days if court sitting arrangements prevent the matter from being heard by the appropriate local court.

In the case of that example, the amended provision would enable the listing to be made at the closest local court, which would alleviate the burden on all the parties involved. I note that this is a very targeted provision and the safeguards to ensure swift justice will remain in place. A provisional ADVO must still be listed on the next possible date at the appropriate local court to ensure that there is no delay. The 28-day requirement will continue to apply except in the very narrow range of circumstances where there is no appropriate local court sitting within

that period. The Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 contains important amendments to provide greater protection and support to victim-survivors of domestic violence. It demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to enhancing safety for victim-survivors of domestic violence and to reduce reoffending. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (13:07:36): The Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 makes several amendments to reform the legislation related to domestic violence offences and the criminal trials of alleged perpetrators. I will turn first to the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 in schedule 2 to the bill. Acting as a witness during the trial of a domestic violence offence when you are the complainant is an incredibly traumatic experience. The amendments that give the complainant additional rights to appear via audiovisual link and in a closed session of the trial will improve the experience of a witness significantly. In her recent publication, Louise Milligan, an investigative reporter with the ABC, examined the trauma that is visited upon witnesses in trials that revolve around sexual assault. Ms Milligan detailed how complainants are often made to feel that they are on trial when they are cross-examined in a court. They must relive the worst moments of their lives in public and under the watch of their alleged attacker, and those details come under enormous scrutiny.

Our criminal justice system is adversarial. However, in the pursuit of truth and justice, we sometimes forget the personal cost of that adversarial nature. It is of utmost importance that those who are accused of crimes are provided with the opportunity to mount a vigorous defence. However, too often in cases involving intimate violence, that vigorous defence is traumatic in itself. It has the effect of reducing the possibility that victims will be able to find trust in our system to make a complaint in the first place, let alone justice. We must recognise and further the rights of victims of domestic violence to seek justice without suffering further trauma. The bill will give complainants the affirmative right to appear in a closed session of court whether in person or via a video link. Hopefully, this will help to reduce the trauma that is placed upon victims by the courtroom experience.

The court will retain the right to hear evidence in an open court or in person when there are special reasons in the interests of justice. This proposed new section also gives complainants the right to have restricted contact between themselves and the alleged offender in court if they do appear in person, including visual contact. This may be achieved through the use of visual screens, special seating arrangements or other such methods. These processes do not necessarily conform to the public expectations of how a court trial is run. The additional requirement in these reforms, which is that the judge provide instructions to the jury that it is a standard procedure for complainants to appear in this manner in domestic violence trials and that the jury should draw no inferences from the method of appearances, is essential. It is important to head off any possibility that a juror will have less trust in a person simply because they do not appear in person and the jurors cannot look the complainant in the eye.

I am pleased that these reforms will be put in place for proceedings that have already been commenced before the introduction of the bill. There is no reason to delay those measures, especially this year when so many court proceedings have been long delayed because of COVID-19 restrictions. We must take the opportunity to reduce the trauma of testimony for as many victims of domestic violence as is possible. The pain and difficulty of making a complaint against a partner or a loved one alleging domestic violence starts well before a victim sets foot in a courthouse. Victims must go through the often arduous and painful process of making a complaint and a statement to the authorities. It is often a complicated process for victims of domestic violence. Complainants may delay the reporting of domestic violence out of fear or because they have a genuine belief that their abuser will change their behaviour. Victims of domestic violence may believe that making a complaint will also have negative implications for their children.

There are myriad genuine reasons domestic violence offences are under-reported and reported in a delayed manner. This is no reflection on the credibility of the complainant or the seriousness of the offence. It is important that jurors presiding over cases relating to domestic violence understand this fact. As such, the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 will be further amended to state the instructions that a judge must give to a jury in domestic violence cases with delayed or no reporting. With these reforms the judge must warn the jury that absence of complaint or delay in complaining does not necessarily indicate that the allegation that the offence was committed is false and must inform the jury that there may be good reason why a victim of domestic violence may hesitate in making or refraining from making a complaint about a domestic violence offence and must not warn the jury that delay in making a complaint is relevant to the victim's credibility, unless there is sufficient evidence to justify such a warning. Explicit instructions are crucial to ensuring that juries understand the law and the motivation of the complainants and the alleged abusers.

This bill will amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2017 to clarify that intimidation offences include the threat of harm to an animal owned by the victim—a loved pet. This is a necessary clarification that ensures that those who are being intimidated in a domestic violence situation will receive more protection.

Threats against victims can cause severe psychological damage. Those threats of violence and damage are made against persons, their relations, their belongings and anything that they hold dear, including a beloved pet. This reform will help to ensure that these insidious threats are able to be prosecuted in an appropriate manner. The Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act will also be amended to ensure that an apprehended violence order, or an AVO as it is commonly known, issued against an offender as part of a court process remains valid for two years after the release of an offender from prison.

Debate interrupted.

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

Announcements

MEMBER SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

The SPEAKER: Members in the Cooper and Northern galleries have joined us today, in addition to members in the Speaker's gallery, in what is a first. As New South Wales starts to recover we are able to reintroduce a number of members to the Chamber. Members will not be allowed to speak from the upper galleries or the Speaker's gallery but they can seek the call. If they want to seek the call they can come downstairs to speak. I thank them for their cooperation.

MEMBER FOR WOLLONGONG

MEMBER FOR LISMORE

MEMBER FOR CAMPBELLTOWN

The SPEAKER: I hope that the member for Wollongong, the member for Lismore and the member Campbelltown had wonderful birthdays during the sitting break.

MEMBER FOR ROCKDALE

MEMBER FOR NORTH SHORE

MEMBER FOR LANE COVE

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the recent birth of the grandchild of the member for Rockdale, Freddie Lee Heares, weighing 9.7 pounds. I am told that he takes after his grandfather. I again acknowledge the member for North Shore, Felicity Wilson, and Sam on the birth of their son, Henry. I also acknowledge the member for Lane Cove, Anthony Roberts, and Alicia on the birth of their son, Joseph, or Joey. Congratulations to you all.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The SPEAKER: I alert members to today's rollout of new EdApp courses—another part of the professional development program for members. I thank leaders on both sides of the House for being generally encouraging of the professional development program. EdApp is an Australian tech startup that delivers education and training via short, bite-sized courses on your smartphone. The first course covers claims and entitlements. By now you will all have received an email encouraging you to download the app and to start the lessons, which each takes no longer than five minutes to complete. I hope you take that opportunity to complete those short lessons and we would be grateful for any feedback.

ELECTORATE OFFICE STAFF

The SPEAKER: My chief of staff and I have also enjoyed continuing to visit numerous electorate offices recently and receiving valuable feedback. I take this opportunity to recognise the hardworking electorate office staff of all members of this Chamber and alert members to the new live training calendar for your valued electorate office staff. The new series of webinars on offer include sessions on dealing with public sector agencies such as the Office of State Revenue or Housing Appeals Committee and perhaps, most importantly, based on the feedback we have had, there are sessions to assist with mental health support and dealing with distressed constituents. Given the year that we have all had, I encourage members and their electorate office staff to make the most of those new opportunities under the training programs.

HANSARD MEMBER SEARCH

The SPEAKER: I alert the Chamber to a change with *Hansard*. The *Hansard* member search page on the internet has now been updated. Previously when a *Hansard* search was conducted according to member, the member's speeches were numbered in reverse chronological order, with number one for their most recent speech. Following feedback and requests, the numbering is now in chronological order, with the member's first speech, often their inaugural speech, now being number one.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I inform the House that from 2.30 p.m. today I will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections.

*Bills***SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT (VENUES NSW) BILL 2020****STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2020****STRONGER COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2020****HEALTH LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020****ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020****WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT (INFORMATION EXCHANGE) BILL 2020****Assent**

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bills.

*Notices***PRESENTATION**

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Keira on two calls to order. That was an abuse of process, member for Keira.

*Question Time***STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND**

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:26:17): I direct my question to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by her comments on 28 October when she said that she "personally did not make decisions on grants from the Stronger Communities Fund"?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:26:28): I acknowledge the question from the Leader of the Opposition. I also acknowledge the interest that those opposite have in this important grants process. I say to all members that, pleasingly, since we have been in government we have provided billions and billions of dollars to local councils for them and their communities. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: Which of those grants that have been provided to councils does she think should not have been provided to those councils? Is it the grant provided to the council of the member for Heffron?

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

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My question was: Does the Premier stand by her comment in this House on 28 October that she "personally did not make decisions on grants from the Stronger Communities Fund"—yes or no? Does the Premier stand by that comment?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Of course I stand by all the words that I have uttered in this place.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I said, I do not know what the Opposition has against us providing direct support to councils. The member for Heffron was very happy about it, the member for Maroubra was very happy about it and the member for Rockdale—

Mr Michael Daley: Wrong. I did not get anything, actually.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can provide evidence; I can table documents. The member for Granville had a very good post, "Fantastic to see the Granville centre finally open."

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Granville also said, "I lobbied for the first \$10 million in funding for this project when Cumberland council was formed. It is the centre of the city." She lobbied for it and she got it. Well done, Kiama.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I really like the member for Heffron. I am not sure whether he is in the House but he said, "Congratulations to all the recipients of Stronger Communities Fund grants. You all do phenomenal work in our community." I think Michael Daley and Steve Kamper also wiped that page. Well done there.

The SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am also pleased to say that many councils across the State received support.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have other examples. The Coogee Surf Life Saving Club received \$2.5 million to operate the club. The Mingara Regional Athletics Centre received over \$400,000, and that included upgrading servicing at the entrance.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question is very clear: Does the Premier stand by what she said in the House relating to her involvement?

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have already alluded to that part of the question, but I am pleased to talk about some other grants. I mentioned that the Mingara Regional Athletics Centre received over \$400,000, and that included upgrading servicing at the entrance.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: If the member's point of order relates to relevance I have already ruled on that. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: With all due respect, the Premier has not answered the question.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. I have already ruled on that point of order.

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is a yes-or-no answer, because it was not said in this House.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. I call the member for Swansea to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Given that the Opposition does not want to hear about all the good news, I am happy to finish my answer.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:29:49): I ask a supplementary question. Given the Premier's answer, why did her senior policy adviser then write that she, "signed off and approved grants from this fund"?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:30:12): Is it not good news to know that Opposition members have been working very hard during the past two weeks in order to ask original questions? They have asked questions about this issue ad nauseam. Currently an inquiry in the other place is also asking questions.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am answering the question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Swansea has been given an opportunity to take a point of order. She should not abuse it. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is pretty clear that the Premier is not answering the question.

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

Ms Yasmin Catley: Who lied—you or your staff?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was distracted by that point of order. It is pleasing to know that members of the Opposition have—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Swansea to order for the third time. If the member continues to interject she will be asked to leave the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is pleasing to know the Opposition has spent a lot of time on strategy thinking of original and new questions to ask me. The people of New South Wales should be confident that no matter how difficult the circumstances—

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

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order—

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

Ms Anna Watson: I am a little confused. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. In one answer the Premier is saying that she does make these decisions but then in the second answer she is saying that her policy adviser said she signed off and approved. It is either one or the other. I am a little confused.

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I was saying before I was interrupted, no matter how difficult things are in our State, no matter how difficult the economic outlook or otherwise, the people of New South Wales can be confident that this Government will make sure that it provides support where it is needed most. Next Tuesday will be clear evidence of this when the Treasurer hands down a difficult but very solid budget. At the end of the day what matters more than anything is that we provide support to our communities, we build the infrastructure that they need and we provide the services that they need. Members opposite can whinge and moan and groan, but the Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering.

COVID RECOVERY PLAN

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:32:35): I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the COVID recovery?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:32:47): How wonderful it is for the Parliament to resume with some sense of normalcy during question time. I thank the member for East Hills for her question. We spent two days, which included a wonderful morning yesterday, visiting local communities and schools. We spoke with community leaders about how the community was feeling during COVID and what their hopes and aspirations were for the future. I thank the member for organising that and I pass on my gratitude to all those members of the community who took the time to meet with me. I am pleased to say that in the time since this House last met the Government has continued to work hard to provide that security and surety, and it is doing everything it can to protect, secure and grow jobs whilst the pandemic is having a devastating effect on many parts of our economy.

I was pleased, along with the Treasurer, to announce the \$250 million Jobs Plus Program. Many businesses from outside New South Wales and throughout Australia have contacted me or the Government to indicate their interest in setting up shop in New South Wales. They are frustrated with border policies, they are frustrated with lockdowns and they feel more confident and more certain that the operating environment in New South Wales will provide them with that surety and business continuity. We are pleased to say that any business that establishes more than 30 new net jobs between now and June 2022 will not pay payroll tax for four years based on the extra jobs that it brings to New South Wales.

This is a great initiative because we know more than ever that our citizens want to look to the future with hope and optimism. We also know that, come March, when JobKeeper ceases to exist, literally hundreds of thousands of people will no longer be able to rely on JobKeeper. That can have a big impact on homes and people's livelihoods and, of course, impact families and individuals. We do not want people being under unnecessary stress. That is why the Jobs Plus Program really secures the opportunity for people to either set up their head office in New South Wales or else extend their existing footprint. I also commend the Treasurer on the various stimulus packages that he had announced, totalling \$16 billion. In particular I want to provide an update on the small business grants that we have provided. It is not just the larger businesses that we are trying to attract to New South Wales but we are also trying to support the smaller and medium-sized businesses that we know have been doing it tough. Now, the \$10,000 small business support grants program—I am pleased to say that nearly 54,000 businesses successfully applied and—

Mr Stephen Kamper: They have subscribed.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sorry, who said that? Oh, thank you.

Mr Dominic Perrottet: The member for Rockdale loves it. It was the member for Rockdale. I heard him. He loves it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Oh, right. Okay. Thank you. Many businesses in your community love it up there, member for Rockdale. In any event, those grants were worth more than \$531 million, which is a big commitment but a great stimulus because we know small businesses, especially during the lockdown, were short on cash flow. This really tided them over to make sure they were able to meet their payments. Anecdotally, when you speak to regional communities in particular and when you speak to small business communities, they are grateful that through Service NSW—and I commend Minister Dominello—when we announce a grant, we are able to dispatch it quickly because of the processes we have in place, and that is a very critical process. So I thank everyone involved in that process. The feedback from the small business community has been positive.

In addition to the \$10,000 small business support grants, we also had the \$3,000 small business recovery grants. Again we had over 37,000 businesses successfully apply and that cost taxpayers \$110 million but it was well worth the investment because, again, it tided over many small businesses who had cash flow challenges during those difficult times. I am also pleased to say that not only are we supporting small businesses in relation to grants, not only are we supporting them in creating and keeping jobs, which is so critical, but we are also making sure we support them in staying COVID safe. Because when they are COVID safe, people will continue to patronise them and they will be able to continue to employ.

That is why we are pleased to be able to make QR codes mandatory from 23 November, and Service NSW has a free service where small businesses can keep employing and can keep their doors open by being COVID safe. As many in this place would know, I have also been very vocal on our borders policy. I say that because unless our colleagues in other States open their borders to New South Wales residents, it will cost us jobs not just in New South Wales but also in those States involved. We are working hard day and night to make sure we bring jobs to New South Wales. On 23 November—I know, much to the relief of the member for Albury, the member for Cootamundra and other members—when the Victoria-New South Wales border— [*Extension of time*]

When the border between New South Wales and Victoria opens on 23 November, not only will it reunite families; it will also allow businesses to continue their operations, save jobs, create jobs and encourage people to continue to invest in New South Wales. I want to place on the record my deep gratitude to many businesses outside of New South Wales, across the nation, that want to operate in New South Wales. The Government will do everything it can to encourage those efforts. I also, again, make a plea to the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia to say we are about jobs creation in New South Wales and saving jobs, and we ask you to do the same.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I also stress that while the challenges ahead are huge—especially in March when JobKeeper will no longer be there—when I visited some regional communities last week I was pleased that some of them indicated to me that they had no longer been relying on JobKeeper. They thought it was a better model to be sustainable and to base their employees on their own sustainable business plan so that they could continue employing beyond March next year. I commend all of those businesses who have already started to think about that process.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the green shoots are there. Consumer confidence in New South Wales surged by more than 17.5 per cent in October. Consumer confidence is now higher than it was pre-COVID. We know it is very volatile, but I am very pleased that at this point in time people are feeling confident about spending. Hopefully that is a sign they are confident about their jobs and keeping their jobs. Whether it is me, the Deputy Premier or the Treasurer, every single person on our team in New South Wales knows how important it is not only to keep our communities and our citizens safe but to keep them in meaningful work and work that they want to do. That is our aim, our motivation and our absolute obsession, if I can go that far, because we appreciate how important that is over the course of the next 12 months. I thank all members in this place on all sides of the House who have given me good feedback on what their communities need. Please know that we are here to support our communities. I look forward to further updates on this important issue.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (14:39:55): I direct my question to the Premier. The Premier's senior policy advisor gave evidence to the Public Accountability Committee that the Premier wrote on documents approving grants for the Stronger Communities Fund. We now know that these documents have been shredded. What did the Premier write on them?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:40:20): I am not sure how this question differs significantly from the previous questions I have been asked. I do not really have anything further to add on this point, but I—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I barely got up!

The SPEAKER: I am not going to take a point of order 10 seconds into the response to the question. The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you. I barely stood up. As I was saying, I note the member for Campbelltown has been very enthusiastic on this topic and has been encouraging a number of people to look at things which are really out of scope, but I would—

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Our seats have got nothing. My area got nothing.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Are you for real?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will be quiet.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When you look across the State at the investment we have made in schools, hospitals, roads—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You are getting a new hospital!

Mr Greg Warren: It is Standing Order 129. What did the Premier write on them before she shredded them? Very simple: What did she write on these documents?

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant and will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot let that question go by without saying that there is an imputation in the question which is factually wrong, but that is another matter to deal with.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not an opportunity for debate.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. If it is factually incorrect, is it that they were not shredded or is it the fact that you did not write on them?

The SPEAKER: It is not an opportunity for another question.

Ms Jodi McKay: What did you write on them?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will take her seat. Has the Premier finished her response?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think so.

REGIONAL JOBS

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:42:20): I address my question to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is creating more jobs in regional communities?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:42:32): I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. He is a member who always champions small business and business in regional and rural New South Wales. At the heart of our local economies are small businesses. It is the mums and dads who mortgage their home and risk everything to be a part of a small business economy and create those jobs that we value so much in regional and rural New South Wales. The support from the Government during drought, the support from the Government during bushfires and the support from Government through COVID for small businesses has been something that I think we should be very proud of.

Yesterday I was in the Dubbo electorate with the Treasurer and the member for Dubbo and we had a bit of a street walk. We met with Sophia Acheson from Klou, which is a small clothing boutique in Dubbo. She said that the \$10,000 grant from the New South Wales Government and the \$3,000 grant from the New South Wales Government were the difference between being able to reopen and manage to get through COVID than actually applying for some of the Federal grants. We give credit to the Treasurer and the small business Minister that we actually had a fund and a program that supported businesses in a real way. Ms Acheson was able to continue trading online. Funnily enough, one of her biggest customer bases was coming out of Victoria when it went into its second lockdown. She was able to tailor her business. Yesterday we had the chance to look at her shop. She has a wonderful and beautiful shop. The message to everyone as we lead into Christmas is: Do not forget to buy regional—buy from the bush—when you are thinking about your gifts this Christmas.

Over the past few years we have had a number of funds that support businesses in regional and rural New South Wales. The Growing Local Economies fund was designed to put infrastructure in place—something like half a billion dollars for shared infrastructure for businesses that are growing or coming to the regions, again

creating jobs for regional and rural New South Wales. The best way that we can futureproof the regions from drought or a downturn in tourism is to diversify our local economies and revenue streams so that we can try to insulate from the downturn in other sectors, including in mining, in tourism and, as I said earlier, in agriculture when drought hits.

That is why the New South Wales Government—which was there during the drought crisis and when the drought broke, as well as through the bushfires and now COVID—was there to support those businesses and help them survive, but now there is an opportunity to see these businesses thrive. That is why we announced the \$100 million Regional Job Creation Fund. It will go directly to small businesses or businesses in regional and rural New South Wales that are looking to expand and will create thousands of new jobs. We do not want these businesses just to survive, we want them to thrive. That is what this fund is about. It will provide grants from \$100,000 to \$10 million for businesses that want to grow. We are excited to have announced it and we have already had hundreds of applications. We are processing those applications, and we will be supporting those businesses to grow not just the jobs of today but of the future.

As I said earlier, to futureproof regional and rural New South Wales we will seek diversity in our local economies. What we are already seeing through the applications that are coming through the Regional Job Creation Fund is that diversity. As I said, often people think that we are about agriculture or tourism—the lazy beaches or the beautiful mountains, or, of course, the agriculture sector—we are more than that. We are advanced manufacturing in the Hunter. We are mining. We are, of course, small to medium-sized enterprises, service industries and professionals. We have great cosmopolitan cities. For people who are thinking about regional and rural New South Wales, it is not a bush change, it is a city change in a places like Orange, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Dubbo—where I was yesterday—and my town of Queanbeyan. These are growing cities in regional and rural New South Wales that are shaping the way that I believe this State will grow in the future.

Last year we had a Bush Summit in Dubbo, where we talked about the economic decline and contraction as a result of the drought in regional and rural New South Wales. Off the back of COVID, learning that we could actually use a digital platform like Zoom to be able to work from a regional setting gives me hope that maybe in five or six years' time we might have a Sydney summit because the boom that is happening in the regions will reverse the trend. We will have more members of Parliament in this House representing regional and rural New South Wales because of population growth. I encourage people not just to come and visit regional and rural New South Wales from a tourism perspective, come and live with us. Work, live and play in regional and rural New South Wales in cosmopolitan cities with great jobs for the future. Through this fund, we are ensuring that those small- to medium-sized enterprises will continue to grow in line with the growth of our regions. When businesses grow, employment grows, population grows and service delivery from government grows. This is win-win and a great time for the regions. And do not forget—buy from the bush this Christmas.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:47:44): I address my question to the Treasurer. After his outstanding visit to Dubbo yesterday, will he please update the House on how the Government's sound economic management has permitted New South Wales to be best placed to lead economic recovery across the State?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:48:05): It is great to have Dorothy Dixers back. I have been waiting for this moment for some time so that we can have some real questions on COVID.

Mr Ryan Park: So have we.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That is great, Ryan. It was fantastic to be out with the member for Dubbo and the Deputy Premier yesterday, as well as Minister for Energy and the Environment "Matt Green". There we were making significant investments. It was a festival of Dubbo with a great local member. We made the announcement of an investment of \$7½ million into a drug rehabilitation centre. In terms of the contribution to the construction: the \$2 million matches the Federal contribution of \$3 million. That is going to make a real difference to vulnerable people in that community and it is something that we will look to roll out elsewhere across the State. We then went to Western Plains Zoo to make another investment in that great zoo at Dubbo. We made a \$14 million investment into a new wildlife hospital, and \$8.8 million was invested from the Deputy Premier's fund into a platypus sanctuary. The Deputy Premier loves platypuses, which are an endangered species. He is a big advocate for endangered species, and he loves platypuses. The Deputy Premier loves Australian animals. There he was—he puts his money where his mouth is. Members opposite talk about endangered species, the Deputy Premier delivers for them.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The water Minister was there as well. Sorry, she was at the third announcement. She took the morning off so she was at the third announcement, which was about the renewable

energy zones. Here he is, "Matt Green"—the greenest policymaker and environment Minister in our State's history.

Ms Jenny Leong: Have you told Ray Hadley that?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The member for Newtown is worried that we are going to build a blue wall all the way through the inner west. That announcement promised 9,000 jobs and tens of billions of dollars of investment for regional New South Wales. We know that we can make these investments, as we have seen when the Premier pointed out the significant \$16 billion investment in stimulus programs over the course of this pandemic. We have made a number of announcements as we have gone through this period of time really focusing on keeping businesses in business and keeping as many people in jobs during the pandemic. Unlike other jurisdictions around the world that are dealing with this global pandemic, we have come into it during very challenging times off the back of drought, bushfires and floods. More than anyone else, the people of New South Wales have done it very tough coming into this pandemic. But there is no jurisdiction that is better placed to deal with it than New South Wales, because of our strong financial and economic management over many years. We came into this pandemic with a strong budget position. Our management to date, whether it has been through our asset recycling approach that was opposed every step of the way—

Mr Stephen Kamper: Sell-off!

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Well, the member for Rockdale will know that the asset base of this State has grown and grown and grown.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have seen more schools, hospitals and public transport turned from old, lazy assets into new assets. That is why we come in with a very strong debt position, opposed by those ideologues on the other side of the House.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That approach has been one of unlocking capital, investing in productive infrastructure and driving economic and jobs growth right across our State. That means, whether you are a family or a business right across the board, we have come into this difficult time in a very good position. It is not how you govern in difficult times that matters, it is also how you govern when times are good.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We know what Labor did. We know Labor's approach in the lead-up to the last election was to increase taxes on every single small business across the State. It was the then shadow Treasurer who wanted to stop our payroll tax threshold increases. You ran on a campaign— [*Extension of time*]

Mr Michael Daley: You stole all his revenue policies. You copied the whole lot. Say thank you to him.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: He who wanted to increase every single tax. They were your policies, and the member for Maroubra is back to increase tax. Then he sits here—he wanted to put a tax on farmers in the middle of a drought and he wanted to put a tax on truckers that took about four days to explain and then he kind of gave up on it and wished it went away. Unfortunately for the member for Maroubra, he had to live through all this so he remembers it very well. There he sits talking about our \$10,000 and \$3,000 small business grants that he opposed, yet he wanted to increase the taxes on small business right across the State. Those policies have allowed our businesses in this State to save around \$5 billion or \$6 billion in taxes in the lead-up to this pandemic to give businesses the cash flow so that they can invest.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That is why when we look at the unemployment numbers coming into this pandemic in the State, early on this year it was just 4.5 per cent. That has increased to 7.2 per cent, and we are going to do whatever it takes to ensure that we prioritise the economy in the budget in order to put as many people back into work during this period of time. As the Deputy Premier pointed out, yesterday we met many business owners who raised with us the importance of the \$10,000 grant and the \$3,000 grant. Sophie said she would have closed her business but for the support from the Government. This Government came into the pandemic with strong fiscal and economic foundations, our asset base is growing and businesses will continue to thrive as we ensure that our State is set up for future prosperity.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:55:06): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that her office shredded the documents that she wrote on and deleted files relating to the Stronger Communities Fund, will the Premier today direct the Department of Premier and Cabinet to recover those deleted files?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:55:28): It is little wonder Joel Fitzgibbon resigned from the front bench today, because the Labor Party in New South Wales has lost its way.

Mr Ryan Park: That is Canberra. That is the wrong Parliament.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The last time I looked he represented a seat in New South Wales. I put on the record—

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Keira and the member for Auburn, one more word from either of them and they are out.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I place on the record that the shadow Leader of the House is suggesting that perhaps Mr Fitzgibbon is not from New South Wales, or that he is separate from the Labor values that exist in New South Wales. During the most difficult time our State is facing, our citizens want us to be focused on their needs, on the issues that matter to them. It is little wonder that a longstanding front bench member of the Labor Party in New South Wales should not see fit—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: This is a serious integrity issue.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Sworn evidence has been offered to this—

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

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Speak to relevance then.

Mr Michael Daley: I am. This is a serious integrity issue. Sworn evidence has been given to this Parliament that evidence has been destroyed. The Leader of the Opposition is asking the Premier whether she will seek to recover that evidence so that integrity can be restored.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. The Premier will continue.

Mr Michael Daley: It is a very simple question. The Premier is being a smart Alec when she should not be.

The SPEAKER: That was totally unnecessary. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no need to put the member on a call. That is what he is like every day of the week.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I reaffirm my commitment to the people of this State that every day the Government and our members get up and work their guts out for the people of New South Wales.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. Will the Premier direct the Department of Premier and Cabinet to recover the deleted files, yes or no?

The SPEAKER: Thank you. The Premier will continue.

Ms Jodi McKay: You are the Premier. You can direct them to recover those files.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I said, the Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to fight for the people of this State and deliver the services and infrastructure they need.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Is it a different point of order? I have ruled on that point of order. The member will resume her seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Labor Party would do well to focus on the citizens of this State.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT AND ROADS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:58:20): My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is ensuring strong country roads and jobs?

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (14:58:36): I thank the member for her question. There is no doubt that 2020—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Rockdale to order for the third time. I have asked members in the upper galleries to remain silent. The member for Rockdale was probably talking when I called him to order for the second time. He is now on three calls to order. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you want me to start again?

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will restart the clock.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for her question. As I said, 2020 has been a tough year for every resident in New South Wales. There have been natural disasters and a pandemic that have brought economic challenges across the State. In these uncertain times it is right for the Parliament to focus on the things that we can all stand behind, things that can unite every member and bring them to their feet in support. That is why I inform the House that my Dixers are back for regional transport and roads. I have heard the call of those opposite. End your campaign, stop sending me your letters, stop ringing my office, because I will tell you now, I am back.

In last year's budget the Government delivered a record infrastructure investment of \$55.3 billion into roads and transport. That delivered more than 3,500 road and rail projects across the State. This is money that kickstarted projects like the Great Western Highway with \$2.5 billion. There is \$960 million to upgrade the Princes Highway south of Nowra. There is also a \$1 billion commitment to the Fixing Local Roads and Fixing Country Bridges programs. That will deliver a safe and modern road network for generations to come. As we approach this year's budget we know we are in a completely different place to where we were 12 months ago. We are coming off the back of a devastating year that has hit the bush hard. It is at a time like this that our communities need to know that we have the support for recovery.

That is why we have brought forward programs like the \$500 million Fixing Local Roads Program. This will provide funding to local councils to repair, maintain and seal priority roads in local areas. There has also been additional help from the Commonwealth Government with funding of \$191 million into this program. We will turbocharge the program and deliver more roads into more communities across regional and rural New South Wales. There is also \$382 million of joint funding for shovel-ready projects. This financial year we will create 3,500 jobs. We have already announced round one of that program with funding of \$243 million for 253 projects across the State. Round two has just opened with another \$136 million available to councils right now.

The member for Cootamundra knows how important this investment is because she will have \$20 million worth of projects in her electorate from round one of the Fixing Local Roads Program—projects from less than \$100,000 up to \$3 million. For example, there is \$3 million for Pullabooka Road in Weddin shire. Big infrastructure projects sometimes get the headlines but I tell members that it is the small projects that make the biggest difference every day to the lives of those in our communities. They are the roads that our families use to get to school, to the supermarket, to work and back home again. Projects across the State will start as soon as next month. These will create jobs and put money into regional communities from the coast to the Far West. These are all funded projects that will be delivered within the next two years.

This is an example of how the Government works for the regions for every single community. Every project that was chosen has been fast-tracked so we can get the funding out the door in the next 12 months. It means shovels in the ground, local workers in employment and investment in our regional communities. It makes a difference. Local councils write in appreciation to say that it keeps the local workforce employed, haulage operators have work and local traffic control providers also get support. Those opposite criticise the program, turn their backs on workers, hate farmers and do not support regional communities.

The SPEAKER: I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Rockdale from the Chamber overnight.

[The member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 15:04 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Fairfield to order for the second time. I ask members in the upper galleries to behave. Members are allowed into the Chamber, but they must not make interjections surreptitiously and think they are under cover.

Ms Steph Cooke: I seek an extension of time for the Minister.

The SPEAKER: I grant the Minister a two-minute extension.

Ms Trish Doyle: Oh, please, no.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Those opposite might say no, because they do not want to hear about the good projects in regional and rural communities. They turn their backs on those communities. We are also investing in projects in the Far West of the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Blue Mountains to order for the first time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: In Barwon we are investing more than \$30 million in projects such as Coronga Peak Road near Byrock in Bourke Shire—a \$4.6 million project to seal 19 kilometres of road.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: In Murray \$5 million is being invested in Carrathool Road, which is a vital freight route, and \$1.9 million into Weimby Road in Balranald. It is not just the little projects. We are building big State projects that will transform lives and change communities and we are leaving a legacy of innovating and delivery for big projects, like the Newell Highway Program Alliance. This project is seeing 30 overtaking lanes and instead of being built in eight years, it is now going to be completed in four years. Earlier this year I went out to Tibooburra to mark the completion of the Silver City Highway from Broken Hill to Tibooburra. The people there could not be more excited about the difference it is going to make for their communities.

As the member for Barwon can attest, the highway is not just a road; it is a lifeline and a game changer for locals when it comes to moving freight, helping operators and growing tourism in these areas. We have projects like the \$1.8 billion Coffs Harbour bypass and the Singleton and Muswellbrook bypasses. It is through this Government's leadership that we are seeing investment into our regional roads. We are going to make journeys smoother, safer and more reliable for the people who are using our roads in rural communities. It is about responding to the needs of today and creating jobs in our local communities. The Treasurer and members on this side of the House are continuing to invest in those roads that matter to people across the State.

NSW BUSHFIRE INQUIRY

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:06:32): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Given the recent findings of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and the royal commission into natural disaster responses, what is the Minister's Government doing to enact those recommendations?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (15:06:52): I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. I am very thankful that somebody in this House, other than Government MPs, has taken an interest in the bushfire inquiry. The 2019-20 bushfire season was truly a demonstration of the new extreme and has showed us what mega-fires can do and how dangerous they can be for our communities and our firefighters. Those fires tragically claimed 26 lives, destroyed nearly 2,500 houses—

Ms Anna Watson: There are still people living on showgrounds.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I acknowledge the interjection of the shadow Minister, who has not even bothered to ask a question or make a statement about the inquiry.

Ms Lynda Voltz: I've written to you every week, and it wasn't my interjection.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: No, you can't write. The fires also destroyed three schools and burnt over 5½ million hectares of land. After every fire there are lessons to be learnt. The member for Lake Macquarie noted the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, which are in addition to a wide variety of local after-action reviews. This Government is determined to learn the lessons of the last bushfire season and to make New South Wales safer from bushfire than ever before. That is why the Premier commissioned the independent NSW Bushfire Inquiry, which was headed by two eminently qualified and capable persons: Mr Dave Owens, APM, former deputy commissioner of the NSW Police Force; and Professor Mary O'Kane, AC, Independent Planning Commission chair and former NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer. I acknowledge their efforts in delivering a report following extensive community consultation.

The inquiry heard from operational experts and community members alike, receiving nearly 2,000 submissions and holding consultations with bushfire-affected communities right across the State. The inquiry's final report made 76 recommendations to improve our State's planning, preparedness and response to bushfires, all of which have been accepted by the Government. Our Government has wasted no time in commencing the implementation of those recommendations. Last month I stood together with the Treasurer and our emergency services commissioners to announce a \$192 million investment, ahead of next week's budget, to

address some key recommendations. Those recommendations include accelerating the creation of a strategic fire trail network, including funding immediate, shovel-ready programs in 11 regional areas; and extending NSW Rural Fire Service mitigation crews and National Parks and Wildlife Services firefighter positions to deliver more hazard reduction work and to trial new mitigation trucks and posi-tracks.

We also are employing new community safety teams to ensure planning work is completed and agreed hazard reduction plans and compliance activities are enforced. We are introducing new equipment and support for volunteers and firefighters, including additional personal protective clothing, mental health initiatives, fire truck safety retrofits and a trial of new food and ration options for frontline workers. They will be complemented by new extreme fire behaviour analysts, training for firefighters and improvements to public information and communications capabilities, including to the Fires Near Me app, air quality forecasting and monitoring systems and UHF radios to allow RFS trucks to talk to farmers.

We are introducing enhanced critical communications for emergency services, including the rollout of integrated dispatches, and providing funding to collaboratively develop an Indigenous cultural fire management strategy. We will be introducing initiatives to help protect the natural environment during and after bushfires, including water catchments, soil protection and wildlife conservation, and initiatives to enhance local emergency infrastructure in local emergency management operations centres. After question time today, and as foreshadowed a few weeks ago, I will be introducing the Bushfires Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, which will seek to implement some of the legislative changes recommended by the inquiry.

Proposed changes will enhance public safety outcomes through empowering rural landholders with a simplified vegetation clearing scheme. They will also strengthen governance arrangements around bushfire hazard management on public land and improve coordination of bushfire planning and operations. The bill also makes changes to simplify the rebuilding of homes following our Black Summer by providing exemptions from the Biodiversity Offset Scheme. Our Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to work through the royal commission's report and its recommendations.

I make particular note of our achievements in aerial firefighting. Last month I was pleased to attend a showcase of all RFS aircraft at the Royal Australian Air Force base at Richmond. It is incredibly reassuring for the people of New South Wales that this season they will be protected from bushfires by the single largest aerial fleet of any fire agency in Australia. No matter what Mother Nature throws at us, we have the ability to respond. If we experience a wet summer, our fleet of aircraft can assist with rescuing people in floodwaters or they can transport our crews to fast-moving grassfires this bushfire season. [*Extension of time*]

The New South Wales Government has invested \$26.3 million to provide the Large Air Tanker [LAT] *Marie Bashir* and Citation "Bird Dog" aircraft that will undertake line-scanning operations. Last season the LAT proved its value time and again. RFS and Australian Defence Force aircraft rescued 51 people from imminent danger during the last bushfire. The new aircraft will double that capability and, along with the two BK117 helicopters, enhance our rapid aerial and remote area firefighting operations. We have also unveiled two new Bell 412 helicopters—an investment of \$6.3 million that will further enhance capability across the State. These impressive aircraft are just part of the fleet, with more than 100 call-when-needed and contracted aircraft that will support firefighting operations across the State.

I am pleased that New South Wales has already allocated additional funds to ensure specialist training and capabilities for night-time aerial firefighting, as per the inquiry's recommendation, and will trial initial aerial dispatch this fire season. Our Government will continue to support the growing need for a mix of aerial assets in our modern-day firefighting fleet. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his interest.

ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE ROADMAP

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:13:10): My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is providing energy security and jobs?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (15:13:20): I thank the member for Wollondilly and congratulate him on the outstanding job he is doing representing his community. He is a fierce advocate for the people of Wollondilly and an even fiercer advocate for cheap and reliable energy in New South Wales—not only cheap and reliable energy but energy that will deliver jobs and investment into New South Wales. Yesterday we announced a plan to do just that: deliver jobs, drive investment into the State and see New South Wales get some of the cheapest energy anywhere in the world. Our Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is all about ensuring that we can unlock the cheap and reliable energy that will be the catalyst for a manufacturing boom in New South Wales. The plan will create over 6,300 jobs as we construct and modernise our electricity system, and over 2,800 ongoing jobs to ensure that we can continue to maintain a stable, reliable electricity system.

But we will see far more than that. It will drive investment into the State. In the next two decades we will see over \$58 billion worth of infrastructure delivered to New South Wales. Where will the majority of that investment go? It will go into the bush.

The Deputy Premier is the strongest advocate for jobs in this Parliament. No-one has done more to deliver jobs than the Deputy Premier and that is exactly what this plan is going to do. The \$58 billion worth of infrastructure will modernise our grid and, most importantly, drive down electricity prices for mums and dads in New South Wales. Mums and dads and New South Wales households will be the beneficiaries of savings of \$130 per annum on average compared with if we did nothing. The beneficiaries of cheap, reliable energy from the modern electricity system will be not only mums and dads but also the businesses of this State. They will save on average \$440 compared with the Government not taking action over the years ahead. That cheap electricity will create even more jobs.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: There will be 23,000 indirect jobs because of those cheaper electricity prices, which will result in a manufacturing boom and an industrial processors boom and those energy intensive industries being able to grow. But if you don't believe what I have to say about how good that plan is, then believe those on the front line. In fact, one of the biggest energy users in New South Wales, Mark Vasella, the global managing director and chief executive officer of BlueScope Steel, said—

Mr Gareth Ward: Hear, hear!

Mr MATT KEAN: I know the member for Kiama is a very strong supporter of the work of BlueScope. Mr Vasella is the biggest energy user and one of the biggest employers in the State. He said, "This is exactly the right policy direction at exactly the right time." He also said that the scale of this plan will stimulate a manufacturing renaissance for New South Wales. But it is not just BlueScope, the biggest single electricity in this State is Tomago Aluminium. People in this House will know that Matt Howell, the chief executive officer of Tomago Aluminium, has been outspoken when it comes to our energy system. He has not always been an advocate for clean energy but he has been an advocate for cheap, reliable energy. He said that anything that delivers cleaner, cheaper and more reliable energy is something that we would be keen to explore.

It does not just deliver for the big guys, it also delivers for mums and dads. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre said that this is a huge win for New South Wales households and businesses and makes clear that we don't have to choose between sustainable, reliable energy and cost. Energy Consumers Australia Chief Executive Officer Lynne Gallagher said it was an important step in driving investment in a modern energy system and significantly reducing electricity prices. But we are not stopping there. This Government is an infrastructure government. We have modernised our road and rail infrastructure and our health infrastructure. We have modernised our education infrastructure and built new schools across the State. *[Extension of time]*

Now it is time to modernise our energy infrastructure. By doing so, we will cement our role as an energy infrastructure superpower. We will secure many of the economic opportunities and benefits that are emerging because of global mega trends. This is all about ensuring that we drive investment into New South Wales; it is about creating jobs and setting us up to deliver cheaper electricity.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: It is all about ensuring that we can be an energy and economic superpower. We owe it to our kids and their kids to do this. We also know that the modernisation of the grid will require us to use over 650,000 tonnes of steel. I want to make sure that that steel is produced and the infrastructure is built here.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: That is why we have announced that that is exactly what we will deliver.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: We will work with industry experts, consumer advocates, unions and developers to find new ways to drive the use of cost-competitive materials to build the State's renewal energy zones.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. If areas like the Illawarra and the Hunter will benefit, the Minister should put it in the legislation. He should lock it in the legislation.

Mr MATT KEAN: I have heard the member for Keira on this issue. I know he is a strong advocate for the Illawarra. I say to the member for Keira that we will work with those opposite to deliver exactly what I promise we will. We will work with anyone in this Parliament who cares about delivering cheaper reliable energy, creating jobs here and driving infrastructure in New South Wales. That is what we will do.

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

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I announce receipt of the report of the NSW Ombudsman for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020. I order that the report be printed.

NSW CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 34I of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, I announce receipt of the report of the NSW Child Death Review Team for 2020, dated 27 October 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020. I order that the report be printed.

INSPECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Report of the Office of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.
- (2) Report of the Office of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 (Cth)—Serious Gap in Inspector's Powers*, dated 27 October 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.
- (3) Report of the Office of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption *Report of an audit of applications for and execution of search warrants by the Independent Commission Against Corruption for 2018-19*, dated October 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.

I order that the reports be printed.

INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 16 of the Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Report of the Inspector of Custodial Services for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.
- (2) Report of the Inspector of Custodial Services entitled *Inspection of Mary Wade Correctional Centre*, dated October 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.

I order that the reports be printed.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020.
- (2) Special Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *A parliamentary solution to a funding model for the ICAC*, dated November 2020, received out of session on 6 November 2020.

I order that the reports be printed.

AGEING AND DISABILITY COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 28 of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019, I announce receipt of the report of the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 27 October 2020. I order that the report be printed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 142 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I announce receipt of the report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission for the year ended 30 June 2020, received out of session on 29 October 2020. I order that the report be printed.

*Committees***JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS****Reports**

The CLERK: I announce receipt of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled *Administration of the 2019 NSW State Election*, report 1/57, dated October 2020, received out of session on 28 October 2020 and authorised to be printed.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**Government Response**

The CLERK: I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 4/57 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled *Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports February 2018 - July 2018*, received out of session on 9 November 2020 and authorised to be printed.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Reports**

Ms FELICITY WILSON: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 23/57*, dated 10 November 2020. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FELICITY WILSON: I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding *Legislation Review Digest No. 22/57*, dated 20 October 2020.

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**Reports**

Mr GURMESH SINGH: As Chair: I table the report of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission entitled *Review of the Health Care Complaints Commission's 2017-18 and 2018-19 annual reports*, Report No. 1/57, dated 20 November 2020. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COERCIVE CONTROL****Deputy Chair**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I inform the House that on 9 November 2020 Trisha Lee Doyle was elected Deputy Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

The SPEAKER: I announce that the following paper petition signed by more than 10,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

Dubbo Proposed New Bridge Crossing

Petition noting that the proposed new bridge crossing of Macquarie River at Dubbo will not flood-proof the Newell Highway nor reduce traffic congestion in Dubbo and will impact on Aboriginal sacred sites, disturb residential areas and destroy parkland and calling on the Government to support the cancellation of plans for a bridge at River Street, Dubbo, and instead raise Troy Bridge above the flood plain to create a Newell Highway bypass, received from **Mr David Harris**.

The SPEAKER: I set down debate on the petition as an order of the day for a subsequent Thursday.

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

New Lambton Public School

Petition requesting the Government to meet with the New Lambton Public School community and the State local member to discuss the issue of intake boundaries; to consider long-term viable solutions to the intake boundaries at the school, including the six streets recently excluded from the zone and the currently zoned part of Kotara; to expand both the infant and public schools; and to build new schools to accommodate the growing population, received from **Ms Sonia Hornery**.

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

Lane Cove Golf Course

Petition noting Lane Cove Council's undertaking to retain the existing footprint and par of Lane Cove Golf Course and calling on the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to refuse the proposed redevelopment of the golf course and to ensure that any future development does not reduce the par and does not include a driving range and/or a putt putt golf course, received from **Mr Anthony Roberts**.

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

Modern Slavery Act

Petition calling on the Government and the Premier to take immediate steps to proclaim the Modern Slavery Act 2018, received from **Dr Marjorie O'Neill**.

Strata Scheme Pet Ownership

Petition requesting that the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 be amended to allow the keeping of pets in all strata schemes and to invalidate retrospectively any by-law that prohibits the keeping of pets, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

Public University Jobs

Petition noting the Government's failure to protect jobs at public universities and calling on the Government to ensure that no job is lost from a public university in New South Wales, received from **Mr Clayton Barr**.

Lismore Proposed Youth Koori Court

Petition noting the disproportionate number of Indigenous youth in contact with the criminal justice system in the northern rivers and North Coast regions of New South Wales and calling on the Government to establish a Youth Koori Court in Lismore, received from **Ms Janelle Saffin**.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The CLERK: I announce that the following Ministers have lodged responses to paper petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Erskineville Railway Station—lodged 22 September 2020 (Ms Jenny Leong)

The Hon. Shelley Hancock—Artarmon Village Amenities Block—lodged 24 September 2020 (Ms Gladys Berejiklian)

Business of the House

BUSINESS LAPSED

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 105 (3), I advise the House that general business notices of motion (general notices) Nos 1248 [Transgrid Upgrade—Community Consultation], 1249, and 1251 to 1402 have lapsed.

*Bills***STRONGER COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) BILL 2020****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:28:18): I continue my contribution regarding the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 and the changes it proposes to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. As I was saying before I was interrupted, the court may vary the apprehended violence orders. The Act will also be amended to ensure that an apprehended violence order issued against an offender as part of a court process remains valid for two years after the release of an offender from prison. The court may vary this as it deems necessary. However, this is an important reform. Victims should not have the immediate fear of further violence placed upon them by the release of their abuser. The standard two-year period beyond release for an AVO will give victims some certainty of legal protection against their abuser once they are released into our community. While it is important that we give those who have served their prison terms time to be rehabilitated in our community, it is even more vital that we protect their victim-survivors.

The amendments proposed in the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 are sensible and are welcomed. The additional protections afforded during the court process for victims of domestic violence are important contributions to the access to justice in New South Wales. We must always ensure that we strike the balance between the rights of the victims to seek justice without suffering additional trauma against the rights of the accused to mount a vigorous defence. The automatic extension of AVOs beyond the term of a prison sentence is essential. Victim-survivors should have the right to continue with their lives and, as much as possible, leave their trauma in the past while focusing on their recovery and their future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:30:45): I thank the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and Attorney General, for bringing the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 to the House. The reforms help to provide greater protections for domestic violence victim-survivors, improve court procedures for criminal and apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] proceedings and explicitly recognise the intersection between animal abuse and domestic violence. It is to this latter point that I wish to speak today: two important reforms that will strengthen how the Crime (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, known as the CDPV Act, responds to harm or threats of harm to animals.

First, amendments to the Crime (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 provide, and in so doing clarify, that a mandatory order that is available to prohibit damage or destruction of property will include harm to animals belonging to the protected person. Section 36 of the CDPV Act places protection of property belonging to or in the possession of a protected person as a mandatory condition of an apprehended violence order where there is a domestic relationship between the offender and the protected person. The proposed amendment to section 36 states that harming an animal is also prohibited.

Second, the bill seeks to amend the Act to provide that intimidation includes conduct that causes a reasonable apprehension of harm to animals that belong to or which are in the possession of a protected person. Existing section 7 (1) (c) is to be omitted and replaced with a new section on the meaning of "intimidation". Section 7 (1) (c) (iv) reads:

(c) conduct that causes a reasonable apprehension of—

...

(iv) harm to an animal that belongs or belonged to, or is or was in the possession of, the person or another person with whom the person has a domestic relationship.

It is true that there are offences and sanctions in our existing animal cruelty legislation that deal with harm caused to animals. But there is a uniqueness to the situation when this abuse, intimidation or threatening behaviour is tied to domestic violence, to coercion and to control. To my mind, it is appropriate to bring animal protection rights and responsibilities into the context of our domestic violence laws so these acts can lead to charges as domestic violence offences. In her report prepared for *ABC Life* earlier this year Kellie Scott noted:

Seventy per cent of women fleeing domestic violence also report pet abuse, and it's another reason many victims delay leaving. They fear the animal who has provided love and support when they need it most will be harmed.

Around 61 per cent of Australian households live with an animal. Our positive relationships with animals can range from the highest levels of affection to more pragmatic feelings of utility and support. Whatever the case, the disturbing reality remains that when a human to human relationship gets vicious an associated human and animal relationship can carry that risk to the animal as well. The RSPCA has noted the following:

A recent Australian study revealed that approximately 50 per cent of women in violent relationships reported that their violent partner had hurt or killed one of their pets. The study also revealed that 33 per cent of these female pet owners, who were now living in crisis accommodation, had delayed leaving their violent relationship because of concerns for their pet's welfare. Published in the *Animal Studies Journal* 2018 is a paper entitled "Animal Victims of Domestic and Family Violence: Raising Youth Awareness" by Lyla Coorey of the New South Wales Health Education Centre Against Violence and Carl Coorey-Ewings of the University of Sydney. The authors report that as members of families where domestic and family violence is occurring, animals are at risk of acts of cruelty and have been killed. Perpetrators use threats, assaults, neglect, torture and the killing of animals as strategies of intimidation, coercive control and retaliation within family violence contexts.

For many elderly, disabled and chronically ill people, animals are their companion and provide aid in relation to their physical and/or psychological needs. As a source of support, practical assistance and comfort, these animals are at risk of being abused by carers and/or family members who exert power and control over the person they are attached to and who depends on them. From the authors' research, they found that in the last two decades there has been a growing interest in connections between animal abuse and intra-familial violence. Research from the United States has promoted awareness around this connection and the implications, including those for household, companion and other animals, when identifying and assessing risk and responding to domestic and family violence. Compared to the USA, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada, Australia's inclusion of animals in its domestic and family violence [DFV] services' responses is minimal.

Today we are considering a legislative response. Violence is a form of control, a tactic for the manipulation of others. Violence can be meted out to those who remain behind, particularly when a partner flees the home. Coorey and Coorey-Ewings point out that it is the animals to which women and children are most emotionally attached that is purposely targeted. They say that this attachment is driven not only by affection but a shared sense of mutual suffering and empathy. Family and domestic violence can spread throughout the family, with implications for pets. This was investigated in a much earlier research project from 2008 entitled, "The relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse: An Australian study" by Anne Volant of Monash University, Judy Johnson of the Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service, and Eleonora Gullone and Grahame J. Coleman also of Monash University and published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. The authors state:

Several North American studies have found a connection between domestic violence and animal abuse. This article reports on the first Australian research to examine this connection. A group of 102 women recruited through 24 domestic violence services in the state of Victoria and a nondomestic violence comparison group [of] (102 women) recruited from the community took part in the study. Significantly higher rates of partner pet abuse, partner threats of pet abuse, and pet abuse by other family members were found in the violent families compared with the nondomestic violence group. As hypothesized, children from the violent families were reported by their mothers to have witnessed and committed significantly more animal abuse than children from the nonviolent families. Logistic regression analyses revealed, for the group as a whole, that a woman whose partner had threatened the pets was 5 times more likely to belong to the intimate partner violence group.

That research was from 2008. Now, 12 years later, Domestic Violence NSW has released its report, *Animals and people experiencing domestic and family violence: How their safety and wellbeing are interconnected*. Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services across New South Wales, representing over 100 specialist domestic and family violence services that support people experiencing violence. Its survey of DFV and community workers reveals that clients who have experienced DFV have been connected to a range of animals, including dogs, cats, large animals, small mammals and other species. Thirty-one per cent of respondents stated that their clients who have experienced DFV have been connected to assistance animals.

The report's overarching recommendation is that law, policy and program responses should improve access to a range of supports for animals and people experiencing DFV to ensure their safety and wellbeing and uphold their dignity. Priority should be given to responses that support animals and people experiencing DFV to stay together and maintain their connection, where possible, in recognition of how this relationship can support healing and recovery and how separation can be re-traumatising for animals and human victim survivors.

In more detail, recommendations focused on the need for specific training for workers to understand the issues and provide support; the need to provide culturally safe, accessible and appropriate community education about pets and people experiencing domestic and family violence; the allocation of resources for cross-sector collaboration including policing to develop solutions to improve the safety of pets and people experiencing domestic and family violence; and the development of policies which will support victims by helping them maintain rental accommodation or stay safely in their homes, gain access to social housing and/or crisis accommodation. There is no doubt in my mind that pets and animals can be used or indeed harmed or threatened with harm as part of violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour within the domestic relationship. The New South Wales branch of the RSPCA informs me that it receives between 300 and 350 calls, on average, per year from New South Wales residents inquiring about its community domestic violence program, which provides assistance for people's pets caught up in family or domestic violence situations. [*Extension of time*]

This generally results in 100 to 130 animals per year placed in the program. Many of those pets will require care lasting for months rather than days. This program commenced 15 years ago when it was called Safe Beds for Pets and many vets still refer to the program by that original name. Current legislation focuses on domestic

violence offences and behaviour and pays due attention to damage to the property of the protected person but it does not clarify whether pets and other animals in the care of a protected person are also to be taken into account for the purposes of an apprehended violence order [AVO]. We are looking at the emotional and physical abuse that takes place when beloved pets and animals get caught in the firing line when a human relationship becomes toxic. It is time to take any uncertainty out of the picture and to extend whatever protections we can to these pets while also providing sanctions against this apparent behaviour. No-one can be guaranteed absolute safety in a domestic or human-related situation but we can as a Parliament condemn, warn off and, if necessary, punish those who harm or threaten to harm these animals and their owners through circumstances that are in breach of an AVO.

While I have focused on the place of pets within domestic violence legislation and AVOs, other important amendments form part of this bill. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 division 5, proposed new section 289U will ensure that a complainant in criminal proceedings and related ADVO proceedings will be entitled to give their evidence in closed court or by an audiovisual link. Other arrangements to facilitate the taking of evidence can be put in place when the court directs. Further amendments under that Act and division will insert proposed new section 306ZR to provide that a warning is to be given by the judge to the jury where evidence is given or a question is asked of a witness that tends to suggest an absence of a complaint or delay in making the complaint that, without more, that delay is not to be construed as meaning the allegation is false. These amendments are sensible updates to meet community expectations.

In conclusion, I draw attention to the RSPCA NSW communities Domestic Violence Program, which can coordinate protection for the pets of a person fleeing violence, that focuses on practical solutions to keep the pets safe and cared for, pet boarding, sometimes fostering, and veterinary treatment. It is one fewer problem for the human victim or victim survivors to have to worry about at such a critical and dangerous time. If you or someone you know are in need of the RSPCA community program's helpline, I urge you to contact 9782 4408 for confidential assistance or on weekends and public holidays 9770 7555. The New South Wales Government has invested \$500,000 in one-off grant programs for refuges and animal shelters to support companion animals when victims flee violent homes. Refuges and animal shelters can now apply to the Domestic and Family Violence Pets and Animal Welfare Support Grant program.

Highly respected Albury vet Dr Arthur Frauenfelder, now retired, tells the story of a woman who came to him in distress when he first opened his practice back in the 1970s. The person said to Arthur when making the appointment that there were extraordinary circumstances to her visit. Quietly she spoke to Arthur's wife, who at that time was working alongside Arthur to establish the business. The woman's plan was to leave her home as soon as her husband headed off to work in the morning and get to the practice by 10.00 a.m., where Arthur was to have an export certificate ready for the woman's pet. On the day of the visit, the woman duly arrived with pet in hand, collected the certificate and was on the next flight out of Albury. "All along," says Arthur, "she was petrified that something might go wrong and she would be caught by her husband."

As Arthur noted from his extensive working life as a vet—and it is an observation with which I concur—it can be impossible to reason with a person who is set on violence towards their partner, and if the partner and children have gone then the beloved family pet is in the firing line for this fury. I thank the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence for developing this legislation, and I support the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:45:07): It is great to finally have the Government talking about family and domestic violence across a number of different platforms. It is an issue that this places knows I am passionate about and something I have been working on for a very long time. Today I speak in support of the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020, in particular new section 7, which states:

Meaning of "intimidation" ...

- (c) conduct that causes a reasonable apprehension of ...
- (iv) harm to an animal that belongs or belonged to, or is or was in the possession of, the person with whom the person has a domestic relationship.

The behaviour directed at a person includes behaviour directed at pets and is often used in coercive controlling situations. As such, it should constitute an offence as this behaviour is meant to intimidate and harass the victim of domestic abuse to bring the victim under the control of the perpetrator. Giving evidence in domestic violence cases, as with sexual offence cases, brings with it the inherent risk of re-exposure for the already traumatised victim to the perpetrator of the violence or abuse. Pursuant to division 5 of the bill, "Giving of evidence by domestic violence complainants—other provisions", new section 289U states that proceedings must be held in camera when a complainant gives evidence. I support that part of the bill. This new section will give a complainant some comfort that they will not have to face the accused directly. It will help prevent the accused being able to interfere with witnesses or behave in a manner that could potentially be intimidating or harassing to the victim.

As I understand it, the court may require the complainant to appear in person in certain circumstances. I am unsure of that part of new section 289U.

In 99 per cent of domestic violence situations that lead to homicide, the violence has been preceded by coercive controlling behaviour by the perpetrator. It stands to reason that consideration should be given to hearing all domestic violence matters in camera so as not to expose the victim to the accused. This is particularly appropriate because the exercise of control by the perpetrator is done in such a specific, intrusive and intimate way. What is proposed is necessary to protect the victim from being further exposed to that controlling behaviour in the courtroom, much the same as is provided for sexual assault victims. It is logical that the specific statutory protection already provided in sexual assault offence cases should be automatically extended to victims of domestic violence. This will help to prevent an accused seeking to further their control over an alleged victim through the processes of the justice system by conducting their own defence. New section 289V (5), "Alternative means of giving evidence and alternative arrangements for complainants", states:

In proceedings in which there is a jury and evidence is given by alternative means or by use of alternative arrangements, the Judge must—

- (a) inform the jury that it is standard procedure for complainants' evidence in proceedings for a domestic violence offence to be given by the means or by use of the arrangements, and
- (b) warn the jury not to draw any inference adverse to the accused person or give the evidence greater or lesser weight because it is given by the means or by use of the arrangements.

This will help the jurists' perspective, as they will understand from media and other sources that in a jury trial evidence is given in the court on the stand by a witness. The assurance by the judge that this imposition does not add to or detract from the evidence of the alleged victim is important. It assures the jury that the proceedings are perfectly normal in these circumstances. So too does the warning at new section 306ZR, "Warning to be given by Judge in relation to lack of complaint in certain domestic violence offence proceedings", about any weight being given to an absence of a complaint regarding the commission of an offence or a delay by the person in making a complaint. The judge must warn the jury not to deem the allegations are false because of a delay or the absence of a complaint. Again, that makes perfect sense.

There is a requirement for the judge to explain to the jury that there may be good reasons the victim of domestic violence may hesitate in or refrain from making a complaint about domestic violence offences. That is a way of enabling and empowering the victim, and giving them confidence in the legal process. I can see that is what the Attorney General is attempting to do, and I congratulate him. The use of this discretionary power that leaves those matters in the hands of the court will require further specific judicial training. The use of such special conditions could be a matter for further specific judicial training. I am pleased to support the bill and commend it to the House.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:51:17): I speak in support of the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. I thank the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence for bringing the bill to the House. The scourge of domestic violence reaches into all communities. It knows nothing of geographic boundaries, of age or background. It follows many patterns and yet its victims report as many differences in their experiences as we know there are similarities. Domestic violence has the potential to inflict long-lasting and significant harm on victims. The Government recognises this and is strongly committed to responding to domestic and family violence in all its forms.

One of the tactics used by perpetrators is the abuse of animals. Violence or the threat of violence directed towards animals in domestic and family violence situations is employed as a form of control and power by the perpetrator—most often a male intimate partner—to intimidate, retaliate against and manipulate his partner, who is often a female, even after separation as punishment for leaving. Abuse of an animal may include deliberate harm and violence, such as hitting, kicking or punching; neglect, which is extended tethering or refusing food or medical treatment, for instance; or other forms of abuse. The animals who are abused in domestic and family violence contexts may suffer injury, pain, torture, permanent loss of function and, in extreme cases, death. Perpetrators usually target the animal to which victims are most emotionally attached. We all know the affection and attention we feel for our own companion animals and the value they bring to our home lives. They often become part of our families.

Provisions in the bill will amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to recognise the seriousness that harm to animals causes and explicitly outlines the protections that our domestic and family violence legislation provides. Animals are already protected by prohibitions and offences for property. The purpose of these amendments is to grant explicit recognition to animals within apprehended domestic violence orders issued under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Laws are an important signal to the community about acceptable standards of behaviour. These amendments send a clear message that animal abuse will not be tolerated and, importantly, could lead to criminal charges. Ensuring that our legal framework provides

clear and unequivocal protection for animals in domestic and family violence settings serves to further strengthen our approach to protecting domestic violence victim-survivors. In particular, two amendments are made, to which I now turn.

The bill amends the definition of "intimidation" to explicitly include harm to, or harm threatened to, animals belonging to or in the possession of the victim-survivor, or a person they are in a domestic relationship with, as a form of intimidation. While the existing law may already cover such behaviour, amending the definition clarifies that in instances where animals are threatened or harmed as a means to cause fear in another person this is a form of intimidation. Intimidation is a crime under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Any person who engages in conduct deemed to be intimidation with the intent to cause mental or physical harm is guilty of an offence that carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. We know that this form of abuse can cause significant distress and mental anguish for victims. The expanded definition appropriately acknowledges that this is a form of behaviour that ought to be subject to criminal sanction.

Animal cruelty is a criminal offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and the Crimes Act 1900. Changes to the definition of intimidation to include threats or harm to animals means such behaviour can be pursued as a domestic violence offence under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Additionally, this provision enhances protections provided by apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs]. These civil orders are important tools to help better protect people from domestic and family violence. Currently, every ADVO includes a number of conditions that restrain the person subject to the order. These restrictions prohibit: assaulting or threatening the protected person or a person with whom the protected person has a domestic relationship; stalking, harassing or intimidating the protected person or a person with whom the protected person has a domestic relationship; and, intentionally or recklessly destroying or damaging any property that belongs to, or is in the possession of, the protected person or a person with whom the protected person has a domestic relationship.

The changes that the bill makes to the definition of intimidation will extend the mandatory provisions of ADVOs by including threats or harm to animals as a part of the intimidation, stalking and harassment provisions. Additionally, this bill amends the mandatory prohibition for damaging and destroying property, extending it to include a prohibition on harming any animal or animals belonging to or in the possession of the victim-survivor or a person with whom they are in a domestic relationship. In any case, courts are already able to specify additional conditions in an apprehended domestic violence order as are necessary or desirable, in particular to ensure the safety and protection of the victim or any children. Breaching an ADVO is a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of up to two years imprisonment.

These amendments are an important step in responding to domestic violence. Complementing the inclusion of animals in ADVO protections is a funding package of \$500,000 to enable frontline services to respond to animals being brought into their care. The funds will be distributed through a grant program to support women's refuges, crisis accommodation and/or animal shelters to accommodate companion animals. Additionally, the Department of Communities and Justice, at the direction of the Attorney General, and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, has undertaken a broad review of the connection between animal abuse and domestic and family violence. This review provided specific advice on reforms to protect victim-survivors and their animals against abuse, and these amendments arise from this important work.

I again thank the Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, for bringing this incredibly important bill to the House. The Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill contains important amendments to provide greater protection and support to victim-survivors of domestic violence. I have only outlined one of those today, but the bill demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to enhancing safety for victim-survivors of domestic violence and to reducing reoffending. I thank the Attorney General and everyone in his team. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:58:40): I lead for The Greens in debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. The Greens support this bill and its intention, and I acknowledge the Attorney General, his advisers and the department for bringing this much-needed legislation to the House. It is my hope that all of us in this place can agree that more needs to be done to stop violence against women and reform the so-called justice system so we can achieve justice for women across this State. After close consultation with key stakeholders, particularly Women's Safety NSW, the Women's Legal Service NSW and Domestic Violence NSW, my colleague and The Greens domestic violence spokesperson, Abigail Boyd, will be moving amendments in the other place to address a number of shortcomings in the bill and strengthen some of its provisions.

The amendments are drafted based on the evidence, expertise and experience of those working in the sector. They are now being looked at in detail by my colleague Abigail Boyd. The detailed and committed work of Hayley Foster and her team at Women's Safety NSW, Karen Willis and her team at Rape and Domestic Violence Services

Australia, the team at Domestic Violence NSW and the Women's Legal Service NSW have informed these amendments. I give credit to Abigail Boyd, who is currently working through the detail of those amendments so that the views, experience and expertise of the sector can be brought into this place to be considered. I urge the Attorney General to consider the amendments closely and to look at whether or not the Government is in a position to support them. I hope that the Labor Opposition will support the amendments so that we can together, collectively, be confident that we are doing all that we can to support victim-survivors.

What is most important in any moves towards addressing domestic violence is that the experiences of victim-survivors are prioritised in informing legislation. It is also important that victim-survivors are empowered as much as possible throughout the processes of implementing preventative measures, reporting violence and attending court proceedings. Any moves towards reform must be trauma informed and protection based. These principles are at the heart of The Greens proposed amendments and we hope that everyone will consider them closely.

The bill makes a number of amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 and the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 which have been well received by organisations and groups in the sector on the whole. The bill makes amendments to allow victim-survivors of domestic violence to give evidence in a closed court or to utilise a remote audiovisual link or other similar technology or arrangement. It also requires the court to warn a jury that any delay or absence of a formal complaint of domestic abuse from the victim-survivor does not indicate that the allegation is false and it requires this to be recognised throughout proceedings.

These are significant reforms and, as domestic violence advocates and services have indicated, they will be integral in ensuring that victim-survivors feel safe and empowered to use the court process and to go through the court process. Sixty per cent of victim-survivors surveyed by Women's Safety NSW indicated that they had fears or concerns about giving evidence in open court that made them reconsider whether they should attend for their matter. Additionally, 87 per cent of victim-survivors identified that the fear of seeing the defendant was a concern which made them reconsider attending court, and 70 per cent reported that fear of seeing the defendant's friends and family was also of great concern.

As we have heard many other members articulate, the bill also makes amendments to recognise the link between domestic violence and animal abuse and prohibits the harming or threat of harming any animal belonging to or in possession of the victim-survivor. This is achieved by amending the definition of "intimidation" to include reference to animals and including it as a mandatory condition under an apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO]. It will carry a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. That is such an important consideration as we have heard too many stories of pets being used to either inflict further harm or to prevent a victim-survivor from leaving the situation. This change is essential.

I use this opportunity to once again highlight that restrictions on people being able to have pets in rental properties and strata accommodation further adds to the lack of availability of appropriate accommodation for women and families that are fleeing domestic violence situations. I urge all Government members to do whatever they can to make sure that there are no unintended barriers within the housing space now that we are recognising in legislation the clear link between domestic violence and the misuse and abuse of pets in the context of using that power over victim-survivors. Pets should not be banned from rental properties or strata properties because it adds to the pressures on people who are trying to find alternative accommodation and escape domestic violence situations.

The bill makes several amendments in regard to apprehended domestic violence orders including introducing provisions so that an ADVO ordered against a perpetrator who is imprisoned will remain in place for the duration of the sentence and for at least two years thereafter. The bill will allow for provisional ADVOs to be properly enforced, applied and amended as required by police. It will also allow the court to grant leave to the person against whom the ADVO is made for an application to vary or revoke the ADVO on the grounds that either there has been a significant change in circumstance since the relevant order was made or that it is in the interests of justice to do so. The bill will also ensure that a failure to comply with the requirement to list a provisional ADVO for court consideration within 28 days does not invalidate the provisional order.

The Greens strongly support those important measures. In particular, we note that the introduction of closed courts when domestic violence victim-survivors are giving evidence and the ability to appear via audiovisual links will be groundbreaking in the way domestic and family violence offences are dealt with in court. It will certainly provide stronger support for victim-survivors and build trust within the institution of the courts and wider criminal justice system. While this is extremely encouraging, it is important to note that there are still key reforms that need urgent attention. Even though we welcome all of the measures put forward in the bill, there are immediate additional changes which could be implemented through the passage of this legislation. I would hope that The Greens' amendments to be moved by my colleague Abigail Boyd in the other place are looked at closely so that we can pass the strongest legislation possible.

There is still so much that can be done to ensure that domestic and family violence is effectively dealt with in our laws and court procedures, particularly when it comes to recognising coercive control as an important precursor to physical violence. We need legislative reforms but we also need systemic change across our community. We need change across our justice system. We need change within front-line services, particularly police. We need action to deal with the inequality still faced by women in society. We need to recognise the urgency of the domestic and family violence problem. Until we do that, our status as women and our ability to participate fully in society will always be limited.

Along those lines, it is of paramount importance that family and domestic violence services are funded adequately in order to provide crucial support for victim-survivors. I encourage the Government and the Attorney General to ensure that this funding is given the priority it needs because those working in services and the support and advocacy organisations need resources to be able to deliver on the crucial work they do. I urge everybody to look closely at The Greens' amendments in the other place. I commend the work of all of the services and organisations that have done the hard yards to get us to a point where we are seeing this type of legislation. I hope that we see support for The Greens' amendments in the other place to make sure that the bill is as strong as it can be for our communities.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (16:07:29): I support the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. It will expand on the conditions of apprehended domestic violence orders, particularly to help protect victim-survivors of domestic violence and their pets. One of the most insidious behaviours of domestic violence perpetrators is targeting a pet to punish their partner. Time and again police and domestic violence support services see women and men who are trapped in abusive relationships out of fear for the safety of their pets. Those cases see abusive partners threaten or get rid of pets, physically and verbally abuse pets and then blame their actions on their partner, threaten and perform violent acts on innocent animals, and keep a partner with them out of fear for the pet's safety.

Pets are expensive and financial abuse and control by domestic violence perpetrators is one of the many disgusting tools in their belts. Often victim-survivors feel that they do not have the financial means to leave with their pets and so they stay. For many people—myself included—pets are beloved dogs, cats, birds, rabbits and other animals. They are, to use a colloquial term, our fur and feather babies. It is hard to explain the relationship to those who do not experience it. For many, they are quite simply our world. They are some of the most important creatures in our lives and we love them unconditionally. But in the toxic relationships where abuse prevails, that love is all too often weaponised by a partner who is using all available means to gain and keep control. It means time and again people are reluctant to leave their abusive living situations in order to protect their pets. Rarely does that choice mean the abuse stops.

It is never the fault of the victim-survivor for choosing to stay to protect their loved one but the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 does not include a definition of "intimidation" that includes harm to, or harm threatened to, animals as a form of intimidation. The amendment will change the status quo and it will send a clear message to domestic violence perpetrators that innocent animals cannot be weaponised, harmed or used as a tool to keep control of someone else without consequences. Like many people, I am the proud owner of a rescue dog and know firsthand how animals behave when they have experienced trauma. I do not think I will ever be able to comprehend how people could knowingly mistreat an animal, how neglect and abuse can be accepted as normal practice and how the unconditional love of an animal can be eroded away into sheer terror through mistreatment.

It has taken years of hard work to build up my own beloved pet's confidence, to break down the barriers built by trauma and to reassure her that she is safe. Across the State there are people in this situation with their own pets recovering from the trauma of their own experiences and helping others, including their pets, move beyond the abuse they have experienced in the place we are all meant to be safe—home. Extending the definition of "intimidation" in the Crimes Act 2007 will mean "conduct that causes a reasonable apprehension of harm to an animal that belongs or belonged to, or is or was in the possession of, a person or another person with whom the person has a domestic relationship" will be included. That will mean the many people who live in fear and with threats will have the weight of the law behind them to protect themselves and the pets they love.

The amendment will also provide "that every apprehended violence order prohibits a defendant from harming an animal belonging to, or in the possession of, a protected person or a person with whom the protected person has a domestic relationship". The laws of this land will explicitly protect the pets of domestic violence victim-survivors and will mean that those innocent creatures cannot be the target of domestic abuse perpetrators with impunity. According to Domestic Violence NSW, protecting animals from perpetrators will improve the safety of people experiencing domestic and family violence across New South Wales. That is not the only amendment to the Act and not the only important issue the bill seeks to address. It is one of many important

amendments to fight the scourge of domestic and family violence in our suburbs, cities, towns and remote areas. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (16:12:50): The passage of the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 will constitute another step on the path towards protecting women from domestic violence. The bill will extend the meaning of "intimidation" as defined in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act to include "harm to an animal" in particular circumstances. It will strengthen the apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] regime and offer victim-survivors another layer of protection and additional pathways to access that protection. The bill will entitle domestic violence complainants to give evidence using alternative arrangements or by alternative means, including audiovisual link, in certain domestic violence proceedings. Those are all worthy and much-needed reforms. We still have such a long way to go. When we have two in five young men who say that they do not believe punching an intimate partner is domestic violence, we still have such a long way to go.

As it stands, the apprehended domestic violence order regime presents a number of challenges for victim-survivors of domestic violence. When an offender is issued a provisional apprehended domestic violence order or is charged with a domestic violence-related offence by police or in cases where a victim-survivor applies for an ADVO, women are required to attend a local court. Frontline Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services workers and victim-survivors continue to report that they find the court system to be confusing and even hostile. Indeed, confronting their abuser in court, giving evidence against them and being cross-examined can often re-traumatise or further traumatise a victim-survivor.

For victim-survivors, so much can hinge on the outcome of this court matter—whether an ADVO will be in place for the victim-survivor's protection or whether an offender is found guilty of criminal offence. The bill follows recent changes to legislation which outlawed the threat to release intimate images for public consumption for the purposes of intimidation or retribution, indicating that the Government is well aware of the role that intimidating behaviour plays in domestic violence. I am glad that, after so many years and as a result of the work of so many campaigners and advocates, domestic violence is finally being taken seriously and the laws of this State are finally being changed to recognise the various forms that domestic violence can take. As Women's Safety NSW has said, the reforms proposed in the bill:

... fail fully to address many of the ongoing issues faced by victim-survivors of domestic and family violence in NSW local courts

The processes in place to deal with ADVO matters vary greatly between different local courts, as does the quality of the facilities and the level of support that victim-survivors can access. As Women's Safety NSW illustrated:

The attitude and approach of local court magistrates to domestic and family violence matters is inconsistent, and instances of poor practice from magistrates undermine the safety and effectiveness of the court process.

I join with Women's Safety NSW in welcoming the aspects of this bill that address these concerns, particularly those that allow victim-survivors to give evidence by alternative means and for evidence to be given in closed courts during some phases of domestic violence proceedings. However, I also join with them in pointing out that these reforms do not go far enough.

Women's Safety NSW has outlined further reforms in this area of the law, including the implementation of condensed ADVO lists and ADVO domestic violence charge lists in all courts across New South Wales. It has called for the introduction of designated hearing days for courts to hear domestic violence matters specifically and an increase in funding for Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services. I have received numerous representations in relation to this from residents in my local area. Women's Safety NSW has also called for the provision of safe room facilities to all victim-survivors when they attend court for domestic violence matters and has recommended that safe room facilities are of an equal standard in local courts across the State.

Domestic violence is not always physical. The abuse takes many forms: emotional, psychological, financial and more. We know that these non-physical forms of violence often escalate and that in 99 per cent of cases where a woman is murdered by a perpetrator of domestic violence, the murder is preceded by intimidating behaviours. Perpetrators of domestic violence will often stop at nothing to control their victims, even years or decades after an abusive relationship has ended. The forms that this intimidation can take vary but it is always disgusting. Perpetrators take control of their partner's finances and track their phones; they exert pressure through children and sometimes through pets. Any form of domestic violence is completely unacceptable. It takes an especially kind of craven monster to try to inflict violence on a victim-survivor through their pet.

For pet owners, few things are more precious than their animals. These animals rely on their owners and oftentimes, especially in the aftermath of trauma, owners rely on their pets for comfort and support. The perpetrators of domestic violence know this and that is why they may target victim-survivors' pets. So it is important to make clear that the prohibition imposed by an ADVO relating to destroying or damaging a protected person's property extends to the harming of an animal. I am glad that the bill addresses these abusive behaviours

often utilised by domestic violence perpetrators. However, inflicting harm on animals is only one aspect of abusive behaviour. This bill is one step on the path to addressing the horrific problem of intimidation in domestic violence situations but it is only an incremental change. It is not enough.

We need more action; we need comprehensive action. We need to set out, in clear terms for all to hear, that intimidation is never okay, especially in the context of a domestic relationship. Rarely does one non-physical action rise to the level of outright abuse. Instead, perpetrators practise a pattern of behaviour that breaks down their target's defences, separates them from their support networks and leaves them isolated and fearful. Elected members of Parliament have a duty to make laws that strengthen our communities and protect those most vulnerable from harm. We have a duty to make laws that enable victims of crime to seek support and remedy. This bill goes some of the way to strengthening the existing regime of apprehended domestic violence orders, making courts safer for victim-survivors and outlawing intimidation tactics utilised by abusers.

I, like many other members, have met with dozens of victim-survivors. I have heard of the emotional terror that they have experienced, the physical trauma that they have endured and the lack of support that they have often received from a system that is supposed to support and protect them. Listening to their testimonies is harrowing. I have felt chills go through my body and wept tears with victim-survivors. I simply cannot fathom what it would be like to be in their shoes. Two in five young men do not think that punching an intimate partner is domestic violence. We have so much further to go. I join with my colleagues in opposing this bill. I urge the Government to do more to make these sorely needed reforms that are being called for by victim-survivors and their advocacy groups a reality. I hope that one day we will never have to hear the terrible stories of what victim-survivors have experienced.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:22:49): I make a contribution to debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. The Greens support the bill but we will flag amendments based on stakeholder feedback in the other place, led by our spokesperson on coercive control, Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC. We look forward to more conversations around coercive control. As we know from authors and stakeholders, such as Jess Hill in her latest book on the issue, domestic violence as a concept can underplay the idea that coercive control exists right across society. We see that in the culture of toxic masculinity that exists in so many powerful institutions in this country. I am very impressed that the Attorney General is starting to look at that across society and not just in an enclave.

One of the things Jess Hill talks about is the tendency for people to think domestic violence could not happen to them. But we know from the stories we hear that that is simply not the case. Sadly, the statistics bear that out. We still hear a lot of fallacies, if you like, and judgements about why a woman would stay in a violent situation. It is much more pervasive, with coercive control behaviours. There are so many reasons women do not leave those situations and it is often very unsafe to do so. I give a shout-out to some incredible people in the Ballina electorate who are working to improve outcomes for women experiencing coercive control: Domestic & Family Violence, Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre; Women's Resource Service, Mullumbimby, and District Neighbourhood Centre—I saw Julie just the other day—the very effective Domestic Violence Liaison Committee in Ballina; and of course the police and all the people working in housing and in government and taking a whole-of-agency approach to support women.

We support the bill and we want to see more resourcing. Some of the recommendations and obvious ways to improve outcomes, particularly at the pointy end when a woman finds herself in the court system, need to be resourced—especially in regional areas. The courts are often not well resourced and because of fatigue and case numbers some corners get cut. We want to see safe-room facilities and audiovisual links resourced. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 and the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to support a number of procedural improvements and to close gaps in the law. These include amending the Act to allow victim-survivors of domestic violence to give evidence in a closed court or to utilise a remote audiovisual link or other technology. Again, that will often come down to resourcing. We want to make sure that there is money attached to this as a budget item.

The amendments require the court to warn the jury that any delay or absence of a formal complaint of domestic abuse from the victim-survivor does not indicate that the allegation is false, and for this to be recognised through proceedings. The current approach is very antiquated, and it is a reality that defence lawyers join those sorts of dots. I am pleased that the amendments will not allow a jury to infer anything if there is a delay or in the absence of a formal complaint. The bill will amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to recognise the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. As we have heard from many speakers, harming a child or a pet is a pernicious and heinous way to control someone. This will be achieved by amending the definition of "intimidation" to include a reference to animals and including it as a mandatory condition in an apprehended violence order. It will carry a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

These amendments will provide that if an apprehended domestic violence order is ordered against a perpetrator and they are imprisoned it will remain in place for the duration of the sentence and for at least two years thereafter. I welcome that change because it gives the family of the perpetrator time to get their lives back on track. They will not have to front up in court again to extend the apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO]. It will also allow for apprehended domestic violence orders to be properly enforced, applied and amended by the police. Amending the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act will enable the court to grant leave to a person against whom the ADVO is made to apply to vary this on the grounds that there has been a significant change in circumstance and it is in the interests of justice to do so. I do not know a lot about that, but I believe we will be addressing the matter fully in the other place.

These amendments are part of the Government's legislative review and monitoring program, which we welcome. We welcome reviewing and assessing whether things actually work. The last thing we want to do is allocate taxpayers' dollars to systems that simply do not work. Key stakeholders welcome where this process has arrived at but there are some who want to ensure that it has teeth. Ms Abigail Boyd in the other place will move amendments that have come about through conversations with Women's Safety NSW, Domestic Violence NSW and the Women's Legal Service NSW around strengthening provisions and protections for victim-survivors during the legal proceedings. I believe they will be very detailed amendments and go into the minutiae of things that impact anyone in that situation. It is re-traumatising for anyone who goes through those court processes. We support the bill and its intent, but I foreshadow that we will move amendments in the other place. We commend the bill for moving towards a model around coercive control.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (16:31:51): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. It is very important for our community. The past months have been challenging, not only for the Wallsend electorate but for all communities in Australia. It has been more than a challenge for domestic abuse victims and their relationships, particularly given that many of those victims have been living in isolation and have been unable to avoid their abusers. We also know that money is tighter and that people are cut off from their vital support networks. The proposed amendments to include harm to an animal in particular circumstances as part of the meaning of "intimidation" is welcomed. The amendment ensures that harm or threats of harm to much-loved animals are included within relevant offences and apprehended violence order conditions.

We all know of examples of perpetrators who use love for an animal as a weapon to control and intimidate a victim. I have seen it in my electorate. It is used to intimidate and retaliate against victims. It is used as punishment for the victims if they choose to leave. Perpetrators use animal abuse to delay victims from leaving. Victims fear for their cherished pets who may not be protected from the perpetrators. The amendments also provide domestic violence complainants with the ability to give evidence in the safety of a closed court. The ability to give evidence in a closed court is currently available to domestic violence complainants only if the accused has been charged with a prescribed sexual offence or the complainant is a child or a cognitively impaired witness. The winner of the 2020 Stella Prize, Jess Hill, has been researching and writing about domestic abuse since 2014. She investigated these issues in her book, *See What You Made Me Do*, which is a forensic examination of the causes and effects of domestic abuse and coercive control and the extent of the problem in our community. She says:

Domestic abuse and coercive control steals people's language away from them ... It's just not good enough to me that there are millions of people who are alive right now who have lived through domestic abuse, who are not understood by the rest of Australia ... you're talking about 2 million women who've lived through intimate-partner violence, millions of grown-up children. So the numbers on that scale are enormous.

