



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday, 12 November 2020**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday, 12 November 2020**

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

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

*[Notices of motions given.]*

## *Bills*

### **ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BILL 2020**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 11 November 2020.**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (09:48:00):** In contributing to the debate on the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020, I note that the affordability of electricity is a big concern for my constituents. It is a big concern for business in my electorate as well. Last year I visited businesses in my electorate including Sanitarium, MasterFoods and Sara Lee. Quite separately, and independent of any prompting from me, all of those businesses underlined that the cost of energy was the single biggest impediment to them growing their business or retaining their business on the Central Coast. I welcome any government action that is aimed at improving the affordability of electricity in this State. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to improve the affordability, reliability, security and sustainability of electricity supply, and
- (b) to co-ordinate investment in new generation, storage, network and related infrastructure, and
- (c) to encourage investment in new generation, storage, network and related infrastructure by reducing risk for investors, and
- (d) to foster local community support for investment in new generation, storage, network and related infrastructure, and
- (e) to support economic development and manufacturing.

This bill is a step in the right direction, and Labor welcomes what it will mean for this State. I say at the outset that this is a good bill but it could be better, and I foreshadow that Labor will move amendments to improve it. Fundamentally, this bill does what I have been talking about for some time: It overturns the fraud of the National Energy Market. For the past 20 years or longer, we have been labouring under the misapprehension that if we set up market mechanisms for the provision of energy in this country then the private sector will sort it out for us. That has failed comprehensively.

Australia has gone from being a country with some of the cheapest energy prices in the world to being a country with some of the most expensive energy prices in the world, despite having an abundance of old energy sources as well as new energy sources. It is so dumb. That is why I welcome this legislation. I go so far as to say that the tone of the legislation is decidedly social democratic. There is no neoliberalism in this legislation. Consequently, I do not care whether it comes from a conservative government or a Labor government; I welcome any legislation that overturns the nonsense that we have been subjected to over the past 30 years in this State—the idea that the private sector will somehow save us and provide cheap energy for constituents and businesses in my electorate. It was never going to happen, and that has been my consistent position on this matter. For that reason, I welcome the opportunities provided by the bill.

The bill seeks to implement the Government's energy plan, which goes to generation, transmission, procurement and jobs. In doing so, the bill largely implements the policy that Labor took to the last State election. For that reason as well, I welcome the legislation. I will talk to some of the elements of the bill. The centrepiece of the policy in this legislation will be the design, development and delivery of 12 gigawatts of new renewable energy generation projects over the next decade to 2030 using the same reverse auction mechanism proposed by NSW Labor. This State intervention will ensure energy generation happens rather than simply hoping that the private sector will hop on board and do what needs to be done to provide sufficient energy generation and sufficient affordable energy in New South Wales.

Thank goodness for new section 34. It allows New South Wales to overturn rules in the National Energy Market, which does not work for anybody in this State. The bill establishes a fund to provide capital and to encourage investment in energy generation. It provides a new regulator—a new planner. Instead of hoping the market will work it all out, there will be some planning that sets targets, which is essential for affordable energy



in this State. The bill provides a non-market mechanism to ensure the delivery of new renewable energy in this State. For all those reasons, the bill is a step in the right direction. The Minister for Energy and Environment—who is in the Chamber—is on the right track. I acknowledge his work and his dedication to bringing this bill before the House.

What is wrong with the bill? I foreshadow that Labor will move some amendments, which I hope the House will support. The location of Renewable Energy Zones is an issue for my colleagues on the Central Coast, which has traditionally been at the centre of energy generation in this State. The Central Coast already has a bunch of energy distribution infrastructure that should be part of this legislation. Locating Renewable Energy Zones in the west is a great idea but we need them centred on the Central Coast and the Hunter as well. Workers need more support. We need a real plan to provide satisfaction and peace of mind to workers in the industries that we know will close. As current generation capacity ends, we must do more to support those workers and provide a path for them and their families into new jobs in new industries.

Local procurement could be strengthened. I know the Government said that that will happen as a result of this bill, but there is nothing to guarantee support for local industry. This is a good bill. It is a step in the right direction. But it could be better. The amendments foreshadowed by Labor should be supported by the House as they will make it a better bill. Fundamentally, I welcome what this bill represents. It overturns the neoliberal idea that the market will somehow provide affordable energy to my constituents and businesses in my electorate. It was never going to do that. The bill is a step in the right direction, and I commend the Minister for his efforts.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (09:56:26):** It is with a great deal of pride that I stand in this House to speak very strongly in support of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020. In doing so, I acknowledge my parliamentary and ministerial colleague the Minister for Energy and Environment for bringing the bill to the House. Indeed, the bill has been a long time in the making. The Government has talked for a long time about renewable energy hotspots and now Renewable Energy Zones [REZs]. The bill facilitates not only the legal creation of those zones but also the procurement of renewable energy projects within those zones in a strategic way. That is attractive to me not only as the member for Northern Tablelands—without doubt, the capital of renewable energy in New South Wales and very soon, I hope, Australia—but also as the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales.

What attracts me so much to this bill is the fact that, for the very first time, communities in regional and rural New South Wales—and, let's face it, that is where all these projects will be built—will be in the driver's seat. I will tell members what I mean by that. For years—and even right now—country communities were often subject to the whims of the particular proponents. Nothing prevents any proponent of a renewables project—whether they genuinely want to work with the community or they are tyre kickers or cowboys—coming into a region and saying "We're going to put turbines all over that nice, prominent grazing country" or "We're going to put solar panels all around that important historical tourism asset that you have in your region." Communities then have to fight a rearguard action through the planning process to try to prevent an inappropriate project from getting across the line.

We should not confuse opposition to some projects in rural areas as opposition to the renewable energy industry, because that is certainly not the case. Speaking from personal experience, in the Northern Tablelands renewables have resulted in enormous economic stimulus already. The Northern Tablelands is home to the two largest wind farms—Goldwind and the Sapphire Wind Farm between Glen Innes and Inverell—in New South Wales. Combined, they are generating more than 500 megawatts of renewable energy as we are debating the bill in this House. Likewise, the Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Energy Storage project has been granted critical State infrastructure status. It was wonderful to be at Georges Junction recently with the Minister for Energy and Environment and the Minister for Water, Property and Housing to announce the project. The Oven Mountain pumped hydro scheme is the jewel in the renewable energy crown of the Northern Tablelands. It is a wonderful project and will be the cherry on top.

But also before Christmas this year we will see the commencement of construction around Uralla of the UPC Renewables New England Solar Farm—a 700-megawatt solar farm, and the largest anywhere in Australia. The Government has provided investment to also create battery storage as part of the project. We have 10 other major projects going through the planning system as well in the Northern Tablelands region, ahead of the New England Renewable Energy Zone. For our region, renewables will be a massive part of our social and economic fabric for many decades to come. Already our region is for the first time in its history a net exporter of energy. This is the economic point: For the best part of 120 years, the Northern Tablelands has been a net importer of energy. That means we sent our money out of our region to enrich other parts of the State where the energy was being generated.

Now, through renewable energy developments and the Renewable Energy Zone, we will completely flip that equation and we will be enriched because we will be generating the electricity that is used not just by New

South Wales residents but also residents of Queensland, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia via the transportation scheme—the interconnector. It is an exciting time. The New England Renewable Energy Zone will be the largest Renewable Energy Zone anywhere in Australia. It will be underpinned by an \$80 million investment by this Government to establish some of the connection infrastructure. Some 8,000 megawatts of renewable energy will be generated by the New England zone alone.

Conservatively, that will unlock \$12.7 billion in investment in the Northern Tablelands. As agriculture Minister I am very proud of my agricultural background, but I can tell members there is not one other industry or initiative we have ever seen in the Northern Tablelands region that would unlock \$12.7 billion worth of direct investment in our region over the next 10 to 15 years. There is nothing that compares with this. That does not count the multipliers and the spin-offs that result from that, being 2,000 construction jobs and 1,300 ongoing jobs as part of generating that 8,000 megawatts.

As I said, even without the intervention of this Renewable Energy Zone the Northern Tablelands is already producing enough renewable energy to power 254,318 average New South Wales homes a year. We are already a net exporter of energy, and this will only improve that. It is absolutely eye-watering to think that as a result of this New England Renewable Energy Zone we will go from being able to power 254,000 homes through our renewable energy generation to up to 3.5 million homes a year just out of the Northern Tablelands and the New England REZ. That is incredible. I talked earlier in my contribution about flipping the equation between being a net importer and net exporter of energy; this just hits it out of the park. It is extraordinary. It will completely transform the economic make-up of our region. However, it does not do it at the cost of our important primary industries in the New England REZ area. As I said at the outset, that is what attracts me to this bill as agriculture Minister, not just as a local member.

We can have the best of both worlds: We can continue to have our thriving agriculture and primary production industries and we can have a growing renewables industry without one taking away from the other. It will not come at the expense of our prime productive agricultural land, because this bill sets up the framework to strategically plan the REZ and then do a reverse auction based on the locations that the Government, the community and the local councils collectively choose. That means we can ensure that we never have the bitter conflict between proponents and farmers, proponents and rural residential lifestyle blocks or proponents and tourism operators. We will be able to sort out all of those conflicts up-front and make sure that we call for expressions of interest by proponents of our REZ in areas that the community already supports. That is the beauty of it. For the first time it puts the community in the driver's seat rather than on the back foot to respond every single time.

As the agriculture Minister, I think that is the best part of this bill. It gives us the ability, for the first time, to control our own destiny. We can have an industry continue to grow and develop, and create jobs and economic benefits for generations to come without sacrificing any of our existing industries, any of our lifestyle blocks or any of our wonderful tourism assets both natural and man-made. I finish where I started this contribution in commending the Minister for bringing this bill to the House. From the outside some may think it is a bit unusual for this particular person to be supporting an initiative like this. I can assure members that it certainly is not. This makes sense and is good for the people who I represent on every single metric. I cannot wait for this legislation to pass this Parliament so that we can unlock some of those billions of dollars of investment and the jobs that will not compromise any other industries but will ensure the viability of rural and regional New South Wales for decades to come.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:06:08):** I note that when the Minister announced his intention to introduce the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 and it was reported in the media, there were clear sighs of palpable relief, especially from the climate scientists and the campaigners who have devoted their professional lives and, in many cases, many hours of their personal lives trying to push for solutions and actions when it comes to climate change. Perhaps this bill marks a turning point. I note that I am speaking in this debate following the member for Northern Tablelands. I think the fact that we can both be putting our support behind this bill perhaps marks a significant turning point. Perhaps this bill shows that we can finally put to bed the climate wars that have been stifling our ability to listen to science and act to rapidly transition to renewable energy.

The politicisation and polarisation of climate change has been one of the greatest political tragedies of our generation. We are thankful for the work of the Minister, who I note is in the Chamber, in seeking a way forward that can garner the political consensus and support needed to be able to drive this urgent change. We have been able to work together and listen to the science in tackling the pandemic, and we can do the same when it comes to the climate emergency that we face. People have been working on solutions to the climate crisis for decades now, and they have been feeling increasingly despairing as the years and decades have slipped by. People like Naomi, Glynis and Rosalind Vaughan from the Australian Conservation Foundation inner west group whom I met with recently have been working tirelessly to try to get legislative reforms to make it easier for us to take up

renewable energy and have climate change factored into government decision-making on planning, protection of the environment and mining approvals. I thank them for their longstanding advocacy and thank all the members of the inner west ACF group.

Across the world, momentum is building for action on climate change. China, Japan, the European Union, the United Kingdom and now the United States have recently announced targets to get to net zero emissions. This is very different from a few years ago, and includes countries with governments of all political persuasions. But a 2050 goal is far too long away, and the reality is that action is needed much sooner if we are to have any chance of success. We must begin work today. We need ambitious interim targets and we need a plan to get there. That is why The Greens welcome the policy certainty that this bill brings. We support a concrete plan to transition to renewable energy in New South Wales, and we are very pleased to see an ambitious target for the shorter term of 75 per cent renewable energy in the electricity grid by 2030.

There is such a thing as too late—and it is drawing dangerously near. In fact, many people fear we have reached some of these critical tipping points already. Events like the melting of the arctic permafrost, melting of sea ice and bushfires on the scale that we saw last summer can exponentially increase the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, beyond our control to reduce these emissions. That is why we need to do more to act. Transition on that scale will require work to begin immediately and not just be an aspirational target that is deferred to another government or another day. The Greens acknowledge that work has begun in this space, with big batteries announced for western Sydney and the replacement of the Liddell coal-fired power station. The batteries are a significant step forward in stabilising the grid and harnessing a huge and growing amount of solar energy in the system. Those projects will mean that we can make more efficient use of renewable energy than we already have.

The transformation of the grid to renewable energy also will mean that work can begin building a hydrogen industry in New South Wales. Germany and the European Union already have flagged that they want to develop a supply chain to buy green hydrogen from Australia to power industrial processes such as steelmaking, heavy transport, air travel and possibly even a replacement for domestic gas heating. The production of green hydrogen presents many opportunities for job creation, most crucially in many of the regions that currently are dependent on fossil fuel industries. Regions such as the Hunter and the Illawarra already have skilled manufacturing workforces and ports from which hydrogen can become a major export. The Illawarra also has a steelworks that could run on green hydrogen instead of coal, shoring up jobs and making locally made steel competitive on the world stage in a world that increasingly will be looking to purchase zero emissions steel.

Other steelworks around the world already have started making steel with hydrogen, though not without significant government investment in the research and trial phase. That also needs to happen here in New South Wales if we want to keep those jobs and support those communities. The solution to the climate crisis must be one that leaves no worker and no community behind—I reiterate, it must be one that leaves no worker and no community behind—and deals with climate and equity together. The opportunities from building renewable energy are immense and there will be new jobs, new industries and huge economic opportunities. But while we develop these manufacturing capacities for hydrogen, this work is meaningful only if we are concurrently pumping huge amounts of renewable energy into the electricity grid because the world will not buy our hydrogen if it is made from fossil fuels.

As Ross Garnaut identified, we have such an abundance of renewable energy resources, Australia can and should be an energy export superpower. This means not just going for 75 per cent renewable energy but producing many more times that for domestic purposes so that not only is Australia powered by 100 per cent renewable energy but we can export the rest. It should be noted that The Greens will be moving to try to proactively improve this bill because it is not perfect and it does prioritise—as we would expect from a Liberal-Nationals government—private investment of renewable energy projects, which means that the significant wealth generated will go back into the hands of private companies instead of into the public purse. Why would we not want that benefit to come back to the people of New South Wales? The Greens will be moving amendments and working proactively to improve this bill because The Greens want to ensure that, where possible, renewable energy is publicly owned and that materials required to build the infrastructure are manufactured locally.

The Greens are committed to prioritising public ownership, to guaranteeing local procurement and to delivering a fair return for First Nation people for all projects built on their land. The Greens want this bill to deliver a clear commitment to green hydrogen which, along with battery and pumped hydro, needs to form the backbone of energy storage in New South Wales. The Greens know that targeted early investment in green hydrogen is critical to rebuilding a local manufacturing base. As legislators, we need to ensure that investment flows from the renewable energy boom not only will deliver green power but also will deliver locally for jobs and for communities. That means inserting strong local procurement provisions into the bill.

The Greens know that every infrastructure project built after this bill is passed will be built on First Nation land. Let us be clear, it is not open, empty space. It is not terra nullius. It is country; it always was and always will

be Aboriginal land. Economic empowerment for traditional owners and First Nation communities is a key priority for The Greens in negotiating amendments to the bill. The Greens look forward to a cooperative response from the Government. The urgency of the climate crisis cannot be overstated. It is an emergency and the wheels of government need to turn with speed and urgency to meet the emergency. The very survival of life depends on it, whether or not we make this transition with the necessary speed. But we have seen how fast we can act when it is truly necessary.

Prior to 2020, who would have thought that it would be possible for a New South Wales Government to finally provide a safe, secure and affordable place to live for people sleeping rough and homeless and income security—sadly, lost yesterday—from a Liberal-Nationals government during the middle of a pandemic? What we saw was that when there is a will to respond to a crisis, people can and will act. What we saw is that when we work together in a crisis, listen to the experts, keep a flexible approach and put our minds to it, it is astonishing what we can achieve. I believe that we have so much to gain by making the rapid transition to decarbonising our economy, job creation, economic growth and, above all, saving this little blue planet so that future generations can also enjoy rich and wonderful lives.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (10:15:09):** I am delighted to speak in support of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020. At the outset, I note the presence in the Chamber of the Minister for Energy and Environment. I thank him and his excellent team for all the difficult and hard work they have put into formulating this outstanding legislation. New South Wales is poised to transition to the energy system of the future. It is this Government's vision that this future is characterised by affordable, clean and reliable energy. We welcome Australia's first coordinated Renewable Energy Zones here in New South Wales. As the cornerstone of that future, I am particularly pleased that this bill will make New South Wales' Renewable Energy Zones [REZs] a reality. This bill will make New South Wales a global leader in this space. Indeed, as the Minister has said, the State will be an energy superpower.

The plan for achieving that vision was outlined by the Government in November last year when New South Wales became the first State in Australia to release an electricity strategy. It is a plan to create a competitive low cost market that delivers resilient energy supply while putting downward pressure on electricity prices. As we heard from the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales and member for Northern Tablelands, the Hon. Adam Marshall, a key action in the strategy is to deliver three Renewable Energy Zones in the State's Central West in Orana, New England and the south-west regions. Debate on the bill has included reference to declaring a new Renewable Energy Zone in the Hunter and Central Coast area. I also note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Upper Hunter. As Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, I welcome a new Renewable Energy Zone. A Renewable Energy Zone has huge potential to boost job creation and growth in the Central Coast region.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (PROPERTY DEVELOPER COMMISSIONS TO MPS) BILL 2020**

##### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jodi McKay, read a first time and printed.**

##### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (10:18:20):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Property Developer Commissions to MPs) Bill 2020 because there must be integrity in politics in New South Wales. Politics must be an honourable profession. The public expects politics and politicians to be honourable, that is, to have integrity. Most importantly, the public expects politicians to serve the interests of the people they represent, that is, their fellow citizens, their constituents. Our democracy is diminished and imperilled if the public believes that politicians are in politics to serve and advance their own interests and to advance the interests of those who can pay for access to politicians.

Let me be very clear, my view, Labor's view, is that if you aspire to play a role in public life, that is, to be in this place, then the honour of representing your community should be enough. The honour of sitting in this Parliament should be enough. Every day when I walk through the door to this Chamber I thank God for the opportunity to be in this place. I know that every member on this side of the House never takes that opportunity for granted. They know the great privilege of sitting here in the oldest Parliament in Australia. There is no situation in which it should be acceptable that a member of Parliament is able to receive a payment of a commission from a property developer, a prohibited donor. Until recently the vast majority of people across our State, in fact,

I would say everyone in our State, would not have had any idea that this was happening. I did not know that this was happening. I did not know that it was even allowed to happen. I would argue that it should not happen and it should not be allowed to happen.

I have had so many conversations with MPs on this side of the House following revelations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and each of them has been shocked by what emerged and what was revealed about commissions taken by members of Parliament. As we know, it is illegal for members of Parliament to receive donations from property developers, and it should be illegal for the very same developers to pay the very same parliamentarians a commission. To do so allows malign interests to circumvent the electoral and political laws that have been put in place to protect our democracy and to uphold the integrity of our public institutions. It turns out that these practices have been allowed to run unchecked in the Parliament since this Government came to power in 2011. We know this because since 2018, when the Independent Commission Against Corruption conducted a hearing into Canterbury Council, revelations concerning former member for Wagga Wagga Daryl Maguire and his improper use of the office he held in order to enrich himself have turned from a trickle into a flood.

Shockingly, we now know that the Premier of New South Wales knew what Daryl Maguire was doing. She knew about his business dealings with property developers as far back as 2013, and that included the receipt of commissions as a payment for doing work. What has concerned those on this side of the House is that she failed to disclose what she knew until the ICAC came knocking at her door in August this year. It was during the hearing in mid-2018 when Daryl Maguire appeared before the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into Canterbury Council that she should have revealed what she knew, but she did not. She did not do so until the ICAC came knocking at her door in August, and even then it had to go back through her or his phone messages to find a text message effectively showing that she supported Daryl Maguire receiving a payment of commission. Amazingly, the Premier congratulated him on receiving those commissions from prohibited donors. She used the words "congrats", "that's great"—

**Opposition members:** Woo hoo!

**Ms JODI McKAY:** Not only did the Premier know about it, she even calculated the commissions for him, asking if a \$5,000 commission was in fact 0.1 per cent. The Premier also knew at the very same time that Mr Maguire was lobbying her office and the offices of other Ministers and MPs on behalf of property developers. These were property developers based hundreds of kilometres away from his electorate in Wagga Wagga. In fact, they were in the electorate of the member for Canterbury. The member for Canterbury is present in the Chamber today. Mr Maguire had absolutely no good reason to be associated with these property developers. He had absolutely no good reason to be doing any business in the electorate of the member for Canterbury.

When asked by the media about this, the Premier blithely stated that she was not concerned because the rules at the time allowed Mr Maguire to receive commissions from developers in return for services rendered. Not once did she express concern that the laws preventing developer donations set up to protect our democracy and integrity in our democracy were effectively being breached—and they were. On this side of the House we would argue that they were. That the Premier thought there was nothing to see here and nothing to report to the ICAC indicates that this was business as usual under the Berejiklian Government and under the Coalition more generally. This bill is necessary because something must be done to improve the standards of integrity in this Parliament. It saddens me that we have to bring this bill to the Parliament. Each and every member on this side of the House knows that commissions from developers should not be paid to members of Parliament.

Standards have been in serious decline since this Government came to power in 2011. In 2015 we saw 10 Liberal MPs appear before an Independent Commission Against Corruption hearing inquiring into political donations from property developers. We have seen a sitting Premier resign because he misled the ICAC. We have seen the police Minister, David Elliott, continue to sink lower and lower, bringing the office of police Minister into disrepute. We have seen the Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, use money from insurance premiums paid by New South Wales businesses to look after injured and sick workers as a political fund to employ a republican political operative from the United States in his office. We have seen the Premier fail to inform the ICAC of the conflict of interest in relation to her relationship with Daryl Maguire. We have seen the Premier fail to inform the ICAC of her knowledge about Daryl Maguire's dodgy dealings with developers. We have seen the Premier fail to disclose to her colleagues that she was in a relationship with Daryl Maguire. She failed to declare a conflict of interest—and she did have a conflict of interest.

We have seen the Premier and her office make use of the grant scheme, worth millions of dollars, for blatant political purposes, that is, allocating money to electorates targeted or held by the Coalition while other communities across New South Wales, our communities, missed out. The quarter-of-a-billion-dollar Stronger Communities Fund is an important fund that was set up to support amalgamated councils. The guidelines for that fund were changed and as a result 95 per cent of that quarter-of-a-billion-dollar fund was funnelled into Coalition

electorates in the lead-up to the 2019 election. We have seen the destruction of records related to the administration and approval of these grants by the Premier's office. It has taken a parliamentary accountability committee, set up by Labor and supported by Labor, to get to the bottom of what has actually happened. We know that the electronic copy was deleted. We know that the hard copy, which the Premier wrote on and signed, was shredded. This week in the Parliament we asked the Premier, "What did you actually write on that advice?" She would not answer the question.

We, and the public, have waited in vain for this Premier to take serious action, to take responsibility and for someone, anyone, to be held accountable in this Government. Labor believes that this state of affairs cannot continue and that the culture of looking the other way, which persists at the highest level of this Government, needs to end. Time and again the Government has had to be dragged to the table when it comes to strengthening integrity in New South Wales politics. When I took over as Leader of the Opposition I made a commitment to the members of our party, to my colleagues here today, that we would do everything we could to restore trust in New South Wales Labor.

**Mr Lee Evans:** Plastic bags full of money.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** That is the commitment I made and that is why I am here before this Parliament today.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Why don't you tell us about the other bag of money?

**Mr Lee Evans:** Come clean about the Aldi bag. Where is the transparency?

**Ms JODI McKAY:** I note the interjections from members on the other side. If they were serious, they would support the bill. Are you going to support the bill?

**Mr Lee Evans:** Why didn't you tell?

**Ms JODI McKAY:** Just say yes. Are you going to support the bill?

*[A Government member interjected.]*

No, they will not support the bill. The Government still has not committed to instituting an independent funding model for the ICAC after the New South Wales Auditor-General reported that its reliance on the Government approving additional funding threatens its independence along with the independence of other integrity agencies.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Members will come to order.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** Government members would like nothing more than for me to sit down right now. They would like nothing more than for me to not introduce a bill that will impact on many of those on that side of the House. When it comes to passing laws to protect our Parliament and our democratic institutions from corruption and misconduct, Labor and the crossbench have been left to do all the work. Two weeks ago Labor successfully moved to change the law to make it illegal for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries to receive a payment of a commission from prohibited donors. Today Labor is moving to extend the prohibition to the entire Parliament—that is, each and every one of those opposite.

The bill makes important changes to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. It amends the Act to prohibit any member of Parliament from seeking or accepting a payment of a commission from a property developer, whether it is from a property developer directly or through a third party. It applies the definition of "property developer" set out in the Electoral Funding Act, and why wouldn't it? Our electoral funding laws prohibit property developers from making political donations. Why wouldn't commissions from the exact same developers be banned? The Act provides that a substantial breach of the prohibition can be found to constitute corrupt conduct. The bill would commence as soon as assent is received, and so it should, because we cannot let another day pass where this practice continues. Government members have been doing it since 2011. No member of this place should be moonlighting with property developers to earn a quick buck, but that is what Government members have been doing.

A member of Parliament has a job to represent the community. All members—on this side of the House and on that side—have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of the Parliament of New South Wales. It is the oldest Parliament in the country. Members have a responsibility to protect and extend democratic values, to be honest and to uphold the law. If a member is here to use the office they have been elected to by their constituents to enrich themselves, their family or their mates, then they do not belong here. If they are willing to be in receipt of commissions from property developers and other prohibited donors to line their own pockets, then they do not belong here. If like the Premier they are willing to look the other way or feign ignorance when those dodgy practices come to their attention, then they do not belong here.

I am pleased to introduce this legislation today but I am incredibly disappointed that I have had to bring the bill to this place. Perceptions matter. Because of the perception that such behaviour is okay and that you can turn a blind eye to it or even encourage it, changes need to be made; that is what Labor is doing today. It is making a change to protect and enhance integrity in this place. I came back to politics because I believe that the people of New South Wales deserve better and that it is important to stand up for integrity. We are living in a period of great uncertainty. Right now our community is faced with twin health and economic crises. We know from history that if trust in our democracy and our public institutions breaks down in times like these, the consequences can be dire. That is why the bill is necessary.

Now is the time to stand up for our democracy and our public institutions. Now is the time to insist on moral and legal standards that, if broken, lead to serious consequences. It will shock the public that the bill is necessary and that it needs to be passed. I urge members on the opposite side of the House to join with Labor and support the bill because each and every person in this place has no right to accept the payment of a commission from a property developer. Each and every person should be focused on their community—proudly representing them, privileged to do so, and privileged to walk through the Chamber door every day and thank God they have the opportunity to. It is time for this House to do what is right. It is time for the Government to do what is right. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **PUBLIC WORKS AND PROCUREMENT AMENDMENT (WORKERS COMPENSATION NOMINAL INSURER) BILL 2020**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:36:08):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There is no question that icare has been a disaster. In day after day of hearings at the recent Standing Committee on Law and Justice inquiry we heard evidence of extraordinary levels of mismanagement at the workers compensation insurer, icare. The Liberal-Nationals Government and the Treasurer in particular would like to sweep it under the rug, but we cannot allow that to happen. The icare scandal has exposed a problem with our laws in New South Wales: a loophole that has allowed a greedy few to game the system for their own financial benefit and that has exempted icare from the normal integrity rules that apply to public sector tenders. The consequences have been the misuse of an immense amount of public funds and the failure to care for tens of thousands of New South Wales workers who got sick or were injured on the job. It is crucial that we close that loophole. The Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020, first introduced in the other place by my Greens colleague Mr David Shoebridge and supported by the Legislative Council, now comes to our House for consideration.

It is clear that there is a loophole that must be closed. While I acknowledge that there is an inquiry still ongoing in relation to those broader scandals, it is absolutely important that we act now. The bill sets out to close the loophole to ensure greater integrity and transparency in the way funds are set aside to help injured workers. Icare is responsible for somewhere between \$17 billion and \$18 billion in trust for the purpose of paying out compensation to injured workers in New South Wales. Some of that money has been supplied by employers in New South Wales who have done the right thing to ensure that if their workers are injured in the course of their jobs they can be adequately cared for, live with dignity, have their medical costs and lost wages covered and be supported to return to work wherever they can. But as *Four Corners* reported back in July, and as has been revealed during the inquiry, that is not what icare has done. Instead it has funnelled hundreds of millions of dollars of public funding into the pockets of its mates and has underpaid injured workers by upwards of \$80 million.

It is absolutely crucial that we act quickly to put in place the measures that are enacted by the bill to make sure that this type of scandal does not continue. The object of the bill is to amend the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 and the Workers Compensation Act 1987 to provide that the Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer is a government agency for the purposes of part 11 of the Public Works and Procurement Act. Part 11 puts in place clear obligations on government agencies in relation to the procurement of goods and services, such as transparent tenders and public notifications of contracts. That sounds pretty standard. Without these elements, as we have seen and as was probably predictable in the case of icare, tender processes which represent huge sums of public money can easily be corrupted.

It is vital that if millions of dollars of public money are to be transferred into private hands via contracts that a process is in place to ensure that it is done fairly, transparently and, most importantly, in the interest of the

public. This is what the people of New South Wales expect—and rightly so. The bill amends section 162 of the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 to include unambiguously in the definition of "government agency" the "workers compensation nominal insurer", which was established under section 154A of the Workers Compensation Act 1987. This change closes a loophole. It puts in place a transitional provision, new section 179, to avoid causing contractual uncertainty. New section 179 provides:

This Part does not apply to an agreement for the procurement of goods and services entered into by the Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer before the commencement of the *Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Act 2020*.

Finally, this bill amends the current provision in the Workers Compensation Act 1987 in section 154A, which expressly states that the Nominal Insurer is not covered by the Public Works and Procurement Act. As we heard in the inquiry, the loophole that this bill seeks to close has allowed for \$1 million to be given to the wife of the former icare CEO under a contract that never went to tender—and that is just one example of many. We also heard about the millions of dollars that were handed over to a corporation owned by an icare employee and his son—a corporation with no history in the field—to craft the net promoter score, which was later used to give the icare executives staggering bonuses. That contract was awarded without a tender process.

In his speech in the other place, my Greens colleague David Shoebridge listed many more examples like those, all of which highlight the urgent need for this bill in order to put an end to the shocking misuse of public funds that has gone on within icare under the nose of the New South Wales Treasurer for several years. It is worth noting that the Treasurer is not present in the Chamber, is not engaging with this process and is trying to distance himself from the scandals and despicable behaviour we have seen from icare in recent times. In fact, back in February, in response to immense pressure from The Greens, NSW Labor—and I note that the Hon. Daniel Mookhey is in the gallery—Unions NSW and the media, icare finally published dozens of contracts worth more than \$150 million on the New South Wales contract database. Some were more than two years old and none had been disclosed within the required 45 working day period. There were contracts worth \$118 million that had never been put to tender.

The extent of this scandal continues to unfold. Just two weeks ago *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Adele Ferguson—who has worked tirelessly to shed light on the issues at icare, and I acknowledge her work in exposing these scandals and corrupt conditions—reported on another raft of contracts that were awarded on the basis of rushed or sham tenders. The tender process for a \$360 million contract to build a new claims and billings platform, for example, took less than three weeks—a time line so rushed that several credible vendors pulled out, leaving the Guidewire and Capgemini consortium, which had a close association with then icare CEO Vivek Bhatia, the only valid candidate.

Let us go with that for a second. We are talking about a tender process for a \$360 million contract to build a new claims and billings platform that took less than three weeks. The only valid candidate was a consortium that had close associations with former icare CEO Vivek Bhatia. According to statements made by brave whistleblower and former icare employee Christopher McCann, when concerns were raised with Mr Bhatia about this contract in particular he yelled and swore at Mr McCann, banging his fists on the desk and denying that his friendship with the owner of Capgemini was a problem. Mr McCann was then forced out of icare—the result of an ongoing campaign of bullying and intimidation—and forced to sign a confidentiality agreement, which he bravely breached in order to expose the truth.

According to reports from journalist Adele Ferguson, documents show that at least one of the alternative bidders, FINEOS, wrote to icare just before the deadline to warn icare that it was pulling out of the time line because it was "extremely aggressive" and "unrealistic" for such a complex and lucrative project. It said that continuing to participate and meet the deadlines posed a reputational risk, but icare proceeded regardless. Unsurprisingly, the \$360 million new claims and billing platform was ultimately a disaster, leading to huge problems for injured workers in accessing assistance. In fact, it denied service and payments to thousands and led to a huge decline in return-to-work rates—a key indicator of how workers compensation schemes are performing.

Let us remember that the kind of deals and arrangements that have been taking place under the nose of the New South Wales Treasurer have been happening within a body that should be supporting and protecting injured workers and providing assistance and support. Instead, what we are seeing is hundreds of millions of dollars of dodgy tenders and scams being handed over to mates of former CEOs and family members of those associated with icare. Government members talk about integrity and the idea that people in New South Wales are struggling and need all the help they can get to make ends meet, and the Treasurer will come in here next week and pretend that he is delivering gifts to the people of New South Wales because he cares about them and is somehow providing them with support. But at the same time, right under his nose and at this very moment, this kind of practice is going on and millions of dollars of public money—money that should be going to injured workers in this State—



is being handed over to family members and close business associates of people who are just simply in it for their own interests and for making a buck. That is truly disgraceful.

Group Executive Rob Craig took home a total salary of \$870,878 this year in wages and bonuses. Then chief executive John Nagle was paid a base salary of \$700,000 in the 2018-19 financial year, plus a \$106,000 long-term performance payment. These icare executives were likely the highest paid in the New South Wales government sector. Let us think about that for a minute. Let us think about the fact that one individual, Rob Craig, got a salary of \$870,878 and John Nagle got a base salary of \$700,000 and then another \$106,000. That kind of money is clearly a problem. I do not care how hard a person works, no-one works hard enough to earn that kind of money and certainly these people did not deserve that kind of money when they were actually scamming injured workers in this State out of their rightful support and assistance to get back to work and to live with dignity and respect. It is nothing short of disgraceful.

All of the money for the wasteful contracts, the huge executive bonuses, the handouts to family and mates should have been going to New South Wales workers who were ill or were injured at work. That is why this bill is so important. Greedy and immoral executives should not be given the opportunity to pocket vast sums of public money that have been set aside for vulnerable people who rely on this support to survive. That is why it is urgent that this bill is passed. While an inquiry is still going on, it is crucial for us to recognise that these dodgy deals, favours for mates and greedy actions by immoral executives can continue to occur under the nose of the Treasurer. In fact, the Treasurer should be thanking us for this bill because it will pull them into line and stop them from tainting his record by his overseeing of this outrageous scandal, which continues to happen in New South Wales.

This bill is the culmination of months of exhaustive and forensic work. I acknowledge my Greens colleague David Shoebridge, MLC, and his team for the work they have done. I acknowledge NSW Labor's Daniel Mookhey, MLC, for the work that he and Unions NSW have done to push and to campaign publicly on this issue. I acknowledge all of them for their strong work in this area, as well as the forensic and investigative journalism by Adele Ferguson in exposing these scandals. We should not have a situation where these scandals have to be exposed. We should not require investigative journalists, members of the upper House and inquiries using public money and media resources to expose this kind of scandal. It should never happen.

The Treasurer should have noticed it and he should have investigated what was happening. Someone being paid \$800,000 a year should have done their job and thought that handing out millions of dollars in contracts and tenders to mates was not an ideal practice. Instead, we have a "gotcha" approach to corruption in this State, which basically means that you can continue to do dodgy things until you get caught and then you apologise or you spin the situation in your favour. I am sick of it and the people of New South Wales are sick of it. They expect more from a government that should be using taxpayer money in the interests of the public to serve their interests. They are sick of people pocketing large salaries but failing to do the basics of their jobs—which, in this case, is supporting injured workers at an incredibly difficult time.

The bill needs to pass now. It has been informed by courageous former icare employees like Christopher McCann, who came forward to put his concerns on the public record through detailed statements to the regulator. On behalf of all members who want to see these problems stamped out through improved integrity standards, I sincerely thank them for their bravery in coming forward. The Parliament placed this loophole in public tendering controls five years ago, and it is the responsibility of members to fix it. We are at a point where icare executives need to be told explicitly by Parliament that the public money they control does not belong to them. They cannot use it however they like; they cannot give it to their wives, brothers or mates. They cannot hand out public money earmarked for injured workers to whomever they choose without due process.

Unless urgent action is taken, there is nothing to stop icare continuing in this manner. This vital legislation should have come from the Government, yet The Greens have introduced this bill. After all the evidence and all the revelations, the Treasurer has done nothing to stamp out these practices. In the absence of any action from the Treasurer, the Premier or the New South Wales Government at large, it is up to members opposite to put a stop to dishonest practices. That is why this bill must be supported. I do not want to hear Government members say that there is currently an independent or upper House inquiry underway. I do not want to hear about delays, because every bit of public money we have available in this State should be going to vulnerable people who need it and not well-paid executives and their family members making business deals. That is called corruption, and we should not stand for that kind of shit in this place.

**Mr Michael Johnsen:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The member for Newtown will not use unparliamentary language in the Chamber. It is unnecessary.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I apologise, Mr Temporary Speaker. I am happy to withdraw my use of the word "shit". It was force of habit.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The member does not need to repeat the word.

**Mr Michael Johnsen:** By habit? That is even worse.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I am very happy to swear all the time outside the Chamber. I take it as a mark of—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The member will leave such language outside the Chamber.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I will. Thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (10:53:20):** The Government is committed to supporting injured workers. Icare was established in 2015 and is one of the largest insurance organisations in the country, with \$38 billion in assets, and has responsibility for the workers compensation scheme. The creation of icare was necessary. Under Labor, we had a workers compensation system where both the operator and the regulator fell under the control of one agency. It did not deliver for the workers and the businesses of this great State. In fact, the scheme had gone bankrupt. Thanks to this Government's reforms, the workers compensation scheme in New South Wales is now subject to a greater level of scrutiny and transparency than at any time in the history of the scheme. In addition to having its own regulatory agency, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, icare is also subject to frequent reviews by the Standing Committee on Law and Justice and budget estimates, as well as in other forums.

The reforms enacted by the creation of icare have put us in a better place to support injured workers. For example, former icare board member Mark Lennon, now the current President of NSW Labor, has observed that the introduction of a single platform and an automated front-end system has clear advantages in assisting many injured workers get back to work after necessary treatment. But it is clear there are issues that need to be addressed, which is why the scheduled statutory five-year review into icare and the workers compensation scheme has been brought forward, with a report due in April 2021. In seeking to continue to reform and improve the workers compensation system, we cannot afford for the cure to be worse than the disease. We must diagnose the issues and ask the necessary questions, and only when we have come to a reasonable estimation of what the systemic issues are should we look to prescribe treatment.

The review must be allowed to undertake a proper and thorough investigation, and due process must be followed. This is not a run-of-the-mill review. It has expanded to include a root-and-branch examination of icare to ensure that there is strong public confidence in workers compensation in New South Wales, as well as identify opportunities to better the system. This is an independent review that is headed by highly respected former Supreme Court commercial judge the Hon. Robert McDougall, QC. The review will ensure that we continue to improve the system to get the best results for injured workers. It will focus on the entirety of icare—its operations, governance structure, finances and management culture. The review will focus on matters of public interest that have been raised in recent weeks, including the sustainability of the scheme, the relationship between icare and its regulator, and the effectiveness and accountability of the board.

If passed, the bill would put the cart before the horse, carry water in a sieve and ensure that the cure is worse than the disease. We need to ensure that Justice McDougall has every opportunity to conduct his work without interference and new roadblocks. The review must be allowed to deliver the results for which it was commissioned: to address concerns with the system and enable the claims model to deliver the best outcomes for injured workers. If passed, the bill will also amend the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 to provide that the workers compensation Nominal Insurer be subject to government procurement obligations in part 11 of the Act, which gives the NSW Procurement Board wide powers to issue legally binding directions to government agencies regarding their procurement.

In addition to requiring certain disclosures and processes, these procurement rules given to agencies can often seek to deliver social policy benefits from government expenditure. A great example of this is the directive issued earlier this year in response to the devastating bushfire season. It required that New South Wales government agencies use local businesses within communities impacted by bushfires and floods wherever possible in the clean-up, repair, rebuilding, remediation and enhancement works in relation to bushfires. Another example is the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, which requires agencies to look at ways to stimulate Aboriginal participation in government procurement through a variety of measures.

Currently the Nominal Insurer is exempt from such government procurement policies—and for good reason because every dollar held by the Nominal Insurer is not government money; it is money that must be spent

on getting workers back to work. The Nominal Insurer was established under section 154A of the Workers Compensation Act 1987, which specifically provides that the Nominal Insurer does not represent the State at large or any authority within the State. It is rightly intended to operate solely for the benefit of private employers and workers. Changing the framework to apply government rules to a non-government scheme undermines the operational intention of the Nominal Insurer.

It is not for the Government to set an unreasonable and burdensome precedent for private businesses to support government initiatives in this way, because it is not the Government's money. Indeed, as the member for Newtown ought to know, section 154D of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 specifically provides that the State has no beneficial interest in the assets held in the Nominal Insurer's Workers Compensation Insurance Fund and that the State therefore is not entitled to any surplus, nor does it hold any liability for any deficit in the fund. On the flip side of this, the legislative framework is designed to keep the Nominal Insurer's finances separate from those of the Government to ensure that taxpayers are not required to support insurance for private businesses.

The cost of the services that the Nominal Insurer provides to private sector employees is funded by a combination of investment returns and workers compensation premiums levied on private sector employees. The bill, if it were passed, would create an unnecessary risk in the accounting treatment of the Nominal Insurer by potentially bringing it within the State sector for financial reporting, which would mean that a financial shortfall in funding from the private sector would be transferred to the Government and borne by the taxpayers.

When it comes to icare, its procurements are a matter for the board and senior management. I am advised that icare is conducting a review of internal procurement processes to confirm compliance with requirements. Icare will also commission an external third party to review this internal exercise once it is completed. This is to provide further assurance of integrity and transparency. There is a range of different procurement options available to icare aligning with the New South Wales Government procurement guidelines. Examples of contract arrangements icare enters into that do not require a full open market tender include the use of whole of New South Wales Government prequalification schemes, which generally only require competitive quotes from selected scheme members for contracts over \$150,000 or \$250,000, leveraging existing whole of New South Wales Government contracts and piggybacking off other government agencies contracts.

When it comes to procurements for the Nominal Insurer, icare is exempt from government procurement rules, as we know. But if there is some suggestion by the member for Newtown that icare has piggybacked on the Nominal Insurer's exemption to government procurement rules when engaging in other procurements, this is a matter for the review. We must allow the work of the review to go ahead unobstructed by haphazard legislative amendments. I do not question the member for Newtown's intention in bringing the bill. I am sure she joins with the Government in seeking to ensure a better outcome for injured workers in New South Wales, but it would be imprudent to seek to make any regulatory or legislative changes while the review is underway. As part of the review, the Government is committed to reviewing legislation which has application to the Nominal Insurer, including relevant sections of the Workers Compensation Act 1987. The review will examine these frameworks holistically.

Finally, Mr John Robertson, former leader of the New South Wales Labor Opposition, has just begun his appointment as the new Chair of icare. Mr Robertson is widely respected in the community, has extensive experience in politics, the union movement, workers compensation, business and, most recently, as the chief operating officer of Foodbank NSW & ACT. The list of key priorities for Mr Robertson includes: refreshing the icare board and leading the recruitment of a new CEO; ensuring full cooperation with Mr McDougall to allow the independent review to be delivered by 30 April 2021; improving return-to-work rates for the Nominal Insurer; and providing monthly updates on the pre-injury average weekly earnings remediation program, which is currently underway to repay injured workers; undertaking an immediate review of icare's bonus and remuneration framework—a decision has already been taken that there will be no bonuses for the year ending 30 June 2020.

It also includes: ensuring no overseas travel by icare staff unless approved by the board; overseeing the independent culture review of the organisation, which has already commenced; and providing monthly updates of meetings with the regulator, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, to address any issues. Changing the legislation now, no matter the intention, would only undermine and distract from the review's goal to ensure the provision of exceptional support and care for injured workers. In these unprecedented times, and looking forward, getting the right outcome is all the more important. The Government opposes the bill.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (11:04:58):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020. I acknowledge the member for Newtown for bringing the bill to the House. I thank my colleague in the other place the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the shadow Minister for Finance, who is in the Chamber and acknowledge his work over the past eight months. He has a steely determination to get to the truth and a laser focus to get justice for injured workers. I also

acknowledge Mr David Shoebridge, who is also in the Chamber; the forensic investigator and fantastic journalist Adele Ferguson; the mighty union movement; and, of course, the injured workers.

