



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday, 10 February 2021**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 10 February 2021

**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*]

*Visitors*

## VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge that Leila Abdallah and Bridget Sakr, who lost their children last year in a tragic car accident, are here in the gallery today with my consent, despite the current standing orders, to witness the Minister for Transport and Roads introduce the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Mr Speaker, I thank you for allowing both the Sakr and Abdallah families to be present in the public gallery. I think Leila is a couple of minutes away so I will reserve some special words I want to say to the families for her arrival.

*Bills*

## ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING OFFENCE) BILL 2021

### First Reading

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

### Second Reading Speech

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (09:49):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time. I cannot say that I am particularly pleased to have to introduce the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021, given its genesis and the reasons for it, but it is an important bill that is being introduced today. I note that Leila Abdallah has joined us in the public gallery. It is great that she is here along with Bridget Sakr. I acknowledge the Speaker for facilitating her being here in person this morning. A year ago this month four angels touched our nation's heart: Antony, Angelina, Sienna and Veronique. Their lives were cut tragically short by a driver who was under the effects of both alcohol and drugs. This bill is for Antony, Angelina, Sienna and Veronique and will forever be known as the Four Angels Law.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Road Transport Act 2013 to introduce a combined alcohol and drug-driving offence for drivers with prescribed concentrations of alcohol combined with the presence of a prescribed illicit drug. The bill introduces a new range of penalties attached to the offence designed to better deter this high-risk behaviour and to reduce the number of devastating crashes impacting on our community. The intention of the bill is to deter drivers from putting themselves and others at significant risk when driving with a mix of alcohol and prescribed illicit drugs in their system and to send a very clear and very loud message to the community that this high-risk behaviour will not be tolerated any further.

The bill provides for higher penalties for the combined offence to reflect the greater road safety risk created by offending drivers. The range of penalties includes higher fines as well as licence and vehicle sanctions for people convicted of the combined drink- and drug-driving offence. It expands the mandatory alcohol interlock order to the combined offence and requires offenders to undertake a drink- and drug-driving education and behaviour-change program. If we look at the reasons why an individual might engage in this behaviour we find that there are wider societal issues that we all must face. We are working through those issues as a Parliament and as a community, and we are now at a point where we know that it has a major impact when it flows through to someone behind the wheel of a car. There is no doubt that we have a lot of work to do in this regard.

Ms Leila Abdallah and Ms Bridget Sakr have touched the lives of so many of us, including the lives of Mr Jihad Dib and Ms Robyn Preston, who are both in the Chamber. Given the way in which our nation was touched by this tragedy, it would be a complete shame if we were not able to change the law in their honour and—as they have repeatedly taught all of us—bring about good and hope through our faith. I will continue to discuss the details of the bill but it is important to acknowledge our nation's four angels.

The impact of road trauma is real for so many in the community. The aim for us all—the Government, law enforcement, businesses, communities, families and individuals—should be to work together to do everything in our power to push the number of fatalities and serious injuries on New South Wales roads towards zero. My colleague Minister Toole and I, having come from the regions and having experienced as local members the impact of road trauma—people injured or hurt and loved ones lost—know that that cannot just be an aspiration; it has to be achieved. The advancements that we are seeing in innovation and technology will help us along the way.

The new offence in this legislation shows just how committed we all must be—including the Government—to making our roads the safest in the world. Last November I announced my intention to introduce this bill when I announced the saving lives accelerated package. This package introduced a range of measures to reduce persistent problems on our roads, such as combined drink and drug driving, which is part of the contents of this bill, and speeding, which the Government is targeting through changes to the mobile speed camera program. Recently, with bipartisan support, the mobile phone detection program was also introduced with the clear intention of sending a message to everybody that, when it comes to compliance and enforcement, the moment you back your car out of the driveway or you are behind the steering wheel of a car you can be caught speeding, with a mobile phone in your hand, drug driving and drink driving, or the combined offence—anywhere, anytime. There will be no more warning signs and no more giving notice. The moment you drive out of your driveway, if you are doing the wrong thing the authorities will be there to enforce the law.

The new drink- and drug-driving offence—or the Four Angels Law—is named after Antony, Angelina and Sienna Abdallah and their cousin, Veronique Sakr, who were killed in a crash in Oatlands in February last year. They were innocent. They were taking a walk to get some ice cream on a hot summer's day. We can all relate to that. The driver who hit them was three times over the alcohol limit and affected by drugs. No parent should ever have to experience what the Sakr and Abdallah families have experienced. No family should have to bury so many. As I indicated, the story broke my heart and it broke the hearts of so many across our State and country. I remember that night because a mutual friend of the Abdallah's, Heidi Morrison, visited me while I was on leave from the ministry because of the fires. I will never forget the impact that the accident had on Heidi. But from that moment on, despite whatever else was going on in the world, the whole country just stopped and reflected on how we could get this all so wrong. All of us have a responsibility to help each other out. As a result of what happened to those children, hearts were broken everywhere.

There is no doubt that politicians repeatedly say, "We have got to do everything we can to stop this." But government alone is not the answer. We all have a responsibility to our loved ones and to the people we know in our community—our friends and our family—to make sure that everybody does the right thing. When Minister Toole and I held a press conference and announced the legislation what both Leila and Bridget said that morning and how beautifully they spoke was quite telling. It is important that I share some of their words. I will touch on what Leila said that day as I think it is important. At the press conference Leila said:

No one deserves to die this way. No one deserves to die on the roads. Especially in the way we saw our kids to drugs and alcohol and speeding. We're all going to die of old age. But not in a car accident. Not on our roads. Our aim here today is that no other people have to go through the same heartache we did because no one deserves to die on our roads. It is something we have to wake up every day to. It is a constant pain that will never go. Eventually you still have to get up and live on. We've got other kids that need us. But if we can save lives then we are happy to help in any way.

Those heartbreaking words not only express how difficult this is for you both but also teach us all a very clear lesson. To Leila, Daniel, Bridget, Craig and Bob, we know you suffered. The degree of that suffering is unimaginable for so many of us. We have to make this legislation for all children who are killed by such senseless acts. There have been other accidents and other tragedies. I can put my hand on my heart and say that I wish they never happen again, but I know that they will. I just wish we could stop them. Anyone who has been involved in a car accident knows that it can happen in a split second and your whole life is turned upside down. I know from personal experience that it is just so quick. This is a law for our beautiful children—all of them—and for your four angels.

In 2018 the Government launched the Road Safety Plan 2021, which featured targeted and proven initiatives to address key areas of trauma and types of crashes occurring on New South Wales roads, including those involving drink and drug driving. As part of the Road Safety Plan 2021, penalties and licence sanctions for drink driving have been significantly enhanced, and Transport for NSW is developing an offenders drink- and drug-driving education strategy. This is underpinned by extensive random breath and drug testing conducted by the NSW Police Force. However, there remains a significant trauma problem and more can be done. In New South Wales between 2015 and 2019 there have been 101 serious casualty crashes involving drivers or riders with illegal levels of alcohol combined with prescribed illicit drug presence. These crashes resulted in the deaths of 98 people. These are not statistics; they are actual human beings who have unfortunately lost their lives.

A further 52 people were seriously injured in those 101 crashes. Serious injury is an understated issue across our community. If we think about the fact that close to 11,000 people end up in a hospital bed every year for at least one night or more, it shows that we can never understate the impact of road trauma or injuries. Eighty-five of those 101 crashes, or 84 per cent, involved drivers or riders with mid- or high-range alcohol levels. During 2015 to 2019 almost three-quarters, or 74 per cent, of fatalities and 58 per cent of serious injuries occurred on country roads. But as we know these fatalities occur not only in the country but also in suburban Sydney.

Given the impairing effects of alcohol on driving performance, we know that motorists with mid- or high-range alcohol levels are already putting the community at significant risk. Research has shown—a statistic that completely and utterly blows my mind—that the combination of drugs and alcohol increases the risk of a fatal crash by 23 times. Of the fatalities that occurred on our roads between 2017 and 2019, 17 per cent involved illegal levels of alcohol, 21 per cent involved illicit drug presence and 6 per cent involved a combination of the two. We all know that since the 1970s drink driving has been reduced significantly on our roads thanks to advancements in technology and innovations such as random breath testing. Despite the successes of the past, over recent years there has been no substantial reduction in the proportion of trauma involving drink or drug driving. Therefore, we need to continue to deter drivers from getting behind the wheel of a car when they have had alcohol or drugs, or a combination of both.

The current approach to deter this high-risk behaviour is based on deterrence theory, which highlights that drivers will avoid engaging in an offending behaviour if they fear the perceived consequences of that behaviour. Research evidence shows that to maximise deterrence the effectiveness of sanctions depends on three main factors: certainty of punishment, including the risk of detection and the probability of the penalties being applied; severity of the punishment, including the legal threat of sanctions and how they are imposed; and the swiftness of the punishment—that is, how quickly after the offence the punishment is applied. Essentially, if people believe they are likely to be caught and receive harsh and swiftly delivered punishment, they are less likely to commit an offence. The new combined offence addresses each of these factors.

Firstly, in relation to the certainty of punishment, police conduct millions of random breath tests each year, and this Government has committed to an additional 200,000 mobile drug tests each year. It will be standard practice for drivers who test positive for mid- or high-range alcohol levels at the roadside to now undergo a test for drug presence. The focus on mid- and high-range alcohol limits is due to the increased crash risk, as demonstrated in the New South Wales crash trauma data, for drivers who have consumed more alcohol. Not only that, drivers who test positive for lower levels of alcohol—that is, low, special and novice—will also be tested for drug presence if they have a previous combined offence. This is to target repeat offenders, and there are plenty of them. By targeting drug testing at drivers with mid- and high-range alcohol levels and all repeat offenders, we are concentrating resources on those drivers putting themselves and those who are innocent at most risk.

The second factor is severity of punishment. This bill proposes tougher penalties compared to those currently available for separate drink- and prescribed illicit drug-driving offences. For example, maximum fines are increased and minimum automatic licence disqualification periods are increased. Acknowledging the seriousness of the offence, penalties for second and subsequent offences are around double that of the first combined drink- and prescribed illicit drug-driving offence. In relation to the swiftness of punishment, as I mentioned, there is a whole penalty framework that may apply to a driver who is charged with the new combined offence. Having your licence suspended immediately is one of these. Research has shown immediate licence suspension to be a more effective deterrent to drink driving than suspensions that are applied later on. We know from Victorian research that a high rate of drink-driving offending occurs between detection and the start of a licence sanction, which is why we expanded immediate licence suspensions for drink-driving offences a couple of years ago. That will continue to apply.

I turn now to how this process is going to work. The combined offence follows similar processes to those currently in place for drink driving and drug driving in New South Wales. A driver who is breath-tested and returns a mid- or high-range alcohol level will then be asked to undertake a drug test. In addition, if a driver returns a low-range alcohol level and has a previous offence, they are also going to undertake a drug test. It is important to note that police will not be requiring all drivers who undertake breath-testing to then take a drug test. We will be focusing on those with the highest risk: those with mid- and high-range alcohol levels, and those with low alcohol levels where they had a previous offence. As with everything in this space, we will keep constant monitoring and review processes in place through the Centre for Road Safety to see how this is going. So it may change. In fact, I suspect it may change down the track.

The drug test is designed to test for the active components of prescribed illicit drugs that can impair the skills required for safe driving. It tests for tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, from cannabis; methylenedioxymethamphetamine, or MDMA or ecstasy; methamphetamine, otherwise known as speed or ice; and cocaine—four drugs defined in the legislation as prescribed illicit drugs. The drug test is a three-stage process.

The first stage is a roadside drug test, which acts as a screening test. The second stage is a roadside confirmation test. The third stage involves the roadside drug test results being sent for further confirmatory testing at a laboratory. Over 95 per cent of positive roadside drug tests are confirmed as positive at the laboratory. This is different to the breath-testing process for alcohol, where breath analysis devices can provide a conclusive alcohol breath reading at the roadside or police station. I would hope in the future that innovation and technology will obviously speed up this time frame.

If the roadside drug test result indicates the presence of a prescribed illicit drug, the driver will not be charged with the combined offence until confirmation from laboratory test results. Regardless of the result of the roadside drug test, the driver will be charged with a drink-driving offence. This is consistent with the existing process whereby a driver with mid- or high-range alcohol levels, or lower range alcohol levels if they have a previous conviction, can be charged with a drink-driving offence on the day. The person will have their licence suspended until they have the matter heard at court—ensuring that the driver is off the road until the matter is heard. That is certainly where the community's expectation should be. This is consistent with the current process for mid- and high-range drink driving and repeat offences.

As I have just explained, the swiftness of the action is a key part in deterring drivers from getting behind the wheel if they have been drinking and/or taking drugs. This is consistent with the current situation for drink-driving offences where licence suspensions already apply. If the lab results confirm the presence of prescribed illicit drugs, a new charge for a combined offence will be issued. This new charge must be issued within 60 days. In reality, the drug results are typically confirmed within two to six weeks. The original drink-driving offence will remain on the driver's charge sheet, but if the driver is subsequently convicted of the combined offence then this original offence will be withdrawn.

The licence suspension will continue until the court date even in the unlikely event that one of the charges is withdrawn before the court. The combined offence charge should not come as a surprise to the driver. They will have been informed at the roadside by the NSW Police Force that this was a likely outcome, given the results of their roadside drug test at the time. While most testing will occur at the roadside as part of the random breath-testing program, drivers can also be tested for alcohol and drugs and charged with the combined offence following a crash. Again, this will operate as consistent with current practice.

I turn now to subsequent offences. This bill sets out what is considered a first offence, and what is considered a second or subsequent offence, in relation to the new combined offence. A first offence is considered to be the first time a driver has committed a combined drink- and drug-driving offence. If they have previously committed a separate drink-driving or drug-driving offence within the preceding five years, but not a previous combined offence, then that driver will receive a first combined offence penalty. A second or subsequent combined offence will apply to drivers who have received a first combined offence within the previous five years in New South Wales or an equivalent offence from another jurisdiction within the previous five years if it is noted on their New South Wales record. It is important to note that we are not proposing to reach out to other States or require them to inform New South Wales of offences. Again, this is an area which I am happy to take up with the national body of State, Territory and Federal transport and roads Ministers at the Transport Infrastructure Council meeting.

The purpose of clarifying a second or subsequent offence is to maintain the principle of applying higher penalties for second or subsequent offences. This is important to deterring repeat offending and is a current feature of road transport law. If a driver has received a first combined offence and subsequently, within five years, receives a separate drink-driving or drug-driving offence, then that is considered to be a second or subsequent drink-driving or drug-driving offence, but not a second combined offence. I will talk a bit about the penalty framework for the combined offence. I acknowledge the Attorney General, who was of course involved in this process, as Attorneys General are always involved. Building on the existing penalty framework—for separate drink-driving offences and drug offences—the intention is to increase deterrence and send a clear message to drivers that putting themselves and the innocent at significant increased risk by mixing alcohol and prescribed illicit drugs will not be accepted or tolerated.

While the penalties are designed to be harsher, they are based on the existing penalty framework for drink- and drug-driving offences. The penalty framework includes fines, licence disqualification, alcohol interlocks, vehicle sanctions, prison term and requirement to attend an education and behaviour change program. All of these penalties and requirements currently exist for other separate drink- or drug-driving offences. However, in recognition of the increased risk of combining alcohol and drugs, the maximum penalties for the combined offence will be higher. In fact, they are more than the combination of separate drink- and drug-driving offences, reflecting the seriousness and increased risk of combining drugs and alcohol when behind the wheel.

For example, the maximum fine for a first time mid-range drink-driving offence is currently \$2,200. The maximum fine for a first time mid-range offence for the new combined offence is \$3,300. The maximum fine for

a second mid-range combined offence is \$6,600. Similarly, while the minimum licence disqualification period for a first mid-range drink-driving offence is six months, the minimum licence disqualification period would be 12 months for a mid-range first combined offence, increasing to two years for a second mid-range combined offence, and three years for a second or subsequent high-range combined offence. You would think by then someone would learn, but it does not always happen in practice in our community. Acknowledging the seriousness of the offence, penalties for second and subsequent combined drink- and drug-driving offences are around double that of a first combined offence. This is important to deter repeat offending and is a current feature of road transport law.

In relation to disadvantaged groups, and this area is a focus of the Attorney General, we have made a conscious effort to develop a penalty framework that deters offending through significant penalties but, of course, the Government knows that there are disadvantaged groups across our community. We have worked collectively across government to come up with this framework, including through a justice impact assessment and in consultation with the Attorney General, to propose what is a measured response. There will be no change for first time low-, novice- and special-range alcohol offenders who since 20 May 2019 can be served with swift and certain penalties including an on-the-spot fine and an immediate licence suspension. They can also be separately prosecuted for prescribed illicit drug presence. Members will recall that in 2019 the Government moved away from low-range going before the courts to an immediate on-the-spot licence suspension.

In addition, existing mechanisms are in place to provide assistance to disadvantaged groups and those in the community from lower socio-economic demographics. The Driver Licensing Access Program provides resources and support in a number of ways, including debt negotiation and management. The interlock program provides a concession rate as well as a severe financial hardship scheme, which provides short-term assistance to participants—up to 100 per cent of the interlock costs. The reality is it costs a couple of thousand dollars to have the interlock system applied to a car. This program is in place to assist with those costs. Courts have discretion to impose appropriate penalties through prescribed aspects of the available sanctions, based on a person's circumstances. We will monitor the impact of the combined offence on all groups of offenders, including those from disadvantaged groups.