There are important steps in this bill to allow police to vary the conditions of an apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] provisionally in circumstances requiring an urgent response due to increased risk. There is not always time to wait for a court listing to make the order or variation to the existing conditions of the ADVO as required. The pivotal role that police perform as first responders to domestic violence incidents is well recognised. Attending domestic violence incidents is a core component of police practice. Victim-survivors with positive initial interactions with police create better reporting rates, reduced re-victimisation and an increase in overall safety, justice and wellbeing. Police responses to domestic and family violence have improved, which has increased confidence within the service system and more women report domestic violence than ever before. However, despite those improvements, domestic violence remains underreported and a proportion of victim-survivors continue to report being re-victimised by their interactions with police.

I reiterate what the member for Ballina said about resourcing for our community sector and community groups. Many of the groups in the Wallsend electorate, such as the Samaritans and the refuges, survive on the smell of an oily rag. Warlga Ngurra, a women's refuge in the area, in particular, is desperate for more staff because it is a victim of its own success. It is incredibly popular and takes in many women, particularly Aboriginal women from all over the State who are fleeing domestic violence. There are few staff to really look after those women.

Today is an opportunity for me to mention in this House the importance of more funding and resources for Warlga Ngurra and other women's services. The staff do a great job. I thank all of the staff who work in this field, whether with the Samaritans or other organisations or refugees. I know they work hard with limited resources and I would love to see those resources increase. Labor acknowledges that the Government's changes are important, but there is more to do. I look forward to seeing further changes, particularly around coercive control.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:38:53): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the incredibly important Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. Domestic violence is a horrific scourge that affects our society—one that no electorate in New South Wales is exempt from. My own community in the eastern suburbs is no exception, with one domestic violence counselling service in the eastern suburbs reporting a 110 per cent increase in demand for support since the beginning of this year. In Australia an average of one woman each week is murdered by a current or former partner and one in four women from the age of 15 has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner. Intimate partner violence is a leading contributor to illness, disability and premature death for women aged 18 to 44. Figures released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that hospitalisations due to domestic, family and sexual violence are increasing. Domestic violence liaison officers in my electorate advise me that it is rare for them to work a shift without at least one presentation or callout in relation to domestic abuse. Indeed, there is often more than one incident in a shift.

Often, perpetrators of domestic violence go unpunished due to daunting processes that survivors of domestic violence must complete. One such process is attending court. Due to the intimate relationships between victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and the nature of the crime itself, victims of domestic violence can feel hesitant to report domestic violence in the first place, and then feel intimidated into ceasing cooperation with prosecutions once the process has begun. Any legislation that makes this process easier for survivors of domestic violence is a good step forward. As discussed by other members in this place, the bill will introduce two provisions to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 that aim to make these processes less daunting and provide greater support to victims of domestic and family violence.

Firstly, these amendments implement an entitlement for a domestic violence complainant to give evidence in a closed court, which is currently reserved for when the accused has been charged with a prescribed sexual offence or if the complainant is a child or is cognitively impaired. Requiring a victim of domestic or family violence to give evidence of a deeply personal and traumatic event or series of events in front of a public gallery, which can often include family and friends of the accused, can be extremely intimidating and can add trauma to that which the victim already faces. Given the private and intimate nature of the crime of domestic and family abuse and violence, this is a commonsense reform that will bring the treatment of domestic violence in line with other forms of intimate violence.

Further, the amendments provide an option for victims of domestic and family violence to give evidence remotely via an audiovisual link or similar technology or via alternative arrangements, including a seating plan or the use of a screen. All of these steps will make the court process easier and less stressful for victims of domestic and family violence and will build on the existing entitlements available for other vulnerable victims and witnesses. The bill also creates new jury warnings, where the court must warn the jury that the absence of a complaint or a delay in complaining does not necessarily indicate that the allegation that the offence was committed is false. The court must also inform the jury that there may be good reasons why a victim of domestic violence may hesitate to make or refrain from making a complaint about a domestic violence offence, and must not warn the jury that delay in making a complaint is relevant to a victim's credibility unless there is sufficient evidence to justify such a warning.

The bill makes changes to the protection provisions provided by apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs]. It ensures that court-ordered ADVOs in a case where the defendant is sentenced to a term of imprisonment remain in force for two years longer than the sentence that was imposed, while still ensuring that the court retains the discretion to order a different period for the ADVO if appropriate. The bill also makes provisions that strengthen the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act to include within the definition of intimidation harm or threats of harm to animals belonging to or in the possession of protected persons. As I am sure members in this place know, threatening, injuring, or killing family pets can be a tactic used by abusive partners to control their victims in the context of domestic violence, but this behaviour is not referenced in the Act.

Together, these amendments make commonsense reforms to the way in which the legal system manages and processes accusations of domestic and family violence and the subsequent legal proceedings. The reforms make those processes less overwhelming and less traumatic for survivors of domestic and family violence, which should always be the goal of policy in this area. If this bill is passed in tandem with the bill criminalising coercive

control that Labor has introduced, it represents a significant milestone in the prevention of domestic and family abuse and violence in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:44:15): I make a contribution to debate on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. I note that the Attorney General, who introduced the bill, is in the Chamber. I state from the outset that I support the bill. I am very supportive of any measure that addresses the issue of domestic violence in my community. I indicate that recently the Attorney and the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services joined me, the Federal member and the Orange community for the opening of The Orchard, which is a domestic violence crisis centre in Orange. I supported this centre in the last Parliament when Pru Goward was the Minister for Family and Community Services.

I spoke to the then Minister about this core and cluster project in Orange, the first of its kind, to facilitate and accommodate victims of domestic violence, predominantly women and young children, fleeing domestic violence situations. She was prepared to allocate about \$1 million of core and cluster funding towards this \$4 million project, which received money also from the Federal Government and local council. It was great to see all levels of government come together for what is a valuable asset in our community. Unfortunately, statistically Orange has twice the reported State average of domestic violence incidents. Prior to my election to this Parliament, as a police prosecutor I dealt with domestic violence every day. In the last 16-odd years in that role, I prosecuted probably thousands of domestic violence related incidents in metropolitan Sydney and regional New South Wales and in and around the Central West.

The member for Seven Hills, who was my boss prior to his election to this place, no doubt used his insight as a previous police prosecutor when he contributed to debate on the bill. Members of the police have an insight into the impact of domestic violence, not only on the court system but also on the community, as they deal with it on a daily basis. Matters of domestic violence probably take up 40 or 50 per cent of their time. That is how prevalent it is in our community. Many people may be surprised to hear those statistics. We never know what is happening next door or down the street or in the lives of those we work with. Previous speakers have mentioned the statistic of one homicide per week, that is, across Australia one woman, on average, is killed every week as a result of domestic violence. That statistic is very concerning.

I turn to the bill. Previous speakers have talked about animals being included as part of the definition of "intimidation" under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act. I have been involved in prosecuting matters where victims have had their dogs kicked, beaten or killed by perpetrators in a threat of intimidation, bullying, harassment and molestation to cause fear to victims. Their actions are quite intimidating. I am pleased to see that amendment to the definition of "intimidation" under section 7. It is also important to refer to issues relating to the manner in which complainants, or victims for that matter, give evidence in court. The domestic violence evidence-in-chief reforms were introduced in 2015—prior to my election—where victims were able to provide their evidence-in-chief or make a statement to police by way of a video-recorded statement, usually made at the scene. That evidence was played at court as the evidence-in-chief of the witness.

In my experience, that reform had a significant and profound impact on the giving of evidence by victims. It reduced their trauma and anxiety, to some extent. It also allowed the court to gain an insight by viewing firsthand what was happening in the house. One could see the raw footage of a victim, usually in tears, sometimes presenting with wounds, bruises or injuries, and often with young children running around screaming, terrified and in tears. Often the videos showed damage to property, for example, holes in walls, weapons such as knives or whatever the case may be. The videos provided the court a real insight by being able to see and hear the reports of the complainants at the time of the domestic violence.

Police officers are often frustrated by the time lag before a matter comes before the court. On occasion the victim and perpetrator have reunited and the complainant may come to court and give false evidence or say that that she made up the story. I think Inspector Sean McDermott was the police officer who drove the domestic violence evidence-in-chief reforms, which have been very successful. The Attorney General will have insight into those statistics and resources that I have mentioned. Since 2015, it would be fair to say there has been a significant increase in successful prosecutions, especially in the Local Court, for domestic violence-related matters as a result of the DVEC reforms.

Allowing a witness to give evidence remotely, behind a shield or in another room, away from the theatre of the court room, is a good measure. Having to eyeball or stare down a perpetrator, whom they may have been in love or in a relationship with and who may be the father of their children, can be a very frightening experience for victims. It is very stressful and makes them anxious. Allowing victims to give their evidence remotely will ensure that victims give an accurate and reliable account when they are recounting the offence, answering questions and being cross-examined. It will certainly assist victims and resolve and eliminate some of those stresses, trauma and anxieties when they are giving evidence in court.

I want to briefly touch on the amendments in the bill that relate to the issue of delayed complaint and the warnings that are provided. Delayed complaint can be construed as an opportunity for a witness to make up a story and it could go to their credibility. A court can ask: If this was such a terrifying incident, why wasn't there an immediate complaint? An immediate complaint is best in a perfect world but the world is far from perfect and there can be good reason why an immediate complaint is not made to police. There can be delay because it takes a lot of courage for a victim to go to the police and report domestic violence. [*Extension of time*]

I do not think any adverse conclusion should be drawn from the lack of an immediate complaint. There are often good and compelling reasons for a delayed complaint in these circumstances. The amendments in this regard are a sensible inclusion in the bill. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (16:54:31): I too speak in support of the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. These amendments assist with broadening the law's understanding of the dynamics of domestic and family violence, as well as improving the mechanisms through which complainants can be supported through the process of seeing perpetrators charged and convicted and broadening the use of apprehended domestic violence orders. I thank the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee, which has been unrelenting in its advocacy for victim-survivors. Earlier this year I met with committee members to hear about the measures it would like to see to help survivors feel safer when they report an incident of violence or intimidation and as they navigate the prosecution process.

I am pleased to see that two of the amendments acknowledge that pursuing domestic violence complaints can be a harrowing process. They provide that certain parts of domestic violence proceedings in which a complainant gives evidence must be held in a closed court, unless a court otherwise directs, and provide domestic violence complainants with the entitlement to give evidence using alternative arrangements or by alternative means, including audiovisual link, in certain domestic violence proceedings. While the bill does not address all the concerns the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee raised, nor does it implement all the improvements that the committee has recommended. The two amendments I have outlined go some way to improving the experiences of victim-survivors, and I thank the Government for listening on this front.

The trauma experienced by these survivors as they move through the courts cannot be underestimated. They are asked to recount extraordinarily distressing incidents and, sometimes, the worst moments of their lives. They are also often required to do it in front of the person who has inflicted this terror upon them. We know that for many of the perpetrators of domestic violence a charge, an apprehended domestic violence order or a prosecution does not make them change their behaviour. While no person should ever be subject to any tactics of intimidation or behaviours designed to instil fear, this is especially important when victim-survivors attend court.

I particularly support the amendment to extend the meaning of "intimidation" to include harm to an animal. Animals are valuable family members, and threatening harm to them can be significantly damaging to those who look after them. I believe this is particularly important for children living with domestic and family violence, who often seek comfort in their pets and use their relationships with animals to escape the frightening circumstances in which they live. I also support the provision that will allow a judge to issue a warning during a trial about a delay or absence of a domestic violence complaint. We know that these delays do occur and countless offences go unreported, and we know that this is often driven by the fear that the complainant will not be believed, the fear that it may make the situation worse, or the fear that the safety of other people will be compromised.

I hope that this amendment gives victim-survivors the confidence to come forward when they feel capable of doing so, without fear of experiencing embarrassment or further trauma at having any delays questioned. While there is still a very long way to go to end the horror of domestic and family violence, this bill is a step in the right direction to improving protections for victim-survivors and giving them the support they deserve as they navigate our court system.

Debate interrupted.

Public Interest Debate

BORDER COMMUNITIES

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:59:14): I move:

That this House acknowledges the ongoing resilience of our border communities in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today it is important to bring this debate to the House to speak about the resilience of border communities. From the outset, I acknowledge the other members who will contribute to this debate—in particular the member for Tweed, who will be joining us shortly. Members know that the northern border communities have been impacted for longer—and significantly—along with the southern border communities. I note that the member for Tweed is now in the Chamber. In speaking of the border, I touch upon the identity of the communities there. I think this

identity has been shaped not just throughout this year but over the journey. The first thing to touch upon is the challenges that exist, whether it be daylight saving, different road rules—such as being able to do U-turns or right-hand turns—or the ability of our tradespeople to gain licences and having a sense of recognition between the States. They are challenges that confront the everyday lives of those on the border. Some 120 years after Federation, there is still so much that needs to be harmonised between States.

Yet despite having the border there, we often see ourselves as one community. Down south, we will head to Melbourne to watch a game of footy. We will duck over to Bright for the weekend. We will catch up with a mate in Wodonga or family in northern Victoria. I remember vividly when a border closure was being canvassed and the Premier was in contact with me. It was directly after being at Jingellic. I spoke to a gentleman there and mentioned to him the possibility of a border closure. He said, "We just can't do that." He said, "I live north of the border but my farm, my work and my shopping is all south of the border." We are very much one community in that sense. The other part of our identity is that living on the border allows us to see things from a different angle. We gain an appreciation of how some things should or should not happen.

A good example is that down south we get to view Victoria's response to mental health issues and domestic violence, which allows us to gain learnings from that. Importantly, we see ourselves as remote from the centres of power. Overall, we are a community of resilience. We learn to adapt and to be agile. This was no more evident than during the initial weeks of the border closure, when conversations involved defining what job was important and recognising the hurt of the first few weeks. Then the changes cascaded down upon us, going from 50 kilometres either side of the border to the two-kilometre bubble. There was an impact on our families and our jobs. One big thing we kept fighting for was the right to employment—the ability to cross the border simply to go to a job.

For me, the resilience I speak of was demonstrated so much throughout our community. From the outset, when residents were not able to cross the border after the second change in daily life, local hairdressers were sharing employees and clients. Restaurants such as La Maison, which is literally a couple of hundred metres south of the border, were denied their clientele. La Maison set up stalls in local shops just north of the river. I give a shout-out to Anthony at Murray River Smokehouse and Alma Organics, both of which have shown this agility and adaptability. I talk about resilience, but overwhelmingly the word on the street over the past few weeks has been "relief". The lifting of the border closure on 23 November will give an overwhelming sense of relief and an opportunity for families to reunite and for businesses to go back to doing business effectively. Until 23 November there will be ongoing traumas, and traumas will continue past that date as well.

In speaking to this motion today I acknowledge those on the front line: Service NSW, the NSW Police Force and the Australian Defence Force, as well as electorate office teams, Ministers' offices and NSW Health. I thank the Premier, the Deputy Premier and Ministers Tudehope and Elliott, who came down to the border. In that sense I recognise that the Deputy Premier was in a conversation with the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation [RAMJO]. It was through that meeting that afterwards I reached out to the Deputy Premier and said, "Please come down." Straightaway he said, "I will be there", and he came down the following week. But, most importantly, I want to thank our community for their good grace while being under immense pressure, their goodwill and, importantly, for looking out for one another.

Today we acknowledge the resilience of people in border communities. It is important to do that in this place but it is more important to give material effect to that acknowledgement rather than just using words. It is important now for New South Wales residents statewide to return the favour and show their support for border communities. If people are looking for a place for business, or a place for a holiday, or a place to move to, look to the borders. For our Government, our challenge is now to no longer see border issues as something to place in the too-hard basket. This is not how we recognise the efforts and resilience of the community. I conclude by citing the words of our beloved Wiradjuri elder Aunt Nancy, who would always speak of the Murray River not as a place of boundaries but as a meeting place. As the border is lifted on 23 November, we take time to acknowledge our communities and see the Murray River, the southern border—and, hopefully, soon the northern border—not as places of boundaries but to be again a meeting place.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:06:09): I am pleased to speak in this place today in the public interest debate because it provides me with the opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing resilience of our border communities, particularly from the perspective of my electorate of Lismore, in managing the COVID-19 pandemic as well as for just being a border community. There are a whole lot of issues that go with being a broader community separate to dealing with a COVID pandemic. I thank the member for Albury for moving a motion concerning border communities and drawing the attention of the House to them. Border communities face particular issues, problems and challenges unknown to others in accessing services, timetabling, daylight saving, which I would love to get rid of, and phone changes. When I get to Murwillumbah my phone changes to Queensland time and that can play havoc with setting the alarm for the next morning.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Does the phone work, does it?

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: It works in Murwillumbah. It does not always work in Bonalbo where the QR code cannot work. Border communities in regular times deal with varying charges and fees, payroll tax exemptions, licences, and the list goes on. My living in a border community and representing border communities show up what I call the fruits and failures of our Federation. The position of the Cross Border Commissioner requires more support because, notwithstanding the commissioner is often very busy, he is particularly busy during COVID. Border communities see themselves as one community. That was writ large when the border closed. It was like: What? We have a border? We are a Federation.

I wish to speak about how our local border community rallied around during the border closure by Queensland. Our community has been living with this for many, many months. From 8 August onwards—about six weeks—it has been quite intense and tough in our community in the areas of medical supplies, health, police, jobs, compassionate reasons, construction and agriculture. However, I hasten to add that we obtained an agricultural exemption from the Queensland side of the border that facilitated necessary movements in that context. My electorate office focused on health matters and jobs. I cannot remember how many representations I made but it would be hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. Luckily for our community I was able to get 129 exemptions from the northern border closure. I also helped eight people from Lismore who were affected by the New South Wales-Victoria border closure and five others who were trying to get back to Australia.

As I have said, it was an intense time for local communities, families and indeed my electorate office staff. As all border communities would know, we tried to help all people in need who reached out and we continue to do that. I advocated hard but not always with a megaphone and was able to plead and persuade that additional postcodes needed to be added. In the first border bubble they were added. In the second border bubble, we got the local government areas in. I note that that was difficult for our communities. When the southern border was closed by the New South Wales Government, we understood that and supported it.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: We called for it.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: That is right. We called for it. The New South Wales Government provided \$45 million to support small businesses in the southern border region. I called for that measure of support for our northern border communities because our businesses were losing up to \$10,000 a week in income and were hurting. The extent of that continuing loss has been documented by the regional business chambers, the Master Builders Association and others. Unfortunately, we are still waiting for financial support. After I wrote to the Deputy Premier I received a reply reminding me that the northern State border was closed by Queensland. Der! I knew that. The point I was making was that the New South Wales Government represents all New South Wales citizens and residents. No matter who caused the closure or how it came about, the New South Wales Government has a responsibility to provide financial support to the people of my electorate in New South Wales. My final point is to commend frontline services, the business community and my whole community for their absolute resilience.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (17:11:23): I participate in the public interest debate to support my colleague the member for Albury, who moved the motion. I note the resilience of our border communities during this very, very tough time. To demonstrate the resilience and strength of my local communities I point out that as of today we are up to our eleventh version of a northern border pass since March this year.

Ms Janelle Saffin: Direction No. 17. I have one.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: For the information of Sydneysiders, I am holding up the famous border pass that New South Wales people must display in their cars when seeking to cross the border into Queensland. As of today with the new pass, New South Wales residents must wait three business days for the application for a border pass to be attended to. My electorate office staff have had experiences similar to those alluded to by the member for Lismore. They dealt with some very emotional cases of children dying of cancer needing urgent treatment in Queensland and not being allowed to cross the border. Many submissions were made and a lot of passes were granted. Some people needed a border pass to attend funerals or to say final goodbyes to loved ones and that generated a continuing demand for border passes.

At times there was confusion because the Queensland Government was quite slow in letting its agencies, particularly the police, know about changes in the requirements for a border pass to be issued. As the member for Lismore mentioned, even the building and construction industry had projects worth \$170 million on hold because all the required structural steel, glass, staircases and tradespeople come from Queensland. The situation was so depressing that the building industry recorded a number of cases of self-harm. However, that eventually was resolved with moving the bubble to the south of Ballina. The Cross Border Commissioner, James McTavish, has done an excellent job. However, I am disappointed by the lack of communication between Queensland and

New South Wales. People seem to be caught up in a blame game between the Queensland and New South Wales governments. Residents of border communities on both sides of the northern State border were being held to ransom, which is really poor conduct. I co-chair the Northern Border Recovery Committee comprising 17 different government agencies.

Ms Janelle Saffin: You never invited me, member for Tweed.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: No. I was dealing at the regional level.

Ms Janelle Saffin: Shame on you!

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: This reminds me of being in Queensland.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the member for Tweed.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Government members are endeavouring to support their local constituents, yet politics is brought into it. It is a terrible shame to hurt people like that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the member for Tweed. The member for Canterbury, the member for Murray and the member for Lismore will come to order.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker—good call and well deserved, too. I must congratulate the Federal member, the Hon. Justine Elliot, on her lack of doing anything on the border closure, but that is true to form. This is about really the people that live within the community. I too congratulate our frontline workers. For a time I had just on 100 staff working in the hospital who lived across the border and could not attend. I had 80 police that look after the Tweed-Byron who could not attend. In the same way we had 80 Queensland police in our area. I had half of my school teachers living in Queensland. So we are actually joined at the hip. We have made a lot of progress with our cross-border but I think this pandemic has indicated how dependent we are on our northern neighbours. I have often said in this place in the last 12 years that our front door is Queensland, our back door is New South Wales. We saw that 30 per cent of my people work in Queensland and 15 per cent of the kids go to school in Queensland. We are joined at the hip. For some reason the Gold Coast Airport was built across the border, where the southern half of it is in New South Wales.

Ms Janelle Saffin: And the uni.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: And the uni as well, as the member for Lismore said. I pay homage to the hardworking people of my area. We have put up with a hell of a lot. At the end of the day, we have not had one case of COVID in the Tweed Valley since the beginning of March. We have had five in the local health district, but that has been further south and some of those were returned international travellers. We felt as though we were being held to ransom for the mistakes of other people. I praise the people of the Tweed. Obviously we were washing our hands and keeping a social distance because we have not had one case. And that trend is continuing. My fear was always that we would get some cases there, because we have a lot of Victorians there at the moment, and we would suffer. But that has not happened and our hospitals are half empty at this point in time. I say well done to the people of the Tweed and well done to the cross-border communities.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:16:44): I pay tribute to the many people in our border communities. I wish the member for Murray had had the opportunity to speak before me. As someone in this place who does have a border community this has been very impactful for her. Not just during this time but throughout the year, as outlined by other speakers, the challenges of living on an interstate border—issues around daylight savings, fees and charges, and all those other things—make it harder for border communities. One thing we must take from this is that there are two States in these borders but there is one community. That is a lesson that needs to be learnt.

I think the politicisation and weaponisation of the border debate was sad and disgraceful. I have spoken to many people who live in those communities. I knew them when I was a tour operator and from visits as shadow Minister. I have spent a lot of time travelling around border communities. None of them want to be pawns in a political game played in Macquarie Street or between States. We kept seeing the focus on what was happening in Queensland and nothing on what was in the control of the Premier in the southern States. We have heard the member for Tweed talking about the politics coming into it but not liaising with my colleague the member for Lismore on these issues. You cannot talk about not politicising things and then politicise them—that is just not right.

We have all heard terrible stories, even in my community. Maitland is very far away from any border but early on in the pandemic my godson had cancer and had to travel from Melbourne to Albury to receive care. The difficulty in trying to do that for him and his parents was awful. The tourism industry, which I have been representing through my role as shadow Minister, was already suffering border closures due to the fires. In Eden

70 per cent of their tourists come from Melbourne. They have not had proper numbers of visitors since November last year. Boats have not been able to operate on the Murray River because that becomes part of the border problem. There have been many concerns and difficulties in understanding the problems. It seems that the bureaucracy of the fixes for these challenges has been poorly thought out. To try to come home to Maitland from northern Victoria and be told by the Government that you have to drive to Melbourne and then fly to Sydney, then you have to stay there—

Mrs Helen Dalton: Put your sheep on the train.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Yes, that is right.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Murray will come to order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Then you have to keep your animals on there. Or even if you are coming to Maitland then you have to quarantine for two weeks before you can go two hours up the road rather than doing that single drive. My office has spent an inordinate amount of time with primary producers and people who have had significant situations in their family life, such as not being able to provide support to siblings who are looking after dying parents and not knowing if they will be able to see their parents again. One woman was living on a property some distance outside of Maitland. She could completely self-isolate in a granny flat on her sister's property. She was told, "No. You must go and stay in Melbourne for two weeks. If your mother gets to the stage where she has hours to live, we can kit you out in a hazmat suit and get you in to see your mother then."

People making these decisions are not aware of the real challenges and mental health consequences that those individuals are facing. The Government went on and on about how it was so great with the Agriculture Workers' Code. As we heard from the member for Lismore, the code was in place from the Queensland border much earlier. The Premier goes on and on about how it was all about Queensland. Well, look in your own backyard. Look at what is happening on the southern border and listen to the member for Murray because she has really important things to say on this, just as the member for Albury has. I am really glad the member for Albury brought this matter to the House as I know he wants to pay tribute to the people in those cross-border communities because they do not deserve to be treated like this.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (17:21:46): I also recognise my southern colleagues, both the member for Albury and the member for Murray, and the challenges besetting cross-border communities with Victoria. There is no doubt this is a year that has been like no other, particularly given that a lot of these communities have had their challenges around bushfires masked by the impact of COVID. The way in which people are working together in border communities is something that needs to be recognised in this debate. I also recognise the member for Tweed, who obviously has a different dynamic in his electorate.

There are a lot of people who must be recognised for the support they have given our community during this time: obviously the local authorities, including local transport workers, through to the NSW Police Force, who also have had to administer the borders. This has been, without doubt, one of the biggest tests for local government coupled with local health districts and certainly local members and their electorate staff. Whilst the community that I represent does not have a large concentration of population across a border, towns like Eden and others up and down the coast are dependent on Victorians visiting. A lot of Victorians who have migrated to the region have had to endure the hardship that the member for Maitland spoke of—the loss of loved ones or people unwell in Victoria and the inability to visit—in the name of keeping people safe and not having the virus spread.

I must recognise the health Minister. On quite a number of occasions he had been approached to assist with a raft of people who had obvious challenges, be they in the agricultural sector or the fly-in fly-out workers who work in the gas fields in Victoria but live on the far south coast, through to some of the enormous challenges with the timber industry and the like. This has been a very testing period. There has been a degree of pragmatism despite having to have a hard border in place. I can tell the House that the moment that date was set in terms of that opening, the sense of relief was next level. I think we all felt that locally. Having that surety has been recognised, and I sense a lot of relief.

I have had feedback from local tourist operators that intrastate tourism has held up. In the Bega Valley we have been supported by the border support grants. About 265 grants have been issued at an average of \$6,600 per grant. That has been especially important to tide over small business. But as we head into the summer period, it is important not to allow complacency to creep in. The feedback I am receiving from some small tourism operators is that they have struggled to find employees to work in their businesses because of JobKeeper. They are nervous about the services they can offer to people who visit the region over the summer period. I ask visitors to the region to be mindful of the stress that small business operators are under and to recognise that this year has been particularly challenging in light of the bushfires followed by the COVID pandemic.

It is important to acknowledge that we are not out of the woods. I am seeing complacency at a State level. If small businesses on the far South Coast can organise a QR code, I am pretty confident that a business in Sydney can too. That is the type of thing that small businesses in the regions are getting on with without hesitation, using technology to give themselves every chance and to ensure we do not see an outbreak in the regions. Unlike the Tweed, we have had cases in our region. It has been 89 days since we had a case of COVID. Members will know about the Batemans Bay Soldiers Club outbreak, which the community self-regulated and got under control. We do not have any active cases at this point in time. We must continue the safety message. Let us have the relief of Victorian visitors, but let us not allow complacency to creep in regarding our COVID safety measures.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:26:54): I thank the member for Albury for bringing this motion before the House. I will speak tonight as the shadow Minister for Better Public Services and as the Opposition spokesperson for Service NSW. Our leader spoke early in support of closing the border with Victoria and backed the Government's decision. Labor urged the Government to put a plan in place as the Victorian border had not been closed for over 100 years and there are more than 54 bridges and many other ways to cross the border between New South Wales and Victoria. I thank communities both north and south of the border with Victoria. But let us not forget the South Australian border and the community of Broken Hill, which has been through a devastating period.

I come from Canterbury but I have spoken to many people living and working in border communities. I have dealt with a lot of matters relating to border permits. I acknowledge my colleagues the member for Lismore, Justine Elliott, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, the Hon. Mick Veitch, the member for Maitland, the Hon. Adam Searle, Kristy McBain and our Deputy Leader, the member for Swansea. They have worked tirelessly over a period of months to provide support to people in southern and northern border communities, and on the South Australian border. It was terrible to see the August headline in the *Border Mail* about sheep. The Government had closed the border without putting a plan in place. I acknowledge the authorities, the police and defence personnel. A government official told people across the border, "Go to Melbourne, catch a flight to Sydney, quarantine for 14 days and drive to where you work."

We were talking about thousands of people who could not cross the border. It was a very difficult time. I acknowledge the Transport Workers Union, the Australian Workers Union, the Public Service Association and the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union. I had a lot to do with a number of meatworks companies and the union. We inundated the office of the Minister for Customer Service day after day as we were receiving ridiculous responses from the bureaucracy. The workers on the front line did a magnificent job. The member for Bega, and Minister for Transport and Roads, said that we are not out of the woods, but we must have a plan as we are reliant on our borders. Regional communities have been significantly affected. Many of my constituents own properties on the South Coast and the North Coast, and they are devastated by what happened with the bushfires and drought.

I urge the Government to look at the border permit system. As the well-respected member for Lismore has stated many times—and as has been repeated in the media—the QR code is an issue in our community due to a lack of technology and connectivity. The internet is wobbly; we have issues. Some 30 per cent of people in our community do not own a smartphone. A large percentage of our elderly on the North Coast are not tech savvy. The Labor Party and our leader support mandating the technology, as I have said in the media. The Government must provide a helping hand, not a heavy hand. A blunt instrument should not be used on those communities that need support. I urge suburban residents to get out into the regions. The Government must do better.

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:32:03): When it comes to border community resilience, the tragic story I am about to tell sums up the experience of so many broken-hearted country people. While Gladys Berejiklian was shaking her fist at Queensland and demanding it open the border, she was also denying families the right to farewell their dying loved ones on the State's southern frontier. On Thursday Loretta heard news that her beloved mother, Therese, had just days to live. She was in Victoria while her mum was in the New South Wales border town of Tocomwal. Loretta desperately wanted to cross the border to see her mum for one last time so she contacted the New South Wales Government to apply for an urgent border permit.

A bureaucrat told her she needed a letter from the doctor confirming that her mum would die soon. She also required another letter from the aged-care facility confirming the same thing, and she needed to develop a COVID safety plan and travel safety plan. She assembled the mountain of paperwork that Gladys required and submitted it to Service NSW. On Monday Loretta had received no response and she was beside herself with stress. Her mum was quickly deteriorating and now had just hours to live. She clung to her phone 24 hours a day, hoping that every call received would be a New South Wales government official telling her that they had granted her border permit. At 3.00 p.m. on Tuesday her phone rang. It was her mum's aged-care facility letting Loretta know that her mum had died alone. Loretta was in tears when her phone rang again minutes later. A New South Wales

government bureaucrat had called to let her know that her cross-border permit had not been approved because she needed more documentation.

This is insane cruelty that the New South Wales Government has inflicted on our country communities. Nobody should die alone—ever. We should all have the right to have our loved ones by our side during our final moments, but the Premier is denying country people that right for no reason at all. There are zero COVID cases in most regional Victorian towns. There are zero cases in New South Wales border towns. While the New South Wales Government allows 40,000 people to gather for the footy grand final, a country woman is not allowed to see her dying mother for the last time. Gladys has forced people to give up their jobs, she has shut down small businesses, she has denied pregnant women access to hospitals across the border and she has prevented people from seeing their own families. There is no evidence at all that shutting State borders prevents the spread of COVID-19—none.

This is blatant discrimination against rural communities. It is disappointing that Justin Clancy, the member for Albury, rubberstamped this rubbish. The member for Albury has put his party ahead of his community. He has betrayed the most loyal Coalition voters in the country. The National Party member for Cootamundra, Steph Cooke, also did nothing to prevent this cruelty while her small towns suffered. Our border communities have been fabulous. We have done the right thing and followed the rules. We had the lowest COVID-19 rates in the world and what was our reward for good behaviour? The New South Wales Government has thrown country people under the bus to score political points. That will stain the Government forever.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (17:36:23): In reply: I thank those members who have spoken in this debate. For the member for Murray to suggest that there was a rubberstamping from the Albury electorate is an absolute falsehood.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murray will come to order. I call the member for Murray to order for the first time.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: It is for the member for Murray to explain to her electorate why she was on social media stating, "Ten days ago I wrote an urgent letter to the Premier asking her to put arrangements in place to manage the influx of Victorians. Followed up July 6, July 2."

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

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: So we have the member for Murray talking on social media about getting restrictions in place.

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

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: I was strongly against border restrictions. I pushed the views of my community and spoke to the Premier, and I had the member for Murray next door saying, "We need restrictions." She needs to own up to that and she needs to speak to her community and answer why she was in the media saying, "I want restrictions for my community."

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! We have heard from the member for Murray. I remind her that she is on three calls to order. The member for Albury will be heard in silence.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: Having said that, I thank the members who have spoken. The member for Lismore spoke about the fruits and failures of Federation and we all experience that as representatives of border communities; it is the challenge we face. Our communities have had an enormous burden placed on them—the burden of being called upon to safeguard the health of New South Wales, the broader community and the health of the nation. They are the challenges that we then have to work on with our communities and face them.

The member for Murray is right to raise the issue of compassionate care. My office dealt with a number of those cases. We have lived and breathed that over the past three to four months. The member raises that in the House and suggests that other members have not had to deal with the same concerns day in, day out in their communities. We have all fought very hard for our communities. I know the member for Lismore has, I know the member for Tweed has, and I know that my Victorian colleagues have as well. It is important to recognise the resilience of our communities. I am deeply grateful for the way that my community has responded and the way it has fulfilled its task. They are heroes for the work they have done in their community.

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

Motion agreed to.

*Bills***STRONGER COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) BILL 2020****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:40:00): This year we have seen so many people living with, harmed and, indeed, killed by domestic violence [DV], and we must always look for ways to prevent domestic and family violence in any way we can. In the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 the Government has put forward a raft of sensible amendments. As the shadow Minister for Primary Industries with responsibility for the prevention of cruelty to animals, I think it is important to draw a link between people who are violent towards animals and who then go on to be violent towards humans and use the threat of violence against animals to intimidate victim-survivors of domestic violence. I acknowledge the efforts of the Hon. Emma Hurst. I know she would have made representations to the Attorney General on this matter because she made them to me when she first came to this place and I was in a prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault role.

I think it is also important to clarify the situations in which police officers are able to issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs], and to continue them for up to two years after imprisonment. I live in a community that is close to a jail—there is a jail in Cessnock—and quite a number of constituents have come to me very disturbed by the prospect of their former partner being released from prison and asking what protections may be available to them. I have raised before in the House situations where some inmates have continued the abuse of their former partners from jail. There is always more to be done; some people just do not change. I think allowing the courts to have more control to grant leave to vary or revoke indefinite ADVOs and permitting closed courts for parts of DV proceedings are just no-brainers. It is something that should have happened well before now.

We want victim-survivors to have the ability to give evidence by other means. I think the member for Orange was very eloquent in his description of the cases he had seen where that was a problem. We need to acknowledge how difficult it is for complainants to make a complaint and the delays that occur. Having the courage to stand up against verbal, psychological, emotional, social, financial or physical violence and say that is enough and make a complaint should not be held against you. It is unheard of that this approach should not apply here in the interpretation of victim-survivors' actions.

I know the shadow Minister will have done so, but I also acknowledge Domestic Violence NSW, Women's Safety NSW, Rape & Domestic Violence Australia and the Australian Services Union for the work they do with so many local community groups, shelters and all sorts of service providers in the prevention of domestic violence field. We must make sure we pay them the respect they deserve. I ask the Attorney General to provide more funding for refuges. In June an 18-year-old woman from my electorate died as a result of an alleged domestic violence incident. It is such a scar on our community. We need more than mechanisms within legislation; we need funding so that police can deal with domestic violence.

I pay respect to the local police in my community, who have risen to the challenges of a quickly increasing level of domestic violence over recent years and have worked hard to support victims and survivors. But again, they can only do what they do with the money allocated by the Government, and they need more. We need to ensure that perpetrator behaviour change programs are in place and that respectful relationships education starts much earlier. That is a way of teaching young people to respect themselves, their partners and their families. In areas like Maitland we have no accommodation at the moment. It is not even a question of getting room in a shelter or a private rental; there is just nothing around. We need the Government to invest more into social housing and that longer-term transitional housing that allows victims and survivors to hold their families close and move on with their lives after the destruction of violence.

It is terrible when one sees someone who is affected. Earlier this week the families and communities Minister and I met someone who had been waiting 17 years for public housing. In fact, when she finally got some community housing she said that it was lucky I had not changed my phone number for 17 years, because otherwise she would not have been able to tell me. The difference that made for that woman in her life manifested itself in the hope that came into her voice and her whole attitude. She talked about undertaking further study, getting a job and having her children live with her, instead of being a mum that visits them in the van that she lives in and in which they go camping for the weekend, because that is the only way she can live with her children. We need mechanisms that support law and order but we also need to support homelessness services for women. We know that this Government has made terrible funding decisions around domestic violence and shelters in this State. It has gutted the sector so terribly since 2014 that it is still recovering from the scars of that damage.

The member for Orange spoke about domestic violence evidence-in-chief, and I want to flag to the Attorney General the inadmissibility of evidence when a victim-survivor cannot attend court because they do not feel safe. That is something that prosecutors have raised with me. They feel that they need more help to make those contemporaneous reports of victims and survivors of violence to have more weight in legal situations, because it is very hard for some survivors to give evidence after the initial event as the violence is ongoing. It is good to see we have a bill that is trying to make some good changes, but there is always more to do in this space. It is important that we continue to do that, but I say to the Attorney General that we need much more money to ensure justice. The Opposition took a \$158 million package to the election and the first thing the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence did was to sign up to one of our initiatives called Our Watch. I say to him that there is a lot more money there and I urge him to spend the cash because everyone's lives depend on this.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:48:40): I make a contribution in support of the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020. Anything that we can do to aid and add to the protection of people suffering from domestic violence, primarily women, is an advance. Therefore, I support this amending bill. It will allow for evidence to be given in closed courts where necessary. As a lawyer, I sometimes have a reluctance to recommend the use of closed courts, because justice should always be open. That is its primary principle. But there are clearly circumstances where it is important and essential to hear evidence in a closed court. We always have to make sure that we get the balance right between justice and those suffering from domestic violence. When women and their children are in that situation, it causes deep trauma that makes it very difficult to act with any kind of urgency. They need all the support that we can give through legislation and we have to back that up through services.

Courts can be quite intimidating for people to appear before, particularly if they have to face someone who has been violent to them. When I say violent, I mean the whole package of behaviours around coercive control. I hope that I can speak on that when that change comes before the Parliament. Domestic violence starts with circumlocution and ends up with murder, and involves everything else along that spectrum. It starts with name-calling and leads to murder, with everything else in between. I am pleased to see that there is a provision in the bill regarding animals. I worked in a women's refuge for five years and was on its board for a fair while. I also worked in a men's refuge as well as in community services. I have seen when an animal has been treated cruelly or killed to punish a woman and her children. That is something that children should not have to go through. It is unbearable and an example of unthinkable cruelty.

As the Attorney General said, this bill seeks to remove some of the obstacles to reporting. I hope that objective is achieved when the bill is enacted, because reporting domestic violence is one of the most difficult things that women face. Then there is the issue of support. The member for Maitland spoke about housing, and I am sure that other members who have spoken have also made mention of it. Provision of housing is essential in removing the obstacles to reporting for women in that situation. If a woman does not have the safety of that shelter it is nearly impossible to come forward.

I have written to the Treasurer to say that we want our fair share in the budget for housing in our area, particularly for those fleeing domestic violence. I hope that we see that spread fairly across the State next week. I look forward to speaking on the coercive control provisions that this bill needs. I recognise that there is a committee that will publish an issues paper dealing with that, and I am sure that good work will be done to make sure that we are able to enact provisions against coercive control. I commend this amending bill to the House and I thank the Attorney General.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:53:59): I make a contribution on the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020, introduced by the Attorney General, the member for Cronulla. Many members have made important contributions on this extremely important issue, and I thank the Attorney General for introducing this bill. Domestic violence is a scourge on society. There is never any excuse for perpetrating violence of any type on another person, let alone a woman. The most recent statistics in New South Wales demonstrate that to June this year 62,000 assaults took place across New South Wales. That is approximately 2,300 cases per week, 340 per day or 14 per hour. That is what the police have attended. As we all know, probably only one-third of assaults are actually reported. Unfortunately, in Blacktown City there have been approximately 42 police cases per week.

I thank the Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre CEO Jihan Leach and her wonderful staff and team of volunteers who are undertaking a thankless but very much appreciated task to help domestic violence victims. It provides a safe house to support women and a friendly atmosphere. It is a community based women's health centre which provides accessible health and wellbeing services for women and girls. It also provides legal support, case studies, food hampers, hygiene products and, probably just as importantly, friendship and camaraderie through yoga and networking opportunities.

I also appreciate the centre taking the lead to establish a vigil whenever a domestic violence death takes place in Blacktown City. My predecessor, John Robertson, when he was the member for Blacktown, and the Blacktown City Council, when I was mayor there, felt it was important for the community to come together in mourning the death, supporting the family and making a clear statement that violence cannot be tolerated. Blacktown City Councillor and Deputy Mayor Julie Griffiths, fellow councillors Kathie Collins and Carol Israel, together with members of the Blacktown City Women's Advisory Committee plus volunteers, have annually made knitting wraps, which go around trees across the Blacktown CBD to raise awareness against domestic violence.

There are many other organisations across Blacktown City, including the WASH House, with board chair Jo Fuller, and manager Catherine White, staff and volunteers who for the past 35 years have been operating in the Mount Druitt and Blacktown areas. Their purpose is to reduce the impact of poverty, social disadvantage and violence on the lives of women and girls. It has delivered almost 4,000 counselling services in the past six years. SydWest Multicultural Services, with Elfa Moraitakis and her dedicated team, offers services across the broad spectrum of the multicultural community in Blacktown City, where there are some 188 different nationalities and almost 50 per cent of residents were born overseas.