Injured workers do not live just in my electorate or in the electorate of the member for Newtown or in south-west Sydney. They live in all electorates across New South Wales, including in rural and regional communities. They live in government electorates. This Government has let injured workers down. I have spoken to injured workers, as has every member in this place. I know that they are hardworking people, whether they are cleaners at the hospital, running their own businesses or working for a government agency or a private business. They are getting on with their jobs and doing something for their families. Their purpose in life is to make sure that they pay the bills, pay the rent and are there for their families. Some of them are the sole breadwinners for their families in low socio-economic communities. In my community there are injured workers who do not speak English and who are the sole breadwinners. It is very depressing for these families and for the children who grow up in households where there is very little money week in and week out. They are poverty stricken. The family household is dark. There is no light.

Struggling employers contribute every week to the Government's insurance scheme. They have been paying exorbitant premiums, which increased in February, while a bunch of overpaid executives have been doing wrong to the most vulnerable people in our community. Government members should look deep into their hearts. They might think that this is just a Greens bill, something the greenies are bringing this on. Forget party politics; what has happened is disgusting. It is embarrassing for the Government. Where do we start, when we read what has been uncovered?

This bill will remove icare's special exemption from the Government's procurement rules, which it should never have had in the first place. Only icare has this exemption, which was given to it by the Treasurer. Icare has abused that exemption and should now lose it. Labor supports the bill and the Government should support it also. Icare should follow the same rules that every other government agency has to follow. The Treasurer's failing agency does not deserve special privileges, especially when it has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on contracts that were signed without tender with firms that are closely linked to the Liberal Party. This was not the only contract that did not go to tender. Many contracts have gone to close connections of the Government without tender.

I will tell members Chris McCann's story. Mr McCann was icare's general manager of compliance and one of icare's top managers. His job was to make sure that icare acted ethically when it spent employers' money. Let us remember that the Government continues to talk about small business and employers. Hardworking small, family-run businesses in my electorate struggle every day. My small business operators switch off the alarm at 4.35 a.m., get up at the crack of dawn and go out there to make another dollar for their family and invest in their business because they aspire to hand over the reins to their families and make sure that their families get a better opportunity in life. They work 18 hours so they can send their child to an independent school or to tutoring. This is hard-earned money; it comes from sweat and tears. Icare does not give a rat's about that.

Every dollar contributed to premiums comes from hardworking small business people. Particularly in rural and regional communities where businesses are doing it tough, we are about to see a lot of "For lease" signs and boarded-up commercial properties whose hardworking landlords have worked their guts out. It comes back to arrogance. There has been a bit of "Wink, wink, it's okay, mate. Don't worry, here's a contract for the mates." This is about employers' and small business operators' hard-earned money, and it is about disrespecting injured workers who, we have heard, have been underpaid millions of dollars. It is disgraceful. The member for Ku-ring-gai criticised the Labor Government of 10 years ago but we protected injured workers.

Mr McCann is an ex-copper and by any measure he was up to the job. He was a frontline soldier in many of Victoria's wars against organised crime—a real hero who was shot in the line of duty and someone whom we all look up to. Chris joined icare in 2016, less than one year after the Treasurer created it. As compliance officer, Chris immediately started noticing some suspicious behaviour: icare executives issuing contracts without tender despite serious conflicts of interest, fraud, the theft of icare equipment and the total lack of proper documentation. Chris noticed this wrongdoing and tried to investigate it. In response, he was subjected to a vile, homophobic, anonymous bullying campaign until he was pressured out of the organisation. Mr McCann deserves an apology from this Government. No-one should go to work and be subjected to vile homophobic slurs and a bullying campaign because they are trying to do the right thing. He was trying to do the right thing.

Icare was like a slush fund for its executives, who were grabbing a bit of this and a bit of that. Instead of opening the cupboards and grabbing some paper clips, they were handing out contracts left, right and centre and committing fraud. What we have seen is disgusting. None of those people are worth a grain of salt and they should hand back the money they ripped from the agency. It is absolutely disgraceful. There should be a civil action to take back their money, because they are not worth even a dollar for what they have done. Mr McCann was barred, without explanation, from attending meetings of icare's board audit and risk committee. Mr McCann had been

brought in as head of compliance and he was excluded from the committee that looks after fraud and risk. Go figure! On that basis, the alarm bells should have been ringing. His job was advertised even though he had not resigned. He had to ask for workers compensation because the stress was too much.

Eventually, when Mr McCann settled his claim, icare made him sign a Harvey Weinstein-esque non-disclosure agreement. How disgusting is that? A public sector agency made a whistleblower sign a gag order to stop him from telling the truth about wrongdoing in that agency. This is disgraceful, but it is fact; it is what went on under this Government. It is what this Government has allowed to happen, because none of those opposite have been asking questions. The Government is meant to model best behaviour in the public service. Any agency or State-owned organisation that is regulated by government has to perform at the very highest standard, because that is the behaviour of a democratic institution.

New South Wales is a robust and lively democracy. We are about fairness and equity. In order to pursue those things for the most disadvantaged people, the agency that is set up to protect and help injured workers must be transparent and accountable for every single dollar that has been contributed through employers' premiums. This agency just did not do that. It let everyone down. The Government has to model best behaviour. Earlier this year my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey exposed icare for failing to follow the legal requirement to publish signed contracts 45 days after signing them. Labor exposed icare for publishing 179 contracts on just one day, years late. Those contract notices showed that icare spent \$120 million without going to tender. That is the equivalent of one-quarter of Treasury's annual budget spent without tender in just a few years.

The reason icare could spend so much of employers' money without tendering was because the Nominal Insurer run by icare is exempt from the Public Works and Procurement Act. No other government agency has that exemption—not Treasury, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, Sydney Water or any other agency. Icare is very privileged and it is unbelievable this has been allowed to happen. Until 2015 the Nominal Insurer had to obey the Public Works and Procurement Act. For 30 years under both Liberal and Labor governments, the Nominal Insurer could care for tens of thousands of injured workers and follow basic procurement rules.

Here is one example of what icare did after the Treasurer handed icare its special privilege. It involves the New South Wales Liberal Party's printer, the IVE Group. The IVE Group is a massive donor to both the Federal and State Liberal Party. The IVE Group has donated over \$200,000 to the Liberal Party in the past five years. Until September, the deputy chair of icare's board was also a director of the IVE Group. Despite never competing in an open tender, the IVE Group has earned close to \$18 million through a contract that was never disclosed until Labor started asking questions.

Here is another example: Korn Ferry. Icare has admitted to breaking its own procurement rules to award at least \$8 million of contracts to Korn Ferry, a recruitment firm closely linked to former New South Wales Liberal Party Minister and party treasurer, Mr Webster. Mr Webster was a senior Minister in the Greiner Government. He also served as the New South Wales Liberal Party's finance director in 2005. Until earlier this year, Korn Ferry listed Mr Webster as its "Senior Client Partner and Head of Asia Pacific Board Services". Public records show that since 2015 Mr Webster has donated over \$61,000 to the Federal Liberal Party. He was responsible for recruiting the icare board director who replaced the Secretary of NSW Treasury, Michael Pratt, after his resignation in 2017. It is incredible that icare would break its own rules and put the former treasurer of the NSW Liberal Party in charge of board recruitment. I understand jobs for the boys but this was complete overreach. It is hard to believe that Korn Ferry would have won this tender without its close connection to the Liberal Party.

A third case is Capgemini. Icare awarded a \$140 million IT contract in a seven-day tender, despite bidders having warned that the rushed process would lead to ruin. Emails obtained by New South Wales Labor in the upper House show that icare's senior leaders ignored the warnings even though multiple bidders withdrew from the tender, protesting the one-week timetable. A consortium of two IT companies, Capgemini and Guidewire, ended up winning the contract having faced no competition. The cost of building icare's new IT platform has since risen to \$360 million and the project is still incomplete. This is fact. It is outrageous that this has been allowed to happen.

Think what that \$360 million could do: It could build a number of schools or help build a hospital in my electorate that I have been begging this Government for. It could provide more teachers and mental health counsellors in schools, more nurses or help at Blacktown Hospital with the obstetricians who have walked out. It is a waste of money that could be supporting those services and our citizens in New South Wales. And this project is still incomplete. The New South Wales upper House is holding an inquiry into Capgemini's relationship with icare's then senior leaders. Icare's former CEO resigned in August after the inquiry heard that Guidewire paid for an undisclosed trip to Las Vegas he took in 2018.

Last year an independent review of icare said that delays in building the IT platform were a major reason why New South Wales return-to-work rates collapsed. But an email reveals that one tenderer who refused to bid

told icare at the time, "The timelines set out in the request for proposal [RFP] document appear extremely aggressive. Based on many long-term government engagements, locally and globally, our opinion is that RFP timelines are unrealistic." Icare's terrible behaviour has passed unnoticed because it could set its own rules. It just did its own thing. This bill intends to shut down this loophole. The provisions of the bill simply remove the Nominal Insurer's exemption from the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912. The amendment defines the Nominal Insurer as a government agency for the purposes of the Act, just like every other government agency. Furthermore, it removes a section in the Workers Compensation Act 1987 that explicitly exempts the Nominal Insurer. It is as straightforward as that but it is a giant step forward in cleaning up this mess.

When the Government makes mistakes and when these things happen, the Government has to admit to wrong and has to fix the wrong. Sometimes the Government has to swallow its pride and do the right thing. This is not about politics. We have to think about who this affects. It affects the people in our electorates. It is not about people living in electorates held by the Labor Party or The Greens; it is about people in all our electorates, the thousands of injured workers in our State. When legislation is introduced or amended we always have to ask: What is its purpose? How will it help someone? Parliamentarians are in this House to help people and to make a better life for people. We are here to advance our State, to be competitive and to follow the rules. We all have to follow the rules.

This agency has been allowed to flout the rules. The Government has allowed this to happen. It has allowed this agency to flourish in wrongdoing and in handing out contracts like confetti without going to tender. The Government can fix this now and help the little guy who is suffering and finding it very difficult to support their family and is on that cliff. Everyone in this place knows that in their electorates there are people who are on the cliff. They are suffering and struggling, compounded by COVID-19. Those opposite should say sorry to our small business operators, our employers, and say, "We will look after every single cent because we know how hard you work and we respect every single cent you contribute in your premium." I will keep reinforcing and repeating that because we on this side are here for those hardworking people. We are here to make sure that this Government does the right thing.

Let us be clear that by voting against this bill the Government is voting for the rorts to continue. It is just perpetual rorts. "Here's a tender. Here's a tender. Here's another tender." There should be no more rorts and the Government should admit that it has done wrong and let down the people. It should also admit to those injured people in all electorates—in places like western Sydney, greater western Sydney, Albury, Goulburn, Myall Lakes and the Upper Hunter—that it has done the wrong thing. Members in this Chamber represent good, hardworking constituents who have been injured and small family businesses who do the right thing and follow the rules. What happens if they do not follow the rules? The Government says they have to get their QR code by 23 November or they will be fined. Everyone else has to follow the rules but not icare.

That is why those opposite should hang their heads, come into this Chamber and say, "Sorry, we will do better." It should apologise to the little guys and help them. The Government should pay them back what they are owed and help the struggling employers. The Government should say sorry and support this bill. Those opposite should do the right thing. If they vote against this bill it sends a signal to the rorters that it is okay to rort and that the Government is open for business to rort. Just five metres from this important Chamber, the Whip's Office was operating as a laundromat. Money was coming in. There was slush fund and a bit of laundering going on—a bit of cleaning of money. These other subbies were coming in, saying, "Here's a bit for you, you and you." All that has to stop and it has to stop now. This Government has allowed these practices. The hubris and arrogance of this Government has to stop.

Those members are in government. They have a responsibility to the people. They are given a commission—not a money commission. They are commissioned by the Governor to do the right thing for the people, to protect them and follow the rules that they set up, not to give exemptions to mates to get commissions, to launder money and to get contracts without tender. Members should think about this. In my portfolio there are a lot of complaints—especially from the startups in IT—about how this Government does not tender a lot of that work. A lot of those small business owners of tech startup companies invest a lot of their own capital. They mortgage their homes so they can get loans to invest in their companies so they can live and fulfil that dream of doing well. But they are not allowed to tender for business because it is already stitched up. This has to stop.

Labor says that employers and sick and injured employees deserve a workers compensation system above reproach. Every dollar that is wasted on a dodgy contract is a dollar not spent helping sick and injured workers get back to work. Every dollar wasted on a dodgy contract is a dollar that we cannot spend lowering premiums for those struggling small businesses in the electorates of all members—not just Opposition members. It is unbelievable that this Government has failed to do anything. The sooner that the bill passes, the better. Those injured workers in members' electorates will feel relief.

I urge Government members to take a walk down the main street of their electorates when they are back in them tomorrow. I urge them to talk to small business owners. I know that many members in this Chamber are hardworking and talk to employers. I urge them to do the pub test: Ask those employers whether they think this is right or wrong. They will tell members that it is wrong. They will tell members that their hard-earned money—their tiny bit of profit—should not be wasted in Las Vegas or in giving out contracts without tender. Every dollar that they contribute should be treated precious. When members talk to their community business owners they should tell them that they respect every dollar that their businesses contribute to premiums. I urge members to have a think about this. I urge them to listen to their community business owners and to their injured workers. I urge members to support the bill.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (11:32:18):** I thank the House for the opportunity to speak in debate on the Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Canterbury, especially her encouragement of all members in this place to walk down our high streets when we are back in our electorates tomorrow and to meet with small business owners. That is a wonderful encouragement, because it flows beautifully into the announcement that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has just made that the Liberal-Nationals Government is providing a \$15 million initiative to stimulate local businesses to support economic recovery in our high streets.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: I appreciate that the member for Mulgoa might not want to focus on the substantive content of the bill, but it is unclear what the announcement by the planning Minister has to do with the content of the bill before the House. I appreciate that Government members are trying to avoid the topic at hand—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have heard enough. There is no point of order. The member for Mulgoa is only one minute into her contribution. She is entitled to make some introductory remarks. The member for Mulgoa has the call.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES:** I was simply making comments in response to the member for Canterbury who urged members to walk down our local streets and speak with local business owners. I am being completely relevant to this debate. The Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020 seeks to amend the legislation governing the status and operation of the Nominal Insurer by making it a government agency for the purposes of the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912. The bill seeks to make this change while the Hon. Robert McDougall, QC, is conducting the icare and State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 independent review. The final report of this review will be delivered in early 2021.

The terms of reference for the independent review are comprehensive and specifically include matters that are the subject of the bill we are now debating. It is important to again emphasise that the bill before the House is seeking to put the cart before the horse. It is jumping the gun on what is an independent review of this very subject. Opposition members always call for proper process, for proper procedures to be followed and for respect of due process, yet they are flouting their own call for such respect of due process by seeking to make amendments to legislation in advance of the findings of an independent review of that legislation. I find it rather hypocritical of the Labor Party to suggest that we make those changes in advance of any findings, which will be announced in just a couple of months.

I will focus on the terms of reference of that independent review, which are in the public domain and easily available on the internet. I again emphasise the content and framework for this independent review. The terms of reference include:

- (1) Comprehensive organisational review of icare, having regard to issues recently raised in the media and in Parliament.

This part of the Review will cover icare's:

...

- (d) Culture
- (e) Governance
- (h) Procurement practices
- (i) Management of probity matters such as gifts, travel, & conflict of interests

...

- (2) Review of the government-managed workers compensation schemes—

including, I note, the Nominal Insurer—

and the legislative framework that supports them.

This part of the Review will consider:

...

- (c) the legislative and regulatory structure of the schemes to the extent they relate to—

the Nominal Insurer. Of further relevance to debate on the bill is paragraph 4 of the terms of reference, which states:

- (4) Recommendations for improvements in line with parts 1-3 of the Terms of Reference, including in relation to:

- (a) organisational effectiveness of icare

...

- (d) any amendments to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 (WC Act) ... to the extent they relate to the above Terms of Reference.

Putting to one side any merit or otherwise of the substantive change to be made by the bill to the status and operation of the Nominal Insurer for the purposes of the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912, it is simply not appropriate to be making a statutory change of this nature while a comprehensive independent review is being conducted by a learned and respected former judge, which includes a statutory review. That is now underway. To do so would be to unnecessarily muddy the waters.

The Hon. Robert McDougall, QC, should be allowed to proceed with the independent review unimpeded by the discussions concerning possible changes to the very subject matter he is reviewing and debate about changes to the legislation that the bill seeks to enact. Any recommendations for changes to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 that the independent review recommends can be considered in due course after the final report of that independent review is delivered in early 2021. I oppose the bill.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (11:39:16):** The Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020 would amend the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 and the Workers Compensation Act 1987 with the effect that the Nominal Insurer would be treated as a government agency for the purposes of the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912. The Nominal Insurer exists for the sole purpose of providing workers compensation insurance for workers in the private sector in New South Wales. It is funded by the contributions made by employers. To treat the Nominal Insurer as a government agency for the purpose of the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 would be highly inappropriate.

Many of the procurement policies and practices that government agencies are bound to follow under that Act and the procurement policy framework and procurement board direction authorised by the Act are simply gold standard procurement practice that any well-run business would seek to follow, such as ensuring value for money. However, other requirements imposed on government agencies would seem to be inappropriate to impose on the Nominal Insurer, which is essentially the trustee of the funds of private sector employees to be applied to the benefit of their employees in the form of workers compensation. For example, government agencies under binding procurement policy framework must in all their procurement activities consider economic development, social outcomes and sustainability. That framework states that by building a diverse supply base government agencies can support businesses of all types to grow and encourage economic development across the State.

The Government uses procurement to support small- and medium-sized businesses, Aboriginal-owned businesses, regional businesses, disability employment organisations and social enterprises. The policy framework further states that sustainable procurement focuses on spending public money efficiently, economically and ethically to deliver value for money on a whole-of-life basis. Sustainable procurement extends the assessment of value for money beyond the sourcing process by considering benefits and risks to the organisation, the community, the economy and impact on the environment. While private sector actors may choose to take such matters into account in their procurement policies, I submit it is not appropriate that it be required by statute. In fact, to require the Nominal Insurer to do so may effectively divert funds from their proper use for compensation payments to injured workers to the support of other social goods, such as increasing Aboriginal employment or lessening impacts on the environment which, however worthy in themselves, are not the proper concern of a workers compensation scheme for private sector employees.

Those obligations on government agencies are expressed in quite detailed directions by the procurement board which, under the bill, would bind the Nominal Insurer. As just one example, the Nominal Insurer would be required in the case of a procurement of goods and services valued at over \$3 million to include in the tender process a minimum 15 per cent non-price evaluation criteria that consider how tenderers will support the Government's economic, ethical, environmental and social priorities. Those requirements are very appropriate in directing how government agencies direct procurement funds but have no place in directing how the Nominal Insurer seeks to make use of the funds derived from private sector employees. The requirements provide the best possible workers compensation for private sector employees. For those reasons, I cannot support the bill.



**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (11:43:27):** I contribute to debate on the Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020 to point out that the bill would change the status of the Nominal Insurer by making it a government agency that is subject to the same procurement policies and directives as apply to all other government agencies. I believe that this is an inopportune proposal. On 25 September 2020 Mr John Robertson took up his duties as the Chair of Insurance and Care NSW. I am sure Opposition members would agree that the former member for Blacktown is very well placed to carry out this very responsible position. He served as a Minister for over two years and, as the Treasurer has noted previously, he is widely respected in the community with extensive experience in politics, the union movement, workers compensation, business and, most recently, as chief operating officer of Foodbank, where he was doing a wonderful job. Indeed, he was the Leader of the Opposition for nearly four years and performed very admirably compared to the current Leader of the Opposition.

As we know, the role of the Leader of the Opposition is a very important role in our parliamentary system and, to be done well, requires a good grasp of public policy issues. In announcing the appointment of Mr Robertson the Treasurer outlined a list of key priorities that he was expected to address including a refresh of the icare board and leading the recruitment of a new CEO; ensuring full cooperation with Robert McDougall to allow the independent review to be delivered by 30 April 2021; ensuring no overseas travel by icare staff unless approved by the board; and overseeing the independent cultural review of the organisation, which has already commenced. Several of those matters could be impacted by the change proposed in the bill. In my view, we should let Mr Robertson get on with the job entrusted to him as the new Chair of icare before we go changing the legislation affecting the Nominal Insurer. The sound operation of the Nominal Insurer is one of the main priorities facing Mr Robertson. For that reason, I oppose the bill.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:46:28):** On behalf of the Government, I participate in debate on the Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020. I acknowledge that this Government is absolutely 100 per cent committed to supporting injured workers right across New South Wales. Icare was established in 2015 and is one of the largest insurance organisations in the entire nation with around \$38 billion of assets including the responsibility for the Workers Compensation Scheme, which members who preceded me in this debate have mentioned, including the member for Mulgoa. The Government engaged in necessary reform because under the previous Labor Government the workers compensation system was not delivering for the workers or the businesses of this great State. Thanks to this Government's reforms the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme now is subject to a greater level of scrutiny and transparency than at any previous time in the history of the scheme.

In addition to having its own independent agency, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, to review its operations, icare is also subject to frequent reviews by the Standing Committee on Law and Justice, budget estimates and other forums. Government reforms have put icare in a better place to support injured workers. For example, former member of the icare board Mark Lennon observed the introduction of a single platform automated front-end system that has clear advantages in assisting many injured workers to get back to work after necessary treatment. It is so important that injured workers receive that treatment but it is clear there are issues that need to be addressed. That is why the scheduled statutory five-year review into icare and the workers compensation schemes have been brought forward with the report due to be released in April 2021. In seeking to continue the reform and improve the workers compensation scheme we cannot afford the cure to be worse than the disease.

We must diagnose the issues, ask the necessary questions and only after coming to a reasonable estimation of what the systemic issues are should we look to prescribe treatment. The review must be allowed to undertake a proper and thorough investigation. Due process must always be followed. As the Treasurer outlined, the review is not run-of-the-mill. It has been expanded to include a root-and-branch examination of icare to ensure that there is strong public confidence in workers compensation in New South Wales, as well as to identify the opportunities to improve the system.

This is a review that, headed by Robert McDougall, QC, will ensure we continue to improve the system and get the best results for injured workers. This is a review that will focus on the entirety of icare—its operations, its governance structure, its finances and the management culture. This is a review that will focus on matters of public interest that have been raised in recent weeks and months—the sustainability of the scheme, the relationship between icare and the regulator, and the effectiveness and accountability of the icare board. This bill, if passed, would put the cart before the horse, carry water in a sieve and have a cure worse than the disease. We need to ensure that Mr McDougall has every opportunity to conduct his work without interference or additional new roadblocks. This review must be allowed to deliver the results for which it was established—to address concerns and enable the claims model to deliver the best outcomes for injured workers, who are the absolute priority.

If this bill is passed, it will amend the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912 to provide that the Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer be subject to the government procurement obligations in part 11 of the Act. Part

11 of the Procurement and Public Works Act 1912 provides the NSW Procurement Board with wide powers to issue legally binding directions to government agencies regarding their procurement. In addition to requiring certain disclosures and processes, these procurement rules given to agencies can often seek to deliver social policy benefits from government expenditure. A great example of this is the direction issued earlier this year in response to the devastating bushfire season in New South Wales. The direction required that New South Wales government agencies use local businesses within those communities impacted by the bushfires and floods wherever possible in the clean-up, repair, rebuilding, remediation and enhancement works in relation to the bushfire season.

Another example is the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, which requires agencies to look at ways to stimulate Aboriginal participation in government procurement through a variety of measures. We have seen this applied effectively on the Central Coast where I live, at Terrigal. The procurement measures were applied to the rebuild of Gosford Hospital. Currently the Nominal Insurer is exempt from such government procurement policies—and for good reason. The reason is every dollar held by the Nominal Insurer is not government money but money that must be spent on getting workers back to work. The Nominal Insurer is established under section 154A of the Workers Compensation Act 1987, which specifically provides that the Nominal Insurer does not represent the State or any authority of the State.

The Nominal Insurer is intended to operate solely for the benefit of private employers and private workers—and so it should be. Changing the framework to apply government rules to a non-government scheme wholly undermines the intention of how the Nominal Insurer is to operate. It is not for the Government to set an unreasonable and burdensome precedent for private businesses to support government initiatives in this way because it is not the Government's money, as I outlined earlier. Indeed, as the member for Newtown ought to know, section 154D of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 specifically provides that the State has no beneficial interest in the assets held in the Nominal Insurer's Workers Compensation Insurance Fund, and that the State therefore is not entitled to any surplus and nor does it hold any liability for any deficit in the fund. On the flip side of this, the legislative framework is designed to keep the Nominal Insurer's finances separate from those of the Government to ensure that taxpayers are not required to support insurance for private businesses.

The cost of the services that the Nominal Insurer provides to private sector employees is funded by a combination of investment returns and workers compensation premiums levied on private sector employees. This bill creates an unnecessary risk in the accounting treatment of the Nominal Insurer by potentially bringing it within the State sector for financial reporting, which would mean that a financial shortfall in funding from the private sector would be transferred to the Government and borne by taxpayers. When it comes to icare, its procurements are a matter for the board and for senior management. I am advised that icare is conducting a review of internal procurement processes to confirm compliance with requirements. Icare will also commission an external third party to review this internal exercise once it is completed. This will provide further assurance of integrity and, most importantly, transparency. *[Extension of time]*

A range of different procurement options are available to icare, aligning with the New South Wales procurement guidelines. Examples of contract arrangements icare enters into that do not require a full open market tender include: first, use of whole of New South Wales government prequalification schemes, which generally only require competitive quotes from selected scheme members for contracts over \$150,000 or \$250,000; secondly, leveraging existing whole of New South Wales government contracts; and, thirdly, piggybacking off other agencies' contracts. When it comes to procurements for the Nominal Insurer, icare is exempt from government procurement rules, as we know. But if there is some suggestion by the member for Newtown that icare has piggybacked on the Nominal Insurer's exemption to government procurement rules when engaging in other procurements, that is a matter for the review to look into. We must allow the work of the review to go ahead unobstructed by haphazard legislative amendments.

I do not question the intentions of the member for Newtown in bringing this bill forward—in fact, I am sure she joins with the Government in seeking to ensure better outcomes for injured workers in New South Wales, who are our priority. But it would be imprudent to seek to make any regulatory or legislative changes while a review is underway. As part of the review the Government has committed to reviewing legislation that has application to the Nominal Insurer, including relevant sections of the Workers Compensation Act 1987. The review will examine those frameworks holistically. Finally, Mr John Robertson has just begun his appointment as the new Chair of icare. Mr Robertson is widely respected in the community and has extensive experience in politics, the union movement, workers compensation, business and, most recently, as the chief operating officer of Foodbank. Members know Robbo exceptionally well; he is a man of very good character.

The list of Mr Robertson's priorities is quite lengthy. The priorities include a refresh of the icare board and leading the recruitment of a new CEO, which is absolutely essential; ensuring full cooperation with Robert McDougall to allow the independent review to be delivered by 30 April 2021; improving return-to-work rates for the Nominal Insurer; providing monthly updates on the pre-injury average weekly earnings remediation

program, which is currently underway, to repay injured workers; and undertaking an immediate review of icare's bonus and remuneration framework. A decision has already been taken that there will be no bonuses for the year ending June 30, 2020, which is quite appropriate. Priorities also include ensuring no overseas travel by icare staff unless approved by the board; overseeing the independent cultural review of the organisation, which has already commenced; and monthly updates on meetings with the regulator, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, to address any issues.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I remind members that under COVID-19 arrangements they must be seated when in the Chamber. The member for Terrigal has the call.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** No matter the intention, changing the legislation now would only undermine and distract from the goal of the review to ensure the provision of exceptional support and care for the injured workers I have spoken about. In these unprecedented times and looking into the future, getting the right outcome is all the more important. That is why the Government opposes the bill.

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (12:01:32):** The Public Works and Procurement Amendment (Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer) Bill 2020 seeks to amend the legislation governing the status and operation of the Nominal Insurer [NI] by making it a government agency for the purposes of the Public Works and Procurement [PWP] Act 1912. The private member's bill was introduced in the Legislative Council on 25 August 2020 by Mr David Shoebridge, MLC. A motion to suspend standing orders to allow debate on the bill on 26 August 2020 was defeated. Part 11 of the PWP Act establishes the NSW Procurement Board with wide powers to issue legally binding directions and mandatory policies to government agencies. The board's exercise of those powers is subject to the direction and control of the Minister for Finance and Small Business.

The Workers Compensation Nominal Insurer is the legal entity that provides workers compensation insurance for non-government employers who do not hold a self-insurance licence. It is established under section 154A of the Workers Compensation Act 1987, which specifically provides that the NI does not represent the State or any authority of the State and is not a government agency for the purposes of part 11 of the PWP Act. Section 154D of the Workers Compensation Act specifically provides that the State has no beneficial interest in those assets of the NI, is not entitled to any surplus and has no liability for any deficit in the fund. The exemption to the PWP Act was utilised for procurements by icare for the NI that have been featured in recent media and parliamentary coverage. However, icare is subject to the obligations in part 11 of the PWP Act for all procurement that is not for the NI.

The bill seeks to make this change while the Hon. Robert McDougall, QC, is conducting the icare and State Insurance and Care Governance Act independent review. The final report is due to be delivered by the end of April 2021. The terms of reference for the independent review are comprehensive and specifically include matters that are the subject of the bill. Those terms of reference include a comprehensive organisational review of icare, having regard to issues recently raised by the media and in Parliament—

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Motions*

#### **NEW LAMBTON PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:05:46):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes a recent change to the intake boundary of New Lambton Public School will see six streets very close to the school and four students excluded from attending the school.
- (2) Notes 68 families attending the school live outside the catchment area.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to change the boundaries to include these six streets.

There is no denying that New Lambton Public School is above capacity. Last year I met with Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW representatives and wrote to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning requesting action to reduce enrolment numbers. As a result of that action, the department changed enrolment boundaries. But in June this year the education department changed the boundaries without any proper community consultation. An online survey asked for feedback. The problem was that the Sydney-centric generated consultation was only shared with the current school community. No attempt was made to make parents who live in the streets that were proposed to change aware of the survey. Does that make sense? No.

My office was informed of the survey just 24 hours before it was due to close. The survey was extended after our intervention. Thankfully, my office and a group of dedicated parents made contact with as many residents

as possible, giving them an opportunity to have their say. The Sydney-generated maps of intake boundary changes made sense at a quick glance, with Lookout Road and Croudace Street creating the line between the intake of New Lambton and Wallsend South public schools. But when locals carefully read the maps, the six-street exclusion on the eastern side of Lookout Road made no sense at all. Homes on the eastern side of Croudace Street, Lookout Road, Ardlessa Way, Floralia Close, Bushlands Close and Ridgeway Road were all excluded.

Croudace Street and Lookout Road are major arterial roads with more than 30,000 car movements a day. They will ultimately be intersected by stage five of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass at completion of construction. More than 1,000 homes on the western side of Lookout Road were changed to the Wallsend South catchment area. From those 1,000 homes I received not a single call, email or complaint about being rezoned, and that was because it made sense to parents to be in the Wallsend South zone. But the children from the six excluded streets, who can currently safely walk to New Lambton Public School—it is only about 200 metres away—will now have to be driven to school. Their parents will have to drive more than 3.4 kilometres to the new school.

When I met with the Minister and Education staff in August, the Newcastle school director was adamant that the school needed to reduce its size by 60 students—fair enough. The department bureaucrats predicted that 40 students from the six streets would attend the school next year. When I asked how they predicted that, they advised it was a formula applied across the catchment area of students per household. That formula is very inaccurate. In conjunction with our office, parents visited every home in the six streets to get an accurate picture of how many students were eligible to attend New Lambton Public School in 2021. The parents doorknocked all 138 homes and had responses from 136. A grand total of two students will be excluded from New Lambton Public School as a result of the exclusion of the six streets.

In stark contrast is the number of out-of-zone students attending the school. I asked the education Minister: How many students are out of the catchment area? The result was that 68 students are currently enrolled at New Lambton Public School from suburbs outside the catchment area, with some living as far away as Blacksmiths. For non-locals, including the Sydney bureaucrats, Blacksmiths is in the Swansea electorate and 22 kilometres from New Lambton Public School. A quick search shows that there are 20 public schools closer to Blacksmiths than New Lambton. Why is the Newcastle director not investigating those anomalies? Why has the Minister decided to punish students who can currently walk to school by shifting them to a school requiring them to be driven across Newcastle's busiest road?

Apparently the Department of Education's advertisements that tout walking to school habits exclude the Wallsend electorate—another matter for the department to investigate. In my time in this place I have seen decisions that made me shake my head, but this one takes the cake. Our community is not asking for much. I am asking the Newcastle director to make sense. Look carefully at the 68 families from way out of the zone who have been allowed to enrol and exclude them. We never ask for much in Wallsend. Residents agree with 99 per cent of the changes to the boundaries but excluding the six streets is just crazy. The streets must be included next year.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (12:12:37):** I speak to the motion brought on by the member for Wallsend—the very lovely member for Wallsend. I have a lot of time and respect for the member for Wallsend. However, as I have in the past, I am compelled yet again to put some facts on the table and maybe enlighten her with some more detail. Under the Department of Education's Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools policy—herein called "the policy"—a student is entitled to enrol at the school within the designated intake area that the student is eligible to attend. Parents may apply to enrol their child in their school of choice. However, acceptance to a non-local school is subject to the child being eligible to attend and the school being able to accommodate the child.

The policy outlines designated intake areas or enrolment boundaries that are determined in consultation with the department's demographers, directors, educational leadership, school principals and local communities. The department continually monitors population and development trends, and periodically reviews boundaries to account for population changes. The data collected by the department guides the decision-making process when it comes to boundary adjustments. It includes consideration of not only current student numbers but also, importantly, future projections. The Department of Education collates information from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and local councils. Enrolment projections are based on the New South Wales Government's common planning assumptions.

It is vital that any changes to a school's enrolment boundary is done in consultation with the local community and in the interests of ensuring that all students living within the designated intake area of a school are able to be accommodated. As part of the school communities planning initiative, groups of schools work together when required to share enrolment growth. Boundaries are adjusted and schools with the ability to expand may be upgraded or new schools may be built. The Department of Education has undertaken consultation in line with its practices and procedures in regard to the adjusted enrolment boundaries for New Lambton Public School, Lambton Public School, Wallsend South Public School and New Lambton Heights Infants School. Consultation

with the local community took place in the lead-up to the exhibition of the new enrolment boundaries in July 2020.

The member for Wallsend met with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC, and representatives from the Department of Education, including School Infrastructure NSW and School Operations and Performance, in relation to this matter in late August 2020. The meeting canvassed information previously shared with the local community and the need to adjust the enrolment boundaries. Over recent years enrolment demand for New Lambton Public School has increased, requiring additional temporary teaching spaces to accommodate students. The adjustments to the enrolment boundaries are about ensuring that student demand is managed across the school community group and so the department is able to best utilise permanent teaching spaces.

It is why the adjustment to the New Lambton Public School intake area was not done in isolation. The school is part of a broader school community group and the enrolment demand is managed across a number of schools. The revised catchment boundaries include adjustments to Lambton Public School, Wallsend South Public School and New Lambton Heights Infants School intake areas. The decision to adjust the boundaries and to shift the three sections of the previous New Lambton Public School intake area was made based on available data and informed by engagement with the local community. The member claims that the decision impacts only four students. However, this is not reflected in the data held by the Department of Education. As was said earlier, the changes are not just about managing the current student demand. Changes are reflective of future demand, and under the previous boundaries New Lambton Public School would have experienced significant pressure and required the placement of additional temporary teaching facilities. That would adversely impact the amenity of the school site and remove vital green, open space.

I am advised that the New Lambton Public School site is constrained and not suitable for future expansion, and that is why the boundary adjustment was necessary. The adjustments to the boundaries are in anticipation of future enrolment demand, which would be more easily accommodated at Wallsend South Public School and Lambton Public School, both of which are on larger sites. The member refers to 68 families living outside the school's intake area. In 2019 the New South Wales Government clarified the enrolment policy as it relates to the processing of non-local enrolment applications.

The clarification was aimed at supporting schools to manage non-local enrolment applications, encouraging greater consistency in decision-making, and making sure that enrolment choices are clear for parents. It also improves fairness and transparency in enrolment, promotes equity of resourcing school communities and strengthens each school as the centre of its local community. The figures cited are a reflection of historic enrolments and not future enrolments. The revision of the policy will ensure greater consistency in the consideration of non-local enrolment applications. I trust that information is very useful to the member for Wallsend—now she may even withdraw the motion.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (12:19:10):** I make a brief contribution to support the member for Wallsend's plea to the Government to fix this anomaly on behalf of the community of New Lambton. Her contribution regarding its impact on the local community was very sensible. It is something that would be easy for the Minister to fix, but having listened to the member for Upper Hunter it seems that the Government will be digging its heels in on this one. His contribution centred around—

**Mr Michael Johnsen:** You did not listen.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Upper Hunter has made his contribution.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I was listening to the member. I will reference a few things that he said. His contribution seemed to focus a lot on the fact that the Government asserts that it has consulted with the community on this change. But if you were living in that community you might have a different view, and that is why the member for Wallsend has moved this motion. But this is something that this Government does everywhere. Even with the most simple changes, such as the Department of Education redrawing a line somewhere that makes a difference to families in terms of where they send their children to school, the Government thinks that it knows better than mums and dads in New Lambton. I do not know why this should be surprising. The Government's consultation record when it comes to changes in education is absolutely abysmal.

I am glad that the member for Tweed is in the Chamber, because I am going to paint a picture of something about which the Government said it has consulted the community on. In the community of Murwillumbah the Government committed to several upgrades. The Minister responsible has been repeatedly asked by the local member and other shadow Ministers in the Legislative Council when these upgrades will occur. She keeps saying that they are coming and to be patient while the Government consults with the community. But it turns out that,

in lieu of the promised upgrades, four local schools will instead be merged into one American-style mega school, about which no-one in the community was consulted.

The Government has forced this decision on the community and told students and parents that the new school will be better and that it knows what will work in their suburb. The Minister goes into an electorate that is not hers and says that the Government knows what upgrades are needed for local schools. How arrogant is that? I appreciate that the member for Upper Hunter gets handed a briefing note by the office of the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, but he should realise that when he is reading out a note that says the Government is consulting when it comes to schools, its record is abysmal. Those opposite close schools. They do not consult with the community. Even on the simplest changes they do not consult with the community.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Upper Hunter has had his chance.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They close schools and flog off the land so they can build a mega school. Communities are going to lose their schools. In the case of New Lambton, they changed the boundaries, which to them is just the mark of a pen but it actually makes a big difference to local mums and dads. They think they know better than local communities. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (12:23:33):** Whilst I acknowledge the gesture from the member for Wallsend in trying to accommodate all the students of her local schools, I highlight that there are 2,200 public schools across the State serving over 800,000 students. It is the job of the department to ensure that it monitors and manages these schools civilly and responsibly to ensure that the very best educational opportunities are provided. I represent an area that has seen enormous growth. I have seen new schools created and boundaries changed regularly in my time as a member, as well as prior to that when I was a councillor. In that time I have yet to see a situation that could not be resolved through consultation between a school's principal and regional directors.

When I read in the first point of this motion that there are four students who will no longer be able to attend school, I wondered whether the member for Wallsend had spoken to the principal or the regional directors. I have never had a request to accommodate four students refused. In fact, there have been many occasions where I have requested that students are moved across boundaries in order to be kept together with their siblings. I put on the record that I have yet to have a request like that refused when a principal and a school's regional directors have worked together, but I acknowledge that the member for Wallsend is well-intentioned and good-hearted in moving this motion. There is no better way to accommodate the educational needs of students across this State than clearing the maintenance backlog in all schools. With that said, I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

"This House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government on its record investment of \$6.7 billion in 190 new and upgraded schools across NSW.
- (2) Commends the Government for reducing the massive maintenance backlog in schools left by the former Government."

There were severe cases of disrepair in New South Wales when I was elected to the Parliament in 2007. The Government at the time addressed the problem by selling no fewer than nine school sites between 2007 and 2011. I do not know who the beneficiary of that sell-off was. I do not imagine for one moment they were like coalmines with people like Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald interested in buying them, but I question why the then Government sold off the sites, leaving a massive backlog that required \$6.7 billion of investment to repair and upgrade 190 schools across the State.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:27:47):** I congratulate the member for Wallsend on moving this important motion that represents the interests of her local constituency and the concerns of parents and students in both her local area and mine, because there are also concerned parents in my electorate who send their children to New Lambton Public School. Education is a silver bullet. Good early child education sets up a child to succeed at primary school, which in turn lays the foundation for success in high school, further education and the rest of their lives. This provides greater options for a young person's future, increasing the likelihood of lifelong success that undeniably provides social and economic good.

Every parent wants to give their child the best possible start in life, which is why few things generate as much anxiety as the education of their children. As a result, many families purchase their homes based on school catchment areas. Earlier this year when the catchment boundaries for New Lambton Public School were changed, a number of concerned parents reached out to me and the member for Wallsend. One local parent shared the feedback she provided to the department about the proposed boundary adjustment on the Google Docs survey that was circulated. Yes, there was consultation, but I certainly do not think it was taken into consideration in the decision. This parent wrote:

I am very disappointed in the proposal. Like many others, we bought a house in the New Lambton Public School catchment area for that exact reason.

We elected to send our daughter to [New Lambton Heights Infants] school for K-2 because we were wanting to begin her formal education in a smaller, family-oriented, close-knit school. The reputation of the school and knowledge of it flowing on to New Lambton Public School was a "no-brainer" for my husband and I. Furthermore, the OOSH is run by the same organisation as New Lambton Public School, which would enable a smooth transition with guaranteed days and familiar, trusted staff. I'm sure you can appreciate that for us as full-time professionals employed in the NSW public service the OOSH service is imperative.

This parent also pointed out that New Lambton Public School is reportedly in excess of 120 per cent enrolment. While she acknowledged that this level of overcrowding was problematic, she correctly identified a broader issue.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I remind members that under Standing Order 54 they must remain seated while in the Chamber.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** How could department planners justify redistricting families to attend Wallsend South Public School, which is already over capacity? This is not an issue that can be solved by redrawing catchment areas. We are facing a crisis of overcrowding in New South Wales public schools. It is a problem across the Charlestown electorate. Twelve out of the 22 public primary and high schools in my electorate are already over-enrolled, and with projected population increases that overcrowding is set to become worse. Eight local schools in the Charlestown electorate are already facing enrolment above the 120 per cent benchmark identified by that parent at New Lambton Public School. Kahibah Public School was at 167 per cent enrolment at the beginning of 2020, according to information from the department obtained during budget estimates. Charlestown and Dudley public schools were at enrolment levels higher than 140 per cent. Eleebana, Redhead and New Lambton South public schools are looking at enrolment levels above 130 per cent. The same parent said:

You owe it to the local community to provide at least 12 months' notice. People plan for school placement.

I know she is not alone in her feelings. It is not a problem that can be fixed by tinkering around with catchment zones. It is unconscionable that this overcrowding crisis is allowed to continue. Our kids deserve better.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:31:57):** I have always had a great deal of time and respect for the member for Wallsend. Public education is critical for our future. The member for Castle Hill has moved a very good amendment to the motion brought by the member for Wallsend. The member for Londonderry made a contribution but failed to deliver any facts. I have four schools in my area—Tweed River High School, Kingscliff High School, Kingscliff Public School and Tweed Heads South Public School—that are all going through upgrades worth \$140 million. The member for Londonderry referred to Murwillumbah. Although that is outside my electorate, I know significant consultation will be taking place there over the next few months. The Government has already allocated \$100 million to that expansion. The local Federal member announced that the Government would, to use her words, "sell it to their developer mates". That is totally false and misleading. That land was committed to remain in public hands.

The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, is doing a fabulous job. Apart from the \$140 million committed to my electorate, in the last few years there has been a \$25 million brand-new primary school at Pottsville. Education is changing and we need to change the way we deliver it. A major part of the modern method of delivering education is with technology, open classrooms and connectivity in order to give our kids, who are our future, the best possible start. The Government is addressing the backlog of maintenance in the Tweed, and I am sure that is being done across the State. When I came into this place in 2007—together with the member for Wallsend and the member for Wyong, who took leave for four years but it is good to see him back—I was horrified at the backlog. Our schools were being treated as second class. It was very easy to slice the budget from time to time. From 2011 the Government committed to reduce the maintenance backlog and it has made great inroads.

Every school holidays when I drive around my local area I see tradesmen fixing and upgrading at all the schools. All my P&Cs are very impressed with the maintenance and the facilities their children are experiencing, and I see that trend continuing. I look forward to the budget next Tuesday when I believe there will be more money for education. It has been a tough year. Both sides of the House acknowledge it has been a tough year for year 12 students dealing with different rules and regulations due to the pandemic. The HSC has now been completed and some schools can hold formals. It has all been done with thought and planning. I regularly meet with my principals, who are the experts in delivering education. The principal at Murwillumbah has the support of four principals and my principals have the support of another four principals. They tell me that this is the best thing that has ever happened to education. I endorse the amendment by the member for Castle Hill.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (12:36:15):** By leave: I support the motion of the member for Wallsend. The amendment moved by the Government is very disingenuous. The member for Wallsend has raised a very important issue to her community. I am a former school principal of 23 years. I know the heartbreak that these sorts of decisions can cause. The member for Lakemba, who is in the Chamber, would also have dealt with these

issues. I say to the Government that I have dealt with government education demographers for a long time. They deal with numbers and lines on maps, not necessarily human beings and the effects on families. One of the biggest issues around where boundaries are set is what is called "communities of interest". They have to understand when boundaries are changed life outcomes for students can be changed because if everyone in their surrounding area goes to a different school it can have a huge social impact on them.