In 2018, as part of the drink- and drug-driving reforms, we extended the vehicle sanctions regime to include certain drink-driving offences. In New South Wales vehicle sanctions—such as numberplate confiscation, vehicle impoundment or forfeiture—are usually applied for three months and involve numberplate confiscation. Vehicle sanctions may be applied up to 60 days after the offence. This is to allow sufficient time for the drug-testing results to be confirmed by the lab testing. This bill amends the definition of "sanctionable offences" to include first offence high-range combined offences and all second and subsequent combined offences. Vehicle sanctions will not apply to first time mid-range combined offences. Removing access to a vehicle is a proven method for dealing with recidivist road safety offenders and may be applied alongside licence suspensions.

In relation to the licence disqualification, alcohol interlock and education program, the penalty framework is not just about harsher penalties to punish those who have put themselves and the innocent at risk by mixing alcohol and prescribed illicit drugs. It also aims to sustain this behaviour change by supporting anyone who is caught to make better decisions in the future. Evidence shows that in-vehicle technologies such as alcohol interlocks are effective at preventing drink driving. Further, research also shows that effective behaviour change programs have the ability to change people's attitudes to alcohol, drugs and driving, with the clear aim of reducing recidivism. So separately, interlocks and behaviour intervention are effective. But an approach that uses both together, combined with penalty sanctions, provides for a systemic approach to reducing the risk of offending over a sustained period, which is why it is important that we take this combined approach to people caught for the new combined offence.

The bill requires that all offenders convicted of the new combined offence undertake an alcohol interlock for a period. This is consistent with existing drink-driving offences whereby interlock orders apply to mid- and high-range alcohol first offences and all second and subsequent offences. The time periods specified on the Alcohol Interlock Program for the combined offence are the same with the interlock time periods for a drink-driving offence. That is, a first time mid-range offence will have a minimum interlock period of 12 months, a second mid-range offence will have a minimum interlock period of two years and a second high-range offence will have a minimum interlock period of four years. Similarly, the processes and exemptions for interlocks are entirely consistent with current interlock requirements. This bill does not change the time periods or interlock requirements; it simply expands interlock orders to people convicted of this new combined offence.

An interlock is an electronic breath-testing device linked to the ignition system of a car, motorcycle or heavy vehicle the offender drives and only permits the vehicle to start if the driver passes a breath test. A person who receives an interlock order and does not enter the interlock program is disqualified from holding a licence for a period of five years from the date of his or her conviction. Except in limited circumstances, it is mandatory

for a court to make an interlock order on conviction for an interlock offence. Offenders are required to complete an up-front disqualification period and a minimum period on the program which requires an interlock.

In 2019 Transport for NSW undertook a process evaluation of the mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program. The results found that having an interlock licence has assisted many program participants to maintain work and meet their social and family commitments compared to disqualification. Interlock programs are in place in all Australian jurisdictions and, while they may vary in scope, design and requirements, they are designed to help drink drivers separate drinking and driving, and build on evidence that they are effective in preventing people from driving with illegal levels of alcohol. Over 20,000 interlock licences have been issued in New South Wales since February 2015 to offenders who were convicted of high-range, mid-range and repeat drink-driving offences, with over 6,500 licences issued in 2020 alone. This is all great; government can go and put all those penalties in place, but it must back this in with appropriate education of the community so they know where they stand and understand the consequences of their actions.

Some members will remember that when we introduced the drink- and drug-driving reforms in 2018 through the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Penalties and Other Sanctions) Act, Parliament passed provisions for a new education and behaviour-change program. These provisions will commence once the education program is completed and related regulatory amendments are made. A requirement to attend this program will apply to the offenders of the new combined offence. This will align with our strong position to separate drinking and drug taking from driving. The bill makes some administrative amendments to provisions in that Act to change references to "the Authority" to "Transport for NSW".

A person is charged with a relevant "refusal" type offence if he or she refuses or fails to submit to a breath analysis or provide a blood sample after a failed breath test. Such behaviour demands serious measures in response. People who drink and/or take prescribed illicit drugs and drive cannot be allowed to escape the consequences of their actions by refusing to comply with the directions of police officers or authorised sample takers. The penalty framework for refusal offences is already in place and includes fines, licence disqualification, alcohol interlock orders and possible prison terms.

Whilst I have gone through the components of the legislation for the lawyers, the courts and the legislators, it is important that we reflect on why this is called the Four Angels Law. By supporting a penalty framework and making significant progress in tackling the problems of combined drink and drug driving in New South Wales, we do not want to see a repeat of what has occurred. It is about reducing the trauma and the long-term consequences that we see associated with car crashes across our community. Every individual is different; every individual makes decisions and choices. Unfortunately, 12 months ago two individuals made a choice which had a very powerful and long-term consequence for so many.

We obviously have to set targets. Targets get set because ultimately we need to be able to measure the effectiveness of public policy. We saw the setting of a target of a 30 per cent reduction in road trauma across our community by 2021. We are going to see the Commonwealth engage with the States to set a new target by 2030 and we have in place a strategy to achieve an absolute target of zero trauma on our roads by 2056. If you look at the advent of autonomy and what is happening in the technology space with motor vehicles and the fact that we now have, in essence, a car that can drive itself—I sat in one a couple of years ago; a fully automated car, not one with driver assist and that type of technology—there is no doubt that we will see this target achieved hopefully much more quickly than we anticipate.

Having both Leila and Bridget here this morning, it is important to reflect on the fact that I can introduce in the Chamber today a whole bunch of penalties and include in this law a combined offence to send a message to everybody that the decision you make can have this consequence, but what has been most telling in the past 12 months relates to a simple word—forgiveness. I will never forget the launch of i4give Day a couple of weeks ago—a day dedicated to our four angels and a day of commemoration of the anniversary of their passing. More importantly, I know that we all learn from each other every day as life goes by. The intent of that day—to be able to find within one's heart and faith the ability to forgive—is something that will make us stronger as individuals and strengthen us as a community.

I do not like to hear the word "tolerate" in our community. If we think about the word "tolerate" we discover it means that a person has a certain viewpoint but he or she has to hide it. We talk about tolerance but, if we think about it, we should be talking about forgiveness instead. We should just do away with the word "tolerate" and insert forgiveness in every element of our lives. i4give Day is not just about that day; it is about every day, every minute, every hour and it is about us. As parents, if we reflect on what we are seeing from the Abdallah and Sakr families, we discover it is the ability to set free and the freedom of forgiveness. The freedom element in forgiveness is really important.

We have all learnt from this tragedy the need for love over hate. I say to Leila and Bridget that their ability to forgive is unbelievable. I wish I could do that—I bet we all do—but they have shown that they can. Danny has indicated to me that an element is now starting to creep into some of the judicial processes where victims are forgiving of the person who may have committed a heinous crime against them or their loved one. We are actually starting to see that peace within those who have been hurt the most. I guess that is the way the Lord works. This morning it is important to place on record Danny's words at i4give Day. Danny Abdallah, the father of three of the angels, said:

I forgive myself and I forgive the offender for the greater good of my family.

If we think about those words we realise that they are moving not only for individuals but also for society. Danny went on to say:

What path do I take? The path of destruction or the path of construction? Do I react and numb this pain or respond and face this pain? I choose to respond.

I hope that Danny can see, as both families can see, that this is about responding. And guess what? We are not finished. There is a lot more to do because, as we know, introducing laws is responding to a community behaviour, and the community does not always respond accordingly. There will always be young adolescent men, in particular, who make terrible decisions—and in this case decisions made well before someone got behind the wheel of a car. This comes back to the broader society issue that we all must face, that we all have to lift. There are too many drugs, too much alcohol, too much pain and suffering, too much trauma, and obviously we have to start to tackle that. This is one component of it. We will build on the four angels—the way that they are looking at us and their expectations of us all, which is their right.

I commend the bill to all members. I am pretty confident that it has bipartisan support, but no doubt in due course my friends opposite will show that. I thank both families for being here. I am sorry that the bill is very legalistic but that can happen when you introduce legislation. There is a very clear message out of today: Everyone in our community must continue to respect our four angels and what they stand for, and the beautiful work of your wonderful families.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I acknowledge the Abdallah and Sakr families, who are in the public gallery.

**Debate adjourned.**

### *Budget*

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2020-2021**

**Debate resumed from 9 February 2021.**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (10:33):** I am delighted to continue highlighting some of the important projects that are being delivered right across the Dubbo electorate and recognising that they are making a huge difference to confidence in our regions. This budget is both generous and responsible, and it is certainly having a positive impact across my electorate. Earlier I mentioned Wellington. Wellington PCYC received \$7,000 for air conditioning to be installed in the boxing shed. That project will ensure the club can provide a safe and comfortable environment for the youth of the town who use the facility regularly. We know that Wellington is a wonderful town with lots of potential. Yes, there have been some problems—particularly when it comes to youth—but this project is only one of the ways that we are looking to address that. Another one is through the Wiradjuri Wheels program, for which we provided \$45,000 last year.

The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and I listened to stakeholders involved in the program, which sees kids picked up from school and transported on the bus to after-school activities, whether they be at the PCYC or the fantastic new Wellington Aquatic Centre, which was rebuilt through the Stronger Communities Fund. We were all together and we watched Lance, the bus driver, head off from our meeting in Cameron Park. He returned a short time later with a bus full of very excited kids, who were off to do swimming lessons and other activities at the pool. I am not quite sure where those kids may have been that day if it was not for the program, but thanks to Wiradjuri Wheels they now have routine and mentors and, most importantly, they are not at risk of being on their own or wandering the streets.

Last year at Trangie we spent \$12,500 to provide filtration for the school's bubblers so that the students have good-quality drinking water. At Brocklehurst—another small village—we spent \$80,000 so that a playground and recreation area could be constructed for the community. That is really important; it is a small community and one that has lots of families and young children. In Mumbil we resurfaced the school's oval with synthetic surfacing, to the tune of \$60,000. It was fantastic to revisit the school on a rainy day, kick a soccer ball around with the kids and enjoy what they are now enjoying. A pretty ordinary piece of dirt that was mostly gravel

is now beautifully green, thanks to the new synthetic surface. In Mudgee and Gulgong the Government has given almost \$55,000 to preschools as part of the Quality Learning Environments program.

There are lots of different things happening as part of that program, including floor and tap replacements, security fencing replacement, solar panel installation and the development of multipurpose spaces. They are not big money projects but they mean a lot to the people who live in those towns and use those facilities, so they are really important. Earlier I mentioned the impact that drought had been having before the bushfires and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that huge impact, I will mention some of the incredible projects that the Government has funded across the region, at Mudgee, Narromine, Wellington and Dubbo. The emergency drought relief package provided \$30 million for groundwater exploration, new bores and a recycled water pipeline that is evident around the Dubbo CBD, where purple pipes are basically everywhere. The pipeline will take re-used water from the treatment plant, which is some way out of town, and make it available for parks and gardens throughout the Dubbo area, therefore reducing the need to use potable water.

The \$30 million from that program has been really well used. The same drought relief package provided \$2 million for bore extensions and exploration at Narromine. The existing bore was deepened and a filtration system was added. Out of Wellington at Burrendong Dam there was an amazing project to upgrade the power, first of all, and to access remnant water that had never been accessed before. That project came about during the absolute height of the drought, when Burrendong Dam was down to about 1.5 per cent. A small cofferdam was built and pumps were installed on floats in that cofferdam so water that was otherwise not available through the outlet valve could be accessed. That was an incredible project. Thankfully, it was not needed, per se, because the rains started to come and the dams started to fill. But the good news is that \$7.7 million worth of work is now mothballed; all of the equipment is stored on site and the power upgrade has been done. If we are ever in the same predicament again, the gear is there and it can be put into action very quickly.

Mudgee received \$1.1 million to upgrade the filtration plant, which has been really important. Some of the stimulus that has come out of the drought—and we have seen a lot of stimulus flowing for COVID-19, as well—is around infrastructure. Timbregongie House at Narromine received \$1 million to enable infrastructure like roads and power, to support the council and to start developing more independent living, which is a fantastic opportunity for Narromine. At Mudgee, Glen Willow Regional Sports Complex received \$10 million for more sporting fields and clubhouses. When I visited there a couple of months ago the progress was phenomenal. There are more grounds for soccer and cricket, and the clubhouses look amazing. Glen Willow is growing as a sporting precinct, as is the indoor multi-sports facility at Dubbo. That is still in the planning stages, but it has now been funded. Basketball is straightaway the main winner out of that project. The indoor multi-sports facility in Dubbo will also include a brand-new PCYC and will provide fantastic opportunities for both tennis and rugby union. There will be more on that to come.

Stimulus has been really important in the budget, as has education, with the Stronger Country Communities Fund providing money for the education zone at Wellington Caves. In recent years those caves have really come ahead in leaps and bounds. A lot of input from the State Government has provided incredible resources worth \$400,000 to develop a really exciting way for schoolchildren in particular to interact with the caves and to encourage more tourism in Wellington. The Billy Dunn Oval at Gulgong received \$122,000 to start upgrading female change rooms. Some 50 per cent of this year's Stronger Country Communities Fund will focus on female change rooms and upgrades, which is really exciting to look forward to.

The Community Building Partnership program has been really successful. On 19 December last year I opened a brand-new facility for the Orana Residents of Indian Sub-Continental Heritage, or ORISCON. That community group had been looking for somewhere to gather for some time. ORISCON received \$25,000 through the Community Building Partnership program and it now has a beautifully converted room of its own thanks to a disused building that was provided by Public Works. As I mentioned, I opened that facility last December. It is now available for the group to hold meetings, to store gear and for women and children to use the space for different types of programs, which has been really popular.

The \$46,000 Dubbo Harness Racing Club canteen upgrade has also been really popular. The club has been looking to do that upgrade for many years and in 2021 it will be one of big upgrades that will be happening. That will make a real difference to fans of harness racing around the Dubbo area. There are so many other things to mention and, as I have already mentioned, the COVID-19 stimulus has started to kick things along. The Dubbo Turf Club has stable upgrades coming. Lots of subsidies have been provided to clubs through the Local Sport Grant Program, including the Narromine Netball Club, the Wellington Swimming Club and the Trangie Magpies Rugby League Football Club. During COVID funding was provided to those clubs that were basically unable to play but were looking to run small competitions and around \$15,000 went to pay for jerseys for people who unfortunately were unable to pay for them because they could not get sponsors.

It is fair to say that I am a big fan of the budget that has been delivered. It looks like 2021 will be a stellar year, particularly for regional New South Wales through those infrastructure projects. Other projects that deliver for people every day of their lives continue to be rolled out. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (10:42):** Each year after the budget is handed down members have the opportunity to talk both about how it has impacted on their individual electorates and also on what may hopefully be included in the next budget by looking ahead through the crystal ball. There was some good news in the budget for the electorate of Wyong. Funding was provided to start the brand-new primary school in Warnervale near Porters Creek: almost \$15 million was provided for that \$38 million project. I drove past the other day and the school project is well underway—all of the earthwork is being done at the moment. The Warnervale Public School that Labor opened in 2009 now has eight demountables, so the new school will take a lot of pressure off it. Last night in a private members' statement I mentioned that the focus should now move to secondary education because Warnervale is a huge growth area with new housing estates being finished and started every day. In fact, it is quite incredible how quickly those houses are being constructed.

Porters Creek Public School is good news. While the school is not very close to Porters Creek itself, which is a little further over, Porters Creek certainly has a historical presence in the area and is an appropriate name given that we already have a Warnervale Public School. To call the school either East Warnervale or Warnervale West may not have been very creative, so the community formed a committee and came up with the name Porters Creek Public School. So that is good news. It is well underway. We are also very happy that there is \$111 million as part of the \$200 million upgrade of Wyong Public Hospital. There is a nice big crane there and the construction is well underway. The community is very happy about that construction, which includes a new car park. We have fought a campaign to keep the car parking free, because Wyong residents have never before had to pay for car parking. We are still waiting to see what will happen in that respect, but certainly the new building is welcome. Later I will talk a little more about funding for health, but I wanted to summarise the infrastructure funding that is in the budget.

There is a little bit of money—\$1.6 million—for upgrades to social housing assets. I received a letter from Denis O'Rourke, who heads up the St Vincent de Paul Society's social housing committee on the Central Coast. Denis was my science teacher at school, so I have known him for a long time. He wrote to say that although the money is welcome for people who already have housing—like most local members, we have a lot of issues with the condition of some social housing properties, particularly older ones and particularly with health issues relating to leaking roofs and things like that—the society is still concerned that the waiting list for social housing on the Central Coast still had around 3,004 people last financial year. He made a plea for more social housing to be built. As I said, I welcome the money for maintenance but I recognise that there very much is a need for new properties to become available. I recognise the work of St Vincent de Paul Society to push such an important issue.

Moving on to other projects, there is the first tranche of funding—\$4.5 million—for the new commuter car park at Tuggerah railway station. Member for The Entrance, David Mehan, and I have been running a long campaign. The last upgrade at the station was in 2010 under a Labor Government, when there was a brand-new car park and upgrades to the station. The lifts that were promised back then, which were started and then stopped, have now been recommitted to. There is \$1.5 million to build those lifts—10 years later, but we will take it. They are very important for the community. Tuggerah is a big centre for business. A Westfield, the Tuggerah Shopping Super Centre and a lot of businesses are located around that area, so having that accessibility is really important. As I said, there is \$4.5 million for the car park and \$1.5 million for starting the lifts—or restarting the lifts, given that they actually had dug the holes previously and then filled them in and are now coming back to start again.

In that funding there is also \$4.2 million to continue planning for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway through Wyong town centre, which is a really important project in my electorate. The funding since 2010 is around \$32 million for planning and land purposes. It was good to report to the community that some of the demolition that is required has finally begun. People are still concerned because they are not seeing work on the road, but two sites have been cleared in preparation for that project to begin. I will be writing to the roads Minister because under the Regional Growth Fund there is what is called the Wyong Town Centre "test". Some \$16 million is allocated for it. I am not sure what that means, but it is connected to that road project. That is hopefully a precursor to actually starting construction, but I will get that confirmed. That has certainly been on our list of major projects.