SydWest provides empowering and women's support services. SydWest has been coordinating culturally and linguistically diverse domestic violence prevention projects for the past few years, working with local community ambassadors to equip them with knowledge and networks to support people in their community to seek help. Harman Foundation, with Harinder Kaur and her team, offer accommodation, food hampers, support services, a telephone crisis line, as well as senior support services. I thank all the organisations in our city and across New South Wales that provide any type of support services to domestic violence victims. I comment on the Government's amendment to change the definition of domestic violence and, to quote the Attorney General:

... any conduct that causes a reasonable apprehension of harm being done to an animal which belongs or belonged to, or which is or was in the possession of the relevant person will therefore explicitly include both harm or threatened harm to animals as a form of intimidation. Changing the definition of "intimidation" will clarify and streamline the application of the offence of stalking and intimidation under section 13 of the CDPV Act. A person who engages in that conduct is guilty of an offence that carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment or 50 penalty units or both.

While I welcome the New South Wales Government's amendments in the legal area, I express my profound disappointment at the failure of this Government to give any on-the-ground, practical support for victims of domestic violence concerning their pets. Many domestic violence temporary accommodation facilities cannot accommodate pets, and while the amendments to the law today may give women the opportunity to take their pets with them, the practical reality is in many cases they cannot. In 2017 when I was Mayor of Blacktown City Council, the council sat down with the State Government to see whether there was any finance available to help it to build the State's first dedicated pet boarding facility for women in a domestic violence situation. At the time Domestic Violence NSW, CEO Moo Baulch said:

I applaud council's proposal ... this will be powerful and practical assistance to many women and families at the moment of crisis when they are at their most vulnerable and desperately need practical support.

Superintendent Gary Merryweather, Blacktown Local Area Commander at the time, said that the number of people who stayed in or delayed leaving volatile relationships because of pets was substantial. He further said:

One of the big things they are concerned about is their children and their pets. Obviously if they leave their pets behind and they're in a volatile and aggressive relationship, they know those pets are going to be used against them.

Earlier this year the organisers of a domestic violence program in Victoria said searching for suitable pet accommodation could mean that women and children had to stay in high-risk and violent homes for longer. While I am grateful for the amendment to the law changing the legal definition of domestic violence, for the past three years this Government has had the opportunity to do something on the ground to support domestic violence victims and their pets but has failed to deliver. I call on the Attorney General to work with Blacktown City Council as it is about to begin its new animal holding facility building. It is not too late, given that the State budget is next week, for us to work together to deliver New South Wales' first dedicated animal shelter for women fleeing a domestic violence situation. It would be one of the largest animal shelters in New South Wales, in the middle of western Sydney, where unfortunately there is far too much domestic violence. Hopefully we can work together to deliver this to Blacktown City Council.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (18:02:40): In reply: I thank those members representing the electorates of Blue Mountains, Seven Hills, Liverpool, Goulburn, Prospect, Albury, Shellharbour, Holsworthy, Newtown, Cootamundra, Charlestown, Ballina, Wallsend, Coogee, Orange, Newcastle, Maitland, Lismore and Blacktown for their almost universally constructive contributions to the debate. I thank the member for Blue Mountains for speaking of her personal experience as a survivor of domestic and family violence. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with her and all my parliamentary colleagues on this deeply concerning and often tragic issue.

I understood the member for Blue Mountains to have suggested that the entitlement to appear remotely to give evidence or to use other alternative arrangements should be an absolute entitlement for domestic violence complainants. I note her concerns; however, it is important that courts retain discretion in how proceedings are conducted. The starting point and the default position will be that is the entitlement, but there will be a court discretion that remains. The drafting of this discretion is consistent with what is in place for other vulnerable witness protection provisions available in the Criminal Procedure Act. This is important because the complainant may be entitled to these protections on multiple bases—they may be both a sexual assault complainant and a domestic violence complainant.

To avoid uncertainty, it is important that the entitlements that are available are consistent with each other. A court may only order that alternative means may not be used if the court is satisfied that there are special reasons in the interests of justice to do so. The member for Blue Mountains suggested that giving evidence by audiovisual link [AVL] instead of by other alternative means should be the norm. Consistent with existing provisions and protections for sexual assault complainants in the Criminal Procedure Act, complainants will be able to choose not to give evidence by alternative means or arrangements. Even if AVL is available, complainants may still choose to give evidence in the courtroom using alternative arrangements, such as screens. This choice in how a complainant presents their evidence is important.

The member for Blue Mountains also suggested that there should be a *prima facie* entitlement for witnesses in domestic violence proceedings—not the complainant but other witnesses—to have a closed court or to give their evidence by alternative means. All of this is a balance between, on the one hand, the fundamental principle of open justice in our legal system and, on the other hand, making sure that, where appropriate, witnesses can give their evidence in a safe way where they are not humiliated and they are not confronted by, for example, friends and family of the person against whom they have complained. The principle of open justice is not an absolute principle and there are circumstances where, in order to ensure the proper administration of justice, it is appropriate to close the court. One of those cases is the protection of witnesses, so we have statutory protections in place for complainants in prescribed sexual offence proceedings, for children and for other vulnerable witnesses where there is an entitlement to give evidence in camera.

It is recognised that protecting those witnesses from further trauma or the fear of public scrutiny so that they may give their best evidence is in the public interest. This bill extends that entitlement to domestic violence complainants in criminal and related apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] proceedings. The member for Blue Mountains suggested that this entitlement should be extended to other witnesses in such proceedings, but we have to take care in the balance between protecting witnesses on the one hand and open justice on the other hand. The amendments have gone as far as the Government thinks appropriate at the moment in achieving that balance—in the criminal context, anyway. The policy arguments to provide closed courts for sexual assault and domestic violence complainants and other vulnerable witnesses in proceedings do not necessarily extend to all witnesses in those proceedings. We have to balance the desire to protect those witnesses on the one hand with the principle of open justice on the other hand. Provision is still made for applications for closed courts where appropriate.

The member for Blue Mountains and the member for Liverpool noted stakeholder advocacy for prohibiting direct cross-examination by self-represented defendants in domestic violence proceedings. There is already a similar prohibition for complainants in prescribed sexual offence proceedings under section 294A of the Criminal Procedure Act, or for a vulnerable witness such as a child or a cognitively impaired person under section 306ZL of the Criminal Procedure Act. I certainly acknowledge that stakeholders have advocated strongly for this reform and the issue is being carefully considered by the Government, by me and by the Department of Communities and Justice. A proposal along these lines would probably require a new provision in the Criminal Procedure Act to provide that a domestic violence complainant is entitled not to be directly examined in chief, cross-examined or re-examined by an unrepresented accused person, similar to the protections that we have already for sexual offence complainants and vulnerable witnesses.

I acknowledge that this proposal would benefit domestic violence complainants who are giving evidence in proceedings. It would reduce their stress and trauma associated with giving evidence and would improve their experience of the justice system. But extending the protection to domestic violence matters without an appropriate implementation model would result in an increase in the time to justice. The volume of domestic violence proceedings is enormous. It is significantly higher than sexual assault proceedings or those with vulnerable witnesses. If we are going to do it, we have to be sure we are going to implement it properly. The existing protection for victims in prescribed sexual offence proceedings already encounters not necessarily resourcing issues but logistical issues where no-one is available to perform the role of asking the questions instead of the unrepresented accused. That results in adjournment or requires court staff to perform the role, which would be a particular problem in regional areas where we cannot have a plethora of people on standby to ask questions on behalf of the accused.

We have to work out, too, who is the appropriate third party to perform this role. As I said, that would be particularly acute in regional areas where there may only be one or two registry staff on duty on any day. We are working through these issues through the Department of Communities and Justice and looking at a range of options. I look forward to consulting stakeholders further on the issue and I thank members for their interest and advocacy on this point. I note the concerns raised by the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Liverpool about access to AVL facilities by courts. They made the important point that it is no good having a law in theory if the AVL facilities are not available on the ground. I am pleased to confirm that AVL facilities are now available to service 271 individual courtrooms in New South Wales. All District Courts in New South Wales now have permanent remote witness facilities installed and I hope to have something more to say very soon about the ongoing expansion of AVL technology in our courts. Watch this space.

I now turn to the suggestion by the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Liverpool that the protections for domestic violence complainants who are giving evidence should go beyond criminal proceedings and related ADVO proceedings to all ADVO proceedings. The impact of extending these protections to all persons in need of protection—PINOPs for short—in ADVO proceedings would be significant, as the volume of ADVO applications is much higher than that of criminal offence proceedings. Interestingly, while the proportion of ADVOs that are finalised as contested are relatively low, the anecdotal evidence we have from operational agencies indicates that PINOPs give evidence in a higher proportion of finalised ADVOs than those that are formally contested. Maybe that is because PINOPS are asked to give evidence about issues such as appropriate conditions even when the order is not contested or because the order is contested at an early stage but ultimately finalised by consent.

If both of the proposed entitlements were implemented so that they apply to all ADVO proceedings, it would create significant delays in the Local Court and have resource implications, including a much greater demand for remote court facilities. That would impact on all matter types that require the use of technology at a statewide level, not just ADVO proceedings. Extending the protections to ADVO proceedings could also impact court efficiency. Current listing practices in the Local Court enable matters to be interposed so a judicial officer can quickly move between cases if a party is not ready. This would not be possible if a list court had to be closed to accommodate PINOPs giving evidence in ADVO proceedings. Extending these protections to ADVO proceedings could have a significant impact on courts and, in particular, could impact time to justice across the whole of the Local Court system.

In turn, that could have a negative impact on victims of domestic violence; other complainants who receive statutory entitlements, such as children and sexual offence victims; and victims in general criminal cases. A change in listing practices might go some way to alleviating issues but is also likely to cause disruption and delays to other matters as a result of scheduling challenges and increased adjournments. However, the entitlements will be available for ADVO proceedings associated with criminal offence proceedings involving the same victim and the same accused. Often these can be determined simultaneously. The bill ensures a consistent approach for related proceedings.

In the event that a remote appearance for a PINOP is pursued in a standalone ADVO proceeding, an application for the person to give evidence by audio or audiovisual link from a place other than the courtroom can still be made in accordance with section 5B of the Evidence (Audio and Audio Visual Links) Act 1998. The member for Liverpool commented about the drafting of the delay in complaint warning in the proposed new section 306ZR. The drafting of the delay in complaint warning, as contained in schedule 2 to the bill, has been carefully considered by stakeholders, the Parliamentary Counsel's Office and the Department of Communities and Justice. It has been drafted consistently with section 294 of the Criminal Procedure Act which provides the same warning for prescribed sexual offence proceedings.

The Judicial Commission provides a carefully drafted direction in the *Criminal Trial Courts Bench Book* which is in accordance with the statutory warning but which, however, provides scope for a court to shape the direction around the circumstances of a case. This warning is triggered when questions have been raised suggesting a delay or absence of a complaint. Often a victim-survivor may have provided a response and this response forms part of the evidence before a jury. The court too can incorporate that aspect of the trial into the direction to expand further why the delay in making a complaint about the alleged conduct of the accused, or an absence of a complaint, does not necessarily indicate that the allegation that the offence was committed is false, and what those reasons were. It will be open to a court, depending on the circumstances of the case, to shape how the mandatory warning is presented. Parties may also provide submissions on the issue.

I will briefly address a question raised by the member for Liverpool in relation to the operation of the amendments under schedule 1 [12] relating to the duration for ADVOs for incarcerated individuals. As the member for Liverpool noted, there may be circumstances where a person is being sentenced to a prison term for multiple offences and not all of them are domestic violence offences or serious offences. In this case the court

would apply the additional two-year period for the duration of the ADVO on top of the duration of the aggregate period of imprisonment, regardless of whether periods of that aggregate sentence related to offences that are not serious offences.

In all cases the court will retain discretion to set a different period if there is a good reason to do so. This means that if the court feels that a longer period is appropriate to ensure the safety and protection of the protected person, the duration of the order can be extended beyond the specified two years. Similarly, the court cannot set a reduced period unless there is a good reason to do so. I note the concern of the member for Liverpool regarding circumstances where an ADVO is already in place prior to conviction or guilty plea. I confirm that the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 already provides for variations to be made, either through an application to the court, see section 72A, or at the court's own discretion, see section 75.

The member for Blacktown raised the question of resourcing animal shelters to provide facilities for those escaping domestic and family violence. It is a well-known phenomenon that often victim-survivors do not leave abusive relationships because they are concerned about the welfare of animals that are left behind and/or because they have nowhere to take those animals. The Blacktown proposal is not one that has personally come across my own desk but I am interested in hearing further from the member for Blacktown and I invite him to contact me to inform me what it involves.

I am pleased, though, to note that at the moment we have invested \$500,000 in a one-off grants program for refuges and animal shelters to support companion animals when victims flee violent homes. That is the Pets and Animal Welfare Support or PAWS grants program for short. Those funds will allow refuges to become pet friendly and enhance the capacity of animal welfare services to provide temporary foster care for animals so that women leaving violent homes can do so without worrying that their pet will be harmed. That is part of this Government's \$21 million boost, with the Commonwealth, to frontline domestic violence services and other supports.

I thank all the stakeholders who have been consulted on and contributed to the development of this bill. I thank the Local Court, the District Court, the Supreme Court, the Children's Court, the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid NSW, the Public Defenders, Victims Services, the NSW Police Force, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), the Judicial Commission of NSW, Women's Legal Service NSW, Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre and the members of the New South Wales Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Council.

That council includes members from Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia, No to Violence, Dr Annie Cossins from the University of New South Wales, and Women's Safety NSW. I particularly thank all those organisations. I thank Domestic Violence NSW for its input and advocacy and, just as importantly, all the marvellous work Domestic Violence NSW and its constituent members do. We know the complex trauma that victim-survivors of domestic violence face. Inevitably there is vicarious trauma among frontline service workers who deal with these cases day in and day out. I thank them and I think all members do—members opposite are nodding their head—for the incredible work they do, their dedication, their devotion, their diligence and their passion for what are often thankless and heart-wrenching cases. I am just in awe of their tireless efforts. I thank them for their work, their advice, their service and their unwavering commitment to their clients and to our communities. I look forward to collaboration with them and efforts to address these highly complex issues.

From the Department of Communities and Justice I thank, in particular, Mark Follett, Alex Sprouster, Jasmine Flattery-Shirley, Lucian Tan and anyone I have not named but should have named for their hard work and valuable advice on this important bill. I believe these amendments will provide greater protections for domestic violence victims when giving evidence and ensuring they will continue to be protected upon release of an offender from custody. They will improve court procedures for criminal and related apprehended domestic violence order proceedings and explicitly recognise the intersection between animal abuse and domestic violence. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

BUSHFIRES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020**First Reading**

Bill introduced on motion by Mr David Elliott, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (18:23:03):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Bushfires Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The bill amends the Rural Fires Act 1997, the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and other legislation to implement changes in response to the devastating 2019-20 bushfire season, known as our Black Summer. The majority of the amendments in the bill respond to recommendations of the New South Wales independent Bushfire Inquiry and will help to reduce bushfire risk and protect life and property or help those who are recovering and rebuilding in the wake of the fires. Our last fire season was like none other our State has faced in the past—indeed, it was unprecedented.

It was a fire season with close to 12,000 separate fire incidents, which accumulated over 2,777 firefighting shifts in response. Ground crews were supported by a number of aircraft, which dropped in excess of 24 million litres of firefighting retardant, mission critical to assist those on the front lines suppress the blazes. It was a fire season which saw 5.5 million hectares of our State burn, destroying more than 2,000 homes and causing close to \$1 billion in infrastructure losses—mainly to farming properties, including damage to over 600,000 hectares of pastures alone.

After every fire season there are lessons to be learnt, and this Government is determined to learn the lessons of the last bushfire season, arming our communities for future seasons and fostering a greater resilience to the threat of bushfire. Earlier this year the Government commissioned the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry, headed up by two eminently qualified persons: former Deputy Commissioner of the NSW Police Force Mr Dave Owens, APM, and former NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer Professor Mary O'Kane, AC. The inquiry heard from operational experts and community members alike, receiving nearly 2,000 submissions and holding consultations with bushfire-affected communities right across the State.

The final report handed down 76 recommendations to improve our State's planning, preparation for and response to bushfires, all of which have been accepted. In response to the recommendations an initial \$192 million funding package has been announced, which includes \$36 million for a new first responder mental health strategy for emergency services, \$23 million in additional personal protective clothing for frontline firefighters and \$17 million to retrofit NSW RFS and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service vehicles and replace Fire and Rescue NSW tankers.

I now turn to the bill's provisions, starting with amendments to the Rural Fires Act 1997. The inquiry heard that landlords felt unable to manage and prepare for bushfires effectively because of the complexity of approval processes for vegetation management. Recommendation No. 28 of the inquiry called upon Government to:

- review vegetation clearing policies to ensure that the processes are clear and easy to navigate for the community, and that they enable appropriate bush fire risk management by individual landowners without undue cost or complexity.

In response, and to achieve greater clarity and simplicity for rural landholders, the bill proposes at new section 100RB to empower owners and occupiers to clear vegetation on their property without the need for a licence, approval, consent or other authorisation under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 or any other Act or instrument, provided they meet the following conditions. The first condition is that the vegetation clearing work is carried out within 25 metres of their property boundary. In cases where a property comprises of several parcels of land that constitute or are worked as a single property, the border of the property for the purposes of the code will be the combined border of those lots. The bill defines land in this respect as a "holding".

The second condition is that they must satisfy that the vegetation clearing work is carried out on land in a rural zone. The bill defines a "rural zone" as any of the following zones under the standard instrument, or a zone under another instrument that is equivalent to one of the following zones: RU1 Primary Production, RU2 Rural Landscape, RU3 Forestry, RU4 Primary Production Small Lots, RU5 Village or RU6 Transition. Additionally, the vegetation clearing work is to be carried out by or with the authority of the owner. The vegetation clearing work is to be carried out for the purposes of bushfire hazard reduction. Finally, vegetation clearing work may be carried out if a rural boundary clearing code is in force and that, indeed, the vegetation clearing work is carried out in accordance with this code.

The rural boundary clearing code will be developed by me as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, with the agreement of the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, the Minister for Energy and Environment and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. The code may make provision for the following: the type of vegetation that can and cannot be cleared; the manner of clearing that vegetation; the requiring of the consent of an owner or occupier or other person as a precondition to the clearing of vegetation; the clearing of vegetation in habitats of threatened species within the meaning of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016; the clearing of vegetation in riparian corridors; the management of soil erosion and landslip risks in connection with the clearing of vegetation; and the protection of Aboriginal and other cultural heritage in connection with the clearing of vegetation.

The new provisions provide that a person is not guilty of an offence under the Acts listed at new section 100RB (3) merely because of the carrying out of vegetation clearing work. The bill also amends the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 to provide a defence to offences under division 1 of that Act in relation to vegetation clearing work done in accordance with the new provisions. The code will be published in the gazette and on the NSW Rural Fire Service website, which will provide support and guidance for landowners seeking to utilise the code.

The next provision in the bill creates a greater consistency between public and private landholders in a "public safety first" approach. This means our collective quest for public safety should be tenure blind, and that the double standards that currently exist between public and private landholders should be eliminated. This responds to recommendation No. 24 of the inquiry, which states that public land managers should aspire to be the "best neighbours possible" in terms of bushfire preparedness. I would go further and suggest that public land managers should not just be highly desirable neighbours but be held to a much higher standard.

I believe the bill achieves this by allowing a senior RFS officer to serve bushfire hazard reduction notices on public authorities, which can currently be done to private landholders but not public landholders; introducing a penalty for public authorities and corporations that fail to comply with a bushfire hazard reduction notice of 100 penalty units, which is double the penalty applicable to an individual; and providing that land may not be excluded from requirements to repair or replace dividing fences under existing section 76, or from the recovery of costs related to repairing or replacing dividing fences damaged or destroyed by bushfire under existing section 77—because if we expect private landholders to take these actions, so too should we expect it of public landholders.

The bill will also improve governance arrangements for hazard reduction and bushfire preparedness, ensuring that these essential activities are completed thoughtfully and in a timely manner. At present, the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service can already carry out audits of bush fire risk management plans but is limited in auditing plans of operations and fire access and fire trail plans. The bill seeks to open all planning in this regard up to the audit and oversight of the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service—our operational expert. Similarly, the Act already requires bushfire hazard complaints about public land to be forwarded to the NSW RFS commissioner. The inquiry found that sometimes members of the public made complaints about public land to the relevant public land manager, rather than the RFS commissioner. The Act does not, however, require public authorities to forward these misdirected complaints to the RFS commissioner. In line with recommendation No. 23 of the inquiry, the bill now closes this loophole and requires them to do so. This will ensure bushfire hazard complaints about public land are appropriately and centrally managed.

The bill also provides for the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service to designate industry brigades. Industry brigades are operated by, for example, private forestry to protect their crops and meet their existing responsibilities under section 63 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 to prevent the spread of bushfires. The RFS has been approached by industry brigades that are keen to work with and assist the RFS to fight fires, both on their own land and in other areas. Last summer the RFS worked well with industry brigades from Victoria to fight fires on our southern border. Victorian industry brigades are incorporated into the Country Fire Authority under Victorian law. The bill proposes to make such provision for industry brigades in New South Wales. The bill, at new section 33AA, will allow the RFS commissioner to designate groups of persons as industry brigades and, through provisions of the Rural Fires Regulation 2013, incorporate those brigades into the RFS. The bill allows the regulations to establish requirements for industry brigades, including deeming industry brigades to be rural fire brigades, as well as the functions and immunities of members of industry brigades and the delegation of functions to members of industry brigades by the commissioner.

I now turn to amendments to the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. The amendments provide an exemption from biodiversity assessment and offsetting for people seeking to rebuild property that was damaged or destroyed in the 2019-20 bushfires. Biodiversity assessment and offsetting is a key part of our planning system. It helps ensure that development is ecologically sustainable and balances social, economic and environmental outcomes. Developments that trigger the biodiversity offset scheme ordinarily require an assessment by an accredited assessor, which can add time and cost to the already difficult job of rebuilding after a bushfire.

The scheme can be triggered when clearing land around a property to establish an "asset protection zone" to protect the property from bushfire.

The bill provides a 24-month exemption from the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme for bushfire-affected development. This means that people rebuilding will be able to meet their safety requirements and ensure they have an appropriate asset protection zone without triggering the scheme. There are limits and criteria to the exemption to ensure that it is fairly and safely applied while minimising impacts on biodiversity. The exemption will apply to buildings or structures destroyed or damaged as a result of bushfire between 5 August 2019 and 2 March 2020. The exemption will not apply to any proposed development carried out in declared areas of outstanding biodiversity value. The exemption will be limited to rebuilds that are the same, or substantially the same, as the building or structure that was damaged or destroyed. These provisions will provide for a sensible and limited exemption from the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme to help people rebuild their homes safely, without excess cost or regulation.

I now turn to some other important parts of the bill. Members may recall that last summer a National Parks and Wildlife Service remote area firefighting crew undertook a difficult firefighting initiative to protect the critically endangered Wollemi pines. The Wollemi National Park is the only place in the world where the Wollemi pines are found in the wild. They are extremely significant and have immense environmental value. Indeed, special measures are needed to enhance protection for these and other outstanding environmental and cultural assets. The bill makes such provisions. If the Minister for Energy and Environment is satisfied that land reserved or required for reservation under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 is an environmental and cultural asset of intergenerational significance, the bill will allow the Minister to make a declaration. That land will be declared land and the regulations will make provision for actions that the chief executive may take for the conservation including restoration of a declared land.

While the inquiry highlighted the need for actions that address the risk from bushfires, the regulations will make provision also for actions that respond to other threatening processes. The bill ensures that the chief executive may take action authorised by the regulations despite any provisions of an applicable plan of management. Importantly, the bill ensures that any such regulations must not affect the operation of the Rural Fires Act 1997 or the regulations under that Act. The inquiry's report spoke to the need for greater engagement with our First Australians. I am delighted to note that the bill also will enhance the involvement of the Aboriginal community in bushfire preparedness by the appointment of a New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council member on the Bushfire Coordination Committee.

Finally, the bill will ensure that our State continues to improve and learn from fire seasons like the one we just experienced. In doing so the bill will update the statutory functions of the State Emergency Management Committee to reflect this strong desire. This bill contains legislative amendments that are critical in responding to the New South Wales Bushfire Inquiry and ensuring that our State is in the best possible position to combat future natural disasters such as bushfires. Before I conclude I place on record my sincere gratitude to all of our first responders, particularly our volunteer firefighters who put their lives on the line for our safety during the last fire season. It is for them and the communities they sought to protect that we introduce these measures to make our State a more resilient one. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BILL 2020

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Matt Kean, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:38:05): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is introducing the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 because, although our electricity industry has served us well, a large portion of the infrastructure on which we rely every day to power our homes, businesses and industries is fast approaching the end of its technical life. Four of our coal-fired power stations that provide up to three-quarters of the State's energy supply each year are scheduled to close in the next 15 years. Those power stations must be replaced before they close to make sure we keep the lights on and avoid price spikes. New South Wales must take decisive action to maintain affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity supply as this inevitably unfolds.

The complexity and scale of the challenge should not be lost on us, nor should be the enormity of the opportunity. The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill is the New South Wales Government stepping up to

the challenge and seizing the opportunity on behalf of the people of New South Wales. The bill gives effect to the New South Wales Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap—an integrated policy framework to secure an affordable, reliable and clean energy future for New South Wales. It is a plan to make New South Wales an energy and economic superpower. This bill will improve the affordability, reliability, security and sustainability of electricity supply in New South Wales. It will encourage investment in new electricity generation, storage, network and related infrastructure by reducing risk for investors. It will foster local community support for investment in new energy infrastructure and it will do so in a way that supports economic development and manufacturing.

By acting now to modernise our electricity infrastructure we can avoid price rises and maintain a reliable system once our existing fleet of generators retires. There are three types of energy infrastructure identified by the experts as the lowest cost replacement for the New South Wales electricity system: first, new transmission that supports the diversification of the grid to renewable-rich areas; second, renewable generation providing very low marginal cost energy to the system; and, third, long duration storage like pumped hydro and firming like gas and batteries providing dispatchable energy and other services to complement the intermittent nature of the renewables. This suite for replacement infrastructure has high up-front capital costs and low ongoing marginal costs. This is why we need to take action to provide investment certainty to the private sector that will lower the cost of capital of the new infrastructure, in turn lowering electricity prices for consumers.

The new electricity infrastructure also has long development times. It takes up to 10 years to build a renewable energy zone [REZ] and eight years to build a big pumped hydro project. That is why we need to take action now—to ensure that new infrastructure is built before the existing power stations close. New South Wales has some of the best energy resources in the world. Our State is in a unique position to take advantage of those energy resources to give our local businesses and industries the competitive advantage that comes from having low-cost energy. However, the transmission system is congested and its capacity to connect new generation is limited. The regulatory framework provides no clear pathway for coordinated investment across infrastructure types. The renewable energy zones are a key feature of the bill aimed at alleviating these issues.

Renewable energy zones are the modern-day equivalent of traditional power stations. They combine generation, transmission, storage and system strength services to ensure a secure, affordable and reliable energy system. They will play a crucial role in delivering affordable energy to help replace the State's existing power stations as they retire. However, investment on this scale has not occurred in New South Wales for decades. The current market framework lacks the clear signals to deliver this investment in a time that we need it. It also lacks the mechanisms to deliver in the interests of regional communities. Only an integrated approach will ensure that investment is orderly, timely, optimised and efficient, meeting the needs of the electricity system and the expectations of the people of New South Wales. The bill establishes the electricity infrastructure investment safeguard as a clear framework to achieve this.

As a government, we recognise these measures are bold. They are also necessary in response to the scale of the challenge that New South Wales faces and the relatively short time available to address that challenge. The New South Wales Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is our plan to manage the electricity sector's transition and to seize the opportunities that this creates. It is a whole-of-system approach to coordinate investment in new generation transmission, long duration storage, and firming projects. It creates a mechanism to deliver transmission infrastructure at scale in the regions with the State's strongest energy resources while working closely with communities. It is a pathway for generation and storage projects to become integral and substantial additions to the communities and economies of these new renewable energy zones. It de-risks investment in crucial long duration storage projects like pumped hydro that often have long lead times and significant up-front capital requirements, meaning that they need long-term policy and investment certainty to reach financial closure.

It ensures that our new energy infrastructure supports and contributes to rather than takes away from our communities and it does this while reducing costs and moving towards a clean, more sustainable energy system. In doing so, the road map will support the State in attracting huge investment in new low-carbon industries. The private sector already sees the potential in New South Wales and has signalled it is ready to invest with 120 large-scale energy generation projects already in the pipeline, totalling \$25 billion in potential investment. The road map will turbocharge that investment at a time when we need it most.

The scale of the benefits this will deliver is vast. The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is expected to drive an estimated \$32 billion of timely and coordinated private sector investment into New South Wales by 2030. It is expected to support 6,300 construction jobs and 2,800 ongoing jobs in 2030, mostly in regional New South Wales. It is expected to deliver an estimated \$1.5 billion in lease payments to landholders in regional New South Wales by 2042. It is expected to reduce carbon emissions in New South Wales by an estimated 90 million tonnes by 2030. It is expected to save households an average of around \$130 per year and small businesses around \$430 per year, after accounting for the costs of the new schemes for transmission, generation and storage. It is

also expected to deliver some of the cheapest electricity prices for industry in the entire OECD, turning New South Wales into an economic and energy superpower.

I now turn to the provisions of the bill. Part 2 of the bill establishes the Energy Security Target for electricity supply in New South Wales for each year, with a long-term monitoring framework. The Energy Security Target is a mechanism to signal how much firm capacity is needed in New South Wales over the medium to long term to keep the electricity system reliable. A person or body will be appointed as the Energy Security Target Monitor to calculate annual energy security targets and to assess and monitor whether or not the Energy Security Target will be met over the following 10 years. This process is designed to monitor the firm capacity expected to be available to electricity customers in New South Wales at times of peak demand.

As set out already in the New South Wales Electricity Strategy, the Energy Security Target is to be equivalent to the maximum demand experienced in New South Wales every 10 years, typically under heatwave conditions, plus a reserve margin to cover the loss of the State's two largest generating units. The Energy Security Target serves as an additional framework that complements the backstops set by the existing national reliability measures, while bolstering the State's electricity resilience. The national reliability standard sets a limit on the amount of unmet demand from consumers across a year, referred to as unserved energy. The NSW Energy Security Target is explicitly focused on the time of maximum demand, typically during a summer heatwave. Measures to assist one of these parameters will help to meet the other.

If a breach of the Energy Security Target is forecast, the bill provides tools for the New South Wales Government to take action, if necessary, to respond. This includes, for example, a mechanism to increase the targets under the Energy Security Safeguard that will drive energy efficiency initiatives or reduce the State's electricity load at times of peak demand. To be clear, taking action in response to a forecast breach of the Energy Security Target is discretionary. A forecast breach of the Energy Security Target may result in the Government taking no action if there is sufficient evidence to show that the market is responding to address the issue.

The monitor, created by this bill, will be provided with information-gathering powers. These powers are necessary to ensure that the monitor can effectively assess and forecast any anticipated breach of the Energy Security Target. These powers will also ensure that the monitor can protect and give confidence to those providing information about its use and confidentiality. In particular, section 11 provides a strong confidentiality protection for this information. This is very important. The information provided by persons under this power will often be very commercially sensitive and it must be kept confidential. If it is not, then there is a risk that firms may have their legitimate commercial interest unfairly prejudiced and that investors will take their capital elsewhere. This is contrary to the purpose of the bill. For that reason, proposed section 11 is carefully crafted to identify narrow circumstances in which the Minister and others may disclose the information. This careful and nuanced drafting, especially in subsections (2) and (6), reflects the statutory purpose of setting out an exhaustive statement of the circumstances of lawful disclosure of this sensitive information.

Proposed section 52 (4) also provides that the monitor is not subject to the direction or control of the Minister. Part 3 of the bill establishes a process for declaring renewable energy zones in New South Wales and a framework for coordinating their delivery. This is a first for the National Electricity Market. A renewable energy zone declaration will specify electricity generation storage or network infrastructure in a specified geographical area in New South Wales, either initially or as amended.

I will highlight a few matters to the House about proposed section 12 (1) of the bill. That section, with division 2 of part 3, part 4 and part 5, is part of a cascading process to identify renewable energy zones and then determine the infrastructure projects and the details, design and configurations of these projects. The purpose of paragraph (b) of section 12 (1) is to allow the renewable energy zone declaration to identify such infrastructure associated with the renewable energy zone which may not happen in the geographical area of the zone. This could include a transmission line upgrade elsewhere in the network reasonably necessary to support the effective operation of the zone. I want to be clear that the purpose of the REZ declaration is not to determine which projects can proceed. Such a result would undermine the competitive tension needed to protect the financial interests of consumers through the tendering for long-term energy service agreements. Protecting the financial interests of consumers is, of course, a key purpose of this bill.

The declaration will necessarily describe the infrastructure at a high level. Determining the final infrastructure projects and their design is the purpose of the renewable energy zone network infrastructure components of part 4, and in this respect I refer the House specifically to proposed section 23 (2) (a), which can deal with different transmission routes, and the tender process set out in part 5. The network infrastructure does not have to be in the geographic area for renewable energy zones so that new infrastructure connecting the main transmission network can also be covered by the declaration. The REZ declaration enables other elements of the bill, such as access schemes and cost recovery for REZ network infrastructure projects, and helps direct investment into these areas through the tenders for long-term energy service agreements.

It will come as no surprise that the three renewable energy zones we have committed to as a government will be the first to be declared if the framework is approved and has commenced. Under the bill, renewable energy zones are identified as planned for the Central-West Orana, New England and South West renewable energy zones. In declaring a renewable energy zone, land use planning, environmental and heritage matters as well as the views of the local community will be taken into account. This is to ensure that renewable energy zones are designed in a way that minimises adverse land use impacts while maintaining social licence in local communities.

The bill tasks the infrastructure planner with the function of coordinating the design and development of renewable energy zones. This includes strategic coordination of community and stakeholder management, helping to establish the social licence for new renewable energy zone infrastructure. The bill provides a pathway for other people to seek a renewable energy zone declaration, upon application, from the Minister for Energy and Environment. The objective is to allow others to deliver non-government-led renewable energy zones. There is also scope for additional government-led renewable energy zones. I note the coverage in *The Newcastle Herald* this morning about the Hunter's renewable energy potential. I reiterate the comments I gave to that paper:

The Hunter is a prime location to investigate for a future REZ given its strong renewable resources of transmission links. We are happy to work with any community in the State that wants to host a REZ and unlock the Roadmap's economic benefits.

To provide investors with comfort their projects will be able to access a stable grid connection over time, the bill provides for the Minister to declare access schemes for renewable energy zones. These access schemes will be a first for Australia and will ensure strategic and optimal use of new transmission infrastructure to maximise the benefits to consumers.

A year ago I informed the COAG Energy Council that New South Wales intended to vary the National Electricity Law as it applies in New South Wales. The regulations may modify or disapply the application of the National Electricity Law or the National Electricity Rules, with the effect that nominated new shared transmission or distribution within the renewable energy zone will be subject to renewable energy zone-specific rules regarding network connection, access, planning and economic regulation. An access scheme will authorise or prohibit access to, and use of, specified network infrastructure in a renewable energy zone.

An access scheme declaration will identify who administers the access scheme. An access scheme must be consistent with the objects of the proposed Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act. The consumer trustee may determine fees payable by participants in an access scheme, and the scheme may collect the fees and disperse them. These fees are envisaged to help pay for the network infrastructure required to enable the renewable energy zone, the costs of operating the access scheme, and community benefit funds for projects which benefit the communities within the renewable energy zone.

It will also be possible for the infrastructure planner to prohibit the connection of proposed infrastructure in a renewable energy zone. This power may only be used in particular circumstances and will not override a development consent already given to construct and operate the proposed infrastructure. This provision is needed to assure local communities that only those projects which are in appropriate locations and whose proponents take the time to genuinely engage communities and build local support will go ahead. It is critical to meeting the proposed Act's objective of fostering local community support for investment in new generation, storage, network and related infrastructure. A key intent here is to maintain community support for renewable energy zones over the long term. That is why the consumer trustee will be able to require that a proportion of revenue from access fees is earmarked for community purposes.

Part 4 of the bill establishes new mechanisms for consumers to pay for network infrastructure both within renewable energy zones and for other priority network infrastructure which improves New South Wales' interconnections with neighbouring States. The infrastructure planner will assess the options available for the network infrastructure projects required for a renewable energy zone and make recommendations to the consumer trustee. This includes options for the network's physical configurations, staging over time, how it will be paid for and specific access rules relevant to each option. The consumer trustee will then make recommendations to the Minister about the most appropriate network infrastructure for the renewable energy zone and in doing so will ensure that the network infrastructure selected ultimately protects the interests of New South Wales consumers.

The bill also provides for the fast-tracking of priority transmission infrastructure projects. These are projects which go beyond renewable energy zones and are identified in the Australian Energy Market Operator [AEMO] integrated system plan, which will help respond to an expected breach of the energy security target. The bill establishes a regime to direct or authorise a network operator to carry out a network infrastructure project. This regime will ensure that New South Wales has the network infrastructure it needs for an affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity supply.

The regulator will be responsible for determining the amounts payable to the network operators for these projects. This determination will make provision for the network operator to cover their prudent, efficient and

reasonable development and construction capital cost and to receive an allowance for operating costs. Network infrastructure projects will be subject to a transmission efficiency test so that the network operator can only recover those prudent, efficient and reasonable capital costs associated with these projects. Importantly, the consumer trustee must set a maximum amount of capital cost that can be recovered by a network operator for the development and construction of a renewable energy zone infrastructure project.

Unless the network operator is directed by the Minister to carry out the renewable energy zone infrastructure project, the regulator will be precluded from determining an amount greater than this maximum amount in its determination. The purpose of this requirement is this: The consumer trustee in determining whether to approve a renewable energy zone network project is making an assessment whether the generation infrastructure in the REZ justifies the cost for the network upgrades. In making this assessment it will have regard to the development pathway of the financial interests of consumers.

However, the final determination for the cost of the transmission project is to be made by the regulator and it is possible that the consumer trustee's cost estimate for the REZ network infrastructure turns out to be inaccurate. If the cost for the transmission upgrade turns out to be so much higher that the consumer trustee would not have granted the authorisation, then the transmission project should not proceed. The purpose of proposed section 24 (2) with proposed section 31 (6) is to operate as such a safeguard such that a notice under section 24 (2) would set out the network infrastructure costs above which the consumer trustee considers the authorisation would not be justified.

The regulator will publish guidelines for network operators on matters relating to the transmission efficiency test including the expenditure and recovery of project development costs. The regulator will be required to remake their determination every five years or if it is directed by the consumer trustee to do so but may amend a determination at any time if needed. The scheme financial vehicle will then be responsible for paying the network operator the amount determined by the regulator. The regime is very narrow both in terms of the circumstances in which new projects can proceed, the nature of those projects and it includes a requirement for funded network infrastructure to be wholly in New South Wales so only New South Wales consumers would pay for any such transmission.

The bill provides for regulations to enable a network infrastructure project to transition from the New South Wales arrangement to those under the National Electricity Rules without the operator receiving payments under both. Part 5 of the bill establishes the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard. In New South Wales we are not going to build the transmission lines and simply hope generation will come. The safeguard involves legislated objectives for new infrastructure, a process to plan the development pathway to construct this new generation, long duration storage and firming infrastructure, and the ability to conduct competitive tender processes to award long-term energy service agreements if they are required to meet the development pathway.

The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard will enable a coordinated development pathway for each of the necessary types of electricity infrastructure. The bill sets out infrastructure investment objectives for generation, long duration storage and firming infrastructure. For generation, the bill specifies this must be an eligible renewable energy source. For example, this could be wind or solar. For long duration storage the bill specifies this must be the storage of electricity for the project's capacity for at least eight hours duration. For example, this could be pumped hydro or in the future long duration batteries or hydrogen storage. For firming the bill specifies this must be scheduled in AEMO's central dispatch process. For example, this could be a gas generator or shorter duration batteries.

The bill sets out objectives for each of these types of infrastructure, including a minimum level by 2030 generation and long duration storage. The overall objectives are: generation needed to minimise electricity costs for New South Wales consumers, long duration storage needed to meet the National Energy Market's reliability standard, and firming infrastructure as needed to meet the NSW Energy Security Target and reliability standard. The objectives set a minimum for the construction of generation infrastructure so that there is the equivalent annual output as: eight gigawatts of generation capacity from the New England Renewable Energy Zone, three gigawatts of generation capacity from the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone, and one additional gigawatt of generation capacity.

The intent is to identify the best renewable energy projects which can connect to the New South Wales region of the National Electricity Market. They do not necessarily need to be in these renewable energy zones; however, those projects outside a zone must show outstanding merit. The objectives also set a minimum of at least two gigawatts of long duration storage infrastructure by 2030. Projects that AEMO identified as committed on or before 14 November 2019 do not count towards these objectives. For the avoidance of doubt, this means the Snowy 2.0 project does not count towards the minimum objective for long duration storage.

Every two years the consumer trustee must publish a report setting out the development pathway to meet these objectives. This report will set out a plan for competitive tenders over the following 10 years which may be required to ensure the level of investment in electricity infrastructure remains on track. The bill provides for long-term energy service agreements between the scheme financial vehicle and a person referred to as a long-term energy service [LTES] operator.

The agreements give the LTES operator periodic options to exercise a derivative arrangement in return for constructing and operating a generation, long duration storage or firming project. To be clear, the derivative arrangement does not pay for the construction of the project and does not pay for the power produced; it is simply a financial derivative arrangement to give the investor certainty the project can earn an agreed minimum level of revenue from selling its services into the electricity market. That is the level of revenue required to ensure the investor commits to the construction and operation of the project.

The agreement can give the LTES operator a series of periodic options to exercise a financial derivative within the life of the agreement, as long as the LTES operator complies with a minimum notice period. The agreements can also provide for the LTES operator to repay the scheme financial vehicle for payments made under a derivative arrangement should specified circumstances eventuate. For example, if the LTES operator earns above a specified amount in a future year where it has not exercised an option, it could be required to pay previous payments from the scheme financial vehicle. This is intended to protect consumers from LTES operators making windfall profits in future years.