In this case, I know from talking to the member for Wallsend that the students from those six streets will now have to cross a very busy road to reach their other school. So there are safety concerns as well. Sometimes we cannot just rely on numbers and lines on maps, we have to understand the impact on students and families. In this case, as the member for Charlestown said, parents have replied to the survey they were asked to respond to and they gave real and relevant reasons why this is not a good idea. We are not talking about 1,000 kids or 100 kids, we are not even talking about 20 kids. We are talking about four students in six streets. Surely the Government can be flexible enough to take into account the needs of those families and their community of interest. Their community of interest is in their current school. It is not moving them to a different school because it makes sense statistically. Students in high school can better cope with change. Here we are talking about very young people. The Government can move an amendment and say it is doing great things in education but education is not about buildings. Education is about kids and families and teachers and how we grow young people.

Sometimes in this place we get too caught up in numbers and how many dollars we are spending and we forget what schools and education are all about. They are about people. Surely, as the member for Wallsend asked, the zone boundary change could be reconsidered. It is not a huge ask; in fact, it is quite a small ask. There is no legitimate reason why the families in those six streets cannot stay in their community of interest at the school they are currently served by instead of having to cross a busy road and be away from the young people they mix with every day. There is no reason to have such a massive change and to cause so much disruption just because the Government wants to adjust a few numbers and lines on a map. The Government has moved an amendment to the motion which talks about how much it has spent. That is great but let us think about actual children. We are talking about the effects of this change on five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-, 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds. That is what we should be talking about here today.

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:40:40):** In reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Upper Hunter, Londonderry, Castle Hill, Charlestown, Tweed and Wyong for their contributions to this debate. The Government's amendment makes a mockery of an important local issue that has been brought by a local MP about a local school which the Department of Education is not addressing. All I am asking the department to do is to listen to the local community and include those six streets in the New Lambton Public School catchment. That is all I am asking. It is not a big ask. It is lovely for Government members to talk about the pots of gold and the schools that are being built in their electorates. The population in Wallsend, like many areas in the western suburbs, is growing by huge amounts. Where are the schools being built in the Wallsend electorate? Nowhere.

The member for Wyong mentioned demographers. The demographer talked to me on the day I met with the education Minister and the department. I would describe the job of demographers as shifting the deckchairs on the *Titanic*. What demographers do—and they get paid very highly for it—is say, "Look, we've got too many students at New Lambton so we're just going to shift them to another school." There is no accountability or care about whether students will have to cross a dangerous, busy road to get to a new school or that their parents had moved to the area, not 200 metres from the school, so their children could walk to a local school. This change does not make sense. I note my disappointment at the local Department of Education in Newcastle. It is not the first time I have had difficulty with department staff not listening to the local community. Yes, they return my calls, as do the principals. I am a former public school teacher, so I understand a little about what schools need—or I hope I do. But some staff of the education department seem to be more interested in certain lobby groups and what the department says and not in what the local parents have to say.

Finally, I say that the department needs to investigate enrolment zones all over the State. When a school like New Lambton Public School has 68 students out of area enrolled—some from large distances away—there is something wrong. Why is the principal and the education department in Newcastle allowing 68 parents to send their children to this school? That is 2½ classrooms. They should not be there. There is something incorrect about this process and it needs to be fixed. If the department is saying to me, "Sonia, we have to move some kids because the school is too big," it should look at those 68 students and investigate why they are coming to that school. It should send them to their local public school, where they will be best served and where, heaven knows, they may be able to walk to school. I will not stop at this. It needs to be fixed and those children and families need to be included in their local zone. Members should not support the Government's amendment. It does not address the problem and it does not listen to the local MP's simple request. I urge members to support the original motion and forget about the inconsequential amendment.



**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The member for Wallsend has moved a motion, to which the member for Castle Hill has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....44  
Noes .....41  
Majority.....3

**AYES**

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Barilaro, J  
Berejiklian, G  
Bromhead, S  
Clancy, J  
Constance, A  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Gibbons, M  
Griffin, J  
Gulaptis, C

Hancock, S  
Henskens, A  
Johnsen, M  
Kean, M  
Lee, G  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
O'Dea, J  
Pavey, M  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D

Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G  
Smith, N  
Speakman, M  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Upton, G  
Ward, G  
Williams, L  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

**NOES**

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P

Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Greenwich, A  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Hornery, S  
Kamper, S  
Lalich, N  
Lynch, P  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKay, J

Mehan, D (teller)  
Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Parker, J  
Piper, G  
Saffin, J  
Scully, P  
Smith, T  
Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)

**PAIRS**

Conolly, K  
Coure, M  
Hazzard, B

Warren, G  
Mihailuk, T  
Zangari, G

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (12:53:11):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Evans Head and Yamba surf life saving clubs on their success in receiving \$100,000 and \$30,000 grants respectively to refurbish their clubs' amenities.

- (2) Recognises the incredible role surf clubs play in communities by teaching young people a whole range of life skills as well as teaching them to save lives.
- (3) Recognises the upgraded amenities will improve conditions for current surf club members as well as encourage more young people to participate in these two life saving clubs.
- (4) Thanks the Government for its contribution of \$130,000 towards supporting surf life saving clubs in the Clarence electorate.

It is terrific that this motion has come on today because, as we know, today is Surf Life Saving NSW Volunteer Recognition Day. This is the day when we recognise that iconic bronze Aussie by which the whole world knows us, the Aussie lifesaver. It stands to reason that as we have the best beaches in the world we also have the best lifesavers. I can honestly say that I always feel safe when I go to the beach and I see that it is a patrolled beach. They warn me of rips, stingers and other little nasties and bities. I am reassured when I am in the water, feeling like Aquaman but swimming like Eric the Eel, that I will be safe.

On behalf of the House, I extend our thanks and gratitude to all the surf clubs in New South Wales for the wonderful selfless service that they give to their communities. It is important that government support our lifesaving clubs. I thank the New South Wales Government for the continual grants it has given to the Evans Head and Yamba surf clubs, which mean they can upgrade their facilities and so attract new members and continue their wonderful work on our beaches in the summer. Evans Head and Yamba are beautiful coastal towns in my electorate. You can leave Byron Bay to the movie stars, the trendies and the wannabes and experience a real Australian summer holiday at some of the best beaches in Australia in a real coastal town with real people. And of course in our coastal towns you will find that iconic Australian, the bronze Aussie lifesaver who we recognise today.

The Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club has a proud history that resonates through its current members, who do an incredible job each summer to save lives and to help train our young people—and, in fact, those who are not so young—to be fit and healthy. I acknowledge the Evans Head club committee, which includes president, Avan Christie; vice-president, David Sly; club captain, Michael Pontefract; club vice-captain, Aidan Yourell; secretary, Teena Redman; treasurer, Troy Irwin; chief instructor, Donna Watts; junior activities chairperson, Lucy Ellis; boat captain, Peter Hickey; mobile service officer, Ben Redman; first aid officer, Maria Ellis; media officer, Debbie Pawsey; and fundraising, Jo Sly.

Evans Head has some magnificent beaches. Main Beach, the only patrolled beach at Evans Head, is a safe stretch of sand with one permanent rip at its southern end, right next to the north wall. Surfers use it to propel themselves out to sea but new swimmers should be aware that it will take you out of your depth very quickly, so keep kids on inner tubes out of this area. Further north along Airforce Beach rips become more regular and more intense. Surf is bigger and the chance of a rescue becomes more remote, so take care. Shark Bay, tucked between the south wall and the headland, may look safe one day but it could be very dangerous the next. In big surf, tonnes of on-rushing water have nowhere to escape. Surfers use them to their advantage but great care is needed for inexperienced swimmers.

One of my favourites is Chinamans Beach on the southern side of Goanna Headland. It is a paradise and we expect you to treat it as such—no dogs, no rubbish and no nonsense. This beautiful beach can throw up a chaotic, pounding surf and a powerful longshore current before ripping out to sea. On days when Main Beach looks small Chinamans Beach is much bigger, so people need to take care. There are several scallop-shaped beaches around the perimeter of Goanna Headland. All of them are remote, all beautiful and all capable of drowning the careless swimmer. There is no doubt the beaches of Evans Head offer a real paradise but they can be dangerous.

Yamba is my home beach and I am very proud of the Yamba Surf Club. Yamba Surf Club was founded on 9 September 1908 and is one of the oldest surf clubs in the world. The club celebrated its 100th year of continuous service in September/October 2008. It is very proud of the fact that in its first 100 years no lives have been lost through drowning on Main Beach whilst patrols have been operating. The Yamba Surf Life Saving Club was formed at a meeting at the Yamba School of Arts on 9 September 1908 and has been operating continuously since that time. It is the oldest surf club on the Far North Coast of New South Wales and, as I said previously, one of the oldest in the world.

In March 1908 teenagers Walter Freeburn and Clarrie Redman used a life buoy and line to rescue Maclean resident Samuel Dhu in a heavy swell at the northern end of Main Beach. They received Royal Shipwreck and Humane Society of NSW awards for their efforts and this rescue was the catalyst for the formation of the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club. Both men became valued members of the new club under the inaugural president, Ted Cox, club captain, Bill Black; and secretary/treasurer and instructor, George Lowe. The first club rooms were built in the 1913-14 season and the present clubhouse was opened in 1931, with extensions and alterations occurring in

subsequent years. The club has operated uninterrupted by world wars and the Depression since its inception over 100 years ago.

The Yamba Surf Life Saving Club's mission is to provide a beach environment that is safe and desirable for use by the public. The club aims to encourage a professional, competitive and social environment that ensures the overall safety of the public. I congratulate its directors, including chairman, Joe Dougherty; deputy chairman, Chris Moran; administration director, Leah Essex; finance director, Tim Small; lifesaving director, James Ryan; education director, Danielle Connolly; surf sports director, Jim Dougherty; clubhouse director, Alan Lawrence; and Junior Activities Committee director, James Forbes. Of course, I make special mention of Barrie Cribb, who passed away this year. He served more than 75 years as a lifesaver. They reckon he swam more than a million laps of the Yamba rock pool. He used to swim up to a kilometre until well into his 90s.

The primary purpose of the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club is to patrol Yamba Main Beach, keeping it safe for the beach-going public. The Yamba surf club also patrols Turners Beach, which is adjacent to the south wall, and Pippi Beach. The club has approximately 10 patrol groups that are rostered for duty on weekends and public holidays and throughout the summer season. The patrol season commences at the start of the September school holidays and finishes on the last weekend in April. They do a terrific job, and members need to recognise them today on Surf Life Saving NSW Volunteer Recognition Day.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** I thank the member for Clarence. I know Yamba Beach. I was taken out by a rip when I was six years old, and if it was not for my Zippy board I would not be here today.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (13:00:33):** I speak in debate on the motion of the member for Clarence. I am a surf lifesaver and have been for 20-something years. I recognise the great job that volunteer surf life rescue people do, the growing professional job that they do and the level of training and skill involved in their job. I join the member in congratulating Evans Head and Yamba surf life saving clubs. It is really good that they have received grants to refurbish their club amenities. I know that a few years back our surf club at Soldiers Beach was totally rebuilt. We certainly enjoy those facilities today, including the new tower that allows us to keep a close eye on the beach, particularly in bad weather conditions.

Surf lifesavers are drawn from different parts of the community. There has been added pressure in recent years, particularly with young people having weekend work. It has put a lot of pressure on the number of people available to do patrols. I know that in our club we have gone from running 10 patrols of about 14 people to being down to six patrols this year. That means that we virtually patrol every weekend; I think every month we get one weekend off. That certainly puts a lot of pressure on the volunteers. I am also aware that many of the volunteers are getting older. In our patrol now quite a number of us are 40-plus; I am obviously 50-plus. That is making it more and more difficult to do re-qualification. Some days when the surf is particularly big—

**Mr Christopher Gulaptis:** You send the kids out.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** That is right. We try to send the young people out, but sometimes they are not there. It is a challenge. I know that Surf Life Saving NSW has just put a new constitution out for consultation. I know that it is looking at different methods for recruitment and trying to get more people onto the beach volunteering, particularly people from multicultural backgrounds to better reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve. Two years ago I was involved in a rescue where a person of Chinese descent got into trouble and had to be rescued. That person did not speak English. We had to find a member of the public on the beach—it was quite crowded that day—who spoke Mandarin in order for us to be able to talk to the patient. It was a very difficult situation. The ambulance officers wanted him to go to hospital for observation, but we were not able to get him into the ambulance because he did not understand what we were trying to convey. I think having a multicultural flavour, if you like, to the surf lifesaving movement is very important—not just in Sydney but in regional areas as well.

As Yamba and Evans Head would experience, we get a lot of tourists. At Soldiers Beach we have the Norah Head Caravan Park, which is full on weekends. Many of those people come down to enjoy the beach and many of them have no swimming skills at all. We call them the "Kmart brigade". They come down with their brand-new boogie board and no flippers and immediately head for the calmest water on the beach, which as members will know is the rip. They get dragged out very quickly to the back and require attention. It is amazing how many people still think that they do not have to swim between the flags and get offended when you ask them to move to the flags. Surf life saving is a great movement. I joined in the under-5s back at Umina surf club. I had a few years off when I did my country service in teacher, and I have come back to surf lifesaving. I have been a member of Soldiers Beach club since 2007. It is a great lifestyle and a great community service. It is actually a great way to keep a little bit of fitness. These days I shout the chips on patrol, so I cannot say our diet is necessarily great. But that is one of the attractions to come to our patrol: you get free chips and gravy—whatever works and gets the people coming back!

I foreshadow that I will move an amendment to the motion. I do not want to take away from the fact that the member for Clarence has moved a motion about the funding for Evans Head and Yamba surf lifesaving clubs. My amendment is in recognition that today is Surf Life Saving NSW Volunteer Recognition Day, as the member stated in his contribution. It is not meant to detract from the member's motion but to recognise that all of our surf clubs right across New South Wales do an incredible job serving their communities. We need to highlight the fact that we need to attract more members, and having new facilities certainly does that. Increasing funding for surf clubs is certainly one way to make sure that we get proper representation on all of our beaches, and particularly that we get new members in younger age groups so that us old fellows do not have to go out in sometimes dangerous conditions to try to keep people safe. I move this amendment in the proper spirit. It is an opportunity to broaden the scope of the motion to reflect the fantastic job that surf lifesaving does across New South Wales. Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

"this House

- (1) Notes surf lifesavers across New South Wales do a fantastic job.
- (2) Congratulates Evans Head and Yamba surf life saving clubs on their efforts protecting lives.
- (3) Calls on the Government to increase funding for all surf clubs in New South Wales."

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:07:25):** I speak in support of the motion of the member for Clarence. I am a member of the Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club and I am patron of the lower North Coast branch. I have five surf clubs in my electorate, and I thank every single one of those clubs and the volunteers within them for what they have done. Over the last few years they have been involved in many rescues. They have been involved in body retrievals and all sorts of things. As volunteers, they do a fantastic job. The clubs in my electorate are the Black Head Surf Life Saving Club, Taree Old Bar Surf Life Saving Club, Forster, Pacific Palms and Cape Hawke. Along with Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club, they make up the lower North Coast branch. The branch president is Brian Wilcox, who does a fantastic job. Those surf clubs have a rapid response team, and each of the clubs—with their education officers and training officers—contain very dedicated people. They are very professional. When you think about it, they are all volunteers putting in their own time to do this.

The funding going into the surf clubs from this Government is absolutely fantastic. The surf clubs in my electorate are very happy with the level of funding. For example, only last week Black Head Surf Life Saving received \$56,000 for an all-terrain vehicle, a wind turbine and retaining walls and \$107,412 for solar, water storage and security systems. Just before that it received almost \$200,000 for an upgrade for the surf club. On top of that it received \$122,251 to upgrade the public toilets that are connected to the surf club, adjacent to the ocean pool. Just this week the Taree Old Bar Surf Life Saving Club received \$56,000 for new shower and toilet facilities together with an upgrade of the first aid room.

A few weeks ago an allocation of \$350,000 was made to enable the club to undertake a stage one upgrade of facilities. Being so close to the beach, all surf clubs have problems with rust and concrete cancer and that \$350,000 will fix up some of those problems and fund an extension to the building. A couple of years ago the Forster Surf Life Saving Club received a million dollars for an upgrade. In a couple of weeks there will be a major announcement, so people should hang onto their hats and wait for that. The Pacific Palms Surf Club is beautiful. I give a shout-out to Kel McCredie. The club received \$282,750 to replace a deck, in addition to previous grants that paid for the installation of windows that overlook the beach and the upgrade of other facilities.

The Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club is an absolutely beautiful club at One Mile Beach. As I said, it is not just about the bricks and mortar but the people who are involved, including all the volunteers. It is one thing to say we have all these fantastic volunteers who spend a lot of their time training, educating and helping people, but they must have the correct facilities to be able to do that. It is great to hear the member for Wyong mention the new surf club tower in his electorate. As I said, all the clubs either have had major upgrades or will have major upgrades soon. I congratulate all those involved in the clubs and again thank them.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:11:16):** I know it is unusual for the member for Blue Mountains to speak during debate on surf life saving clubs but I participate in this debate as the shadow Minister for Emergency Services to acknowledge the fantastic volunteers who are involved in surf life saving clubs and point out that they come within the ambit of emergency services. As my sons were growing up, travelling from the trees to the seas was part of every school holiday and the iconic red-and-yellow uniforms were part of their growing up. My contribution to debate on the motion moved by the member for Clarence will be brief but it will serve to acknowledge that today is Surf Life Saving Volunteer Recognition Day.

The recognition day is a great opportunity for us to acknowledge, honour and pay tribute to the fantastic people who provide protection on our beaches. Their training is at the highest standard. They provide assistance

to visitors. As the member for Wyong said, there are many more visitors to our beaches who have no idea of the threats to their safety that they may encounter. For those of us who live miles from the rips and the red-and-yellow uniform of our beaches, television programs like *Bondi Rescue* provide us with an opportunity to tune in and refresh our memories of what beach life is like. Today I will attend a function that acknowledges some of those fantastic volunteers.

I take the opportunity presented by this debate to state on the record that it is not just the volunteer aspect of surf lifesaving but the emergency response role of surf lifesaving that is important. Our lifeguards, who have years of experience, provide training to our nippers in surf sports and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Community education and first aid training is part and parcel of the surf lifesaving world. I briefly refer to paragraph (2) of the motion, which states that surf lifesaving clubs across the State teach "young people a whole range of life skills as well as teaching them to save lives." That is certainly true. While we think of beaches as fun places, there exists an element of emergency, sometimes involving matters of life and death. I recognise the incredible work of surf clubs across the State for their role as emergency service providers. I support the amendment moved by the member for Wyong, which points out that all clubs across of New South Wales are worthy of funding and support for upgraded facilities so that their volunteers, club members and visitors to the beaches can benefit.

**Debate interrupted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** It being 1.15 p.m. I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Members*

#### **MEMBER FOR BLACKTOWN**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend good wishes to the member for Blacktown on his birthday.

*Announcements*

#### **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE AWARDS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the following staff who have received parliamentary service awards: heading the list at 30 years' service is Helen Minnican, our Clerk; 25 years' service award to Debbie Newton, Clarence electorate office, and Marilyn Cameron, previously North Shore electorate office; 20 years' service award to Danny Heldal, Table and Chamber Services, and Mohini Mehta, committees office; 15 years' service award to Diane Leahy, Coffs Harbour electorate office, Simon Johnston, Table and Chamber Services, and Dora Oravec, committees office; and 10 years' service to Rhonda Hanbury, Penrith electorate office, Jennifer Brinsmead, Tweed electorate office, and Perri Hodge, Cessnock electorate office. To all of you, thank you and congratulations. They are significant milestones and you are appreciated by all who work in this Parliament and the public as well.

*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 in the absence of the Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections I will take questions on his behalf.

*Question Time*

#### **STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:19:35):** I direct a question to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House that given the evidence before the Public Accountability Committee's inquiry into her rorting of the Stronger Communities Fund if she will appear before the committee to answer critical questions about the shredding of documents in her office?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:19:56):** I am not sure if members caught an inappropriate word that the Leader of the Opposition used in her question but I am happy to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wakehurst and the member for Maroubra will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am happy to answer the question even though—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** That will be the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Mr Speaker, they have asked the question.

**The SPEAKER:** An Opposition member has asked the question. Opposition members will remain silent. Government members will not encourage interjections. All members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I reject the words used by the Leader of the Opposition in her question. I have answered multiple questions in relation to this matter and I will continue to provide any information that is required.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129. The question is: Will you appear before the committee—yes or no?

**The SPEAKER:** The question has been answered.

### EDUCATION

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (14:20:55):** I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is improving education and skills across the State?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21:05):** I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question. Only last Monday I joined the member and the education Minister from the other place to view the new school being built at Edmondson Park. It was pleasing to see. When we built the South West Rail Link, those opposite said that it would be a white elephant because nobody lived there. Now there are thousands of people living there. In fact, the car park has been expanded from 400 to 1,000.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Like a lot of projects, those opposite talked about it for years and never delivered. We are delivering on this side of the House.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is an example of the Government ensuring that we are ahead of the curve when it comes to education and that education is an enabler. We know it should not matter what your postcode is or what your circumstances are. If you have access to a good education in this State you are able to achieve anything. That is the philosophy behind this Government's record investment in education. I acknowledge the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and the Treasurer for finding those extra vital dollars, even though we are going through a difficult financial time in this State, to make sure that our students have the best chance to be their best. As part of this year's budget we have been pleased to announce an extra \$600 million going to education out of the \$3 billion acceleration fund in order to support jobs.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Out of those extra dollars, there will be three brand-new schools.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** They are Edmondson Park, as we have noted; Googong, as we have noted; and Murrumbateman—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** And a number of upgrades to schools across New South Wales.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite talk a lot about supporting education but they do not believe in education.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** They do not support investing record amounts in education. I am incredibly pleased about this year's budget. We have acknowledged how difficult a year it has been for our students. They have had to face massive disruption, particularly the senior students who are doing the HSC next year. Those who have just completed the HSC have had the most disruptive year of any HSC students in living memory. That is why our Government was very pleased to invest in excess of \$330 million to provide tutoring services to students across the State. We are extending this not just to government schools but also to Catholic, independent schools and non-government schools. We know the pressure to give students that are falling behind that extra catch-up time is stressful for teachers, students and their families.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In order to support the Government's initiative with this investment, 5,500 casual or part-time tutors will be hired to provide support.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Whether they are former teachers or educators, we will make sure that students get the support they need during this process. Another major education announcement that we have made in relation to this budget is providing at least another year of preschool funding support for parents. For some parents who only send their children to preschool twice a week, it is free preschool. They are allowed 15 hours free preschool every week. That is a major commitment, but we believe it is one which will support families doing it tough—especially families who may have lost a job in their household or who are worried about their jobs going into 2021. We are also very pleased to have announced \$120 million as part of our metro renewal program. That is for small projects in and around school communities, which can really make a difference. Whether it is upgrading a canteen facility or a playground, it is money that is being spent on the ground straightaway and will provide jobs for local suppliers.

We make sure that when education has infrastructure upgrades in communities—especially the smaller projects—local suppliers and small businesses are able to benefit from that. That complements what the Deputy Premier announced for rural and regional schools to make sure that the same opportunity exists for all schools across the State. Whether a student attends a small or a large school, all schools across the State will be getting that support. That builds on the massive infrastructure pipeline that we are delivering for our students across New South Wales. Over the next four years alone we will be upgrading or delivering more than 190 new and upgraded schools in a record investment of \$6.7 billion, and that is on top of the 140 new or upgraded schools we have already delivered. [*Extension of time*]

It is pretty amazing to think that 140 schools have already been upgraded or delivered right across the State, whether it is Belmont High School in Swansea or Jordan Springs in Londonderry. I know that many members opposite are pleased with that. They will not say it publicly, but a number of schools across the State—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There are loads of them all across the State. We know that it is not just what we do in terms of the bricks and mortar; it is also what happens inside the classroom. Whether it is providing extra tutorial services, providing teachers with the extra support they need to develop their own leadership, or providing special peer support for teachers, we know what is required. I am also pleased to say that the New South Wales Government is focusing on our curriculum review. The last time the curriculum was reviewed I was still in high school. That is a long time ago—30 years.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** It just feels like yesterday, though.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Exactly. It just feels like yesterday.

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

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** You wish it was yesterday.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I do indeed wish it was yesterday, but we will not harp on the past. I am pleased to say that literacy, numeracy and science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the STEM subjects, will take a focus in the new curriculum. We want to make sure that our students have those core competencies, whether we compare them with other students across the nation or across the world. I want people to look back on their education in the New South Wales public system as I do—very proudly—and know they got the best education that is available anywhere. Our curriculum review, which is ongoing, will focus on decluttering. It will ensure that basic literacy, numeracy and STEM competencies are developed. It will also look at pathways in years 11 and 12. Whether a student wants to go to university, go to TAFE or get a job, we will make sure that they are able to acquire credits, skills or learning in the vital secondary education system. I thank the Treasurer and the education Minister for their record investment in education because it means the students of tomorrow will have every opportunity in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

**The SPEAKER:** I point out that I have called seven members of the Opposition and three members of the Government to order. The Premier was answering that question in a serious way. Interjections were not warranted. When a Minister is answering a question seriously and in the public interest I do not expect there to be lots of interjections. I am surprised that I had to call 10 members to order.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (14:28:45):** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm revelations in the Legislative Council today that the corrupt former MP Daryl Maguire had a key to her house from the time that she bought the property in 2016?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:29:05):** I regret that Opposition members have started rehashing questions they have already asked me. What is clear to me is that the Leader of the Opposition and One Nation are very strong political allies. It is true. It just goes to show that the Labor Party will do anything in order to point-score. I have finished my answer.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (14:29:50):** I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the Premier's previous answer. Did Daryl Maguire use the key that he had to the Premier's house to collect his personal belongings, including toiletries, two months ago?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:30:12):** I refer you to my previous answer and those last week and the week before. Ask me some real questions for once!

**REGIONAL TRANSPORT SERVICES**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:30:25):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is investing to support our regions?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (14:30:41):** I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. It is a real treat for members this week; I have actually got two Dixers. Tuesday's was a pretty good one and today's is going to be even better. Today I want to talk about some of the things that we are doing in regional New South Wales to support our residents, whether it is our billion-dollar road investments or our transformative changes to public transport. We went to the election with a very ambitious target. Over the past 20 months we have been working for the residents of regional New South Wales with the commitments and the delivery of the spend that we have been seeing. We have committed \$57.3 million over the next four years to improving bus services in 16 regional cities, and we are doing just that.

In the past few months those improvements have been realised and I have had the pleasure of announcing them, alongside many of our hardworking regional MPs. In total we have already added more than 1,300 new weekly bus services around the State. That includes 61 in Albury, 93 in Tamworth, 59 in Lismore, 45 in Parkes, 57 in Griffith, 68 in Queanbeyan and many more. Each of those services makes life easier for people in our regional cities. It makes it possible for them to go to the shops, visit family and friends, and attend medical appointments. It is especially important for those people who may not be able to drive, especially the seniors in our communities and even young people, who are often forced to walk if there is not a local service available to them. That is just one way that we are investing in regional communities to make life easier.

Another way we are making life easier for our seniors is through our regional seniors travel card, which we have already seen taken up by 334,000 seniors. Once it is spent it will boost the New South Wales economy with \$83.5 million. We have already seen \$56 million that has been put into cash registers and has gone to local fuel stations and taxidriviers, with more than 92 per cent of those funds being spent in regional New South Wales. Cards have been used at 5,420 merchant outlets in 2,320 locations. That does more than help our regional businesses; it is also supporting our seniors. It is levelling the playing field so that they can have the same support that our big-city residents receive every day. It is great news for our regional seniors because they will get another card to use next year with another \$250 to spend on fuel, taxis, buses or NSW TrainLink services.

*[A Government member interjected.]*

The Treasurer just said he loves that card. I will give him some numbers. In Port Stephens, 11,092 people have taken up the card. In Maitland—and the member can say thank you—8,075 people have taken up the card. In the MidCoast Council area, 19,103; Bourke, 118—

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —Hay, 375; and Campbelltown, 0. Because you are not regional, you guys do not get it. Those opposite come into this place and say that this is the card they want to talk about now, but this is the card they refused to support. This is the card they refused to commit to.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Are you really gloating about how easy it is to give free cash away?



**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That is what I expect from someone like the member for Maroubra: to get up in this place and tell us how much he likes it but he does not go and tell his residents that he does not support it. [*Extension of time*]

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister is not being relevant. By the way, my office has been consumed with people complaining about lack of access to that card by your broken promises.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Bathurst will not incite the Opposition.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** These cards are great for regional New South Wales. Tomorrow, together with the member for Dubbo, I will be looking at the next phase of the regional rail maintenance facility. Again, you cannot have that because that is a regional project. I really do not know what Labor stands for. When they come into this House they stand for nothing. I do not know who they represent. I do not know who they stand for. They come in here—

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** One minute they are talking about the Leader of the Opposition getting a photo with Joel Fitzgibbon. Are they going to get up today and say that they support him? Then they say, "We support regional jobs", but they do not support regional jobs because they voted against the Local Land Services Act. Then they say they support farmers, and they go and vote against our Right to Farm Bill. They have had a bad week and it is not getting any better for them.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was about transport. The Minister's carrying on about regional jobs, Joel Fitzgibbon and Labor's support for the coal industry and regional jobs, as strong as it is, is not relevant. While we welcome the praise, it is unnecessary at this time.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will continue. He has made a slight digression but has been overwhelmingly relevant.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They come into this place and say one thing but do the opposite. We are investing in regional New South Wales. They are directionless. They are desperate. That is how they started the year and that is how they are going to end it.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (14:37:44):** I address my question to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Government has delivered for the people of western Sydney?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:38:03):** I will because, as we know, this Government delivers for every single person and family right across the State. The people of western Sydney are always winners when it comes to the New South Wales Government and our investments right across the State. That comes after decades of neglect in western Sydney by those opposite, a former Government that believed western Sydney ended at Summer Hill. All of the people of western Sydney were neglected year after year after year. They opposed every one of our infrastructure projects. They had a Premier who said Sydney was full and as a result there was no investment in western Sydney year after year under those opposite. Their opposition to western Sydney did not stop when they fell into Opposition, after a blue wall ran through all of western Sydney. They opposed WestConnex. The other day the Leader of the Opposition opposed the divestment of our 49 per cent share of WestConnex—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —a project she opposed. Has she driven on WestConnex? She loves it. There she is in red—the last Trump supporter holding out hope on that side of the House. Under Labor, Sydney was stagnating and western Sydney was going backwards. Under this Government we have the Sydney Metro Northwest. Earlier the Premier spoke about a project that I think was promised when she was back at school—

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** The South West Rail Link.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The South West Rail Link. When I was in primary school it was the north west rail line. I still remember being in primary school and the joy and excitement when that north west rail line was going to be built. Promise, promise, promise—broken, broken, broken.

**Mr Michael Daley:** What is the toll on the M5 again?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** There is the member for Maroubra talking about contracts signed. They were the kings of the glossy brochure but they never delivered an infrastructure project. The South West Rail Link—once again, started by them and never finished. It was completed by us. As the Premier said, they said no-one lives there. In fact, that is what they said when they opposed the M2 when Bruce Baird was the transport Minister. They said no-one lives in north-west Sydney and no-one ever will. How ridiculous is that? Now there is another seat out there.

**Ms Jo Haylen:** What seat are you going to next, Dom?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I will get to that, Jo. I am getting there; hold on. As to hospitals, Westmead Hospital—

**The SPEAKER:** The members seated in the gallery will remain silent.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member for Campbelltown loves it—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —Nepean—

**Mr Ryan Park:** What about Rouse Hill?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Yes, Rouse Hill is coming along. They love it. There are hospitals everywhere, Ryan. Everywhere there are hospitals, road projects, rail projects, schools. The member for Londonderry, it was not a good redistribution for her: a red seat soon to become a blue seat. We will be counting all of the votes. Why is it that under Labor there was very little investment in western Sydney? That is because, as we have seen lately particularly with WestConnex, of their opposition to our asset recycling approach every single step of the way. They had scare campaigns and fear campaigns. That is why when they were in Opposition these projects did not get built. Whether it is 190 new and upgraded schools—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —all of the hospitals and health facilities that we are investing in right across the State could not happen under those opposite. In isolation, the \$100 billion infrastructure program over four years—soon to be updated in the budget next Tuesday—will once again demonstrate that we are the infrastructure capital of the nation. What the member for Mulgoa will see in the budget is continued investment in her electorate in western Sydney, making sure that we build the public transport infrastructure and the road infrastructure that allows people to get home to their families faster, improves their lives and makes a real difference. Importantly, the people of western Sydney backed us. They love WestConnex. Every single day those opposite opposed it and now they travel on it. They love it. Every person in western Sydney loves WestConnex. This infrastructure ensures that not only are we driving economic growth—half a percentage point of economic growth during the pandemic—but also there will be significant jobs growth off the back of it. [*Extension of time*]

I will have something more to say next week about the jobs growth off the back of our infrastructure agenda, which has been substantial. There has been strong investment, jobs growth, economic growth and great assets at the end which will make a difference to people's lives. It was sad to see that the seat of Lakemba was abolished. He is a good man and a great member—

**Mr Michael Daley:** You had your eye on it, did you?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** No. I wrote the book on switching seats. I am happy for the member for Lakemba to come and seek advice. I am happy to provide advice on how to swap seats and win and how not to do it, how to sell a message and how not to sell a message, where to renominate. He should not run against Tania Mihailuk unless he wants to end up in a body bag at the bottom of the Georges River but he could run where he grew up, Strathfield. We know that she probably will not be there. In fact, recent polls show that 40 per cent of Labor voters support the Premier over the Leader of the Opposition, and that poll does not take into consideration their own members. The more they see of her, the more they vote for us. We are going to put corflutes of Jodi all around the electorates. We want a photo shoot with the Premier after question time. We are going to send you out.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. Could you please bring the Treasurer back to the leave of question?

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer will continue. He has got 20 seconds.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We were going to put up corflutes of the Opposition leader all through western Sydney. That was our little plan back in those days when we were getting you to run for Newcastle. We thought that it would be good—but not this good. The force is with her. Jodi is our Jedi. She is going to be our

secret weapon at the next election. If members opposite want to do us a favour they can run Jihad Dib for Strathfield and get Labor back on track.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (14:45:21):** I direct my question to the Premier. Daryl Maguire had a key to her house for four years. He had his personal belongings and toiletries there. She said that she loved him, he was her "hawkiss", her numero uno and that she hoped to marry him. How can the Premier still maintain that this was not a relationship that she was required to disclose under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:46:11):** This question is extremely similar to ones that I have previously answered. First of all, there are a number of assumptions in that question that are incorrect. Second of all, there is little doubt that NSW Labor has lost its way. Out there in the real world people are worried about their jobs, they are worried about their schools, they are worried about their transport. They are not worried about that!

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier said that there were a number of assumptions that were wrong, so I ask her to outline the parts of the question that were incorrect.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Premier is being relevant.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said, it is little wonder why people have lost faith in the New South Wales Opposition, but we will continue to deliver for the people of this great State. Roads, schools and hospitals—that is what we are here to do and that is what will do.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has completed her answer.

**REGIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (14:47:27):** I direct my question to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. Since the introduction of the NDIS, providers in regional New South Wales who have historically relied on block grants are struggling to remain viable, and sadly others have shut down. Vulnerable people with disabilities in isolated communities cannot afford to lose the services. I am grateful for his genuine interest in this issue today, so what is the Minister doing to ensure that these vital services can continue?

**The SPEAKER:** While the Minister makes his way to the main part of the Chamber, I remind members that staff from Surf Life Saving NSW are holding their annual volunteer recognition day in the Parliament as guests of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I remind members that they can drop by the event and hear from volunteers, ask questions about water safety ahead of the summer and, importantly, take a picture and share it on social media to promote their good cause.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (14:48:26):** I start by acknowledging two people, with the indulgence of the House. I acknowledge Scarlett Wakelin from Nowra Anglican College. She is a student doing work experience in my office. I also acknowledge one of my electorate office staff, Anna Watson.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It is not me.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** No, you have been working for me for years! It is a different Anna Watson. Keep it coming, Anna! I acknowledge the member for Barwon for his question and for his genuine interest in disability services as someone who worked in the disability sector prior to coming to this place. I had a wonderful opportunity to spend some time with him in his electorate in August, and we travelled to many of the outstanding services and met some wonderful people. I acknowledge Campbell Quintrell, who is one of the representatives on the NSW Youth Advisory Council, from Broken Hill. We also met someone from Mac River, who had been with Youth Justice NSW but is now back in the community of Broken Hill. We met with Compass Housing Services as well as the Salvation Army, who are offering supports and housing services to people who need them most. We also met family support staff working for organisations like CatholicCare and Mission Australia, who are doing absolutely wonderful work in that part of the world. I thank the member for Barwon for his generous hospitality as part of that visit.

I am proud of the fact that I am the first disabilities Minister to have lived experience of a disability. I am proud of the fact that the Premier has stood strong in support of people with disabilities, as has this entire Parliament and every party from across the political divide, and I thank her for that. As members of the House

would be aware, in July we celebrated two years of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It might interest members to know that we now have 55,000 more people receiving support from the NDIS than ever before. The scheme is, of course, a tremendous reform that gives people choice and control again over their lives. I am so proud of the work that we have been able to do across the political divide to make this historic reform happen.

Is the NDIS perfect? No, it is not. There is still a lot of work to do. But since I have been the disability services Minister, New South Wales has championed reforms at the Disability Reform Council. We have seen changes to the way we support people as they exit health care using complex care pathways. The scheme has also ensured that we have resolved issues around voluntary out-of-home care, offered support for people with Information, Linkages and Capacity Building and aided disability workforce planning. These have all been positive reforms that have been worked on by Ministers from around the country. As a result of the recent review, we will see the Disability Reform Council continuing its work as per the full scheme agreement.

The member for Barwon references issues around thin markets. In parts of New South Wales, and indeed across Australia, there are thin markets or no markets for disability supports. I am proud of the fact that in December last year I argued for a project pilot at Wentworth and Walgett to look at utilisation of people with NDIS support payments and packages. Tragically, in that part of the world we are seeing package utilisation as low as 41 per cent. That money does not just get hived off into State or Federal coffers; it was meant to go into a reserve fund. This comes directly to the point made by the member for Barwon, and I was delighted to meet with workers for Silverlea Early Childhood Services when I joined him in his electorate. We met Silverlea President Mariette Curcuruto, as well as the board, and it was wonderful to see the great work that they were doing. As the member for Barwon referenced, because of the change in funding arrangements that mean funding is now focused on giving individuals choice and control over the use of their packages, arrangements have been changed, particularly in rural and remote Australia. [*Extension of time*]

It should not matter whether you live in Bronte, Bondi, Bomaderry or Bourke—the whole point of this scheme was to make sure that people with disabilities get the support that they need. I have to be frank with members: At Disability Reform Council meeting after Disability Reform Council meeting, I and other Ministers have raised the reserve fund as an issue because it was meant to have been established on 1 July this year. Minister Stuart Robert was recently on radio in this State describing the \$1.7 billion that could be helping people with disabilities to realise their potential and providing vital life-changing support as a rounding error!

[*An Opposition member interjected.*]

I acknowledge the very disappointing interjection from the member for Canterbury, who should know better having been a shadow Minister, because I joined with a Victorian Labor Minister to write a letter to the Federal Minister telling him what we thought of the lack of a reserve fund. The member for Canterbury should be quiet so that she might learn something. Victorian Minister Luke Donnellan and I wrote to the Federal Minister and expressed that we have a deal with the Commonwealth in relation to that \$1.7 billion. It is not a rounding error, it should be an investment in the people who need it, like those who receive the sorts of supports the member references at places like Cafe 64 or Silverlea in his electorate, of which he has been a great supporter.

I will continue to raise this issue with colleagues from across the political divide because the whole point of this scheme was to focus on the people who need support. I know that all too well, as someone who has my own lived experience and my own story to tell. I do not believe when New South Wales has signed up to this historic reform that we should short-change people with disabilities in this State, no matter where they live. The pressure still needs to be applied. I thank my colleagues from every other jurisdiction who want to see this reserve fund established, as it was meant to be established in July of this year. Every day we wait is a day that people with disabilities are being denied the vital supports they need.

It is important that we get the parameters of this fund right so we can continue to drive those life-saving and life-changing reforms for people who, for whatever reason, have not been able to realise their potential in life. We owe that to every citizen of this State. As the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, I am passionate about this issue. I thank all my colleagues and friends in this place for their support and continued efforts in their own electorates to back in this reform and support people with disabilities.

### SCHOOL FUNDING

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:55:29):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, and the Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is delivering increased investment across our schools?

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (14:56:16):** I thank the member for East Hills for her question. Her passion and enthusiasm for her electorate and community is ever seen. As the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education and as a former teacher, I am pleased to update the House on

the investment that this Government is delivering to improve education in this great State. I commend Minister Mitchell in the other place for her passion for education. She is a great Minister and it is a great opportunity for Skills and Tertiary Education to work with Education. I commend the Premier, who is also a passionate supporter of education and who takes a personal interest in every program to make sure we are driving educational outcomes. I also thank the Treasurer, and I know the budget he is about to hand down on Tuesday will contain great investment in public education for the future of our State.

This Government is allocating a record \$1.3 billion in equity loading for next year to more than 2,200 public schools across New South Wales. That is a \$50 million increase on the 2020 year. Equity funding is provided to schools to address the additional learning needs of students and reduce the impact of disadvantage on student outcomes. This is an incredible outcome for students and our community. This Government has invested record amounts in needs-based funding. We are one of the only States to fully fund the full six years of the original Gonski agreement. We have committed an additional \$6.4 billion to 2027 as part of our commitment to Gonski 2.0.

I know that many members in the House were pleased to hear Minister Mitchell's announcement just yesterday about an additional \$366 million to help close the gap in educational opportunities experienced by students in rural and remote areas of the State. The Rural Access Gap package will ensure that every student in regional New South Wales has the same opportunities no matter where they live. The benefits of the Rural Access Gap are threefold. First, the package will upskill teachers and upgrade digital capabilities of more than 1,000 regional schools. Secondly, it will lift educational opportunities for the 210,000 students who call regional New South Wales home.

**Mrs Helen Dalton:** Are we getting any more teachers?

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** We are actually; we have lots more teachers.

**Mrs Helen Dalton:** Not in Griffith we don't. Not in Dalton we don't.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is all right. I will get there. We have plenty of announcements. The package will be great for the New South Wales economy and it is estimated that it will generate 5,000 jobs, including 1,800 in regional areas. I have more good news—and I will get to more teachers. On Tuesday the Premier, the Treasurer and Minister Mitchell announced free tutoring for students in 2021. This is a \$337 million program that is part of the New South Wales 2020-21 budget. The program increases the ongoing support for students' education. The Government is employing up to 5,500 additional staff to deliver small group teaching at every New South Wales Government school, as well as non-government schools with the most significant levels of need.

Because of the pandemic, 2020 has been a tough year; it has been a disruptive year. In some areas it comes on top of bushfires and floods. The COVID-19 learning support program will begin in term 1 of next year and run throughout the school year. It includes \$306 million to provide small group tuition for eligible students across every New South Wales Government school, and \$31 million for non-government schools with the greatest levels of need to provide small group tuition. Another great announcement this week is the building blitz of up to 1,000 projects that is about to start in hundreds of public schools as part of a \$120 million metro renewal project. The program will provide a government contribution of between 50 per cent and 80 per cent for metro school capital projects, including covered learning areas and science facilities. But there is more. On Sunday the Premier, Treasurer and Minister Mitchell, together with the member for East Hills, announced \$120 million to continue our free preschool program for next year. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the member for East Hills for her interest. More than 44,000, three- to- five-year-olds attending community preschools will benefit from an extra year of free preschool. The free preschool program has been supporting families since the beginning of the pandemic and this funding will provide certainty for parents into the future. It will provide up to 15 hours of fee-free child care each week and allow parents to continue working and, importantly, support them to divert family income into other essentials. On top of all that, we are investing a record spend of \$6.7 billion into 190 new and upgraded schools.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** One hundred and ninety new schools?

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** One hundred and ninety new and upgraded schools. There is \$6.7 billion for 190 new and upgraded schools. On this side of the House we care about education. Those opposite have started to fire up. We care, and we are delivering record amounts. I thank the Premier and the Treasurer but, most importantly, I thank Minister Mitchell in the other place. She is a wonderful education Minister. We are the education government and the Premier is the greatest champion of education.