When I was elected we had to fight for the upgrade to Wyong Hospital, the road through Wyong and the Warnervale Town Centre. All those projects have now begun, are halfway through completion or are about to start. As the local member and on behalf of our community, I am very happy about that. We also got \$239,000 for a new boat ramp at Tacoma South. I went out there to see the boat ramp and it looks really nice. Interestingly, the locals are a little perplexed because they did not know they needed a boat ramp, but it looks good. They are wondering about it. It has lights, a little car park and so on on the river. The locals never asked for it but they are

happy it is there. I have a boat, so I might go down and try it out one day. If I had been asked, I would have suggested another place to put a boat ramp. Anyway, they put it there so there we go.

We also received some welcome money under the Housing Acceleration Fund for the Warnervale Town Centre water and sewer. We cannot build a town centre until we have the water and sewer in place. That infrastructure is vital. There was \$8.5 million for that. We also received a bit over \$6.8 million for the upgrade of the Mardi Water Treatment Plant because a new Mardi to Warnervale pipeline is currently under construction to add in those new suburbs. We have to upgrade the water treatment plant as well in order to push water up into those new areas. I recognise that funding was received for the Central Coast hockey facility. An amount of \$639,000 fixed the second hockey field there and turned it into a full water field. They will now be able to host things like masters and youth competitions. They are very happy as they had been looking to get that done for a long time.

The old sand-based field had been patched so many times there was always the risk that when the ball rolled along and hit one of the patches it would flick up, hit someone and cause injury. That is a really good outcome. As I said, there is a range of really important funding for the Wyong electorate—the new school, the upgrade to the hospital, social housing money to fix existing residences, the Tuggerah railway station car park and lifts, and also funding for the road through the Wyong Town Centre. I certainly acknowledge that is a good outcome for Wyong. I have always acknowledged the money that we have gotten through budgets. We are a growth area. When we are in government the Wyong electorate receives a lot of money and when we are not in government the electorate receives a lot of money.

I acknowledge that both sides understand the importance of the community there and that my electorate is taking a lot of the new housing and population growth on the Central Coast and helping meet the targets there. As well as raising the social housing issue, I have been contacted in recent times—it is a complex matter for governments—about getting the balance right between building infrastructure and providing services within that infrastructure. It is very difficult. On the coast we have had an upgrade to Wyong Hospital, which is underway, and an upgrade to Gosford Hospital. Yesterday both the Premier and the health Minister referred to those upgrades. I was not going to mention them in this speech but they provoked me to do so. They tried to justify the fact that on the Central Coast we got no money from the bushfire fund by saying, "But you got money for your hospitals." The two are not related; they are different funds for different purposes.

The staffing and service levels at both of those hospitals need to be addressed. It is great having new buildings, but buildings are for making people well and providing services. I highlight the fact that presentation numbers to the emergency departments [EDs] at both hospitals are unprecedented. With our population growth, we statistically have both an older population—one of the oldest populations in the State—and one of the youngest populations in the State. We have the fourth largest Aboriginal population in the State and we have the largest Aboriginal youth population in the State. We have a whole lot of complex issues and both of our EDs are stretched to capacity in terms of staff being able to cope. There are chronic staffing shortages at both hospitals.

This morning I was informed by text message by people I know at one of those hospitals that many shifts are routinely left unfilled due to high vacancies. Keeping vacancies unfilled is a business model to claw back the money lost due to the inability to perform elective surgery—which made the hospitals money—because of COVID. The hospitals have a policy of not filling vacancies to save money but it is affecting the staff and the patients. Yesterday I interjected on the Treasurer—and I got in trouble from the Speaker for doing so—that our nurses are literally going home crying at the end of their shifts because they cannot do their job and are so stressed. A nurse told me on the weekend that she was responsible for 14 patients in her unit by herself because they are not backfilling vacancies. She felt so guilty because she literally could not get to all the patients during her shift.

Another nurse told me the problem is that staff are so tired because they are being asked to work double shifts and so on to fill in because there are issues around unfilled vacancies. The local health district is saving money by cutting nursing hours and removing shifts on wards. Again, that increases the pressure on existing staff members. The restrictions they face cause conflicts between the nursing staff trying to do their jobs and the needs of patients. Both hospitals have not had an appropriate increase to funded beds despite the redevelopments. This is hard. It is nice to build big hospitals but if you do not fund the beds to go into the hospitals and staff them then all you have are nice buildings where staff cannot do their jobs.

As I said, the member for The Entrance and I were at the launch of a Parkrun in Tuggerah on Saturday morning when a nurse came up to us. She said, "This isn't the right place but I have got to tell you what is going on. We are not allowed to speak so I am not going to tell you my name." She spent the next half hour telling us what is going on. She said the coast is experiencing greater acuity, with patients both sicker and older. That is putting pressure on the whole system. The use of unfunded and unstaffed beds means that nurses are taking a bigger patient load than is safe. Sometimes members on this side of the House get into trouble from the Speaker for calling out but that is the frustration we feel. That is the message people are sending us. This is the only forum

we have to challenge what is being said. Yesterday it really did upset me when the Premier and the health Minister said, "What are you complaining about? You got a new hospital." The reality is that they are great buildings and we appreciate it. At the start of my speech I acknowledged the money that is being spent, but there must be a balance between the new buildings and actually staffing them properly. The brand new Gosford Hospital is now putting patients in corridors and lounge rooms until they find a bed. They literally have bed block because they do not have the funding to provide the number of beds that are needed, so they are putting patients into corridors and lounge rooms.

I heard notice of a motion this morning from the member for Wallsend saying that they have had to call down ambulances from the Hunter to help out at the Central Coast. Every single ambulance on the Central Coast is at the hospitals and they cannot transfer patients into the wards because there is a blockage. They are having to take resources from the Hunter because every Central Coast resource is locked up in this system. The push from the Government is to get surgeries and waitlists down, but without investing in post-care or primary care, which adds even more pressure. The surgeries go through, but once the surgeries are over the patients go back to the wards and do not have the support that they need to do what they want.

There are inadequate mental health beds across the State. I have heard stories of patients being admitted to mental health hospitals and they run out of room, so they let them out at 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m. One young fellow's dad came in absolutely distraught because the hospital did not wait for him to come to get his son. They let him out and he immediately went onto the highway out the front of the hospital and tried to jump in front of cars. This is difficult. We had similar problems, but it is really how we get the right balance of providing the necessary services, particularly in growth areas. Finally, a nurse said that at the moment the hospitals focus on budget over clinical care. She was finding that really hard to deal with. [*Extension of time*]

I was not going to talk about that. If members go back through my contribution to the budget debate, they will see that I focus as much as I can on the positives, but those comments yesterday really got me thinking. I had to respond on behalf of those fantastic frontline health workers who are taking this pressure to the point where they are literally having nervous breakdowns. They want to do the best job they can, but they feel they are not being supported in that role. That brings me to the next issue that I am really upset about—a maternity ward at Wyong Hospital—which we fought for as a community many years ago. We built it in government. I acknowledge that we had trouble finding obstetricians, so they put in place a midwifery-led model that was recognised as being world class. The midwifery model is very popular because it is a whole-of-care model. It starts before the birth, continues during the birth and follows up after the birth. The mothers and families involved in that program cannot speak highly enough about it, to the point where some people had two or three children through the program.

I received a message last week from a constituent who informed me that the maternity ward had been closed because it was being used as a COVID ward. We understand that there has been a pandemic and I did not criticise that. We had to make sure that the resources were available. But I have now been told that it looks like the maternity ward will not reopen and is now being used as a surgical ward. That is devastating for all of the families in the northern part of the Central Coast, who now have to go to Gosford for births. We will be highlighting this issue over the coming weeks, but it was a fantastic maternity ward. It had the best facilities, including baths in which to have water births, but now it looks likely that it will not reopen and will be closed permanently. There were issues associated with the intensive care unit not being up to standard if there was a difficult birth that could not be catered for, and the mother had to be moved to the maternity ward at the Gosford Hospital. We accepted that but the new redevelopment was supposed to upgrade the ICU to the appropriate standard so that births could again occur at Wyong.

On a number of occasions I have met with midwives and mothers who have been through the transfer program and they are absolutely devastated. They cannot see the reason for it. It is better for mothers to have their babies at their nearby hospital. They consider the decision to revert to the Gosford Hospital a retrograde step. They are not saying that the maternity ward should become a fully-fledged ward similar to that in the Gosford Hospital; rather, they are saying that the midwifery-led model is such a good model that it is almost criminal for it to be stopped. I state for the record that the Opposition's intention is to fight for the maternity facility at Wyong to be utilised for its intended purpose, and we will support those midwives and mothers in their campaign to make that happen. I think that is really important.

As I have said, that is a population growth area. The Wyong maternity ward also serves the electorates of the member for Swansea, the member for The Entrance and the member for Lake Macquarie. We have people who come from Morisset and other areas farther north. The Wyong maternity ward is an absolutely vital resource that must be properly funded and operated for the benefit of a community that thousands and thousands of new people will move to. I will expand in greater detail the comments I made yesterday about the provision of secondary education. As I said last night, I understand that three possibilities are on the table. One is a new high school, one is a senior college at the Wadalba Community School and the third option is to adjust boundaries at

existing schools to accommodate the population increase. The third option is obviously the one the community is not enamoured of because parents want their children to go to school in their local area and not to move to Gorokan or Wyong.

The option of the senior college at Wadalba has merit. It should be seriously considered because the site has sufficient land and opportunity. Having a senior college would bring Wadalba into line with The Entrance, which has the Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College that offers years 11 and 12, and with the southern part of the Central Coast, which has the Brisbane Water Secondary College that offer years 10, 11 and 12. They are great educational facilities and it would be great to have facilities of an equivalent standard in the northern part of the Central Coast. I have a teaching background and I am a little torn deciding on the option of a brand-new high school because I believe that a new high school has to have the sufficient numbers of students to sustain course offerings. I am not confident that a brand-new high school would have sufficient numbers currently, and consequently the community would have to wait quite a while before that would be the best option.

I support the option of a senior college at Wadalba. It is the option that will cost less than the cost of a brand-new high school. The Wadalba Community School is unique because it currently is the only school on the Central Coast that offers kindergarten to year 12. It already has K-6 and then years 7 to 12 on site. It would be fantastic to have K-6 and years 7 to 12 in the current facility, which would allow for increases in the student population, and then a new facility for years 11 and 12, which could be a really good purpose-built facility that could share other facilities, such as the library and sporting fields, and offer some really good subject choices.

That is probably my preference, but the community is a little bit torn and does not know 100 per cent what is the best option. I ask the department and the Government to sit down with the community and start a dialogue because at the moment they are hearing nothing. I know there is talk behind the scenes, but certainly Sharryn Brownlee and the Central Coast P&C are interested in this issue and have been advocating for it. I have been advocating for it. The principal at Wadalba is certainly keen to have discussions about it. It would be great if there were forums. At the moment all people see is that in its current form Wadalba is becoming more and more crowded, and they are frustrated that no other options are on the table. I call on the Minister to look at that matter seriously.

As I said, new estates are opening up virtually every single day and we need to look at these things because there is a time lapse between when you start talking about it, putting plans together and getting construction underway. Even if we start talking about it tomorrow, it could be two or three years before we are up to the stage where they are able to start construction. That is my report on the budget. Hopefully the budget will allocate more money for the road through Wyong particularly and we will find out what that \$16 million is. Hopefully it will pay for a few shovels and dig a bit of dirt. On that note, I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (11:11):** I have great pleasure in providing a response to the budget that was delivered by the Treasurer last year. It is important to put some context around the particular circumstances that led up to that budget. I do that because I do not think we will find a time in history when governments have been faced with more challenging times—very few would have been faced with such challenging times in which to deliver a budget. If we think back to the years leading up to 2020, especially from 2016, the majority of New South Wales had suffered one of the worst droughts in the history of this country. In some places that drought had begun as far back as 2012. The drought had a dramatic effect on our country's agricultural exports. In 2020 there was a 25 per cent reduction in agricultural export, which had ramifications for the budget. At that time we also saw some serious writedowns in GST revenue because of, sadly, other irresponsible governments around this country that could not manage their finances anywhere near as well as New South Wales could.

Exactly one year ago today we looked forward to record surplus budgets into the future of in excess of \$1 billion over the forward estimates. However, following those years of drought, and the much-needed investment of billions of dollars by this Government into those areas, at the end of 2019 we faced severely hot weather of over 40 degrees on numerous days, a build-up of fuel on the ground and horrific winds, which, together, caused some horrific bushfires, which placed further strain on the budget. I state for the record my great appreciation of the emergency service workers who worked absolutely tirelessly. I offer my commiserations to the many families and emergency services personnel who lost loved ones and to the thousands who lost buildings due to bushfire. As good, responsible governments do, this Government invested immediately in those areas, placing further strain on our budget. The bushfires were followed by a brief break in the drought and some floods, when further emergency services personnel such as the SES protected life and property in large numbers, as they always do and for which they should always be commended.

Then, just when you thought nothing else could go wrong and it was safe to venture outside, the worst pandemic in 100 years affected every country in the world. Despite everything that was already placing a great strain on our budget, a year ago this Government was completely debt free and looking forward to record surpluses

and a billion dollars of cash assets in the bank. Then, all of a sudden, it was faced with having to inject billions of dollars as a result of the great tragedy of the pandemic, which was a vital measure. Some of the investment was made to ensure that the Government's infrastructure rollout continued, and that through that investment we employed as many people as we could and kept as many existing workers as possible in work to keep the economy ticking over.

If I remember correctly some of the figures from that time, between the beginning of March and the end of April 270,000 full-time jobs in New South Wales were lost. However, by the end of October last year 200,000 of those jobs had been replenished, such was the success of the necessary investment by this Government across all portfolio areas to keep the long infrastructure funding pipeline ticking over. This Government makes no apologies for its record \$100 billion investment in infrastructure over the forward estimates. Returning to a comment I made earlier about irresponsible governments around the country that cannot manage their finances, that investment has supported roads, hospitals, schools et cetera. Compared with Queensland, which is \$90 billion in debt, it highlights our comparative success. As a result of the GST writedowns, the Queensland Government will place greater demands on the Federal budget for taxation and support. The Queensland Premier did not want anyone travelling to her State during the past year, which placed a huge burden especially on the tourism sector, but she has now put up her hand for further handouts from the Federal Government.

In testing times like this you see great leadership, and we have seen that from our Premier. I commend her for the role she has played. I also commend the health Minister and the likes of Dr Kerry Chant, who have faced the media almost every day for the past year, for fronting up and being accountable for this Government's actions during this pandemic, outlining the protocols that need to be followed by the community and announcing the funding needed to keep the economy ticking over. Again, I commend our emergency services personnel. Last year the Government allocated \$192 million over five years for the emergency services, including \$36 million for a new first responder mental health strategy. That is very important in the context of what the people of this State have been through, from drought, bushfires, floods and now a pandemic. This funding will have a significant impact on the mental health of many people, so it is great to see that money invested. That is just what is being invested into mental health for first responders from the Emergency Services portfolio. There is also further funding for mental health as a whole, which I will speak about shortly.

The Government has provided \$23 million for additional personal protective clothing; \$9 million to fund priority works such as fire trails, which will allow access to important areas for hazard reduction work to prevent as many bushfires as possible in the future; \$8 million for integrated dispatch systems for the Rural Fire Service; \$5 million for enhancement and training of its aerial fleet; \$3 million for improvements to the RFS Fires Near Me smartphone application; and \$3 million for critical equipment. That is just the breakdown of the \$192 million injected on behalf of emergency services.

As I mentioned before, the Government invested heavily in infrastructure but it also provided a huge amount of funding to businesses—reduction in taxes et cetera—to continue to stimulate and help this economy through that very awkward 2020 period. Some of the key measures that supported business and jobs included a two-year payroll tax rate cut from 5.4 per cent to 4.8 per cent, which will increase the payroll tax threshold from \$1 million to \$1.2 million. Those tax cuts alone were worth \$2.8 billion. Once again, that is a significant impact on the budget, but a stimulating measure to ensure that our economy is being sustained, business is being sustained and jobs are being sustained.

The Government provided an additional \$500 million for the Out and About digital voucher program, which will be delivered very soon; \$472 million for further vouchers to be used by small businesses under the payroll tax threshold towards cost of government fees and charges; more than \$39 million in funding on behalf of the Business Connect program; \$5 million for the NSW Small Business Commissioner to establish a new tendering support service; and almost \$2 million to support small business, with rebate programs providing \$500 to small business owners and sole traders who buy and store safety equipment. That is an enormous measure and, once again, a huge impact on the budget, but it is a very important investment in small business. As is often said, small businesses are the backbone of this economy and provide over 50 per cent of the jobs in the State.

The Government has made a massive investment in infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, which has been one of the drivers of economic prosperity in the State. The Government is committing a record \$14 billion in city-changing transport infrastructure, which will increase public transport services, reduce road congestion, create jobs and help reduce the impact of COVID on the State economy. In western Sydney more than \$656 million in the budget has been invested into stage one of the Parramatta light rail project. That important investment will help with the growth of the City of Parramatta, which is now commonly referred to as the second CBD.