These agreements will be designed to give investors long-term revenue certainty and accelerate the build-out of renewable energy zones in a manner that supports the reliability of supply in New South Wales. Agreements will be structured to match the type of project being supported. For example, agreements for generation could be designed to set an agreed average wholesale electricity price for projects. Agreements for long duration storage projects could be designed to set an agreed availability payment in return for agreed operating and contracting behaviour. Agreements for firming projects could be structured to encourage those projects to dispatch when market prices are above a specified threshold.

The consumer trustee is responsible for determining the standard terms and conditions of the long-term energy service agreements. If required to meet a development pathway, the consumer trustee can run competitive processes to offer long-term energy service agreements—the investment signal for this new infrastructure. It will be the consumer trustee's role to set the rules for tenders, in consultation with the regulator, and administer the tenders in accordance with these rules. The rules will set the parameters for the tenders including eligibility and assessment criteria as well as the fees and securities required to make a bid. The eligibility criteria may include matters which the consumer trustee considers important for the physical needs of the system and the financial interests of the consumers, such as ramp rates and system services. These tenders may be combined with the process to award rights for renewable energy zone access schemes.

The consumer trustee will preference bids for generation infrastructure located in a renewable energy zone when making its recommendations. In this respect, I note that proposed section 41 (3) speaks in terms of generation infrastructure that is "part of a renewable energy zone". The use of the word "part" captures both the notion of generation infrastructure being geographical as per proposed section 12 (1) (a) and the notion of generation infrastructure connecting to network infrastructure outside the zone identified as contemplated by proposed section 12 (1) (b).

In exercising its functions, the primary consideration for the consumer trustee will be the financial interests of consumers. That is important. It is clear that the consumer trustee will be making recommendations to achieve the relevant development pathways and the infrastructure investment objectives. However, the structure of part 5 deliberately provides flexibility to the consumer trustee to protect the financial interests of consumers, for example, if unforeseen events make this expensive. Accordingly, if a tendering round does not see bids of sufficient value for consumers, the consumer trustee has flexibility to deal with these events in a reasonable way in the financial interests of consumers.

The development pathways and the infrastructure investment objectives are meant to be strong guides to the consumer trustee; they are not intended to be rigid rails which must be adhered to at all costs. For example, there may be circumstances where it is in consumers' overall interest to achieve the minimum objectives shortly after the prescribed date. The consumer trustee will have discretion to recommend a project not in a renewable energy zone if it shows outstanding merit, and that will largely be about providing consumers substantial financial value. The consumer trustee will only hold a tender to award LTES agreements for firming infrastructure if the Minister directs it. That reflects that there may be lower cost options to add the marginal capacity needed to achieve the energy security target.

At the conclusion of a tender, the consumer trustee recommends the long-term energy service agreements that the scheme financial vehicle may enter into. The bill also provides for the regulations to authorise the consumer trustee to recommend agreements outside of a competitive process where that is in the interests of consumers. That may be needed if there is insufficient competition, such as may occur if there are only a limited number of pumped hydro projects competing in a tender round. Once the consumer trustee has made its recommendations, the scheme financial vehicle then finalises the terms and conditions and may then offer to execute the agreement with the LTES operator.

The consumer trustee will prepare a risk management framework to minimise risks associated with the long-term energy service agreements. The risk management framework provides for the scheme financial vehicle to enter a second type of derivative arrangement referred to as a risk management contract. That will enable the scheme financial vehicle to enter derivative arrangements that hedge risks arising from long-term energy service agreements. For example, small energy retailers and large electricity users want access to derivatives to reduce their exposure to volatile wholesale electricity market prices. The scheme financial vehicle could offer those persons a risk management contract that onells the equivalent derivative arrangement exercised by an LTES operator. That could reduce the cost of the scheme to consumers and improve access to derivative contracts.

In this respect, I note that the purpose of the risk management framework is broader than managing the financial position of the scheme financial vehicle. It relates more generally to the financial position of electricity consumers. For example, if there is illiquidity in the contract market as a result of long-term energy service agreements being put, it is important for consumers that the risk management framework authorises the scheme financial vehicle to provide liquidity on the basis of the put contracts. The scheme financial vehicle will establish a fund called the Electricity Infrastructure Fund. Payments into the Electricity Infrastructure Fund will be used to meet the scheme financial vehicle's liabilities and the administrative costs for the consumer trustee, financial trustee and regulator.

The bill enables the scheme financial vehicle to order contributions from distribution businesses to the fund; that is, Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy will be required to pay a specified amount to the fund each year. The National Electricity Rules enable those businesses to recover these costs as part of their network charges. The market modelling prepared for the Department of Planning Industry and Environment indicates that even with the additional network charges New South Wales households are expected to save an average of \$130 a year from 2023 to 2042. The regulator will determine how much is payable to the scheme financial vehicle and can vary its determination if concerned the scheme financial vehicle will not meet its liability or the cash balance has fallen. The regulator will publish guidelines about the exercise of its powers.

It is important to ensure that the scheme financial vehicle can be certain of meeting its liabilities so it is rated as a credit-worthy counterparty for network, generation and storage projects. The bill provides for the scheme financial vehicle to issue its own order without a determination if the regulator has failed to make a determination in time. The amount recoverable under this part of the framework is only that which the scheme financial vehicle needs to meet its liabilities. The bill also makes provision for regulations to authorise networks not to recover their contribution amounts from electricity users with an exemption under the existing Energy Savings Scheme, that is, emission intensive trade exposed industries such as large manufacturers.

I turn now to part 7 of the bill, which provides for a number of roles and functions, including a consumer trustee who sets development pathways for the electricity infrastructure required over the next 20 years, advises the Minister and the infrastructure planner in relation to proposed and declared renewable energy zone network infrastructure projects and administers tenders for long-term energy service agreements for new long-duration storage, firming and generation projects; the scheme financial vehicle which administers the contracts, fees, payments and contributions under the bill; the financial trustee, who is the person to establish and own the scheme financial vehicle and to advise the regulator in relation to contribution determinations; the infrastructure planner, whose role is to assess different options for REZ network infrastructure and to coordinate investment in generation storage and network infrastructure; and the regulator, who is responsible for monitoring, enforcing and reporting on the administration of the schemes established by the bill.

The bill provides for the Minister to appoint one or more regulators so there is flexibility in which schemes are overseen by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales or other bodies such as the Australian Energy Regulator. There are two pathways for termination of appointments. The Governor can terminate an entity's appointment on address by both Houses of Parliament or, where an audit finds incompetence, misconduct or incapacity, the Minister can terminate an appointment, other than for the financial trustee, which appointment can be terminated by the consumer trustee. Prior to termination, the appointer must advise the person that their performance is unsatisfactory and give them an opportunity to respond.

The bill also contains a number of miscellaneous provisions. In order to ensure the effective administration of this scheme, the consumer trustee, the financial trustee and the infrastructure planner will report to the regulator

at the end of each financial year and the regulator will publish an annual report. The energy security target monitor, the consumer trustee, the financial trustee, the regulator, and the infrastructure planner will not be subject to personal liability for the purpose of exercising their function under the bill, providing they act in good faith. The protection for the infrastructure planner does not arise, however, in relation to the administration of an access scheme in a renewable energy zone or the carrying out of construction or development of storage and network infrastructure. For the avoidance of doubt, the scheme financial vehicle will be subject to personal liability. It is important this entity is held financially accountable for the contracts it enters into.

There is a false and misleading provision in the bill to ensure there are appropriate penalties for a person giving false or misleading information to any of the appointed entities under this framework in relation to the administration of the bill. Information obtained in connection with the administration of the bill may not be disclosed other than in accordance with the bill, subject to penalty notice provisions. The bill also authorises, for the purposes of part IV of the Federal Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and the Competition Code of New South Wales, the tender for and giving effect to a long-term energy service agreement, giving effect to risk management contracts and any order not to connect a project to the network. That is appropriate, as the primary function of the consumer trustee is to protect the financial interests of consumers. The Minister and infrastructure planner may delegate their functions under the bill. The consumer trustee, financial trustee and regulator may delegate their functions to a class of person prescribed in regulations. The Minister will review the Act after five years to determine if the policy objectives remain valid and appropriate and will table a report on that review to each House of Parliament.

The bill also amends the Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987 to provide a framework for recoverable grants to be repaid to the NSW Climate Change Fund, known as the CCF. Currently the CCF supports a range of activities which are risky for the private sector to invest in alone. Some of these projects might eventually turn a profit or meet another stage that warrants repayment to the CCF but it is currently not possible for the CCF to be repaid. These amendments will enable the CCF to recover grant payments in these situations so it can recycle funds into new initiatives. The amendments to the Energy and Utilities Administration Act also enable standing or special purpose committees to be established to provide advice on the exercise of my functions under various pieces of energy legislation, including the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard.

Where the Energy Corporation is appointed as an infrastructure planner for a renewable energy zone, it will have the functions the corporation has under the Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987, as modified by the regulations, and will not be limited to the extent its role as infrastructure planner involves the supply of electricity and affects TransGrid's functions. Further, amendments are also being made to the Electricity Supply Act 1995 to allow new energy savings targets to be set beyond 2025 in the Energy Savings Scheme and for those targets to be amended if there is a forecast breach of the energy security target and changing the targets is determined to be the most appropriate response to that breach in the circumstances.

Through the changes it will be possible to exempt small retailers from their obligations under the Energy Savings Scheme during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. The amendments also streamline the regulation-making power for future Energy Security Safeguard schemes. Through our New South Wales Electricity Strategy we have already communicated our intent to establish a peak demand reduction scheme, which will require regulation-making provisions. New South Wales energy consumers will be better off as a result of the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap enabled by the bill. Residential customers are expected to save an average of around \$130 each year between 2023 and 2042, and small businesses around \$430 each year after accounting for the costs of the new schemes for transmission, generation and storage.

There are pathways available for generation and storage technologies to compete to provide the services they are best suited for. Enabling a mix of technologies will improve the affordability and reliability of electricity supply. For renewable energy zone generation and long duration storage projects, agreements are expected to be awarded to a mix of wind, solar, batteries and pumped hydro. The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard will deliver the equivalent to the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone, the New England zone plus an additional allowance for outstanding projects. This will mean a lot of variable energy for the grid, which is why we are planning enough storage to ensure the system is stable.

Technologies like gas and batteries can be supported under the firming development pathway. In a hydrogen future I hope hydrogen plants will play a role under this mechanism too. Some may say the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard should be adopted nationally—and I could not agree more. This New South Wales approach could indeed prove to be the template for national reform. I would be happy to see this actually help the national electricity market reform process. For New South Wales the reality is we need to start now because it takes a long time. It took over 30 years to build New South Wales' existing fleet of coal-fired power stations. We need to replace four out of five of them in less than 15 years. We might even have less time, given the growing risk of mechanical failure as plants age. In Texas it took nine years to build a renewable energy

zone. Pumped hydro projects take up to eight years. So, given the early stage and uncertainty of national reforms, we need to continue on the current path rather than delay.

From here there is, of course, more work to do, such as on the details of the access rights, transmission efficiency test, Electricity Infrastructure Investment Safeguard tendering process and agreement terms and conditions, and for this we will turn to industry for input in order to make sure the regulatory framework is fit for purpose. Together these measures will help us to not only promote but, importantly, to coordinate the major investments we need in new electricity infrastructure in New South Wales. This bill is designed to provide for an energy system that is affordable, reliable and secure, and operating in the interests of consumers, the New South Wales economy and the environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Private Members' Statements

DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE PROJECTS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoynes—Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans) (19:18:00): As this is one of the final parliamentary sitting weeks for the year, I take this opportunity to reflect. We are now navigating a new way of life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and I feel that it is important to acknowledge how the community has adapted and responded during this trying and challenging time. I have been very proud to see my community, constituents, small businesses and not-for-profits bounce back and keep COVID-safe to limit the spread of the virus. I have spoken in this place a number of times about the need to support the community as the local economy seeks to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Part of this approach includes providing much-needed funding of local projects in order to create jobs and improve infrastructure.

One example of a local project that is improving access to services and infrastructure for my electorate and creating jobs is stage one of the upgrade to Concord hospital. Just last month I visited Concord hospital with the New South Wales health Minister, Brad Hazzard, to attend a traditional tree topping out ceremony to mark the new clinical services building reaching its highest point. The \$341 million redevelopment of Concord hospital is on track for completion in 2021, with an eight-storey clinical services building set to deliver more than 200 additional inpatient beds, as well as the Rusty Priest Centre for Rehabilitation and Aged Care, the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare and a comprehensive cancer centre. It is a fantastic project and one that I am incredibly proud of. After many years of campaigning for an upgrade I am delighted to witness the progress that this project has made, particularly within the last year.

In my electorate we have also seen the commencement of the project to redevelop Concord Oval which began earlier this year. The New South Wales Government through the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has provided funding of \$42.2 million dollars for the construction of a new regional facility. Upon completion the project will transform Concord Oval into a state-of-the-art sporting facility with the capacity to seat 800 spectators, new amenities for local sporting clubs, a new indoor gymnasium, rooms and open space for community use, and a centre of excellence and training facility for the Wests Tigers football club. During construction the redevelopment of the Concord Oval project is expected to create approximately 1,000 jobs, which is significant in these challenging times. I am pleased that this facility will provide new infrastructure for my constituents and a new regional facility for sporting and recreational use more broadly.

Just down the road in Canada Bay the Government is supporting another local project. The New South Wales Government will provide \$3.2 million dollars to upgrade Charles Heath Reserve. The plans for the upgrade will include a new playground, outdoor exercise stations, a barbecue and picnic area, and public domain works that will improve the overall accessibility of the park. The funding will be provided to the City of Canada Bay Council and I understand the community consultation process has begun on the project. As we have seen this year, public recreational facilities are important to the community. I am pleased to support a number of initiatives such as this project that improve the quantity and the quality of open green spaces in the Drummoynes electorate. In many aspects this year has slowed down many things, but plans to continue to improve infrastructure in the Drummoynes electorate have not skipped a beat.

WALLSEND ELECTORATE BANKING SERVICES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (19:21:40): Six months ago CommBank closed the Wallsend branch temporarily for up to six months to deal with staffing needs elsewhere and a drop in patronage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it claimed. At the peak of the pandemic I know that many businesses changed and adapted. The bank said it needed to move branch staff to call centres due to the influx of pandemic phone calls from customers seeking financial assistance. Six months later the assumption we all made that "temporary" meant something completely different rings true. The branch remains closed with no sign of reopening. In May I wrote

to the CEO asking him to reconsider the closure—quell surprise, no reply. Last week I wrote to the CEO again, asking him if CommBank planned to reopen the branch as promised. Again, silence deafened.

The impact of the closure on our community is devastating. Over the last few years CommBank closed branches across the Wallsend electorate. This closure has left the biggest postcode in the whole of the Hunter Valley without a branch. The elderly and customers living with a disability have struggled to travel to Glendale, New Lambton or Hamilton branches via public transport, as the quickest round trip to Glendale is 50 minutes, to Hamilton is one hour and to New Lambton is over 90 minutes. During the peak of the pandemic my staff and community volunteers had to help customers by driving them to Glendale or New Lambton just so they could access their money to buy food and pay their bills. So far this year, many of the major banks and building societies abandoned customers in the western suburbs as branch after branch closed its doors. The Newcastle Permanent Building Society closed the Cardiff branch. The Greater Bank closed Jesmond branch. Westpac closed New Lambton branch and removed the ATM. The Maitland Mutual closed its Glendale branch.

Adding to these closures, most banks and building societies also reduced their opening hours, making it even harder for customers to get into a bank for face-to-face service. Perhaps more people are using online banking services, but there are thousands of people in the Wallsend electorate who rely on bricks-and-mortar banks. The elderly, the disabled and the socially and economically disadvantaged are all proportionately more likely to lack steady internet access or the ability to use the internet. Sue, a local resident, recently told me:

It is getting to the stage that you have to scout around to find where a branch of any bank is located. For those of us that use public transport it is very difficult to find a branch on a bus route. Not everyone can use or wants to use internet banking. People like to have face-to-face contact especially when it is matters relating to their money. For us elderly and the disabled it is so difficult.

People are just a number on a piece of paper by which the bank can enrich itself and its shareholders through dividends. It is done at the expense of too many communities. Shame on the Commonwealth Bank for its treatment of the people of the Wallsend electorate. How many services have used the COVID excuse to close their doors? We all knew that a temporary bank closure would mean something worse down the track—and it has.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:26:15): I thank the member for Wallsend for speaking up in Parliament—as she does so often, vigorously and with conviction—on behalf of her community. She quite rightly condemns the actions of the Commonwealth Bank, just as many members of this House have spoken in the past condemning the big four banks that have unscrupulously used the cloak of COVID-19 not only to reduce services to regional communities but also to deny them and remove them altogether. Shame on them. They should be doing better while they are posting record profits for their shareholders. The very people who helped build those profits for those companies are the ones who suffer. It should cause us all to reflect on what it means to serve in terms of being a good corporate citizen. If we have alternative options in our communities, we should all vote with our feet.

NUFFIELD AUSTRALIA FARMING SCHOLAR ANDREW ROLFE

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (19:27:11): I will take this opportunity to congratulate and recognise a Monaro local who is excelling in his field. Andrew Rolfe hails from a locality just outside Cooma called Maffra and has been named one of the 2021 Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars. It is a major feat and will open countless doors for Andrew over the coming years. Each year Nuffield Australia awards scholarships to farmers in Australia to help increase practical farming knowledge and develop management skills. Through this scholarship, farmers are given the opportunity to travel overseas to learn and study farming practices that are used in other countries. Andrew is part owner in the family business, a self-replacing merino flock enterprise, which comprises more than 5,000 sheep across 4,100 hectares.

The scholarship is supported by Australian Wool Innovation. Andrew is planning to use the scholarship to research intensive management techniques and models for merino sheep production. Coming from the Monaro region, he will fittingly use the opportunity to explore how to develop a productive, sustainable and drought-resilient farming system. It will not only help with the future running of his family farm but also provide new techniques within the industry. Whilst the drought has broken this year in the Monaro, the impacts of the prolonged drought are still being felt by our farmers. We know we will face drought again but our farmers are always adapting and finding innovative ways to maintain their businesses. Andrew is an example of this. During the drought he was forced to adapt the production system on farm and he learnt that it is possible to increase the flock whilst effectively managing the land.

Andrew is particularly focused on how intensified, best-management techniques can be utilised to drive merino production and preparedness for the next drought. Andrew hopes that he will travel to the United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Europe and South America to study some of the best management practices. Andrew has said that he plans to identify and combine the best management techniques globally and develop an

intensive management system that will enhance production and drought preparedness for Australia's merino sheep industry. I congratulate Andrew on winning the scholarship and look forward to following his journey over the years ahead. Andrew is an example of the many farmers we have in the Monaro. We have seen droughts come and go, but I believe organisations like Monaro Farming Systems comprise a new breed of farmers who are able to produce in a way that we have never produced before.

Land conflict issues often arise between farming, national parks and state forests through the concept that somehow landholders and farmers do not manage their land. The greatest conservationists in our country are our farmers. They have been farming for generations and they adapt to the changing climate and the changing landscape and they adapt to drought. In the Monaro I believe we have the best farmers in this State—if not the country. We produce well above what is expected for the region. We live in a lucky part of the world where we are always last into drought and first out of drought, and sometimes the intensity of drought is not felt as much as in other parts of the State. In my recent travels across the State we have seen the impact of drought, but we have also seen with rainfall across the State—north, south, east and west—that there is hope in regional and rural New South Wales. I have always said if you want to see prosperity in the regions just add water, and that is exactly what we are seeing now.

Crops are coming out of the ground, harvesting is happening, tractors are back in the paddock and our farmers are reaping rewards for their efforts. For some, it is the first time in a number of years that they have reaped a reward. I acknowledge the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, who is at the table, and the support in this budget for our farmers. Without Government intervention and support, our farmers and our regional communities would have done it harder. I acknowledge the Minister for putting our farmers and regional and rural communities first. We will be with them as we come out of drought. The Government is committed to working with our landholders. We also want to work with the up-and-coming young talent, the new farmers such as Andrew Rolfe, who will take farming to the next level. Australia is proud of its farming sector. We do it without subsidies, protection and tariffs—unlike other countries—and that is why we have the best and most innovative farmers in the world.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:31:56): I thank the Deputy Premier for bringing to the House a congratulatory message to Andrew Rolfe, who is one of only 20 Australians selected for the Nuffield scholarship program for 2021. For those in the agricultural sector, particularly young people, the Nuffield scholarship is like the Oscars of the sector. Every young, innovative agriculturalist aims to be a Nuffield scholar because of the benefit that it brings not only to their own enterprise but also to their networking. In his contribution tonight the Deputy Premier acknowledged that Andrew is a leader in the merino sheep industry, and I can only endorse that. He is renowned in the Cooma-Monaro area and throughout the industry in New South Wales. He is a deserving recipient of this scholarship, and hopefully in 2021 he will be able to travel internationally and bring back skills and experience to his operation and to the industry and the State.

NORTHCONNEX

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:32:57): Now that the \$3 billion NorthConnex tunnel has opened, at long last local streets and roads have been returned to our community. The tunnel linking the M1 interchange in Wahroonga to the M2 Hills motorway has completed a long-awaited missing link in our national highway network. I pay tribute to the former member for Ku-ring-gai, Premier Nick Greiner, AC, who was the first chair of Infrastructure NSW and recognised the transformative potential of the NorthConnex and WestConnex projects. NorthConnex was constructed through a joint venture between the State and Federal governments and the private sector. New South Wales Liberal Government funding was over \$577 million. Since my preselection and then election in 2015, my staff and I have dealt with a large volume of community correspondence about NorthConnex. So we had cause for celebration when the project ended and we officially opened Australia's newest road tunnel on 31 October. I was pleased to take part in the historic day along with local MPs and special guests. The Premier, the transport Minister and Transurban CEO, Scott Charlton, together cut the ribbon. The ribbon was designed and printed by North Wahroonga resident Richard Kerslake, whose business also produced the ribbon for the Sydney Harbour Tunnel opening in 1992.

Motorists are now able to travel between Newcastle and Melbourne without stopping at a single traffic light. NorthConnex will save drivers up to 15 minutes in travel time, bypassing up to 21 traffic lights along the notorious Pennant Hills Road. Prior to NorthConnex, Pennant Hills Road had long been recognised as the worst road in Australia, with an average of one traffic incident per day of which one in four involved a truck. For years, local residents, primary and high school students and business people have lived with thousands of trucks and commercial vehicles passing through their suburban communities. By removing up to 5,000 trucks from Pennant Hills Road every day, safety has been boosted and the lives of so many people have been positively changed. It has only been a few weeks since the tunnel opened, but there has already been significant traffic improvements

on our roads. When I recently drove along Pennant Hills Road, it was virtually free of traffic, without any large trucks. That is something I never thought I would see. I thank the residents of my area for their continued patience and support over the past five years while the tunnel was being constructed.

Due to COVID-19, an onsite community open day was not feasible; however, the project team at NorthConnex switched gears to produce an Australian first—a 360 degree virtual tour giving exclusive behind-the-scenes access. From swooping native birds and backlit forests to driving under the stars, NorthConnex has been designed to keep drivers alert through its innovative lighting display—a first for our country. Over 17,000 people were involved in delivering NorthConnex, including more than 1,500 individuals who were part of the NorthConnex Hub, which was a dedicated facility designed to provide training and certification to apprentices associated with the major work. I had the privilege of meeting local apprentices onsite, including Indigenous apprentices who completed their Certificate III in civil construction, tunnelling and civil works while gaining hands-on experience at NorthConnex. The hub was an investment in both workers and their professional skills.

Understandably, to deliver NorthConnex successfully there were a few hurdles to jump over. I thank the staff at Transurban, Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services and everyone who has been involved. NorthConnex is an engineering triumph which has transformed the way in which we move around Sydney. The Liberal New South Wales and Federal governments have delivered a state-of-the-art underground motorway which will be used for generations to come. I commend our Government for continuing to support the booming infrastructure industry of New South Wales. The New South Wales Government will provide more projects over the next four years through its \$100 billion infrastructure investment pipeline, which will benefit our community. NorthConnex allows people to spend more time with their families and less time in traffic, and I think we agree that the importance of getting people home safely at the end of the day is immeasurable and should never be taken for granted.

GREEN SQUARE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (19:38:20): I draw to the attention of members an article that was published in yesterday's *Sydney Morning Herald* headlined "COVID-19 to reshape Sydney in 'biggest way' since Spanish flu as population stalls". In it Matt O'Sullivan writes:

... the population of greater Sydney is forecast to rise by just 500 people in the year to next June due to a slump in people migrating from overseas. That compares with projections before COVID-19 for the city to grow by 92,500 people in the same period.

My electorate bears much of the impact of population growth. Upon its completion, the Green Square urban renewal zone will be the densest neighbourhood not just in Australia but anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere. In the 10 years to 2019, the population of the City of Sydney local government area grew by nearly 40 per cent—from 170,000 people to 240,000. In the same time, the population of Greater Sydney grew by only 18 per cent and New South Wales as a whole by 15 per cent. In the next decade, the population of the suburbs of Waterloo, Zetland, Rosebery and Beaconsfield were expected to practically double from 38,000 to 61,000, although those figures may be subject to some revision given the slowdown in population growth from a decrease in migration, however temporary. Those 61,000 people will live in just three square kilometres—a whole new State electorate in itself.

I have been urging the New South Wales Government for some years to implement some sort of development and population moratorium on the Green Square area and to consider revoking development approvals where possible. As I was advised by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, effectively all of the development applications in that area have substantially commenced, so in that sense the die is cast. With nearly 100,000 fewer people expected to migrate to Sydney in the next year, we have an incredible opportunity to catch up on the infrastructure backlog which concerns me and my constituents.

Before the pandemic, roads in my electorate were practically at gridlock every peak hour. Buses struggled to transport passengers because they simply could not move on the roads and train commuters could not even fit into the stations or onto the mezzanines, let alone onto the trains themselves. While COVID-19 has temporarily alleviated that pressure, eventually the pandemic will pass, population growth will resume, passengers will return to public transport and the pressure cooker will start up again.

New South Wales has always been much better at building apartments than at building the associated transport, health, education and green infrastructure it needs in order to maintain the quality of life our residents in the city deserve. The slowdown in population growth is welcome, not just for its calming effect on house prices but also because it gives the State the opportunity to catch up on the infrastructure backlog created by the massive growth in housing and population. In a sense, the closure of our international borders due to the pandemic has done what I have been calling on the New South Wales Government to do for over five years—slow the growth in population in the inner city to provide for the necessary growth in infrastructure. I am urging the New South

Wales Government, particularly the Minister for Transport and Roads, to make the most of this pause in population growth and bring forward infrastructure projects for my electorate.

I congratulate the Minister on the additional entrance to Mascot train station—work on which will begin early next year—which will alleviate the huge pressure on that area, as well as the prospective 60 per cent increase in train movements through the station. I urge the New South Wales Government to pursue the Central to Rosebery via Green Square light rail project, which has been recognised by Infrastructure Australia as a "high priority initiative" for five years running. The corridor has already been reserved by the City of Sydney and it is eager to see mass transport to the Green Square area get underway. If the preferred alternative is a trackless tram or a high frequency bus service, I am not partial, but it is essential that we make the most of this pause afforded to us by the pandemic to catch up on the infrastructure backlog created by years of rampant overdevelopment in my community.

UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE HIDDEN TREASURES

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON (Upper Hunter) (19:43:10): The Upper Hunter electorate is fortunate to have 13 remarkable women who have been honoured in the 2020 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll—an initiative of the Rural Women's Network supported by the Department of Primary Industries. They were honoured for their outstanding contribution in volunteering, having given up their time, expertise and energy to wideranging social and community organisations and initiatives within the Upper Hunter. The past year has presented many challenges due to ongoing drought, fires, floods and COVID-19. During this time, rural women have played an important role in supporting families and communities through their volunteer work. The Hidden Treasures Honour Roll is an important initiative of the Department of Primary Industries and the Rural Women's Network that celebrates women volunteers who give so much to their rural communities. I note that 104 women from all over New South Wales have been recognised in this year's honour roll, and I am proud to announce that 13 women from the Upper Hunter have been honoured.

Christine Betts from Murrurundi volunteers for the Doing It For Our Farmers pop-up pantry in Murrurundi. Justine Cooper, also from Murrurundi, coordinates the Doing It For Our Farmers group, manages the pop-up pantry and volunteers for other organisations in the community. Cassie Fisher from Scone volunteers as a mentor to help older people with disabilities. She is an inspirational athlete who won gold and silver at the International Special Needs Taekwon-Do Games for Australia. Carole Johnston from Aberdeen has volunteered for the Aberdeen Treasures op-shop and other organisations for 20 years. Janine Katon, also from Aberdeen, has been president, player, coach and secretary/licensee of the Aberdeen Bowling Club.

Jenny Loasby from Blandford volunteers for the Doing It For Our Farmers group as well as various other organisations in the community. Michelle Loft from Merriwa works with the Muswellbrook Netball Association and on the Wideland Challenge at the Merriwa Springtime Show. Lorna Parnell from Merriwa recently retired from her post as volunteer manager of the Merriwa Non-Emergency Medical Transport service but still volunteers for other organisations with the Merriwa community. Carol Ray from Scone is an active member of the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society and volunteers for numerous other organisations within the Scone community. She has also spent an impressive 18 years with TransCare looking after the aged.

Christine Riley from Cassilis volunteers for Merriwa Bushmen's Campdraft and the Merriwa Pony Club, as well as a number of other organisations. Edith Shipway from Merriwa is involved with numerous community events, including the Festival of the Fleeces, and organisations such as the Merriwa Tourist Welcoming Centre and Merriwa Spinners. Tash Taaffe from Merriwa volunteers tirelessly as coach and president of the Merriwa Little Athletics club and helps out with a number of other organisations in the community. Lastly, Julia Wilton, also from Merriwa, is a valued and popular employee at the Gummun Place Hostel who volunteers with junior league, touch football, netball and swimming clubs, and with the P&C. The Hidden Treasures Honour Roll 2020 will provide a lasting legacy. I thank these outstanding women of the Upper Hunter for the enormous amount of support and generosity they give to the organisations and, more broadly, the communities of the region.

GOULBURN ELECTORATE HIDDEN TREASURES HONOUR ROLL

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:47:25): On 9 November I had the pleasure of meeting the 2020 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll nominees for the Goulburn electorate. The Hidden Treasures Honour Roll is an important initiative of the Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network that formally recognises and thanks inspiring women volunteers within New South Wales rural and regional communities. In previous years we have heard amazing stories of local women who are driven to help others, and this year was no different. Of the 104 women recognised on this year's honour roll, three were from the Goulburn electorate.

Carolina Merriman is a very active member of the local farming community and was nominated for her selfless volunteering in the community. As a busy young mum she took on roles within the local NSW Farmers

branch during the peak of the drought. Carolina made a huge effort to support her community by running mental health awareness and drought and weeds management initiatives. She was nominated for her focus on the wellbeing of those around her during difficult times, often with very little public recognition. We are only too aware of the importance of managing people's mental health in our regional areas, and I recognise the often thankless supportive roles that are required to carry this work out. Carolina's nominator said that she deserves to be recognised so that others may follow in her tracks. I congratulate Carolina and I urge her to keep up the good work. She has done her community proud.

Catriona McAuliffe from Goulburn was also listed as a hidden treasure. Her energy and motivation for her local community is inspiring. She is an exemplary regional service manager for NSW Farmers across regions 5 and 8, and supports an incredibly vast and diverse membership from Yass to Canowindra. Catriona has a wealth of knowledge that is exemplified by her roles in food and agribusiness solutions as well as her 20 years with the Yass Show Society on the executive committee as vice-president and treasurer. She is also on the organising committee for the Rural Women's Gathering in Forbes in 2021. She is known for actively mentoring and promoting other women in each of these roles. When women empower other women, incredible things can happen. Catriona has successfully advocated for funding in many areas and established countless programs that benefit farmers. Overall she has made a substantial contribution to her community. Her nominator says that her generosity and genuine sincerity are the drivers of her success. I congratulate Catriona. Her hard work has not gone unnoticed.

Finally, a third hidden treasure from Goulburn has asked to remain anonymous. However, echoing the two previously mentioned recipients, this woman was nominated for her commitment to the environment, youth work and other projects in the local community. In the past year, regional communities have faced many challenges, including drought, fires, floods and COVID-19. Now more than ever, through their volunteer work and other methods of contribution, rural women play an important role in supporting families and communities. Despite these tough times, it is important to recognise these invaluable women. I thank each of them for meeting with me and sharing their stories. I am honoured to represent them in this House.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:51:18): Let me share four small yet powerful words: You are not alone. These four words hold significant meaning for the thousands of people living with mental illness in our communities. This year those four words resonate more than ever. By any measure, 2020 has been unprecedented. The year began with devastating bushfires that ravaged large parts of our country, destroying homes and livelihoods and sadly resulting in the loss of life. Who knew that things would only get worse? But, of course, they did. The COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down. Life would never quite be the same. As the pandemic worsened, we grew accustomed to new social norms like lockdown, quarantine, QR codes, social distancing, hand sanitiser and, of course, working from home.

The health crisis led to a severe and damaging economic crisis. By the middle of the year about a million Australians were out of work. Soon after, Australia's economy plunged into its first recession in nearly 30 years. The long queues outside Centrelink painted a picture that spoke a thousand words. Many lining up for social support were doing so for the first time in their working lives. Yet there was another crisis unfolding in our community as a result of the pandemic—the colossal toll on people's mental health. Social isolation and chronic uncertainty exacerbated psychological distress and mental health problems among previously healthy people but especially those with pre-existing conditions. Australian National University research showed that young people aged between 18 and 34 experienced the greatest mental health impact due to COVID-19. In fact, the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds experiencing severe psychological distress jumped from 14 per cent in February 2017 to 22.3 per cent in April 2020.

These alarming figures highlight the urgent need for more funding for community mental health services. Young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic consequences of COVID-19 and will carry the burden of the pandemic for decades to come. It is vital that sustained investment is made into community mental health services in order to build greater capacity to support young people experiencing stress, anxiety and depression not only during COVID-19 but beyond the pandemic. I recently visited One Door Mental Health's local outreach service at the Salvation Army Macquarie Fields Community Centre, where a program called Connector Hub is helping people with mental illness live to their fullest potential through the support of a peer worker. The benefits of a peer worker are enormous, as they help people with mental illness achieve their goals and improve their wellbeing. The programs' success is based on the fact that "you are not alone". If there is one thing the bushfires and the pandemic has taught us, it is that we are stronger together—once again, those four words: you are not alone. As we navigate our way out of the pandemic, we need to focus also on one small, yet powerful four-letter word: hope. It is hope that continues to sustain us through these tough times and it is hope that makes us believe there are better days ahead.

But we cannot rely on hope alone. The upcoming New South Wales budget is an opportunity for the Liberal Government to address the overwhelming impact that the virus has had on people's mental health and wellbeing, and will have for many more decades ahead. A recent Ipsos poll revealed that 45 per cent of New South Wales voters believe that mental health has been affected a great deal or a fair amount by the pandemic. This impact is significantly higher for younger people: 65 per cent of those aged between 18 to 24 and 60 per cent of those aged between 25 to 39. The upcoming New South Wales budget represents an opportunity for the Liberal Government to address a crisis that is set to outlast the pandemic. The time to act is now. It is an opportunity for the Liberal Government to boost funding for community health services in our electorates. It is an opportunity to demonstrate that mental health matters. It is also an opportunity to show people in our community living with mental illness, their carers, their families and their friends that they are not alone. That gives us all hope.

BOMADERRY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services)
(19:56:06): I am the proud product of Bomaderry. I went to Bomaderry Primary School and Bomaderry High School. It is where I grew up. It is where I call home. I love where I live. But it is the people who make up our community that make Bomaderry such a great place to live. I want to update the House on some of the things I have been doing for my hometown and the changes that are making a real difference. As members of the House will be aware, one of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to fix the Princes Highway.

I am pleased to report that the upgrade to the Princes Highway between Berry and Bomaderry is on time and on budget. Not only will this make local roads safer but also it will complete the duplication of the Princes Highway throughout my entire electorate. The Albion Park Rail Bypass is also cracking ahead. This project has not only generated local jobs but also established an infrastructure skills legacy hub, which is giving local young people the opportunity to train in construction and develop vital skills as part of major infrastructure delivery. Not only are these enormous State Government infrastructure projects employing local people but also they are using materials manufactured here, such as local steel, which also boosts local employment.

As I attended university in Wollongong, catching the train from Bomaderry was a daily commute. Since I have been the local MP I have secured more services and more seats to bolster public transport. I am also pleased to advise the House that I have secured funding to increase the capacity of the South Coast train line. The passing loop at Toolijooa will effectively double the capacity of the South Coast line. I have secured a further commitment from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to upgrade Bomaderry station with a second platform that will facilitate trains arriving and leaving at the same time. New carriages will also come towards the end of this parliamentary term to replace the existing Endeavour fleet. The new regional fleet will be hybrid trains which will be able to run on both diesel and electric lines.

Growing up in Bomaderry, I fondly remember playing on our local sporting grounds. Investments to upgrade these facilities do not just improve lifestyles for locals. If sporting facilities are constructed to a high standard we can attract sports tourism to our area, with competition sport being a great opportunity for regional communities like ours. Recently I announced a State Government grant to upgrade Artie Smith Oval. This multimillion-dollar investment has been secured from the New South Wales Government Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. The upgrade will be part of a significant benefit to a number of local sporting groups, including AFL and croquet, and provide better facilities that will meet the needs of a growing community.

As a former student of Bomaderry High School, I am proud of the outstanding teachers, staff and of course the incredible students. Since becoming the local MP I have secured a new gymnasium building, upgraded science labs and major upgrades to the student library, in conjunction with funds raised by the school P&C. I acknowledge their efforts. I also secured the installation of air conditioning and upgraded heating at the school, and this work is underway right now. In what was a win for the environment and keeping costs low, this heating and cooling system will operate on solar power. I love returning to my old school and speaking with students. I have no doubt I would not be a member of this Parliament or, indeed, a Minister in this Government, if it were not for the outstanding education I received at Bomaderry High School.

Earlier this year the South Coast sustained heavy rain and flooding. There was significant damage to the school and many of the classrooms were simply not inhabitable. I have personally inspected these classrooms following the flood damage and met with the principal, Ian Morris, who is an outstanding principal, as well as the Department of Education and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning on this important issue. I deeply appreciate the strong representations from Sue Cuninghame and the school P&C, who have been strong advocates for the school community and particularly its students. This is not the first time that flooding has occurred. I am aware that a hydrologist's report has been undertaken. I call on the Department of Education to deliver the necessary upgrades to ensure that water damage does not cause staff and classrooms to be vacated following even moderate rain events.

I also call on the Department of Education to install a dust extraction system for industrial arts laboratories and make improvements to home economics rooms, as these subjects are becoming more popular and are jobs outcome focused. Having sat where current students do now, I will always stand up and argue the case for investments that make a real difference, not a cost to government but an investment in the next generation. I place the House on notice that no matter what role I hold in this place, my electorate always comes first. While I deeply respect my ministerial colleagues, my first and foremost loyalty is to the people of my community who gave me the greatest privilege of my life: to represent them and their interests in this Parliament.

BANKSTOWN RAILWAY STATION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (20:01:08): I draw the attention of the House to the Government's recent announcement that it has approved the Sydney Metro authority's proposed redesign of Bankstown station as part of the Sydney Metro Sydenham-to-Bankstown upgrade project. This redesign will see the construction of a 400 metre long interchange that will connect the existing Sydney train station and the heavy rail with the future Sydney Metro station, exacerbating a very longstanding divide created by the rail line in the heart of the Bankstown CBD. What this announcement means for Bankstown is that the Government has now essentially ruled out any hope that the metro station will be situated underground, as the Government initially promised, which would have allowed for the north-south split in the centre of the city to finally be addressed.

I echo the sentiments of Federal Labor leader Anthony Albanese, who on Saturday night was at the Bankstown Sports Club for the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce gala dinner, when he said that the metro should be underground at Bankstown. Of course, as a former Minister of infrastructure, Anthony Albanese would understand and appreciate the value of having the metro underground. I note the Federal member for Blaxland, Jason Clare, also supports this notion. The redesign has provided no detail about the integration of the Government's proposed future extension of the metro from Bankstown to Liverpool. The Government has repeatedly deflected questions asked by me and the local community as to how and where the extension west from Bankstown station will eventually be developed, if at all.

There are other concerns relating to the Bankstown Arts Centre site, which sits immediately west of the current station. It could potentially be sacrificed if there were to be an extension. That would be a devastating blow to the cultural hub of our community. The plan also fails to address, and in fact makes worse, the issue of inadequate commuter car parking around the station. My hope is that the Government will eventually support Canterbury-Bankstown Council and help to upgrade nearby car parking facilities in the area. I note the very small area in the mapping around the metro station for allocated parking is completely inefficient for the size and potential use of the station. Undoubtedly our area will require extensive upgrading of existing and potentially new car parking to be able to properly support the metro station in the future. There is a long history of significant community opposition to a number of these projects. I note again that this Government withdrew the Inner West line in October 2013, which effectively disconnected—and continues to disconnect—commuters west of Bankstown.

We are waiting for the Government to finalise its position on whether it will restore the service—at least in part—in 2024 as it promised. A recent survey, which I have mentioned a number of times in the House, provided three different options and it appears that the Government will take up the first option, which will connect Sefton and Chester Hill directly to the city service. We are waiting for more information on what the Government will finally do with that. The survey has been completed and the people have spoken. It is quite clear that the vast majority of our community wants at least that partial restoration of the inner west train line. It is important that the Government wastes no further time and advises the community whether it will partially restore that service.

My community survey about services west of Bankstown indicated that residents from Potts Hill, Birrong and Yagoona would like their service to be reconnected. Clearly there is overwhelming support in the community for services west of Bankstown—namely, Sefton and Chester Hill and stations west of Chester Hill—to again be connected directly to the City Circle.