## SOCIAL HOUSING

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:03:16):** I address my question to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is providing increased social housing?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (15:03:55):** I thank the member for Tweed for his question—he is 100 per cent for the Tweed—and acknowledge that we will be starting work on the 40-unit development in the Tweed CBD in the next few months. I think it is relevant that I acknowledge Jennifer Brinsmead from the Tweed electorate office, Deb Newton from the Grafton electorate office and Diane Lane from the Coffs Harbour electorate office for the work they have done. I know, as a member with a North Coast-mid North Coast electorate, that we have enormous numbers of people calling us about access to social housing and maintenance issues. I thank all those ladies for their work and the work we will continue to do in this incredibly important area of government. Our Land and Housing Corporation [LAHC] assets are the third largest asset holding in the New South Wales Government, and I am proud to say that we are growing those assets and opportunities. We have been part of the renewal and construction of 8,800 homes across New South Wales over the past nine years. But the great news is that over the next three years we will deliver another 6,000 homes and properties.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** How many are you going to sell?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** The member for Canterbury may ask. There is a lot going on in her patch and she should be excited. We are renewing and revitalising.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will stop interjecting.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** We are working with community housing providers. That has been a significant policy development to allow renewal. I am looking at the member for Wollongong. He and I were there at the announcement of the construction of that project right there in the centre of Wollongong, overlooking the stadium. We are working together with a great community housing provider to provide more social housing, more affordable housing and also private rental. It is a project that is dynamic and exciting.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Perhaps you should approve it.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wollongong will come to order.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** I am sure they will, and I will ensure that Wollongong council supports it. Fairfield council, which is just fantastic, is part of a renewal project. For 15 years a spare block of land was sitting empty in Fairfield, not doing anything. We are going through a process to rejuvenate that block, which will add 393 social, affordable and private homes right there in the Fairfield council area. I thank the council and I support it. I acknowledge the mayor of Griffith, John Dal Broi, who is working with us to revitalise and provide affordable housing projects and exciting innovation to Land and Housing homes within Griffith. Griffith is one of the most dynamic and incredible parts of regional New South Wales. Its biggest challenge is affordable housing for its workers. We are working with Griffith City Council to deliver a very exciting project—which, I might add, is supported by the Federal Government. I might as well acknowledge Michael Sukkar, the Assistant Treasurer in the Commonwealth. We are doing great work together to activate and tap into the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation funding. Gareth Ward and I are working hard to ensure we get the lion's share of the Commonwealth money and to ensure we grow housing throughout regional New South Wales.

I am looking forward to the budget next week. We have a Treasurer who has been working very hard and who knows that housing construction is a very important part of stimulating the economy. Whether it is putting apprentices on or whether it is the mum-and-dad building operators that construct some of our projects, it is an exciting space to be in. Not since the global financial crisis, when we had significant stimulus funding and support from the Commonwealth, have we seen such a rejuvenation in New South Wales. This is a great space to be in. At least 6,000 new homes will be built over the next three years with our community housing providers as well as Land and Housing Corporation. Whether it is the Tweed, Fairfield or even St Marys—I was there the other day—amazing projects are revitalising and putting greater density on great land near public transport and providing homes that are more fit for purpose for residents. That is particularly exciting. We are really at an exciting point working with Sydney city council. We can deliver 4,250 new homes across the City of Sydney local government area with the addition of two new housing renewal projects at Franklyn Street, Glebe, and Explorer Street, South Eveleigh. *[Extension of time]*

Since February, LAHC has lodged planning proposals with the City of Sydney to advance three other major revitalisation projects, including at Redfern—a build-to-rent—Waterloo and Glebe. The two new projects with around 850 dwellings will bring the total number of new homes in the City of Sydney to 4,250, of which around 1,260 will be social—a 38 per cent increase in social homes over the five projects' current social housing numbers.

Housing is the key to economic recovery. These five projects will create almost 10,000 direct and indirect jobs in the City of Sydney alone. The Treasurer, the Premier and the Deputy Premier realised that housing was at the heart of stimulating the economy post COVID. Out of the \$2.3 billion COVID stimulus package, we received \$47 million to update, maintain and invest in our Land and Housing Corporation properties across New South Wales. This will create 500 jobs.

Whether it is at Arncliffe, where I visited with the Treasurer, or whether it is in the town of Kempsey, where we were able to put extra money into improving the LAHC's stock, there has been a building bonanza during this period. As well as backing jobs, the stimulus program delivered important capital upgrades to support people and families living in social housing properties throughout New South Wales regional and metropolitan communities. I am looking forward to the budget. I am looking forward to delivering more projects across the whole of New South Wales. Whether it is Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Tweed Heads, Wauchope, Fairfield, Wollongong or the City of Sydney, we are supercharging and improving our social housing stock and delivering more affordable housing, and we are doing it with the support of this Government for the people of New South Wales.

### *Documents*

## **UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 days after assent as at 12 November 2020.

## **PRINTING OF PAPERS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I move:

That the following papers be printed:

- (1) Determination of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *WaterNSW Maximum prices for Water NSW's Greater Sydney services from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020.
- (2) Final determinations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Hunter Water Corporation Maximum prices for water, sewerage, stormwater drainage and other services from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020; and *Sydney Water Corporation Maximum prices for water, sewerage, stormwater drainage and other services from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020.
- (3) Final reports of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Review of prices for Hunter Water Corporation from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020; *Review of prices for Sydney Water Corporation from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020; and *Review of prices for Water NSW Greater Sydney from 1 July 2020*, dated June 2020.
- (4) NSW Forestry Snapshot Report on the Implementation of NSW Forest Agreements and Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals for the year ended 30 June 2018.
- (5) Report 147 of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission entitled *Access to digital records upon death or incapacity*, dated December 2019.
- (6) Reports for the year ended 30 June 2019 of the Animal Research Review Panel and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.
- (7) Report pursuant to section 35 of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act entitled *Return and Earn Annual Statutory Report 2017-18*.
- (8) Report pursuant to section 242A of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force on covert search warrants for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (9) Report pursuant to section 26ZN of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (10) Report pursuant to section 242A of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force on criminal organisation search warrants for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (11) Report pursuant to section 27ZB of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (12) Report pursuant to section 24 of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (13) Report pursuant to section 25 of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (14) Report pursuant to section 25P of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (15) 2019 Audit of the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment (Volumes 1, 2 and 3).
- (16) Report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled *Bus Safety Investigation Report - Bus Fire TV 9159, Sydney Harbour Bridge, NSW, 2 November 2018*.
- (17) Report on the Review of the Service NSW (One-stop Access to Government Services) Act 2013, dated May 2020.

- (18) Report on the Statutory Review of the Provisions of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 inserted by the Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Act 2014, dated July 2020.
- (19) Report on the Review of the Biofuels Act 2007, dated August 2020.
- (20) Report on the Review of the Boarding Houses Act 2012, dated August 2020.
- (21) Report on the Review of the Marine Pollution Act 2012, dated December 2019.
- (22) Report on the Review of the Road Transport Act 2013, dated September 2020.
- (23) Report on the Statutory Review of the Inclosed Lands, Crimes and Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (Interference) Act 2016.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: APPROPRIATION BILL AND COGNATE BILLS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:12:40):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) On Tuesday 17 November 2020 to:
  - (a) provide for the following routine of business prior to 2.15 p.m.:
    - (i) at 12.00 noon, Speaker takes the chair;
    - (ii) introduction and second reading speech on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills; and
    - (iii) the Speaker to leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.
  - (b) permit the giving of general business notices of motions (general notices) at the conclusion of tabling of papers.
- (2) On Thursday 19 November 2020:
  - (a) to interrupt the business before the House at 9.45 a.m. to permit the Leader of the Opposition to speak on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills.
  - (b) following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, the passage through all remaining stages, with the question "That these bills be now read a second time" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail on the bills.
  - (c) a member, immediately following the passage of the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, to move the motion "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2020-2021".
  - (d) After the member has moved "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2020-2021":
    - (i) the debate is to be adjourned without motion moved;
    - (ii) the resumption of the debate is to be set down as an order of the day for a later time; and
    - (iii) the mover may speak to the motion at a later time prior to their right of reply.
  - (e) the House to resume the regular routine of business:
    - (i) government business;
    - (ii) general business notices of motions for bills for up to 20 minutes;
    - (iii) general business orders of the day for bills for up to 90 minutes; and
    - (iv) general business notices of motions or orders of the day (not being bills).
  - (f) to permit the consideration of the regular routine of business to continue until 2.00 p.

For the benefit of members I note that paragraphs (e) and (f) are slightly different from the motion as circulated, but I have discussed this matter with the member for Keira and the principle remains the same.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Committees*

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS**

**Reference**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** By leave: I move:



That the motion for the referral to the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics on a proposal to establish a Parliamentary Compliance Officer be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** I will make a quick comment that both Presiding Officers have a keen interest in this matter. Thank you for putting the motion forward on behalf of the Government. I will look forward to seeing it progress.

*Sessional Orders*

**SITTING DAYS 2021**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:16:09):** I move:

That unless otherwise ordered, the House meet during the 2021 autumn and spring sittings as follows:

Autumn Sittings: February 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18; March 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25; May 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13; June 8, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24.

Spring Sittings: August 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12; September 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16; October 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21; November 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18 and November 23, 24, 25 as a potential reserve week.

For the benefit of the House, I indicate that those days are the same days that were circulated yesterday.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:16:35):** I move:

That the motion be amended by adding June 1, 2, 3.

The Opposition believes next year is absolutely critical to the recovery of the communities that all members represent across New South Wales. We believe that working men and women across the community expect their parliamentarians to be at work developing solutions, policies, legislation and ideas that support their recovery. Next year will have the lowest number of sitting days the Parliament has sat since this Government was elected in 2011—a mere 48 days. That is ridiculous at a time when our community needs legislative support, ideas, reform packages, funding and assistance. We should be put to work as parliamentarians in this place.

I know the Attorney General will refer to budget estimates, but budget estimates is not a sitting of the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales Parliament. This is where legislation is developed, passed and debated. This is where it is amended because we are the men and women who represent communities across New South Wales. We do not believe next year is the year to limit the sitting days. We believe there is an easy opportunity for the Government to add an extra week without doing wholesale changes to the calendar by sitting on 1, 2 and 3 June 2021.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:18:35):** In reply: I understand and support the sentiments of the member for Keira that all our constituents across New South Wales expect us to be working extremely hard fighting COVID-19 and focusing on economic recovery. But this is not the only place where we do that, and the vast bulk of our work happens outside this Chamber. To suggest that unless we are sitting here in this Chamber we are asleep at the wheel and not doing work is preposterous, and we all know that. There will be more parliamentary activity for members of this Chamber next year than basically for the past 15 years—and that is as far back as my research has gone because it proves the point.

Next year with budget estimates hearings and supplementary estimates there will be 77 days of parliamentary activity. That is more parliamentary activity than any year in the previous 15 years. In the last several years of the Labor Government there was the following number of sitting days: in 2005, 64 days; in 2006, 73 days; in 2007, 51 days; in 2008, 68 days; in 2009, 72 days; and 2010, 72 days. Next year we are proposing 77 days when we combine, as I have done with those years, sitting days with budget estimates. Next year has more parliamentary activity than we saw under the Labor Government. I commend the sitting schedule to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General has moved a motion, to which the member for Keira has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....38  
Noes .....41  
Majority.....3

AYES

Aitchison, J

Doyle, T

Mehan, D (teller)

## AYES

Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P

Finn, J  
Greenwich, A  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Kamper, S  
Lalich, N  
Leong, J  
Lynch, P  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKay, J

Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Parker, J  
Piper, G  
Saffin, J  
Scully, P  
Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)

## NOES

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Barilaro, J  
Berejiklian, G  
Bromhead, S  
Constance, A  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Evans, L  
Gibbons, M  
Griffin, J

Gulaptis, C  
Hancock, S  
Henskens, A  
Johnsen, M  
Kean, M  
Lee, G  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
Pavey, M  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Saunders, D

Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G  
Smith, N  
Speakman, M  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Upton, G  
Ward, G  
Williams, L  
Wilson, F

## PAIRS

Atalla, E  
Harris, D  
Hornery, S  
Mihailuk, T  
Warren, G  
Zangari, G

Clancy, J  
Williams, R  
Roberts, A  
Coure, M  
Conolly, K  
Hazzard, B

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: REFERRAL TO THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:31:34):** I move:

That on receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding a proposed referral to the Independent Commission Against Corruption standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) To permit consideration forthwith of the message and of the following motion:

That:

- (a) the Legislative Assembly disagrees with the Legislative Council proposal for a reference to the Independent Commission Against Corruption as set out in its message dated 12 November 2020; and
- (b) a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution.

- (2) Provide for the following speaking time limits:
- (a) mover – 10 minutes;
  - (b) two Opposition members – 10 minutes each;
  - (c) one Government member – 10 minutes;
  - (d) one crossbench member in favour – 10 minutes;
  - (e) one crossbench member against – 10 minutes; and
  - (f) mover in reply – three minutes.

I make some brief observations. Standing Order 340 deals with how this House deals with messages from the Legislative Council. It states:

**340.** Messages from the Council may be considered:

- (1) Forthwith; or
- (2) At a later hour; or
- (3) Tomorrow; or
- (4) On a future day.

There are four options under Standing Order 340. I propose that the House takes option No. 1—"Forthwith". Standing Order 85 deals with speaking times for members. Curiously, this sort of debate is a "debate otherwise not provided for", which would allow members to speak for 20 minutes each with no limit on the number of speakers. Against the backdrop of debate in the Legislative Council—and the amount of time that has been taken up in this House with repeated questions to the Premier on this topic and a no-confidence motion—I propose that a reasonable amount of time for debate is a little over an hour when the speaking times that I have proposed in the motion are totalled.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:33:59):** The Opposition has a couple of problems with this motion. I will commence with the "forthwith" component. In common with a lot of things done by this Government, it wants to fly under the radar, treat matters in secrecy and impose a blackout on transparency. There is a reason this motion is being debated today and why it has been moved late in the day. It is so that our friends in the fourth estate do not shine a light on what is actually happening here. Mr Speaker, I understand that you take the functions of this Parliament very seriously. I do not remember the last time a Premier was referred to ICAC by both Houses; in fact, I do not remember a time at all. The motion proposes limiting the speaking time for members of Parliament to express their views, which may be supportive of the motion or against it, on arguably—given that it has never happened before—one of the most important issues to come before this Parliament.

There are nine individuals on the crossbench and only two of them will be given the opportunity to speak. It is not for me to speak for them. These are very serious matters. I witnessed debate on the Library Bill go on for days—a debate during which people spoke about the first book they learned to read. That debate went for hours and hours on end, yet we have a situation where the Premier of New South Wales will potentially be referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the first time in the history of this State but Opposition and crossbench members will be limited in the number who are permitted to speak. The motion reflects that the functions of the Legislative Assembly are not being taken seriously. The motion does not reflect the seriousness of the subject matter. I ask that the time limits be removed.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I seek leave to speak to the motion.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms Jenny Leong:** As a member of this House, I thought I could speak in debates on standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** No. Under Standing Order 85, which relates to the suspension of standing orders under Standing Order 365, there is provision for the mover to speak for five minutes, one other member to speak for five minutes and then the mover to reply for five minutes.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I seek leave to make a brief contribution.

**Leave not granted.**

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

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:37:08):** In reply: For about a month the Opposition has gone up hill and down dale and directed approximately 30 questions to the Premier on this subject. The Opposition has raised this matter over and over and over again. This is a waste of Parliament's time. It is now an abuse of process. The Opposition and the

crossbench want an open-ended debate about a matter that has repeatedly been the subject of questions directed to the Premier—over 30 questions have been directed to the Premier. The Opposition cannot ask questions about COVID, jobs, education or health. The Opposition has nothing to say. Opposition members take no interest in the substantive matters that affect the people of New South Wales. All they want to do is drag up the dirt. The motion represents a reasonable proposal for a reasonable debate.

The Opposition's mates in the upper House—the Shooters, The Greens, the Labor coalition in the upper House; maybe One Nation is part of that coalition as well, the wolf in sheep's clothing—are flogging this issue to death. The Opposition and the crossbench have spent hours and hours on it. We do not hear the hypocrites opposite complaining when they seek to disrupt Government business in the Legislative Council. We do not see these hypocrites complaining when they delay Government business until about 10.30 at night so the House can waste time on Standing Order 52 debates. If they were serious about the people of New South Wales and serious about the welfare of the people of New South Wales, they would be debating education, health, jobs, drought, bushfires and the COVID pandemic instead of going round and round in circles wasting this Parliament's time.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....45  
Noes .....33  
Majority.....12

#### AYES

Anderson, K	Gibbons, M	Provest, G
Ayres, S	Griffin, J	Saunders, D
Barilaro, J	Gulaptis, C	Sidgreaves, P
Berejiklian, G	Hancock, S	Sidoti, J
Bromhead, S	Henskens, A	Singh, G
Butler, R	Johnsen, M	Smith, N
Constance, A	Kean, M	Speakman, M
Cooke, S (teller)	Lee, G	Stokes, R
Crouch, A (teller)	Lindsay, W	Taylor, M
Dalton, H	Marshall, A	Toole, P
Davies, T	Pavey, M	Tuckerman, W
Dominello, V	Perrottet, D	Upton, G
Donato, P	Petinos, E	Ward, G
Elliott, D	Piper, G	Williams, L
Evans, L	Preston, R	Wilson, F

#### NOES

Aitchison, J	Finn, J	Mehan, D (teller)
Bali, S	Harrison, J	Minns, C
Barr, C	Haylen, J	O'Neill, M
Car, P	Hoenig, R	Park, R
Catley, Y	Kamper, S	Parker, J
Chanthivong, A	Lalich, N	Saffin, J
Cotsis, S	Leong, J	Scully, P
Crakanthorp, T	Lynch, P	Tesch, L
Daley, M	McDermott, H	Voltz, L
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Washington, K
Doyle, T	McKay, J	Watson, A (teller)

#### PAIRS

Clancy, J	Atalla, E
Conolly, K	Warren, G
Coure, M	Mihailuk, T
Hazzard, B	Zangari, G
Roberts, A	Hornery, S
Williams, R	Harris, D

**Motion agreed to.***Private Members' Statements***REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:51:13):** On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month the guns on the Western Front fell silent after four years of horrific conflict. Eleven November, Remembrance Day, marks the end of the First World War—a conflict that spanned multiple fronts and theatres and claimed the lives of almost 21 million people worldwide. With almost nine million lives lost in military action, the carnage and horror experienced by soldiers at the front was all too real. Remembrance Day is a time when we come together to commemorate those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. We wear a red poppy, which has become the enduring symbol of the First World War, and gather together at remembrance services across the State and the country.

During this difficult year it is heartening to see that sub-branches and councils across the State and in my own community have been given the green light to hold services, albeit with limited numbers and COVID-safe controls. Australia's involvement in the First World War began when Britain and Germany went to war on 4 August 1914. The outbreak of war was greeted in Australia, as in many places, with great enthusiasm. Australia's first significant action of the war took place on 9 November 1914. The Royal Australian Navy made a major contribution, with the destruction of the German raider SMS *Emden* by HMAS *Sydney*. While the sinking was seen as the first naval victory by a very young Royal Australian Navy, it also introduced the service to the dangers and rigours of naval warfare and helped establish the traditions, camaraderie and great sense of duty that remain true to this day.

To commemorate this victory, the HMAS Sydney Association hosts a memorial service in my electorate at Bradleys Head Reserve, where the memorial mast stands. I acknowledge association president Barry Brooks and secretary Brian Yeo for their continued commitment to the preservation and memory of HMAS *Sydney*. I will join them next week for the commemoration. For most Australians, the Gallipoli campaign is where the Anzac legend was forged in the horror of the Dardanelles. On 25 April 1915 members of the Australian Imperial Force landed at Gallipoli alongside Allied forces from New Zealand, Britain and France. The Gallipoli campaign ended with hundreds of thousands of casualties, including over 8,000 Australian deaths. Throughout 1916 and 1917 losses on the Western Front were heavy and the gains small. In 1918 Australian forces were instrumental during the battle of Hamel, leading to a string of decisive advances on the Western Front until Germany surrendered on 11 November 1918.

For Australia, the First World War remains the costliest conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner. Australian women also volunteered for service in auxiliary roles as cooks, nurses, drivers, interpreters, munitions workers and farm workers. Australian nurses served in Egypt, France, Greece and India. The conditions were often trying and close to the front, where they were exposed to shelling and aerial bombardment as well as outbreaks of disease. When the war ended, thousands of ex-service men and women, many disabled with physical or emotional wounds, had to be reintegrated into a society keen to consign the war to the past.

This year I joined the North Sydney RSL Sub-Branch for its Remembrance Day service at the North Sydney War Memorial. I thank the president, Alex Wilson, and the committee for arranging a service that was centred on tradition and respect. I acknowledge the servicemen of HMAS *Waterhen* who stood guard as the catafalque party throughout the service, Lieutenant Commander Alan Parton for his moving words of remembrance and the Mayor of North Sydney Council, Jilly Gibson, for reading the poem *In Flanders Fields*. I acknowledge the students from North Sydney Demonstration School, Anzac Park Public School, North Sydney Girls High School, North Sydney Boys High School, Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, Marist College North Shore and St Mary's Catholic Primary School who laid wreaths as tributes.

I acknowledge the 1st North Sydney Scout Group, which laid a wreath, and I thank the members of the Clan Macleod Pipe Band of Sydney for their rousing contribution. I acknowledge the Mosman RSL Sub-Branch and president Peter Watson for hosting a service at Mosman War Memorial and rededicating it with the addition of names from the Mosman area. My special thanks goes to Councillor Roy Bendall of Mosman Council, who laid a wreath on my behalf at that service. I acknowledge all the members of my local sub-branches from Mosman, Kirribilli and North Sydney. Whether young or old, they are doing everything they can to keep our memories alive and to learn from the issues of the past. I also thank all of our service men and women currently serving at home and abroad, in conflicts and in peace, for their continued service to our country. Lest we forget.

## TAXI INDUSTRY

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (15:56:00):** I once again bring to the attention of the House the outrageous way in which the taxi industry and owners of taxi plates in my electorate have been treated by the Government. We are now more than four years out from the Government's Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016. That legislation was the final nail in the coffin of an industry that was already struggling under the Government's lack of commitment to regulation of point to point transport. As I have said many times before, the entry of rideshare operators into New South Wales and the Government's failure to come up with a fair reform package has meant that the owners of a single taxi plate have now lost well above \$300,000 in capital value to their licence plate. That has caused incredible hardship to many taxi plate owners, whether they have invested in a single plate or several.

I will not repeat the statements I have made before about the incredible inadequacy of the first two tranches of compensation payments or the woeful handover of New South Wales Government funds to the Commonwealth through a failure to obtain tax and Centrelink exemptions. However, when an average of under \$40,000 has been given to taxi plate owners who have lost more than \$300,000 each per plate—with up to half of that being handed straight over to the Federal Government—it is no wonder that taxi plate owners feel as though those opposite have given them the rough end of the stick. Added to that, during the recent parliamentary inquiry into ridesharing we learnt that around \$100 million of the money that was promised in the Additional Assistance Payments Scheme has not been delivered to the suffering families that the Government promised it would look after. They are real people who have been impacted by the Government's uncaring and cruel attitude. They are local families who are struggling to get by.

Although those opposite—specifically the transport Minister—had promised to fairly compensate those facing specific hardship, the reality on the ground is very different to what was promised. I would like to inform the House of one family in my electorate, Mr Ossama and Mrs Helen Wassef, who were denied any payments based on hardship from the Additional Assistance Payments Scheme. The Wassefs bought their taxi plate in 2010 for around \$400,000, most of which was financed through a business loan. Banks do not lend money for no reason. Like the Wassefs, the bank believed that the State of New South Wales would not renege on its commitments to the rule of law in the taxi industry and that the playing field would be fairly maintained. Ten years down the track the Wassefs still owe \$210,000 on their loan but they would be lucky to be able to sell the taxi plate the loan is secured against for \$70,000.

They are a family that has become beholden to an unserviceable high interest loan thanks to the neglect and mismanagement of those opposite. Their bank is demanding higher repayments due to the Government devaluing the Wassefs' asset. It is worth nearly nothing. Unlike those opposite, the Wassefs wish to honour their commitments. They are supporting Mr Wassef's elderly parents, who are here in Australia on bridging visas while applying for permanent residency. Mr Wassef's father recently had \$40,000 in hospital bills, which the Wassefs had to meet. The Wassefs are struggling to get by while trying to continue to do the right thing by those around them. Yet despite that being explained to the Government and repeated attempts to have the transport Minister review the decision, they have been denied any hardship assistance under the Government's programs.

If that is not hardship then I do not know what is. The Wassefs are just one of thousands of families in my electorate and in many others who trusted the Government to do the right thing. They are people who believe that you look after those around you and that you do not back out of your commitments. Those opposite—in particular those who have personally overseen the botched introduction of ridesharing in this State—could learn a thing or two from families like the Wassefs. It is not too late to do the right thing. The passenger service levy is expected to expire within the next two years. Keep it going and fairly fund a compensation package that actually delivers for families like the Wassefs. End this debacle, and the pain and suffering, once and for all.

### *Petitions*

## M5 EAST TOLL

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It being 4.00 p.m., private members' statements will be interrupted so that the House can consider the paper petition signed by 10,000 or more persons listed on the business paper, regarding the M5 East motorway toll, that was lodged by the member for Macquarie Fields. Before we commence the debate and for the benefit of the public listening online I take this opportunity to explain the process and rationale behind this unique debate. It is unique because it enables the public to directly bring their concerns to the attention of this House.

The intent of the procedure is that the petition debate will start with a speech from a member, which in most cases will be the member who lodged the petition, followed by up to four other members and a Minister in response. To conclude the debate the first speaker will speak in reply. After all members have spoken the House

will vote on the question that the House take note of the petition. The question will in most cases be determined on the voice and be passed; however, if it is challenged by a member it may proceed to a division, where the bells are rung and members vote on the motion to take note of the petition by sitting on the appropriate sides of the House.

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

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (16:01:50):** It is my delight—indeed, it is my honour—to present this petition on behalf of fed-up motorists from south-west Sydney. The Liberal Government has had plenty of time to scrap the unfair toll on the M5 East. It has so far chosen not to do the right thing by motorists. Instead of asking for the M5 East toll to be axed, the best the members for East Hills, Holsworthy, Oatley and Camden could do for their communities was to repeat political spin which no one believes. They used filibusters in this House to avoid having to vote for motions which called on them to stand up for their communities and axe the tax that has come at the worst possible economic time.

The Liberal Government believes it is only a bunch of Labor MPs making a fuss about the issue. Well, it is wrong. Its arrogance has blinded it to the plight of motorists in south-west Sydney. More than 10,000 residents have signed this petition and many thousands more motorists want the new M5 East toll on an old, existing road gone. Some people who signed petition believe it is simply unfair to put a new toll on an old road. Some are sick of the Liberal Government selling out to big business like Transurban. A lot of people just want the toll gone so that they can avoid the unfair financial hardship. Take one of my constituents, for example. The new toll on the M5 has forced him to leave his job with Virgin Australia at Sydney Airport. He simply could not afford to keep his job and fork out the ridiculous amount of money to drive in the tunnels that he has been using for 20 years, which were built and paid for by a Labor Government.

My constituent believed he would work at Virgin Australia until retirement, but then the pandemic hit. My constituent was placed on the JobKeeper payment but his household bills did not just disappear. Council rates, home insurance, gas, electricity, groceries, water bills and credit cards still needed to be paid. Then the Liberal Government slugged him with a new tax on an old road that he has been driving for 20 years, which is nearly \$7 each way and will increase with the consumer price index for many decades ahead. That is an absurd amount of money to pay for a road that has always been free. My constituent's household budget could not be stretched any further. He had no other choice but to take a redundancy. He told me:

If the M5 from King Georges Road to the airport had no charges—as it was previously since 2001—I still would have stayed at Virgin Australia.

At the age of 59, my constituent has to start again, and everyone knows how hard it can be to find employment when you are a mature worker. Most people understand the upheaval that comes with redundancies and the nerves of finding and starting a new job. Add in the fact that we are in the middle of a pandemic and my constituent is rightly feeling stressed and perhaps overwhelmed. That is all because this Liberal Government turned its back on motorists in south-west Sydney and introduced a new tax in the middle of a pandemic.

In his written response to this petition, the Minister was nothing short of callous. He trots out the same old spin: "Spend thousands of dollars on the new M5 East toll and we will give you a few hundred dollars back"—despite motorists still being well in the negative—and "Your travel times will be faster because of increased capacity." The truth is that the M5 East is still two lanes each way, as it has been for 20 years, so there is actually no increase in capacity. The claimed faster travel time is due to the fact that motorists are avoiding this new tax and clogging up local roads in nearby Rockdale, Kogarah and all the surrounding suburbs—but, hey, do not let the facts get in the way of good political spin.

The Minister failed to acknowledge the financial pain that this toll places on motorists. He failed to acknowledge that during a pandemic is the worst possible time for a new tax. He failed to correct the Liberal Government's mistake in imposing the M5 East toll. He claimed the toll reflected reduced travel times in the tunnels but there is a problem because there is no transparency on that issue. Transurban is not actually required to report travel time data as the Minister detailed in his response to my question on notice No. 3791. That is right, the Liberals want the public to believe they are trying to improve conditions for motorists but they will not reveal the data to back up their claims.

The tolling giant and the Liberal Government hide behind a smokescreen they call "reduced travel times and traffic volumes", but the smokescreen disappears under scrutiny. What is left is plain for everyone to see: a boardroom golden handshake deal between the Liberals and the corporates at the expense of our communities. The Liberal Government sold out motorists as part of its obsession with privatisation without caring about the financial consequences for them. Offloading WestConnex into private hands allowed Transurban to place a new toll on the M5 East as another source of revenue for no major expense. It was only able to do that because the Liberal Government let it. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:07:03):** I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for bringing this petition to the House today. I like him—and, significantly, I think his constituents do as well, as we see when he is re-elected time and time again. But being well meaning in representing his constituents does not make him accurate. It is particularly disappointing for the member for Macquarie Fields to be self-righteous enough to complain about the M5 East toll. Think back to when those opposite were in government for 16 years. When they built the M5 East they slapped a toll on it. When they built the M5 they slapped a toll on it. When they built the M2 they slapped a toll on it. When they built the Lane Cove Tunnel they slapped a toll on it. When they built the Cross City Tunnel they slapped a toll on it—which was really good for patronage, wasn't it guys? When they built the left-hand turn onto Military Road in my electorate they slapped the world's largest toll per kilometre on it.

It concerns me that when those opposite are in government they say and do one thing—particularly in our electorates—but do not understand the economic necessity of utilising money to pay for additional infrastructure. That is not surprising because at the 2019 election—the member for Maroubra is not in the Chamber and neither is the member for Strathfield but we do have the member for Kogarah, who might have an opinion on the leadership of the Labor Party—those opposite thought they could represent the views of all people in New South Wales but failed significantly to understand the economic case, which was supported overwhelmingly by the people of New South Wales, for recycling assets, reinvesting in infrastructure and ensuring that we are funding the infrastructure our community needs.

It is appalling that during this pandemic, when we need every single job and every single piece of government-supported infrastructure we can get in order to put us in the best economic position possible as a State, those opposite once again do not care about COVID and the pandemic. They do not want to talk about jobs. They do not want to talk about the benefits of infrastructure. They want to complain about the funds that are necessary to build infrastructure. I am particularly disappointed. I reflect on a major piece of infrastructure in Sydney—I would have loved to hear the member for Macquarie Fields reflect on it also—which has had a toll on it since 1932. It is the Sydney Harbour Bridge—the big coathanger-shaped one. I am not sure whether those opposite drive across it. They are too busy putting tolls on our roads, not driving on them.

Thankfully, the people of New South Wales did not choose Labor in 2019. They chose the Berejiklian Government because they know we are the only ones who can invest in the infrastructure our communities need and that Labor would stop crucial infrastructure projects, which the revenue contributes to. At the 2019 election which projects did Labor not want to scrap? Those opposite wanted to scrap pretty much every project they possibly could. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for at least raising the petition in his electorate, because the last time I spoke to a petition on infrastructure in this place it was from some eastern suburbs luvvies about a road in the northern suburbs that my community has called for since before I was born. I am glad that he is at least aiming to represent his community—even if he does not represent the interests of the State's coffers and our economic recovery from COVID-19.

I will tell the member for Macquarie Fields the true story of the M5 East. Since it was opened in 2001 it has been an essential part of the Sydney motorway network—thank you for that—and the main freight route between the airport, Port Botany and south-west Sydney. But because Labor failed to build the M5 East with enough capacity, motorists on the M5 East experienced heavy congestion for years. Labor did nothing about it. It is not possible to widen the M5 East tunnels safely and effectively due to the significant impact it would have on motorists—motorists coming from Labor electorates. Without the M8, by 2021 the average speed on the M5 East would have been 42 kilometres per hour. The M8 motorway therefore duplicates the M5 East corridor, halving travel times and doubling travel speeds.

We know that Sydney is the best city in the world to live in, and we are helping people get where they need to be sooner by delivering a record infrastructure build with an integrated transport network designed for the future. New tolls are only applied where users receive a direct benefit—there is a causal link. As has been outlined, journeys are faster and safer for motorists on the M5 East. It is disappointing that Labor is adopting the same old tactics of shutting down every infrastructure project it can get its hands on.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (16:12:05):** This is the great toll swindle on the working families of western Sydney. It is a tax on working families who are doing it tough—tougher than they have for 30 years. In fact, the Liberal Party likes toll roads so much it gave one of them an award: "The M8 has been awarded the 2020 NSW Premier's Award in the 'Strong Economy' category. The decision-making panel highlighted the project's significant contribution to stimulating the economy." Stimulating the economy they say—out of everybody's pockets, \$20 for trucks and \$7 for cars. Where is that money going? Half of it is off to Transurban and, after next Tuesday, all of it will be off to the private sector. Repeat after me: 100 per cent privately owned monopoly toll road. The Government promised at the last election it would not do that. Do not think that will not



come up each and every day when we talk about the Government's economic legacy as everybody is trying to rebuild the economy after the COVID pandemic.

It has been a disgraceful effort by the New South Wales Government, not by the backbenchers who are in the Chamber today but by the New South Wales Treasurer and the transport Minister, who today cancelled a public transport project in western Sydney while talking up toll roads for western Sydney. There you go: The east gets public transport and the west gets toll roads and an inability to pay—\$7 for cars, \$20 for trucks and a 4 per cent increase each year, every year, for 20 years. I still have not heard the transport Minister say, "You know what, 4 per cent a year is too steep for working families. They can't afford it." In fact, he went on Triple M Sydney, ABC Radio Sydney and 2GB and said, "Yeah, no, that is absolutely adequate." This is at precisely the same time as he is giving public servants a 1.3 per cent wage increase. So there is a 1.3 per cent increase for public servants but a 4 per cent increase for people who use toll roads on the M8 and the M5. If inflation increases then the toll will jump even higher to perhaps 5 per cent, 6 per cent or 7 per cent—we do not even know how high it could go. On 13 August I was amazed by what the transport Minister had to say on the Triple M Sydney morning show. Jess Eva said:

Andrew Constance I understand that — but yesterday we had to listen to a man who couldn't visit his mother more than once a week because he couldn't afford the tolls to go and see her. And that same man ... Just wants to visit his mother.

The Minister for Transport and Roads responded:

I understand the cost of living measures — If people are struggling — they can contact Transurban.

He is telling people to give the toll road company a call! It is as if he is saying, "I'm just the bloke who caused the mess, it's not my responsibility to fix it. Go and give Transurban a call." It is like giving your SP bookie a call and asking, "Can you let me off the debt, please?" What an absolute joke. At a time when unemployment is approaching double digits, we are in the deepest recession in 29 years and when families are desperately saying to Labor MPs and Liberal MPs that they cannot afford the toll, the transport Minister suggests giving Transurban a call, as if that is the solution!

I did not think that matters could get worse, but last week we found out that the Government will break its privatisation pledge to the people of New South Wales and privatise the rest of the toll road. The Treasurer said earlier, "Look, I need to privatise it, but we don't call it privatising. We call asset recycling, economic efficiency"—or some other crappy terms that mean privatisation.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** The golden key.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Yes, the golden key to prosperity. On 26 September 2018 in *The Daily Telegraph*, the headline read, "Dom's home truth. Treasurer says family comes first after seat swap furore". The article went on to read:

Under-siege Treasurer Dominic Perrottet has declared he is "no different" to any father trying to balance work and family life.

Other dads do not have chauffeur-driven government cars and do not earn \$370,000 a year but they still pay the toll. The Treasurer says he cannot afford the tolls and needs to move closer to the city, but regular people in western Sydney have to pay full freight. That is the modern Liberal Party for you. At a time of hurt and struggle, they simply could not care less.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:17:37):** Good afternoon, members. It is lovely to be here.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Terrigal has only just begun speaking.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** It is all right. Half the family of the member for Kogarah live in my electorate, so it is okay. He is a happy boy, and so are all of his family. I acknowledge the member for Macquarie Fields for bringing the petition to the House. It is important for the public to have their say through petitions like this. I acknowledge the member for Kogarah's contribution. The \$4.3 billion WestConnex M8 opened on 5 July 2020. The new twin tunnels provide a continuous nine-kilometre journey between Kingsgrove and a new interchange at St Peters, which was built on the former Alexandria landfill site, representing a great use of landfill. The M8 means that motorists are able to travel from Beverly Hills to St Peters in around 10 minutes. Importantly, it is also providing relief for motorists who use the M5 East, which was notorious as one of the country's most congested roads.

We have put people's lives back together by giving them more time to spend with their families, and that is such an important thing. We are seeing similar benefits from NorthConnex for residents on the Central Coast who are saving up to half an hour on their journey times. NorthConnex offers the added advantage of choice, as people are still able to use Pennant Hills Road if they wish. The WestConnex M8 is a critical corridor for goods imported and exported from Port Botany and will be vital for tourists going to and from the airport post-COVID.

The M5 East, constructed under a Labor government, was not built to cope with the volume of traffic that would need to use the road. There was no futureproofing of the project. Prior to the construction of the M8, more than 120,000 trips were made on the M5 East. It had the slowest typical travel times of any motorway in Sydney. Before it opened, it took an average of an hour to drive between Liverpool and Sydney. I can travel from the Central Coast to Sydney faster than that. The reality is this Government has had to clean up the mess left as a result of Labor's short-sightedness. There was no futureproofing of the road projects that previous Labor governments commissioned.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Thank you, but that is a tired argument.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** We like you too and we hope that you come back. We are backing the member for Lakemba—it is all good. Labor failed to adequately invest in future infrastructure. We have seen this on the Central Coast, where we have been short-changed for years. We were promised road after road and nothing ever happened, but this Government has delivered the NorthConnex, the M1 upgrade and all the roads that were never delivered under Labor. Most people on the Central Coast are happy to use NorthConnex, but if they do not want to then they can use Pennant Hills Road.

The M8 tunnel has two lanes in each direction with capacity for a third lane to cater for future demand. That is an idea that was foreign to previous Labor governments. This Government has futureproofed the M8 tunnel, which is the longest underground road tunnel in the country, to the benefit of thousands of people who get as much as half an hour back in their daily lives. The M8 is also helping to ease congestion on the M5 East, saving drivers up to 30 minutes on journeys between Liverpool and the city. You cannot put a value on being able to spend an extra 30 minutes with your family every day. The WestConnex M8, the final stage of the WestConnex known as the M4-M5 Link Tunnels project, and the M6 extension known as the Sydney Gateway are amazing projects.

Following the delivery of the M8, a distance-based toll now applies to the existing M5 East. The minimum toll for cars is \$3.04, which is less than the cost of a cup of coffee, and the maximum is \$6.95. This change was announced in 2015 as part of the planning and community engagement of this vital \$4.3 billion project. Transport for NSW worked with the WestConnex and Transurban to prepare road users, the community and stakeholders for the opening of the M8. This included providing information about tolling on the M8 and the M5 East. In the lead-up to the opening of the M8, stakeholder briefings that advertised a range of online and social media information were made available, just as the Government did with NorthConnex. That gave people the chance to have a look online to make an informed decision about what they wanted to do. That has been the big difference between this Government and former Labor governments—we give people the choice so that they can decide what they want to do. This is what we have done with the wonderful NorthConnex, which is a multibillion-dollar project that is saving time in people's everyday lives.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:22:41):** I congratulate the member for Macquarie Fields on bringing this very important petition to the House today. I say to the 10,000 signatories of the petition that there will be many more to come. I recognise that many of them are from the Central Coast and they signed the petition because they have realised that they are being smashed by the cost of NorthConnex.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** That is complete rubbish. They have a choice and you know it.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** I note that the member for Terrigal does not get many complaints about the toll because his constituents know that they will fall on deaf ears—like a lot of complaints that are made to him. Instead they come to me complain about this situation because they know that I will do something about it for the coasties. The people of the Central Coast, especially small business workers and those involved in goods transport, cannot choose to use NorthConnex and they know that they are going to be smashed by its toll. Truck drivers will be fined \$190 if they do not pay the \$24 toll but use Pennant Hills Road instead. That equates to \$500 a week for small business owners on the Central Coast who have no choice but to use the road. These are the people whom the toll will really hurt. This Government says that they are looking after small business owners in our local community, but they are being smashed.

Central Coast residents who are faced with paying \$7.99 each way, or \$80 a week, to get to work in Sydney faster have been contacting my office. Peter is a young man who wants to use the tollway to get to work but cannot afford it. He has tried it out. He would have preferred a trial time but, no, that was voted down by the Government. Rodney is a real estate agent in Liverpool. On the first day the tollway opened he rang my office and blasted my staff about the cost. It is an absolute disgrace. Everyone who signed the petition is sending a message from the people of New South Wales to the Parliament. I used to live in western Sydney and the reintroduction of the toll out there is an attack on the people of our State. It is not reinvesting; it is making the people of this State pay a private provider to use the roads.

It is a systematic problem: The Government privatises our roads and collects tolls on behalf of private corporations. Imagine what we could do if that money was returned to the State's coffers—and the pockets of the people of New South Wales—to reinvest in infrastructure. Several constituents from the Transport Workers Union met with us in Wyong and said people will lose their business as a result of the toll.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Name them.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** I will talk to you after this. I do not have their names with me. People will be forced onto this road who cannot afford to use it, at a cost of \$500 a week for their businesses. I bring to the attention of the House the cost of the tollway and the pressure from the Government to send people back to work in the city. The Government is pushing people onto the tollway so it can pay its real estate friends in the city and the toll operators when people on the Central Coast would prefer to work from home. There is huge support for the work from home movement yet the Government is pushing people back to work in the city and forcing them onto roads at additional cost. I point out to people across the Central Coast the increase the Government has put in place for toll roads. People do not realise there will be a 4 per cent increase every single year. That is a massive cost—and it is coming. There are pay cuts for frontline workers across the Central Coast.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** That's not true—same old, same old.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** I hope you start to listen to the people of the Central Coast. I get sad when residents of caravan parks contact me and say they cannot make ends meet.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** We get your people ringing us every day because you don't look after them.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Gosford will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** The member for Terrigal needs to listen to the people of the Central Coast. This cost is ridiculous for commuters who want to work in the city but do not want to pay the \$7.91 a day, \$80 a week, just to get to their workplace. We are coasties. We spend four to six hours a week travelling, and adding an extra \$80 cost every week is not fair to coasties.

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:27:38):** The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is proud to deliver the new \$4.3 billion M8, which is making journeys on the M5 East faster and safer. We all know how clogged with vehicles the M5 East was for many years. One incident could bring the entire corridor to a standstill. Transport for NSW predicted that by 2021 without the M8 there would be 108 motor vehicle crashes a year on the M5 East—about one every three days. The M8 has doubled the capacity of the existing M5 corridor. Following the opening of the M8, Transport for NSW is monitoring traffic and heavy vehicles on local roads. Transport for NSW will also prepare a road network performance review plan within the next 12 months to examine traffic and identify potential mitigations required on the road network as a result of the M8 being operational.

While motorists on both the M8 and M5 benefit from faster and safer journeys, the New South Wales Government understands cost pressures on families and is providing relief for those motorists who are frequent toll users. These measures are: one free 12-month vehicle registration to drivers who have spent \$1,352 or more on tolls in the previous financial year, which is an average of \$26 per week; and half-price registration for drivers who have spent \$811 or more on tolls in the previous financial year, which is an average of \$16 a week. The M5 South-West Cashback Scheme also remains in place for motorists using the M5 South-West. Eligible motorists can choose to claim cash back for these tolls or, alternatively, claim toll relief. Additionally, the New South Wales Government offers a raft of cost-of-living support measures and rebates with information available on the Service NSW website, which I encourage those opposite to direct their constituents to.

The New South Wales Government has a \$57.5 billion investment program generating thousands of jobs. Toll roads are part of the transport network because they enable infrastructure to be delivered years earlier than would otherwise be possible, allowing people in the freight industry to experience benefits sooner. The Government has already delivered the new M4, the M8 and NorthConnex, all of which are saving people time on their journeys. In September the Premier and Minister for Transport and Roads marked the halfway point in tunnelling for the M4-M5 link tunnels, part of the third and final stage of WestConnex. When these tunnels and the Rozelle Interchange are complete in 2023, motorists will experience the full benefits of WestConnex. Importantly, we are also building toll-free roads and more public transport as part of an integrated transport plan to make journeys faster, safer and more convenient. This includes investing billions of dollars in Sydney Metro City & Southwest, Sydney Metro West and Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport. The Government has a proven track record of delivering major infrastructure that saves people time and makes a real difference to people's lives.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (16:30:46):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Kogarah, Gosford, North Shore, Terrigal and Miranda for their valuable contributions. I note that the member for Camden is in the Chamber. I thought he was a mannequin, because he has not said anything. Somebody move his arms. It is *Weekend at Bernie's* here, colleagues. One would think he would take this opportunity to speak up for his community. But what do we hear? There is nothing at all; total silence. I am amazed that the first two speakers in this important debate were the member for North Shore and the member for Terrigal, who would not even know where the M5 East is. They would never have paid to use it. The Government says that petitions should be heard—the voice of the community should be heard—in this place. Yet it does not listen, it does not care and it does not change its ways. It says it understands the financial impact but does nothing.