Across the city there are also the benefits of congestion-busting projects such as WestConnex and the opening of NorthConnex—a project with a massive impact that has been years in the making. As I consistently

say to people, motorists will no longer be faced with that three-, four- or five-kilometre traffic jam through Pennant Hills Road when returning from holiday over Christmas time. There has been a massive reduction in traffic and it is a huge improvement to the road network in that area. Billions of dollars have been invested into very necessary road infrastructure and on behalf of communities that utilise Pennant Hills Road. The road has now gone back to the community, which is very important, and it is a great road to use at this point in time. NorthConnex will allow communities around the road to grow instead of breathing in heavy fumes day in, day out from the massive amount of trucks. Some 5,000 trucks a day, which were utilising that road, are now in a nice, safe tunnel in NorthConnex and the traffic flows around that particular area have been improved.

That is just some of the funding that has been invested. Looking a little bit further, \$1.6 billion is being invested in bus services. In an area such as mine, which now enjoys the direct benefits of this Government's investment in the Sydney Metro Northwest, we need to link the growing communities. As I have said many times before, our area is one of the fastest-growing areas in this country in population growth and housing. While it is wonderful to have the Sydney Metro Northwest servicing our areas of Rouse Hill, Kellyville, Bella Vista, Norwest, Castle Hill, the Hills Showground station and Cherrybrook, we need interconnected bus services and this Government has certainly been proactive in that area.

We still have a wonderful system of buses operating each and every day up and down the M2, transporting people from the Hills into the city, which complements the services of the Sydney Metro Northwest, but the interconnected services of buses now operating in and out of our suburbs is something to behold. We have never before seen the services that we now have. Of course, when a government does something like this, it is always important to correspond directly and have dialogue with the community, and the Government certainly did that. It would be unfair to say that we satisfied 100 per cent of the community, but we certainly got close to that the majority of times. Those services continue to grow and they continue to be adjusted, which is very important. That all falls under part of that \$1.6 billion investment.

We are providing \$192 million for the Transport Access Program to upgrade train stations and ferry wharves and make them more accessible. That upgrade includes new lifts and we just heard the member for Wyong speak about our significant investment into the lifts at Tuggerah station. Our funding is being spread very, very fairly and quite appropriately in areas of need across New South Wales. Some \$540 million has been allocated in the budget to commence construction on the Sydney Gateway project and to continue the planning and pre-construction work around the airport and onwards for the M6 Stage 1 extension. Of the \$5.7 billion, \$356 million is allocated over the next four years for the planning and pre-construction of the Western Harbour Tunnel and the Warringah Freeway upgrade as part of the Western Harbour Tunnel program. What an enormous difference that will make once that tunnel is put in place.

I have spoken before about NorthConnex, but WestConnex has also made a huge difference for people leaving the city and utilising WestConnex to travel up through those areas and out to western Sydney and onwards to Greater Western Sydney around Penrith, with significant reductions in congestion and travel times; it allows people to get home and spend more time with their families, which is very important. There is \$197 million in the budget for the Prospect Highway upgrade. As I said, funding is being invested very fairly in areas of need right across western Sydney—in areas that the Liberal Party does not represent. The upgrade to the lifts at Wyong, as the member for Wyong previously pointed out, is not in an area that we represent, but it is important infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. I think the people of New South Wales can be justifiably proud of the investment this Government has made and continues to make under the very trying conditions that we faced last year. Very prudent measures are being taken.

Speaking about funding a little bit closer to home, \$149 million has been allocated for the upgrade to Memorial Avenue in my neighbouring electorate of Baulkham Hills. That is a very significant road upgrade, linking Windsor Road through to Old Windsor Road, to address the new substantial growth in suburbs in that electorate. It will be a massive improvement for our community, but it is not just about those particular electorates. Our constituents do not drive across lines and say, "I am now in Castle Hill" or "I am now in Baulkham Hills" or "I am now in Blacktown or Riverstone." They need those road links and that connectivity. It is great to see that investment in our local area adding to the infrastructure; it is part of the very important infrastructure investment that has been made in our electorates since our election in 2011.

Some \$120 million will be provided over two years to match the Federal funding commitment for metropolitan pinch points. We know how important that is. Those small investments in left-hand turning lanes, left or right signals, layover lanes et cetera make an incredible impact on the reduction of traffic congestion at some of those important points. We see the traffic backup in peak hours, so smoothing out some of those areas helps the entire network to operate more effectively and efficiently. More than \$1.1 billion will be provided to deliver more trains and more services for the Illawarra and the airport and the South Coast lines. They are necessary and important upgrades. It is great to see that our trains now have air conditioning.

We know that patronage on public transport at this point in time is lower than it would be normally. In 2019 it was an absolute pleasure to utilise our Sydney Metro Northwest almost on a daily basis. I am happy to declare a conflict in that the rail line goes to my electorate, but I was determined to utilise that particular metro rail line to see firsthand that it was operating effectively. I was able to pass on commentary to our capable Minister to ensure that it was running effectively and smoothly. On some occasions I sat for a few minutes when the metro pulled up at stations. It did not operate as effectively as we wanted it to, but the majority of those flaws have been well and truly ironed out, and we have a very good service to our area.

Over the next four years \$710 million will be provided for walking and cycling infrastructure right across the State—one of the largest investments in walking and cycling. Everybody knows full well the importance of walking and cycling pathways to all communities. Every morning when I am out walking it is great to see the number of people who are enjoying the same thing and undertaking a healthy lifestyle. [*Extension of time*]

**Mr Geoff Provest:** We are interested in this.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I thank the House for its indulgence. As I said before, that investment is very important. It is possibly the largest investment in this country in walking and cycling infrastructure, enabling people to embrace a healthy lifestyle—whether that is people walking to work or encouraging their children to walk to school, or indeed people simply enjoying healthy walking activity, as I do each morning with my wife. It also gives my wife an opportunity to advocate for better services in the household and for me to do other things around the place.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Services in the household?

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** It is an important time, yes, for everybody's health, not only our personal health. As I mentioned, the budget includes a record \$2.4 billion investment for mental health services across New South Wales, which is very important after all the events that led to the budget: years of farmers suffering drought, the horrific bushfires that affected this State and the eastern seaboard at the end of 2019 and into 2020, the floods, the pandemic and the way it has turned our lives upside down—I look around the Chamber and notice people still wearing masks. The pandemic has disrupted our wonderful lifestyle not only in our State and country but also around the world: the way we conduct ourselves, the number of people we can be with, how we go shopping, and where we can sit on buses or in Parliament. Our lives have been disrupted significantly. Many people have been more disadvantaged than I have mentioned, and that would have a significant impact on their mental health. The record \$2.4 billion investment will be absolutely vital.

I will highlight some of the key aspects. Some \$47 million will be provided over four years to support students by inducting an additional 100 wellbeing health and in-reach nurses across vulnerable areas of schools. I think that is very important on behalf of our young people. Further highlights include \$6 million over three years to establish 12 mental health and community wellbeing collaboratives across the State; \$66 million on behalf of clinicians and peer workers to expand the Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response model, enhance therapeutic activities in inpatient units, increase the capacity and responsiveness of the Mental Health Line and expand virtual health services; an additional \$66 million over three years to continue the additional specialist mental health clinicians; and another \$50 million over three years to provide technology and expand telehealth services to people in remote areas. It is a very worthwhile investment that will aid many people across New South Wales, following circumstances that have played a significant role—an adverse role, in many cases—over the preceding years.

There has been an investment in jobs and in kickstarting the economy. There is some \$29 billion in the Health budget. I take a moment to once again commend the nurses, doctors, emergency service workers, paramedics and everybody else who has played a role throughout 2020. The impacts have been enormous. Whether they have been working in areas of quarantine or standing on borders that have closed, people have been required to rise to the challenge and get out there almost immediately. We see them on the nightly news. We sometimes take for granted the thousands of people who are doing the testing each and every day. It rolls off the tongue when we talk about the 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 people who get tested each day. That does not happen by itself; it requires personnel. Certainly many thousands of people have been involved in that testing.

My commendation goes out to all health workers, who are led from the top by Dr Kerry Chant and her wonderful team. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude for the role they have played. In the context of the massive amount of investment in hospitals the Government has made throughout 2020, it is very easy to see where the record \$29 billion in funding goes. As somebody who had never seen the inside of a hospital before because I had enjoyed very good health, sadly I did see the inside of a couple. One was Blacktown Hospital, and what a marvellous facility that is. I only get to visit there on rare occasions, but the quality of that particular facility is second to none. There is immense pride in the nurses, doctors, clinicians and everybody else who works there.

They are working in a world-class hospital and health facility; it is wonderful for them and wonderful for the patients.

We think about COVID and the strain that it has placed on our health services. But when you see the number of people who come in for treatment or operations day to day, you start to understand how that almost \$30 billion impacts on our budget. I saw it there firsthand and I recognise it. You have to put up your hand and say how lucky we are to live in this country and indeed in this State, where we have a responsible government that is rising to the challenge. It is investing in new hospitals and it is investing in nurses. Sometimes that is difficult; today we have heard various members say that there are shortfalls in nursing staff across hospitals. That is something the health Minister will take on board. The Coalition has employed thousands of new nurses, teachers and emergency services personnel since coming to government. We must ensure that we continue to do that to satisfy the needs of our community.

It would be remiss of me not to mention in some small way the investment in my electorate of Castle Hill. The wonderful North Kellyville Public School that was opened a couple of years ago provides an outstanding quality of education to primary school students around the growing area of North Kellyville. The primary school is led by the very capable principal, Tom Moth, and his group of highly qualified teachers. An additional \$300,000 was provided to that school. That school was funded and opened years ago but an additional \$300,000 has been provided to continue to add services at the school.

Very importantly, the Government has recognised that Samuel Gilbert Public School is another school that has huge demands and is under pressure. Samuel Gilbert Public School is in the middle of the border between Glenhaven and Castle Hill. I am proud to say that after many years of lobbying some \$16.4 million was provided in the budget to fund the upgrade at that particular school. That is a significant investment and our community is pleased as punch to see that record investment so that school can evolve. I am sure that many people in my community do not know that we have the second Powerhouse Museum in Castle Hill. For many years I have encouraged the Museums Discovery Centre to be advertised more broadly to our community, because it has some incredibly historic aspects. An upgrade is happening at the moment, aided by a \$12.5 million investment. Boy oh boy, that will be an incredible tourist attraction and it will provide stimulus for the local economy in that particular area.

The \$63 million Rouse Hill Hospital land acquisition was also in our budget. I have advocated for that for many years and we are looking forward to that hospital being constructed and providing important health services to our community. Finally, as is always necessary but sometimes goes unnoticed, another \$14 million was provided to Sydney Water for upgrades in those important growth areas. Whether it is investment in drainage or sewerage, those important services must be provided. As I said, they largely go unnoticed, but it is very important for the growing residential development that we have. I commend the budget to the House.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (11:41):** I will begin my contribution to debate on this year's budget by reflecting on some comments from the member for Castle Hill. The member spoke at length about how, through the Transport Access Program, the member for Wyong is finally getting an upgrade to the lifts at Tuggerah station. The member for Castle Hill said that in some way the member for Wyong should be grateful because the Government has finally handed out funding to Labor electorates. That showed the arrogance that is creeping into this nearly 10-year-old Government. That arrogance was on display by the Premier yesterday concerning another issue on the Central Coast. She said words to the effect, "Central Coast, don't worry about the fact that you didn't get any money to help recover from the bushfires. You got a hospital before, so it's alright. We gave you something once, so it's alright."

I reflect on the Transport Access Program, because 10 years after the Government took away funding from the Unanderra station lifts—funding that was allocated in the 2009-10 budget by the Labor Government—it has finally given it back. There has been 10 years of fighting. For 10 years disabled people and old people have struggled to get up and down the 72 stairs to access the platform. There is no other way to access the platform apart from taking the stairs. But 10 years after the then transport Minister—who is now the Premier—took the funding away, she has finally given it back in this budget. It is almost 90 days since the budget was handed down and there is no tender or contract let to a construction firm, though we do have a promise that work will start later this year. While I welcome the fact that the money has been allocated, it should not have taken so long. The same goes for the member for Wyong; the member for Blacktown, with Doonside station and others; and the member for Macquarie Fields. Macquarie Fields station, one of the largest and most heavily used stations in south-west Sydney, is still without any improvements to transport access.

Perhaps that sort of approach is why on 18 November—the day after the budget—the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury* declared a "budget black hole". Of course, the newspaper was not reflecting on the \$16 billion deficit for this year; it was referring to the fact that it considered the Illawarra to be a black hole for budget spending on new initiatives. It noted that, while some funding was coming, it was mostly going to projects that

were already underway—with many missing out altogether. Interestingly, the paper cited some of the comments by my colleagues and me about the infrastructure projects that were missing out. No specific money was dedicated to the Mount Ousley interchange, despite the planning for it being well advanced and despite the demands on that intersection from truck and heavy vehicle movements. I noted before that money is coming to Towradgi and Unanderra stations as part of the Transport Access Program.

While the St George Illawarra Dragons' home ground at Jubilee got \$3 million, the Wollongong Entertainment Centre—a 22-year-old facility where a roof leak last year stopped a nationally televised National Basketball League [NBL] game—still has nothing earmarked in this budget. There is nothing earmarked at all, it seems, to upgrade that facility into the stadium that the third largest city in the State deserves. That cancelled NBL game will be held tonight in Wollongong, with the newly renamed Illawarra Hawks taking on Melbourne United. Last week was the anniversary of the leaking roof. The day after, the acting sport Minister—who is still the acting sport Minister—said that fixing and upgrading the entertainment centre was a government priority. One would think if a government makes a priority of a facility that attracts hundreds of events in any year—except, obviously, 2020, for very good reasons that we are all well aware of—with a leaking roof that caused a nationally televised basketball game to be cancelled, it would mean there would be some action. But what have we got? Nothing.

We crow about doughnuts at any other time when it is COVID related, but doughnuts is what the WIN Entertainment Centre has got in terms of funding. In fact, it is worse than that because in 2018 the Government started a stakeholder consultation process to understand the views of Wollongong stakeholders about what they might like to see that venue become in the future. We are now in 2021. The Government has had the stakeholder consultation report since February 2020, according to documents I received under the Government Information (Public Access) Act. It even engaged a public relations agency to create what is described as a public-facing document about the stakeholder consultation. Do we have it? No, we still do not have it. We have an acting Minister who is keen to not release it for as long as humanly possible, it would seem. Why? One can only suspect that it is going to expose a decade of neglect of the facility under this Government—which it will—and possibly, or probably, a plan to privatise it as well, knowing this Government. If it is not nailed down, the Government will try to sell it.

I am more than willing to criticise the acting sport Minister for not addressing the serious issues with that 22-year-old facility in Wollongong, but I will acknowledge that he has done one important thing in this budget. The Wollongong local government area [LGA] had been excluded from all sporting facilities funding in the State—both the metropolitan sporting fund and the regional sporting facilities fund. In fact, only two of the 140-odd local government areas around the State were excluded from everything: Wollongong and Newcastle. After Wollongong was excluded from that funding, at least the acting sport Minister saw sense and included the Wollongong LGA in the Greater Cities and Regional Sport Facility Fund this year. I have been calling for that ever since we were excluded. It will not make up for the fact that we were not able to get funding from any source for the past couple of years, but at least there is now an opportunity for the excellent grant applications to come through—and they will be excellent.

All the applications from Wollongong are generally of high quality. I look forward to a substantive allocation of that fund to Wollongong, not only because our sporting facilities have been allowed to fall so far behind but also because the quality of the submissions and applications will dictate that even the most one-eyed of governments will not be able to resist the logic and compelling arguments that Wollongong sporting clubs will put in applications for that \$100 million fund—and we know how one-eyed this Government can be when it comes to grant applications and allocations. Any funds that come will be most welcome.

I will reflect on something that was not in the budget and acknowledge the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Recently I received advice that the Work from Wollongong plan, which I suggested in May of last year that will allow non-frontline public servants to not have to commute to Sydney every day, looks likely to be adopted. This is to go beyond the pandemic period. People will not have to commute to Sydney every day to sit in an office and then commute home again but be able to spend a couple of days a week working out of the New South Wales Government office block in Crown Street in Wollongong. The Government will call it another name, but in this case a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet. The importance of this plan is not just that it gets people off the commute and spending more time with their families; it also gets more people working in Wollongong CBD. They can go out and get their coffee and lunch, perhaps go out to dinner after work, go to one of the great small bars we have in the CBD or even grab their groceries on the way home. It allows them to engage in their kids' sport and after-school activities more easily than if they were on a train.

If the Government ever got its act together in terms of improving mobile phone connectivity along the South Coast line, people would even be able to work a little more along that line as well. Something the member for Castle Hill did not touch on in his contribution—and I have not heard anyone touch on this aspect of the budget that will impact on just about every household, particularly in western and south-western Sydney—is the

continued impost of tolls in New South Wales. I believe Sydney now has the dubious honour of being the most tolled city on the planet. Let that sink in for a minute: Sydney is the most tolled city on the planet. People travelling to work are paying literally thousands of dollars a year. The Government says, "Don't worry! We have got a rego reimbursement scheme. You can get a couple of hundred back." What a great deal! Shell out thousands and get a couple of hundred bucks back. Then you have tradies who are criss-crossing Sydney doing their job and small businesses facing this impost as well. It is incredible that this situation continues.

Even worse is that wages growth is being deliberately suppressed by this Government's strategy of continuing to drive down wages growth by using the public sector as an example to the private sector. The Government does not drive down toll rate growth. That is a minimum of 4 per cent a year. The Sydney Consumer Price Index at the moment is about 1.8 per cent, but not if you are a toll operator—4 per cent straight in the skyrocket, and not just for one year but every year for the whole concession. I understand that by the end the road will have been paid off 17 times over with those tolls. I wish my income would pay off my house 17 times over in the same period. I will also briefly touch on another issue that very few members opposite have raised during their contributions to the budget take-note debate. That is the great property tax reform proposal. It is interesting that no-one has really touched on it because, according to the Treasurer, it is the single greatest property reform and tax reform ever to be done. I reflect on some comments made by the member for Macquarie Fields last night. He eloquently outlined the case for concern when it comes to this proposal. The self-described "working class economist from Macquarie Fields" noted:

Property prices do not go up or down because stamp duty exists or is taken away and replaced with a never-ending annual land tax. To suggest they do is at best deception and at worst just plain absurd.