NSW BUSHFIRE INQUIRY

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (20:06:20): This time last year much of New South Wales was blanketed in a haze of bushfire smoke. In the subsequent weeks and months the situation would worsen and New South Wales would record its worst bushfire season in history. Over that summer there were 11,774 reported fire incidents, which scorched 5.5 million hectares of land, destroyed 2,476 homes and, tragically, claimed 26 lives. I know those numbers are etched in the minds of everyone in this House—and particularly some who we know had an extraordinarily tough time in their electorates. It was the summer that gave us three state of emergency declarations, destroyed almost \$1 billion worth of infrastructure, and required heroic and extraordinary efforts from more than 5,600 firefighters to eventually contain the fires.

While the embers still smouldered in many parts of the State, the Government acted quickly to establish the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, which has now produced interim and final reports that have also fed into a royal commission on our national firefighting capacities and, just as importantly, on a plan to meet the State's future needs as the climate changes. The inquiry made 76 recommendations, and I note that the Premier and her Government have committed to meeting all of them in time. I focus on two or three of those recommendations as they relate to the State's aerial firefighting capabilities. Lake Macquarie is home to Skyline Aviation Group, which recently acquired 11 Royal Australian Navy [RAN] surplus Seahawk helicopters and is reconfiguring them for firefighting duties. To put it simply, a locally owned fleet of aircraft is being repurposed to fight fires from the air.

The fleet is centrally located on the State's eastern seaboard and could have up to four aircraft ready for the coming fire season. All that is needed is a bit more Government interest and retention funds so the aircraft can be ready to be used as soon as needed. I have already had some discussions with the Deputy Premier and the emergency services Minister about this fleet—although they have not yet had the opportunity to inspect it. I have seen the fleet and I am increasingly convinced that Skyline Aviation Group already has a lot of the capacity that the State requires now and into the future to significantly improve our aerial firefighting capabilities as per the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry. As I mentioned, Skyline Aviation Group is locally owned and locally based. At present, most type 1 rotary aircraft used during the Australian fire season are from overseas. We could wait around for the Federal Government to perhaps fund a national fleet or we could bite the bullet and get involved with a fleet that is literally sitting in my electorate, almost ready to go.

Recommendation number 52 of the inquiry urged the Government to enhance firefighting capabilities by trialling aerial firefighting at night. The Seahawks have the capacity to fly at night, although Skyline Aviation Group is awaiting final certification from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority. The helicopters also have the potential to move larger numbers of firefighters into areas that might not be accessible by road. Such a fleet could be moved quickly to areas of need anywhere in New South Wales. It could also be used interstate or even overseas, such as in New Zealand, if required. There is certainly a cost associated with keeping and maintaining such a fleet, but such costs are negligible given what happens during times of emergency now and what the Government is seeking to do in the future to align with the inquiry's recommendations.

Currently, it costs the Government about \$6.8 million for two similar aircraft to be brought in from overseas to operate over 120 days. I understand it would cost about one-third of that to operate two locally based aircraft with the same capabilities. It would cost far less money than bringing in similar aircraft from overseas. Further, research carried out by Dantia—the economic development arm of Lake Macquarie City Council—shows that basing the fleet locally would create about 270 direct jobs and a further 470 indirect jobs in the first four years of operation. This fit-for-purpose fleet could easily be added to the mix of our aviation firefighting assets. It has the capacity to be ready in time for the coming fire season and to be expanded in the years ahead.

I fully understand the need for due process and probity around decisions to engage a private company in this way, but this unique opportunity should at the very least have authorities meeting and discussing the possibility with the proponents. It would be a massive lost opportunity for additional heavy-lift firefighting aerial assets and regional jobs if the 11 former RAN Seahawk helicopters were to be lost not just to New South Wales, but perhaps also to Australia.

MURWILLUMBAH SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (20:11:13): I am speaking up and speaking out against the Government's planned closure of four schools in Murwillumbah—Murwillumbah East Public School, Murwillumbah Public School, Wollumbin High School and Murwillumbah High School—to build a mega school on the Murwillumbah High School site. I take the Government to task on three fundamental problems regarding this decision. First, the comments I have seen from the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Deputy Premier, the member for Tweed, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Energy and the Arts, when they joined together to announce the closures in Murwillumbah, did not provide an evidence-based educational rationale. This must be the primary and, indeed, the only reason: to better our children's educational outcomes—and not only opportunities. I was told by the department that there would be more opportunities, but those opportunities can be provided at will. Ways and means can be found now if the Government has the political will to do so.

Secondly, the approach taken was like a fly-in fly-out visit by The Nationals MPs, Ministers and MLCs: no meetings, no prior notice, no consultation with the school communities, and then they leave town. The days of governments anywhere arriving in town to tell us what they are going to do to us, not for us, are long gone—but obviously this Government has not noticed. It left the community in Murwillumbah in shock—and, believe me, our communities have had enough shocks. All of us here know that, and that is why it was really quite cruel. We have had enough shocks. We have had bushfires, we have had droughts and we are now in COVID. Cyclone

Debbie and the resultant flooding caused catastrophic damage in Murwillumbah and, sadly, lives were lost. That leads me to the third problem: the damage caused by that flood to Murwillumbah East Public School in April 2017. Among other things, a library and four classrooms were destroyed.

Immediately after the floods, the Murwillumbah East school community was promised restoration and rebuilding. It is now three years and seven months on and there is still no restoration or rebuild as promised. There are, of course, some demountables. It was in the 2018-19 budget, as then member for Lismore Thomas George said and the Government agreed to, and it was in a subsequent budget. But nothing happened. The P&C was patient but became increasingly frustrated as there were no clear answers or time line to rebuild. I have asked many questions on notice in this place and have been involved in advocacy with media and with visits, trying to get the restoration and rebuild sped up.

The last questions on notice that I asked were in May 2020, with a reply in June 2020 through the Minister's representative in this place. I was told that the upgrade would commence in mid-2021. In quite a few other answers I was told that it would be completed by 2022. I raise that time line because in February 2020 the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning signed off on the plan to close the schools and to create this mega school. Yet in answers given to this House she said clearly that the rebuild and the restoration would go ahead. I labour this point because it speaks to a lack of truthfulness and trust. I can only conclude, as the community would, that the Minister was not being truthful in her replies. There is no alternative view that has credibility. So how can the Minister and the Government have credibility with the community when they say "Trust me, we know what's good for you" but we see school closures and this mega school proposal?

Many people are deeply disturbed about this matter. I will take another opportunity in this place to put in *Hansard* all their comments. The overwhelming request from the community is: Halt, consult and talk to us. If the Minister had done that with me, I would have given her a fair hearing and said, "All right. Let's go out and talk to the community." That opportunity is lost.

INVERELL DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (20:16:23): It gives me no pleasure at all—in fact, I find it incredibly distressing—to stand here again in this place and have to talk about the dire medical and service staffing situation that is currently facing many rural and regional public hospitals. Tonight I will confine my remarks to the new Inverell District Hospital, which is in roughly the geographic centre of the Northern Tablelands electorate. I am sorry to say it, but the reality is that some sections of our New South Wales health system are absolutely sick. Despite the community lobbying very hard for many, many years and the State Government then delivering a \$60 million state-of-the-art new district hospital for Inverell, a shortage of visiting medical officers, of doctors, and reports of a lack of staff or poor staff conduct at the hospital have cast a very dark and long shadow over what should be a source of great community pride.

From the outset, I want to say that I am not pointing the finger at any particular individuals. This year the challenges posed to our health system have been unprecedented and the medical practitioners and nursing staff have been wonderful during the COVID-10 pandemic—Inverell hospital included. They have been at the forefront of dealing with this pandemic and I sincerely thank them for their work in keeping the community safe. They are to be congratulated. But, like the rest of the Inverell community, I am trying to work out what the hell is going on within the structure of Hunter New England Health? Something is seriously crook when we have a brand-new hospital with so many complaints and so many issues with how the hospital is operating and how the hospital is run and managed.

Since the start of September, four months after stage one of the redevelopment was completed and the brand-new hospital building opened there has been a stream of complaints every single week to my office about the conduct and poor bedside manner of staff or the simple non-availability of staff, let alone visiting medical officers. Initially these excuses could have been put down to teething issues with the new hospital. We all get that; we have been there and seen that before. It is a new lay-out, a new system. However, after many, many months the excuses have now dried up. Every one of the complaints erodes the faith and confidence the community have that this brand-new hospital is capable of looking after them and caring successfully for them and their family members.

Hospitals should be places where people can receive care with confidence because they are places people visit when they are at their most vulnerable. So why, for example, was an 83-year-old woman discharged very recently from Inverell Hospital at 1.30 a.m. when she did not want to leave? She was told to come back for tests the very next day, only to collapse well before she could come back the next day, and was transported back to hospital by ambulance to go on the merry-go-round again. I have said it before, and I will say it again: What is the point of spending \$60 million of taxpayers' hard-earned cash to build a brand-new hospital if it is not run

properly and to the standard it should be to provide care for the community? In another case a young patient was transferred to Armidale Hospital for treatment for constant vomiting after Inverell hospital was unable to diagnose the problem.

While at Inverell, the patient was not X-rayed. If he had been, the X-ray would have shown an inflamed intestine and he could have been dealt with immediately and transferred to John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, where he was sent eventually because the X-ray work was undertaken when he presented at Armidale. Inverell hospital has all the diagnostic imaging technology and the staff to operate it. To this day, no-one can work out why that patient was not diagnosed properly. Granted, the patient would still have ended up in Newcastle, but the amount of time saved by not transferring him to Armidale could have made a significant difference to his health outcome. Recently another constituent wrote to me and said that he was punted from the Inverell hospital emergency department and sent back to his local GP, only to be told by the GP, "You're too sick. You've got to go back to emergency. You should have been treated." He wrote, "Having a new building means nothing if the disgraceful service doesn't change. It is just putting make-up on a pig." I could not agree more.

Another person described the fly-in fly-out locum doctor situation on weekends as being like spinning a chocolate wheel to see what you are going to get when you are rushed to hospital. Again, these comments are being made by locals who are concerned about what is happening at their hospital. In response, this month I have called an emergency meeting of NSW Health officials. I have demanded that Hunter New England Local Health District Chief Executive Officer Michael Di Rienzo—who is well known in the Inverell community—be present and front up to the community, together with senior hospital staff, local GPs, the Inverell Shire Council and local paramedics. We need to get to the bottom of this problem. Now is the time for solutions for the Inverell community, not more excuses.

NEWCASTLE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (20:21:35): It is an exciting time in Newcastle. At the beginning of last month a trial commenced to give some of the city's hospitality industry a boost as it emerged from the COVID shutdowns, allowing businesses to extend trading hours and serve drinks that would ordinarily be prohibited by their licences. The Newcastle Committee for Night Time Jobs and Investment—which has brought together a range of stakeholders from local and State governments, industry, local businesses, the community and government departments—has worked exceptionally hard to bring this trial together. The six small bars taking part are now on par with the rest of New South Wales in being able to remain open until 2.00 a.m. and serve drinks with more than 30 millilitres of alcohol after 10.00 p.m. Eighteen restaurants are now able to trade until midnight, or 10.00 p.m. on Sundays, with all drink restrictions eased.

The aim of this trial is to increase opportunities for employment within the industry and to continue to develop Newcastle into a global city. With participation in the trial comes increased scrutiny and data collection, and I thank the participating venues for their commitment to ensuring the safety of all involved: Babylon, Basement on Market, Uptowns, Blue Kahunas, the Civic Theatre, Coal & Cedar, Grain Store, Harbour Bar & Grill, Honeysuckle Social, The Koutetsu, Saints, MEET Restaurant, Milky Lane, Moneypenny, Scratchley's Restaurant, The Beehive, The Dockyard, The Edwards, The Falcon, The Landing, Signal Box, Three Bears Kitchen, Valerie's Pizza Parlour and Zinc.

We are almost six weeks in, and local police have reported that the behaviour of the participants has been good. The sky has not fallen in. I have been watching with great pleasure the posting of job advertisements from the involved businesses. I am aware of more than 10 new people being in work and existing employees receiving more hours. The atmosphere has changed. One small bar, Blue Kahunas, reported the first weekend of the trial to be the busiest it had had since opening two years prior. It is now not uncommon for patrons to be turned away or to be in an orderly line on the street waiting to enter.

Of course, these venues are operating with COVID-19 restrictions, but the number of people coming into the city to access Newcastle's new nightlife shows that this more sophisticated option is wanted. Recently I supported the Government's 24-hour economy bill, which introduced a simpler penalty process for licence breaches and improved the regulations around same-day alcohol deliveries. While these are all positive measures, nightlife is more than drinking and dining and we need to be looking further to create the thriving night economy that locals and visitors want to get amongst. Music is a key component, and Newcastle loves its music. As we look forward, we must ensure that musicians and the venues that host them are given every opportunity to contribute to the nightlife we want that is safe and respectful and with diverse options that are not overly restricted.

Naturally, what makes a city vibrant is its people. While the trial is one positive way to bring more people into the city for leisure, we should not forget our daytime hospitality friends and restaurants who are not involved with the trial and who undoubtedly would benefit from a scheme that has commenced that supports outdoor dining. With venues facing patron limits as a result of the square-metre rule, this outdoor dining trial fast-tracks the

approval process to just three days for a venue to expand its licensed boundaries. With venue capacities still severely restricted indoors, the ability to expand outdoors would provide an excellent antidote for these businesses and an excellent dining experience for the customers. Newcastle has bustling dining precincts in Cooks Hill and Hamilton, with businesses that I am sure would embrace more outdoor dining opportunities. But right now we need to be giving our economy the tools it needs to bounce back. For the hospitality and music industries, the outlined measures will encourage greater trade and put more people into work. This is exactly what we want.

STUDIO ARTES

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (20:26:24): As a local member I know I should not play favourites but when it comes to community organisations there is one that holds a special place in my heart: Studio ARTES. This year Studio ARTES celebrates 20 years in our community—and what an amazing 20 years it has been. Studio ARTES provides a range of creative programs for adults living with disabilities. It has programs running five days a week in Hornsby and also has centres in the inner west and Studio A at Crows Nest. The timetable at Hornsby includes everything from dancing, parks and recreation, art and weaving, in the kitchen and gardening. There is a program for just about every interest and every person.

I have attended many classes at Studio ARTES and I have loved every single one. I have showed off my dance moves and I have done art. Recently I attended a Zoom video production class to see some of the editing skills they have been learning. What I have learnt from my many visits is that no matter what class you attend you are guaranteed to have a good time at Studio ARTES. The classes are not just one size fits all; rather, each program is tailored to the individuals who attend. The teachers go above and beyond to ensure each member of their class gets the most out of their attendance. It is no wonder they are hugely popular and have students coming back for more.

Studio ARTES was started by the amazing Wendy Escott and Sue Byatt in an old garage in Hornsby. Having worked at Hornsby's Clarke Road School, Wendy realised there were many young adults living with a disability who had artistic talent but that there were no local schools that could cater to their needs. So they opened a class themselves. Studio ARTES started with 16 students, six volunteers and no funding. Some 20 years on they have grown from those humble beginnings to 260 members and 100 staff across three sites. Wendy received an Order of Australia Medal for her work as well as the Centenary Medal and was also named Hornsby Citizen of the Year in 2009. She still serves on the Studio ARTES board and was named a finalist in this year's Westfield Local Hero Awards. Sue is also still a regular volunteer, helping out where she can.

Since I was elected the member for Hornsby in 2011, I have maintained a strong relationship with Studio ARTES. They would always be happy to have me drop in and take part in classes. Every year I have attended their annual ball; I once even dressed as Darth Vader. I have attended their amazing annual performances and many art shows over the years. I have always been happy to support this organisation and have loved watching it grow and succeed. The year 2015 was a highlight: not only was I re-elected as the member for Hornsby but Studio ARTES released a song about me. It was a first and only song written and released about me as the member for Hornsby. Written to the music of the classic *Billie Jean*, they sang about my love of eighties music and how I enjoy driving around Hornsby. It will definitely go down as one of my favourite remakes of all time.

It has not always been easy for Studio ARTES. On 3 April 2016 a fire broke out in the adjoining pool shop, which destroyed the shop as well as the Studio ARTES premises, supplies and artworks. I remember getting the devastating phone call. Concerned, I headed straight over. In the days after the fire, I was so proud to see the community rally around and support this important organisation. I was able to help with a New South Wales State Government assistance grant of \$20,000 and support them as they looked for new premises. It took seven months and lots of hard work before they were able to reopen in their new home on Jersey Street, where they are still today. I was also pleased in 2018 to give Studio ARTES \$15,000 as part of the Community Building Partnership program, which enabled them to build a sound studio.

I have a number of artworks in my Hornsby office painted by the students of Studio ARTES, including works by Belinda, Daniel and Emily. Daniel Kim and Emily Crockford have both moved on to Studio A. Daniel painted my portrait, which currently hangs in my electorate office, and Emily was a finalist in this year's Archibald Prize. Emily is a remarkable young artist, as are Daniel and all the other artists. For Emily to be hung in the Archibald is just amazing. I have made many friends with my visits to Studio ARTES. My chief political adviser, Declan, rings my office on a daily basis and sometimes pops into the parliamentary video, as the member for Myall Lakes will know. However, he has not come for a while because he is being very COVID safe. We miss Declan in Parliament and we hope he comes back soon. He also gives me very regular updates on Facebook about how I am going. He is probably watching us live now, so I say hi to Declan. Nerida, Paige, Daniel, Peter: I have loved getting to know you all and will continue to see some of the amazing work you produce at Studio ARTES.

It would not be the amazing organisation it is today without the amazing board members: Wendy Escott, Doug Spencer, Simon Bryan, Andrew Reeves and Dick Bryan. I thank them for their support and leadership of this organisation. I also thank the amazing CEO, the wonderful Deb Sazdanoff; Mary Carabetta, the program manager at Hornsby; Jessica Raymond, the program manager in the inner west; along with finance manager, Gillian Dart. I also acknowledge former service and systems manager Lynne Slevin. Lynne was a valued member of my Hornsby team. Finally, to the Studio ARTES staff and volunteers, there are so many amazing people who teach classes, volunteer and run the office. I say a huge thankyou to all of them for their hard work, dedication, perseverance, expertise and kindness. They are what makes this organisation the amazing place it is. I congratulate Studio ARTES on 20 years, and may there be another great 20 years to come.

TRANSPORT MANUFACTURING

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (20:31:47): The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly raised concern from the community about our nation's reliance on foreign manufacturing and products. The pandemic has slowed the flow of imports that local industries rely on, resulting in delays and price rises for goods. The commentary has also focused on the fact that local manufacturing has taken a beating in recent years, resulting in job losses and ultimately the decline in local experience and expertise. New South Wales has a proud history of manufacturing public transport such as buses, trains, trams and ferries. For years the manufacturing of these modes of transport was the underpinning of local communities. Local transport manufacturing presented job opportunities in fields such as designing, metal fabricating, spray painting, upholstery and many other specialist industries.

During my studies as a technological and design teacher in the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the manufacturing of trains in New South Wales. I saw the manufacturing of Tangara train carriages at Goninan Industries at Broadmeadow in Newcastle, which employed thousands of local workers. The construction of the Tangara train carriages also lent itself to other local industries in the manufacturing of stainless steel, aluminium, glass, materials and electrical components. Closer to Fairfield, the railway yards at Lidcombe-Granville were the manufacturing hub for the construction of railway bogies, the train's drive system and guidance mechanism. This alone supported specialist industries like the construction of axles, suspensions and braking systems in western Sydney for generations.

For well over 50 years New South Wales State Transit buses were manufactured by Custom Coaches in and around Guildford, Smithfield and Villawood. The construction of New South Wales State Transit buses saw many local families work in the industry for generations, supporting not only local jobs but local businesses as well. Slowly but surely the collapse of the once mighty Custom Coaches at Villawood was due to the decision made by the current Liberal-Nationals Government to purchase buses from interstate and overseas. Premier Gladys Berejiklian was the transport Minister responsible for making this decision in 2014, so it comes as no surprise that this Government is hell-bent on purchasing foreign products rather than supporting local industries and jobs.

Recent comments made by Premier Berejiklian that, "Australia and New South Wales are not good at building trains. That's why we have to purchase them", is downright offensive to any worker who has ever produced not only trains but other modes of transport for this State. It is not hard to see the disastrous outcome of the Liberals' and The Nationals' decision to purchase foreign transport: trams for Sydney's light rail manufactured in Spain; trains from Korea that are too wide for tunnels; and ferries built in China and Indonesia that were manufactured using asbestos components and are too high to fit under the bridge on the Parramatta River. Rather than saving a buck, the cost of these projects has well and truly blown out when remedial works to ensure the modes of transport are up to New South Wales standards are considered. Enough is enough. It is time to get New South Wales back on track manufacturing good quality trains, buses, trams and ferries. New South Wales can do it. We have seen it done before.

Some have called the pandemic a reset button—a time to stop, think and do better. There is no reason why this cannot apply to the concept of bringing manufacturing back to New South Wales. It is clear that in the past we have had success in this area and there is no reason why it cannot happen again. In order to power the State's recovery after the pandemic, we need to rebuild the manufacturing sector in New South Wales. Not only will this ensure that we have the essential supplies should the trade chain be impeded or cut off but, on a larger scale with larger projects, there will be enough productivity capacity and jobs created to rebuild the economy once the threat of the pandemic is over and the virus is contained. As a State, it is vital for New South Wales to look towards a future that is prosperous and sustainable. Reviving the manufacturing sector in New South Wales is a way to achieve that, ensuring the profit from any such ventures stays within our State. We as a State are capable of manufacturing. It is time we are given the opportunity to show this.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (20:36:27): The member for Fairfield has a very short memory. It was the previous Labor Government that signed contracts with a Chinese manufacturer for trains that had a number of flaws and a number of issues. It was the previous Labor Government that said it would roll out a

Rosehill Metro, on which it spent half a billion dollars without laying one-quarter of an inch of track. It was the previous Labor Government that said it would introduce a transport card. The Labor Government could not deliver it but the Government delivered the Opal card very quickly after coming to government. When it comes to a record of trains and transport, the members on the other side of the House are the last who should be listened to and they are the last who should be preaching to members of the New South Wales Government. I could go on and mention other things, such as the east-west tunnel under the city and the contractor who went broke. Opposition members are the last politicians that people should listen to.

HEATHCOTE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (20:37:33): At this time of year everybody reflects on what has happened over the past year. As other members have said, the pandemic and the recent fires top the list. Our communities have gone through a lot during the past year and we should reflect on how those misfortunes have affected our communities. In my community we have lost a lot of businesses in our rows of shops as well as in shopping centres in particular. I put a call-out to those businesspeople that if they are feeling a little bit down to seek help. Over the past 12 months, during the pandemic and the fires, some major works were done from Bald Hill down to Stanwell Park. The road was closed for eight weeks in the middle of the pandemic so the poor businesspeople whose premises were at the bottom of Stanwell Park basically lost all income for a period of eight weeks. Thankfully that work was completed on time. In fact, it was completed one week earlier than predicted. The work was necessary because the road was sliding off the hill at Stanwell Park. It is now a safe thoroughfare and it will be safe for the next 20-plus years.

Over recent sitting weeks I have told a tale of woe in this House about my struggles with getting a bridge built over the Woronora River. That does not sound very exciting but it has been one of the banes of my life. I am pleased to report that yesterday the Government announced an allocation of \$35 million to construct a bridge across the river, which will make driving much safer, and funding to duplicate Heathcote Road, on which 11 people have passed away over the last five years. I put out a call also to Susie Smith, who is the partner of the late Drew Cullen. Drew was the last person who died on that bridge in 2015. Susie Smith is an absolute stalwart. After Drew's death, she has concentrated not only on raising their children but also on becoming a champion pistol shooter. She is now world class and represents Australia.

As I said, there have been a number of accidents on Heathcote Road. To improve the area's safety record, the Government has committed to fixing that road as soon as possible. Yesterday the Government announced the allocation of \$183 million in State and Federal funding to construct the already announced duplication between Infantry Parade and The Avenue. The announcement included \$35 million in planning funds that will be used to duplicate Heathcote Road. Part of the work has already been done by moving electricity works and drainage and the project is well underway.

Funding has been brought forward in the State budget so the road can be fixed and no more deaths will occur in that area. Yesterday I made the comment that I have been advocating on behalf of my community to Minister Constance to support the futureproofing of the road corridor. I am pleased that the planning funds will enable investigation of alternative infrastructure across the valley. In the meantime the duplication of Heathcote Road will include widening the road over the bridge across the Woronora River. Work is continuing. That means that government planners are examining the possibility of crossing the valley on one level so that motorists will be able to go from Heathcote Road straight across to Engadine-Heathcote, which will be fantastic and safer for all concerned.

I commend Susie Smith for being an absolute tower of strength for the community during the fight to get funding for improved roadways in my electorate of Heathcote. She was at the forefront of rallying support for the projects and I appreciate all the help she has given, especially considering all that she has suffered in the loss of her partner. I can say only that Susie Smith is an absolute tower of strength for not only her family but also her community. I thank Minister Constance for his assistance. Yesterday on Channel Ten, although it was not mentioned on the funnies, I said that I have been riding Andrew Constance like Seabiscuit to get funding for upgraded roadways—and I have. Minister Constance is pleased that funding has been obtained from Treasury and that the road infrastructure will be built sooner rather than later.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (20:42:37): How lucky are the people of Heathcote to have a member like Lee Evans fighting for them. Heathcote Road is a notoriously bad road and is responsible for 11 deaths in the past five years. If any road in New South Wales should be upgraded it is Heathcote Road. The road infrastructure will include an upgraded bridge. I congratulate Lee Evans. I know that in so many fights for his electorate he has been at the forefront in his efforts to obtain the very best infrastructure and facilities for the people of Heathcote. What a champion! He is a local champion for the people of the Heathcote area. On their behalf, he does a mighty job not only in his electorate but also in Parliament.

CENTRAL COAST SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:43:29): Yesterday my constituent Debbie Downer publicly revealed that she is homeless. She did not want to do that and she should not have had to do that but it was the only thing she could think to do in her desperate search to find a home for herself and her family. Debbie told her story to local media outlets, NBN TV and *The Daily Telegraph* online newspaper. In doing so, she hopes to draw attention to the desperate shortage of affordable housing in my electorate and in the wider Central Coast area. Debbie has a roof over her head but she is homeless. She shares a two-room building with her six children, aged between nine and 18. Three of her children have special needs, including autism spectrum disorder. Her accommodation is clearly inadequate. She has no security of tenure. The arrangement was only meant to be a temporary one. She has now been advised by the property owner that she will need to move out of that accommodation at the end of the month as the building is needed for other purposes.

Debbie has applied for accommodation in the private market; however, she has been advised by more than one real estate agent that she will never get an offer on the Central Coast, even if she can find a place she can afford, given she is a single mother with six children and no large income. My office helped Debbie with her application for priority housing assistance in 2019. We helped her get back onto the priority housing list after her oldest child turned 18 and the rules of the system removed her from it. She has no prospect of being housed any time soon. At the end of the month she will be put out of her home and most likely be offered accommodation in a hotel somewhere on the Central Coast. That is not good enough, and the reason is simple: we have created one of the most expensive housing systems in the world. We have a housing system where homes are seen as assets rather than an essential service and a housing system where the private sector provides most of the homes and rental properties on the basis of profit rather than need.

More to the point for Debbie's family, the reason we cannot find a home for her, even though she is on the priority housing list, is we have less public housing now than we did in 2011 when those opposite first sat themselves down on the Government benches. An answer printed in the *Questions and Answers* paper dated 20 December 2019 in response to my question No. 2093 contains a table that shows that in 2011 there were 4,565 social housing homes on the Central Coast within the electorates of Wyong, The Entrance, Terrigal and Gosford. By 2019 that was down to 4,299, which is 266 fewer public housing homes in nine years. I seek leave to incorporate a table depicting the decline of social housing stock in The Entrance electorate into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

		Property Count					
State Electorate	Financial Year	Studio	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4+beds	Total Units
Swansea	2011-12	-	226	126	334	44	730
	2012-13	-	226	125	333	44	728
	2012-14	2	205	126	260	50	743
	2012-15	2	216	126	359	48	751
	2012-16	2	216	126	358	48	750
	2012-17	2	215	125	358	50	750
	2012-18	1	215	125	358	49	748
	2012-19	1	215	124	358	49	747
Wyong	2011-12	8	280	320	419	105	1,132
	2012-13	8	280	320	399	104	1,111
	2012-14	10	238	317	377	91	1,033
	2012-15	10	238	318	377	91	1,034
	2012-16	10	242	321	376	91	1,040
	2012-17	10	242	323	373	95	1,043
	2012-18	9	242	323	369	95	1,038
	2012-19	8	242	323	366	93	1,032
The Entrance	2011-12	7	376	268	667	123	1,441

	2012-13	7	376	269	663	123	1,438
	2012-14	12	366	222	576	112	1,288
	2012-15	12	366	222	575	112	1,287
	2012-16	12	366	222	572	113	1,285
	2012-17	12	390	269	572	113	1,356
	2012-18	12	390	268	571	112	1,353
	2012-19	12	390	268	568	112	1,350
Gosford	2011-12	30	593	536	391	64	1,614
	2012-13	30	591	531	377	64	1,593
	2012-14	28	521	457	321	54	1,381
	2012-15	28	542	467	322	55	1,414
	2012-16	28	542	465	322	54	1,411
	2012-17	26	532	467	317	53	1,395
	2012-18	20	532	465	310	52	1,379
	2012-19	20	532	463	306	52	1,373
Terrigal	2011-12	-	51	96	203	28	378
	2012-13	-	51	96	202	28	377
	2012-14	-	62	131	307	48	548
	2012-15	-	62	131	307	48	548
	2012-16	-	62	131	307	48	548
	2012-17	-	62	131	305	48	546
	2012-18	-	62	131	304	48	545
	2012-19	-	62	131	304	47	544

That table shows the decline in the number of larger homes over that period. Whilst there has been a small increase in the number of studios and one bedroom apartments or houses available, the number of larger homes for families such as Debbie's has decreased overall. The answer to question No. 2824 by the member for Gosford as printed in the *Questions and Answers* paper dated 16 June 2020 revealed on 12 May 2020 there were 72 vacant social housing properties located on the Central Coast. That is why Debbie and I chose Faye Close, Bateau Bay, as a place to tell her story. Number 5-6 Faye Close is a vacant property that has been boarded up for years, I have been told. The building is structurally sound; it just needs a bit of work.

There are six bedrooms at 5-6 Faye Close, which in a short time could provide accommodation to my constituent. In that particular area, the Government has sold a number of social homes to the private sector. The three bedroom home across the road from 5-6 Faye Close is being rented at \$460 per week. That is only going to be affordable to a family earning \$80,000-plus. The Government has sold land in that estate and I cannot see where any investment back into the State has occurred. We need more social housing on the Central Coast. The Minister, who is in the House, came to the Central Coast in September and said that 243 homes were being built. That is still 23 less than the number we had in 2011, nine years ago. We can do better.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (20:48:44): I thank the member for The Entrance for raising the important issue of homelessness. If the member would forward the details of his constituent to me, I would be more than happy to investigate the situation he outlined in the House this evening. The Government has a record budget for housing and homelessness in New South Wales. We have the largest social and affordable housing building program of any State or Territory. I recognise that homelessness is not just a city problem, it is a problem across the State. I was in Gosford recently and looked at some of the investments the Government is making there that are currently under construction in addition to some of the homes being built in the Hunter area, where I was last week too. The Government is working hard with specialist homelessness services, particularly at this time. It has been a very difficult time for the social services sector, but I want to ensure that everybody has a safe place to live, as I am sure every member of Parliament does. If the member for The Entrance will send me the details, I will undertake to investigate the matter personally.

FORGOTTEN DIGGERS ORGANISATION

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (20:49:48): With all the lives that were lost, it was supposed to be the war to end all wars but, unfortunately, that was not to be. Beginning in 1914, Australian men and women undertook long journeys to foreign lands, and many of them did not return home. One of those men who left his family and departed our sunny shores, never to return, was Private William John McLachlan—the grandfather of my grandmother Myrtle and my great, great grandfather. Private McLachlan was in his forties when he fought in the first disastrous attack at Bullecourt in an attempt to break the Hindenburg line. Exposed to machine gun and artillery fire, the Australian soldiers were forced back to their own lines while tanks stood burning on the battlefield. The Australians had 3,000 men killed or wounded in that battle and Private McLachlan was one of them. He did not survive the first day of the first battle at Bullecourt that took place on 11 April 1917. My great, great grandfather Private William John McLachlan is honoured at the Australian National Memorial in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

There were, however, many forgotten diggers who, after returning home from World War I, died from their wounds or later in their life found themselves destitute and did not have their memories honoured at a cemetery. John Thomas from Panania in my electorate of East Hills, is the president of the 45th Infantry Battalion Association and formed the Forgotten Diggers organisation. The aim of the charity is to identify those World War I diggers who, for whatever reason, either did not qualify for or whose families did not apply for a Commonwealth-funded memorial and as a result are lying in unmarked graves. Once the graves have been identified and the research has been completed, John from the Forgotten Diggers places a white cross on that person's grave with their name and AIF. Later a concrete footing is laid and once a memorial plaque is obtained that is funded by Veterans Affairs, the Forgotten Diggers lay a concrete footing for the plaque with money raised by donations. I was very happy to be able to secure \$5,000 in funding from the New South Wales State Government to assist John from the organisation to continue to honour our forgotten diggers.

There are three Johns in this story of forgotten diggers—John Thomas from the Forgotten Diggers organisation; John Shields, a Vietnam veteran also from Panania in my electorate; and Private John Parker, 45th battalion 1st AIF, who was destitute when he died and lies in an unmarked grave in the same cemetery with Private Basil Morrow MM 1st AIF. This Anzac Day, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people conducted driveway services. Private John Leslie Shields was a stretcher bearer in the Vietnam War and was unable to march as he usually would this year. John created his own cenotaph in the front yard of his home in Lambeth Street, Panania, and it attracted great attention from neighbours, on social media and also by Channel 7. John Thomas from the Forgotten Diggers saw that John had a cross as part of his cenotaph and Vietnam War memorabilia display but he also noticed that it was made from Styrofoam. John Thomas visited Private Shields and presented him with a more permanent timber Forgotten Diggers cross to replace his temporary Styrofoam one. This gesture was gratefully appreciated by John Shields and he was very keen to help John with his initiatives with the Forgotten Diggers.

John Shields decided to support the Forgotten Diggers charity and gave money to go towards being able to concrete the grave of World War I Private John Parker 45th Battalion 1st AIF at Katoomba Cemetery. A cross and rosemary plant will be placed there on Sunday 22 November, and I look forward to attending the service with both John Shields and John Thomas. On Monday I visited many local cenotaphs with Private John Shields, my nan Myrtle and Councillor George Zakhia. We laid wreaths to honour all the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice and served our great nation. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

ENERGY-FROM-WASTE INCINERATION

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:54:08): I bring to the attention of the House a major concern of my constituents in Blacktown that has wider implications across New South Wales—that is, the proposed energy-from-waste incineration process. The industry will argue this is proven and ever-improving technology that is used in abundance around the world, with the air emitted getting cleaner through world's best practice, but in the end this is a pollution-emitting process. I am concerned about any facility where approximately 90 per cent of the building cost is committed to cleaning up and making safe the product it produces. This is a lazy way of dealing with the environmental problem of landfill. We should be focused on recycling and have a goal of zero waste.

I understand that up to five proposals either have been lodged or are in a discussion process. That is approximately 1.6 million tonnes of rubbish that can be incinerated. In 2018 some 16.5 million tonnes of waste was produced from all sources, of which 63 per cent was diverted from landfill, leaving 6.1 million tonnes being placed into landfill. Arguably, almost one-third of landfill will be incinerated and half of this will be done in Blacktown City. Over time, more incinerators will come online and the recycling industry will be under threat. We have three options when dealing with the energy-from-waste incineration process. The first option is to do nothing and allow the unelected bureaucracy and last-century regulations and guidelines to deal with it, thereby leaving it up to councils and local communities to oppose the process. That seems to be the Liberal-Nationals

Government's approach. The second option is to have a moratorium or stop the assessment process until current laws, regulations and guidelines are updated.

Planning assessment processes and environmental standards must be modernised to meet the new challenges posed by energy-from-waste incineration processes. The Government has previously rejected this approach, but I am always hopeful that it will change its mind. The third option is to ban it outright, as proposed by The Greens in the other place. I firmly believe in the second option. The Minister for Energy and Environment gave an indication last year that he would appoint the chief science officer to update the environmental standards, but we have heard nothing. Three years ago his predecessor also promised to update the environmental standards, but we have still not heard anything.

In summary, the planning issues that need to be dealt with and considered are the following: first, the regular review of regulations to reflect world's best practice; secondly, setting a maximum amount of waste that could be used as energy by waste plants; thirdly, no energy-from-waste incineration operations to be located within a radius of 15 kilometres of each other or near schools; fourthly, all approved facilities to be required to continuously improve emission treatments; fifthly, a social licence based on community consultation and support; sixthly, an annual fee based on approved tonnage of waste payable to the local council for monitoring, community consultation and education; and, seventhly, a strenuous fit-and-proper-person test for board members, senior management and the organisation.

None of this is currently in the regulations or laws. There are also environmental issues to be considered. Improvements include: first, the New South Wales emissions standards to be updated to match world's best practice; secondly, the periodic update of regulations to reflect this best practice as it changes over time; thirdly, the chief science officer, through an advisory body, to report to this Parliament on the advancements of energy-from-waste technology and address environmental and health challenges, including the impact of nanoparticles on human health as an emission from these plants; and, fourthly, outline the plan regarding acceptable means in dealing with residual waste and toxic waste. None of this is currently covered by any of the regulations.

This Parliament and this Government must immediately get serious about energy-from-waste incineration and set the standards. We cannot and must not allow lobbyists and industry to take control by exploiting the current situation to the detriment of local residents. The Government and proponents can hide behind the assertion that they will burn only non-recyclable material, but the fact is you must feed the beast. All energy-from-waste incineration will billow out higher emissions. Let us get the laws right in the first instance.

COVID-19 AND PATHOLOGY SERVICES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:59:13): Wednesday 11 November is International Pathology Day. It is a yearly awareness day that is dedicated to highlighting the fundamental role of pathology in the healthcare community and in all our lives. It is particularly apparent this year, with the strain placed on those resources by COVID-19. Modern pathology in Australia has been put to the test unlike at any other time. Pathology testing has made an unprecedented contribution to the wellbeing of the community. Whilst this contribution is nothing new, it is particularly important during the pandemic. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District has conducted 132,801 tests for COVID-19, in addition to its normal workload. It has seen frontline workers busy 24/7. The test for COVID-19 is being performed in a range of locations, including hospitals, emergency departments, fever clinics, GP surgeries, Aboriginal medical services and community testing clinics. The specimens are sent to pathology laboratories that then confirm cases based on laboratory analysis of swabs.

The wait for confirmation of a positive or negative test result is always stressful. It is made less stressful by NSW Health Pathology, which has pioneered a process that automatically delivers COVID-19 test results directly to patients via SMS. If you have been tested for COVID-19 at a NSW Health public hospital, fever clinic, COVID-19 clinic or emergency department you can sign up for the new, secure SMS service. Your local hospital health team can provide you with the details of very simple steps to register. This innovation has delivered quicker and more efficient results. The work that continues to be done by pathologists during this pandemic has advantaged the entire healthcare system. It has used the knowledge gained from COVID-19 testing to locate the virus and protect the community. The work being done by frontline workers and their unions—particularly the Health Services Union [HSU]—in testing and the secure carriage of samples cannot be underestimated. I congratulate the HSU and commend its secretary, Gerard Hayes, for his wonderful work. He is a fearless advocate for all his members. I congratulate him tonight.

This year ABC national health reporter Sophie Scott hosted the International Pathology Day event. It celebrated the pivotal role that pathology has played in guiding us safely through this pandemic. Some of the pathologists who have been at the forefront of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic include Royal College of Pathologists of Australia fellows Professor Deborah Williamson, clinical microbiologist, Deputy

Director, Microbiological Diagnostic Unit Public Health Laboratory; Professor Bill Rawlinson, AM, senior medical virologist, Director of Virology, South-Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Health Service; Associate Professor Paul Griffin, infectious diseases physician and microbiologist, Director of Infectious Diseases, Mater Health Services, Brisbane; and Associate Professor Robert Baird, Director of Pathology, infectious diseases physician, Royal Darwin Hospital.

To those people, the frontline workers, the sample takers, the testers, the HSU, the staff in the labs, I say a big thank you. I particularly highlight the workers in my electorate who do a fantastic job protecting us. I am disappointed that the Government has chosen to reward them by freezing their wages and cutting their wages; it is a kick in the guts for those who have worked so hard—not just pathologists but all healthcare workers in New South Wales. It is an absolute disgrace and will not be forgotten.

VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (21:03:28): As we come to the end of our parliamentary sittings for 2020, I take this opportunity to reflect on what has been a challenging year for my local community in the Vaucluse electorate. We have got through it together with goodwill and patience, and by holding those we care for close. My electorate is one of the most diverse in New South Wales. We travel a lot for work, for pleasure and to visit family, and we welcome tourists from all around the world to our beautiful area, including Bondi Beach, Watsons Bay and Double Bay. Our national parks; our historic buildings; our Indigenous history; our lush, green areas; our history; our clean beaches; and our harbour are indeed the envy of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic began to affect our community in March, with the introduction of strong but important measures by this Government to keep us all safe. Before that the devastating summer bushfires ravaged so many parts of our State.

More than ever, it has been a privilege to support my community this year in ways I never thought I would. As one of the smallest electorates in the State, we are very densely populated and after COVID struck we quickly had cases identified in my local area. I realised that one of the best things I could do to help my electorate was to send daily emails with NSW Health updates and information on New South Wales Government support. We still send those updates when there are COVID community transmissions. I have had overwhelmingly positive feedback on how helpful the daily missives have been. Residents have had a reliable source of information to ease their understandable anxiety and help them plan their lives.

In addition, residents have taken me into their confidence and shared their stories of heartbreaking hardship. There have been families stranded overseas, mental health issues and financial issues. I deeply respect them for doing so and I honour the confidential nature of the details they have shared. I have tried to assist them all, and the requests continue to this day. Regrettably, we still have a long way to go and more hardships to see. My local community organisations have also rallied together to support the community. Whether it was hosting young people from bushfire-affected communities or delivering meals and offering hands-on support to communities affected by COVID, I have been really heartened by their show of true community spirit, which has gone above and beyond their normal duties, in a time of great challenge.