What does it say about this Liberal Government that it places this financial impact on people in south-west Sydney? The toll is \$6.95 each way, increasing by 4 per cent every year for decades to come. It is a lot of money for a lot of families. Yet the Government does not care. One would have thought the Minister for Transport and Roads would be here to contest this issue, given it is so important. But he sends members who have probably never travelled on the M5 East or paid the toll. The only time they use the road is probably on their way to the snow. It is just not fair. It says that this Liberal Government does not listen to the people in south-west Sydney and it does not care. It is unacceptable. The M5 East toll is a new tax on an old road that has been free for 20 years.

**Petition noted.**

#### *Motions*

### **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

#### **Reference**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding a referral to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. In accordance with the suspension of standing and sessional orders, I will call the member for Ku-ring-gai to move his motion forthwith. I remind members that the following speaking times apply to the debate: the mover, 10 minutes; two Opposition members, 10 minutes each; one Government member, 10 minutes; one crossbench member in favour, 10 minutes; and one crossbench member against, 10 minutes.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (16:34:49):** I move:

That:

- (1) The Legislative Assembly disagrees with the Legislative Council message proposal for a reference to the Independent Commission Against Corruption as set out in its message dated 12 November 2020.
- (2) A message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution.

Just when we think the position of the leader of the New South Wales Labor Party can be degraded no further, the Leader of the Opposition takes it down even more. When my motion is passed, the big winner will be the member for the marginal seat of Kogarah, who will move one step closer to his dream of leading the Labor Party at the next State election. If I could give him some gratuitous advice, I would say, "Don't bother, Chris. Jodi has fouled the spring so badly you'll never be able to clean it up in your political lifetime." Can anyone believe that the Labor Party sisterhood in this House—the squad that shouts across the Chamber at us every day—would allow themselves to become accessories to this grubby attempt at a political hit on the first elected female Premier in this State? You could not make it up. The position that they support was started by two middle-aged white men in the upper House, the Hon. Adam Searle and the Hon. Mark Latham. Are the members representing the electorates of Blue Mountains, Newtown, Summer Hill and Port Stephens, who play gender politics so often, really prepared to support them?

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Anybody—including Mr Searle, Mr Latham and the member for Strathfield—can make a complaint to the ICAC, no matter how superficial or misconceived it is. But the public duty of each and every member of this House means that none of us should ever allow this Parliament, Australia's first democratic Parliament, to be involved in frivolous and politically motivated rubbish like this. The proposed referral really is a special kind of madness by the Opposition. It simultaneously seeks to degrade this Parliament and to interfere with the important and proper work of the ICAC. That includes the ICAC completing its report into the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party, its general secretary Kaila Murnain and Mr Ernest Wong in relation to illegal property developer donations of \$100,000 in cash made to the New South Wales ALP head office by a property developer, Mr Huang, whose links to the Chinese Communist Party involved compromising Australia's national security.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: It is on relevance.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member is being entirely relevant.

**Ms Kate Washington:** What he is saying has absolutely no relevance to the motion that is before the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member for Port Stephens will resume her seat.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** A reference by both Houses to the ICAC has particular legal consequences. Under section 10 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, any person can make a complaint to the commission. Referrals to the ICAC by members of the public can be assessed as unworthy by the ICAC under section 20 of that Act and the commission can decide to not conduct or continue or to discontinue its investigation. But a matter referred by both Houses of Parliament must be fully investigated by the ICAC under section 20 and section 73 of its Act and must result in the preparation of a report under section 74. The ICAC cannot refuse to investigate a reference from both Houses of Parliament, no matter how ill-advised the reference. This proposed referral to the ICAC relates to three topics: the Daryl Maguire matters; the Stronger Communities Fund matters; and a matter relating to National Party donations, which was added by amendment. I will leave the third topic for other Government members to deal with.

Only corrupt conduct should be referred to the ICAC. A matter constitutes corrupt conduct if it falls within section 8 of the ICAC Act and it must also involve a matter set out in section 9. I listened carefully to the speeches in the upper House. No-one who has asked the Parliament to support this ICAC referral has sought to demonstrate any prima facie case of corruption against the Premier by reference to sections 8 and 9 of the Act. That starkly shows this to be an irresponsible, ill-conceived, politically motivated attempt at a parliamentary reference to the ICAC. At the very least, any fair-minded MP would have to be satisfied by an analysis of what is and is not arguably corrupt conduct before they could support such a reference but there is not even the most basic attempt to satisfy the Parliament on that question. To put this matter in its historical context, it is the first attempt to make a successful joint reference to the ICAC since both Houses of Parliament referred the issue of coal exploration licences over Doyles Creek and Mount Penny, which ultimately resulted in corruption findings against Eddie Obeid, Ian Macdonald and John Maitland.

Through their corrupt conduct, those ALP identities made tens of millions of dollars each. This is nothing like that. In Margaret Cunneen's case, the High Court of Australia, the highest court in our land, held that care needs to be taken when bandying around the word "corruption". What is commonly called corruption is not its legal meaning under the ICAC Act. Matters of corruption that the ICAC has jurisdiction to investigate must involve more than just conduct which adversely affects what the High Court called the efficacy of the exercise of an official function, or what journalists like to call a breach of the pub test. For the ICAC to have jurisdiction, the High Court found that the allegations must involve matters which could adversely affect the probity of the exercise of an official function. That means matters like bribery or improper financial self-benefit. None of the matters stated in the upper House could remotely lead to the ICAC having jurisdiction to investigate and find corruption against the Premier.

The Daryl Maguire matters seem to involve nothing more than some sort of fascination of Searle and Latham about the Premier's private life. Daryl Maguire's relationship with the Premier, whatever it was, could not have made him an immediate family member as defined under the Ministerial Code of Conduct. That means there was no obligation on the Premier to disclose their relationship nor Maguire's financial affairs under paragraph 7 (1) (c) of part 2 of the code. If their relationship had any impact on the Premier's duties under the ministerial code, it could only relate to part 3 of the code. Under part 3 there is an obligation to make disclosures only if a Minister is about to make a decision which might benefit a family member.

Under the code, a family member could be a person in an intimate personal relationship with the Premier. But the ICAC did not have to explore all of the boundaries of the Premier's personal life and her relationship with Mr Maguire because it was satisfied that the Premier never made any decisions to benefit him. If the ICAC thought that the Premier had made such a decision, it was obliged as a matter of procedural fairness to put to her any decision that it thought might be a conflict of interest or to challenge the denial by the Premier that she ever did anything wrong. But the ICAC did not do that.

It is clear from the transcript that counsel assisting the ICAC hearing, after reviewing all of the evidence and considering the Premier's answers to his questions, considered there was no conflict of interest. At page 1,463 of the transcript, the Premier gave sworn evidence as follows. Counsel assisting, Mr Robertson, asked this question about any conflict of interest: "Have you ever exercised any official function or declined to exercise any official function because you thought by exercising that official function or declining to exercise that official

function you might be able to assist Mr Maguire's personal interests or the interests of his associates?" The Premier's answer was "Absolutely not." Mr Robertson then said, "That's the examination, Commissioner." There was no attempt by counsel assisting to challenge the Premier's evidence that there was no conflict of interest. Labor can try all it likes to make things up but that is what ICAC put to the Premier and that was her evidence.

Labor's creepy obsession with the Premier's private life should end. Given the ICAC does not think the Premier breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct, why would this House of Parliament refer the same matters that the ICAC has already considered fully back to the commission? The Parliament should not engage in such nonsense and should not waste the important time and resources of the ICAC. My analysis alone justifies members refusing to pass any referral to the ICAC, but I will briefly go to the other part of the upper House's motion. The matters relating to the Stronger Communities Fund tied grants are currently part of a hearing before the upper House Public Accountability Committee. No explanation has been made why those matters should be referred to the ICAC before the inquiry is completed. Not only is it premature; it is also hopeless.

Ms Lau said at page 17 of the *Hansard* record that the Premier did not sign any formal approval briefs to approve the funding. There can be no reason for this Parliament to force the ICAC to investigate something that could never constitute a finding of corruption against the Premier. Unfortunately, the motion in the upper House is a grubby attempt to politically damage the Premier. It is completely and hopelessly foolish and these attacks on the Premier seem to make her more popular, not less. I urge the members of this House to support my motion and not refer these matters to ICAC.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (16:45:00):** The standard you walk past is the standard you set, words that the New South Wales Premier quoted in this Parliament on 8 May 2019. So why is this referral today so important? It is because the Premier of New South Wales knew Daryl Maguire, a former member of this House, was getting commissions for brokering property deals as far back as 2014. Not only did the Premier know but she congratulated and supported him every step of the way. I want everyone to think about this for a moment. Do you think if you walked a few steps out there onto Macquarie Street and said to someone in the street, "Do you think it is reasonable and acceptable that a member of Parliament is also receiving commissions as part of a property development scheme?" Absolutely not.

This motion is important because the Premier of New South Wales knew the former member for Wagga Wagga was \$1.5 million in debt and knew that he was working on something in Badgerys Creek that he believed could clear his debts. It is not our opinion. In a recorded phone call when Maguire told her a land deal was done, she replied, "I don't need to know about that." Maguire talked about introducing his little friend to someone and asked if the Premier knew what he meant. She again replied, "I don't need to know." The standard you walk past is the standard you set, and this Premier set a very low standard for herself and her Government.

The Premier knew that Maguire took Louise Waterhouse to her office and arranged a meeting with Jock Sowter from the roads Minister's office. She denied knowing about it until ICAC played a recorded phone call in which he told her. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept, and this Premier has accepted a very, very low standard. This Premier knew Maguire was advocating for property developers in Sydney, and she received representations about a developer's specific project direct to her private inbox. This is the most senior official in New South Wales. This is the highest office in this State. And we now know that not only did she know that a member of her Government was, incredibly, taking commissions from property developers—I just want all of us to think of that—but she also congratulated him and endorsed it. The standard you walk past is the standard you set, and this Premier has set a very, very low standard.

This Premier knew that Mr Maguire had various outside business interests but never checked whether he was complying with the Ministerial Code of Conduct or the code of conduct that all members of this place have to follow. I ask any member in this place if they can honestly say it is acceptable for one of their colleagues, regardless of their political persuasions, to take commissions from property developers while they are paid a substantial salary to fight hard for the communities they represent? Can the member for Ku-ring-gai, a Senior Counsel, a senior law officer in this land, honestly sit there and say that it is acceptable for a member of Parliament to do that—and not only is it acceptable but it is endorsed by the Premier, the highest officeholder in this land? The standard you walk past is the standard you set, and this Premier set a very, very low standard.

But all of that pales to insignificance against this issue. We all know that back in 2018 Maguire was disgraced at ICAC. It became public knowledge for every man and woman who has the pleasure and privilege of serving in this Chamber. Every single one of us knew about it. The person who knew about it most was the Premier. At that point in time when Mr Maguire was being investigated by ICAC and had publicly resigned, do you think for one moment this Premier thought, "Now might be the time to head down to ICAC and have a conversation?" In 2018 the former member for Wagga Wagga was very publicly shown to be engaging in conduct that no member of this House should ever engage in. At that time even former Ministers said to their staff, "Listen, if you are ever in meetings and you feel uncomfortable, now is the time to head down the road and tell the

Independent Commission Against Corruption what you know." But still silence. Because the Premier is right—the standard you walk past is the standard you set, and this Premier has set an appallingly low standard for this Chamber.

Not one person in this Chamber when they go home tonight can honestly look at themselves and say they believe that this Premier should not be referred. There is not one person, because if there was I would say to that person, "You've got an extremely low standard." The Premier of New South Wales not only knew but also endorsed a member of her Government taking financial incentives and commissions from property developers. She knew, she did nothing and she endorsed it. I think it is one of the most shameful acts a member of this place has carried out, certainly in the time since I have been a member of this House. I have never once seen a Premier of New South Wales turn a blind eye to blatant corruption. We did not move a referral like this against the former member for Ku-ring-gai, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell. But what we have seen from this Premier is an acceptance of a standard that I hope we never see as low as, ever again.

Not only has she disgraced herself, her party and her community but she has disgraced every single one of us in this place. I do not believe for one moment that there is a single member in this Chamber, including the members opposite, who has the privilege of representing their community in the oldest Parliament in this nation and who thinks the behaviour that this Premier has stood by is acceptable. I do not find it acceptable and I do not believe that any member of this place does, regardless of their political persuasion. I say to the Premier that she is right: The standard that you walk past is the standard that you set. That standard is an absolute disgrace.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:55:07):** The Government opposes this motion. We have a motion before the House that seeks to refer information to the ICAC that came from the ICAC. It also seeks to make findings on behalf of the Public Accountability Committee's inquiry before findings are delivered. Put simply, the motion before the House is a media stunt. It has no substance and is designed to achieve a win for the Leader of the Opposition. She is scouring the landscape for an opportunity to become a white knight whilst wearing tarnished armour and carrying a blunt sword. The amendment in the upper House today relates to the National Party donations disclosure. Mr Speaker, I cannot be heard over the cackle of members on the other side of the Chamber.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Keira that he was heard in silence.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** The amendment in the upper House today relates to the National Party's donations disclosure for 2017-18. Any determination on what has been raised in this case is a matter for the NSW Electoral Commission, not the ICAC. I would have thought that the Opposition would have realised that.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** I repeat that the member for Keira was heard in silence and I expect the same standard from the other side of the Chamber.

**Ms Kate Washington:** He wasn't heard in silence.

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

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Who would have thought we would be in a situation where the Liberal Premier of New South Wales is more popular among Labor supporters than is the Labor Leader of the Opposition. But it is true. I have had Labor voters—

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** How is this relevant?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I am just about to tell you. I have had Labor voters calling my electorate office in Hawkesbury expressing their support for the Premier. Their comments were, "I have always voted Labor but I want Gladys to stay"—

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Yes, I've heard that one before.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Have you heard that one? "I want Gladys to stay. Tell Gladys she is doing a good job and to hang in there."

**Mr Ryan Park:** Don't worry about corruption; you can turn a blind eye; forget about it.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I was silent when the member for Keira made his contribution; I ask that he please gives me the same courtesy. More than anything, this motion directly reflects the Leader of the Opposition's leadership style: all show and no substance. On 25 October 2020 *The Sydney Morning Herald* wrote, together with a published poll:

Among Labor voters, more would prefer Ms Berejiklian as Premier than Ms McKay—40 per cent and 37 per cent respectively.

That is following all the mud those opposite keep slinging. The real reason for this motion is to save the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition. It is a wholly political attack against the Premier and the Government, in a time when we are dealing with a pandemic—

**Mr Ryan Park:** That's it, Robyn. I didn't think you'd see it.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** —and an economic crisis which has not been seen in living memory. I remind the member for Keira that he stood in this Chamber and argued for more sitting days in the 2021 calendar. He now wants to waste more time instead of dealing with the business of government. That is all he wants to do. This is just another stunt in a long line of stunts from the Opposition. I will give members examples of more stunts the Opposition has thrown at us. In August 2020 it recalled the Legislative Council. They brought back a bunch of politicians to sit around and chat, while the State was in the middle of a COVID crisis. It was done notionally on the basis that the House needed to be engaged on COVID-19 matters, yet the entire week was devoted to moving a no confidence motion against the Treasurer—which failed. Then there was the censure motion on Damien Tudehope on 18 June about the Western Harbour Tunnel business case. Censure motions are now a dime a dozen. It is getting quite predictable, I have to say.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Keira that he has made his contribution to the debate.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** We had the censure motion against Don Harwin on 6 August, and a motion of no confidence against the Treasurer on 26 August about icare—a failed motion. The most embarrassing part is that the ALP had previously prepared its entire social media strategy thinking it would win the vote. We had the Leader of the Opposition making comments at the time. I will read her comments out to members. She stated:

The Treasurer does not have the confidence of the Parliament. He does not have the confidence of the community. He does not have the confidence of the sick and injured workers of icare—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76, relevance. I ask that the member be brought back to the motion before the House. What she is discussing at the moment is completely irrelevant to the motion before the House.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied that the member for Hawkesbury is being relevant. The member has the call.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Before I was interrupted, I talked about the social media comment from the Leader of the Opposition saying that the Treasurer did not have the confidence of the Parliament. But the censure motion failed in the upper House. Uh oh, we had better change that social media comment. Some 40 minutes later the comment was tweaked:

Half of the NSW Upper House does not have confidence in Treasurer Dominic Perrottet. He is on notice over icare—and he no longer deserves to be in his job

But they forgot to take the previous post down. Whoever is doing their social media—naughty, naughty! How very disappointing. Mr Speaker, I would like to be heard in silence.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will continue.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Then there was the censure motion about Don Harwin on 24 September about Stronger Communities—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Shall we bring that one in too? Let's go!

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Another day, another censure. I just like to keep the member for Port Stephens in the loop about all the censures. I am building this up. There was a no confidence motion against the Premier on 14 October.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation from Opposition members.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** That motion lost in both this House and the Legislative Council. There was a dissent motion against the President of the Legislative Council on 20 October, a motion designed entirely to attack the independence of the President. There was the suspension of Don Harwin on 20 October regarding Stronger Communities, suspending a member for 99 minutes for the non-production of documents, which it was stated and later established did not even exist. The Opposition should do its homework. A contempt motion was proposed against Don Harwin on 10 November regarding the Stronger Communities Fund, and it fell flat. It is clear that the New South Wales Labor Party is after a headline and a press conference. It is all about shaming. I can speak firsthand about shaming. It is such a cowardly act, and this tactic is used when everything else fails. The best way to deal with cowards who try to shame you is to rise above the white noise, get on with the business at hand and deliver the outcomes that the people of this State expect of all of us in this House.



This motion is entirely discredited. It is shameful. The Leader of the Opposition has no idea of the respect and love that our Premier has earned among the people of New South Wales, including her support base. Her support base has failed her; they support the Premier. That demonstrates the Leader of the Opposition is totally out of touch with the people on the street—and I do not mean the people on Sussex Street. Members should not be debating this motion today. The good people of this State are looking to a leader and a government that will set up our State for success after such a year of turmoil. I rest my case.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will come to order. I clarify that the motion before the House is a disallowance motion. I know the member for Hawkesbury was speaking about the motion of the Legislative Council which is the subject of a disallowance motion. I make it clear that the motion before this House is a disallowance motion disagreeing with the Legislative Council's proposal for a reference to the ICAC as set out in the message from the Legislative Council dated earlier today. I call the member for Maroubra.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (17:05:05):** The Opposition's submission to the House is that the motion that was carried in the Legislative Council today ought to be upheld and that the Premier ought to be referred to ICAC. In so many ways this is an unprecedented motion. I have not seen anything like this in my 15 years as a member of this House.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai will come to order. He will have an opportunity to reply to the debate. He should reserve his comments until then.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I have not seen anything like this motion in respect of its terms, as forensic as they are. I have not seen anything like this motion in its historical portent. I have not seen anything like this motion come out of the upper House and the numbers by which it was carried today—which, if I am not mistaken, were 22 to seven. Every single non-government member—in other words, 60 per cent of the assembled Legislative Council—voted to refer the Premier to ICAC. This motion is unprecedented in its terms and it ought to be considered as objectively and dispassionately as possible, as it should be. The Opposition's submission goes generally to two elements: firstly, it goes to the Premier's knowledge of the conduct of Daryl Maguire and her attempt to conceal that; secondly, it goes to the misdirection of significant public money in respect of grants and the efforts that this Government—the Premier's office, no less, and probably the Premier—has made to destroy evidence of those grants.

But really the Opposition's submission is about a continued pattern of misbehaviour by this Government. The pattern for the way this Government has conducted itself was set on day one with Premier O'Farrell. His mission then, and this Government's mission now, was not to govern for the good of the people of New South Wales but to smash the Labor Party at every opportunity and to get away with whatever they could to win at all costs, to look after their mates, to dismantle the things that Labor had done, but above all—and this is the overriding principle of this Government—the rules do not apply to them. The Opposition is here to tell this Government that the rules do apply to this Government. No matter what the Government's bleating is, the Opposition intends to pursue this matter until election day. Government members should not whinge to the Opposition about the business of the House being interrupted and time being wasted. It is the Opposition's job to keep this Government in check and honest, and that is what the Opposition will do.

It is bad enough when a government displays this attitude but when the top political officer of the State, the Premier no less, is the one who is being examined here that is significant indeed. It is what happens when a government has been in office for too long. The member for Hawkesbury spoke about the popularity of the Premier. It is true—and recent elections have borne this out—that at the moment, because of COVID, incumbent governments are enjoying popularity. But that does not mean that the Premier can be or should be forgiven for doing the wrong thing. Two separate considerations are involved. The polls might say one thing but the objective evidence clearly says another. What will happen today is that politics will interfere with objective evidence, but objectively the conduct of the Premier falls short of the standard that is required of her. I should say in respect of that concept that 70 million Americans voted for Donald Trump but it beggars belief that people say he was a good President. The very same thing applies here today.

There are two simple questions. The first is: Is it acceptable for significant and unlawful wrongdoing within the knowledge of the top political citizen in the State to be concealed and hidden by that person? The answer has to be no. It cannot be otherwise. It has to be no or we are all doomed. The second is: Is it acceptable that an enormous amount of public money—\$142 million no less—be redirected to buy political advantage and then the fact of that concealed by destroying evidence? We are all doomed if the answer to that is not no. The point about all the allegations that have been examined in public by ICAC, the media, this House on multiple occasions and the upper House is that there is a simple objective fact here that the Government has not availed itself of, which is that the Premier and the Government have been asked on multiple occasions in various forums to provide objective evidence that what the Opposition is saying is not true.

The fact is that they have failed to provide evidence both in relation to the Maguire matter and in relation to the destruction of documents matter. That is why there have been multiple motions passed in the upper House and why the Hon. Don Harwin might not be there for very long. But one of the things that people may have missed is some of the bombshell evidence that has been given to ICAC. Let me take a minute or two to go through a tidbit of what flavours that inquiry. Counsel assisting asked the Premier on 12 October:

Do you remember whether Mr Maguire ever introduced you to someone he described as his business partner in relation to G8way?

Of course we are talking there about Phil Elliott. The Premier responded:

I wouldn't have known who that was. I'm not sure who that – um – I have no recollection. I may have been introduced to someone, but I don't know who, what, I don't know who that person was.

Again, in relation to another question, counsel assisting asked the Premier:

And what was Mr Elliott's relationship with Mr Maguire as you understood it as at 6 September, 2017?

The Premier said:

I knew they were friends. I knew that Mr Elliott ran Mr Maguire's campaigns. I knew him through the Liberal Party and, and I also assumed they had mutual interests together but I didn't know what they were.

Except that when a transcript of a telephone recording is played to the Premier, Mr Maguire says:

And um yeah I'll be alright if we do this deal with um if William gets this deal done at Badgerys Creek then I won't have to worry about it, too much we'll be in front again. Phil is going to China Saturday. Can you believe that?

The Premier responds:

Yeah but I thought that you said he wasn't very good at that?

Not "Phil who?" but "I thought in the previous conversations we'd had that you described his business capabilities to me." And then of course *The Daily Telegraph* drops a bombshell when we discover on 15 October that Phil Elliott's wife has been examined in a private hearing and she gives evidence before ICAC, sworn no less, that they had dinner, the four of them, not only at Daryl Maguire's house but at an Italian restaurant in Wagga Wagga as well.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Didn't know him though.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** She did not know him. Here is something that is curious about *The Daily Telegraph* article on 16 October. The article states:

Mr Elliott has previously given evidence he deleted his company records at the request of Mr Maguire.

Do we have a common thread here? Elliott deletes his records at the request of Maguire. Maguire rings his staff member down the hall and says, "Quick, chuck the computer out," and then a little while later the Premier is concocting the same destruction of evidence in her office in relation to \$142 million worth of grants. What a rotten bunch! I should note in relation to the shredding of that evidence that a former public officer whose ability and integrity has never once been impugned, the former Auditor-General Tony Harris no less, said that on the basis of the destruction of evidence the Premier should resign—on that basis alone. But she will not because she has the numbers in this House. Clearly, the Premier will not resign. This will not go away. There is no point in Government members complaining that this is taking up the time of the business of Parliament because if we all walk past the evidence that is objectively in the public domain now, then there is a new standard.

It goes to an article I saw recently in *The Australian* where AUSTRAC CEO Nicole Rose suggested that real estate agents and others in the financial sector be held to a higher standard in relation to the disclosure of the conduct of their clients. How on earth can you tell people in the private sector that they need to live by a higher standard when the Premier of New South Wales will not? There will be a new standard if we let the Premier get away with this. The Berejiklian standard will go something like this: When you have a clear, lawful and public duty to protect the public good by calling out wrongdoing where you know it exists, you don't have to do it if you don't really want to. We are all doomed if that standard prevails today.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:15:43):** Throughout this year, throughout this pandemic and this economic crisis we have dealt with a number of censure motions and motions of no confidence in both this House and the Legislative Council. Now we are dealing with the referral of the Premier to the ICAC passed by non-Government members in the Legislative Council in a motion brought by the Government in this Chamber. My contribution is on behalf of the three Independents in this House: me, the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Wagga Wagga. We have consistently addressed these matters with the threshold of proving corruption or maladministration. This has always applied and will always apply to all members regardless of whether they are from the Government, Opposition or crossbench. Matters raised in the referral are already part of ongoing and comprehensive investigations.

The ICAC is investigating the conduct of former member for Wagga Wagga Daryl Maguire through Operation Keppel. It clearly has an abundance of information and evidence against Mr Maguire and his associates. With this evidence it can make adverse findings against witnesses and initiate new investigations. I have confidence that the ICAC will conduct further inquiries if it deems it necessary. The Legislative Council Public Accountability Committee is inquiring into the Government grants process, and the State Archives and Records Authority and Information Commissioner have both confirmed that they will assess allegations of destroyed documents. Referring a member to the ICAC is a serious matter and should not be done for political purposes. The Independents will closely monitor the outcomes of the inquiry and the reviews. We see the Legislative Council's referral as superfluous and unnecessary. We support the Government motion moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (17:17:59):** I will address this motion on behalf of The Greens. I thank the House for providing me the opportunity. In other censure motions and motions of no confidence the crossbench has not been given the opportunity to speak to the motions. I strongly believe that it reduces our ability to express our views and place them on the record, which diminishes the debate in this place. That debate should legitimately include different perspectives. We take these matters incredibly seriously. We have considered this, as we consider all motions. In the past we have voted against some no-confidence motions and we have voted for some no-confidence motions. Today we will be opposing the motion by the Government, not because we believe the Premier should resign and not because we believe that we have done a thorough investigation and have convicted the Premier but because we believe the matter should be investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. We believe that is the right organisation to address the matters presented in the resolution from the upper House.

I add that any allegation against members, particularly female members of this House, that were made in this debate concerning gender politics, including against my colleague the member for Newtown, is offensive and should be repudiated by this House. I do not apply improper motives to any member speaking on this matter. I believe everyone is approaching it to assess the issue according to their own philosophical and political perspective, and I do not believe it is appropriate to attack individual members on the basis of gender politics. As I have pointed out, and as we have consistently said concerning the Maguire matter and others associated with this motion, we do not believe the Premier should resign. That is an important difference to the position of others in this debate.

We believe that these matters need to be fully and thoroughly investigated. When it comes to corruption prevention, any training in this area will tell you that if any matters are suspicious or of concern or may raise concerns around corruption in particular they should be referred to the ICAC and investigated. It is not our job to satisfy sections 8 or 9 of the Act and determine whether an action was corrupt. It is sufficient in my mind for us to look at the resolution that we have seen from the upper House, to look at the conduct displayed in the media and say we are not here to judge, we will provide that information to the ICAC and it is their job as the fiercely independent fact-finding body to do that work. We believe it is important that happens. There has been an argument that it will compulsorily ensure an investigation. The Government knows as well as we do that the numbers are not there.

It is a moot point to claim that it should be something that weighs heavily upon us. We know that will not be the case. I agree that neither side of this House should be crowing. We have seen the Independent Commission Against Corruption deal with a range of members in Opposition and Government ventures. It has infected the activities of politicians and officials, as demonstrated by the recent matter regarding the infamous Aldi bag and Sussex Street. We all have a responsibility to address these matters carefully and seriously. The motion highlights the need, as we and the ICAC committee have been saying for some time, for independent funding for the ICAC. The situation around the funding for the ICAC is deeply conflicted when the Premier, the subject of this motion, is involved in its funding. While the ICAC's core funding is guaranteed, it has to come cap in hand to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and beg for money every year to ensure that it can continue its ongoing processes. It is important to remind ourselves why we have senior counsel's advice noting the current funding arrangement of the ICAC is unlawful. That is why we have the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC producing a detailed report saying why the ICAC's funding should be independent.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** That is not what the Solicitor General said.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai will have an opportunity to reply.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** Examples such as this demonstrate why the independence of the ICAC funding is so important. The most recent report from the Chief Commissioner has identified that not only the Premier but also senior bureaucrats should not be involved in the funding of the ICAC. The issues before us are significant and I believe warrant investigation by the ICAC. I do not believe that we should prosecute the case in this House by saying that it fully satisfies sections 8 and 9; that is something that the ICAC can do. In conclusion, I will

identify the issue of the Stronger Communities Fund. I draw to members' attention the process of grant making that has been happening in recent times. It has been unsatisfactory by the standards of even the most disinterested observer. The way the \$250 million was allocated, to anybody, was unjust. I note the comments in the motion adopted by the upper House where the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC addresses the way that grants should be allocated. He recommends, first, the recommendation made for selection should be a recommendation with reasons and, secondly, at the acceptance of the recommendation by the panel it should similarly be supported by written reasons. In other words, there should be accountability and transparency from start to finish.

If there is one thing that comes out of the whole sorry mess that we have been going through over the past few months, it is that we should have open and transparent allocation of public taxpayer funding. What has been revealed by the Public Accountability Committee, in particular the way the grant money was distributed, is a disgrace. The Greens will not be supporting the resolution put forward by the Government and we commend other members to think seriously about the matter. Even if the resolution is supported by the House, we encourage members to make sure that they do a lot better in all of their activities, whether personally or as parties or in the way they allocate monies in this place.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (17:25:13):** In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Hawkesbury, Keira, Maroubra, Sydney and Balmain for their contributions. It really did stick in my craw when the member for Maroubra, who sat as a member of the most corrupt Government in the history of this State, lectured our side of the House on corruption. In what I can only describe as an excellent address to the House, the member for Hawkesbury reminded us where the public stands on the Premier and any referral. Labor has to stop this creepy fixation with the Premier's private life. Not one word was said by the member for Keira, the member for Maroubra and the member for Balmain about why there is a prima facie case of corruption under sections 8 and 9 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] Act against the Premier. Frankly, it was like that great line in the Australian film *The Castle*: "It's the vibe of it." When I went through a very detailed analysis of fact and law under sections 8 and 9 of the ICAC Act, not one word was said or counter made against anything I put to the House. That is at the very crux of the matter.

As the member for Sydney quite correctly said, Mr Maguire is already a person of interest before the ICAC and there have been no grounds demonstrated for any further referral. The members in favour of referral have not made out their case. The member for Balmain took exception to the comments that I said about gender but I note that not one female member of this House spoke in favour of referring our female Premier to the ICAC. In the upper House the debate was led by men: Latham, Graham, Shoebridge and Adam Searle who moved the motion. They were the members who spoke to the motion. I think that makes good the point of the member for Hawkesbury, which is that the public is behind our Premier. Labor does not want to expose all the proponents of gender politics that goes on day in and day out in this Parliament. It did not expose one of its female members by their getting up and attacking our very popular female Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** This is a political hit. It is a stunt. My motion should be agreed to by the House and I encourage all members to support it.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: I seek the leave of the House to alter the motion that is governing the discussion to allow a female member of the Opposition to address the motion.

**Leave not granted.**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time. The motion is that this House disagrees with the Legislative Council proposal for reference to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, as set out in its message dated 12 November 2020, and that a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....43  
Noes .....35  
Majority.....8

AYES

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Barilaro, J  
Berejiklian, G  
Bromhead, S

Gulaptis, C  
Hancock, S  
Henskens, A  
Johnsen, M  
Kean, M

Provest, G  
Saunders, D  
Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G

## AYES

Constance, A  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Evans, L  
Gibbons, M  
Greenwich, A  
Griffin, J

Lee, G  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
McGirr, J  
Pavey, M  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Piper, G  
Preston, R

Smith, N  
Speakman, M  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Upton, G  
Ward, G  
Williams, L

## NOES

Aitchison, J  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P

Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Kamper, S  
Lalich, N  
Leong, J  
Lynch, P  
McDermott, H  
McKay, J  
Mehan, D (teller)

Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Parker, J  
Saffin, J  
Scully, P  
Smith, T  
Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)

## PAIRS

Clancy, J  
Conolly, K  
Coure, M  
Hazzard, B  
Roberts, A  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

Atalla, E  
Warren, G  
Mihailuk, T  
Zangari, G  
Hornery, S  
Harris, D  
Car, P

**Motion agreed to.***Private Members' Statements***BATHURST ELECTORATE SHOWS**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (17:37:34):** It gives me pleasure to be able to talk about shows in this House. The shows in regional and rural communities are such important events for those local communities. In a lot of areas, they might be the largest community event that is held each and every year. It is very welcoming news that shows are returning for 2021. Very importantly during this time of COVID, the New South Wales Government has put together a COVID-safe plan that shows can follow to host events. Those shows can have up to 5,000 people per day, so this is going to cover many of the 192 shows that we have across the State. Shows that have larger numbers will be able to apply for a public health order if the organisers wish to increase the numbers at those events.

During the bushfires and drought we saw a lot of communities coming together. It was important for our rural landholders to come together and talk about the impacts of the drought. Shows provide that support and also provide support to the wider community. People are also able to showcase their agricultural produce. It is great to see that shows are back on the agenda for 2021, and I know that is going to be a huge and welcome boost to our local communities. I congratulate the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. As part of the Government's stimulus program, we are seeing an unprecedented amount of investment going into showgrounds. That is going to transform the facilities, and it is also going to look after a number of the buildings on the sites that are so important. They tell the history of the local area and so it is important that we preserve and protect those buildings for generations to come. There is a massive investment in the Bathurst electorate, and I thank the Minister for that,

but this stimulus funding is going to those showgrounds. It will provide local jobs and an economic boost to the local community, and that is very welcome news.

A couple of showgrounds in my electorate are going to receive some of the funding through the stimulus program. The Bathurst Showground is going to receive around \$3 million. It is an iconic site that can be seen immediately when driving into Bathurst. The heritage buildings tell the history of the area and the shows have been running there for over 150 years. It is important that we protect those buildings that need some work and need to be repaired. The Beau Brown Pavilion, the Cec English Pavilion, the Don Leitch and Sinclair Pavilions and the Howard Pavilion will all receive significant funding for upgrades. There will also be funding spent on the grandstand, which will make it safer. Some of the safety works will also lead to further improvements happening around the showground.

The Sofala Showground is going to receive \$48,000 to construct a brand new animal nursery. I had the opportunity to catch up with the committee of the Sofala Showground. I think it is indicative of all the showgrounds in our local community that they are made up of volunteers and members of our communities, and they volunteer to look after the sites. When I was there, they were planning a working bee to mow the lawn and look after the show site. It is great news that they are receiving \$48,000 from the State Government to replace the animal nursery. The Rylstone Showground is receiving \$73,000 to paint, put in a new kitchen, and put access paths and walkways in and around the showground. We also went to the Lithgow Showground and they are going to get \$181,000 to upgrade the change rooms and meeting room facilities of the Tony Luchetti Sports Precinct. Blayney Showground will get \$122,000 for boundary fencing and signage, and even overnight parking for livestock transport vehicles. The Carcoar Showground will get \$59,000 to fix up the shearing holding pens and the Neville Showground will get \$31,000 to install a new playground. It is an important investment for creating jobs and driving the local economy.

#### DIGITAL DIVIDE

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:42:43):** The digital divide is undermining the ability of people to access basic government services. It affects many residents in my electorate, including older people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people on low or fixed incomes. The digital divide also affects communities throughout New South Wales, particularly in rural and regional areas and in low socio-economic suburbs in greater western Sydney. For many of us, internet access is something we take for granted. Indeed, there are many aspects of modern life which are inconceivable for most of us without access to the internet and smartphones. We can run our entire lives on our smartphone. For many people, the internet is how we work and stay in touch with our family and friends. Our reliance on the internet has grown even more since the COVID-19 pandemic as people rely on the internet to maintain social connections while also maintaining social distancing, with classrooms and meetings replaced by Zoom and a whole lot of other innovative ways.

However, while many of us take the internet for granted, we must be mindful that many people in our community either do not use the internet or they experience significant difficulty accessing the online world. I will give a quick example. A few days ago my 11-year-old daughter Cassandra was showing my dad the part of Greece that he comes from. My brother and I have tried many times to help my parents access the internet and technology. It is very difficult particularly for people of that generation but once you talk them through it and they feel comfortable, it gets easier and easier. I am not saying that my dad is an expert—he has a long way to go—but I was proud to know that the grandchildren of the generation of people who are in their 70s and 80s are helping them with this technological connection.

Australian Bureau of Statistics research on household use of information technology found that 13 per cent of people do not use the internet and more than 33,000 children in New South Wales live in a home without the internet according to the most recent census. The 2019 Australian Digital Inclusion Index found that digital inclusion in New South Wales decreases for low income households, households in rural and regional areas and for older people. The digital divide needs to be taken more seriously by the Government. I note that the Minister responsible is in the Chamber and I recognise that he is passionate about providing access to digital technology.

Last week I visited the Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS] and the Greek Orthodox Community of New South Wales. I am proud that these organisations are helping to connect our elderly with technology. We are all well aware of the distressing impact of the social dislocation that came with staying at home and distancing during lockdown. Both CASS and the Greek Orthodox community, as well as many other multicultural organisations, are putting on classes to help older people with technology. It is something that the Government should consider. I urge the expansion of the existing Tech Savvy Seniors Program and I encourage further funding for local organisations. This would ensure that people in multicultural communities in rural and regional areas and those in low socio-economic suburbs have access to technology.

It is becoming commonplace for the Government to deliver programs exclusively through digital means. Last year I held a Bring Your Bills event that was attended by 500 people, many of whom were older and from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Most people want to speak to others face to face, and that is especially the case for those who do not speak English very well. It is important that we do not allow people to fall through the cracks, and it is important that we respect people's choices about whether or not they go online. I urge the Government to expand these programs and invest to help to bridge the technological divide.

### **RYDE ELECTORATE CHURCH COMMUNITY**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (17:47:54):** We all search for meaning in our lives, especially during moments of uncertainty such as the ongoing global pandemic. For attendees of the nearly 45 separate churches across the Ryde community, this search for meaning is answered by spiritual faith. I have been struck by the resilience and commitment shown by members of the Ryde church community, who have not only innovated their practices in order to continue functioning in a COVID-safe manner but have also served as a valuable support mechanism for others in our community.

Members of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church in North Ryde on Coxs Road are a fine example of this, and this year the church will mark the 100-year anniversary of the Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel. I am told that mass continues to thrive with weekly live streaming, allowing the church to not only hold onto its Christian traditions but also to maintain vital relationships throughout the North Ryde community. I recognise Michaelite priests Father Stan, Father George and Father Anthony for their tireless work, as well as parish council members Jason Hodges, Richard Morgan, Neil Meloti, Anna Macri, Dhanushka Jayawardena, Marea Cavaleri, Lydia Scuglia, Shirley Leung, Jenny Hodges, Benedict Lee and Nadia Caravella.

Also situated on Coxs Road is the North Ryde Anglican Church, which has remained just as committed to its important work despite the pandemic. The year has even been an opportunity for church growth, with five community members being baptised in September and a number of significant property upgrades taking place across the site thanks in part to the New South Wales Community Building Partnership program. The church continues to conduct important food distribution work in partnership with Anglicare and the Together For Ryde fellowship of churches. Senior minister John Chappell highlighted the dedication of staff team members Simon Pei, Michael Yip, Lauren King, Raph Li and Jireh Lang. He also spoke highly of the church's volunteer executive team and preschool team, including Fiona Arndell, Chris Aspland, Peter Bliss, Bruce Duncan, Kathy Cole-Clark and Joan McKittrick. In John's words, "Trial often brings refocus," and so it seems in the case of the North Ryde Anglican Church. It has strengthened its commitment to supporting our community despite a challenging year.

Just as impressively, there are few better examples of COVID-safe practices than at the Macquarie Korean Baptist Church in Macquarie Park. I had the chance to hear from associate pastor Justin Kim, who underlined the importance his church places on community health and safety when conducting Sunday worship. Under the leadership of senior pastor Steve Choi, the church measures visitors' body temperatures and collects contact details through QR codes at the door, all while maintaining full social distancing and thoroughly cleaning down surfaces and using hand sanitiser and masks. Pastor Justin was deeply appreciative of how his congregation has voluntarily followed the safety rules without complaint, and I would like to say a warm *gamsahabnida* to the churchgoers for their strong commitment to the Ryde area's wellbeing.

COVID-19 is not the only challenge our local churches have had to face this year. Until the arrival of Reverend Matthew Whitfield in September, the West Ryde Anglican Church was without a senior minister. I warmly welcome Matthew and his wife Belinda, as well as their children Benjamin, Elena and Annabelle. I also recognise the important work of church staff, wardens and parish nominators who managed the transition period after farewelling Reverend Malcolm York in 2019. They include Simon Keith, Andrew Irving, Andrew Copeman, Susanna Dumbrell, Natalie Courtis, Wilson Leung, Luke Scandrett, Arthur Feltham, Sui Lian Tan, Brenda Cooper and Tony Jones. I deeply appreciate the hard work our churches have passionately carried out during the COVID-19 period, not only in support of their own members but also of the Ryde community more broadly. There are countless other examples I would like to highlight from approximately 40 other places of worship in Ryde, so I thank the whole Ryde community for its resilience. I am so proud of the community's ability to triumph over any challenges that come its way.

### **DUBBO ELECTORATE PROJECTS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:52:54):** The last few weeks have been outstanding across the Dubbo electorate, with many major projects either being announced or opened. It was great to have a number of Ministers visit the electorate over the past week to make some of those major announcements in the lead-up to next week's budget. The "Festival of Dubbo", as it was coined by the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer, started when the health Minister, Brad Hazzard, joined me to unveil concept plans for additional car parking at the

growing Dubbo hospital precinct. In the lead-up to the 2019 election I stood at that hospital with the Deputy Premier and made that project one of my major election commitments after a petition I carried out had shown significant desire from the community for the extra spaces.

The Dubbo hospital precinct is growing rapidly thanks to significant investment from the New South Wales Government, and work is continuing on stage four of that redevelopment. At the same time, the State and Federal governments have combined to facilitate the construction of the Western Cancer Centre, which will allow people from the Central West to access life-saving treatment without having to go too far from home. That would be an outstanding achievement. The announcement of around 380 new car parking spaces has been welcomed not only by residents of my electorate, including the hundreds of staff members who work at the hospital, but also by residents from outlying areas who rely on the hospital for their medical needs.

The major announcements made this week at what you could call a mini community Cabinet will mean big things for the Dubbo electorate. I was joined by the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer as I proudly announced \$7.5 million in funding for the construction and operation of a residential drug rehabilitation facility in the Dubbo region. I recently spoke in this Chamber about the work I had been doing behind the scenes with the Treasurer and Minister for Health and Medical Research in relation to achieving this outcome for people in the community who are impacted by drug addiction. I wish it were not the case but there is a significant drug issue in our region, as has been highlighted by the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'.

I have wondered at some suggestions that I did not really have a desire to see this project get over the line. I assure members that nothing could be further from the truth and I am hoping that this very positive announcement well and truly answers those suggestions. The end result is that through the work we have done with the Treasurer, the Minister for Health and Medical Research and the Deputy Premier, a facility will be built. Most importantly, it also means the correct wraparound services and programs will be put in place to have a meaningful and long-term impact on those who need help. This is a massive win for the community and I thank all those who have been involved.

After that amazing community announcement, we turned our hands to conservation, with a total of \$22.8 million allocated for two exceptional projects at Taronga Western Plains Zoo. Again, I have no issue in declaring it the best zoo in the world. I know it ranks at the top of the Treasurer's favourite zoos as well. It was there that we joined with the Minister for Energy and Environment to unveil plans for a platypus refuge and a new wildlife hospital. The platypus refuge is valued at \$8.8 million and will be a world-leading project. The need for such a facility was identified by Murray Wood from the Department of Regional NSW as he investigated the impact of drought and bushfires on our native species. Working with Steve Hinks and his team from the zoo, our collaboration will see an incredible result.

The refuge will hold up to 65 platypodes at any one time and not only will provide a safe haven for them when required but also the chance for further research into breeding programs to ensure the long-term survival of this very unique monotreme. The Deputy Premier saw the value in this project and was supportive from day one, and it was through that support we achieved the financial contribution. The other part of the project is a new \$14 million wildlife hospital—the biggest and best anywhere west of the Great Dividing Range. It will allow for more medical work to be done on sick and injured animals, while doubling as a training centre for the next generation of vets. In addition, both projects will add to the visitor experience at the zoo and its appeal with locals and guests to the region.

Last but not least, our group was joined by the Minister for Water, Property and Housing at the Dubbo Solar Farm where the future of the first renewable energy zone [REZ] in New South Wales was unlocked. The REZ will see Government and the private sector combine to utilise solar, wind and pumped hydro in ways we never have before, to not only provide a regular supply of electricity but also drive down prices for mums and dads and business owners as well. There are plans for multiple REZs across New South Wales but it is the Dubbo, Wellington and Mudgee regions that are leading the way as the first zones. There will be alternative income sources for landholders who want to be involved and thousands of jobs. The Dubbo electorate is humming and I look forward to seeing each of these wonderful projects progress over the next few months.