Funnily enough, as an economist I could not help but agree with him when he noted:

... property prices are reflective of demand and supply factors, namely, the ease in accessing credit, the price of credit, people's current and future expectations of their employment and income—

and whatever other investments they might have, and the liquid nature of those—

... and property stock supply and the timing of that supply and population growth.

I note that people can make comments and submissions through the property tax reform "Have your say" website until 15 March. It is unclear from that website exactly how many submissions have been received but there is one interesting part of that website where you can get a bit of an insight into what people are thinking. Let us remember that the Treasurer has expressed this reform is necessary to get more people into the property market. He believes that the way to go is allowing the choice between stamp duty—which you can amortise through your home loan, as most people do—and a property tax on your property that increases for life.

The "Have your say" website has a quick poll section on the property tax reform. When I checked it earlier today some 4,318 people had voted. Essentially the question being tested was the claim that the reform would make home ownership more achievable in New South Wales. Of those 4,318 votes some 54 per cent said it would help them enter the market and 46 per cent said it would not. I note it is a very small sample and clearly was not well advertised by those members opposite, but at the moment about half the people who participated in the poll over Christmas have contributed by saying, "No, I do not think this is going to help me." Are we looking at another Fire and Emergency Services Levy [FESL] here, a failed FESL where a Government puts in a tax only to rush back into the Chamber and reverse it?

**Mr Guy Zangari:** It was a fizzler.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It was a fizzler of a failed FESL—that is what it was. Are we staring down the barrel of that? Or are we just staring down the barrel of another GST thought bubble from the Treasurer? He not only was happy to put everyone on the tick for toll road rate increases into the future but also wanted to broaden the base and increase the rate of the GST. Is this the third strike on tax reform for this Treasurer?

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Three strikes and you are out.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It seems that he might be struggling. I also reflect on the Government's decision to redirect income generated from non-renewable resources into the NSW Generations Fund, which could easily be described as the State's offset account. It has been presented as helping to protect children and grandchildren from shouldering the cost of debt for the current recession into the future; equally, it could be described as denying current revenue from existing taxpayers. The reason I touch on that is not because it is happening but rather what is going to happen with it. One could say this is the State saving for a rainy day, but I think what is really happening is that this is a savings account for Premier Perrotet. He has got this up his sleeve. He is squirreling away the cash for when he takes on the leadership—and then what is he going to do? His latest plan is to redo Macquarie Street—or will he redo White Bay? Who knows what he has got up his sleeve.

What he should be having a look at is supporting workers in communities, particularly regional communities like my own or those in the Hunter and Lithgow, that are facing the sharp end of change when it comes to coalmining and our energy generation into the future. We know that domestic demand is changing. The Minister for Energy and Environment told us last year during the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill debate that over the next 20 years the coal-fired power stations in New South Wales are expected to close. That effectively reduces coal demand to zero. As that happens, our trading partners are also reducing their coal consumption to meet their commitments to net zero emissions by either 2050 or 2060. If you believe the International Energy Agency, which has a pretty good handle on this sort of stuff, global coal demand probably peaked around 2013. But the phase-out of coal will still take many years in a lot of markets, particularly through Asia. Even Germany's ambitious decarbonisation agenda will not remove coal completely from its energy generation until 2038, and a bit longer for steel production.

While there is potential for what is known as green steel, produced using hydrogen as the reducing agent for iron ore, the ability to do that on a commercial scale is still probably the best part of a couple of decades off. That is not to mention the fact that one needs large amounts of hydrogen to achieve that and those large amounts of hydrogen need large storage capacity. There are some real issues around land, hydrogen production and steel production into the future for green steel. While I would love to see Colorbond and the other steel produced at Port Kembla steelworks made with green steel—and I hope it will be there into the future to allow that to happen—the fact is that commercial viability for that technology is some time away. Even Germany's ambitious agenda on the carbon side of the equation does not come without support on the worker side and community side of the equation. Germany is investing €44 billion to support coalminers and coalmining communities through that process, because it is a difficult process. [*Extension of time*]

The trauma that can be caused within families through large-scale job loss in any community is incredible. In the early 1980s I remember Wollongong living through the upheaval of the steel market there, and later on when the Newcastle steelworks closed. The Port Kembla steelworks actually lost more jobs than Newcastle at the time, even though Newcastle closed. The Hunter had the fortune of being close to the great coalfield in the Hunter region, which allowed a lot of those unemployed people to pick up work in the mines. While the export coal from the Hunter and other parts of New South Wales will be part of the New South Wales economy for years to come, realistically it probably will not be forever. Exactly how long will be largely determined by others. That means that the employment future of the thousands of men and women directly and indirectly involved in the coal industry will increasingly be in the hands of foreign governments and multinational corporations.

That is why it is more important than ever, as the transition on the energy side of the equation is happening, that change and support for communities is also happening. Anyone who has gone through any sort of regional economic change will understand that such stuff does not happen overnight. Certainly those sorts of changes do not happen easily in regional communities, as the member for Tweed sitting opposite would know. There are not hundreds of job opportunities just waiting there. Regional communities really have to work at it from the ground level up to ensure that attraction is happening. That then begs the question: If the income generated from non-renewable resource royalties is heading into the Generations Fund, where will the support for those communities come from into the future?

As I said, we are in a period of technology overlap in which on a global scale there are both coal-fired power stations and renewable energy. Various nations are moving at different paces with that. We have been in periods of technology overlap before: For example, when cars started to be mass produced, for a time they shared roads with horses and carts; for a time CDs and music streaming services existed side by side. But in each case, as the technology improved, production costs fell and governments invested in supporting infrastructure, demand for the new technology generally grew and consumer preferences generally meant that one technology prevailed over the other. At the moment consumer preferences are driving some of the change in the energy generation sector to meet net zero targets. As Fatih Birol, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, noted recently:

Nothing short of a total transformation of our energy infrastructure will be required.

But no matter the technology, resources will continue to be needed. That is why New South Wales will continue to need a strong resources sector because, while the extracted resource might change, there are still many other resources with which New South Wales is endowed that will be part and parcel of our technologies, communities and societies into the future. It is estimated that approximately \$1 trillion worth of key energy metals, such as copper, nickel, cobalt and rare earths, will be needed by 2035 to meet the renewable energy, storage and electric vehicle production challenges. That is a huge task. The amount of copper that we need to mine, extract and process is estimated to be at least the same as, if not more than, the total quantity of copper that has been mined, processed and used since its discovery. That is an extraordinary amount of resources, which is why we need a strong, safe, sustainable, reliable and responsible resources industry in New South Wales into the future.

There are huge opportunities in this, but those opportunities alone will not make up for what will take place in coal communities over that same time. It is not good enough for a government to cross its fingers and hope for trickle-down job creation that this Government is used to relying on. It is also not good enough to add workers in carbon-intensive industries to the end of a log of claims and tick the empathy box, if you will, but not back up the demand with real support. Workers and communities facing dramatic change must receive the same passion, advocacy and real investments demanded in the pursuit of climate action. Every time we pick up the pace of climate action, we must step up support for carbon-intensive communities. Jobs, job security and wages growth must receive at least equal focus as do climate adaptation and mitigation.

Working men and women deserve bold action on climate to be matched by bold action to support and create jobs, which is why I posed a question to the Treasurer. If the Government is going to redirect royalties into the Generations Fund, the Treasurer should be looking at what the Generations Fund will do for those communities to help them in the future. We have some time but delaying any longer will not help those communities. The Government must acknowledge the risks it faces from the employment futures of men and women—in coalmining particularly, or associated with coalmining, or the businesses that support them—that will increasingly be in the hands of foreign national governments and multinational corporations. The New South Wales Government must take that risk seriously, manage it comprehensively and accept that securing the future of those workers and those communities cannot be done on the cheap.

Labor understands that. We get it. We see it. We live it. It is about time the Liberals and The Nationals shed their cloak of comfort, got on with the job and took it seriously. The problem will not be solved by sitting back and hoping for the best. Trickle-down job creation will not work. Property tax reform will not deal with the difficulties facing those communities. If the Government intends to channel cash into the NSW Generations Fund, that could be a source of financial support for those communities.

I conclude my comments on the budget there. As I said, we are now 90 days in and I look forward to a speedy awarding of contracts for the construction of lifts at Unanderra and Towradgi stations, giving local contractors priority for the work. That is about all that Wollongong can take out of the budget. I hope the work will be done by local workers because, as well as the great social dividend that will come from making up for a decade of neglect of those stations—it will get rid of the only access way to Unanderra station being 72 stairs—there could be a jobs dividend for the Illawarra as well. I trust that the Government will take the needs of communities such as Wollongong that are facing a great difficulty and are at the sharp end of the patchiness of the recovery a bit more seriously in the next budget.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:10):** The people of New South Wales and my electorate of Hawkesbury have done an exceptional job in rising to the challenges of 2020. The 2020-21 New South Wales budget supports our people to take the next step and get New South Wales on the road to recovery. The Hawkesbury electorate is embracing the period of recovery following the multiple disasters of drought, floods, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why we needed a budget to keep New South Wales safe, create jobs, kickstart the economic engine and reform for a brighter future. We have a window of opportunity to do everything we can to get the economy moving again and avoid long-term economic harm. The recent budget gets the job done.

The budget assists those who were impacted by the devastating 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires. A total of \$250 million is available through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. Grants are available to organisations including councils, joint organisations, business chambers, charities, businesses and local Aboriginal land councils to deliver successful projects. I note that round two is yet to be announced and more funding will go into that area. The Hawkesbury community has been boosted by the funding of \$1.68 million through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund supporting community bushfire-affected improvements and targeting those areas hardest hit by last season's devastating bushfires. The funding will be allocated towards delivering all-age access parks, recreation and sporting facilities, and markets across Bilpin, St Albans and Colo Heights, which were badly affected during the bushfires last year.

The funding in local infrastructure projects will help local businesses that have been further impacted by COVID-19 and demonstrates the New South Wales Government's support during difficult times. The Hawkesbury community received \$50.6 million for local infrastructure projects. When a local member of Parliament advocates for their constituents, they get outcomes. The infrastructure projects include \$18.2 million to complete the Windsor Bridge replacement project; \$13 million for the continued planning of Pitt Town Bypass; over \$9 million to complete the upgrade of March and Bosworth Street's intersection as part of Richmond Road upgrades near Richmond Bridge; \$6 million for continued planning and investigating of the third river crossing at Richmond-North Richmond, which I am very passionate about getting outcomes for; \$1.5 million for managing regional flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley; and \$1.9 million to upgrade the Wisemans Ferry boat ramp, installation of a pontoon and construction of a car park.

Those projects will create jobs and also facilitate faster and safer journeys to and from home and work, which is important for the mums, dads and families in the Hawkesbury. The electorate also secured over \$55 million for other capital works programs, including \$26.8 million for the upgrade of the Richmond water recycling and waste water treatment plant. This will ensure that our critical water supply and treatment facilities continue to service the Hawkesbury community. The budget also committed \$23 million to the agricultural centre of excellence in Hawkesbury. The centre will be a new, purpose-built residential educational facility that will deliver contemporary agricultural STEM education, and train students and staff. This funding shows that the New South Wales Government is focused on the future success of the Hawkesbury and greater New South Wales after trying times.

Other budget allocations for the Hawkesbury community include \$5.47 million for a new housing renewal project that will deliver 15 new social homes and support 27 jobs whilst bolstering spending on local businesses and trades. This replaced four building blocks with four homes. The project at Sunnyside Crescent in North Richmond is one of around 50 projects being delivered under the Government's \$400 million fast track housing construction package to help boost the economic recovery from COVID-19 in communities throughout the State. The Hawkesbury agricultural selective school at Richmond High School received \$611,000. I thank the Treasurer very much. The school opened its doors to year 7 students in Sydney at its Richmond campus this year. The Hawkesbury Rural Fire Service also received \$86,000 to assist with this current bushfire season.

Funding through this budget will safeguard our communities from COVID-19 until the vaccines are ready to roll out. The Health budget received a record \$29.3 billion, which gives our State's gold standard testing and contract tracing units the funding and resources needed to keep the people of New South Wales safe. In addition to this, \$500 million was allocated to support COVID-19 clinics, hotel quarantine and increased pathology testing and contact tracing; \$385 million was provided for additional personal protective equipment to keep frontline workers safe; and \$30 million was assigned for additional emergency department attendances and ambulance calls. The Government will also increase the digital capability of the State's health system, investing in systems that track prescribed medicines associated with a high risk of causing harm or dependence to seamlessly manage the more than 70 million pathology tests that are undertaken every year by NSW Health.

Telehealth capacity will be expanded through a \$45 million funding boost that will deliver faster and more convenient care. Palliative care services will receive increased support through a \$55.9 million investment over four years that will provide the best quality care and support for those reaching the end of their life. An additional 5,000 end-of-life support packages will allow people who are dying a choice about where they spend their remaining days and the type of care they receive. This funding will also provide access to specialist allied health professionals, improved bereavement and psychological support services, and education and training.

The Government has invested \$2.8 billion in a record workforce boost of 8,300 frontline hospital staff, including 5,000 nurses and midwives, 45 per cent of whom will work in regional and rural areas. Our community was lucky enough to welcome recently four intern doctors who have started working in the Hawkesbury District Health Service, launching a new phase in their career. They are among 1,041 intern doctors starting across New South Wales this year, which is the largest intake of any State or Territory in Australia. The budget has provided historic funding for mental health services across the State and includes more support for school students, investment to help our most vulnerable and addressing homelessness. This support for mental health is welcomed by my electorate of Hawkesbury, which has faced the disaster of drought, floods, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has allocated \$36 million for a new first responder mental health strategy that supports all emergency services first responders. It has also introduced the State's first ever suicide monitoring system, which will provide up-to-date data for health and support services about the number of suicide deaths across the State. The Suicide Monitoring System will inform critical decisions about services and local health responses in communities impacted by suicide. The New South Wales Government is investing \$87 million over three years in new suicide prevention initiatives. That is a vitally important area of funding for every electorate, particularly the Hawkesbury electorate.

The New South Wales Government has allocated \$120 million to extend the existing free preschool program to the end of 2021. The funding supports around 44,000 three- to five-year-olds attending community preschool in over 700 community and mobile preschools across the State. New South Wales students will receive free tutoring this year thanks to a landmark \$337 million program as part of the 2020-21 budget. The Government is employing up to 5,500 additional staff to deliver small-group tuition at every New South Wales government school, as well as non-government schools with the most significant levels of need. That has been greatly welcomed by my local community following what has been a disruptive year for school students. It will also create employment opportunities for school teachers and university tutors.

The COVID Intensive Learning Support Program is another measure in the New South Wales Government's strategy to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and ensure that every school and every student can improve every year. The New South Wales Government has committed \$150 million to the installation of LED lights in public schools. That will benefit the environment while saving on energy costs every year. The Government has also launched the Schools Renewable Energy Infrastructure Pilot Project, which will assess the benefits and costs of large-scale implementation of solar photovoltaic systems, batteries and demand response initiatives in New South Wales public schools.

The New South Wales Government's Crown Reserves Improvement Fund received a \$40 million boost in response to COVID-19 and bushfires, on top of the \$17 million already budgeted. I welcome the \$1.7 million in funding for improvement projects for Crown land reserves and community facilities in the Hawkesbury area. Local projects being funded in the Hawkesbury include \$1.655 million towards the construction of a multipurpose trade, industrial, livestock and machinery pavilion at the Hawkesbury Showground, which has left the Hawkesbury Showground community with very big smiles. The funding for the new pavilion is in addition to the \$323,827.90 already announced by the New South Wales Government through the Showgrounds Stimulus Funding Program. The total funding package for the construction of the new building is over \$1.9 million—I thank the Treasurer and the planning Minister.

I am grateful for the \$50,000 being put towards the cost of constructing a seawall to stabilise a Hawkesbury River bank that is currently eroding; and the \$29,803 to control feral goats at Wisemans Ferry—yes, there are feral goats at Wisemans Ferry but hopefully not for much longer. Feral goats can cause soil erosion, spread disease and pose a risk of collision with vehicles. It is the little things in the budget that are worth mentioning because they are what communities appreciate. The budget is all about jobs. Thousands of New South Wales workers lost their jobs because of the pandemic last year. The budget supports the Government's plan for 270,000 people to be back in work in New South Wales by 2024. Hawkesbury tradies, tenants and businesses are gaining direct support due to the NSW Land and Housing Corporation's rollout of the \$47 million Social Housing Maintenance Stimulus Program, announced in the New South Wales Government's \$2.3 billion COVID-19 stimulus package. That timely investment has seen \$163,462 committed to important maintenance works and upgrades on social housing properties in Hawkesbury.

Our record \$107 billion infrastructure pipeline is building a better future while supporting 145,000 jobs every year for the next four years—it is worth repeating: some 145,000 jobs every year for the next four years—delivering major projects in our cities and our regions. The key transport measures that will benefit New South Wales include \$1.6 billion—the mind blows with the amounts we are offering here—for services throughout the State, including school services and funding for new and replacement buses; grants to councils for local and regional road maintenance and upgrades; and natural disaster recovery grants, providing immediate relief for clean-up and restoration costs in the aftermath of natural disasters. I have seen that for many of our good people in Hawkesbury, the sites are cleaned, they are in caravans at the moment, and we are working with them and council to get outcomes so that they can get back into their real homes and have a real life ahead of them. Assisting transport-disadvantaged individuals through the Community Transport Program is a very important initiative that is also included in this budget.