There have been positives, too, and I have continued to work hard for my local community. There are a number of achievements, which even this year we have been able to pull off. We secured State heritage listings for Rushcutters Bay; Yarranabbe Park, Darling Point; and Hermitage Foreshore Reserve in Vaucluse—both beautiful and historical. We have new ferry services for Rose Bay and Watsons Bay and pop-up cycleways for Bondi and Rose Bay, giving residents more options to travel to and from work. There has been significant progress on our \$80-million plan to close the last New South Wales ocean wastewater outfalls at Vaucluse and Diamond Bay, and to improve the water quality at Rose Bay Beach through our local working group. This is supported by \$100,000 in New South Wales Government grants to tackle litter in my local area. And over the past year we have had 18 new police officers join our local area command to keep us safe.

Some of the amazing local community organisations in my electorate include Darling Point Society, Double Bay Residents Association, Rose Bay Residents Association, Vaucluse and Diamond Bay Precinct Committee, Vaucluse Progress Association, Watsons Bay Association and Woollahra History & Heritage Society. There are many religious organisations in my electorate, including Bondi Mizrahi Synagogue; Central Synagogue; Bondi Anglican Church; Chabad Double Bay; Dover Heights Synagogue; Emanuel Synagogue; St George Greek Orthodox Parish Rose Bay; Nefesh Shule; Our Lady Star of the Sea, Watsons Bay; Sephardi Synagogue; St Joseph's Church, Edgecliff; St Mark's Anglican Church, Darling Point; St Michael's Anglican Church, Vaucluse; and St Stephen's Anglican Church.

Our sporting organisations include Bondi Amateur Swimming Club, Bondi Bowling Club, Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Diamond Bay Bowling Club, Eastern Suburbs Cricket Club, Easts Rugby Club, Royal Motor Yacht Club, Vaucluse Bowling Club and Woollahra Colleagues Rugby Union Football Club. Our community service organisations include the 3rd Rose Bay Judean Scouts, Bondi & Districts Chamber of Commerce, Bondi

Lions Club and Rose Bay Rotary Club. There are so many more that I could include in my salute of thanks to my local community. I wish everybody a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and a very safe and holy New Year. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

Community Recognition Statements

BUTTERFLY BOX

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (21:08:51): Monique and Dustin Van Damme from Charmhaven created the Butterfly Box in memory of their daughter, Avaline, who was lost due to stillbirth. In Australia over 2,000 families experience stillbirth every year. The Butterfly Box is a special kit designed for families who have been through this heartbreaking experience—a great representation of the love and support sent to families. The items in the Butterfly Box include a hand-stitched blanket, beanie set, teddy bear, memorial candle, angel keepsake and forget-me-not seeds. They are a few of the local handmade gifts for families impacted by infant loss. Monique and Dustin took the idea further and wanted to give back by organising two fundraisers to purchase cuddle cots for the neonatal intensive care unit at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Cuddle cots are specially designed, insulated bassinets that allow families to spend extra time with their baby in a hospital rather than a morgue. The Van Dammes are now preparing their next 25 Butterfly Boxes to be donated to Gosford Hospital.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE KU-RING-GAI DIVISION AWARDS

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (21:09:55): I recently attended the Ku-ring-gai division awards night for St John Ambulance. The ceremony recognised the extraordinary efforts undertaken by members of St John Ambulance. On behalf of St John Ambulance and the Premier, I had the honour of presenting the Bushfire Citations to eight deserving volunteers for their contributions during the 2019-2020 black summer. The final and most prestigious award of the night was the St John Save a Life Award, which was presented to David Kerr. David was called to the pool area of his unit complex to find a child unconscious. Through his quick action and effective CPR, the child survived. David also received a First Bar to the Service Medal of the Order for 15 years of service. I am truly inspired by the great work that Ku-ring-gai volunteers do every day for our community. I congratulate all awardees and thank all members for their significant contributions to the running of an outstanding division.

LOVELLS GROUP

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (21:10:57): Happy birthday to Newcastle-based manufacturers Lovells Group, which will turn 90 years old next month. Initially from Homebush, Lovells is a family company that proudly calls the Hunter home. Predominantly servicing the mining, automotive and rolling stock industries through suspension components, it is the only manufacturer of industrial springs in Australia. I also congratulate Lovells on its commitment to keeping workers in full-time employment and for sourcing Australian raw materials for the manufacture of its goods. It is a world leader in its field and its continued success is a testament to the strength and skill of Australian and Hunter manufacturing. Well done to Simon Crane, Trent Ball and the great team at Lovells. Happy birthday, Lovells; here's to another 90 years.

MILLIGANS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (21:11:50): I congratulate Myall Lakes local business Milligans on being named one of the top 30 small businesses in Australia by Business Australia. Milligans has been in business for over 40 years, with storefronts in both Forster and Taree. The company is a shining example for the local small business community. The business has faced many challenges during the recent drought, fires, floods and pandemic, but it has ultimately come out stronger by listening to the local community, staff and its customers. Again, I congratulate principal Deborah Atkins, Milligans and staff on the achievement and wish them luck ahead of the announcement of the top 10 business champions on 23 November.

ADAM FREIER

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (21:12:38): I recognise the incredible contribution of Adam Freier, who is a retiring great of the Randwick District Rugby Union Football Club. After four decades as a galloping green, Adam retired from rugby this year, with his boots and the number two jersey being very hard to fill. Adam has been playing first grade at the Wicks since the late nineties, when he was plucked from obscurity by Eddie Jones and given a Brumbies contract. Adam went on to play for the Waratahs and the Rebels, as well as having 25 caps for the Wallabies. Adam retired from professional rugby eight years ago and returned to the Galloping Greens in 2015. This year he played Shute Shield at the ripe old age of 40. Adam is a fierce competitor and has been a great mentor to generations of players at Randwick, having represented the Wicks in finals campaigns across four decades. I thank Adam for his incredible contribution to the Randwick rugby union club and wish him all the best for his future. Up the Wicks!

THE SAVING PLACE FOOD BANK

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (21:13:36): I recognise the marvellous charitable work of The Saving Place Food Bank in Port Macquarie, which has delivered a vital lifeline to those facing financial hardship in our community. Sadly, each week a portion of the Hastings community will struggle to provide the basic essentials, like food, for their family. It is because of compassionate organisations like The Saving Place Food Bank in Port Macquarie that families under financial stress receive the help they need. Located at 10 Blackbutt Road, Port Macquarie, The Saving Place is one of 10 wholesale centres on the mid North Coast that open their doors to people who are struggling with the cost of living. Managed by Dave Davis and chairman Bob Eldridge from The Shalom House of Hope, the organisation and its hardworking volunteers have provided fresh, frozen and non-perishable food items free of charge to our community since November 2019, with over \$575,000 worth of goods going to families all across the Hastings. I was pleased to join the Federal member for Cowper on 14 November to witness the dedicated volunteers supporting our most vulnerable in Port Macquarie. I also congratulate Dave on his 20 years of service to my local community.

SHELLEY BEACH SURF CLUB WAR MEMORIAL

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:14:37): I was honoured to represent my community on 5 November at the dedication of the Shelly Beach Surf Club war memorial. The event involved the unveiling of the new memorial and a raising of the flag ceremony. The memorial is a partnership project between the club and The Entrance Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch. The blessing was delivered by Father Stevens from Our Lady of the Rosary in The Entrance and a minute's silence was observed following the Ode and the sounding of the last post. I recognise the gracious donation of a new flagpole and memorial stone by the sub branch and the Federal Government. These new features may not have been possible without their donations, so I thank them. I also congratulate Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club president Brad Glover, secretary Karen Faulkner-Hulls and both senior and junior management committees on their continuous work for our community.

DOUBLE BAY NETWORKING GROUP

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (21:15:34): On 29 October 2020 I joined local small business owners at a Double Bay Networking Group event, co-hosted by Woollahra Council Mayor Susan Wynne. Group chairman Stephanie Giannis and vice-chair Deirdre O'Loglin do a wonderful job connecting and supporting local small businesses. I had the opportunity to speak about how the New South Wales Government supports small businesses, particularly during COVID. It was good to hear about their challenges and listen to their suggestions for how we can better help them in future. I thank attendees Omar Afiouni, Jacqueline Blacket, Victor Dorsen, Rowena Hamilton, Werrdan Khoury, Eliana Juarez, Collette Meraabi, Dr Xavier Mirouze, Cindy Shames, Mercedes Sarmini, Nathalie Scipioni, Christina Tsogas, John Varnay and Ury Zhang for their incredible resilience as small business owners during COVID-19.

MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (21:16:29): This NAIDOC Week I congratulate everyone involved with the 2019 Maitland Regional Art Gallery [MRAG] exhibition *Stories from Wonnarua Country*, which won the Australian Museums and Galleries Association MAGNA 2020 major award for Interpretation, Learning & Audience Engagement. Over a period of 18 months, MRAG partnered with Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, Maitland Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and Wonnarua Elders in a series of three-day workshops with local Aboriginal students, including a day on country at Baime Cave. The students from Francis Greenway High School, Maitland High School, Hunter Valley Grammar School and Metford, Tarro, Telarah and Woodberry public schools created artworks depicting what it means to be on Wonnarua country today. They engaged their whole school community with identity, cultural awareness and knowledge in each project. The resulting exhibition was spectacular and ran for five months, attracting over 20,000 people. I congratulate them on what was more than an exhibition, it was a powerful moment for our community.

YAWARRA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (21:17:37): I recently had the honour of joining the education Minister at the opening of a facility at a special school in my electorate. The Yawarra Community School provides educational opportunities for children with special needs. Shortly after the school opened in July of last year, I joined the Minister and school principal Deborah McCreadie for a sod-turning ceremony on a hydrotherapy pool, which was the last piece of the Yawarra puzzle. It was great to go back a couple of weeks ago and officially open the pool, which is amazing. I take great pride in all the announcements I make and openings I am able to attend across my electorate but, being a little indulgent, this one was a little more special. One of my electorate office staff, Jane Diffey, was instrumental in initially putting forward the case for the construction of the school. Jane and her husband, Gus, lost their daughter Clare to Rett syndrome in 2014. Without their strength and Jane's

pushing, these projects may not have come to fruition. Yawarra now has a facility to service its students as well as others that need it across the region. I wish the school community all the best going forward.

SUPERINTENDENT ANDREW HURST

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:18:37): I congratulate police superintendent Andrew Hurst of Bourke, who was selected from thousands of applicants for the Churchill Fellowship 2020 award. Superintendent Hurst's fellowship will focus on changing the behaviour of domestic violence offenders through programs concentrating on mental health as well as drug and alcohol counselling. I am fortunate to personally know Superintendent Hurst and his family, and I cannot think of a more deserving or competent person to be given the award. Domestic violence in New South Wales is one of this generation's greatest social issues. I have no doubt that the knowledge he will gain through this study will go some way in tackling the problem. I thank Superintendent Hurst for his service and continued fight for the victims of domestic violence and I wish him all the best with his fellowship.

PORT HACKING LITTLE ATHLETICS CENTRE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (21:19:20): I acknowledge Port Hacking Little Athletics Centre, which recently kicked off its forty-third competition season. The centre encourages children to participate in sport and improve their skills within their own abilities, forging lifelong friendships along the way. The community spirit at the heart of this wonderful organisation was evident at last month's season launch, with a full program and ceremony completed despite the wet weather. Whilst younger members of the family participate and compete on the track and field, their parents make up the large volunteer base that supports the club and keeps the Saturday morning competition at Sylvania Waters Athletics Track running smoothly on a weekly basis. Amongst these dedicated volunteers, I recognise the hardworking executive committee for the 2020-21 season, including president Mark Laverance, vice-president Adam Arnold, secretary Phil Turpin, treasurer Cameron Burne, Sharon Potts, Jenny Blanch, Trevor Orsaris, Lara Sams, Ray Russell, Darren Bauer and Michael Michael. I extend my best wishes to all at Port Hacking Little Athletics Centre.

WYONG DISTRICT GARDEN COMPETITION

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (21:20:20): I congratulate Bill Burton and Carol Nunn from Wyong for being named reserves champions in the Wyong District Garden Competition. On 20 September nine gardens opened to the public, showcasing the efforts of local gardeners from the north end of the Central Coast. The gardens appealed to all tastes and interests, with 30 types of fruiting trees, bushes and ice cream bean trees on display. Bill and Carol are known for their whimsical garden, which contains a little bit of everything, but this year the brush plant and clivia flowers were the highlights. Carol says that Bill is definitely the secret to their success. He devotes his time to the garden and is always visiting nurseries to find new items and plants to add to his quirky installations. They were last year's grand champions and I congratulate them on another great win. I wish them all the best in next year's competition.

TACMED AUSTRALIA

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (21:21:10): TacMed Australia in Coffs Harbour is an extraordinary organisation that I had the pleasure of visiting during Veterans' Health Week 2020 celebrations. It is an emergency medical company that develops equipment and provides training and consulting solutions for high-risk organisations and environments, such as the police and other first response providers, and sells its products all over Australia as well as internationally. TacMed is a veteran-owned and founded business and 60 per cent of the staff are veterans. During Veterans' Health Week, the organisation raised \$500 for the Commando Welfare Trust. I congratulate the team, led by founder and managing director Jeremy Holder and supported by medical director Dr Dan Pronk and director of special projects Adam Cantrick. All have served with Australian Army special operations teams in medical roles. Dr Pronk was the regimental medical officer for the SAS and commandos, while Jeremy still does casual shifts as an intensive care paramedic with the NSW Ambulance in Coffs Harbour. The area is fortunate to have such great businesses like TacMed providing jobs, boosting our local economy and providing an important service to our community.

SURFING THE SPECTRUM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (21:22:12): Aimee Blacker knows a thing or two about catching a wave. Along with Tahlia Anderson, Aimee co-founded Surfing the Spectrum, a not-for-profit surf therapy initiative that works with children with autism. She was recently named as a Westfield Local Hero for her commitment to these children and their families. Surfing the Spectrum creates the best of both worlds for kids with autism—a space to be with their peers and others who understand their needs and an opportunity to experience fun and physical activity that may have otherwise been challenging for them to access. I have seen firsthand how the kids and their families appreciate the program. The smiles on their faces really tell the story. I congratulate Aimee on her acknowledgement as a local hero.

TERRIGAL AVOCA PANTHERS AFL TEAM

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:23:06): It is finals time for many sporting groups, and I congratulate the Terrigal Avoca Panthers AFL team on becoming the 2020 Hunter Central Coast premiers. On Saturday 17 October the Panthers marched onto the field at Adelaide Street Oval to take on the Newcastle City Blues. By quarter time the Newcastle City Blues were up 34-9 but from the second quarter onwards I am pleased to report that the game completely changed. Utilising a defence that the Panthers have become famous for, the team were up 51-34 at half-time. By the end of the third quarter the Panthers were further ahead 75-37 and they ran out comfortable winners 76-50. I congratulate the players and head coach Chris Bishop on the season win. It is a testament to the players, who continue to develop a reputation of excellence for this fantastic AFL club on the Central Coast.

COOGEE ELECTORATE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (21:24:12): I celebrate and recognise the pathologists and pathology services across the electorate of Coogee and New South Wales. On International Pathology Day we look to build awareness and highlight the fundamental and essential role of pathology in the healthcare system and in our community. This year has placed an unprecedented amount of pressure on our pathology services and our pathology professionals have risen to every challenge. The entire healthcare system has been able to wisely use the knowledge gained from COVID-19 testing to locate the virus and protect the community. As a result of the amazing work of our pathology professionals, along with our public health unit at Randwick, the Eastern Suburbs have been able to track and trace every local case, keeping people safe and our economy open. Never before has pathology testing made such a contribution to the wellbeing of the community as it has this year during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that we take the opportunity to thank and celebrate all those who work within the pathology community for their tireless and essential work.

BERRIMA MARKETPLACE PARK

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (21:25:05): I acknowledge completion of the Berrima Marketplace Park's all abilities playground and recognise that this project has come to fruition owing to the Rotary Club of Berrima District. In 2017 Berrima Rotary took on the venture, beginning with small and welcome improvements to the park. The following year the New South Wales Government provided \$30,000 to the project from the Community Building Partnership program. Then an additional \$239,000 was allocated from the Stronger Country Communities Fund. Recently I was delighted to declare the playground officially open with new soft fall, two new carousels, in-ground mini trampolines, a seesaw, a play net and a toddler play ship. There is plenty of fun to be had for Berrima's children and children at heart. I congratulate Berrima Rotary on its success in the development of the park and in particular Derek White for his dedication to the project over many years. I also thank the Rotary Club of Moss Vale for its financial contribution. Thank you, Rotary, from the entire community.

ROSS EARL

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:26:02): After a 44-year association with local government and eight years as Bourke Shire Council general manager, Ross Earl retired in October 2020. Over the course of his eight years with the shire, Ross was instrumental in ensuring that Bourke shire was given every opportunity to thrive. During his time with the council, Ross oversaw the redevelopment of the airport, the revival of the air service, the rebuilding of the Bourke Olympic Pool, the sealing of the Wanaaring Road, and improvements to the town's CBD and Central Park. These are just highlights of the major changes he was able to initiate. Ross' persistence in fighting for Bourke has left a legacy for future generations. I wish Ross and his wife, Annette, nothing but the best in his retirement and thank him for his service to the Bourke community.

CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (21:26:53): I congratulate the recipients from my local area of East Hills who recently received Canterbury Bankstown Local Business Awards: Hair Appeal and Beauty Connection at Revesby; Reflexation Natural Therapies at Picnic Point; Maria's Fresh Flowers at Padstow—the shelf is starting to bow under the burden of the number of trophies Maria has now won; Scribbly Pre-School and Long Day Care Centre at Picnic Point; 32 Hundred Lighting at Milperra; and The Butchers Pantry at Panania. Four Seasons at Revesby won the fruit and vegetable shop category. This is quite an achievement as it has only recently celebrated the first anniversary of the business opening. Other recipients were: Your Padstow Doctors Plus, who do a great job of keeping residents well; Helloworld Travel at Revesby; the very young and entrepreneurial Gemma Clarke Photography at Picnic Point; Echo Boards and Products at Condell Park; and Moorebeauty by Stephanie at Panania. Well done to them all on this amazing achievement, particularly in what has been an extremely challenging year for small business.

WRAPT WITH LOVE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:28:04): I recognise the wonderful work of Young's Wrapt with Love, a community group that knits blankets for those in need. Wrapt with Love began 15 years ago. The group knits or crotches 200 blankets annually, sending blankets to recent bushfire victims and Young's oncology unit. Some are also sent overseas. While the blankets provide comfort to the recipients, those who make the blankets also benefit. For a few hours each week the group gathers to make blankets. This has been a great support system for its members. Some members are isolated living out of town and others are widows, which makes the gatherings crucial for mental health and wellbeing. Groups like this are an integral part of our community. I thank the volunteers for the blankets they create and the safe space for community members.

MELBOURNE CUP WINNER POITREL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (21:28:57): I recognise a part of history that has been preserved by cousins Henry and Timothy Moses in remembrance of the 1920 Melbourne Cup winner, Poitrel, bred and owned by the Moses brothers at Arrowfield Stud in New South Wales. In 2018 Poitrel was inducted into the Australian Racing Hall of Fame, one of the Australian racing industry's highest accolades. An interesting fact is that Poitrel failed to reach the 300 guineas reserve price at the yearling sale and was therefore retained by the Moses brothers, six years later winning the "race that stops a nation", exactly 100 years ago. I commend the Moses family for sharing the golden 1920 Melbourne Cup at the Moree Race Club's annual charity dinner as a reminder of Australia's rich horseracing history. It is our traditions and celebrations such as the Melbourne Cup which unite Australia in memory of our country's vibrant heritage. I applaud Henry and Timothy Moses for recognising the significance that the 1920 Melbourne Cup shares with the wider community as a notable centenary sporting event.

PATHOLOGY SERVICES

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (21:29:59): I celebrate and recognise the pathologists and pathology services across Newcastle, the Hunter and all of New South Wales. On International Pathology Day we look to build awareness and highlight the fundamental and essential role of pathology in the healthcare system and in our community. This year has placed an unprecedented amount of pressure onto our pathology services and our pathology professionals have risen to every challenge. The entire healthcare system has been able to wisely use the knowledge gained from COVID-19 testing to locate the virus and protect the community. As a result of the amazing work of our pathology professionals, along with our public health unit, Hunter New England Health has been able to track and trace local cases, keeping people safe and our economy open. Never before has pathology testing made such a contribution to the wellbeing of the community as it has this year during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that we take the opportunity to thank and celebrate all those who work within the pathology community for their tireless and essential work.

PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE HIDDEN TREASURES

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (21:31:01): The Department of Primary Industries has announced the recipients of the 2020 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll, celebrating the achievements of volunteer women in rural communities. Today I acknowledge Senior Constable Wendy Hudson from Camden Haven who was recognised for her service and commitment to the NSW Police Force and her extraordinary volunteer efforts for the Kendall Tennis Club and the Kendall Country Women's Association. By all accounts Wendy is an ambassador and an advocate for youth in the Kendall community, inspiring and motivating the next generation of junior tennis stars through her local youth leadership programs and girls' mentoring programs. As a committee member of 26 years and president of the Kendall Tennis Club for 12 years, Wendy and her team have raised a remarkable \$800,000 in funding to establish the latest state-of-the-art tennis centre in Kendall, which has seen the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup and Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup visit the court ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament. A champion of tennis development, Wendy also coordinates over 100 juniors each week through the club's tennis program and in her spare time dedicates her support to the local Country Women's Association organisation. Congratulations, Wendy.

COOGEE DOLPHINS

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (21:32:06): I celebrate the fantastic fundraising work of one of our great local sporting clubs, the Coogee Dolphins, who recently donated over \$5,000 to Ronald McDonald House, Randwick. Recently I had the honour of attending Ronald McDonald House along with Coogee Dolphins President, Paul Vanni, and the mayor of Randwick City Council, Councillor Danny Said, to present the cheque. The funds were raised by the Coogee Dolphins through their annual sports luncheon and will go towards the upkeep of room 17, available at Ronald McDonald House, Randwick. Ronald McDonald House, Randwick does an amazing job of providing care and support for the families of seriously ill children. The ability to keep families

together whilst children are undergoing serious medical treatment is vital for the wellbeing of both patients and parents. I thank everyone at Ronald McDonald House, Randwick for the amazing work that they do and the Coogee Dolphins for their ongoing support of this fantastic charity.

CHRISTIE GUNTHER

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (21:32:55): In the bush we get behind people who are doing it tough in our communities. There is no greater example of this than Dubbo nurse Christie Gunther. In September Christie embarked on what she called "a big walk for little feet" in an effort to raise funds for Erin and Jeremy Ray, whose young son, Mitchell, is bravely battling neuroblastoma. Mitchell's battle has captured the attention of the Dubbo community and a GoFundMe campaign has raised almost \$50,000 to help the family, who have been forced to live away from home as Mitchell receives treatment in Sydney. Some of those funds came from people who donated to Christie's big walk, which saw her spend the best part of 12 hours on a treadmill at Anytime Fitness in Dubbo. During that time she and a few helpers who filled in for a few short stints during the day covered almost 60 kilometres and raised some very valuable funds. This was not Christie's first long walk either. In 2014 she spent 5½ hours pounding the treadmill to raise money to help the family of Max McIntyre, another young man from Dubbo who faced a major health battle. People like Christie make Dubbo a better place to live. I congratulate her and wish the Ray family all the very best.

GIANTS BASEBALL CLUB

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (21:33:58): I bring to the House's attention the Giants Baseball Club, a sporting club with a long tradition. With over 100 years of history, the Giants pride themselves on being a family club with an emphasis on fair play and enjoying the game of baseball. The club is a strong community, consisting of players aged four to over 65, along with their parents and volunteers. It has a culture of teaching not only the skills needed to play the game but also the sportsmanship to go with it. Of course, the club's success would not be possible without the dedicated volunteers, ranging from past State and national players who offer their expertise to support parent, coaches and players to the administrators and committee members who have guided the club over the years. I recognise president Nathan Fuz, treasurer Elliott Levick, secretary Lauren Stewart, Tony Thomas, Sue Cunningham, Jasmine Hill, Brad McDonall, Steve Clapham and Alex Palmer for their continued efforts. I commend the Giants Baseball Club and extend my best wishes for the future.

COFFS HARBOUR SHOWGROUND

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (21:34:54): Coffs Harbour Showground will always be an important place and space in the community I am proud to represent. The showground is benefiting from more than \$300,000 worth of upgrades and projects that have supported 32 jobs, including electricians, plumbers, security installers, roofers, air-conditioning installers, asphalt workers, window fitters, shed erectors and labourers. The showground was in the limelight recently when Treasurer Dominic Perrottet and Minister for Water, Property and Housing Melinda Pavey announced an additional \$20 million for the statewide COVID-19 showground stimulus program. This initiative is literally helping to build our State's economic recovery. I thank the Coffs Harbour Showground and Public Recreation Trust board, comprising chair Deb Farquhar, vice-chair Dan Heather, secretary John Clarke, treasurer Lianne De Paoli, showground manager Steve Sullivan and land managers Christopher Pearson, John England and Lorraine Tibbs.

LAYLA GERRISH

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:35:46): I wish 16-year-old Terrigal ballerina Layla Gerrish the best of luck as she takes part in a scholarship program in New York. This fantastic opportunity has been provided to Layla through a professional dance school called Ellison Ballet. On Sunday 18 October Layla flew to New York to begin the one-year program. I am told that the pre-professional training delivers the highest standard of classical ballet training and education. Being a full-time dancer requires a minimum of six hours of physical training per day, with school work undertaken on weekends through distance education. It is such a significant commitment. The training program in New York is open to teenagers from all over the world aged between 12 and 19. It is fantastic that Layla has been selected from this significant-sized pool of talent. I congratulate Layla and look forward to her returning to the Terrigal electorate in 12 months' time.

EAST HILLS ELECTORATE CARERS

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (21:36:38): In October I had the honour to host the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Gareth Ward, in East Hills as we launched the first-ever 10-year carers strategy. Minister Ward and I hosted carers from across the East Hills electorate at Panania Diggers to recognise the tireless efforts unpaid carers make to support those in need. It was an immense privilege to meet so many wonderful carers from East Hills, like Anne Funke, a full-time carer for her son Mitchell, who has Angelman syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. Like so many carers, Anne works part-time whilst caring for a loved one. In

2014 Anne was awarded the NSW Carer of the Year award and is a tremendous advocate for carers in East Hills and all of New South Wales. People like Anne are the lifeblood of our community. We were also joined by Elena Katrakis, CEO of Carers NSW, which provides support, guidance and training to carers across the State. The new strategy ensures that over the next 10 years carers will receive better support to improve their financial and physical wellbeing and assist with the challenges that come with caring for loved ones. I thank all carers for the tireless work that they do.

OLIVIA-EVE KNIGHT

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:37:48): I congratulate Olivia-Eve Knight on being awarded the highest award within Scouts Australia: the Australian Scout Medallion. Olivia-Eve has been involved in the West Wyalong Cubs and Scouts for over six years and was presented with the award by mayor Brian Monaghan. Olivia-Eve has been a dedicated and active member of the Scouts, participating in events and camps and displaying leadership qualities to other Cubs and Scouts members. As well as raising funds for Scouts, Olivia-Eve has also been involved in fundraising locally for Meals on Wheels and St Vincent de Paul. I congratulate Olivia-Eve on this well-deserved accolade. She is setting a wonderful example for her peers within the community and I hope she keeps up the great work.

FARMSIMPLE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (21:38:32): I recognise Lee Coleman and Matt Higham for developing a cloud-based farm management software, FarmSimple. Lee and Matt, from the wonderful Croppa Creek in the heart of the Golden Triangle, wanted a better way to manage their various farm documents and came up with the idea of a software program with specific aims. It was important that there would be one document, it had to be easy to use, and for active farmers it had to have the ability to work offline and allow the phone or tablet to collate information. Credit is given to their participation in Farmers2Founders, an innovation program that puts primary producers at the centre of agrifood innovation and creates pathways for farmers to get involved. Matt and Lee said their business was expanding from New South Wales into Victoria and Western Australia. FarmSimple has seen a 35 per cent increase in clients and a 67 per cent increase in revenue. Its success has had a flow-on effect, enhancing agribusiness throughout Australia. I commend Lee and Matt for their contribution to agribusiness, for taking the initiative to improve their own business and for using the sources for business development that are now available.

MARK CONDI

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I was delighted to see Bankstown Sports Club announce at its Annual General Meeting on Monday 2 November, that it would appoint its CEO Mr Mark Condi as a Life Member of the Club in recognition of his lifelong service to the organisation. Since first joining the Club as a staff member at the age of 18, Mr Condi has served in a wide variety of roles, including as CEO for a number of years. In his time leading the organisation, Mr Condi has overseen the Club's continued growth, which now ranks the Club among New South Wales' top 10 registered clubs by membership. Mr Condi and the Board of Directors have played a pivotal role in supporting our local community, including financially backing many sporting and community groups. Mr Condi has also expertly guided the Club through the COVID-19 pandemic, including through its temporary forced closure, and its successful reopening. I congratulate Mr Condi on this well-deserved recognition, and commend him for his long-standing commitment and service towards the Bankstown Sports Club and the local community.

LACHLAN HYDE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I recognise the initiative and civil mindedness demonstrated by Mr Lachlan Hyde, a Community Advocate for South-Western Sydney who has put forward a proposal to upgrade and rename the Prospect Creek, to the Lennox River. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Hyde, together with my parliamentary colleagues Mr Guy Zangari and Mr Nick Lalich, on Tuesday 3 November at the Prospect Creek to discuss his proposal, which will soon be determined by the NSW Geographical Names Board. Mr Hyde has undertaken substantial research and work to support his proposal, including to demonstrate that the Prospect Creek meets the criteria associated with being a river rather than a creek, and to support his proposal that the new river be named after Mr David Lennox, a 19th century stonemason who designed and oversaw construction of the Lansdowne Bridge which crosses the waterway. I commend Mr Hyde's commitment and initiative in putting forward this proposal, which has my full support, and thank him for his efforts in consulting with the local community and key stakeholders in the development of this proposal.

SWANSEA RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB UNDER 15 MEN'S TEAM

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—I congratulate the Under 15's men's team of the Swansea rugby league club on their victory in this year's grand final. The team won the Hunter Valley Combined Division 2

competition prevailing 30 – 10 over Singleton. Making a grand final at any level is an achievement in itself but to win one is an outstanding effort. Rugby league is an institution in the region and we are extremely proud of the success of our local clubs. I would like to thank all the volunteers and parents for their work during a difficult season in supporting the club to keep the season going in challenging circumstances. Local sporting clubs like Swansea rugby league club are the lifeblood of our community. Congratulations boys on a fantastic season and I hope you enjoyed celebrating your grand final win.

BELMONT RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB UNDER 15 MEN'S TEAM

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—I congratulate the Under 15's men's team of the Belmont rugby league club on their victory in this year's grand final. The team won the Hunter Valley Combined Division 3 competition prevailing 16 – 4 over Kotara. Making a grand final at any level is an achievement in itself but to win one is an outstanding effort. Rugby league is an institution in the region and we are extremely proud of the success of our local clubs. I would like to thank all the volunteers and parents for their work during a difficult season in supporting the club to keep the season going in challenging circumstances. Local sporting clubs like Belmont rugby league club are the lifeblood of our community. Congratulations boys on a fantastic season and I hope you enjoyed celebrating your grand final win.

NEW LIFELINE BOOK SHOP

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury is a volunteer organisation in Gordon, in my electorate of Davidson, that has recently launched a new book store in Lindfield. Lifeline volunteers worked hard to set up the pop-up shop, which includes fiction, children's books, cooking and craft, as well as CDs and DVDs. This is part of a growing retail business operated by Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury which helps contribute to funding crisis support and suicide prevention services. It is located at the old Lindfield Bookshop site, so I am pleased that they are continuing its legacy. I commend Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury for promoting the importance of reading in my local community, and for providing vital crisis support services.

SAM DAYKIN APPOINTED TO YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—Young people are the leaders of the future, so I am pleased that Sam Daykin, from my electorate in St Ives, has been appointed to the NSW Youth Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Council enables young people to advise the NSW Government on issues relevant to them across the state. They consult with youth, community groups and government agencies on a range of issues. Sam, who is only 14 years old, plays sport, is involved in school committees and passionate about mental health, inequality and the environment. So his appointment to the council will highlight many of these important issues into the future. I congratulate Sam on his achievement, and commend him for his ongoing commitment to represent and support the wellbeing of young people.

A WALK OF JEWISH SYDNEY

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—Today I celebrate and recognise the work of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and the City of Sydney in developing and recently launching the 'A Walk of Jewish Sydney' app. Recently, over 80 guests attended the launch of the app by the Australian Jewish Historical Society at The Great Synagogue. The app is a wonderful recognition of the rich Jewish history of our city and will be a fantastic addition for use by interested locals and overseas visitors. The app covers 45 points of Jewish interest around the centre of Sydney and is a 2020 update of Helen Bersten's 1995 book Jewish Sydney – the First 100 years 1788-1888. Congratulations to the Australian Jewish Historical Society and the City of Sydney for sharing this rich history to a new generation.

ROOSTERS NRLW

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—Today I recognise an incredible season of Rugby League from the Rooster's NRLW side. The mighty Roosters had a fantastic season, playing strong attacking rugby throughout, eventually making it to the NRLW Grand final on October 25th. The tricolours had the majority of the possession and the territory in the first half but were unable to capitalise on their dominance, the Broncos turning the tables quickly to leap ahead 12-0. A comeback which included two spectacular tries to the Roosters saw them head into the halftime break down by just 12-10. Unfortunately, the Broncos were the better team in the second half, scored two further tries and winning the game 20-10. Congratulations to Captain Corban McGregor and to every player that pulled on the mighty red, white and blue this year as we strive to go one better in 2021. Up the Chooks!

ST JOHN AMBULANCE MACARTHUR AWARDS

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—Saving lives through first aid is what St John Ambulance volunteers do best. The Macarthur Division – stretching from the Cross Roads at Casula and south to the Southern Highlands – has 50 active and dedicated members. Its volunteers regularly provide health services

for Wollondilly and Camden Council area events – helping people in sickness, distress, suffering or danger. But it was the devastating bushfires in late 2019 where our local St John Ambulance volunteers really shone. Macarthur members responded to the urgent call for assistance when Tahmoor, Balmoral and surrounding areas were evacuated. St John volunteers worked at the Picton Fire Evacuation Centre 24/7, assisting evacuees with medical treatment, providing emotional support and ensuring evacuees had access to essential supplies. It was a surreal and frightening experience for all involved, and St John Ambulance volunteers are to be commended for their bravery, self-sacrifice and compassion in a crisis situation. Volunteers are our unsung heroes. I congratulate all of this year's St Johns Macarthur Division award recipients and give thanks on behalf of our community for their dedication and service to others.

ADAM STEVENSON PHOTOGRAPH

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I recognise Wallabi point resident Adam Stevenson who's amazing photograph of a Kookaburra surveying the devastating impacts of the bushfires in Saltwater. Adams photo garnered international attention used by publications such as Australian Geographic, National Geographic, ABC, BBC UK, NBC US, WWF, Greenpeace international and more. The photo has now been highly commended in the NSW resilient Australia photography award. Adam doesn't consider himself a photographer and says the photo was taken on his iPhone while walking with his family to assess damage three days after the fire tore through the region coming dangerously close to the Wallabi point village. Prints of the photograph were last year used to help raise \$35,000 at the 'Thank a Hero' fundraiser at Club Old Bar.

EMILIA TODD - BAG RECYCLING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I congratulate Forster, Holy Name student Emilia Todd who recently received a special Virtual Academy Personal Best Award from the Maitland-Newcastle Catholic Schools office. Emilia received the award for her project which investigated potential strategies to encourage tourists to dispose of their rubbish more thoughtfully. From the start Emilia approached the project with impressive planning strategies creating an online survey to understand more about the issue before using the gathered information to create an educated solution. Her solutions included a new key tag encouraging the use of the Return and Earn stations and a bag made using recycled materials to make holiday makers rubbish more portable. Emilia then used her graphic design and sewing skills to create a prototype of her ideas. All of this culminated with an impressive 16 minute video presentation of her project. I again congratulate Emilia for completely a thorough investigation into an issue in our community and finding a creative and innovative solution.

YOUTH SOLUTIONS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)—There are so many organisations and charities in Campbelltown that have an enormous impact on our community. One of those charities is Youth Solutions. The passionate and dedicated team at Youth Solutions focus on drug and alcohol prevention, as well as health promotion, among young people aged between 12 and 25. It is no easy task but it is one the team have fully embraced. Youth Solutions not only operates within the Macarthur region, where Campbelltown is located, it also stretches out into the Wingecarribee regions. The team at Youth Solutions do a tremendous job in reaching young people throughout both regions, despite the large footprint. It always helps when charities and organisations have a great leader and they certainly have that at Youth Solutions in Geraldine Dean, who joined the charity almost 20 years ago. I have been fortunate to know Geraldine for many years and I can attest to her passion and drive to see Youth Solutions – and our young community – thrive. Investing in our younger generations is critically important and that is something Youth Solutions have done, and continue to do. Thank you to the entire team and keep up the great work.

KERRIE GRAY

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I recognise the fantastic work of Kerrie Gray of Alstonville and applaud her selection as nominee on the Department of Primary Industry's Hidden Treasures Honour Roll for 2020. Kerrie has been a Red Cross volunteer for 40 years and an Emergency Services volunteer since mid-1981. From 2009 until October 2019, she was the Red Cross Zone Representative for two zones, supporting 13 branches. She has been an elected member of the Red Cross Divisional Advisory Board since 2017. In the community, Kerrie represents Red Cross Lifeblood: she is a 'Pillowcase' presenter delivering disaster preparation workshops to primary schoolchildren; she works with local councils, community organisations and State and Federal MPs; she is partnered with State Emergency Services, the Rural Fire Service and welfare agencies; she is a member of Sanctuary Northern Rivers, supporting migrant and refugee groups; she has a strong connection with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and has worked with members of the deaf community. During disasters such as last summer's bushfires, Kerrie worked more than a full-time job, supporting those affected in her community, liaising with volunteers, establishing evacuation centres and coordinating recovery efforts, including ongoing welfare.

BALLINA SEAGULLS RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I congratulate the Ballina Seagulls First Grade team and captain/coach Luke Douglas on winning the Northern Rivers Regional Rugby League A-Grade Gold competition grand final. The Seagulls won in a hard-fought match against Marist Brothers and had to dig deep to secure the victory. It was a great end of season for the Ballina club, which won three of the four premierships, including the U18s Reserves and A-Grade. Luke Douglas did an amazing job this year, and it reflects well upon the club that the great majority of its first grade squad came through from its juniors. In a time of Covid, it is pleasing to see clubs maintain their cohesion, motivation and standards of fitness, while working to ensure that players, spectators and supporters are kept safe.

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—My congratulations to St Mary's Catholic College, Gateshead, which took out top honours at the 2020 Lake Macquarie School Environment Awards. St Mary's was recognised for the school community's efforts in energy saving, waste reduction and improving the natural environment. Science teacher Katrina Piper said that students at St Mary's are "very aware of the environmental crisis that our planet faces," and that "participating in the Environmental Awards encourages them to be involved and make a difference from the ground up." I couldn't agree more. St Mary's has had a long-running Landcare group, who have gone above and beyond to rehabilitate the school's local environment. To all the teachers and students who have contributed to the Landcare group and its work over the years, I offer a heartfelt thanks—this kind of community-minded engagement is characteristic of my Electorate, and part of what makes me so proud to be the Member for Charlestown. Congratulations once again to Ms Piper, principal Larry Keating, the students and school community at St Mary's.

CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AWARD WINNERS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—I offer my congratulations to category winners of Lake Macquarie City Council's School Environment Awards in the Charlestown Electorate. The annual School Environment Awards showcase and recognise the innovative and inspiring sustainability projects happening at schools all around Lake Macquarie. Garden Suburb Public School took home the award in the Waste category, working hard to reduce, reuse and recycle. I applaud Principal Louise Dunn and the entire Garden Suburb Public community on their win. As much of our State faces prolonged drought, water saving has become more important than ever. Eleebana Public School won the Water category, and I congratulate Principal Lucinda Farrell and the school community. Finally, Hillsborough Public School won the Encouragement Award, and I wish Principal Cassie Bate-Barnier and her school all the best in future environmental endeavours.

GRIFFITH RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—I am privileged to recognise 100 years of Griffith Rugby League Club. The Griffith Rugby League Club, now known as Griffith Black and Whites, was formed at the beginning of 1921 football season. Members included representatives of the employees of the Irrigation Commission and farmers working in the Mirrool Soldier Settlers area. This would have been an exciting time for these players as this was the first year Rugby League was played in the Griffith end of the Mirrool area. The Club over time, has been fortunate to have many committed members of the Griffith Community take on the roles of Committee, Officers, Coaches or Sponsors. These people have provided the local young men, women and youths not only the opportunity to play Rugby League, but forge mateship and lifetime friendships with fellow players, Coaches and Committee members. The Club has enjoyed success, winning 12 First Grade Premierships in either Group 17 or Group 20 Competitions; 14 Reserve grade; 14 Under 18yrs; 5 Under 16yrs & 2 Women's League Tag Group 20 Premierships.

PATHOLOGY WORKERS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise International Pathology Day that will be celebrated on 11 November 2020. The acknowledgement of this day commenced in 2014 but it is of course particularly significant this year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, pathology workers have worked tirelessly, and in circumstances of potential danger in testing. There has been a great priority for testing in a timely and accurate manner. In many cases this is in addition to their normal tasks. As with others in the health system, they have performed above and beyond their normal duties. I am delighted to signal my support for the effort they've put into their work, most especially during this time of pandemic. It's a pleasure to acknowledge and celebrate pathology workers.