## STATE BUDGET

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:57:59):** Next week the Treasurer will hand down the budget which will give us a clear understanding of where this Government's priorities lie and what choices it has made. People in the electorate of Newtown, and indeed across the entire State, have never known such uncertain economic times. We have not faced such dire economic circumstances since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The decisions the Government makes in this budget are crucial. For many, they will be the difference between surviving or becoming destitute, between being able to live well or being overwhelmed with pressure and anxiety.



Budgets are about people. They are not about bolstering tax breaks for big business or funding global corporates. They are not just arbitrary tables of numbers. They are conscious choices that impact people's lives.

This budget must provide for all people to ensure that no-one is too poor to live; to ensure they will have a roof over their heads, despite losing their jobs; and to give them the wraparound care when they have been left without support. This budget needs to be about doing what governments are meant to do: serving the people and making sure the community is looked after, especially those who are most vulnerable. That means everyone living in New South Wales, including anyone who is on a humanitarian visa or a student visa or any other visa that allows them to live, work or study here. Those people have been abandoned during the pandemic by the State and Federal governments. This is State-sanctioned cruelty and it must stop. Everyone should be able to afford to live and live well. Everyone should have a roof over their heads. During this pandemic many people experiencing homelessness were housed and supported according to their needs. If we did it then, we can do it now. We can build public housing and invest in public housing, 30,000 homes every year for the next 10 years, providing shelter for people who need it and finally getting rid of the massive public housing waiting list. Much needed jobs will be delivered while we build these homes.

We can deliver affordable housing to counter the huge spike in rental stress, which will increase throughout 2021 as millions of people are moved onto inadequate JobSeeker payments. We are calling for 100 per cent social and affordable housing on public land and for the Government to audit all available State land and properties with a view to fast-tracking publicly owned housing that people can afford. We need to build zero emissions housing and retrofit existing housing. These are the homes we need in the twenty-first century. A budget at its core is a moral and ethical framework. A budget is about choices. We need to choose compassion and dignity and provide people with what they need to live with dignity and to live well. The Government's job today is to use every mechanism at its disposal to provide essential support to those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. Because of this pandemic, that is a huge growing number of people in this State. We have to have a budget that deals with this health crisis and with the climate crisis as well as creating a budget that puts wellbeing, sustainability and equality of access for everyone in our community at its core so that no-one is left out as we face the enormous difficulties that are upon us.

#### **JOHN RIORDAN**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (18:01:52):** I recognise the outstanding career of Marist College Kogarah's Principal Mr John Riordan, who will retire at the conclusion of the school year. John has been an educator for 37 years, spending the last 12 years as principal at Kogarah. He began his career as a human science and environment teacher before being promoted to assistant principal, first at De La Salle College, Revesby, and then at St John Bosco College, before being promoted to principal at De La Salle, Cronulla. Since it opened its doors in 1909, Marist College Kogarah has always focused on the twin goals of achieving academic excellence as well as nurturing young men of good character. Mr Riordan has continued this tradition throughout his tenure, with a commitment to the highest standards of achievement and behaviour by the young men at the school. I am an old boy of Marist College Kogarah, as is the member for Oatley.

Mr Riordan's extraordinary impact at Kogarah can be seen in the school's consistently outstanding HSC results as well as his legacy as a Lighthouse leader. Mr Riordan is renowned for identifying and nurturing future leaders, both in staff and students. He has regularly and effectively coached or mentored other principals, assistant principals and those aspiring to be appointed to leadership roles in Catholic schools. Mr Riordan's dedication to helping others speaks volumes to his character and his commitment to education. John's colleagues speak of his excellent and engaging management style: realistic, sensible, positive and always committed. He is known for his balanced judgement, his ability to negotiate challenges and driving the school forward. Maybe his most important quality is his sense of humour, which gives so much confidence to staff and the student community.

Mr Riordan's leadership skills were acknowledged and celebrated in 2018 through the Australian Council for Educational Leaders NSW Leadership Award. He received the award for his strong and sustained strategic leadership and his skill in building a positive culture at Marist College Kogarah. John is the son of Joe Riordan, Minister for Housing in the Whitlam Government, and the brother of Bernie Riordan, former Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union and President of the Labor Party. I am sure there will be many thanks offered to Mr Riordan in the coming weeks from students and staff, past and present, and I add my own to that list. Through a long and outstanding career John has touched the lives of hundreds of students and I thank him for his service to our community. I wish John and his wife, Kim, many years of a well-deserved happy and healthy retirement.

#### **ST PAULS NETBALL CLUB**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:04:37):** I acknowledge St Pauls Netball Club at Winston Hills from the Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association and note its 2020 season and particularly its award winners. The club is small in terms of numbers but shoots above its weight in the competition. I thank the St Pauls

committee for its dedication and hard work throughout the season. I say well done to president Gemma Martin, vice-president Garry Allen, secretary Danielle Bliss, treasurer Julie Ogle, registrar Vicki Davies, assistant registrar Penny Wallace, coaching coordinator Kylie Mulcare, umpire convenor Sam Davies, equipment officer Kerry Walters, publicity officer Ashleigh Davies and school liaison officer Melanie Fletcher.

I congratulate the 10D Gold team, which received the 2020 Encouragement Award. The award is given to a team whose members face hurdles but train hard and constantly improve their netball abilities whilst trying their best in every game. Team 10D Gold scrambled to secure enough players at the start of the season before Baulkham Hills Netball allowed some younger players to enter the division. Right before the 2020 competition began, a player sustained a season-ending injury, so the team had to recruit again whilst the registration deadline was fast approaching. The team found more players quickly and recruited some new coaches. Team 10D Gold only had seven netballers, with some newcomers to the sport and some teammates who had clashes with commitments outside of netball. However, the group finished an amazing second place in the season. I congratulate team 10D Gold and I wish the team all the best for next season.

The Spirit of St Pauls Award was received by Natalie Marten. The award is given to a club member who displays the qualities and spirit that all netballers value and strive towards, such as sportsmanship. Natalie has been a St Pauls member for over a decade. She brings her experience as a player to her role as a junior coach and has taken teams of varying abilities to premierships with her excellent coaching. I am told she is always positive, enthusiastic and friendly and always focuses on the development of her team's netball skills whilst ensuring everyone has fun. She is a terrific role model to players and coaches at the club.

The Service Award is given to a club member who has provided outstanding service to St Pauls over a number of years. There are many worthy recipients across the Winston Hills area. This year the winner was Kylie Mulcare. I say well done to Kylie, who has assisted the club for more than two decades and is well known for her umpiring achievements and her years on the committee serving in multiple positions. She has also coached and managed teams and has helped as a delegate to the Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association. Importantly, Kylie was the club's lead in coordinating St Pauls' response to the COVID-19 public health orders and was thanked for her guidance and leadership during this particularly difficult time.

The 2020 Father David Scott Best and Fairest Award is received by a team that has performed well and shown sportsmanship throughout the season. The team chosen has been playing together for a number of years and has many great combinations and premierships behind it. Team members always encourage each other and enjoy training and playing games. I congratulate 14C Navy on its award as the best and fairest and on almost being undefeated for the whole season. I also say well done to Gemma Martin, who was recognised for her efforts with the 2020 Umpires Convenor Award. The award was given to Gemma for her outstanding commitment and continuous positive attitude and support throughout the year while umpiring. Gemma has received numerous awards, has served as an umpire for several years and is always available to fill in at the last moment when needed. She assists the development of new umpires and shares advice and knowledge whenever needed. I say a big congratulations to St Pauls Netball Club on a great season despite all the challenges that it faced. I wish the club the very best for next season.

#### CESSNOCK ELECTORATE OFFICE STAFF

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:09:28):** I take this opportunity to talk about my electorate staff in general. It is perhaps an early Christmas felicitation but more importantly it is a congratulations to Perri Hodge, who was awarded her 10-year service award during proceedings today and yesterday. Perri did not want to come down for the ceremony. We sometimes joke in the Cessnock electorate office—and I am probably the worst offender—that the chances of catching COVID in the office are far less than the chances of catching COVID in Sydney. Perri did not want to come down for this particular occasion, but she is well worthy of the honour bestowed upon her today. I think the member for South Coast, and former Speaker, who is in the Chamber, might have introduced the awards some five or six years ago.

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** Yes, indeed. Well, I didn't introduce them but I made them grander.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I thank the member. Last year another member of my staff, Anne Lomas, received her 30-year award. I point out this small but really vital piece of information to anyone who aspires to be a member of Parliament. When I was elected in 2011, I had the opportunity to take on brand-new staff who would not really have known what their role was or to keep the staff who were already there. I made the smartest decision of my life—well, other than getting married. I made the second smartest decision of my life: I kept the two staff members who were there, Anne and Perri. Perri had been there for about 12 months, after a long and esteemed career in the banking industry. She has wisdom and positivity and a lovely nature. As members of Parliament, we cannot place a value on the importance of that quality for a person working in an electorate office.

Having had a different career, she had many life experiences and skills that prepared her well for the role of being an electorate officer.

Members all know how difficult that role is, and we all know how important the role is for filtering through the various things that come through our front doors, over the telephone and via email these days. While the important issues absolutely get to the local MP, the smaller and simpler issues that can be dealt with quickly, efficiently and decisively are managed by our electorate staff. Let us face it: Quite often we simply are not in the office to deal with the issues that come to our front door. I sit in an office that is set back a little from the front door and I occasionally hear people come in incredibly angry and frustrated. There is a certain tone as they come through the door. Here is the thing about Perri: She greets them with respect, fairness and courtesy. Three or four minutes later, I hear these people who were once angry walking out, saying in the most cheerful of tones, "Thanks very much, Perri! Really appreciate your help. I'm glad I came in." I do not know how one could place a price on that level of service to our local community and to me as a local MP. I am sure we all have these wonderful staff in our offices. I give a massive shout-out to Perri.

I also want to recognise Anne, who received her award for 30 years of service. Anne has worked for four different members of Parliament during her 30 years—three of them Labor and one Liberal. My predecessors were smart enough and wise enough to keep Anne on when they became new members of Parliament, and I certainly was not silly enough to fail to recognise the wisdom of their decision. I also have Rebecca, who joined our team last year. She was originally a temporary replacement, but she has brought an entirely new energy to the electorate office team. She is significantly younger and, as a result, she has skills with these things called computers and this program called Facebook and I do not know what else.

There is something called an internet that she refers to at times. She does some wonderful work to keep the community that I have the honour to represent up to date with what is going on in the life of the local MP and important information they need to know about COVID or fire issues, where they can source information and things like that. Bec does a wonderful job. I might be a week early for Christmas felicitations, but the 10-year service award going to Perri this week prompted my short private member's statement this evening. My massive thanks goes to all electorate office staff right across the State who do a wonderful job, especially the Cessnock team.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Cessnock. I thank him for his kind words about staff at his electorate office. Having wonderful staff is quite common among us. I confirm that his staff are excellent, particularly Perri. The member for Charlestown and the member for Swansea and I in Lake Macquarie all have very good working relationships with our staff. I thank him for bringing that matter to our attention.

### **NOWRA RIVERFRONT PRECINCT**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (18:15:01):** The Nowra riverfront precinct provides an extraordinary opportunity to draft a visionary plan to shape the future of Nowra and strengthen its role as the regional capital of the Shoalhaven. Despite being located right beside the Shoalhaven River, Nowra does not currently have an active waterfront like a lot of other river towns do. The Shoalhaven River is a beautiful natural asset, and we know there is strong community support for the activation of the riverfront. Already South Coast residents have contacted me to suggest pedestrian and cycling paths along the foreshore, and coffee vans and food trucks with shaded seating areas. At the moment the construction of the \$342 million Nowra Bridge is underway and so, in a sense, these things have been put aside for the time being. Nevertheless, it is now an opportune time to plan and get on with the job of revitalising the riverfront when the bridge project has finished.

Earlier this week I established the Nowra Riverfront Advisory Taskforce, which will drive the revitalisation of the Nowra riverfront precinct and assist in fast-tracking the development of the site. The group is co-chaired by Regional NSW and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment with representatives from Shoalhaven City Council and other key departmental agencies including NSW Health, the NSW Land and Housing Corporation and Transport for NSW. A joint local and State approach will ensure activities are coordinated and aligned to existing works underway, including the new Nowra Bridge. The Nowra Riverfront Advisory Taskforce will examine sites for strategic development, appropriate planning controls to facilitate investment, affordable housing and social infrastructure requirements, traffic flow, and funding opportunities.

The broad objectives of the advisory task force are to: identify and prioritise strategic development sites within the riverfront precinct as a catalyst for the creation of an iconic gateway into Nowra and the enhancement of associated public spaces; consider appropriate planning controls to facilitate investment on strategic development sites and investment into affordable housing and other social infrastructure within the precinct; identify and explore funding opportunities for catalyst infrastructure within the precinct; ensure that any future revitalisation and redevelopment of the riverfront precinct aligns with work being undertaken as part of the Nowra

Bridge project and on the Shoalhaven Medical Campus; and examine the project impact including its effect on local roads and traffic and opportunities for social housing and community outcomes.

My colleague the member for Kiama and I will be part of the task force that will provide strategic guidance around the redevelopment of the riverfront precinct, determine strategic development sites within the precinct and associated public spaces, examine the social and economic impacts of the proposed redevelopment and identify potential funding sources. For years in Nowra we have in a way been stuck in a quagmire of going-nowhere conversations and going round and round in circles with plans bumping perhaps from council to other agencies and then nothing happening. The time for talking is over. With the construction of the new \$342 million Nowra Bridge, we now have a clear window of opportunity to create an iconic gateway to the Shoalhaven. Anyone who has travelled around Nowra recently will have seen the rapid progress being made by Fulton Hogan as they construct the Nowra Bridge.

Current progress includes vegetation removal in work areas and utility relocations, continuing work on the new local road connecting to Lyrebird Drive, building the casting yard on the southern side of the Shoalhaven River where the concrete bridge segments will be made, piling on land and in the Shoalhaven River for the new bridge piers, removing material including rock from the work area near Illaroo Road, and widening the Princes Highway on the north-western side of Bomaderry Creek. With so much work underway in the area it is time to seize the momentum and the moment. That is why I have brought all of these key stakeholders together to get on with the job of finalising a plan and working with the council that has done an enormous amount of work in this space for many years. We will coordinate our consultation with the community and work with Government around funding opportunities to finally redevelop one of the most beautiful riverfronts you will ever see.

Work by the task force is underway. I formed the group last week and we had our first meeting today. Everybody is extremely enthusiastic about finally getting something done on the Shoalhaven River foreshore. I thank everybody for attending the meeting today, including Minister Ward in his capacity as the member for Kiama. All of the agencies that attended brought something to the meeting. All I could foresee happening in the future was council would do its planning, the project would be bumped from agency to agency and it would be years before something finally eventuated. We are all keen and we are going to do something on that riverfront. Mr Temporary Speaker, very soon you will have to come down for a visit.

#### STATE BUDGET AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:20:07):** I speak today about the dire need for funding, and funding certainty, to enable the community sector to meet the growing demand for assistance due to the COVID-19 recession. COVID-19, and the resulting economic downturn, is leading to increased disadvantage across a range of domains, including unemployment, homelessness and domestic violence. As a result, the community sector is reporting increased pressure on its services and is predicting a wave of financial and operating distress over the next 12 months. The rising levels of disadvantage resulting from the economic downturn will be felt unevenly across different locations. A recent report prepared by Equity Economics for the NSW Council of Social Services found that parts of the Swansea electorate will be among the worst affected in the State.

In Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, homelessness will increase by 40.5 per cent and unemployment will increase by 12.3 per cent—the highest in the State for both categories. On the Central Coast, homelessness will increase by 18.7 per cent and unemployment will increase by 7.1 per cent. Those numbers are shocking. But even more frightening is the thought of each name and face behind those statistics—and what their fate will be if the Government fails to adequately fund the community sector in its upcoming budget. The COVID-19 pandemic and recession continue to present unprecedented challenges for our society as a whole and especially for our most vulnerable. That is why I urge the Government to provide for those who will be hardest hit when unemployment peaks shortly after the Christmas and New Year period. I note that the Treasurer has just entered the Chamber, and I am pleased that he has. The Government must ensure there are no funding shortfalls and provide funding certainty so the community sector can deliver essential assistance to the growing number of people in need.

I am talking about organisations like Nova for Women and Children, which runs the only drop-in hub in Lake Macquarie for women and children at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness and domestic violence. It has set up a new residence in Charlestown. I note that the member for Charlestown is also in the Chamber. Staff of Nova told me that she visits the drop-in centre and provides them with an enormous amount of assistance, and I thank her. She knows how important the service is. When I visited the drop-in hub recently, Nova staff told me they were stretched to meet demand for their services even before COVID-19. In the 2018-19 financial year, Nova was funded to work with 1,049 clients but it saw more than 1,200 clients. Nova's Specialist Homelessness Service Program will be even more critical for vulnerable women and children in the Swansea electorate when rates of domestic violence and homelessness peak next year in accordance with a study. Yet the future of the program is in doubt because the Government gave it a contract of just 12 months, ending in 2021.

A lack of funding certainty makes it difficult for Nova to renegotiate property rental and administrative costs, to provide job security to employees and, ultimately, to deliver essential services for women and children. That is why I have written to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services to request the budget provides Nova with three years of funding certainty, plus two-year contracts, as well as a 20 per cent funding increase to meet demand. In its upcoming budget, the Government must provide adequate funding and funding certainty to the community sector. If the Government fails to do so, it will effectively abandon the most vulnerable members of our community at this time of unprecedented need.

#### SIR JAMES MARTIN

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (18:24:14):** Today I pay tribute to a great Australian, Sir James Martin. In a time when the prevailing orthodoxy is to tear down statues, I recently had the great pleasure to unveil a new one. It is said that Sir Henry Parkes, Australia's "Father of Federation", wanted a statue of his mentor and friend Sir James Martin in the plaza that bears his name, Martin Place. It was Parkes who decided to name Martin Place in Martin's honour, but the statue never came. In fact it took 91 years from Martin's death for a New South Wales Government to get around to putting in a memorial of any kind in Martin Place. That 1977 memorial was a small, insignificant plaque camouflaged amid Martin Place's brown and grey stone surfaces. That is partly why so few people know anything about the namesake of one of our best-known city locations.

James Martin was born in Ireland and came to Australia with his family as an infant. His father worked as a horse groom in Parramatta and young James was brought up in the servants' quarters. His family wanted him to have a proper education but in 1832 there was no high school in Parramatta, nor could his family afford to move to Sydney Town, so the 12-year-old boy declared that he would instead walk to school. That is precisely what he did for the next two years, until his family had the money to relocate. Those early determined efforts set him on a career trajectory that boggles the mind even today: a journalist, editor and publisher; a legal career; election to Parliament; appointment as Attorney General—the first non-barrister to hold that role; admission to the bar and silk just a year later; three times New South Wales Premier; and Chief Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court. He believed passionately in the idea of Australia as a self-sufficient nation. He championed education for all—especially disadvantaged kids—because he knew from experience that education unlocks opportunity. He left an indelible mark on our city and our State, and ultimately our nation, through being the protégé of Parkes.

Now Martin Place is home to that long-awaited statue, a tribute to pique the interest and capture the imagination of those who see it. In passing I express my sincere thanks to noted Sydneysiders John and Patricia Azarias, without whom this would not have been possible. The statue is no burly bust of some soup-strainer moustachioed man. It depicts a boy in full stride, confidently walking towards the future—a future we know was storied but about which he knew nothing except the promise of opportunity for those who work for it. In his hands he carries books to represent his lifelong love of learning. His upward gaze depicts the steely determination to make his own path. The new statue in Martin Place is one of a pair, both magnificently crafted by sculptor Alan Somerville. The other statue is in Parramatta to honour Martin's home town. Together they represent the unbroken link between the east and west at a time when Greater Sydney is evolving into a global metropolis with Parramatta at its centre.

The statues also offer a timely lesson in perseverance and hope in adversity. An ungentrified Catholic in a time of bitter sectarianism, married to a convict's daughter, Martin's personal success was earned against the odds. From humble beginnings he achieved greatness. New South Wales could certainly do with a bit of Martin's plucky determination right now. That boy from Parramatta dedicated his life to serving the people of New South Wales at every opportunity and left this place better than he found it. It is an inspiration for all of us, but especially our young people, no matter what their circumstances: to have a dream, to work hard at it and to never give in. That is the lesson and the legacy of the life of Sir James Martin.

#### TAREE AND MANNING VALLEY BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (18:28:27):** I inform the House of the recent announcement of \$8.2 million in funding to help Taree and the Manning Valley on a path to bushfire recovery. Taree and the Manning Valley will soon be home to one of the North Coast's largest regional indoor sporting and entertainment facilities. The current Saxby's Stadium will be expanded and transformed into the Iron Arena as part of a major upgrade thanks to more than \$8.2 million from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund, a joint initiative of the Australian and New South Wales governments. In government the Federal and State Nationals have secured hundreds of millions of dollars towards a range of programs designed to assist bushfire-affected communities to get back on their feet.

Last week I joined Dr David Gillespie, the Federal member for Lyne, in Taree to announce the \$8.251 million in funding to deliver one of the most significant community infrastructure projects the

Manning Valley has seen in decades. The Iron Arena will provide a transformative change for the local economy, attracting a range of high-profile events at the local, regional, State and national level. Iron Arena will cater for a range of activities, including increased participation in sport by meeting latent demand—especially in basketball, netball and futsal—and a range of new sports, such as volleyball and indoor hockey, as well as hosting trade shows and concerts. The project consists of expanding and redeveloping the facility to include five indoor courts and the installation of retractable seats to create a show court for larger-scale sporting and entertainment events seating 1,300 patrons.

This funding will transform Saxby's Stadium into a regional indoor complex fit to host major sporting and entertainment events, and support the health and wellbeing of locals and the careers of rising sports stars. Sport is such an integral part of our community. While the current stadium has served the community well for 40 years, the added floor space will accommodate more hours of competitions, social matches and training sessions. The investment in Iron Arena will provide benefits for the community beyond sporting groups by driving a sustained boost to the local economy.

This project is shovel-ready and will immediately deliver much-needed stimulation to our region's economy, which has been ravaged as a result of drought, bushfires and COVID-19. Once complete, the Iron Arena will be a premier sport and events facility, driving events-based tourism around high-profile competitions which can be hosted locally. These events and sporting competitions bring in talent, coaches, organisers, families and friends who will spend with local accommodation providers, eateries and retailers. The chair of the Iron Arena development committee and President of Taree Basketball Association, Steve Atkins, said the facility has long been dreamed of by local sporting groups. He said:

Taree has outgrown the current facility. This expansion of Iron Arena will fill a void in the sporting community allowing us to cater for larger events, like state championships.

He went on to say:

A facility like this isn't just beneficial to the sporting groups, it will also help Taree build a stronger economy through sports-led tourism and allow our region to cater for a broader range of entertainment and other events.

The Nationals in Government are backing projects that will put people back in work, retain existing jobs and stimulate our region's economy with a focus on improving essential community infrastructure and industry development. Currently the largest venue in Taree would seat about 700 people. Schools have to split their presentation days to day and night sessions, or two nights during the week. This facility is one location, one venue that seats 1,300 people. It is not only for sport but for entertainment, as well as business expos and those sorts of things.

People might say it is a bushfire fund. Taree is at the centre of a big valley that was really hit by the bushfires. There were 154 homes lost, over 800 sheds and a life lost at Johns River. It was devastating. Taree is the centre of that entire valley community. Part of it is bringing back and re-socialising the people. Taree council had its first new round of going around and meeting the villagers with a pizza night at a place called Moorall Creek. Only a few hundred people live there and there is a long winding dirt road to get there. The people were so excited about being able to get back together again. Another part of this is getting people into something that they are going to be super proud of, something that has got the local tradies, local workers and local suppliers involved in the build. Event-led tourism is so important to Taree, the Manning Valley and the Myall Lakes electorate.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:33:34):** I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on his unbridled passion for delivering for his community, including the outstanding facility that is going to be delivered for Taree and the Manning Valley. Some \$8.25 million has been allocated to build a state-of-the-art upgrade to the existing Iron Arena. Obviously Steve Atkins called it right: This is about what it is going to deliver to the local community. It is not just about the support that it is going to give local businesses, as the member said. Restaurants and other clubs will benefit from being able to have 1,300 people in a stadium. This is really a game changer for the member's electorate.

I know as a regional member how important stadiums and facilities like this are. It provides not only economic growth but also talent growth within sporting events and, in addition, the jobs it is going to create during the construction. As the member for Myall Lakes said, these communities have been hit very hard by bushfires. It is great to see \$8.25 million in investment being delivered by the member for Myall Lakes and the Liberal-Nationals Government to develop fantastic projects from one end of New South Wales to the other.

#### NAIDOC WEEK

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:34:42):** This week is NAIDOC Week and, as such, I acknowledge the Gadigal and Bidjigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of this place we call Sydney and my electorate of Coogee. As I have said previously in this place, the name "Coogee" is derived

from the local Aboriginal word "koojay", which means smelly place or, in the Bidjigal language, stinking seaweed—a reference to the smell of decaying kelp that washes up on the beach. Luckily, I love both the sea and the seaweed. This year's theme is "Always Was, Always Will Be", which recognises that First Nation people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years. The very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nation people. To them, this nation began at the dawn of time.

I take this moment to apologise to all Indigenous Australians for the harm that has been inflicted upon them either by me or by any member of my family, past or present. I acknowledge that the State of New South Wales has not yet done what needs to be done to acknowledge the injustices inflicted upon our First Nation people. I commit to doing my best to ensure that this Parliament starts treaty or treaties negotiations with our First Nation people. As members of the Parliament of New South Wales, we must work together with First Nation people to develop treaties that ensure people do not have to compromise their Aboriginality to be successful.

In 2018 the Victorian Parliament became the first to introduce treaty legislation and implement the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to support the Victorian Aboriginal community. This marked an incredibly significant step towards reconciliation and providing our First Nation people with the voice they have always wanted and needed. In my electorate alone, some of the biggest concerns expressed by my constituents are those relating to the injustices that Aboriginal people face in New South Wales. Some of the biggest issues the State of New South Wales needs to address to eliminate those injustices are incarceration rates and treatment of Indigenous people in the justice system and the improvement of opportunity and outcomes of the education of our Indigenous children. In 2018 the shadow Attorney General, and member for Liverpool introduced a bill to establish the Walama Court, which is an Indigenous-specific court that would operate within the jurisdiction of the District Court of New South Wales.

The introduction of this court would be a significant step in addressing the issues relating to police brutality and incarceration rates for Indigenous people. The importance of the design of the Walama Court is the focus on diversion rather than punishment. It is crucial that the New South Wales Government focuses on addressing the underlying causes of crime and, where possible, diverts offenders away from the criminal justice system with the goal of reducing recidivism. I thank the Premier for acknowledging the need to transform our national anthem to be an inclusive and celebratory tribute to our entire nation's history. I do not agree with her on many things, but I agree with her on that. This change not only will be a small step towards restoring respect and dignity but also will unite and recognise us all as Australians. We must hear and learn the 65,000 years of history of this nation—a history we want all Australians to celebrate.

#### SERVICE NSW

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (18:38:16):** The fact is that the Liberal Party and National Party Coalition gets an unfair rap from historians. Our record of reform is constantly ignored, overlooked and just plainly airbrushed from history. Labelling yourself as a "progressive" does not entitle you to claim the title that you are the party of reform. Instead, it is the delivery of change that provides an enduring benefit for the community, especially in my electorate of Wollondilly. Clearly that is something those opposite know nothing about. It was the Coalition that dismantled the White Australia Policy in the face of strong opposition from the Labor Party. But Left-leaning historians would have you believe otherwise. Shame on them and shame on the Labor Party.

At a State level, it was a Liberal Minister who created the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1967—incidentally, that was former member for Wollondilly, and later Premier, Tom Lewis. Does the member for Newtown ever remind anyone of that fact? I bet not! During the Greiner period another former member for my area and later a Premier, the Hon. John Fahey, introduced major microeconomic reforms to industrial relations. Those changes drove enormous efficiencies and encouraged job creation. They also started a wave of industrial reforms throughout the country. I could go on and on, but I am sure members get the point. It is the Coalition parties that have delivered the real, sustainable reforms over the years: not buzzwords or feel-good causes that lead nowhere, but real action that makes the lives of our citizens easier and better.

Since the Coalition came to government in 2011, there is no doubt that New South Wales is a better place for it. One reform I am particularly proud of is the creation of Service NSW in 2013. It has changed the way people across the State interact and transact with the Government. Whether it be the member for Lane Cove registering the birth of his son, Joseph, the member for Liverpool applying for a seniors card, or even me renewing registration of the car with my face on each side that is parked downstairs, Service NSW has it all covered. Through online technology, Service NSW has opened up access to the Government around the clock—any place, day or night. In effect, it has made government 24/7.

Service NSW has 125,000 in-centre customer visits each week, 118,000 calls and handles 777,000 website visits. Its customer satisfaction levels—98 per cent—underpin the success of this reform but it really should not

be any surprise to anyone when the average waiting time in a Service NSW centre is just seven minutes. What an outstanding legacy former Premier Barry O'Farrell left us. But we should be open to new suggestions and look for new insights and ways to improve Service NSW to make it even greater. The app take-up is increasing, as is the number of online transactions, but there are still some services that can only be delivered in person.

I understood when during the midst of the bushfires many constituents came to my office requiring support after their documents had been destroyed. There are some people who, frankly, cannot navigate the internet. In regional areas like mine, limiting the hours of operation to nine to five on weekdays—as currently occurs in many centres—makes it very difficult for some constituents. Consider a Picton small business owner. They will have to undertake at least a 40-minute journey to either Gregory Hills, which closes at 6.00 p.m., or Mittagong, which closes at 5.00 p.m. While Gregory Hills is open for several hours on Saturdays, many business owners are busy and the location is too far for those in the southern part of my electorate.

Consequently, I propose the designation of regional hub status on selected centres throughout the State, with extended hours of operation including both Saturdays and Sundays. It is clear that the high take-up of online services will continue and that weekday peak demands, highlighted in the 2016 review, will fall. This would potentially free up staff hours to be redeployed to cover weekends. Therefore, any cost implication would be small to neutral. Service NSW represents everything that is good about this Government and underpins our success at reform delivery. However, I urge Minister Dominello to investigate the viability of establishing regional hub centres with extended hours that include weekend opening times. Let us make Service NSW even greater.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:43:19):** I congratulate the member for Wollondilly. I know he will campaign extremely hard on behalf of the people of Wollondilly for regional status for Service NSW. I am very lucky to have a Service NSW facility at Erina, which is open on Saturdays like all the other Service NSW outlets on the Central Coast. I know that people on the Central Coast absolutely love Service NSW. The average waiting time at Erina is just over 4½ minutes and the staff do an exceptional job. I congratulate Minister Dominello because Service NSW has been an absolute game changer for the people of New South Wales in every sense of the term. With services like the 13 77 88 24-hour hotline to ask a question about COVID or being able to renew a driver licence online, Service NSW caters for people of all ages. It does free cost-of-living assessments that have saved Central Coast residents—and no doubt the residents of Wollondilly also—thousands of dollars. I congratulate the member for Wollondilly. I know that he will champion extended service hours with Minister Dominello. I look forward to hearing an update soon.

### ESSENTIAL ENERGY

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:44:28):** I speak tonight about power poles and the practice of them being gifted to landholders by Essential Energy. There are two parts to this: There is the policy and then there is the legal issue. I have drilled down and done a lot of work to understand how the practice came about. I have advocated to the relevant Minister that it is a bad, costly policy that discriminates against landholders, farmers and people in rural areas. Policy should be rolled out and socialised. When Government Ministers announce a policy they should have a program as to how they are going to socialise it and how it will impact the community. It is like the QR code. I use it to illustrate a policy that has a good base but will impact harshly on rural people without mobile phone access, the elderly who are not tech savvy, those without smartphones, those with disabilities and so on. It will impact some people very harshly. I have taken up that issue with Minister Dominello.

Initially I was told that the power poles were "gifted". That word is not liked. We did not know we owned them. I will read into *Hansard* some of the correspondence I have received from my constituents regarding the private power poles and asking me to help. One constituent states:

As you are likely aware, until now all electricity poles and wires up to the connection point of the dwelling in our area were, in practice, inspected and maintained by Essential Energy or their predecessors.

This maintenance practice is apparently changing, with Essential Energy suddenly demanding landholder funding of so called "Private Pole" maintenance, and to gauge by the surprise, shock, and outrage of many landholders, the change is being managed very poorly and abruptly by Essential Energy, with no negotiation or prior notice being offered to the landholders.

I am not having a crack at Essential Energy, which has done really good work during bushfires, floods and COVID. Essential Energy is owned by the Government and the primary shareholder is the Minister for Energy and Environment. It comes back to the policy issue about how we roll things out and implement them. The letter continues:

It is clear that the very concept of "Private Poles" is outdated since it assumes that only the landholder benefits from these poles. This concept predates the widespread installation of grid connected photo-voltaic (solar panel) installations on many dwellings and farm buildings.

My constituent goes on to talk about that further, and says:



The timing of this change of maintenance practice by Essential Energy could hardly be worse, with many rural land owners heavily financially impacted by the recent drought, the 2019-2020 bushfires, and the loss of income due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of them have to pay \$7,000, some of them were told \$4,000 and some were told \$2,000. I know that Essential Energy has a policy that people can pay off debt. If you are a landholder or a farmer who does not have a big income, or if you are an independent superannuant or you are on a pension and get a bill ranging from \$2,000 to \$7,000, it is quite burdensome. This policy must change. I have taken it up with Minister Kean. I have been given so many different reasons it is happening, such as it is Electricity Supply Act 2015 installation rules—there are 11 iterations and one annexure—some say it is the National Energy Regulator or it is contestable work that Essential Energy is not allowed to do. I ask for the precise legal basis of this practice so we can understand what is going on. As a policy it is flawed, it is fraught and it needs to change.

### SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (18:49:35):** I speak about an issue that my constituents feel passionately about—and I know you share their passion on this issue, Mr Temporary Speaker. Over one million tonnes of plastic is consumed in New South Wales each year, of which only 10 per cent is recycled, and plastics make up over half the litter in this State. With New South Wales set to generate over 30 million tonnes of waste annually by 2040 and landfills set to reach capacity within 10 to 15 years, eliminating single-use plastics must be an urgent priority. My constituents have raised concerns about plastic waste since I was elected. However, the pandemic has increased alarm due to the unprecedented growth in plastic consumption. The shift from eating out to ordering takeaway has generated a surge in single-use plastic containers, coffee cups and carry bags. The use of face masks in public has also seen a new type of plastic enter the waste stream, with large amounts of mask litter in the public domain.

Plastic is environmentally problematic. It contaminates soil, water and the food chain, and can kill wildlife. The impact on oceans is devastating. Globally, nearly one garbage truck of plastic enters the ocean every minute. It has been estimated that there are 51 trillion microplastic particles in oceans and these are ingested by the fish we eat. Over 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds die every year as a result of plastic pollution. By 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish and almost all seabird species will be affected by plastic ingestion. The proliferation of plastic in single-use products is a shocking waste of natural resources. The Government is developing the 20-Year Waste Strategy, including a New South Wales plastics plan aimed at phasing out single-use plastics, tripling plastic recycling by 2030 and reducing plastic litter by a quarter. The plan must set out concrete action supported by legislation and mandatory requirements to guarantee a significant cut to plastic consumption and waste within the next three years.

Past reliance on voluntary measures, grants and education has seen the State not only fail to meet previous waste-reduction targets but also increase the generation of plastic waste. Kerbside recycling has community support but it cannot cater for all plastics, and kerbside recycling rates have plateaued at 42 per cent of municipal waste. Producers need to take more responsibility for their products and be required to prevent environmental impacts. The packaging of too many products remains excessive, unrecyclable and made of virgin plastics. Packaging product stewardship and producer responsibility must be made mandatory, with all plastic packaging sold in New South Wales to be made from 100 per cent recycled content by 2025. The use of recycled and recyclable materials must be required in all products where that is possible.

Procurement policies should ensure that the Government always purchases products made from, and packaged in, recycled and recyclable materials. Procurement principles should favour alternatives to plastics, such as bioplastics that do not cause the same environmental impacts. Such policies will support local recycling and bioplastics industries. A tax on plastics could be considered as a disincentive to plastic use. Some plastic should just be banned. South Australia recently passed legislation to ban the sale, supply and distribution of a number of single-use plastic items, including straws, cutlery and polystyrene cups. The ban includes plastics that break down quickly into smaller parts and there is a framework to add other items.

Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory have started processes to enact similar legislation. New South Wales must follow. Microbeads hidden in cosmetics, personal care items and cleaning products are ending up in our oceans and being consumed by marine life. The voluntary industry phase-out is not good enough for this destructive form of waste and we need to urgently impose bans. Microfibres from synthetic-based clothing pose threats similar to microbeads and we must invest in solutions. I welcome commitments to ban lightweight single-use plastic bags, which New South Wales will be the last State to implement.

As the last State, we should ensure that our ban addresses not only the success but also the failures of other schemes, including whether heavyweight plastic bags are now the new single-use plastic bag problem. We currently export 240,000 tonnes of waste for recycling each year and Government investment in local recycling is needed before export bans commence to avoid a massive increase in recyclable plastic ending up in landfill.

This would boost jobs in regional communities. The introduction of container deposits did not cause consumer or industry disruption and the community is willing to adopt new changes to reduce plastics in the environment. I call on the Government to take bold action to drastically cut plastic waste.

### PAYROLL TAX

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (18:54:35):** For my private member's statement I will talk about payroll tax in regional New South Wales. Payroll tax and its effects on employment have been brutal, more so for the increasing number of employers and manufacturers across rural and regional New South Wales facing financial pressures after years of drought, bushfires and now COVID-19. The timing of these three events has been unprecedented and ruthless, causing setbacks to businesses such as limited cash flow, profit or reserves. Whilst there is a burst of harvest work at the moment, we have a shortage of temporary labour. The longer-term trend has been one of less full-time work in the west of the State. I recall a discussion at a business dinner in Broken Hill where a business owner told me he would like to employ more people but to do so would mean crossing the threshold for payroll tax. That is a perverse outcome and a disincentive to employers in a town desperate to grow its population.

Many members have spoken of their empathy for regional New South Wales during the drought, the bushfires and now COVID. Add that to the lower standards of health and education in the region. I really hope those sentiments are sincere. People in my electorate know that words are cheap when it comes to helping regional New South Wales. Let us demonstrate that we mean it by making a structural change to a tax that would benefit regional areas. Payroll tax has been around in New South Wales since 1971 and its effects on employment and various aspects of business competitiveness have been questioned ever since. I am repeatedly presented evidence that regional and rural businesses need tax cuts. I recently travelled to Inverell with the Hon. Robert Borsak, where we met with general manager Andrew McDonald, chief financial officer Nigel Blakemore, and People Manager Todd Newton from the Bindaree Food Group.

The company employs 900 people and is the largest employer in Inverell. It injects an average of \$1.4 million into the local economy through wages each week but pays up to \$3 million in payroll tax each year, which acts as the main barrier to expansion. In south-east Queensland, where the company also has operations, there are support measures in place for regional businesses to grow because the Queensland Government wants to attract business and jobs to its regions. However, if employers in regional areas like Bindaree go over the threshold for payroll tax they do not receive meaningful support from the Government. This is a well-established company that does fantastic things for its community but most importantly it employs local people. We hear a lot from the Government about the need to stimulate jobs growth, so I am declaring that Bindaree is ready, willing and able to employ people. All it needs is for this Government to lift the barriers around getting people into work, which can be achieved by removing payroll tax for regional businesses.

Mines are major employers in many of my communities and in communities throughout the rest of regional New South Wales. With the variation in commodity and resource prices at a time of global economic uncertainty, would we not want those mining companies to be able to retain as many staff as possible? Each job puts money into the local economy. If a worker supports a family, that means kids in local schools and more money being spent in local businesses. For the Government, the removal of payroll tax in regional New South Wales would cost just \$1 billion out of the current \$87 billion collected statewide. That represents just 1.14 per cent. This saving would allow businesses and communities across regions to recover from a devastating drought and pandemic.

Payroll tax is inefficient and counterproductive and punishes business for employing people. Does that pass the pub test? A zonal taxation approach with a single regional zone encompassing everywhere but Greater Sydney would allow for specific regional tax incentives and concessions for businesses that would sustain employment, assist employers and create economic growth. A zonal taxation system could provide concessions for businesses operating outside metropolitan areas and stamp duty concessions for commercial properties and commercial vehicles in regional New South Wales.

This would provide financial incentives for people and businesses to live, work and invest in the regions. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party implores the Government to abolish payroll tax in regional areas and instead introduce a zonal taxation system. Payroll tax is a handbrake on regional economic growth and employment. It is effectively a tax on employing people. The Government should not be creating an environment where business owners have to choose between paying the price for growing their businesses and hiring more employees and maintaining the status quo and stagnating to avoid the tax threshold.

## COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (18:59:27):** Not for the first time I draw to the attention of the House the dramatic impact of the Government's forced council amalgamations on my electorate. As Adele Ferguson from *The Sydney Morning Herald* wrote:

The NSW government's controversial council merger policy is in crisis, with the 20 amalgamated councils losing \$1.03 billion in three years and ratepayers facing hikes in rates and cuts in services.

My electorate is made up of four councils, two of which were the result of the 2016 amalgamation: Bayside Council and Inner West Council. The other two, the Council of the City of Sydney and the Randwick City Council, are two of the State's best councils. They provide generally excellent service standards and their leadership responds promptly to the concerns that I raise with them on my behalf of my constituents. However, the Government's decision to forcibly amalgamate councils was disastrous for the other two councils in my electorate because the fundamental philosophy of the project was flawed. Not only have the promised cost savings not materialised—in fact most amalgamated councils are now losing more money than ever—but local government is ceasing to be local at all.

The Inner West Council Mayor, Councillor Darcy Byrne, for whom I have enormous respect, has faced enormous difficulty synthesising the three service standards and rating systems of the previous councils, even though that council consists of areas that are broadly of common interest. As good a mayor as Councillor Byrne is, the Government's amalgamation process was so crude that the council is now onto its third general manager. The high service standards of the former Marrickville Council have only been maintained because of the excellent advocacy of Mayor Byrne, who, for example, was more than happy to join me at a meeting of parents at a local school to discuss pedestrian safety.

The failure of the amalgamations is not specific to my community. You only need to listen to the member for Canterbury and the member for Bankstown describe the difficulties that their amalgamated councils are facing. That is not to mention the Central Coast Council, which last month was placed into interim administration over some very serious financial issues. However, I contend that the most egregious failed council amalgamation is Bayside Council. Adele Ferguson's article identified it as the worst-performing council in New South Wales, and residents of my electorate happily concur with that assessment.

The genesis of its failure arises from the political boundaries, influenced by the member for Oatley, who baulked at the idea that the culture and behaviour of both Labor and Liberal Rockdale councillors would be inflicted on his community. The culture he wanted to avoid is what my community is now coping. We had Liberal members in the company of Liberal councillors brawling in our streets and assaulting police officers over a preselection dispute. Now I understand why the Premier does not want Bayside Liberal councillors wearing Liberal Party banners in local government.

Fundamentally, Botany Bay and Rockdale have no community of interest. They share no boundary and have vastly different service standards and rate structures. It is inaccurate to call Bayside a merged council. It was a hostile takeover of the City of Botany Bay by a Rockdale Council administration that holds everything about Botany in contempt—its council staff, elected people, service standards and, most of all, the residents themselves. The culture of Bayside Council is one of hatred for Botany. The member for Maroubra and I have given the council every opportunity over four years to get it right because we wanted the amalgamation to succeed in the interests of our residents.

But if the drastic decline in service standards, refusal to recognise or be accountable for that decline or continued deception from council staff were not enough, this rates harmonisation debacle was the final straw. This is a council whose first response when under pressure is denial, defensiveness and deceptiveness. When I told the Minister for Local Government that in September and October its staff had ignored her advice that they could implement a staged rates harmonisation, she appeared surprised. This is just one of the reasons the member for Maroubra and I have received thousands of signatures to a petition calling for the Minister to break up the Bayside Council and end the toxic culture it has fostered.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:04:50):** I have huge respect for the member for Heffron. I noted that in his speech he mentioned the Central Coast Council. I am very pleased that the Minister acted swiftly to put the Central Coast Council into temporary administration. We have seen appalling behaviour by the Labor/Greens/Independent-run council. It was the first council in New South Wales history to throw back \$4.6 million of State tourism grant funding over purely political arguments. It was an opportunity appallingly thrown away on the Central Coast. For the first time ever we had one council representing one region. The State Government provided that one council with over \$104 million in grant funding in the past two years alone, and we have seen the council argue over everything from a fence to a tourism project that would have delivered

millions of dollars and which the council threw away. Unfortunately, we have seen failure and the politicisation of a council and that is where it failed our community. The community has had a gutful of that sort of behaviour.

### **HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:05:52):** I update the House on education infrastructure in the Holsworthy electorate. As part of the New South Wales Government's record commitment to school infrastructure, the local community will benefit from a brand new primary school and has benefitted from many school upgrades and improvements. The Government is investing \$6.7 billion over four years to deliver more than 190 new and upgraded schools to support flourishing communities across the State. It is the biggest investment in education infrastructure the State has ever seen. Earlier this year I joined the Premier and the education Minister at Prestons Public School to see the \$11 million upgrade, which has been completed a year ahead of schedule. Prestons Public School received 10 new classrooms, a new multimedia room and an extension of the hall and administration block. The new facilities at Prestons Public School are amazing and will ensure that students receive the best education in a supportive environment.