The investment into local transport infrastructure will not only improve local journeys but also create jobs and deliver economic benefits at a time when they are most needed. The creation of jobs is also facilitated by the threshold upon which stamp duty is charged on new homes for first home buyers, increasing from \$650,000 to \$800,000. Thousands of dollars' worth of stamp duty is also being slashed for properties up to \$1 million. For vacant land, the threshold has increased from \$350,000 to \$400,000 and will phase out at \$500,000. The assistance is well received by first home owners in Hawkesbury as well as by Hawkesbury locals with jobs in the building industry. There are a lot of tradies in Hawkesbury. Bligh Park is covered with tradies. I love it—utes and vans everywhere there.

Major payroll tax relief in the 2020-21 New South Wales budget will enable businesses in Hawkesbury and around New South Wales to hire more staff, keep their doors open and focus on recovery in the post-pandemic world. The payroll tax rate is cut from 5.45 per cent to 4.85 per cent for a two-year period, along with the threshold being permanently increased from \$1 million to \$1.2 million. The New South Wales Government will introduce a land tax discount for new build-to-rent housing projects until 2040. That is pretty exciting. It will boost the construction industry, create more options for investors and ultimately more housing options and security for tenants. The budget includes substantial new investments in regional infrastructure, including \$1.6 billion for digital investment. Many businesses will benefit from the initiative of digital vouchers worth \$1,500, which will help tens of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses below the payroll tax threshold pay for government fees and charges. Small and medium-sized businesses in Hawkesbury have been doing it tough and this form of assistance will aid their recovery.

The budget injected \$500 million to support hard-hit sectors like tourism and hospitality, with \$100 Out and About vouchers for every adult New South Wales resident to spend on eating out and getting out. I know a lot of Hawkesbury locals are keen to do their bit to help their local small businesses, so they will be getting out and about once we get that up and running. With the beauty and rich history of the Hawkesbury electorate, I encourage visitors from far and wide to visit. But I am a little bit envious of what we have in Hawkesbury. I want people to take their time in coming and trickle through. The Bells Line of Road is flooded with tourists—we love it, but we want to manage it as best we can. Everyone is welcome in Hawkesbury, always.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** The member for Wagga Wagga would be there with bells on.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** We would love to see you there. Hundreds of fee-free training courses are now available for school leavers, young people and job seekers as part of the New South Wales Government's Skilling for Recovery initiative. The courses come from the \$320 million committed to delivering 100,000 fee-free training places, giving prospective students an excellent opportunity to investigate fee-free training options. The Summer Skills program will offer courses covering a range of industries, including agriculture, construction, conservation, fitness, engineering, coding, communication and digital literacy. Neighbourhood high streets around the State will be revitalised with a new \$15 million initiative to stimulate local businesses and support economic recovery. *[Extension of time]*

The Your High Street grants program is the next phase of assistance for councils. It will restore vibrancy to our high streets and villages. Your High Street builds on the huge success of the \$15 million Streets as Shared Spaces program, which is now supporting 48 demonstration and pilot projects across New South Wales. The budget lays the foundations for future prosperity with a bold reform agenda, including planning, education, digitisation and tax reform.

Fiscal responsibility is in the Liberals' and The Nationals' DNA. This budget has put in place sound fiscal repair measures to ensure that we are ready for the next challenge. The budget takes advantage of record-low borrowing costs in the short term to prevent damage in the long term, while charting a responsible course back to surplus by 2024-25. The budget increases the standard of living for Hawkesbury constituents and conveys the type of recovery and stability they can expect going forward. I am proud to be part of a government that has a history of strong fiscal management. We have been able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a visionary way, which is the way it should be. I commend the Treasurer for his efforts, and I speak highly of the budget.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (12:31):** As has been said before, this year's budget is extremely important in light of the drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Summer bushfires. Once again, I acknowledge the leadership of the Government and the support of the Opposition in tackling the challenges that we face and in providing support during this very difficult time. In particular, once again I thank our frontline and essential workers, our emergency services workers and our community for the way in which they have responded to the pandemic.

I wish to discuss two important matters: firstly, bushfire recovery funding and, secondly, the question of infrastructure investment. There has been some discussion of bushfire grants. It is important to make the House aware of the real needs of our communities and of the importance of the recovery funding. The Black Summer bushfires devastated the Snowy Valleys Council, a portion of which is located in the Wagga Wagga electorate. Almost half of the Snowy Valleys Council region was burnt—basically 400,000 of 800,000 hectares. But more than that, the devastation caused by the fires has impacted the whole State, not only the region, particularly because of the impact on horticulture and on forestry. I address that impact.

Australia's softwood plantation industry was struggling already to keep up with demand for timber in this nation. The loss of tens of thousands of hectares of timber will have an impact for decades. Estimates are that one-third of plantation timber has been lost and that this will take 30 years to replace. The softwoods industry supports 50 per cent of the jobs in the Snowy Valleys Council region, but it also supplies the timber for homes throughout New South Wales and Australia. It is a sustainable industry that reduces our need to import timber, and that is the great environmental benefit. But more than that, all of the product is used. It is used for sawn timber, packaging and paper, landscaping and biofuel.

The softwoods industry supports \$2 billion of economic activity a year for this country. It provides almost all of the profit for the Forestry Corporation of NSW. It is estimated that every job creates half a million dollars of output. At the same time, the apple industry in the Snowy Valleys Council region also suffered devastating losses of one-third of orchards in the region, and it will take 10 years to replace them. It is an industry of State and national significance; the Batlow name is synonymous with great apples throughout the world. Urgent action was and is needed to support and rebuild that industry. That is the long-term impact on forestry and horticulture in the Snowy Valleys Council region, without talking about tourism and farming.

I thank the shadow Cabinet for visiting Tumut in the aftermath of the fires last year. I accompanied it on visits to parts of the devastated region. Almost all members of the Cabinet came to Tumut; they were invited by the Mayor of Snowy Valleys Council. I believe the Cabinet recognised that the economic impact of the fires on that particular region would last years and years—in fact, decades—and that urgent assistance was required to prevent a disaster of State and national significance. I thank the shadow Cabinet for taking the time to visit and to learn the extent of the long-term impact, and for its advocacy in that regard. At the same time, many Ministers from the Government have visited the region; I thank them. I particularly acknowledge the Deputy Premier, who has visited Snowy Valleys on a number of occasions and has met with industry representatives, local growers and residents.

I particularly remember his visit in the middle of January 2020. It was hot—very hot. The smoke from the fires still hung in the air. The fires were still raging. The smoke, heavy as it was, was not as heavy as the feeling of despair in the communities there. They faced that despair in a blackened landscape, knowing that they were looking at long-term impacts on not just farming and tourism but also industries such as forestry and horticulture—impacts that would threaten the livelihood and existence of their communities. That was the atmosphere into which the Deputy Premier arrived that day. He toured extensively in the area and, as industry, farmers and members of the community put the case to him, I believe that he recognised the need to provide funds for urgent rebuilding. There was an urgent need to get industries back on their feet. I thank him and acknowledge the importance of his advocacy in that regard.

The funds that have been allocated by the Federal and State governments to the Snowy Valleys Council are welcomed by the devastated communities. They are welcomed because they are rebuilding State and national industries. In fact, it is not too much to say that the funding will save those industries. At the moment 8,000 hectares of softwood plantation is being replanted annually; that is more than two times the normal amount, equivalent to eight Melbourne Cricket Grounds. It is an extraordinary effort. Yes, there will be years ahead that are tough—10 tough years, at least—but those industries will survive and go on supporting the State and the nation. I also commend the upgrade funding for the Tumut Airport, which is part of making sure we can better fight the fires that I have no doubt will again plague the south of our State.

Of course, there is more to be done. Much of the tourism to the region has been put on hold because of the devastation to forestry that I have spoken about. For example, the western foreshore of Blowering Dam has been off limits to tourists for more than a year. That has been a real blow to the region, particularly to towns such as Batlow and Talbingo, because the dam is an important tourist attraction. It is such a shame at this time of year because the weather has been perfect and Blowering Dam at times has been close to full. Unfortunately that important tourist attraction has not been available. In addition, the Hume and Hovell Track has been badly affected. It is encouraging to see that the Government has made allocations towards repair work, but that work needs to get happening.

I understand that there have been delays because of safety around COVID, but we cannot delay any more than is necessary. By Easter at least I would like to see areas like the western foreshore of Blowering Dam opened to some tourists. I will visit that region and I will encourage and work with the Government to try to open that up, because it is an important part of getting those communities back on their feet. Other projects are in the pipeline. Communities in that region have been working very hard to put together projects to renew their communities after the devastation of the fires. Those projects deserve serious and appropriate consideration, and I will insist that is the case in future funding rounds. I also take the opportunity to support and commend the work that was done by Resilience NSW to help those communities. That has been a very important part of rebuilding and gaining confidence. I commend that organisation in particular for the work it has been doing.

I will talk now about infrastructure spending. The budget has made a contingent allocation for a range of projects that are underway in my electorate. Those projects are long overdue, but it is good to see that they are taking place. They include the rebuild of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and Tumut Hospital. The Wagga Wagga Base Hospital is close to completion and the car park will soon be underway, which is excellent. That is a very important project. Last week I reviewed the new entrance way to the hospital and, in particular, I saw the facilities that will be used for the COVID vaccination program. It is great to have those modern facilities; one would think they were purpose-built for vaccinations because they are easily and safely accessible to the public. That is what you get when you have modern facilities and a modern hospital. That work is progressing. Good progress has been made on Tumut Hospital as well. Again that is an important part of providing health services, as is recruiting the health professionals that we need for our community.

The special activation precinct in Wagga Wagga's Bomen Estate is also proceeding, as is the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics Hub, which on completion will be a major inland port that will do much to support the development of the region. I welcome that initiative. I acknowledge the important role of the Government in providing those precincts throughout regional New South Wales, particularly the new precinct in

Wagga Wagga. The new school in Estella is all but complete and has welcomed its very first students. I have had a preliminary review of the campus and its marvellous design. The modern classrooms will be very much appreciated not only by the students but also by their parents. It is great to have state-of-the-art facilities in our region.

I want to comment on the Riverina Conservatorium of Music project, which is proceeding after an allocation for stage one in the budget. This is an important educational and cultural development, not just for the city but also for our region, and the funding is long overdue. Our rural and regional communities deserve access to the modern cultural facilities that are so often taken for granted in the city. As is appropriate, a business case for stage two is being prepared. I reiterate the importance of projects such as this for our community.

**Debate interrupted.**

### *Committees*

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**

### **Report: Assaults on members of the NSW Police Force**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (12:45):** As Chair: I am pleased to speak to the committee's report on assaults on members of the NSW Police Force, which was tabled on 18 November 2020. Members of the NSW Police Force play an integral role in protecting us and our communities while also risking their lives. Therefore, any assault on a police officer is unacceptable. An assault on a police officer is an offence not only against that individual officer but also against the community. Assaults on police officers impact their physical and mental health and form the bulk of work health and safety incidents reported by police. It is important that police get the support they need to perform their duties as safely as possible. Assaults on police officers remove resources from the community and demonstrate disregard for the justice system.

As part of the inquiry, the committee looked into how to reduce the incidence of assaults on police and also how to support police resilience and lessen the harm police officers may experience while doing their job. Our inquiry found that assaults on police may be under-reported, which is concerning. This is why we recommended more in-depth study to find out the true extent of assaults and the factors that allow this to happen. We also heard that a majority of health and safety incidents reported by police are physical assaults. When officers take leave due to an assault, it puts a strain on the police workforce as well as on individual officers. To assist the NSW Police Force to manage this situation, we recommended the creation of a reserve pool of officers to assist in backfilling temporary vacancies. Such a model could alleviate local area command pressures when additional support is needed.

We also heard there is a link between individuals who have a history of violence and those who assault police officers. To address this issue, developing an offender education program and establishing a violent offenders list would be helpful. This is one of our key recommendations to assist offenders to rehabilitate and reduce future assaults on police. Police officers receive a lot of training throughout their careers, including communication and de-escalation skills aimed at preventing violent and negative interactions with the community. However, inquiry participants told us that the nature of policing means that officers will be confronted with unpredictable situations. We commend the NSW Police Force for the support and training that it gives its officers, but we heard that new recruits face culture shock and may not be adequately prepared. We support more resilience training for new recruits to prepare them for hostile and challenging situations.

Of particular concern to the committee is the number of complex incidents involving people with mental health issues. It was brought to our attention that police are increasingly being called as first responders to such incidents. The nature of these calls can sometimes be confrontational and can escalate to assaults unnecessarily. We understand that health responders may be best placed to address these incidents in the first instance, and there is a memorandum of understanding between police and Health on how they work together. However, we found that this should be reviewed to address its effectiveness in the current environment. Our inquiry found that there are already positive measures to prevent assaults, including body-worn video cameras, which were supported by inquiry stakeholders across the board. We also heard that building and maintaining positive relationships and engagement with the community can also contribute to building trust with the police.

It is clear that relationships between the community and the police are an important aspect in preventing assaults on police and we commend the work that is being done in this space. On behalf of the committee I extend our gratitude to the individuals and organisations that made submissions, gave evidence at the committee's hearings and shared their experiences with us. Their contributions have been extremely valuable in helping us understand the issues and formulate our recommendations. Finally, I thank my colleagues for their dedication to

the work on this committee and their support for this inquiry—the Deputy Chair Mr Mark Taylor, MP; Mr Edmond Atalla, MP; Ms Steph Cooke, MP; and Ms Tamara Smith, MP. I also acknowledge committee staff for the work that they have done to support the committee. I commend the report.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:50):** As a member of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety, I have been privileged to participate and contribute to the inquiry titled *Assaults on members of the NSW Police Force*. I state from the outset that no employee should be exposed to any form of violence or assault as they undertake their employment responsibilities. Police officers are tasked with keeping our communities safe and should never be the subject of any form of assault as they go about their duties. We acknowledge every member of the NSW Police Force for their role in protecting our communities.

A recent investigation by the Australian National University has uncovered 39 Australian police officer fatalities between 2002 and 2019, with 12 of those fatalities being a direct result of an assault against a police officer. One incident of an assault against a police officer is one incident too many. The aim of this inquiry was to hear evidence from a range of stakeholders and to make recommendations to the New South Wales Government aimed at supporting our police officers and the minimisation of harm in their work environment. The report has stated:

Assaults on police officers remove resources from the community and demonstrate disregard for the justice system.

The report makes 15 recommendations aimed at reducing the incidence of assault on police, supporting police resilience and minimising the harm they may experience while doing their job. The inquiry explored incidences of assaults on police officers and the impact they have on officers, their families and the community. While the current data suggests the trend in assaults on police officers is stable, the inquiry found that the actual number of assaults may be under-reported. There appears to be a culture that many police officers do not report minor incidents as they perceive that these are just part of the job. The committee also explored strategies to protect police officers through the provision of adequate training throughout their service and not just at the start of their career.

Police officers are often confronted with uncertain and difficult situations that they may not be prepared to face. For this reason, the committee makes recommendations that new recruits fulfil a period of service learning in the community where they are stationed before they commence their active duties. The report also explored how community engagement strategies can assist in building positive relationships and interactions between police and the community. In this regard, we acknowledge the importance of building better relationships and increased positive interactions between the police, children and young people. The report states:

The school environment provides a good opportunity for police to engage with children and young people across a number of age groups. We highlight the work of the School Liaison Police Officers and Youth Liaison Officers and recommend additional resources ... and expansion of programs to include programs for primary school aged children.

I place on record my thanks and appreciation to the NSW Police Force, which has participated in this inquiry, and the many stakeholders who gave evidence at the inquiry. I ask the Government to implement the recommendations. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (12:54):** It is a pleasure to speak as Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety about the committee's report on assaults on members of the NSW Police Force. From the outset, the committee wished it clearly stated that any assault on a police officer is totally unacceptable. Secondly, it noted that assaults on police officers are not only an offence against that individual officer but an offence against the whole community. Assaults on police officers impact upon their physical and mental health and form the bulk of work health and safety incidents reported to the NSW Police Force. The committee also stresses the importance of police getting the support they need to perform their duties as safely as possible. Assaults on police also remove resources from the community and demonstrate a total disregard for the justice system as a whole.

The committee's final report of the inquiry contained a number of key findings and made a certain number of recommendations aimed at reducing the incidence of assault on police, supporting police resilience and minimising the harm they may experience while doing their job. The committee found that it is difficult to identify the true extent of assaults on police officers due to possible under-reporting and the way in which assaults are recorded. The recommendations included that more support be provided to assaulted police, that more resourcing is necessary to cover temporary vacancies created by assaults on police, that further research into the causation of assaults on police be conducted, that offender education programs specifically about assaults on police be developed, and that a violent offender register be considered. The committee also made recommendations relevant to the feasibility of a period of service learning as well as resilience and mental health training for new police.

The committee found that the current memorandum of understanding [MOU] between the NSW Police Force and NSW Health is an inadequate response to the ongoing reliance on police officers as first responders.

The recommendations included conducting a review of the effectiveness of the MOU and an evaluation of police training in communication skills and de-escalation strategies. The committee found that the use of body-worn video when police conduct their activities is a positive tool in assisting police with their duties as well as engendering trust between police and members of the community. Recommendations 12 to 15 related to funding of additional liaison officers, funding for building stronger police-community engagement, provision of additional resources for PCYC activities and a review of cultural awareness training.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work on the committee with the Chair, and member for Goulburn, Wendy Tuckerman, in the conduct of this inquiry. I am also grateful for the work and fantastic contributions of my parliamentary colleagues and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety: the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Cootamundra and the member for Ballina. I think I speak on behalf of the whole committee when I thank the Parliament's Committees Office. Particularly I thank Emma Wood, the committee manager responsible for the law and safety committee, for her outstanding work. I look forward to the recommendations being implemented to look after New South Wales police.