AUSTRALIAN PEACE ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise the Australian Peace Association, an organisation with members resident in the constituency that I represent. I recently met with representatives of the Association, including their President, Mohammad Al-Mossawi. These refugees are particularly concerned at the fate and future of refugees in Australia who arrived by boat. They have been here for at least 8 years. Many have been recognised as genuine refugees and cannot go anywhere else. For almost a decade they have been separated from families and relatives in their country of origin. This separation for such time has destroyed families and relationships. Some have formed relationships in this country and some are well established financially. Despite this they are not allowed to apply for partner visas. Their children, having been here for almost a decade, are not allowed to continue their tertiary education. They are living in limbo on temporary protection visas. The association is understandably quite concerned at what the future holds and hope for a path to emerge to lead to permanent residency.

DE LA SALLE CATHOLIC COLLEGE CRONULLA 2021 SCHOOL LEADERS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—I congratulate the newly elected school leaders for 2021 at De La Salle Catholic College Cronulla, one of the local high schools in the Cronulla electorate. Chloe Thomson and Finlay Lynch were recently elected as school captains, and Annabella Dorsman and Bailey Nicolai were elected as vice-captains. Student leadership provides a unique opportunity to grow and develop skills in public speaking, communication and leadership styles. These skills are not only important at school, but are crucial in the modern workplace too. I wish Chloe, Finlay, Annabella and Bailey all the best in their new leadership roles and studies into 2021. I recognise the outgoing school captains, Tom Hallett, Bailey Thomson, Ethan Fowler and Maya Hill. I congratulate them on their leadership in what has been a very challenging year and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I am thrilled to inform the House of the recent rise of football in our local community. Football is the world's largest sport and has united countries across the globe. This year, my son James began playing for Forest Rangers FC and has loved the experience. It has been great to see him learn new skills, make friends and use his energy on the field, rather than at home. Locally, participation numbers are on the rise. There are a range of clubs across all sections of our community, under the umbrella of the St George Football Association. The NSW Government has responded to this growth by providing assistance to local grassroots football clubs. I was delighted to recently announce funding for Lugarno Football Club, Glory Football Club Riverwood, Forest Rangers Football Club, Oatley Football Club and Peakhurst United Football Club. The money will go toward registration subsidies, equipment purchases, facility upgrades, skills workshops and much more. Many of the clubs have worked hard over many months for these upgrades. I would like to thank all those who are backing football locally. I am excited for what lies ahead!

SYDNEY HILLS BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—I take this opportunity to recognise all the businesses within my electorate of Castle Hill who were recently recognised at the Sydney Hills Business Awards. The evening is a wonderful opportunity to recognise the importance of small businesses throughout the Hills, who are struggling throughout this COVID-19 Pandemic, but benefitting from the NSW Government's COVID assistance grants, as well as fee waivers, tax help and other general assistance. My congratulations go to all the winners from the Castle Hill Electorate: Cheyena Lee from Quinn Care OSCH Our Lady of Lourdes Kellyville, Mal Cutler Smash Repairs, The Bakehouse North Kellyville, Australian Skin Clinics, The Hills Learning Centre, Foot Locker Rouse Hill, Bella Fiore Floral Designs, Lavish Hair and Beauty Bar, Inspired Spaces Design, Robert Cliff Master Jewellers, Coco Cubano, Pinot and Picasso, OSSO, BOSETTI, Versatile VA, Lena Kasparian and Flight Centre Castle Towers.

VALE LINDA CATERSON

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—It is with great sadness that I advise of the passing of Linda Caterson, a Hills Local for over 40 years who was well loved within the local community. She married Fred Caterson in 1944, who would go on to be a Hills Councillor for 35 years, also being the Member for the Hills for 15 of them. Linda was involved in local civic life in her own right however, founding the Castle Hill Children's Library and the Hills District Historical Society. Both the Catersons were also actively involved in their religious life, spending time at their local Church and never shying away from an opportunity to help someone, this could be seen in Linda's volunteering for Meals on Wheels for over 3 decades, as well as her commitment to the Castle Hill Girl Guides, where she would ultimately become a patron. Ms Caterson will be missed by all in the local

community, and is survived by her and Fred's 3 children; Ian, Robyn and Glenys, and their families. I wish them all the best.

2020 LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—The St George Local Business Awards is always a fantastic night that brings the community together to celebrate the outstanding work of local businesses and their staff. I would like to congratulate a few local businesses who received some well-deserved awards at the ceremony in early October 2020. I would like to make a special mention of Jayden Bitz of Jumbuck Meats Gourmet Butchery in Oatley who won the youth award; Diana's Pharmacy in Mortdale who won best pharmacy; Nara Lounge in Hurstville for best family restaurant; F'coffee in Mortdale for best employer new business, Bridge Street Kids Early Learning Centre in Hurstville for best education service; Piccolo Cannoli Bar in South Hurstville for best bakery/cake shop; Hurstville Physio Plus for best health improvement service; Douggie's Grill in Hurstville for most inclusive employer; Kumon Hurstville Education Centre for best education service; Sunnyhaven Disability Services in Kogarah for best community service; and Forecast Clothing in Westfield Hurstville for best women's fashion store. These are all fantastic achievements and I can vouch that each and every business is worthy of their respective awards. Well done everyone!

ADRIANA CARE

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I congratulate Adriana Care for having been successful at the 2020 election as an elected councillor of the Law Society of New South Wales. The NSW Law Society is a professional association which represents over 29,000 solicitors in New South Wales and around Australia. The Law Society regulated the practice of law within the state of New South Wales and I was pleased to see a well-known figure within Camden and the Macarthur area's legal community be elected to such a prestigious role. Adriana, who is the director and managing partner of Coutts Lawyers and Conveyancers has often been highly commended throughout her career for advancing women in law via her leadership and commitment to creating more opportunities within the workplace and throughout the local community. Adriana, who is a current councillor of the Law Society, was very deserving of this role and I again commend her and the role that she plays in Camden and beyond.

PLIVATI SWIMWEAR

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I have frequently been proud to inform the house of successes from within Camden's vibrant and energetic business community. PLIVATI swimwear is but another of these wonderful stories and a fantastic example of a Camden business going global. PLIVATI in Croatian translates to 'swim' in English and the brand was only launched last year by Julianne Bobanovic. PLIVATI was recently featured on the runway of the DC Swim Week. It was the only Australian brand featured this year. This is a fantastic achievement for this wonderful Camden business and I wish Julianne and the team at PLIVATI continued successes on the global scale.

MENTAL HEALTH FORUM, LISMORE ELECTORATE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—THE COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted on many Northern Rivers residents' mental health and well-being so my Mental Health Forum in Lismore last week was an opportune time to listen to frontline services. My special guest was NSW Shadow Minister for Mental Health Tara Moriarty MLC. More than 20 key stakeholders focussed on rural and regional service delivery. I thank local organisations for doing such an extraordinary job supporting the community during the pandemic, and floods, drought and bushfires. I was delighted to take Tara to visit Headspace Lismore. I was instrumental in securing the facility when I was Federal Member for Page. We met with Program Manager Kerri Shaw, Senior Manager Youth & Health Steve Dowker and Clinical Team Leader Terri Connor. We visited Grow Northern Rivers and met with Regional Manager David McLachlan and his team. Grow is an established and successful community-based organisation which supports people with mental illness with their recovery. Congratulations also to the Rotary Club of Summerland Sunrise for recently hosting a 'Lift the Lid on Mental Health' awareness breakfast at Slate Café in Lismore's Quad, which raised \$500 going to Australian Rotary Health for research into mental health.

REOPENING OF REFURBISHED LISMORE LIBRARY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Last week, I joined Librarian Lucy Kinsley and Lismore City Deputy Mayor Cr Neil Marks for the reopening of the Lismore Library after a \$198,000 refurbishment funded by the NSW Government, the State Library of New South Wales and Council. Main features of the refurbishment include an automated returns chute, replacing shelves from the mid-1970s, hydraulic desks to better serve children and those in a wheelchair, new seating and carpets, repainting all internal walls and internal signage. We caught up with Bexhill mum Fiona Berry and her son Oscar, 3, who were reading books in the new kids' castle on the upper level. Libraries are much more than places where we go to read and borrow books or e-books; they provide

a range of services to the community, helping people learn new technology and offering a welcoming place, where we can feel at home. I want to pay special tribute to Lucy Kinsley, who has worked for Lismore City Council for 42 years and has been our Librarian since 1988. Lucy is the face of Lismore Library and she and her staff provide a wonderful community service, in person and online, bridging the digital divide.

CAPTAIN MICHAEL KELLY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—I congratulate Captain Michael Kelly who is the recipient of the Dempsey Medal, recognising his contribution to the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. Michael is a Port Authority of NSW marine pilot. A part of his role as a marine pilot is to fly out to sea and help guide large ships safely into a busy Sydney Harbour and Port Botany. Michael has worked closely with the Stella Maris Catholic chaplaincy for seafarers for the past 5 years. Michael packs thousands of Christmas hampers and personal care packs for seafarers who spend months at a time at sea. Inside the care packs include items such as toothpaste, deodorants, razors and chocolates. Michael, his wife Belinda and his children, Thomas and Ashleigh, all pack the hampers together. To date, over 10,000 care packs have been provided to seafarers.

NAIDOC WEEK: ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—This year's NAIDOC week acknowledges that the lands on which Australia is built always were and always will be, Aboriginal land. NAIDOC week reminds us just how much more we need to do to tackle systemic racism and that the work of reconciliation must begin with acknowledging First Nations sovereignty. Schools across the Summer Hill electorate are marking NAIDOC week and later this week, local elders at Marrickville Golf Course will unveil a mural honouring the enduring culture and sovereignty of the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation. This NAIDOC Week, I acknowledge the important work of Indigenous organisations in the electorate. The Aboriginal Women and Children's Services provides vital support to Indigenous women fleeing domestic or family violence. Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre provides community legal services. Innari Housing Inc helps indigenous people experiencing homelessness get back on their feet and find permanent housing, and AbSec is tackling the disproportionate rate of indigenous kids in the state's out of home care system, and fights to keep kids in their community. I acknowledge and thank you for your important work and support you in your fight for justice and recognition.

RED RATTLER

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—The Red Rattler Theatre, a queer arts collective in Marrickville, has been an iconic, welcoming and eclectic space for artists and the LGBTIQ+ community since 2009. Set up by a collective of 5 queer artists, the Red Rattler offers artist in residency programs, volunteer programs, and a safe and immersive space for the LGBTIQ+ and other vulnerable communities. Along with so many other inner west arts venues, COVID 19 has had a devastating impact on the theatre. However, the Red Rattler quickly adapted, hosting virtual DJ sets allowing patrons to dance the night away from the comfort of their living rooms and providing space and programs for artists to keep safely practicing throughout the lockdown. With restrictions now easing, the Red Rattler is once again welcoming audiences back, but needs urgent support from the community and from the Government. I congratulate the artists, staff, and patrons for their ongoing support of the Red Rattler and call on the NSW Government to support our local arts venues and stages, particularly those like the Red Rattler that serve as a home away from home for marginalised communities.

GAYLE DUNN

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)—Following the death of Ulladulla's Craig Dunn and Danny Lewis, Gayle Dunn decided to turn tragedy into triumph, creating the Dunn and Lewis Memorial Centre to help serve her local community, especially young people. Eighteen years on from that heartbreaking loss, the centre has just opened a 600 seat auditorium, which not only provides a wonderful place for the local community, but will provide job and training opportunities. Along with Gayle, who is President and Founder of the Dunn and Lewis Youth Development Foundation, I also want to give special mention Chairman Kevin Whitford, and to the Board Directors Greg Best, Barry Penfold, and Lexi Meyer. I cannot speak highly enough of the wonderful place that the community has created at the Dunn and Lewis Centre. Not just in the bricks and mortar facilities, but the programs which give opportunities to young people. Thank you Gayle, and congratulations to everyone involved in this very special part of the South Coast.

WESTERN SYDNEY CYCLING NETWORK INC.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I take this opportunity to commend the work of Joe Farrugia and the Western Sydney Cycling Network Inc. Situated in the Fairfield City Showground this network and its members enjoy riding the local bike paths in and around Fairfield and having coffee together afterwards. They also repair and recycle bikes so that the local community has access to a bike if they want to join in and cycle around the

neighbourhood. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a resurgence in the popularity of bike riding and we are fortunate to have a service available to us through the Western Sydney Cycling Network Inc. They are a non-profit community based cycling group, affiliated with both Cycling NSW and Bicycle NSW and their aims are to educate and promote cycling, to provide a bicycle recycling service for the local community and to encourage a social and healthy lifestyle. Thank you to the Western Sydney Cycling Network Inc. for providing such a valuable service to our community and encouraging the people of Fairfield to get exercising and at the same time use a sustainable form of transport.

RACHEL ARTHUR

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I congratulate Ms Rachel Arthur, vet nurse at the Fairfield Road Veterinary Hospital in Guildford West and winner of a Rescue Award 2020 in the inaugural category of Drontal Foster Carer Story. Rachel started her foster journey at the Sydney Dogs and Cats Home three years ago and became committed to her passion for animals when she fostered Sass, a tiny kitten who needed her help and who survived against all odds due to Rachel's care, eventually going to a permanent adoptive home. This led Rachel to turn to a career in caring for animals by training at TAFE to be a vet nurse. Her entry and ultimate win in the competition to the tune of \$2,000 in prizes will assist Rachel to look after the 18 cats she currently has in her care and prepare for more kittens coming soon. In all, Rachel has fostered 100 cats and has dreams of setting up a foster care program that recruits carers living with mental illness. The care of animals is a noble act and I commend Rachel Arthur for her work and dedication, and congratulate her once again on her win.

RONNIE PEEL

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—It is with sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Wakefield resident, Australian singer and musician Ronnie Peel, also remembered by some as Rockwell T James. Ronnie was a bassist well known for his solo 1977 Top 40 hit Roxanne, his work in the La De Das and with the John Paul Young Allstars. His music career took off in the mid-60s with R&B band The Missing Links. From there he travelled to London and joined Thunderclap Newman which recorded the 1969 hit Something in the Air. But more than his musical feats, Ronnie was simply a truly decent bloke who loved entertaining and a good yarn. He was a well-known, well-liked and well-respected member of his community which will farewell him at a memorial service today. I first met him when he sought my help over the operations of an open-cut mine near his small rural community. He was passionate about such matters and I was pleased to help him as best I could. Ronnie will be greatly missed by his family and friends, and I extend to them my sympathies and wish them all the best. Vale Ronnie Peel.

AUDREY KOOSMEN

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I am honoured to acknowledge the monumental work of Audrey Koosmen from Blackalls Park who is a truly remarkable woman and a genuine local hero. Audrey is the current president and founder of Hunter Wildlife Rescue, also known as the Native Animal Trust Fund. For the past 56 years, Audrey has dedicated her life and time as a wildlife volunteer. From providing around-the-clock feeds to orphaned animals such as kangaroos, possums and koalas through to fighting to conserve hectares of habitat and co-ordinating mass rescue events, to overseeing the creation of the education centre at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, it's fair to say she's personally responsible for the survival of a countless number of wild lives. In the bushfires earlier this year and at the age of 73, she co-ordinated more than 80 responders over three months who searched and rescued injured and heat-stressed wildlife on fire grounds. She also coordinated a feeding project in the fire ground to ensure that hundreds of starving native animals were fed. Caring for wildlife and fighting for habitat conservation is a lifelong passion for Audrey and she deserves the very highest recognition for her efforts.

TEMORA'S EDEN ENGINEERING

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I acknowledge Eden Flack, owner of Eden's Engineering which has been named a finalist in the 'Let's Roll' category of the Australian Business Awards. Eden's Engineering was established in 2002 and specialises in machining, fabrications and welding. The Temora business initially relied on local agribusinesses for support but online marketing opened up national opportunities. The 'Let's Roll' Australian Business Awards support businesses that make a difference to people's lives through passion, innovation and this year have persevered through COVID-19 constraints. Congratulations and well done Eden and Eden's Engineering for being recognised with this significant award, hopefully it makes all the long hours and hard work worth it.

ELAINE ROBERTS - GRANDPARENT OF THE YEAR

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)—It was my pleasure to announce busy volunteer and proud community leader, Mrs Elaine Roberts, as the 2020 Grandparent of the Year for the Wallsend electorate. Elaine was nominated by the community as a way to recognise and celebrate the amazing contribution she has made to

her families and society with her tireless volunteer work. She is a Wallsend local who has spent her years not only raising her own children, but also looking after her grandchildren, great grandchildren & great great grandchildren. She still continues her community work and remains a volunteer at Wallsend Public School where she does canteen duty every week. Grandparents like Elaine help make communities stronger with their energy and commitment and I was so happy to present her with this award. At 84 years of age, many of us would like to take some time to put our feet up and relax but Elaine is still an active member and volunteer in our community. Everybody knows Elaine as Nan. All the school kids call her Nan, as do the teachers. She is truly an inspiration to everyone she meets.

MELANIE HOWARD

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Wallsend has had its fair share of sporting champions, and now we have our very own NRL Women's superstar. Melanie Howard, or Howie as she is known to friends, pulled on the boots again this year, this time for the Sydney Roosters NRL Women's team. Melanie was part of the Central Coast Roosters team in the NSW Women's Premiership. The team took out the Minor Premiership and went on to win the Grand Final 16-10 over the North Sydney Bears. This was back to back Premierships for Melanie who also won in 2019 with the CRL Newcastle team. Following that success, Melanie then went on to steer the Sydney Roosters NRL Women's team in to the NRLW Grand Final where, despite scoring a superb solo try, they went down to the Brisbane Broncos 24-16. Melanie topped off a successful 2020 by having a burger, The Big Malonie, named in her honour by local café, Drop In Espresso Bar. She also gained selection in the NSW Women's State of Origin side. Congratulations Melanie. Good luck in the upcoming State of Origin series. I know you will continue to do us proud.

HEPATITIS NSW

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Hepatitis NSW is a state-wide, not-for-profit charity created with the aim to increase awareness and knowledge amongst viral hepatitis affected communities and increase access to healthcare services for those affected by viral hepatitis. The ultimate goal of Hepatitis NSW is to work towards a world free of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. Hepatitis NSW works with the NSW Ministry of Health, Local Health Districts, Primary Health Networks and the Pharmaceutical Industry to disseminate knowledge throughout priority populations and enable equitable access to services for marginalised people. Hepatitis NSW also focuses on providing non-judgemental services that are free from stigma and discrimination. The work of Hepatitis NSW is essential, as left unnoticed and untreated, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C can lead to devastating health consequences. In South West Sydney alone, there are approximately 13,300 people living with Hepatitis B. The more aware our society is of viral hepatitis, the more likely people are to be tested, bringing about appropriate treatment and preventing transmission. I would like to thank Mr Steven Drew, CEO, Hepatitis NSW and his dedicated team, for the great work they do in raising awareness and increasing resources for our community.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Settlement Services International [SSI] is a community organisation and social business that supports the most vulnerable in our society. Settlement Services International strives to achieve a society which values diversity by providing social and economic support, allowing individuals and families to reach their full potential. Those supported by Settlement Services International include refugees, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people seeking asylum. Settlement Services International provides a myriad of support services and programs including Status Resolution Support Services, Arts and Culture Programs, Community Engagement, Programs designed to combat domestic violence, Employment opportunities including disability employment services and refugee employment services, youth collective and programs designed for parents. The work of Settlement Services International is incredibly important, especially in the State Electorate of Prospect which is blessed to be home to a diverse range of cultures and languages. This year Settlement Services International celebrates their 20th anniversary. I would like to thank and congratulate the hard working team at Settlement Services International for serving and advocating for our marginalised communities for the past 20 years. Thank you Violet Roumeliotis, CEO, and the team at Settlement Services International for combatting inequality and making a meaningful and substantial impact on many lives.

DAVID MAILLER UNE ALUMNI AWARDS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise Mr David Mailer as one of 13 University of New England 2020 Alumni Award recipients who demonstrates the University's values of community engagement, respect, inclusion and integrity. Mr Mailer, co-founder of Meralli Solar, has been acclaimed for his innovation in the development of commercial solar farms. His influence in the venture of sustainable energy has made possible an enterprise that sits alongside with agriculture and empowers rural and regional economic development and sustainability. Some of the attributes of

Mr Mailler's concept include low visual impact, unmatched installation times, simplified technology reducing cost and complexity with innovations using DC technology and battery storage to maximise the delivery and consistency of power to the grid. I commend Mr David Mailler for his contribution to Australian business in economic benefits, social values and environmental sustainability.

AUTHOR DAVID CONWAY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise Mr David Conway, budding author, who has turned the problems of crippling drought into a project giving purpose and humour. David has written his first book entitled *Eric the Echidna*, a children's book that will delight adults, and it all came about from his wife's garden amid acres of arid paddocks. First came the thirsty and hungry wildlife, then came the stories. Mr Conway is close to retirement and had no experience writing or understanding the pathway to self-publishing. However, rather than succumb to the misery of drought, he took the advice of friends and family and turned his observations into an amusing story. I congratulate David for his enterprising venture. He turned a difficult time into something positive and has brought cheer to many people along the way. Thank you David for your courage and optimism.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH AT DUNLEA CENTRE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—I draw the attention of the House to my recent visit to the Dunlea Centre for their Mental Health Month presentation and mindful morning tea. I was pleased to be a part of the celebrations and on the day a well-orchestrated drone shot was taken. Dunlea's young people and staff wore white 'Mental Health Month October' T-shirts and stood on the oval to make the Mental Health Month acronym. The shots turned out great and I'm sure we will see them on a Mental Health Month campaign! Mental Health Month is celebrated every October and throughout the month, Dunlea hosted a raft of events with the aim to increase awareness of mental health issues and reduce stigma. These included inviting former NRL player Beau Champion and Australian cricketer Moises Henriques to discuss mental health, as well as launching a new podcast 'Tune in With Dunlea' and Executive Director Paul Mastronardi conducting mindfulness activities for Dunlea's young people. It was fantastic to see the young people and staff at Dunlea so engaged with this important initiative and I commend them for their efforts with promoting and participating in this great initiative.

INVESTING IN WOMEN PROGRAM 2020

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I am pleased to recognise Wentworth Community Housing for receiving a \$50,000 grant from the New South Wales Government last month. The grant is part of the 2020 Investing in Women funding program organised by the New South Wales Minister for Mental Health, Women and Regional Youth, the Honourable Bronnie Taylor MLC. Wentworth Community Housing assists with affordable and social housing and homelessness support for those in need across Western Sydney and in the Seven Hills Electorate, particularly at Lalor Park, Seven Hills and Toongabbie. Wentworth Community Housing seeks to support women who need additional assistance and services. I recognise the workers of Wentworth Community Housing and those of other organisations which continue to dedicate their time and resources to helping those in need in Lalor Park, Seven Hills and Toongabbie and I know locals are always thankful of these organisations' support. I thank Wentworth Community Housing for their support of women in the Seven Hills Electorate and note the New South Wales Government grant will further this great, local organisation's capacity to support women of all ages to access housing services across Blacktown, Hawkesbury and Penrith local government areas.

SEVEN HILLS-TOONGABBIE YOUTH CLUB

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I recognise the Seven Hills-Toongabbie Youth Club on Best Road, Seven Hills. The Youth Club is a fantastic facility for young people and holds regular educational, sporting and community events. The Club was established on the grounds of The Hills Sports High School in concert with the Seven Hills Group which operates the nearby Seven Hills-Toongabbie Returned Services League club. The Youth Club's facilities are used by the school for educational and sporting events during the day and the wider community at night for sports and local area and family occasions. The Youth Club has many regular activities for locals including aikido, ballroom dancing, gymnastics, jazz ballet, judo and swimming. The venue is also the host of regular seniors' day club events organised by the RSL. I thank the Seven Hill-Toongabbie RSL members and the Seven Hills-Toongabbie Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch for their on-going support of the Youth Club and local schools and hospitals with their year round fundraising efforts.

NEIL CROMARTY AND PETER HARVEY RECEIVE RSL LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—Almost a century of combined service to the Returned and Services League of Australia was celebrated in October when two of Maitland's best-loved Veterans were honoured with life membership of the RSL. Acting State President of RSL NSW, Ray James OAM, presented life membership certificates to Neil Cromarty and Peter Harvey in recognition of their service to the League and to

the Veteran Community. Peter has been a member of the RSL for more than 50 years and is a former sub-Branch President and Vice President. Since 2011, he has been the Honorary Curator of the East Maitland War Cemetery, which the sub-Branch maintains on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Neil has been a member of the RSL for more than 40 years. He has been the sub-Branch Secretary since 1997, a period of over 23 years, and is also the Welfare Officer. Neil's efforts have been fundamental to the successful operation of the sub-Branch on many levels; one being his commitment to the planning of and preparation for ANZAC and Remembrance Day Services. I acknowledge, and thank you both, for your service.

CONGRATULATIONS SHARRON THOMAS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I congratulate Sharron Thomas, who has been named a finalist in the rural category of the 2020 Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards. This year a record number of nominations were received and I understand that judges faced a huge challenge compiling their short lists in each category. Sharron owns the Mother Goose Day Nursery, in Bolwarra. She has now chosen to cut back to three days per week to ensure she has the availability and flexibility to meet the needs of the four children in her care at home – three long-term foster children aged 16, 15 and 2, and her own son, who is 12. Sharron also has three grown sons and during the past three years has provided foster care to eight children aged from infancy to 8 years. In addition to this mammoth commitment to mothering and caregiving, Sharron is renowned for collecting cans and raising funds for families in need at Christmas, and connecting families with service providers to ensure their access to support. Sharron comes from a family that has always contributed to the community, and Maitland is grateful that she continues that tradition. Good luck in the Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards.

DAVID CRAWFORD

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate I thank David Crawford for his service and care to people living with HIV in NSW. I understand that David's retirement is the culmination of a 30 year career advocating for people living with HIV and the LGBTIQ+ communities at large. Upon receiving a positive diagnosis in 1984, I understand David began studying for a nursing degree and in 1989 he began his career at St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst. David continued working at St Vincent's Hospital as a registered nurse and Nursing Unit Manager until 2009 when he took on the Treatments Officer role at Positive Life. I understand David leaves a significant legacy reviving and strengthening that role and that he will be greatly missed. The community has benefited from his unique contribution, both as a registered nurse and a peer, championing the interests of people living with HIV. David was recognised with the inaugural HIV Hero award in 2018 as having been on the frontline of the response since the early days of the epidemic. I thank David for his commitment to the community and I wish him well in post-retirement life and his next endeavours.

AUSTRALIAN PARENTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to record the inspiring work of Australian Parents for Climate Action (ACP4CA). This volunteer group of parents, grandparents and carers of children work together to address their serious concern about climate change, with a clear focus on the safety and survival of their children. They inform and support parents to discuss and educate kids about climate change. They identify practical action that will reduce emissions and they lobby decision makers for changes to laws, policies and practices that will prevent climate change. ACP4CA currently has a campaign to get solar in all schools, childcare centres and preschools, which they show saves money and reduces emissions, while also providing an economic boost to help recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also a great teaching tool for students to learn about clean energy and how we can all take action to prevent climate emergency. I commend the positive contribution of ACP4CA to and thank them for their work to make sure there is a liveable future for all children.

ROGER FRENCH

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I acknowledge Wallacia resident, Roger French who I have had the pleasure of knowing for many years. Roger recently completed his 46th City2Surf run in October at the age of 80 years old. Roger participated in the very first City2Surf run in 1971 and has continued to participate almost every year since. This year's race did look slightly different due to COVID-19, with individual entrants downloading an app that tracked their progress as they ran a 14km course of their choosing. Roger did several laps of the Bridge to Bridge walk in Penrith and Emu Plains and finished with a very creditable time of 111 minutes and 52 seconds with a preliminary placing of 4th out of the 29 runners over 80 who finished. Roger is highly involved in his local community and is the Health Director of the Natural Health Society of Australia, a not for profit organisation that is celebrating its 60th Anniversary and focuses on teaching others how to lead a healthy life through a healthy diet, rest and relaxation and regular outdoor activity. Congratulations Roger on this achievement, you are an inspiration!

JODI MAHER

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I congratulate Glenmore Park resident, Jodi Maher who is launching her new book 'An IVF Miracle from Mahers, by J A Maher' this month on 16th November 2020. This book describes Jodi's memoir as an intimate reflection of her journey to becoming a mother after eleven rounds of IVF treatment. Through her writing Jodi hopes to connect with other families who have been through similar situations and encourage them in their experience by sharing her story and the story of four other brave women. I acknowledge the thousands of families that have had difficulties starting a family and congratulate Jodi on bringing awareness to this important topic and starting the conversation of the positive and negative emotional journey that comes with IVF treatment. Well done Jodi on this outstanding achievement, I wish your official book launch all the best.

GEORGIA FOLEY - NARRABRI RESIDENT

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Narrabri resident Georgia Foley was recently awarded the Special Award for a Woman in a Non-Traditional Trade or Vocation and was a finalist for the NSW Apprentice of the Year Award. Georgia took out the Apprentice of the Year Award at the New England Regional Training Awards in June. She started her electrical apprenticeship with Whitehaven Coal and received the Bert Evans Apprentice Scholarship, which helped ease the financial burden and assisted her to purchase tools for her kit. I congratulate Georgia on this achievement and for providing young people - especially women - with a strong role model in our region.

OLWYN CAMPEY - NARRABRI VIEW CLUB MEMBER

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Narrabri VIEW Club member, Olwyn Campey, was presented with her 30-year service pin at their first meeting since COVID-19 forced the cancellation of all social gatherings for the club. Olwyn first joined VIEW in 1990 when she lived at Red Rock and a new club was started there. She later transferred to Woolgoolga and then to Narrabri in 2016, where she was elected as a VIEW delegate. Narrabri VIEW club is currently supporting one primary school student and has just finished supporting another student through to her graduation from university. I thank Olwyn for her service to the Narrabri community through the VIEW club.

COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)—I congratulate Blacktown City Council for winning the 2020 Community Based Initiative of the Year Award, for their "Great West Walk" campaign. The Great West Walk is a 65 kilometre long walking track that ranges from Parramatta CBD, to Penrith CBD. The trail was initially mapped by the Walking Volunteers Organisation, with help from Blacktown City Council, Parramatta City Council, Penrith City Council, Western Sydney Parklands and the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. The walk passes through a wide range of landscapes, from urban shopping centres to woodland parks and river sides, taking in many notable landmarks, such as the Neoblie Historic Cottage in Rooty Hill, the Federation Forest, and the ANZAC centenary Walk. It took a tremendous amount of joint effort and commitment from multiple Councils and organisations to complete this project. I would like to commend everyone involved, and in particular Blacktown City Council on this well-deserved award, and for providing an extremely pleasant and healthy experience to our local community.

MOSMAN ROTARY RECEIVES GOLD CITATION

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—The Rotary Club of Mosman was formed over 55 years ago and members contribute their time, energy and passion to sustainable long-term projects both locally and across the globe. I am pleased to say this dedication has been acknowledged with Mosman Rotary receiving a Gold Citation Award for its support for community projects. The Club is only one of 17 in the 74-club local district to receive a citation, and only one of 6 to have achieved gold status. Each project that Mosman Rotary supports has its own humanitarian aims, but central to all is the desire to make the world a better place. I congratulate the members of Mosman Rotary for being recognised for your achievements. Former Rotary District Governor Kalma McLellan presented the award to former Mosman Rotary Club President Graeme Robinson in September, during Rotary's first in-person picnic since the pandemic started. I would also like to acknowledge the current club president Richard Vahtrick, the committee and all the members from Mosman Rotary.

TANI RUCKLE RECOGNISED AS BEST PERSONAL TRAINER

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Today I acknowledge the incredible achievements of Tani Ruckle, a Mosman resident who has been recognised among the best personal trainers of Northern Sydney for 2020. Tani rose to prominence in 1988 when she competed in the Women's World 15km Championships and was named Australian Marathon Champion. In 1990 she went on to win a silver medal for Australia at the Auckland

Commonwealth Games, and represented Australia again in the 1994 Victoria Commonwealth Games. Across her sporting career, she has competed in a range of community events Australia wide, and won over fifty road races. For the last twenty years Tani has been working in the fitness industry as a personal trainer and group fitness instructor locally at Fitness First in Mosman. Alongside training sessions, Tani works as an ambassador for StreetWork, which focuses on keeping youth off the streets of the North Shore and Northern Beaches. Congratulations Tani on being recognised as one of the best personal trainers of Northern Sydney for 2020.

MONICA AND NATALIE PETTITT

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—I congratulate Monica and Natalie Pettitt who have been taking the softball diamond by storm. The sisters, who attend Asquith Girls High School, are not only amazing players but get behind the plate to umpire as well. Monica has represented NSW in the PSSA Girls Softball team in 2016. She was also in the 2019 Australian team for the International Friendship Series where she was awarded the best female batter award. Earlier this year she represented NSW in the Under 16s State Women's team. She was selected to play in the NSW Combined High Schools Blue Team, the NSW All School Girls team and the 2020 International Friendship Series. Due to COVID-19 some tournaments were cancelled but the girls are back coaching, playing and umpiring the summer season. Her sister Natalie played earlier this year in the NSW Orange team as well as the U15 Regionals in Perth. She umpired for the NSW Combined High School Team, which lead to her selection as an umpire for the NSW All School Girls Team. I have no doubt these sisters star will continue to rise and do not only Hornsby but our State proud.

MIKE SOUTHAM

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—I congratulate Mike Southam for his 40 years of service to the Berowra Branch Library. Mike began working at the Berowra Branch Library as a librarian when it first opened in 1980. The library was opened as part of the \$1 million Berowra Community Centre complex which is located in Gully Road in Berowra. More than 450 people attended the official opening and since that time it has been an important fixture for the local community. Since the opening, Mike has always welcomed Berowra customers with his friendly and helpful personality. In fact, many of the kids who would visit the library in the 80s and 90s are now bring their kids in to meet Mike and use the library. He has been the face of the Berowra Library for the past 40 years, and it would not be the same without him. I would like to congratulate and commend Mike for his outstanding service to the Berowra community.

COMO JANNALI JUNIOR CRICKET CLUB

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—Cricket is back and so is the wonderful Como Jannali Junior Cricket Club. With roots tracing back to 1961 with the formation of Jannali Cricket Club, the 1990 amalgamation with Como Cricket Club formed an organisation that would go on to win the Sutherland Shire Junior Cricket Association Club Championship on four occasions. Como Jannali Junior Cricket Club caters to cricketers of all levels, with a strong focus on enjoying the game of cricket while developing their skills. In this current season, the club has grown to register 122 local children including a girls only team in the under 13s competition of which they are incredibly proud. I commend the hard working executive team who volunteer their time to oversee the continued success of Como Jannali Junior Cricket Club. I recognise President Jason Felice, Secretary Brad Abrook, Treasurer Geoff Fitzgerald, Club Couch Terry Spyrides, COVID-19 and Child Safety Officer Rodd Staples and Registrar Jeremy Hill. I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for the rest of the season to all at Como Jannali Junior Cricket Club.

SYLVANIA BOWLING CLUB

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Sylvania Bowling Club, a small club with a big presence in our community. Established in 1955, Sylvania Bowling Club is a favourite amongst locals for barefoot bowls, special events, food, drink and weekly meat and seafood raffles. Whilst COVID-19 presented new challenges for clubs across the state, Sylvania Bowling Club took the opportunity to undergo works around the facility and reopen bigger and better than before. I recently visited the club to see its impressive new solar panel system, funded with \$38,500 from the NSW Government's 2019 Community Building Partnership Program. This new system is not only providing a source of renewable energy but reducing electricity costs for the club. I take this opportunity to recognise the recently elected office bearers for 2020-2021, including President Ray George, Vice President Andrew Jones, Secretary Keith Howell, Treasurer Tony Robins, Women's President Kay Makin, Women's Vice President Robyn Mackenzie, Women's Secretary Mary Kaft, Women's Treasurer Margaret Kent, Rod Green and Alan Wick. I thank the members of Sylvania Bowling Club for their hospitality and look forward to visiting again soon with Santa.

CHIPPING NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOL SMITH FAMILY APPEAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—I commend Chipping Norton Public School for taking part in the Smith Family appeal. The Student Representative Council have decided to host a gift collection for The Smith Family charity in the lead up to the festive season. This gift collection is in support of The Smith Family's Toy and Book Appeal. It is incredible to see Chipping Norton Public School's leaders come up with this thoughtful initiative that encourages the school community to support young children in need this upcoming Christmas season. The gift collection encourages families to donate toys and books for children aged between 6 and 12 years of age. These donations will help spread joy at what can be a difficult time for vulnerable families in our local community. Mr Speaker once again, I would like to commend Chipping Norton Public School and their SRC Team for this wonderful initiative that will go towards a supporting worthy cause, especially after a trying year. Thank you.

ST CHRISTOPHER'S YEAR SIX CLASS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—I recently had the opportunity to visit the Year Six students at St Christopher's Primary School Holsworthy, to talk about the NSW Government and Parliamentary system. I was warmly welcomed by these students and we discussed politics, levels of Government and my own personal journey as a politician. I was so pleased to be asked so many great questions by the students. They were interested in my role in the local area but also had many other insightful questions related to both State and Federal Governments. It was great to see these Year Six students taking a keen interest in our local environment and I was able to advise them of initiatives that the NSW Government is doing to help protect and preserve it – including the creation of the Georges River Koala Reserve. Once again Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the staff and Year Six students at St Christopher's for inviting me to come speak with them - I thoroughly enjoyed the discussion we had!

PHYSICAL DISABILITY COUNCIL OF NSW

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Our communities are a better place when everyone is included and empowered. Today, I draw to the attention of the house the Physical Disability Council of NSW for their remarkable advocacy for people with physical disability in the Balmain Electorate and across NSW. PDCN is powered by majority of people with physical disability who are leading change in our communities. They focus on both systemic advocacy to remove barriers and discrimination to people with disabilities, as well as educating the broader community on access and inclusion, and empowering people with physical disability to speak up for themselves. PDCN remind us all that 'disability' is as much about society's failure to create inclusive environments as it is about a person's specific disability. I would like to particularly acknowledge policy officers Hayley Stone and Alice Dixon Wilmshurst for their recent work to improve accessible public transport, housing and healthcare. I would also like to acknowledge Serena Ovens, CEO and the volunteer board which is led by Chris Sparks, President and Simone Stanford, Treasurer. I know I speak for everyone in our community when I sincerely thank PDCN for all their efforts to make our community more inclusive.

NAIDOC WEEK

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I recognise NAIDOC week and the wonderful celebrations the diverse history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples which are occurring across the Balmain Electorate this week. The Balmain Electorate is on the land of the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation. It always was and always will be. NAIDOC week reminds us that while this is a time to celebrate that Australia is home to the oldest continuing cultures on the planet, we also must recognise that First Nations' sovereignty was never ceded. Every week of every year must be dedicated to First Nations' justice. I would particularly like to acknowledge all the wonderful organisations that have been leading change in the Balmain Electorate including Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, Tranby College, Strong Mothers and Gunawirra. On behalf of the Balmain Electorate, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we call home, pay my respects to elders past and present, and wish everyone a happy NAIDOC week.

WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE AND MUSEUM

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—I acknowledge the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum for the important role it plays in preserving and promoting the unique history of the Wollondilly Shire. A repository for archives and records relating to the early development of the villages in the Shire, it incorporates these objects in its exhibitions to outline stories from the early pioneers of the area. The collection includes extensive photographic records, indigenous artefacts, and local family history documents to help showcase the stories of our area's early pioneers. The Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum, located on Edward Street in The Oaks, is currently open on weekends and public holidays and other times by appointment. I would like to

extend my particular gratitude to the tireless volunteers from The Oaks Historical Society who provide all Museum visitors with their unique insights into Wollondilly's early history.

CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—In the second half of this year, I held a Christmas card artwork competition for primary school students attending schools in my electorate of Wollondilly. I was pleasantly surprised to have my office inundated with entries. I would like to congratulate Kayla Brocklesby from the Southern Highlands Christian School who was the overall winner. Kayla's artwork depicted the nativity scene and featured the three wise men presenting their gifts. I also congratulate the three runners up. Ella Fitzgerald, who was the winner of the Kindergarten to Grade 2 category. Poppy Clarke who won the grade three to four category. And Luc Hilaire, who was the winner of the grade five to six category. The four winners will feature on my 2020 parliamentary Christmas card. Keep an eye out for it next month. Finally, I would like to state my appreciation to all the students that submitted artwork this year. I also thank their teachers. My wife and I had a lot of fun looking through all of the entries and the final decision was definitely not easy. I am already looking forward to next year's competition.

THE SAVING PLACE FOOD BANK PORT MACQUARIE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I recognise the marvellous charitable efforts of The Saving Place Food Bank in Port Macquarie for delivering a vital lifeline to those facing financial hardships in our community. Sadly in the Hastings region there is often a portion of people each week that struggle to provide the basic essentials like food for their family. It is because of compassionate organisations like The Saving Place Food Bank in Port Macquarie that families under financial stress receive the help they need. Located at 10 Blackbutt Road, Port Macquarie, The Saving Place is one of 10 wholesale centres on the Mid North Coast that open their doors to people who would otherwise go hungry. Managed by Dave Davis and Chairman Bob Eldridge from The Shalom House of Hope, the organisation and its hardworking volunteers have provided fresh, frozen and non-perishable food items free of charge in our community since November 2019, with over \$575,000 worth of goods supporting families all across the Hastings. I was pleased to be invited on 4 November to witness our dedicated volunteers in action supporting our most vulnerable in Port Macquarie. Congratulations to Dave for his 20 years of service.

SAM DAVISON

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I acknowledge Year 12 graduate Sam Davison from Camden Haven High School for his sensational HSC artwork and film making talents that have mesmerised and captivated audiences for his originality and lifelike presentations. It is no doubt that Sam Davison has a bright future in film making and production as he revealed his stunning visual art pieces for his HSC major project, depicting eight portraits of directors and actors that inspire and shape his creativity and individuality. Moving to the Camden Haven in 2011, Sam recognised from a young age that he possessed a passion and talent for drawing and illustrating images. As part of his Year 12 major this year Sam designed portraits that cleverly portrayed his innovative flair through the incorporation of a negative space so when the drawn image is inverted, it also reveals the positive reflection of each portrait. To communicate the meaning and connection behind his project, Sam constructed a six-minute short film which opened a dialogue to drawing and creating portraits through several time lapse videos and stills, with actor Morgan Freeman effectively explaining the process. I congratulate Sam for his dedication and commitment towards his studies.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:40 until
Wednesday 11 November 2020 at 13:00.**