As part of the New South Wales Government's COVID-19 Recovery Plan, the local area will benefit from a brand new primary school. On Monday we announced that a site has been selected for a new primary school in Edmondson Park as part of the Government's commitment to delivering high-quality school infrastructure across New South Wales. The new school will cater for 1,000 students and is a response to the continual growth in the local area. In addition, I am pleased to say that Liverpool is one step closer to receiving a brand new school following the release of the State Government's indicative site plans. The new school will be built on the side of Liverpool Boys and Girls High School and will cater for projected growth in the local area. The school is intended to provide flexible learning spaces and essential facilities such as a library, a hall, outdoor learning spaces and an open play space. It is proposed that the school will provide dedicated out of school hours care and preschool facilities.

The planning for Liverpool West Public School is also making headway, with the schematic design and State significant development application lodgement to occur early next year. Both schools will deliver high-quality school resources and facilities that will allow students in the local area to reach their potential. I look forward to community engagement commencing and I am pleased that the planning process has begun. These projects will also help foster job creation for the local area. They are a response to the Government's commitment to helping people in work and creating employment opportunities for the citizens of New South Wales in light of COVID-19. It is estimated that these school infrastructure projects will support up to 1,500 jobs across the State. It comes at a critical time in supporting economic growth through job creation as part of the Government's response to the pandemic, while also providing quality schools for our communities.

I am pleased to say that students in the Holsworthy electorate will benefit from funding delivered in their school budget allocations for 2021. These funding allocations are part of the \$10.1 billion in annual Gonski funding being delivered to public schools next year. The distribution of funding through the Resource Allocation Model will ensure that next year's students will be provided the best possible learning opportunities. For the Holsworthy electorate's public schools, just over \$17 million in funding has been allocated, which will help to deliver support where it is needed most: to students and schools with the greatest need. I am pleased to say that this funding is an increase of over \$600,000 from the 2020 funding amount. The funding will ensure that schools in the Holsworthy electorate will continue to flourish and support local students in their educational opportunities.

I acknowledge the additional maintenance works that Moorebank High School received earlier this year as part of the estimated \$200 million that was spent on 968 additional maintenance and upgrade projects at public schools across New South Wales. I was excited to see the investment made by the New South Wales Government benefiting schools in our local community. The maintenance works focused on additional repairs and upgrades including roof works, new floor coverings, drainage, electrical work and painting. We have also seen air conditioning going into Casula school and Lucas Heights Community School, which I know is making a difference for them. I am thrilled that public schools in the Holsworthy electorate have been recipients of major funding from the New South Wales Government and I look forward to what the future holds in educational infrastructure in our local area.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:10:34):** I congratulate the member for Holsworthy, who is a tireless advocate for schools from one end of her electorate to the other. Not a week goes by where she is not either attending one of her schools or supporting them with funds being provided for vital infrastructure. We are both very proud to be part of a Government that is putting record funding into schools and teachers. I come from a family of teachers. It is not a job; it is a vocation. We are proud of the investment that the Government is putting into school infrastructure and, just as importantly, teachers from one end of New South Wales to the other. I congratulate the member for Holsworthy on her fierce advocacy for all of the schools in her electorate. She

represents them incredibly well and I am sure that they will be looking forward to future announcements about infrastructure.

### **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:11:25):** For many people, the bushfire tragedy of 2019-20 is something they will never get over. It has left scars that will never heal. I cannot begin to imagine the loss of whole communities and the devastation, both physical and psychological, as firestorms raked the land. For many people a direct and palpable effect of the fires was the loss of property and the ultimate loss of loved ones. For many others it was their job that took its toll. For many people, including full-time and volunteer firefighters, the psychological scars will endure.

I stand in awe of the men and women who volunteer as firefighters and of their continued dedication in the face of overwhelming danger, such as we saw in the unprecedented New South Wales bushfires late last year and early this year. Amidst all the horror and devastation was our NSW Rural Fire Service: the men and women who stand between us and disaster. On 13 February 2020 the fire service said that all of the fires in New South Wales had been declared contained. All bushfires in the State had been extinguished. For the first time since early July 2019, there were no active bush or grass fires in New South Wales. The fire service's deputy commissioner Rob Rogers said it had been "a truly devastating fire season for both firefighters and residents, who've suffered through so much this season."

The fires were brought under control in part thanks to torrential rains, which in turn brought major flooding. It was one extreme to the other. New South Wales has a fire season every summer, and they are getting worse. The State had already had months of extreme heat and one of the worst droughts on record when this one began. There were fires in every Australian State but New South Wales was hardest hit, with smoke so bad in Sydney in December that the air quality measured 11 times the hazardous level. The blazes damaged World Heritage areas, including the Blue Mountains and the Gondwana Rainforests in New South Wales and Queensland. The ABC's report into the Lake Conjola area on the South Coast of New South Wales captured the scene. Conjola was hit particularly hard. As the fires approached, the water pressure in Lake Conjola became a trickle across the town as residents used what water there was to hose down their homes. The firefighters were relying on the only fire hydrant they could find in Conjola Park.

When the fire took hold in the trees, balls of gas exploded in the air above them, birds fell to the ground dead, houses were consumed one by one as the firestorm cracked and swirled through the trees, sucking everything to it. The bushfire created its own weather system, a so-called pyro cumulonimbus storm, bringing lightning, thunder and even rain. The residents of the once quiet little town had to stand by the water and watch their town burn to the ground. For Conjola, Murphy's Law proved prophetic: everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Among all this turmoil was a volunteer bulk tanker driver, a driver whose job it was to fill his water tanker and return to the operations area to resupply the operational fire trucks, which he was doing from a fire hydrant in Conjola Park.

He was making trips back and forth and upon returning to the park to fill up once more he found the hydrant but the town had gone. The sight had a profound effect on the driver. A sense of disorientation and of misplaced guilt enveloped him. Our tanker driver and Conjola are one of many stories to come out of the New South Wales bushfires. There were many who served during our most devastating bushfire season ever. There are those among them who will carry the physical and psychological scars with them forever. We must never forget that many of those who were out fighting those bushfires are volunteers, who do it out of the goodness of their hearts. They are so committed. We need to contemplate the trauma suffered by all those who were involved with these fires and to make sure that those who have suffered and are still suffering are looked after appropriately.

### *Bills*

## **NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESERVATIONS) BILL 2020**

### **First Reading**

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a future day.

### *Community Recognition Statements*

### **COMETS BASEBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:16:28):** I acknowledge the amazing Comets Baseball Club. Since its inauguration in 1981, the Comets Baseball Club has inspired its members to take pride in their club and to do

their best both on and off the playing field, placing a strong focus on encouraging players to pass on their expertise and knowledge of the game by assisting with coaching, umpiring or the management of junior teams as they graduate to more senior levels of baseball. The Comets are a true family and community club, as is demonstrated by their impressive listing of life members and the retention of players through to coaching and management positions. I acknowledge the hardworking committee who volunteer their time and efforts to support the club and its members. I recognise Trevor Geldenhuis, Michael Sant, Scott Collins, Dan Spooner, Steve Nash, Suzette Staeker, Scott Tully, Liam Flynn, Jason Noye, John Pigot, Chris Little, Glen Tomlinson, Oliver Brissett, Dru Bright, Dearne Jones, Michelle Morgan-Spooner, Peita Burgess, Rhys Peeters and Julie Little. I extend my best wishes to all at Comets Baseball Club.

#### **ST CHRISTOPHER'S PARISH HOLSWORTHY**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:17:31):** I refer to my recent visit to St Christopher's Parish Holsworthy to see the newly installed sound and lighting equipment. The parish applied for a grant through the Community Building Partnerships and also received funding from the Premier's Discretionary Grant. With those two grants combined, it was able to install new overhead television screens, update the microphone system and improve the lighting system in the church. I was so pleased when I visited completed works on 27 October 2020 to see that the funding provided by the New South Wales Government had been put to great use. The new lighting and sound equipment will make a huge difference to the community of St Christopher's Parish. Once again, I congratulate St Christopher's Parish on its newly installed lighting and sound equipment, which will go a long way to providing a more comfortable and inviting environment for the parish community during mass.

#### **DIWALI**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:18:23):** I wish all Australians celebrating a very safe and happy Diwali, or Tehar, this Saturday. In particular, I wish my amazing Australian Nepali community Tehar ko shubhkamnaye. During Tehar Goddess Laxmi is worshipped with excitement and celebration. On the darkest day of the month, families light oil-filled diyas and decorate them around their homes. An abundance of sumptuous food, new clothes, gifts for family and friends and a visit to the temple are commonly practised. It is a time to rejoice, to celebrate the light over darkness and good over evil. Tehar is particularly more fitting this year, following the darkness of COVID19 pandemic. To everyone who is celebrating Diwali and Tehar, we wish you all the best. I thank everyone as we need this light over darkness.

#### **DEEPWATER SCHOOL OF ARTS HALL COMMITTEE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:19:28):** I congratulate Mary Hollingsworth, chair of the Deepwater School of Arts Hall Committee, and all the members of the committee and wish them well as this Saturday the 103-year-old hall will be reopened, following the undertaking of outstanding works to upgrade the hall. The upgrade to the hall received a \$100,000 grant via Glen Innes Severn Council through the Drought Communities Fund. The extensive work included disability access, the complete refurbishment and extension of the back dressing rooms and restumping and painting. For those who are not familiar with Deepwater, the hall is the focal point of the community. For all the major art exhibitions, plays and fun times and, unfortunately, some sad times, the community gathers in that hall. A wonderful amount of work has been done by the volunteer committee. I commend Mary, Tricia Stack and all the committee and I wish them all the best for this Saturday's celebrations.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN MCDERMOTT**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:20:31):** I want to recognise legendary race caller John McDermott, who passed away on 3 November. Macca, as he was affectionately known, called his first meeting as a 17-year-old in 1963. Macca went on to enjoy a career of more than half a century, race calling on-course and for television and radio. He worked across all three codes and on tracks throughout the Hunter Valley and Central Coast. Macca was best remembered in recent years as the voice of The Gardens greyhound track. Behind the scenes Macca was a mentor to other successful broadcasters, including Gary Harley, Tim Newbold, Greg Radley and Phil Roberts. Sadly, Macca was forced to retire last year due to illness and died from bone cancer earlier this month, aged 75. He was so well regarded by the greyhound industry and I know that they miss him. He is certainly somebody who is held in very high regard.

#### **YANTRA DE VILDER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:21:25):** I inform the House of a wonderful achievement by local resident, Yantra de Vilder. Yantra de Vilder, a composer and filmmaker from Avoca Beach, has had her film, *HOME - A Place of Belonging* accepted by two major film festivals, the Around Films International Film Festival, based in Barcelona, Spain, and the Paris Lift-Off Festival. The film, largely developed off the back of Yantra's most successful and significant involvement over the past four years in the Five Lands Walk Festival, celebrates

our Central Coast community. Our community has plenty of cultural diversity, featuring a variety of cultures including Indigenous, Chinese, South African and Celtic. Production of the film started in June 2019, supported by a \$5,000 grant I provided to Yantra through Multicultural NSW. Due to COVID-19 the Five Lands Walk could not go ahead this year. Yantra decided to publicly release the film instead, which involved the creation of an online event. On the night 400 people tuned in to watch. Congratulations again to Yantra de Vilder and all the best in Barcelona and Paris.

#### **INTERNATIONAL PATHOLOGY DAY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:22:33):** On International Pathology Day I acknowledge the integral service that pathology workers provide and have provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the coronavirus outbreak, health staff have been at the front line of the global fight against contagion and illness. Here in New South Wales our pathology workers have worked tirelessly to ensure that testing has occurred in a timely and accurate manner. They have been among the great heroes in the battle to track, trace and slow the spread of COVID-19. These workers have still managed to undertake those other essential tasks that serve our community every day of every year. The first International Pathology Day was held in 2014, and the work performed by people in this health discipline is more important today than ever before. I thank all those who undertake this important work in our community. Thanks also to the Health Services Union which supports them in ensuring they return home safe, regardless of the dangers of their work. I hope they can enjoy this special day, reflect on this remarkable year and celebrate all they have accomplished.

#### **GORDON HIGHLANDERS RUGBY TEAM**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:23:28):** Rugby has never been gone, but it is back on the North Shore of Sydney. For the first time in 22 years the mighty Gordon Highlanders have taken home the Shute Shield trophy after defeating Eastwood 28-8 in a thrilling final at Leichhardt Oval on Saturday 31 October. The Shute Shield is the Premier grade club competition in New South Wales rugby. Eastwood may have stunned the minor premiers with an opening try at the eight-minute mark but the Stags took control of the match with three tries, two conversions and three penalty goals. Led by their victorious coach, Darren Coleman, and captained by Jordon Goddard, there were tears of joy among the Gordon community. Gordon now has 13 premierships up its sleeve. Let's do it again in 2021. In a sign of the times, police and health officials were not satisfied with overcrowding on Wayne Pearce Hill so play was suspended 15 minutes into the first half to socially distance the very excited spectators. Go the Highlanders!

#### **HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:24:36):** I acknowledge all of the year 12 students who have just finished their HSC. I give a particular shout-out to them; they must be doing it really tough, particularly during COVID. They cannot attend their end-of-year functions and their formals, which is a rite of passage and a big deal for them. I express to each and every year 11 and year 12 student our deepest sorrow that they cannot celebrate in that way, but I wish them all the very best for their futures, going on to university or whatever they have chosen to do. We are thinking of them. The time will come when they can celebrate and acknowledge one another on the great work and the hard work that they have done. I can only imagine how hard it has been for a lot of these kids who have worked so hard to get through year 12 and I wanted to make sure that we acknowledge them and congratulate them.

#### **CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:25:34):** The Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce CEO, Wally Mehanna, is an absolute machine and has been a powerhouse throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He has encouraged businesses in East Hills, Bankstown, and Canterbury to not give up, to be innovative and to soldier on through what has been the toughest of times for the business community. Wally has forged ahead with plan A and has led the way with events. I have had the great pleasure of attending an evening of Women in Leadership with Bronnie Taylor and The Power of Networking with Stuart Ayres, and the chamber also held a series of workshops for smaller businesses to encourage them to "tackle their brand".

The Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce Gala Dinner is the night of nights for the Canterbury Bankstown local government area. This year, due to restrictions, the numbers were limited; however, every seat that could be filled was, and, as always, it was the who's who of the business community, with Premier Gladys Berejiklian as the guest speaker and the Minister for Finance and Small Business, Damien Tudehope, also in attendance. I congratulate the entire board of the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce on forging on with the chamber's objectives in the most difficult of circumstances. A thankyou is honestly not enough to be expressed to the CEO Wally Mehanna, who has been a champion for all of the organisations and businesses that are members of the chamber.

**SERGEANT JOHN MICALLEF**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:26:40):** A huge thankyou and congratulations and a sad farewell to Sergeant John Micallef from the Campsie police station on his retirement from the NSW Police Force. Thank you, thank you, thank you on behalf of our community. Sergeant John Micallef led a stellar 38-year career and should be highly commended for his tenacity, endurance and sincere commitment to keeping our community safe. In 1991 Sergeant Micallef received a certificate of appreciation for devotion to duty and courage following the arrest of an armed robber within the grounds of the university. In 2001 he received the Commissioner's Olympic Citation. In 2002 he received the Commander's Commendation for the development of the Emergency Management Traffic Plan for the Sutherland shire. Also in 2002 he received a letter from Commissioner Moroney and a letter of appreciation in relation to the bushfire emergency in 2002-03. I could go on and on but on behalf of our community I thank Sergeant Micallef, congratulate him and wish him all the best.

**RICHMOND GIRL GUIDES**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:27:48):** I congratulate Paige Nash, Kahlia Hitchcock and Jasmine Lane from Richmond Girl Guides on being presented with the Baden-Powell Award. The award is named after Lieutenant General Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, who was a British Army officer and who, with his sister Agnes, founded the Girl Guide movement. The trio were awarded the Baden-Powell Award in recognition of almost 12 months' dedication to a variety of outdoor and guiding activities. One task included arranging an outdoor guide camp for 17 Girl Guides, which spanned the entire weekend. The tasks they competently completed required them to show the leadership skills that made them worthy of such an award. Their challenges were magnified by COVID-19. I commend Paige, Kahlia and Jasmine for their wonderful achievement and wish them many more achievements and a successful future.

**GLEN CRUMP**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:28:43):** I congratulate Glen Crump on his induction into the NSW Youth Work Hall of Fame. Mr Crump is a Kamilaroi man who has been advocating for youth rights for the past 20 years. At the age of just 12, Mr Crump founded the Moree Youth Council. He later held roles with the Premier's Youth Advisory Council and the Regional Board of Youth Affairs, and has twice been named Moree's Young Person of the Year. As a youth worker with the Miyay Birray Youth Service, Mr Crump assists rural young people and Aboriginal young people, as well as supporting youth navigating the criminal justice system. Mr Crump was a crucial member of Youth Action's Aboriginal advisory group, which held the first New South Wales Aboriginal Youth Conference, bringing together delegates from across the State to develop an Aboriginal Youth Policy that was delivered to the Premier and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I congratulate Mr Crump on being awarded this well-deserved honour and thank him for his dedication to supporting vulnerable youth.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I also extend my congratulations to Glen Crump, whom I know well.

**DR CATHY FOLEY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (19:29:49):** Dr Cathy Foley has been announced as Australia's next Chief Scientist, beginning her appointment in January next year. Cathy lives in my electorate of Davidson and has enjoyed a formidable 36-year career as a research scientist in the field of solid-state physics and its applications, combining quantum physics, material science and research translation. She is also a former NSW Woman of the Year. In her new role Cathy hopes to help the Government source the best information and knowledge from across the science field in Australia. She also wants to encourage young people with an interest in science to embrace a career in science, technology, engineering and maths—not just as a well-paid job but as a way to make a contribution to society. I congratulate Cathy on her new role and wish her every success in helping to shape a brighter future for Australia after the deeply felt effects of COVID-19.

**MAITLAND ELECTORATE HIDDEN TREASURES HONOUR ROLL NOMINEES**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:30:48):** Congratulations go to Maitland's nominees for the 2020 New South Wales Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Lyn Dark, of Telarah, has been a volunteer since the 1970s with schools, St John's Ambulance, Maitland Hospital's Pink Ladies, NSW Cancer Council, Lioness and Lions clubs. Narelle Ryan, of Rutherford, volunteered for three decades in the Scout movement and is now an active Lion. Rutherford's Stacy Jacobs is a Rotarian, PCYC Advisory Board member, Cessnock Family Support Service committee member and volunteer driving instructor who also coordinates Cessnock's Pink up the Town and cooking for Hunter Hands of Hope. She has recently injured herself quite badly and I hope she recovers quickly.

Margaret Wood, of East Maitland, has volunteered as a Learn to Swim instructor since she was 14. She has volunteered for Fingal Beach Surf Club, Coal Fields United AFL and Tenambit Junior Rugby League Club



and she supports hearing-impaired students. Dorothy Crouch, OAM, from Duns Creek, has volunteered with the Maitland Swimming Club for over 70 years, has been a Maitland Citizen of the Year and Freeman of the City and has worked with Maitland Boy's High School P&C Committee. Lyn, Narelle, Stacy, Margaret and Dorothy, thank you so much for your service. You are truly treasures, but hidden no more.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:31:53):** I congratulate Sutherland Shire Football Association on the successful completion of another season. With nearly 20,000 registered players across our shire, Sutherland Shire Football Association is an organisation at the heart of our local sporting community. Despite the challenges of 2020, the group was determined to play as many games as possible and ensure the financial viability of its 26 member clubs. These objectives were successfully met, and those involved in the organisation of the local football competition ought to be commended for overseeing 13 rounds of football at a time when we were not sure any games would be played. I recognise the hardworking executive committee members, whose dedication directly resulted in a successful sixty-eighth season of football. I acknowledge President Matt Brady, Vice-President Keith Ward, Honorary Treasurer Giulio Di Stefano, General Manager Jeff Stewart, Laura Cowell, Paul Gallagher, Jim Hankins, David Johnson, Barry Jones and Russell Marsden. I commend the Sutherland Shire Football Association for its resilience during the most tumultuous season in its 68 years.

#### **BELMORE PCYC**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:32:56):** Happy birthday and congratulations to Belmore PCYC. I thank the club for helping the young people of Canterbury over the past 65 years. This a huge achievement for Belmore PCYC. As the local member it is a great honour to acknowledge everything it has done and its continuing success. The PCYC at Belmore has been helping the youth of Canterbury for 65 years. I have been there many times and I have seen the great work that Belmore PCYC does to encourage, to reach out to, to hug our youth and to bring them in. For many of the youth that is what they need. We have strong participation and I am very supportive of PCYCs. I thank also our police who have been involved. They do a tremendous job. Congratulations and thank you, Andrew Shenouda, the club manager, and happy birthday to Belmore PCYC.

#### **ST CHRISTOPHER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:34:00):** Today I congratulate the 2021 school captains who were selected by their peers at St Christopher's Primary School, Holsworthy. I congratulate the newly elected school captains, Isabella Bertram and Dominik Terzic, and vice-captains Anne Marian and Alec Senior. I understand that there were eight candidates for student leadership positions who all gave their final speeches to years 4, 5 and 6. I commend all the students who put up their hands for a position on the student leadership team. They should be incredibly proud of the fact that they put themselves out there and gave it their best shot.

I recently visited year 6 to speak to them about the New South Wales Parliament and being their representative. The students showed great interest and asked some fabulous questions. I know they will leave big shoes to fill, but I am sure the new leaders will guide the school safely and capably into 2021. Once again, I congratulate the newly elected school and vice-captains of St Christopher's Primary School and wish them the best of luck in their duties in the new school year.

#### **WORLD DIABETES DAY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:35:02):** For World Diabetes Day, I acknowledge the magnificent work done for our community in this field by our nurses, and also the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association. Diabetes type 1 and type 2 are both difficult and complex conditions that affect millions of Australians—and that number is growing very quickly. Nurses are on the front line working with patients on the prevention, diagnosis and management of diabetes. As diabetes is often part of a complex diagnosis involving other conditions, the role of nurses in teaching diabetes management can reduce the risk of complications for patients and lead to better outcomes in the long term. World Diabetes Day is so named to recognise the birthdate of Sir Fredrick Banting, who co-discovered insulin in 1922. This led to the effective management of the disease. Well done to everyone in our community and to the diabetes awareness groups. It is so important to have that support and the work of our nurses. I thank them.

#### **JANNALI ANGLICAN CHURCH**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:36:05):** I acknowledge the wonderful community at Jannali Anglican Church. Jannali Anglican Church aims to be a church that is deep in the Word, devoted to prayer and passionate about people. The organisation facilitates numerous events throughout the year for its diverse community of hundreds of members, including regular church services, weddings, conferences and community services. Earlier this month I was incredibly pleased to meet with Reverend Neil Fitzpatrick and families from the

church community at a weekly playgroup. With over 100 children in the church's community, these families are amongst those set to benefit from a \$25,000 Community Building Partnership grant for a new children's playground.

The new playground is currently under construction and will provide a space for children to play and use their imagination in a safe place while allowing parents to build stronger relationships. I recognise the dedicated staff at Jannali Anglican Church, including Neil Fitzpatrick, Andrew Barry, Josh Maule, Cameron Hyslop, Leah Blake, Carolyn Woods, Mel Balhatchet, Lorraine Hiller, Kerrie Rees and Ben Williams. I commend Jannali Anglican Church for its role in our community and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **NAIDOC WEEK**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:37:08):** This week we celebrate NAIDOC Week. It is a week to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This year the theme is "Always Was, Always Will Be". The theme aims to recognise that our First Nations people occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years. We are incredibly honoured to live in Australia, where the Indigenous culture is the oldest living culture on Earth. From the bottom of my heart, I want my community of Canterbury to know that, along with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, every day we are fighting for reconciliation. We are fighting to ensure that there is recognition in the Constitution. We need to see the Indigenous flag hanging in the Senate. I urge for that to happen, as it does in this Chamber.

#### **PRESTON ROBINS AND ILLAWONG LITTLE ATHLETICS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:38:12):** I acknowledge the Little Athletics season, which commenced in September. I commend the Prestons Robins Little Athletics Centre and Illawong Little Athletics for encouraging children across the Holsworthy electorate to get involved in athletics. Prestons Robins Little Athletics was established in 2008 and Illawong Little Athletics relocated to Barden Ridge in 2004. Both clubs cater for children aged three to 17 years and encourage all abilities to participate and have fun. The Prestons club has done it a bit tough this year, with a change of location after its home was needed as a COVID testing facility. I thank it for being so understanding. Little Athletics offers children a foundation for all sports and allows young athletes to improve their fitness and coordination whilst making friends at the same time. The main focus is on personal improvement and participation, which helps to contribute to the healthy development of children. I wish all the local children involved in both Prestons Robins Little Athletics and Illawong Little Athletics the best of luck in the upcoming season.

#### **FIRE AND RESCUE NSW**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:39:14):** In the early hours of 10 November in East Maitland a house fire was attended by multiple Fire and Rescue NSW brigades, including 374 Maitland, 455 Rutherford, 382 Morpeth and 454 Tarro. While the family of six was able to leave the building safely, they were unable to bring out the family dog, Betty, who is much beloved. It took over an hour to bring the fire under control, which did not bode well for Betty. However, soon after things began to settle she was spotted near a second-floor balcony. She was safely rescued by our Fire and Rescue NSW heroes via a ladder platform and returned to the arms of her relieved family members. After a veterinary visit, it was declared that Betty would make a full recovery. The house is ruined, but the family is safe—and so is Betty. I thank our hardworking Fire and Rescue NSW workers, for whom such events are a daily occurrence but have such a big impact on the lives of those families who face such disasters.

#### **P-TECH**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:40:16):** On Monday I had the pleasure of joining Minister Geoff Lee at Henry Kendall High School. Firstly I acknowledge the great work being done by the principals at the Henry Kendall High School, Kariong Mountains High School and Tumby Umbi High School. All three principals have done an amazing job working to introduce P-TECH. P-TECH is a technology-based partnership between the fantastic company IBM and these three schools. It combines the high school curriculum with tertiary-level training to give students a foot in the door for future job opportunities in the growing technology industry. As we heard from the CEO of IBM Australia, moving into the future there will be around 100,000 tech-based jobs. The future looks very bright for these students undertaking this P-TECH course. The program was first developed in the United States in 2011. I am absolutely delighted that hundreds of Central Coast students will now benefit from completing P-TECH. I also commend all the local Central Coast businesses that are partnering with IBM and these schools to deliver these fantastic courses to our wonderful students on the Central Coast.

### **PATHOLOGISTS**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:41:18):** I acknowledge the thousands of pathologists across the world, particularly in New South Wales. I thank them for their amazing work, their professionalism and their contribution, particularly over the past eight months working 24/7 to make sure that people have their test results. They did it diligently. They worked very hard. They were determined. Many people have seen the value of pathologists. As someone who has gone through treatment for breast cancer, I know pathologists do amazing work. I know their diligence and professionalism. I will never forget so many pathologists who looked after me. From the bottom of my heart, I say thank you to all our pathologists.

### **MAITLAND NATIVE FOOD GARDEN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:42:25):** I congratulate Slow Food Hunter Valley and the Maitland-Rutherford Guides on their action to preserve threatened Indigenous local land food species through the establishment of a native food garden. Slow Food and Guides volunteers recently gathered on the grounds of the Maitland-Rutherford Guide Hall in St Andrews Street, which had been landscaped and prepared for planting. Together, in rainy conditions—perfect for plants but not so pleasant for humans—they settled at least 25 threatened Indigenous local species into the soil of their new garden. The garden will be maintained and harvested by a team of 20 volunteers drawn from both the Guides and Slow Food. The team will also monitor and document the plants' growth rates, water requirements, nutrient uptakes, flowering, food production and places in the ecosystem alongside insects and birdlife. The garden is a Slow Food Ark of Taste project made possible through Federal funding provided by member for Paterson, Meryl Swanson. The fruits of the plot will be accessible to the people of Maitland and its surroundings. On behalf of our community, I thank Slow Food and the Maitland-Rutherford Guides for acting to ensure the protection and preservation of biodiversity in our area, and Meryl Swanson for supporting them.

### **BOUDDI NATIONAL PARK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:43:27):** I thank all the fantastic workers and volunteers at the Bouddi National Park, especially those from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service team. I had the pleasure of going through stage one of the newly upgraded Bouddi National Park Walk, which is \$1.4 million worth of investment from the New South Wales Government. For those members who have not done it, Bouddi National Park is literally one of the most stunning walks around our native bushland and beaches anywhere in New South Wales. It is truly breathtaking. To see the excitement generated by this investment by the Government with our team from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and our community volunteers is really uplifting, and stage two is getting underway. I congratulate all the volunteers for the time they have put into this initiative and the great work being done at the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. They should be so proud of the work they are delivering. Over winter, the number of people using Bouddi increased to 66,000 visitors, which is a threefold increase on the previous year. I congratulate the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

### **CANTERBURY ELECTORATE FAITH COMMUNITY**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:44:32):** I acknowledge many volunteers who have reached out, particularly those from our faith communities. In my electorate of Canterbury I have many churches, mosques, synagogues and temples. I am very lucky and very proud that I represent all those people who practise their faith. Thinking back over the very difficult time we have had over the past eight months, I thank each and every one of them for their patience. I thank them for what they have done. I know it has been very difficult, particularly during lockdown and particularly with the restrictions being quite harsh. But the restrictions were put in place to ensure that we saved our community and to ensure that our lives and livelihoods were saved. I acknowledge each and every person of faith who has done the right thing and those who have reached out and volunteered. We are slowly getting back to normal. Thank you.

### **REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:45:40):** I acknowledge the Davistown RSL, the Terrigal-Wamberal RSL and our volunteers at Copacabana for running three fantastic Remembrance Day services this week on 11 November. Unfortunately, I could not attend those events because I was attending Parliament, but I was able to attend the Remembrance Day service in Martin Place with the Premier. It was wonderful to see our own Central Coast local Gareth McCray, who lives in my electorate, emceeding the event for our State. Gareth is an outstanding ambassador for Remembrance Day and veterans. He is known by so many. I am pleased that Gareth has chosen to make the Central Coast his home. He is a good friend, a great colleague and a proud and very patriotic Australian. As I said, it was great to take part in the Remembrance Day service in Martin Place and to see Central Coast local Gareth McCray doing a fantastic job of emceeding on such an important occasion.

**CAROLE-ANN MCGARRY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:46:39):** Last week I had the great honour of meeting Carole-Ann McGarry, who is a passionate volunteer with Hunter Wildlife Rescue and who brought a little friend to meet me. Bella by name and bella by nature is a seven-month-old eastern grey joey who Carole-Ann has been showering with 24 hours a day love, care and attention since she was orphaned at the age of five months. I am lucky enough to have a mob of kangaroos that comes into our garden on a regular basis. They are part of an amazing community of macropods that include eastern grey kangaroos and red-necked wallabies who live in my neighbourhood. Unfortunately, we have seen a recent increase in these beautiful native animals being hit by careless drivers, both on the highway and in our immediate estate. Carole-Ann made a number of suggestions to try to assist in the survival of these macropods. I will work with her, the State Government and the council to try to implement some of her suggestions. Carole-Ann also raised the plight of the grey-headed flying fox and the squirrel glider in my community. I will investigate options for them as well. I congratulate Carole-Ann on her advocacy. We must all work together to protect our precious native animals.

**VIC ALHADEFF**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I acknowledge and pay tribute to Mr Vic Alhadeff, who has announced his intention to step down as the CEO of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in the first half of 2021. Over the last 16 years, Mr Alhadeff has worked tirelessly to lead and promote the role the board plays in advocating for the interests of the NSW Jewish community at-large. Mr Alhadeff also served as the chair of Multicultural NSW, and as the voice of the Keep NSW Safe coalition, which was instrumental in achieving law reform in New South Wales prohibiting the incitement of violence on religious and other grounds. Mr Alhadeff has also previously served as the editor of the Australian Jewish News. While Mr Alhadeff will officially step down in 2021, he will continue to lend his tremendous expertise and experience to the board in a part-time consultancy role. I acknowledge and pay tribute to Mr Alhadeff's accomplishments at the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, and also to president Mr Leslie Berger for his continued stewardship of the organisation.

**BANKSTOWN SPORTS STARS FC**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I am pleased to recognise the success of the Bankstown Sports Stars Football Club, which recently received the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association Club Championship Award 2020. This is a wonderful and well-deserved achievement for the club, which has been providing an avenue for the development of youth sport in our community for over 60 years. Like many sporting clubs across the local area, Bankstown Sports Stars Football Club was forced to suspend training and preparation at the height of the COVID-19 restrictions, and I applaud their remarkable effort in overcoming these challenges and earning the prestigious club championship. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Bankstown Sports Stars Football Club president Mr Frank Fruci, vice-president and treasurer Mr Louie Taouk, secretary Ms Houda Hamze, junior vice-president Mr Sharif Amin, and registrar Mr Norman Bejjani, as well as the coaches, players and club volunteers, and commend them on their dedication to local football and their tremendous contribution to our community. I am proud to offer the Bankstown Sports Stars Football Club my continued support and wish the club all the best for the 2021 season.

**GEOFF PORTER**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—**Congratulations to Geoff Porter on being named as one of the seven Bathurst Living Legend inductees for 2020. Mr Porter has made impressive contributions to construction, charity, beekeeping and volunteer firefighting over many years. A fourth generation Bathurstian, Mr Porter's aspirations of being a carpenter led him to commence an apprenticeship with Hobson Bros in 1980. Mr Porter took over Hobson Bros and renamed it Geoff Porter Constructions in 2001 and ran the business until 2018. It was during his later years in construction that Mr Porter got involved in the Central West Charity Tractor Trek Group, having been involved in the event since its inception in 2012. Since retiring from the construction business, Mr Porter has devoted his time to a longstanding family passion—beekeeping. Mr Porter bought his first lot of bees in 2008 as a weekend hobby, and the trade has since become his key area of work. Mr Porter also helped set up the Ted Porter Memorial Award for Champion Honey Exhibitor at the Royal Bathurst Show. He is also an active volunteer of the Yetholme Rural Fire Brigade and played a vital role in combating last summer's disastrous bushfires.

**ST JOHN AMBULANCE MOLONG**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—**I recognise the following members of the St John Ambulance Australia, Molong Cadet Division, for their dedicated volunteer service to community and their awards presentation at Molong on 29 October 2020. Congratulations to the following members: Divisional Superintendent Julie Dean, awarded 2nd and 3rd bar to the Service Medal for 20 and 25 years, respectively; Charlotte Cassell,

awarded 1st bar to the Service Medal; Jade Kirk, awarded 9 year Service Recognition Award ribbon; Annalise Livermore, awarded the three-year Service Recognition Award ribbon; Claire Cremona, Cadet Service Award—1st Year Service Star; Abigail Oliver, Cadet Service Award—1st Year Service Star; Jazmin Pietrzak, Cadet Service Award—1st Year Service Star; Taylah Bliss, Cadet Service Award—2nd Year Service Star; Mia Fitzsimmons, Cadet Service Award—2nd Year Service Star. Ashton Arokiaswamy, Jocelyn Behan, Taylah Bliss, Claire Cremona, Mia Fitzsimmons, Dakota O'Keefe, Jazmin Pietrzak, Jade Kirk and Annalise Livermore—Young Volunteer nominees in the Centre for Volunteering NSW awards; Deborah Lytton, Elizabeth Newstead, John Burchett, Les Dean and Julie Dean—Adult Volunteer nominees in the Centre for Volunteering NSW awards; and Kerry Burchett, Central West Adult Volunteer of the Year Award, and nominee for New South Wales awards. Well done everyone.

### **COROWA-RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—Congratulations are in order to the Corowa Rutherglen Relay For Life Committee, who were named the Volunteer Team of the Year during the Cancer Council's NSW CEO Awards. The committee was recognised for the outstanding contribution made by their employees and volunteers in producing the first virtual relay event. This year's event had to be livestreamed due to COVID-19, requiring a rapid response from the organisation to turn its focus to the use of technology for this iconic event. Relay For Life brings communities together to celebrate cancer survivors, remembering loved ones who have lost their battle and those who are living with cancer. I would like to thank in particular Corowa committee members Liz Clark, Julie Bartlett, Jamie Warner and Christine Wilson for their perseverance, their dedication and hard work.

### **NORTH SHORE CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, as many in this place would know, Christmas is my favourite time of year and each year I ask my local primary school students to compete in my annual North Shore Christmas Card Competition. This year the entries were outstanding, which made it incredibly difficult to decide on a winner and three runners-up. The theme for this year's competition was "My Christmas Day", encouraging students to reflect on how they and their families celebrate Christmas. The winner of this year's competition and whose artwork will be on the front of my Christmas cards this year, was Brendan Soedirdja from Middle Harbour Public School. Congratulations to our three runners-up: Lily Collins from North Sydney Demonstration School, Grace Treloar from Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary, and Breccan Cullen from St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Congratulations to all those students who submitted entries this year from my local primary schools: Middle Harbour Public School, North Sydney Demonstration School, Mosman Public School, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary, Mosman Preparatory, and St Mary's Catholic Primary School.

### **SES VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE NEW LIGHT STORM VEHICLE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, recently I joined volunteers from the NSW State Emergency Service North Sydney Unit to hand over the keys of a brand-new light storm vehicle. This new vehicle will greatly enhance the North Sydney Unit's capacity to protect the community from the damage inflicted by storms and flooding. Our local volunteers play a vital role in helping our communities prepare for and recover from severe weather. I would like to recognise the service of our hardworking volunteers who pull up their sleeves and put the community ahead of themselves. I acknowledge the continuing work of our local volunteers from Mosman SES and North Sydney SES. Thank you to the volunteers with more than a century's service between them, who welcomed me to the base: Unit Commander Dale Harley, Deputy Commander Rick Beament, and Deputy Commissioner for the Metropolitan Zone Stuart Fisher. Thank you also to the North Sydney volunteers: Morag O'Gorman, Indrek Ott, Alan Price, Colin Whybourne, and Don Lange.

### **ARTHUR ERNEST WILLMINGTON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to honour a hero from the Mulgoa electorate, Arthur Ernest Willmington, lovingly known as Artie, was the longest living resident in Luddenham and a beloved member of the local community. Sadly, Arthur passed away on 1 October at 91 years of age after living a long and happy life. Arthur was born in Penrith and lived in Luddenham his whole life—growing up on the family farm and living in the post office residence along with his eight siblings. Arthur was loved by all who knew him and was most well-known for the incredible contributions he made to the NSW Cancer Council. Arthur and his wife, Jean, started the Luddenham Cuppa for Cancer that over many years of selling roses and cuppas to locals, raised a whopping \$406,955.80 for the NSW Cancer Council. Also an active community member, Arthur served over 50 years on the executive committee of the Luddenham Progress Association. He was part of the Luddenham Uniting Church and was a member of the Luddenham Show Society. We deeply thank you Arthur for all you contributed to the Luddenham community, and may you rest in peace.

**PENRITH CITY LOCAL BUSINESS AWARD WINNERS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate two local businesses from Glenmore Park in my electorate of Mulgoa who were award recipients at the 2020 Penrith City Local Business Awards. Firstly, well done to Viola Jewellers who were awarded Most Outstanding Jeweller in their category. After only having a store located in Glenmore Park since September 2019, owner, Haitham Zamil and his team have worked hard to connect with the community and provide outstanding service. Viola Jewellers comes from a long line of third generation jewellers, starting in the Middle East before moving to Sydney in 1982. After settling down in Glenmore Park last year, they have already made their mark. Well done! I would also like to mention Carolanne Brennan and the team at The Shed Café also located in Glenmore Park who were recognised as Most Outstanding Café. Since their opening, they have become a favourite amongst locals as their food, beverages and service is unquestionable. Having been there myself on several occasions, I am delighted to see their hard work has paid off in this way. Congratulations to The Shed Café, very well done!

**FATHER PAUL MARSHALL**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I would like to recognise and congratulate Father Paul Marshall on becoming the new Rector for 2021 for the Holy Spirit seminary. Father Paul was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Parramatta on 19 December 1988, and has served in the parishes of St Marys, Castle Hill, Luddenham-Warragamba, Toongabbie and Greystanes. He has been the Diocesan Youth Chaplain. Father Paul has been widely respected for his ongoing dedication to the parish community at Our Lady, Queen of Peace Parish, Greystanes where he has served for the last 6 years. Father Paul has been recognised by many of the student's overtime as a father figure in many ways while he supports them on their journey through emotional, psychological, pastoral and spiritual development. Congratulations on being ordained the new rector once again Father Paul Marshall. It is well deserved.

**ABTISAM SOUFYAE**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Newcastle has always been a city that welcomes refugees and Jesmond, in particular, is a multicultural melting pot of cultures from across the globe. Over the last three years, a large number of families from Syria have arrived in the area. More than half the students enrolled at Jesmond Public School speak a second language at home. Mrs Abtisam Soufyae has been playing a vital role in supporting refugee students that attend the school. Abtisam arrived in Australia in late 2010 from Libya with her husband and two daughters, to study her Master's degree in Leadership and Management in Education at the University of Newcastle, and had a third daughter in 2012. Abtisam has been working as a School Learning Support Officer at Jesmond Public School for the last four years. She takes her role as a School Learning Support Officer very seriously and uses it to support many refugee children and their families. Abtisam works closely with the teachers at the school to implement support strategies to assist refugee students in learning. Thank you Abtisam for your great work in our community.

**DANIEL WALLACE**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Fighting for workers' rights is never easy but it's a fight that Daniel Wallace has never shied away from. Daniel started his working life as a boilermaker. By the age of 24, he was an organiser with the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union NSW Branch. was elected to Lake Macquarie City Council in 2008 representing the West Ward. He served two terms, including a term as Deputy Mayor. He continued his rise through the ranks of the union movement and in 2014 he was elected the Secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council, now known as Hunter Workers. Daniel has also served as the Chair and Secretary of Labour Co-operative, the Managing Director, Secretary and Vice President of The Newcastle Show and more recently as a Director on the Committee for the Hunter and the City of Newcastle COVID-19 Taskforce. Late last month, Daniel finished his role as Secretary of Hunter Workers. Thank you Daniel for your service to workers and the Hunter community. You have left your indelible mark on the union movement. I look forward to seeing what you do next. I am sure it will be another success.

**VIC ALHADEFF**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the work of Vic Alhadeff, who has announced he will step down after serving as the CEO of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies for the past 16 years. Vic has been a strong and passionate voice in the ongoing fight against discrimination, and has also served as the chair of Multicultural NSW and as a spokesperson for the Keep NSW Safe coalition. During his time serving in these roles, he has successfully campaigned for law reform outlawing the incitement of violence on the basis of race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. While Vic is resigning as the CEO of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, he will continue to serve the board as a part-time consultant. Vic's contribution to the Jewish

community, and all of New South Wales cannot be understated. I wish to convey my sincere thanks to Vic for all of his work, and congratulate him on an incredibly successful tenure.

#### **KRISTALLNACHT COMMEMORATION**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—On the 9th of November, the Jewish commemorated Kristallnacht, or the night of broken glass, which marked the onset of the Holocaust. On this day 73 years ago, Nazi forces set fire to or destroyed over two hundred synagogues, damaged 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses, arrested 30,000 Jews, and murdered 91 Jews in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. The Jewish people who were arrested were rounded up, earmarked for torture, slave labour, brutal treatment and often death at the hands of the SS. The Third Reich's Jews were then forced to pay one billion marks for what Nazi leader Hermann Göring called "their abominable crimes." It was my solemn privilege to attend the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies commemoration ceremony, and I would like to thank the organisers of the event for inviting me. Events like these ensure that this horrific tragedy and loss of human life will always be remembered, so that it is never repeated.

#### **ST DOMINIC'S COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERS**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)**—As the end of the 2020 school year is quickly approaching, I wish to offer my congratulations to the incoming student leadership team of St Dominic's Catholic College. The leadership team for 2021 includes, College Captain, Dylan Wilson and College Vice Captain, Lwandile Ndlovu. Additional members of the leadership team are Bayley Baragry -Cultural & Sport Prefect, Flynn Cole-Social Justice Prefect, Noah Cutajar -Communication Prefect, Nicolas Hodge-Pastoral Care Prefect, Jirah Liddiard -Cultural & Sport Prefect, Harrison Moss-Rice House Prefect, Andrew Nicotera -Tench House Prefect, Jonah Pares-Communication Prefect, Patrick Rowan-Religious Prefect, Clay Saunders -Surawski House Prefect, Maksim Vujasin -Academic Prefect and Jacob Zordoumis -Dharuk House Prefect. Student leader's play an important role and I have no doubt these students will make positive and valuable contributions across their school community.

#### **CHILE KIDNAPPING EXTRADITION**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise those community activists who have campaigned for the extradition from Australia to Chile of a Chilean woman alleged to be involved in Pinochet-era kidnappings. The woman is said to be involved in the kidnapping of seven people in the 1970s. The kidnappings are alleged to have resulted in their death. The woman concerned is said to have worked for the infamous Manuel Contreras, Chief of Chile's secret police, the National Intelligence Directorate, known as DINA. I know many of the community activists involved in this lengthy campaign. They are passionate in their desire to achieve some belated justice for the victims of Pinochet's fascist regime. Australia has become home to many political refugees from Chile. Australia is a much better society because of it.