**Report noted.**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Report: Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (12:57):** As Chair: I speak on the report entitled *Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places*, which I tabled in November 2020. The protocol was developed by the New South Wales Government in 1999 to ensure that people sleeping rough are treated respectfully and are not discriminated against because of their living situation. The protocol outlines the rights and responsibilities of people sleeping rough and can direct them to support services if they require or request them. In May 2013 the *Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places—Guidelines for Implementation* was published to assist signatory agencies with implementing the protocol. While Housing NSW was then the lead agency for coordinating the protocol, it is now managed by the Department of Communities and Justice.

The committee embarked upon an inquiry under the terms of reference and received a total of 35 submissions. These came from the community, service providers, local councils and the New South Wales Government. The committee also held two public hearings at Parliament House in August 2020, with witnesses representing the service providers, local councils, the New South Wales Government and those with a lived experience of homelessness. In addition to submissions and evidence at the public hearing, members of the committee had the opportunity to join me on a visit to Belmore Park near Central Station to witness firsthand assertive outreach in the field, which gave committee members valuable insight into the plight of those who experience homelessness and the agencies who serve to help them.

I thank the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, the Hon. Gareth Ward, for joining us on that assertive outreach visit. I thank his staff for organising it, in conjunction with the other agencies who were there on the day. The site visit and the hearings presented the opportunity to meet a number of relevant stakeholders and get firsthand experience of and insight into some of the issues raised during the inquiry. Overall, stakeholders told us that the protocol was a valuable tool to give guidance on appropriate and constructive interactions between public officials and people sleeping rough in public places. However, it was also reported that the protocol was not used consistently across the State and across agencies. We have therefore recommended that a mechanism be put in place to make agencies more accountable by demonstrating how they are implementing the protocol.

The inquiry began just before the start of the global pandemic. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the New South Wales Government has spent more than \$70 million to expand programs to help support some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Assistance has been given to 850 individuals and families to rent homes in the private market. More than 1,900 individuals and families who were homeless or at risk of homelessness have been moved into social housing since April last year, including more than 230 rough sleepers who had spent time in temporary accommodation such as hotels. Throughout the inquiry we heard positive reports on how government agencies and non-government organisations had worked to provide enhanced support to people experiencing homelessness in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This work helped people sleeping rough to keep safe and housed throughout the crisis.

Having considered stakeholders' input, the committee has made 23 recommendations that we are confident will enhance the protocol and make it fit for purpose to meet the contemporary needs of people sleeping rough and the agencies and organisations that use the protocol. Local councils are often among the first points of contact for people sleeping rough. As such, the committee has recommended that local councils be given the opportunity

to become signatories to the protocol. The protocol should include specific guidance on appropriate responses to various vulnerable groups of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, people with disability and young people. We have recommended that consideration be given to including reference to the appropriate child protection provisions for children under 18 years of age who are sleeping rough and guidance on appropriate responses to people under 24 years of age who are sleeping rough.

The value of the protocol can be further enhanced by increasing awareness around it. While we heard that it was well used by a number of agencies, there was less awareness of it amongst the general public and people experiencing homelessness. As noted in the report, the committee heard about the good work and increased collaboration between government and non-government support services in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people experiencing homelessness. I commend these service providers for their amazing work and hope that the spirit of collaboration continues long past the pandemic. The protocol has served the community well over the years and I am eager to see how it develops to continue to meet the needs of the community. I hope that the Government will consider the committee's constructive recommendations as part of this process.

I again thank the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, the Hon. Gareth Ward, and his staff. I thank the other members of the committee, many of whom are here today, for the collegiate way that we worked together on this important issue. I am also grateful to the Legislative Assembly committee staff for the expertise and professionalism that they applied in assisting the committee throughout the inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:03):** I will take a moment to comment on the fabulous work that has been undertaken by the Committee on Community Services in the inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places. The work done by the committees often goes unnoticed by the public at large. When we work together with shared concerns for the people of this State around a number of issues, and are not throwing grenades across the Chamber, we actually do come together. I note that for the record. In this inquiry the committee was dealing with the lives of people who live in extremely difficult situations. I acknowledge that it is tough to hear some of the stories and we all know some of these people. They are the most marginalised, disadvantaged and unwell people in our society. For the record I also acknowledge those who care for them and advocate for them, particularly those who work in the services that respond. Often there are not any easy answers. Many people in those circumstances are only ever a circumstance or two away from homelessness—something I know only too well.

The basis of the report is that practices and protocols that should and can reflect dignity, support, respect and provide easier pathways out of homelessness should be central to what we do in this House for the people of this State. I thank our chair, particularly for her foreword, and I acknowledge that the committee made 23 recommendations arising from comprehensive material and discussions. I particularly pay tribute to members of the committee who really pushed for recommendation 4 being included. I know it has significance for my colleague the member for Wyong and the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, David Harris, for the member for Newtown and for me as the shadow Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. For the first time the committee recommends that the protocol specifically address the needs of some very marginalised people, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women, people with disability, young people, LGBTIQ people, non-citizens and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I think the recommendation is really good work that all members of the committee engaged in together.

I note for the record and for those who work in the space of domestic violence, as well as victims-survivors, that the committee heard that in New South Wales there is an increasing number of women who are experiencing homelessness. The majority of those women are fleeing domestic and family violence. A growing number of them are older women who are experiencing homelessness. That issue is front and centre in the report. As I thank everyone and comment on the good work we do, I also thank all of my colleagues across the political spectrum, all those who made submissions, and those who were brave enough to speak at the hearings about some of their really tough experiences. In particular, committee members could not do this work and speak to the report if it was not for the hardworking, professional and responsive committee staff. They are all fabulous. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (13:07:1):** As a member of the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Community Services I welcome the opportunity to speak to the committee's report on its inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places. Like the member for Blue Mountains, I thank members of the committee for the collegiate manner in which the inquiry was conducted and I thank the chair for her guidance. It is important for me to point out that central to this inquiry is those who have lived experience of homelessness. The protocol was a useful tool for the guidance of appropriate and constructive interactions between the public, public officials and those who are experiencing sleeping rough. I acknowledge those who have a lived

experience of homelessness. The importance of this protocol is ensuring that people who sleep rough are treated with respect and do not suffer discrimination.

Among the many significant aspects of the inquiry is one that I feel was important to raise, which is that this is the first opportunity to review the protocol. I think it is really important to recognise that these instruments should not be static and should not be set and forget. We should ensure that we treat protocols as dynamic documents that are open to review. Also important is a need for consistency of implementing and offering an opportunity to other organisations, such as local councils, to adopt the protocol as well.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to spend time walking the street with the assertive outreach team and it was striking to see the collaboration between government and non-government organisations and to note the importance of assertive outreach and Housing First as tools for assisting those who are living rough. I commend the recommendations of this inquiry to the Government. Homelessness brings with it the lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds and for many of them trauma has been part of their experience; therefore, I draw attention to the need for a trauma-centred approach when responding to those living rough. From the perspective of a regional member of Parliament, the way that this inquiry looked at a regional element was important to make sure that we share insights not only of metropolitan areas but also of the regions. I thank the chair, my colleagues on the committee and committee staff and I commend the report to the Government.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:09):** As a member of the Committee on Community Services, I also make a contribution to this take-note debate on the report of the inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places. While the primary purpose of this inquiry was to examine the protocol, given the intersection between the protocol and the broader homelessness crisis this State is facing as well as the inquiry coinciding with the global pandemic—which has seen significant shifts in how the Government works with organisations and services to respond to community needs, homelessness and sleeping rough—the insights offered by those who made submissions to this inquiry, the experiences and advice shared by witnesses and the report itself provide a timely snapshot on the issue of homelessness and the ways in which homelessness can be prevented and ended.

I urge the Government to take on board and act on the recommendations in the report. I am pleased to say that during the deliberative meeting to consider the draft report I was able to make a significant contribution to amending those recommendations. I acknowledge the recognition of my contribution as a member of Parliament who represents an electorate with a high number of homeless people, as opposed to members playing party political games over amendments. I was grateful that some of those amendments were incorporated in the report. One of the crucial recommendations was that a clear review process, implementation plan and accountability mechanisms be established around the protocol to ensure that all signatory agencies are delivering on their responsibilities. The member for Albury talked about the importance of that review. Another recommendation related to expanding the specific communities to be considered in relation to the protocol to include young people, LGBTIQ+ people and non-citizens. That issue needs more focus, more work and more attention by the Government, particularly beyond this pandemic.

With regard to young people, the committee acknowledged the importance of child protection provisions as a crucial element. The recommendations also include broadening and encouraging more agencies and councils to become signatories and the importance of the provision of training and support, making sure a Housing First approach is referred to in the protocol, and considering the benefits of Public Space Liaison Officers [PSLO] and funding those positions by Government. It seems that the creation of jobs in New South Wales is high on the agenda at the moment. Funding for local councils to establish PSLOs in areas where there are a high number of rough sleepers would be a wonderful contribution to the community and also a way to create local jobs.

I also acknowledge the need for the protocol to be accessible by having person-centred language, being trauma informed and ensuring that those who are unable to speak or read English are able to engage with the services and supports. When we joined with the assertive outreach team—I give credit to those individuals—we came across someone who did not speak English. A card was handed to them, written only in English, explaining how to engage with services. Obviously that card was of no use to them. I acknowledge that Paul Vevers, the Deputy Secretary, New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice, immediately took that on board and recognised that as a problematic approach. [*Extension of time*]

I want to ensure that there is an annual review of the protocol, as the member for Albury said. Homelessness is not inevitable. No-one should be denied a safe, secure and habitable place to live. The Together Home model recognises the need for government support to house people and put housing first, as well as offer wraparound services. I hope this model continues to be funded and expanded so that we can put an end to homelessness in this State. It is not an incurable problem and we have the solutions.

Finally, I thank all the homelessness experts, advocates and community service members who made contributions to the committee's inquiry, including Homelessness NSW, local councils, and services and

community organisations. I urge the Minister and the Government to do all they can to take on board the recommendations of this report, and to hear the stories of those with lived experiences of homelessness, the experts and the people who have the solutions so that we can end homelessness together in New South Wales. I thank the committee staff for their contribution and attention to detail in supporting the work of the inquiry. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues on the committee for working in a collaborative way.

**Report noted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Members*

**MEMBER FOR MAITLAND**

**MEMBER FOR DUBBO**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the member for Maitland and the member for Dubbo who celebrated their birthdays last week. I wish them a belated happy birthday.

*Question Time*

**GREGORY HILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:18):** I direct my question to the Premier. This month I met with families in Gregory Hills who were promised a new primary school before the last election. Under this Premier, school performance has gone backwards and children are stuck in overcrowded classrooms. Why is the Premier failing families in Gregory Hills by leaving them with a dust bowl instead of a school?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:18):** I appreciate that the New South Wales Government has had to play catch-up when it comes to school infrastructure—

**Ms Prue Car:** This is actually a new suburb, so that does not count.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I note that the member for Londonderry said it is a new suburb, which is of interest because since we have been in government we have upgraded or built 152 brand-new schools.

This year alone the New South Wales Government estimates that we will open or upgrade 30 brand-new schools by the end of the year. In fact, last week the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, the member for Northern Tablelands and I were in Armidale opening Armidale Secondary College—the largest investment ever made in our regional communities and something to be proud of. But I know the member for Macquarie Fields is very happy because in this term alone there are three new upgraded schools in his electorate.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I will take the point of order from the Leader of the Opposition in a moment, but I will ask the Clerk to stop the clock because I want to make a statement. Members of the Opposition are interjecting to an unreasonable degree and consistently. I ask them to stop doing so.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question to the Premier was specifically about Gregory Hills. The Premier promised them a school before the last election but has not delivered that school. Could the Premier give us a report please on Gregory Hills?

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Of course we would be pleased to give an update on all the schools that we are upgrading.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I gather from the Leader of the Opposition's question that she is interested in the school infrastructure program, so I am giving her an update on that. I am saying that we have completed 152 schools since we have been in government. This year alone—

**Ms Prue Car:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I have just ruled on relevance. Is the point of order on relevance or is it something else?

**Ms Prue Car:** It is clearly relevance. The question was—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Londonderry will resume her seat.

**Ms Prue Car:** —that parents of Gregory Hills need to know—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Londonderry will resume her seat. The Premier will continue.

**Ms Prue Car:** —when are they finally going to get their school.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It is important to note that in this term alone, Ajuga School in Macquarie Fields is being upgraded, Campbell House School in Macquarie Fields is being upgraded and Glenfield Park School in Macquarie Fields is being upgraded, and this is just in this term.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** If it is on relevance I am going to let the Premier continue. Is it on relevance?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is 129. The Premier has not even mentioned Gregory Hills.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Premier will continue.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** The question is specifically about Gregory Hills.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Premier will continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Leader of the Opposition had three months to think of her questions for question time. If she cared about that school she would have raised it with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. When we came to government there was a net loss of schools caused by those on the other side of the House.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

Do they want to hear the answer or not?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am not going to continue with this noise. Mr Speaker, can you please make a ruling?

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Premier will continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite do a disservice to all the parents, whether they are in the electorate of the school the Leader of the Opposition has raised today or in any other community.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will remain silent.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** They ask a question and they have taken 10 points of order.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order: Premier, we are more than four minutes into the question—

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

**Ms Anna Watson:** You have not even gone near Gregory Hills. Can you please talk specifically about Gregory Hills?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time. Members will take their points of order through the Chair.

**Ms Anna Watson:** I did.

**The SPEAKER:** You did not.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I understand that Gregory Hills, along with a number of other schools, is in the planning phase.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** What those opposite do not realise is that when you are investing more than \$6.5 billion over four years in so many schools— *[Time expired.]*

### COVID-19 AND JOBS GROWTH

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:24):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is creating jobs to help the State recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:24):** I thank the member for East Hills for her question. I know that in her community, as well as in so many other communities—especially across western and south-western Sydney—people are concerned about their jobs. In fact, people across the entire State are concerned about their jobs. No matter where you go, we know that jobs and job security are critical to the wellbeing of families and communities. I thank the member for East Hills for ensuring that wherever possible the Government is focused on creating jobs in her community and throughout the regions. That is why I am proud that during the pandemic we have not had a single day when we have not been able to forge forward with our infrastructure pipeline. Whether in the city or the regions, we have ensured that the \$107 billion that the Treasurer has found in the budget to invest in our schools, roads and hospitals is critical not only for delivering essential infrastructure but also for creating and keeping thousands of jobs.

Many of those projects rely on local supply chains. With international markets disrupted, more and more infrastructure projects rely on local materials, supplies and products. I am pleased to say that, notwithstanding the challenges of the pandemic and the shock that has been absorbed by the hospitality and tourism sectors in particular, New South Wales is bouncing back. However, we know that the Government must enable that bounce-back. In particular, I thank everybody involved in infrastructure delivery across the State, which has allowed us to complete 152 schools with another 30 to be delivered this year. In addition to our hospitals, roads and rail, that vital and critical infrastructure is being delivered across the board.

I commend the Treasurer, the finance Minister and all those involved in providing support through Service NSW to small businesses, including those in East Hills, during these difficult times when business interference or government policy creates interruptions that impact cash flow. We make sure that we are providing that support. We provided that support on the northern beaches, and we provided it some time ago for our border communities in southern New South Wales when we had to close the border. I appreciate the ongoing concerns and issues regarding that level of support at a grassroots level. The New South Wales Government will always consider options to support small businesses and to make sure that they continue to employ people, which is so critical moving forward.

In addition to infrastructure and to the stimulus that we are providing in direct support to small business, and the payroll tax cuts, we are also looking at how we can keep the virus at bay and ease restrictions. Today I was pleased to announce that from Friday the four-square-metre rule goes back to the two-square-metre rule. In terms of hospitality's contribution to the budget, the latest advice, which we received this morning, is that that will add another one-third of \$1 billion into the New South Wales economy every month—in essence, a \$300 million injection every month. Over three months that will bring \$1 billion back into the economy simply from being able to ease the restriction from the four-square-metre rule to the two-square-metre rule. That demonstrates that when we are able to keep the virus at bay, and we appreciate the importance of keeping the economy open, easing restrictions has that dual effect: It allows people to try to have a COVID-safe, normal way of life, but it also ensures that jobs can continue well into the future.

I acknowledge the good work done by my Parliamentary Secretary, Gabrielle Upton, in relation to a paper she presented on centralising research and development functions in New South Wales. COVID has taught all of us that New South Wales is stronger and more resilient than we envisaged and that we have the opportunity to create the jobs of the future. By centralising research and development functions across government, we are able to create more jobs in future growth areas to ensure that level of job security. We know that that involves retraining. It involves people of all ages at all stages of life thinking about their options. But this has given us an opportunity to think about how New South Wales can have the edge moving into the future.

In addition to those initiatives, we are also developing our activation precincts in the regions and in the city. For example, through our three cities strategy we have the Central to Eveleigh precinct, where we are encouraging IT investment and development. The Westmead health and education precinct is attracting investment from all around the world, and I know for the Parramatta community and surrounds that is a big jobs boost. Certainly around the new airport city, the aerotropolis, we will be creating literally thousands and thousands of jobs. [*Extension of time*]

We have seen that precinct take shape in relation to future industries like 3D printing, robotics, freight and logistics. Already many global brands and brands common to us in Australia have set up shop there and are creating thousands of jobs. Whilst we know we live in challenging times, the Government is always on the front foot and considering what opportunities it can create for job security, jobs creation and also reskilling, allowing people to gain skills, change skills and change professions if they need to.