#### **PCYC LAKE MACQUARIE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—This year has been very tough for many in our community, and community organisations such as the PCYC have not been spared the difficulties, having fewer opportunities to fundraise and being unable to deliver as many services to the local community. On Saturday 31 October, PCYC Lake Macquarie at Windale hosted a car boot sale in an effort to kick-start fundraising and start to build community spirit after this difficult year. I went along, and was pleased to see a number of local stall-holders including handmade craft, diamond art, bath products, homewares, crochet, plants, prints and personalised gifts. It was the PCYC's first car boot sale. We don't have many open-air markets like this in the area, and I hope it becomes a regular occurrence. My thanks to Martin Eddy, PCYC Lake Macquarie Club Manager, and Assistant Manager Sarah Lenton, who organised the day, and to all the stallholders who risked the rain to support the PCYC.

#### **CHARLESTOWN ROTARY**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—I thank the Charlestown Rotary Club for working with the staff and volunteers at PCYC Lake Macquarie to help reinvigorate this important part of the Windale community. Our local Rotary club has assisted with upgrades to the gardens at the front of the PCYC. They built sandstone flower boxes and planted the garden. The project was funded and managed over the past twelve months. I would like to acknowledge Rotary Club president Ben Chard and Ted Atchison OAM, who I met PCYC Lake Macquarie when I had a look at the gardens. The results are great, and have definitely improved the physical environment at the Club. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Richard Addinall, who helped organise the upgrades. I was glad to meet with Ben, Ted and the staff at the PCYC to discuss the work that's been done so far—I look forward to seeing what's coming next!

### ORANGE BLOSSOM FESTIVAL GARDEN COMPETITION

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—Unfortunately COVID has claimed another scalp, with a Hill's favourite, the Orange Blossom Festival having to be cancelled for 2020, the first time since 1969. However, I am delighted to announce that the always-competitive garden festival went ahead as normal. With COVID forcing so many of us to remain home for extended periods, and people looking for a way to spend their time, the gardens were of a particularly high standard. Predating the Festival itself, the competition started in 1959, with Councillor Eric Mobbs spearheading the early years. This year a myriad of succulents, grasses, evergreens and flowers dazzled the horticulturally expert judges, with Paula Daniels, Craig Job, Jenny Guest, Kaye Aitchinson, Danuta Szczypior, Trixie Muddell, Don & Daphne Bradford, Joy Jones, Kay & Bob Smith, Barbara Amor, Valma & Jack Russell, Neil Manning, Susanne Waesch & Gary Wellard, Irene & Grant Fisher, Betty Murray, Hazell Mackness, Elwyn Harding, Bob and Dot Butler and Living Choice Glenhaven winning their respective divisions. A special mention must go to the staff and students of Kellyville Public School for sweeping the schools competition. My congratulations go out to all winners, and wish everyone the best of luck for next year.

### RYAN PAPENHUYZEN

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Kellyville local Ryan Papenhuyzen for his Grand Final and Clive Churchill medal wins. The Hills has always had a strong rugby league pedigree, producing such legends of the game as John Kolc, Ron Hilditch, David Williams and Geoff Gerard among many others. This stands as a testament to the strength of local junior clubs in the area, including Papenhuyzen's Kellyville Bushrangers and Hills District Bulls, alongside the Rouse Hill Rhinos, North West Hurricanes, Hills Hawks and the whole Parramatta JRL competition. Papenhuyzen stands as a testament to what can be achieved when government, organisations and communities invest in grassroots sport. It's why the NSW Government has been so proud to continue our Active Kids Vouchers, Local Sports Grants and Community Building Partnerships, so that the next generations can have as many opportunities to excel as possible. Whilst I was obviously going for the Western Sydney team on the night, my congratulations goes to Papenhuyzen and the Storm, and I wish Ryan the best for his future.

### PAT KENNEDY

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I offer my condolences to the family of Ballina resident Pat Kennedy, who passed away recently, and especially to Jeanette, his wife of 33 years. Pat literally lit up the town he lived in for the past 30 years – bringing joy to thousands of locals and visitors every Christmas by adorning the family home with up 200,000 festival lights. He was the embodiment of the Christmas spirit, not only setting up the spectacular light show and curating displays, but also dressing up as Santa Claus to greet children and their parents with a beaming smile. The extraordinary spectacle of the Kennedys' house was a Christmas institution in Ballina for 27 years and the far-reaching effects of Pat's community spirit have been witnessed since his passing, with Jeanette receiving cards in her letterbox from people she doesn't know. Some of them first saw the lights when they were children and later brought their own children and grandchildren to enjoy the heart-warming display. Just before being admitted to hospital, Pat was able to install thousands of lights at his West Ballina home, ensuring the Christmas show will brighten up the street one more time.

### VIC ALHADEFF

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today, I recognise the 16 years of service Vic Alhadeff has given to the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. Vic, who leaves the CEO role next year, has been a dedicated and tireless leader of the Board and has substantially elevated its work and status in the Jewish and general communities. While CEO, he served as chair of Multicultural NSW and as spokesperson for the Keep NSW Safe coalition, which campaigned successfully for reforms to the NSW Crimes Act to outlaw incitement to violence on the basis of race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. In this role, and throughout his life, Vic has been guided by a passion for combating anti-Semitism and for social harmony. I personally have benefited from his wisdom and expertise, and will miss him in the role. His guiding principle, that we must always take sides because silence aids the perpetrator, never the victim, is a reminder to us all to have courage. His belief that we can all effect change is a source of hope. I wish Vic and his family all the very best for the future and thank him for his service to our communities.

### CHATHAM HIGH SHOW TEAM

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to commend Chatham High for the success of their show team. Attending Wingham beef week this year the school entered five animals with the best result coming from a British White steer who won the best school presented animal as well as being the lightweight carcass champion. The school also had success at the Ekka awarded the MSA (Meat Standards Australia) award for a British White steer. Chatham High School has expanded its cattle operations from purely school based to



include a registered cattle stud. The stud has been named 'Bulang Park', which is the Gathang word for cow or beef. At present, it's a Limousin stud but has the potential to grow into Drakensberger and Tarentaise studs as the school has acquired the female animals to begin the growth of the stud. And while COVID-19 wreaked havoc for the show team they found a silver lining using money that would ordinarily be spent on participating in shows to purchase a new livestock trailer which will enable the school to transport animals to various shows as well as between the school and its agisted properties.

#### **TEAM TAREE**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise a group of Taree locals who have recently formed a group called Team Taree to drive positive change for the Taree and Manning Valley community. Team Taree are made up of a group of diverse local business people who are now working together to help showcase positive stories about their community. The group is already making an impact, with their love Taree social media campaign. Which is sharing the stories of what the Manning valley means to locals and why they choose to make it home. Their first video tells the story of Jada Stanley who runs an internationally renowned surfboard and Fashion Company from Wallabi Point has more than 11 000 views on Facebook. Another story on their page featured the Dr Krishan Gupta and his family who had originally planned to stay in Taree for a year, but were so taken with the lifestyle that now 10 years later they still call Taree home. These stories are a testament to the great communities in the Manning Valley and I commend this group for being proactive and spreading positivity throughout the region.

#### **LEE CORDNER**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—A \$5 million Veterans' Wellbeing Centre is set to come to Nowra thanks to the tireless efforts of Lee Cordner, who led a local Working Group with the wider community that made it possible for RSL NSW to develop the business case which secured the funding for the centre. The Veterans' Wellbeing Centre will assist the Department of Veterans' Affairs and provide support for local veterans and their families. Services will range across veteran health and welfare, and ensure more is done to help those who've served our nation. Thank you Lee Cordner for the work you and the local working group have put in to make this happen. Our veterans and our entire south coast community are incredibly grateful for the time and effort you've contributed to secure these funds. Thanks also to the many local RSL sub-Branch volunteers who've contributed to this success. I look forward to seeing the centre delivered soon for our region.

#### **STELLA STUDIOZ**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—Located in Nowra on the NSW South Coast, Stella Studioz has been educating and inspiring many vocalists, performers & musicians for over 10 years. I was very pleased to recently hear of the institution's success, having won the Outstanding Education Service of the Year Award at the Illawarra Local Business Awards. The hotly contested prize was challenged by 23 other businesses, showing the level competition for the prize. I would like to congratulate everyone at the studio, including teachers Sian Ludlow, Sam Tacey, Jasper Almond Smith, Nathan Edwards, Crystal Scocco, Julia O'Keefe, Scott Bowcher, John Gwilliam, Neil Foley, Graham Dyer, Anthony Snape, Damion Stirling, Piper Druce, Harriet Adamson, and Wendy Barnes. Thank you for everything you do to support our community and well done. It's always great to see local businesses achieve great things.

#### **LANDCARE NSW**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—Today I had the opportunity to be a part of the planting of 1,200 trees on Polding Street, Prairiewood, thanks to Landcare NSW. This is part of their larger strategy to decrease heat in Western Sydney through creating cooler spaces. I was joined by my parliamentary colleague Dr Hugh McDermott, Member for Prospect, and CEO of Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC), and former Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Charles Casuscelli. In attendance was also Dr Adrian Zammit, CEO of Landcare NSW, in which I thank him for his dedication to minimising the effects of global warming throughout the state. I'd like to take this opportunity to give a special mention to the Landcare NSW volunteers. I applaud their efforts in contributing to this important cause.

#### **BATYR**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of Ms Safa Majidi and Ms India Smith from Batyr in relation to mental health issues and youth employment in the Fairfield area. Batyr is a mental health organisation whose object is to destigmatise mental health issues in order to open the way for better social and employment opportunities for young people. This organisation has visited many schools and other organisations, including those in the Fairfield area, in order to engage with young people so that they can feel confident to voice their concerns in this area. As we all know, the level of unemployment in the Fairfield area is

at an all-time high and significantly higher than in other suburbs in NSW. Indeed in the Southwest electorate area which includes Fairfield, youth unemployment sits at 20.7% - a staggering figure and the highest in the NSW. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Batyr for the essential work they do for our young people in providing warm interactions focusing on their strengths and working towards meaningful employment opportunities.

#### **KOGARAH CHRISTMAS AND LUNAR NEW YEAR CARD COMPETITION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I take this opportunity today to announce my 2020 Christmas card competition and 2021 Lunar New Year card competition are open for entries. My annual Christmas card competition is open to all Year 3s in the Kogarah electorate, and entries close on November 27. After last year's incredible entries – both in terms of quantity and quality – I am very excited to see what year 3 can produce this time around. 2020 was the inaugural Kogarah Lunar New Year card competition, and after such a success I definitely had to bring it back for 2021. It's open to all school-aged students throughout the electorate, with two winning designs, one from primary and one from secondary students, to be selected. Entries this year will be in celebration of the Year of the Ox, and close on December 11th. We're lucky to have many talented young students in the Kogarah electorate – I encourage everyone to enter - and I'm looking forward to receiving lots of amazing art.

#### **THE GREENWAY ART PRIZE**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Last Friday I had the pleasure to attend the Greenway Art Prize at the wonderful visual arts hub Art Est. This year marks the eleventh year running I've been able to attend this event. Today, I would like to congratulate all the prize winners, entrants, judges and organisers involved this year. Especially I would like to acknowledge the curator Tara Morelos, Bronwyn Tuohy from the Inner West Council and Jennifer McNamara the Director of Art Est. The Greenway is an urban green corridor that follows the Hawthorne Canal on the west border of the Balmain Electorate all the way to the Cooks River. The Art Prize was established in 2010 to encourage local artists to capture this urban environmental and active transport corridor. It was my pleasure to attend such a vibrant event that celebrates two of the great loves of my community: preserving our environment and visual arts. Every entry was a personal celebration of our community spirit and I was inspired to see the talent emerging in the youth prize categories. One of the best things about being a MP is meeting amazing local creatives that make our community a more beautiful place to live.

#### **HENSON PARK OVAL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Henson Park Oval is getting a much-needed facelift before the 2021 season kick-off thanks to Inner West Council, with new turf, drainage system and lights. Opened in 1933, Henson Park Oval is the spiritual home of inner west sport, serving as the home-ground of the Newtown Jets, Sydney Swans Women's Training Team and as a training ground for the Sydney Swans Academy. There has never been a better time to upgrade it - the COVID-19 pandemic put extraordinary pressure on our parks and during the height of the lockdown, Henson Park was a hive of COVID-safe activity as residents got out to safely exercise. COVID-19 has been especially tough for local clubs and I would like to acknowledge John Trady, who has been hosting his regular 'Laps with Trady' fundraiser to support the Jets, where her rides laps around Henson Oval on his bike to raise money for the club. Thank you to the Inner West Council, Mayor Darcy Byrne and Newtown Jets President Barry Cotter for getting this important work at Henson Park done and thank you to local residents and die-hard fans like John, for their passionate support of the inner west sport.

#### **INNER WEST ROLLER DERBY LEAGUE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Since 2012, The Inner West Roller Derby League has fought to create an inclusive, safe and encouraging sport for inner westies. As well as being a tonne of fun, the League is dedicated to actively stamping out intolerance and bigotry, hosting LGBTIQ+ focused events, anti-racism workshops and training and education programs to support marginalised people in sport. Australia loves sport, yet sadly homophobia, transphobia and discrimination continue to be pervasive, with studies showing 80 percent of people have either witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport and 75 percent believing LGBTIQ+ people are not safe on the sports field. The League has become a central part of the LGBTIQ+ sporting community and whether you are a pro skater or a shaky beginner, there is space for everyone. This November, the League is hosting an event for first-time skaters at the Robyn Webster Sports Stadium in Tempe and I encourage anyone who is Derby-curious to go along and give it a go. I congratulate and thank the volunteers, leaders and players who have done so much to support the League and wish the Bamshees and Skatecrashers the best of luck for a winning season.

#### **INTERNATIONAL PATHOLOGY DAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—The 11th November 2020, marks International Pathology Day. International Pathology Day is an annual awareness day celebrating the vital work, commitment and sacrifice of

all pathology staff in the healthcare community in Australia. Pathology workers are the unseen professionals, helping us understand and overcome thousands of illnesses and play a fundamental role in protecting society. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, pathology staff have worked tirelessly as part of the testing process. They have provided much-needed support to all members of our community and have ensured that COVID-19 testing occurs in a timely and accurate manner during this incredibly challenging time. Pathology workers have been on the front lines, risking their lives and steering us through this unprecedented crisis. I would like to thank pathology staff across New South Wales for their hard work and dedication. It is thanks to them COVID-19 testing ran efficiently in NSW and through their assistance NSW avoided a second wave. I would also like to thank the Health Service Union for supporting all health workers, including pathologists throughout NSW during one of the most challenging years to date.

#### **VVIP CLEANING**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On the 2nd November 2020, I was pleased to attend the Grand Opening of VVIP Cleaning Australia. VVIP Cleaning Australia is a residential and commercial cleaning service provider based in Smithfield, assisting businesses, shopping centres, schools and residential properties across NSW. Mr Ammar Desho, Director, VVIP Cleaning Australia, offered us a tour of the new store and an explanation of the equipment used and the jobs undertaken. Mr Desho currently employs over 70 individuals, many of whom reside in the Prospect Electorate. Small businesses play an integral role, employing thousands across NSW and providing necessary services to our community. Prospect is home to numerous successful small businesses. Although the COVID-19 pandemic placed many challenges on small businesses they have risen to the challenge. At the Grand Opening, I was joined by my Parliamentary Colleague, Mr Guy Zangari MP, Member for Fairfield, Father Rode Hanna, Parish Priest, St Mary's Assumption Chaldean Parish and Mr Saleem Alkamessi, Darah Sharia Mandaean sect in Australia. I would like to congratulate Mr Desho on the opening of his new store. I sincerely thank Mr Desho for his warm hospitality and wish the VVIP Cleaning Australia team all the best in their business endeavours.

#### **ANNA MASON**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by the friends and families of our Rural Fire Service brigade members, particularly during the catastrophic 2019 – 2020 bushfire season. While they may not be on the front lines fighting fires, the support they offer active members behind the scenes is a really important part of the broader firefighting effort. Anna Mason from Bonnells Bay is a wonderful example of this. Anna's husband Chris Mason serves with the Peninsula Rural Fire Brigade, and throughout the last bushfire season she went above and beyond to care for all of the brigade's 43 members. Not only was Anna on hand to provide much-needed emotional and mental support to brigade members as they returned from their gruelling shifts, she also arrived at the station in the early hours of the morning to make breakfast for those finishing night shifts. What's more Anna looked after the children of brigade members, allowing RFS volunteers to go out and fight bushfires. I congratulate and thank Anna for her continued support of the Peninsula Rural Fire Brigade members.

#### **SAMANTHA CROSS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the revolutionary work of Plastic Police founder Samantha Cross from Lakelands. For the past five years Samantha and her small team have saved over 65 million pieces of soft plastic pieces from going into landfill. The soft plastics collected have been used to remanufacture the likes of park benches, roads, garden beds and wheel stops. Samantha has created a circular economy for soft plastic and has set a new benchmark in sustainability and innovation. The Plastic Police program began as a trial at just one school and was so successful that it grew into a regional project in the Hunter-Central Coast region with over 20 organisations and 90 sites collecting soft plastics. The program continues to grow with a focus on educating, engaging and inspiring communities and organisations to reduce, recycle and buy recycled. More than 10,000 employees and 11,000 primary school students in the region now recycle their soft plastics and many more thousands of residents have changed their behaviour towards the disposal of plastic. She really is making a better future for both our planet and our communities and I applaud Samantha on her work.

#### **GEOFF MAREL AWARDEE DR ANDREW BAKER**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I am pleased to announce local Doctor Andrew Baker as the recipient of the Geoff Marel Award, which recognises substantial contributions to the education and support of junior medical officers. Dr Baker is currently the director of pre-vocational education and training at Westmead Hospital, taking up a mentorship role for the next generation of healthcare professionals in our local community and across the Western Sydney Local Health District. Due to his success in this role, Dr Baker has also been nominated for the Australia and New Zealand Clinical Educator of the Year Award. Part of his role includes the support of over-seas doctors and their training. Dr Baker has a long history with Westmead Hospital, starting his

current role in 2011 after serving as the director of medical services. Congratulations to Dr Baker for receiving this award and his nomination for the clinical educator of the year and thank you for your expert medical services provided to Seven Hills Electorate residents. I wish you the best of luck in the future.

#### **THE LADY WOODWARD CUP AND SEVEN HILLS-TOONGABBIE RSL WOMEN'S AUXILIARY**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I congratulate the Seven Hills-Toongabbie Returned Services League Club's Women's Auxiliary for coming second place in The Lady Woodward Cup for raising a fantastic \$12,000 for RSL Defence Care. Well done the incredibly hard-working Women's Auxiliary and its Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL local Committee. I recognise president Patricia Banks, vice president Julie Evans and Beverley Black. This award is well deserved for the Committee. The ladies of the Auxiliary at the local RSL are fantastic. Patricia, Julie, Beverley and the team are so dedicated to the Club and assisting the Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch. These terrific ladies are always looking for local community projects to assist on or can be found raising money for those in need, Western Sydney charities and defence and veterans causes. I thank the Women's Auxiliary of Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL for their service to the local community and again congratulate them on their success in The Lady Woodward Cup for 2020 and their fundraising for RSL Defence Care.

#### **NAGLE CENTRE**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—Compassion, dedication, and selflessness – these are all qualities those at the Nagle Centre in Campbelltown all possess in spades. The St Vincent de Paul Society-run centre plays a crucial role in supporting those in need in our community. There a number of services offered at the Nagle Centre including the dining room meal services. The dining room service is such a wonderful and important program which offers people free breakfast, lunch and dinner on selected days. Campbelltown, like the rest of the state, is not immune to hardship. There many people who struggle every week to put food on the table for their families or pay the electricity and gas bills. There are also a significant number of people that are homeless in Campbelltown. Whether that is living on the streets or sleeping in cars or on couches or friends, homelessness can take many forms. That is why it the contributions of the team at the Nagle Centre are so incredibly important. On behalf of the community at Campbelltown, I would like to thank every member of the Nagle Centre team. Your hard work and dedication is truly appreciated.

#### **WELCOME TO MAITLAND CBD, ST NICK'S**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I am delighted that 70 new early education and childcare places were opened in the heart of Maitland's CBD last month with the opening of the new St Nicholas Early Education Centre and Pathways Training Centre. St Nick's Maitland includes a 15-place nursery, a 15-place program for children 2-3 years, a 20-place program for those aged 3-4 and a 20-place preschool program for children 4 to 5 years. Importantly, the new facility is also home to the St Nicholas Pathways Training Facility, which will attract trainees in early childhood education from across the Hunter Region and offer a range of study options for aspiring and existing early childhood education and care professionals. I'm pleased that Maitland families now have access to more long-day care options in the centre of town. It is also positive to see more people coming into our CBD, experiencing what we have to offer, and hopefully supporting our small businesses during their visit.

#### **QUEENS WHARF MORPETH OPENS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—The historic village of Morpeth has become a magnet for visitors to the Maitland and Hunter areas, widely known and loved for its boutique shopping, interesting dining and unique location. The village added a string to its bow recently with the official opening of its \$1.2 million upgrade to Queens Wharf, and I was delighted to be present for the occasion. The wharf has been extended, the boat ramp has been widened, and there is now a second access ladder. Away from the water, the carpark has been renewed, there are new footpaths, and landscaping works such as new turf, gardens and retaining walls are in place. The enhanced access to our glorious Hunter River will ensure improved accessibility for smaller recreational vessels at all tide levels and better accommodate visiting larger commercial vessels. I congratulate Maitland City Council for jointly funding this fabulous initiative alongside Transport for NSW, and helping to make Morpeth an even more appealing destination for locals and visitors to our region. Remember: #It Must Be Morpeth

#### **SAVING MOORE PARK**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I would like to record the efforts of Saving Moore Park group, which has become a strong voice for protecting Moore Park and returning it its original Macquarie Bequest purpose of passive recreation. In just a few years, Saving Moore Park has built a membership of more than 4,000 people who care about the parkland and want to protect it from further alienation and commercialisation – a passion and goal I share. The group's focus has been on removing car parking from the grassland, pushing for proper government funding to maintain this vital green space, and recreating Moore Park

as an attractive space for people to spend time and enjoy Kippax Lake and green landscaped outdoors. Saving Moore Park has taken this advocacy directly to the responsible ministers and are working with Lord Mayor Clover Moore and the City of Sydney along with MPs representing the parkland and adjacent communities. I'm proud to work with this group to return Moore Park to Governor Macquarie's vision for a great city having great parks and open green space that belong to all the people.

#### **TRANS PRIDE AUSTRALIA**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate I would like to commend the vital work of Trans Pride Australia. Trans Pride offer online spaces and events that foster community connection and support for trans and gender diverse people, their families, friends and colleagues. Their online groups dedicated to allies, partners, carers and parents provide vital, safe spaces where people can learn, discuss the challenges and celebrate the joys of sharing life with their trans and gender diverse loved ones. Trans Pride is made up entirely of committed volunteers that are dedicated to building a national network of organisations that provide clear pathways to trans and gender diverse-friendly resources. Their advocacy work promotes the visibility and rights of trans and gender diverse people as equal citizens of the world and valuable members of our community. I was honoured to have Trans Pride join us at parliament house last month to celebrate my motion in support of equality, dignity and fairness for the trans and gender diverse communities. A motion that was passed unanimously. I thank Trans Pride for their ongoing efforts to support the extended trans and gender diverse community, and their promotion of safety and inclusion for all people.

#### **STOCKLAND'S SHELLHARBOUR SAFE ROOM**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I'd like to congratulate Stockland's Shellharbour particularly centre manager Daniel Buchanan in for the opening of a domestic violence safe room at Stockland's Shellharbour. The room is modelled on the Lisa Harnum Foundation safe rooms, which were set up in Sydney's Hills district three years ago after the murder of Lisa Harnum by her finance. The room will make it easier for women to access support and services. Stockland's paid for the room to be refurbished. Illawarra Women's Health Centre general manager Sally Stevenson said she was grateful to Stockland's Shellharbour centre manager Daniel Buchanan whose idea it was to set up the room. The centre have long supported the women's health centre. Mr. Buchanan earlier this year became aware there were retail centres which had safe facilities for Women where confidential consultations could happen. When the space was made available by Stockland's for the safe room, Mr. Buchanan reached out to the women's health centre to form a partnership. Now women are able to contact the women's health centre to make a booking at the safe room. Once again my congratulations to Stockland's Shellharbour and Mr. Buchanan for this initiative.

#### **VISIT BY HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS TO ST GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, ROSE BAY**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)**—On Tuesday 3 November I had the pleasure of helping welcome His Eminence Archbishop Makarios Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia for the first time to St George Greek Orthodox Church, Rose Bay. On the day, our local Greek community gathered for a special service at the Church when local parish priest Father Gerasimos Koutsouras was elevated to the rank of Protopresbyter by Archbishop Makarios. Congratulations to Father Koutsouras and his wife Eleni for receiving the honour – you do so much for our community. Thanks to Committee Member John Barbouttis for inviting me and President George Confos, Vice-President Nicholas Golfin, Secretary Rozy Dorizas-Crosson, Treasurer Spero Raissis and the Church's Ladies Auxiliary Committee led by President Penelope Mayson, VP Anna Vlahomitros and Secretaries Christine Penklis and Patricia Aroney for such a special day. I'm proud that the NSW Government has been able to support the Church with \$120,000 of grants over the last nine years. I look forward to visiting again soon.

#### **BELMONT HOSPITAL STAFF**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Belmont Hospital staff on being recognised at the 2020 New South Wales Health Awards for their fantastic work during the COVID-19 crisis. Belmont Hospital and its staff developed an innovative swabbing model for the public health emergency allowing them to see up to 1,200 patients a day at a six lane drive-through clinic. The system allowed patients to book a COVID-19 assessment via telephone and complete the drive-through appointment within two minutes. Although Belmont Hospital didn't win their category, I'm incredibly proud and grateful to our essential workers, whose knowledge, professionalism and dedication have spared us from the scale of devastation that we've seen in other parts of the world. I thank all the staff at Belmont Hospital and all across the Swansea electorate for their hard work and dedication to keeping the community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**BRETT YOUNGBERRY**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I rise to honour the life of Valentine Public School year two teacher Mr Brett Youngberry who passed away unexpectedly on 21 October 2020. He was 52 years old. Mr Youngberry leaves behind a wife Michelle and two children, Matthew and Lucy. Along with the enduring impact he has had upon those he has taught during his fifteen years as a public school teacher, Brett spent the majority of his career teaching at Valentine Public School and was a beloved member of the school community. The Principal of Valentine Public School Lee Saurins described him as an 'irreplaceable story teller'. Many former students have spoken of the positive impact Mr Youngberry had upon their lives with current and former families holding a vigil outside the school to honour Mr Youngberry. Our community will be worse off for Brett Youngberry's absence. My thoughts are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

**CAMDEN ROTARY CLUB CHARITY GOLF DAY**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I would like to recognise today before the NSW Parliament the work of the Rotary Club of Camden and the success of their recent Charity Golf Day that was held on the 12th of October. This event raised close to \$23,000 over the course of the day which is an outstanding accomplishment and I was proud to have been able to donate parliamentary wines signed by the Premier and Treasurer to help this wonderful cause. The money will be donated to a number of organisations such as the Right Start Foundation, which is an amazing local charity committed to supporting families touched by Down Syndrome and promoting awareness; as well as the Shining Stars Foundation which is another fantastic local organisation that runs both homeless and community outreach programs for the less fortunate in the Macarthur Community. Further, a number of local community organisations also benefitted. The work that Camden Rotary does for the Camden community is to be commended and I was pleased to have been able to support and recognise their efforts before the NSW Parliament.

**REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Remembrance Day marks the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month which was the time and day that the World War One armistice between the Allies and Germany was signed in 1918. This morning I had the honour of attending Remembrance Day commemorations in Macarthur Park right in the heart of Camden to recognise the sacrifice of so many Australian men and women. Together with Mayor of Camden, Councillor Theresa Fedeli, President of the Camden RSL Sub-branch Iain Richard-Evan and Senior Vice President Con Diomis we commemorated this solemn day. Also in attendance, paying their respects, was former Member of the Legislative Council the Hon. Charlie Lynn OAM. On Remembrance Day we commemorate the men and women who lost their lives serving their country from all wars and conflicts. On behalf of the Camden community I pay my respects to, and thank these men and women. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

**EXTRAORDINARY LOCALS HELPING CHILDREN IN TANZANIA**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Recently in Murwillumbah, I stopped at a street stall to chat with Mrs Narelle Higgins and her husband, Geoffrey about local issues and also about Mrs Higgins' long-term association with the Wendyrayna Secondary School in Tanzania. This association started in 2005 when Mrs Higgins and her friend, Mrs Wendy Watson, visited a village in Tanzania. Their host, the Dean of Student Office at Mkwawa University College of Education, Mr Winston Mdegela, expressed his wish to build a secondary school to educate local children. Committed to making this dream a reality, Mrs Higgins and Mrs Watson started to raise fund by selling their "Grandma's Kitchen" home-made jams, pickles, chutneys and biscuits. I was pleased to support them. Mrs Higgins and Mrs Watson have raised more than \$150,000. It has been used to help build four classrooms, a science block, two dormitories, two teachers' cottages and a kitchen. This is an extraordinary achievement. Like Mrs Higgins and Mrs Watson, I know the importance of good quality education in ensuring a better future for all children. I acknowledge and thank them for their tireless work. Good deeds start at home but do not have to finish there.

**FAR NORTH COAST TABLE TENNIS CLUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Recently, I visited this Goonellabah based Far North Coast Table Tennis club and caught up with the President Mr Peter McGrath and other members, including my friend Ms Oan Gasorn. A state-of-the-art venue, the club offers 11 international standard tables, Olympic standard Taraflex rubber flooring and automatic robot professional practice machines, which I tried at low speed under the eye of world class table tennis Coach and Manager, Graeme Townsend. It is one of the best-purposed build table tennis centres in New South Wales. Established in 2003, the club has hosted the U21 National Championship and the National Athletes with Disabilities Championship. The club plans to host several competitions at State and National levels, including the annual Northern Region of NSW Championship. I applaud the club for encouraging

all students to play including nearby Kadina High School and Blue Hills College. Table Tennis is a sport for all ages and a sport that just keeps growing. I thank Mr McGrath and other Committee Members, including Mr Brian Johnson, Mr John Carson, Mr John Orman, Ms Margaret Loong and Ms Janine Martin.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY 2020

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)**—This year we have had to learn to live with all kinds of restrictions, including ones which prevented us from holding traditional Anzac Day services in April, a tradition that our nation has proudly kept for over a century. In light of this, I'm even more grateful to be able to mark Remembrance Day this week, with up to 100 attendees at allowed at services of remembrance across NSW. At the Epping Cenotaph, John Curdie OAM and the Epping RSL Sub-Branch led the Epping community in commemorating those who made the supreme sacrifice and acknowledging those who still serve. This year, we mark 102 years since the armistice of the Great War, and we think of those who have fought, in all wars, for the democracy and freedom we enjoy and often take for granted in this country. I express my deepest thanks to John and the Epping RSL Sub-Branch for hosting this year's Remembrance Day Service. Lest we forget.

### 2020 WESTFIELD LOCAL HEROES AWARDS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to recognise Ms Myrna Dominquez who works with the Autism Advisory and Support Service. Recently, Ms Dominquez was named one of the 2020 Westfield Local Heroes for all of her dedication and work supporting families living with autism. The Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by the local community to recognise hard working members of the local area. The successful nominees are awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisations to ensure that they can continue their important work. Westfield Local Heroes is a recognition program that works to connect and enrich the local community in acknowledging the special people who work to make it a better place. Once again Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ms Myrna Dominquez for receiving this award and commend her and all of the hardworking team at the Autism Advisory and Support Service for the continued support they provide to local families living with autism. Thank you.

### NSW HEALTH AWARDS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Aged Care Rapid Assessment and Investigation (ARIA) Unit, in the South Western Sydney Local Health District's, for recently receiving the Secretary's Award for Integrated Value-Based Care at the NSW Health Awards. The ARIA Unit is based at Liverpool Hospital and provides targeted, streamlined and multidisciplinary care for older patients. The Unit aims to provide integrated care to ensure that these older patients receive the right care at the right time. This award recognises the effort that all staff put into caring for their patients, especially during what has been a challenging time in the health care sector. I am pleased to see local health care units acknowledged through these awards, for their dedication and hard work they put into improving patient care. Mr Speaker once again I would like to congratulate the ARIA Unit at Liverpool Hospital for receiving this prestigious award and commend them for their continued effort in providing quality health care for our older members of the community. Thank you.

### ROZELLE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—I'm delighted to acknowledge the Rozelle School of Visual Arts as they celebrate 50 years of continuous dance classes. The Rozelle School of Visual Arts was founded by Barbara Cuckson, based on her mentor Gertrud Bodenwieser's dance principles. Her father inspired her to embrace the idea that this studio could become a community centre for recreational activities. In 1969, Eric Cuckson provided his daughter with the means to acquire a disused factory site in Rozelle and built the main hall that is still in use today. Since then, Barbara has been inspiring our community with dance. The creative arts make such a meaningful contribution to our wellbeing as individuals and the richness of our society. For our children, the arts encourage the development of a critical suite of skills including creativity, collaboration, self-expression and self-confidence. I know this first hand as I've seen my own daughter Beatrix grow and thrive in her dance classes this year. On behalf of everyone in our community my heartfelt congratulations and thank you to Barbara Cuckson and her sister Margaret, Barbara's daughter Marion, dancer Amy Armour, pianist Farrah Sa'adullah.

### BEDE PARKES OAM

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—I wish to congratulate a local resident, Bede Parkes of Helensburgh, on the outstanding achievement of receiving a Medal of the Order Australia (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours for her life's service to the Helensburgh community. Bede manned the White Elephant Stall at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School Fete for 40 years and volunteered for her Holy Cross Catholic Church her whole life. She has raised money for the local branch of the RSL, the RFS, Helensburgh Junior Rugby League and Widows and Veterans Entitlements Service 2508 Inc. Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales will present Bede with the insignia of her award at a special ceremony at

Government House later this month. I congratulate Bede on this honour and thank her for her community service over the years.

#### **MAX BYLSMA – NORTHERN HEAT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to recognise 17-year-old AFL sensation Max Bylsma from the Port Macquarie Magpies for his selection into the renowned Northern Heat development program. A superstar in the making, Max was instrumental this year in leading the Magpies to a round three victory against the 2020 premiers, the Grafton Tigers in an absolute nail-biter, 75 points to 74 at Wayne Richards Park, Port Macquarie. During the match, Max kicked a vital goal which helped to secure the win on the 1 August while highlighting his natural-born talent to the selectors. Max is a new arrival to Port Macquarie, having relocated with his family from Orange this year. He was previously training with the Giants academy for four seasons as largely a midfielder for the Orange Tigers before his move to the Mid North Coast. To be selected into the Northern Heat development program means Max can continue to improve his skills and abilities in hope that one day he will make the big league as an AFL professional football player. The elite program features video analysis, strength and conditioning training and GPS tracking. I congratulate Max for striving to achieve his career goals.

#### **BEN SIMON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I acknowledge a selfless act by Port Macquarie resident Ben Simon, who for the past 18 years has been the official bugler for the Port Macquarie RSL Sub Branch. Despite not being allowed to perform inside at yesterday's Remembrance Day Commemorations at Port Panthers due to COVID 19 restrictions, Ben went down to the Port Macquarie Cenotaph to deliver the Last Post and Reveille as the clock struck 11am. As a non-organised event, Ben took it upon himself to undertake his civilian duty to the delight of around 150 people who gathered at the Cenotaph to pay their respects to the men and women who have served in the Australian Armed Forces over the past 102 years. Ben then attended the Remembrance Day Commemorations luncheon to a round of applause as a thank you for his generosity. In 2015 Ben was recognised for his dedication to his community with the Certificate of Merit which is the highest civilian honour awarded by the RSL for his outstanding service to the RSL and Veteran Community. Congratulations Ben Simon on your marvellous achievements.

#### **9TH ANNUAL PINK RIBBON PINK SAREE BREAKFAST**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I joined the 9th annual Pink Saree Breakfast organised by Rehka Rajvanshi and Sue Advani and a few words of appreciation are due for this wonderful cause. Raising money as well as awareness for breast cancer, as well as the treatments available and all it entails in such an exciting event makes me look forward to this fundraiser year after year. It is heartbreaking learning what breast cancer suffers in Australia go through until this day during this informative event. Attendees are able to hear the moving stories of survivors during this event, enjoy fashion parades of the most exotic design, and participate in raffles and other extremely entertaining activities. The organisers have done a fantastic job keeping their donors as well as the rest of the public interested in participating by holding this fantastic event. It was an especially great cause allowing us to reunite with so many of our friends and colleagues after many months of Covid-19 restrictions. It is clear a lot of time and effort is put into organising this event year after year. Well done to all involved.

#### **LOCAL HEROES**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to congratulate the three winners of the Hornsby Westfield Local Hero Awards for 2020. The first is the amazing Jeni Hayes. Jeni has dedicated her life to community service and for the past 10 years she has been with Mission Australia where she helps young people at risk of homelessness. Jeni, thank you for all you do for our community and I am sure Dave, Noah and Ben are extremely proud of what you have achieved. The second winner is James Thomas founder of Feel the Magic. James lost his Dad in 2005 and his Mum suddenly in 2011 at the age of 31. After the death of his mother he sold his successful business to start Feel the Magic a not-for-profit mentor-led program which supports children and teens through grief. Thank you James for this extremely important work. Finally 9 year old Ava has been passionate about helping children living with a disability. She has been fundraising for St Lucy's to build a wheelchair-friendly vegetable garden and this award will help see that dream become a reality. Thank you Jeni, James and Ava for all the work you do for the Hornsby community.

#### **RARE CANCERS AUSTRALIA**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—The Aussie spirit is ever present in my electorate of Wollondilly. I am always pleased by the way in which people look out for one another and are continually willing and eager to lend a helping hand. And I am grateful to the charity sector who bring together those that wish to give, and those that are in need. Rare Cancer Australia, founded in 2012 by Kate and Richard Vines, is another very worthwhile charity that seeks to improve the lives of Australians affected by rare and less common cancers



– known as RLC cancers. While we have seen increases in incidence for common cancers, we have also seen dramatic reductions in mortality due to early diagnosis and improved treatments, but this has not been the case for RLC cancers where diagnosis remains slow, and treatment availability limited. On December 11, the scenic Southern Highlands Golf Course will host a Teeup4Rare fundraising golf day. I encourage all golf-lovers and weekend hacks to spend the day chasing that little white ball around the course and raise money for a great cause.

#### **F45 BOWRAL**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—The past year has been tough for many businesses during the lockdown. This has been particularly so for gyms that rely on customers having physical access to their premises and staff. Tim Caruana purchased the F45 studio in Bowral on April 12 and worked hard to maintain his team and customers during the lockdowns. Realising the lockdowns were going to last for some time, he turned to technology to deliver online classes. Tim also introduced a pay now pay later option, which meant that clients didn't pay for the time the gym was shut. Through these innovative approaches F45 actually grew its customer base. It is great to see business owners like Tim getting creative to make the best of the difficult times we have been through. Well done to him and his team.

#### **ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH MIRANDA**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the incredible community at St Luke's Anglican Church Miranda. With the foundation stone for a new Anglican church in Miranda laid in 1899, a small weatherboard building served our community for more than 70 years. As the church and local populations quickly grew, the church expanded and new buildings were built in 1970. For over 120 years this vibrant community has been 'connecting people with Christ' and providing services for members of all ages. Just last month I had the pleasure of visiting St Luke's following a 2019 Community Building Partnership grant of \$22,000 for the installation of air conditioning in the Children's Ministry Building and surrounding fencing. The funding will enable children to play in a comfortable and safe environment. I acknowledge the dedicated team behind St Luke's including Brett Middleton, Sharyn Perry, Tim Goldsmith, Jennie Everist, Sam Norton, Sandy Rigby, Cam Harte, Jess Moran, Isaac Shumack, Lizz Beilharz, Eddie Chin and Lisa Byrnes. I extend my best wishes to everyone at St Luke's Anglican Church Miranda.

#### **GYMEA COMMUNITY AID AND INFORMATION SERVICE**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service, a community organisation who strive to bring self-reliance, dignity and well-being to people's lives. Established in 1975 by a passionate group of local residents, GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service relies on both staff and volunteers to provide information and associated support services to seniors, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and the wider community more generally. A diverse selection of social and planned activities ranging from walking groups to gardening clubs, non-English language speaking groups and dance classes, promote inclusiveness, independence and participation in our wonderful and diverse community. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the management committee behind this fantastic not for profit service, including President Kaye Herald, Vice President David Moorcroft, Secretary Wendy Ducasse, and committee members Bernadette McBarron and Peter Meintanis. I also recognise General Manager Joanne Cracknell and her staff including Rita Napolitano, Jenny Grey, Katrina Vavdinis, Mona Chui and Rita Vandenberg. I commend the entire team at GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service and thank them for their ongoing support of our community.

#### **MOSMAN LIBRARY'S DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, today I acknowledge that Mosman Library will soon be celebrating its Diamond Anniversary. Mosman Library first opened in Belmont Road on 1 December 1945, and now records up to five thousand visits a week at its site in the Barry O'Keefe Library on Military Road. To celebrate 75 years, Mosman Library is inviting community members to get creative with numerous social media challenges, including a 'shelfie' competition, where readers are asked to showcase their shelf or to-be-read pile. We have provided funding to Mosman Library for their Library indoor garden and reading zone project which has greatly contributed to the library space for visitors to enjoy. Thank you to the outstanding staff at Mosman Library for continuing to provide our local community with a fantastic place to enjoy a good book or community event. I would like to acknowledge all the current Mosman Library staff including Donna Braye, Mary Lou Byrne, Darragh Christie, Madeleine Coulson, Gavin Fordyce, Sarah Kain, Stephanie Oppen-Riley, Marilyn Porter, Simin Reyhanian, Bernice Russell, Therese Scott, Shona Tait, Ashleigh Veitch, Grace Winzar, Grace Yoo, and Linda Horswell.

### **NEW WILDLIFE HOSPITAL FOR TARONGA ZOO**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I acknowledge that Taronga Zoo is set to receive a new wildlife hospital that will be called the Centre for Wildlife Rescue, Conservation Medicine and Species Recovery. Last weekend I attended the Zoo with the Treasurer and the Minister for the Environment to announce that the Government will be providing \$77 million in funding towards this project. After the intense bushfire season, a lot of native wildlife was badly injured, and the Taronga wildlife hospital played a vital role in nursing injured animals back to health including koalas, wallabies, and flying foxes. This investment into a Sydney icon will allow the staff at Taronga to bolster the Zoo's emergency care capacity and will ensure our furry, feathered, or scaly animal friends get the best possible care. I would like to thank all the staff at Taronga Zoo and acknowledge the Executive Director and Chief Executive Cameron Kerr, all the Zoo directors, the keepers, scientists, veterinarians, and volunteers who take such care and pride in the work they do to look after not only the 4,000 animals kept at Taronga, but the injured wildlife that comes through the hospital.

### **HELPING THE SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the amazing work of Pastor Alex Currie. Pastor Currie may be retired from his position at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Wahroonga but he is working harder than ever. He has spent the last few years helping the Kukudu Adventist School in the Solomon Islands. With limited funding the school was unable to purchase the equipment and supplies many of our students take for granted. Thanks to the work of Pastor Currie, Pastor Ray Eaton and Brett Partridge the school has been transformed. With another container being filled this year, Dural local Barry Lumby, approached my office to see if the Department of Education would consider donating furniture that is no longer needed. It took a few calls but we were able to organise a delivery 100 chairs and tables which could be shipped to the school. The container is now on its way to the Solomon Islands and I hope the furniture makes a welcome addition at Kukudu. I want to thank Pastor Currie, Barry and everyone involved in this project. It is a wonderful initiative that I know is helping so many kids have a brighter future.

### **ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL VISIT**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Year 6 students from St Patrick's Catholic School in East Gosford. Traditionally, Year 6 students would visit Parliament House as part of their studies. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 overnight exclusions have been cancelled which meant the students of St Patrick's Catholic School were going to miss out. But the fantastic teachers didn't want the students to miss out on this rite of passage, Mister Speaker, so we brought Parliament to them! A week-long 'in-house excursion' involved the kids wearing mufti clothes, and virtually experiencing both NSW Parliament House and the Australian Parliament House. I was fortunate to meet the students face to face in the purpose-built L.A.R.C.. We spoke about how long NSW Parliament has been operating, as well as what it means to be a Member of Parliament, and then a very interesting Q & A session to finish. Thank you to the students and staff of St Patrick's Catholic School East Gosford.

### **ELSIE'S RETREAT CELEBRATION DINNER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker, oh what a night Saturday the 26th of September was! I had the pleasure of attending the Elsie's Retreat Celebration Dinner with Margret Pearce, Oana McBride and a number of supporters of the Elsie's Retreat project. Held at Magenta Shores, the night was a celebration thanking all who have supported the team over the last six years bring Elsie's dream to reality. Back in July, we reached the milestone of our regions first ever dedicated in-patient Palliative Care Unit, established at Gosford Hospital. For many families, including my own, Palliative Care is an incredibly sensitive issue. The least we can do as a community and as a Government is to create the best possible facilities in a hospital setting. This wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of the Margret and Alannah, and of course those others who continue to support these two wonderful women. I look forward to seeing the incredible work the team in orange will continue to do throughout our community, particularly with construction beginning soon on the Palliative Care Unit.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 19:48 until  
Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 12:00.**