As a result of the vast inroads in making ourselves more efficient in the back office, through Service NSW we are able to provide a digital offering to many of our citizens. That means we can employ more people on the front line to support our communities, whether it is nurses, whether it is police or whether it is customer service personnel. We are always looking for opportunities. COVID has shown us how we can cut red tape and create

opportunities to reduce our costs in the back office and make sure we invest in extra staff on the front line. Service NSW—and our investment in health, education and police—is demonstrating how jobs can be created through the Government being more creative, more innovative and more efficient.

I thank the member for East Hills for her question. Through our infrastructure pipeline, our approach to easing restrictions as well as keeping the virus at bay, the stimulus measures that we have, our precinct development and our areas of focus like research and development and skills, the New South Wales Government knows that this year—perhaps more than any in our State history—it needs to focus on jobs across the State. It needs to focus on growing job security, creating new industries and supporting those industries that will create those jobs. But it also needs to be open to the fact that citizens of all ages and stages in their careers should look, and will be looking, towards reskilling.

#### NORTH-WEST SYDNEY SCHOOLS

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (14:30):** My question is directed to the Premier, who promised a new school on the Schofields Road at the Tallawong precinct in Rouse Hill before the last election. Thousands of families have moved in but the school has still not been built. Why has the Premier failed to deliver the schools that families in north-west Sydney need?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:31):** I appreciate the question from the member for Blacktown but I wish to reiterate that the Government intends to keep all of the commitments it made before the election, notwithstanding the shocks we have had to absorb through what can only be described as a challenging past 18 months. We intend to keep every single promise we made. We intend to make sure that we deliver on the ground for our citizens. Following on from the question that the Opposition leader asked me—as well as the member for Blacktown, and through various interjections—I am happy to go through some of the schools that we have built in the last little while.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

The question was about the north-west.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: The question was specifically about the Tallawong precinct in Rouse Hill.

**The SPEAKER:** And the Premier has directly answered that question, so please sit down.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** No, the Premier has not answered that question, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has answered the question. Please sit down.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Please answer that question!

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has answered the question.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We need a school at Tallawong because we built the north-west rail line, which starts at Tallawong station. Those opposite could not even build the infrastructure communities need to move forward.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Clearly my staff—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Clearly we could not fit all 150 school upgrades and the 30 new ones for this year on the list, but I want to give some examples of upgrades we have made already. In the north-west—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Examples of new schools include the Ponds High School at Riverstone, which is in the north-west—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** —and Russell Lea. There is also a number of schools in the south-west, including Marie Bashir Public School in Strathfield, Gosford Public School in Gosford, Jordan Springs Public School in Londonderry, and the list goes on. In Bankstown—is the member for Bankstown here?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time. I call the Treasurer to order for the first time. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Of course, there is Bardia Public School in Macquarie Fields, the Hunter School of Performing Arts in Newcastle, Ashbury Public School in Summer Hill and Banksia Road Primary School in Lakemba.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: The question was about the north-west and the Premier is talking about schools in Gosford.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has answered the question. I am satisfied that the Premier is now being generally relevant. The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

[*Interruption*]

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has clearly answered the question and may continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Are you kidding me? Like, seriously! For how many years did Labor promise the north-west rail line?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** No wonder members are talking on the opposite side; the Leader of the Opposition had three months to come up with a question and on the second day of question time she has asked me about commitments we made two years ago before the last election.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If members wish to ask a specific question, then ask it. But the Premier has answered the question and is now being generally relevant. The Premier may continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The good news for the communities of the north-west, the south-west, western New South Wales, the cities and the bush is that we will keep delivering the infrastructure—schools, hospitals, roads and rail—that our communities need across the State.

#### REGIONAL JOBS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:35):** I address my question to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and all-round good guy. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government's investment in roads is driving jobs in the regions?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (14:35):** I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. On Friday last week I was in Dungog with the member for Upper Hunter and the Deputy Premier to announce more than \$16 million to fix 23 timber bridges in that community. Those are just some of the 424 bridges that have been funded in round one of our Fixing Country Bridges program across 54 local government areas. That is a great program. That \$500 million investment in bridges in the bush could only be delivered by The Nationals and Liberals in government. It will mean that hundreds of projects will start across the State in the coming months, and that will create more than 2,000 jobs.

I will provide members with an example. At the last election Labor committed \$9 million to replace and upgrade bridges in the Kyogle area. In round one of this program the Government is investing more than \$40 million, which is a game changer for the community. I know the member for Lismore is watching and she will be cheering me on when she hears this announcement. Last year the Government announced \$250 million to fix local roads—roads that matter to local communities. That includes hundreds of projects to support more than 2,200 jobs, from Brewarrina to Cessnock and even down to Griffith. Again, those small projects will make a big difference to those communities. Those road projects make a real difference because people use those roads every day to get to work, to take their kids to school and to get home—and there is more to come.

In the coming months I will be announcing the next round of funding, which will see more than \$100 million invested in local roads across our communities. Again, that will create jobs for the bush. We have started the Coffs Harbour Bypass on the North Coast. That is the biggest infrastructure project ever seen in that town's history, and it will create more than 2,000 local jobs in the area. It is clear that members on this side of the House are driving projects that create jobs in the right parts of the State. I ask Opposition members: Exactly what are they doing? Every time we talk about those projects, they get out there and they oppose them and I do not know why. Is it because they are anti-jobs?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We committed \$2.5 billion to the Great Western Highway. That project will create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, and guess what? Labor is against it. The community has signs up along the Great Western Highway. They are backing in our plans for our tunnel, and you know what? The Labor member does not want it. Her community is telling her that she has got it wrong. Our Dubbo bridge project is going to create 300 jobs in construction, and guess what? Labor is against that as well. The only jobs that Labor members

care about are their own. Their jobs will be secure in opposition for the next four years and the four years after that. I heard Dom come up here yesterday and speak about his eldest daughter probably getting through high school before we see a Labor government. It will not be just his eldest daughter; it will be all the kids. All the kids will go through before we see a Labor Government ever again.

I say to Labor: Get behind these projects. If you want to come out into the regions and see them, I will show you. I will take you again. I will take you on a road trip and you can see some of the projects. I will show you the Newell Highway. I will show you the 40 new overtaking lanes that are being constructed on that road. I will show you how it is going from border to border, supporting local communities. I will show you the sealing of the Silver City Highway and the Cobb Highway—changing communities forever and providing around 150 jobs during construction—or the Albion Park Rail bypass, which is another project that has seen over 2,800 people working on it and another project that is ahead of schedule.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Based on its performance this week, Labor is going nowhere.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I will tell you this. I want you to listen to this. I came across a story at the end of last year and I just cannot get it out of my head. I carry the article everywhere I go now. You want to listen. It is from *The Daily Telegraph* and it says:

The only thing you don't like about Sydney or NSW is Labor leader Jodi McKay.

That has to hurt. A heading like that has really got to hurt. [*Extension of time*]

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Before starting the clock for the extension of time I will hear the point of order.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Clearly the Minister is using a prop. There were four words he had to remember and he needed to bring a prop to remember them.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not a prop. I am satisfied that it is being used as an aide-mémoire.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is about jobs and I am talking about the job that the Labor leader is doing. This is based on a survey of 2,000 people. Out of that survey, only 5 per cent of people trusted the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The social researcher says there is a message in it for the—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lakemba rises on a point of order. The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I recall the question being specifically about roads. We have swayed way off that.

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy to give the Minister a little bit of leeway, but not too much.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is about jobs.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Stop the clock.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Ryan Park:** It is under Standing Order 129, but I want to refer to something. At the beginning of yesterday you asked us to improve the standard of behaviour.

**The SPEAKER:** Are you speaking to the point of order?

**Mr Ryan Park:** Yes, it is 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Are you still Leader of the House on your side?

**Mr Ryan Park:** Yes.

**The SPEAKER:** Consistent with that, I ask you to show some leadership rather than consistently interjecting. I will uphold the standards of behaviour, but I ask you to hold your own side to account. If you are going to start lecturing me, just watch it.

**Mr Ryan Park:** I ask you to adjudicate on Standing Order 129. You have said from the very beginning that things have to be generally relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** I have adjudicated on that point of order. Resume your seat. I said I have given the Minister a little bit of leeway, but not too much.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I am going to read this quote because it talks about jobs, and jobs is the question.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** "Now there is a message in it for the Labor Party to do their job because the feelings are clearly showing that is what the people want."

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Will the Minister be going on a call? You would put me on one; you did yesterday, in fact. The Minister is still not being relevant, and he should be relevant because—

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** —I have written to the Minister about a regional road in my electorate.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume her seat. Minister, I have ruled on relevance. You will very shortly return to roads.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There is no doubt that our roads are supporting our contractors and our subcontractors right across our communities. If anyone was wondering, I did see in that poll that 75 per cent of people surveyed actually said they trusted the Premier. I am one of them too. I say well done to the Premier and congratulate her. We will put that poll aside. I conducted my own poll. I polled the Labor Party people in my electorate. There is a whole 10 of them. I will tell the House what happened. Three of them said that they want and trust the member for Strathfield. Three said they trusted the member for Kogarah. The surprise was the member for Wollongong. He got four. Four people said that they actually trusted him. I am going to get on with the job of delivering for our communities. We will do the road projects that create jobs because that is what The Nationals and Liberals do in government.

#### MARSDEN PARK HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:45):** My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier promised families in Marsden Park a high school before the last election. It is two years later. Thousands more families have moved in and still construction has not begun. Why has the Premier failed to build the high school that my community needs now?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:45):** In relation to similar questions I have received in question time, I am pleased to advise that the site for the Schofields Road proposed school at Tallawong was announced in July last year. The project is on track for delivery by day 1, term 1 2023. Gregory Hills is in the planning phase with the completed final business case already ready. We will be providing further information to the community about that. I will get updated information in relation to the school that the member for Londonderry has just spoken about in Marsden Park. I do not have that information at my fingertips, but I am sure somebody will provide it to me by the end of question time. But the bottom line here is that, when we say we are going to do something, we do it. The bottom line here is that no-one has a greater passion in public education than someone who has been through the system like me.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** This is not about you. This is about the families.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is providing the type of detail that the member for Londonderry has asked for. Please listen to it.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It is also important to note, as I said, that while it is easy to try to make various assertions about whether or not we will deliver schools, the bottom line is that since we have been in government we have delivered upgrades or new schools to 152 of them, which is a record for this State. The infrastructure investment is in excess of six and a half billion dollars.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Londonderry is on her last warning.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** When we came into government, there was not even an infrastructure team in the entire Department of Education.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN:** I stress that when we came to government, there was not even an infrastructure team within the Department of Education. We had to start it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Londonderry to remove herself from the Chamber for one hour under Standing Order 249A. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Londonderry left the Chamber at 14.47.]*

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN:** I know why the member for Londonderry is asking that question today. I do not blame her for wanting things delivered in her electorate. I do not blame her because she is worried about her margin and what could happen at the next election. I say this: Whether it is schools or hospitals, roads or rail, when we say we are going to do something, we do it. Not even the challenges we have been through in New South Wales—

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. I do not know if the Premier realises it, but the development application to demolish the building—that old house in Schofields—has been withdrawn by the Government. The Government is not even progressing with the planning, unless it is going to keep the old house for the principal's cottage or something.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. The member for Blacktown will resume his seat.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN:** If those opposite think that they know the answer, why did they ask the question?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Blacktown to order for the second time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN:** I will not take too much more of the House's time, but I will say this: We intend to stick to all of our commitments. We intend to stay close to our communities and support them during this challenging time. Even though New South Wales has been through a very difficult time we are more motivated and more enthusiastic than ever to deliver the services and infrastructure our communities need right across the State.

#### RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government's policies on renewable energy zones will create jobs across New South Wales?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:49):** What a great question from a great member, the member for Dubbo. I know he is not the only member in the Chamber who is interested in jobs—isn't that right, member for Keira? There are a few people here interested in talking about jobs at the moment. It is great to be back in Parliament. We have had some great rulings from you straight out of the blocks, Mr Speaker—that is fantastic stuff. I ask you to put the lettuce away for this one, though. Here we are a year closer to the election and members opposite are no closer to government. That is the reality. It has been a tough summer for them. They are still faced with the same choice: a leadership ballot between Marginal Minns and Missing McKay. Let me give them a hot tip: They cannot vote for you if they do not know who you are!

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I am very interested to hear about the renewable energy zone in the Hunter and what the Minister's plans are. We would like him to move onto the topic.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is making preliminary comments. The Minister has the call.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I do digress. I will go back to the question—what was it? It was about creating jobs in New South Wales. There is no greater creator of jobs than the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government in New South Wales. The reality is that our energy road map is the biggest job creation scheme—the biggest nation-building scheme—since the Snowy Hydro. Our energy road map will deliver 9,000 construction jobs in New South Wales over the next decade. We will be creating thousands of ongoing jobs to ensure that our kids and their kids have opportunities, not only in the cities but mainly in the regions. It is a jobs bonanza for the bush.

That is what Coalition governments deliver: jobs, opportunities and investment. Did I mention the investment? Our energy road map will see over \$50 billion of investment coming into New South Wales. This is about jobs and investment. Most importantly, it will deliver the citizens of New South Wales some of the cheapest, most reliable and cleanest energy anywhere on the planet. What does that mean? That means jobs in new industries like green steel, green aluminium, cement and, of course, hydrogen. But those low energy prices will not only drive down bills for families in New South Wales but also mean an economic bonanza for those energy-intensive industries that already exist—businesses such as Tomago Aluminium.

But members should not take my word for it. They should take the word of some of the biggest employers in the State, such as the CEO of BlueScope, who said the New South Wales Government's energy road map would stimulate a manufacturing renaissance in New South Wales—delivered by a Coalition Government. It is not just industry spruiking our wares; it is also the Australian Industry Group and its CEO, Innes Willox. You have heard of him haven't you, Premier?

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Absolutely.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** He is an outstanding champion for business and jobs. He says that the New South Wales energy road map will lower costs overall. Low costs for New South Wales families and low costs for New South Wales businesses means jobs, jobs, jobs. It is a jobs bonanza right here in New South Wales. But who is owning this space? It is not the alleged party of the workers opposite. It is a Coalition government that is delivering jobs and driving investment into New South Wales, delivering cheap, reliable energy that also happens to be clean, setting us up for success now and into the future as we grab these new opportunities that are emerging in international markets.

We are creating new industries around green steel, hydrogen, cement, manufacturing and agriculture. This is what Coalition governments do. It is an exciting time to be in New South Wales. While we are focused on creating new jobs, those opposite are focused on taking other people's jobs. I read a great piece from that fine investigative journalist from *The Daily Telegraph*, Anna Caldwell. The extent of her investigations was picking up the phone to the member for Rockdale. He said, "We are further behind now than we have ever been." [*Extension of time*]

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Whilst the Minister was talking about energy in relation to the question, everybody was quiet. Once again he has strayed well away from the question, which was about renewable energy zones, I believe.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the Minister to remain relevant.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** It is about jobs. It is about energy creating jobs. Low energy prices mean jobs for the bush, jobs for the cities and jobs right across the State. This is a job-creating government. We on this side are driving new industries, investing in new opportunities and underwriting the prosperity of today and tomorrow, making sure that New South Wales is not only the powerhouse of the Australian economy but the powerhouse of the world, because of the cheap, reliable and clean energy that we will deliver as a result of this road map. Maybe the member for Lakemba was the unnamed source in Anna Caldwell's article who said, "We are further behind now than we have ever been."

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: Unlike the Minister, I do not leak to the press. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister has definitely strayed well away from the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear further from the Minister.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I see lots of names being touted as the future leader of the Labor Party, but no-one is touting the member for Lakemba. They are touting many fine people. Getting back to the point, why is the Opposition further behind than it has ever been when it has names like "Missing McKay", "Marginal Minns", "Can't Count Keira" and "Developer Daley"? Is it any wonder those opposite are so far from government it is not funny?

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 70. The Minister is being deliberately quarrelsome and I ask that you bring him back to the leave of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has completed his answer.

**Business interrupted.**

#### *Announcements*

### **CHAMBER SEATING ARRANGEMENTS**

**The SPEAKER:** I have been asked to clarify an issue that was raised by the Treasurer. I make it very clear for everyone's benefit that even though we are moving from an environment of four square metres to two square metres, the current seating arrangements will remain because of the 1.5-metre social distancing rule. The guide is best practice, which we are following. If the Minister wishes to change that then we will review our situation.

*Question Time***SCONE TAFE****Business resumed.**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (14:57):** My question is directed to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education. Before the last election the member for the Upper Hunter, Michael Johnsen, told the community that Scone TAFE would not close. Why is the Government selling off a TAFE campus in the Hunter region, where almost one in five young people are unemployed?

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (14:58):** I thank the member for Lakemba for his question. I share a passion for TAFE with the member for Lakemba. I am sure he means well in his question. It is a great opportunity to update the House on the wonderful achievements of TAFE, including the program for Scone and how the Government is delivering great services in the Hunter. Firstly, I congratulate and thank the Treasurer and the Premier on their record budget for TAFE this year of \$1.97 billion. That is up on last year and does not include \$263 million worth of capital programs to be rolled out this year alone. There is great news for TAFE. This just goes to the point that this Government is committed to TAFE remaining a comprehensive public provider of skills training.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister is being relevant to TAFE but the question was specifically about why Scone campus is being sold off.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will continue. He is in the first minute of his answer and he is talking about TAFE.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** This demonstrates that our Government is committed to TAFE. As we know, TAFE has a long and proud history. For over 100 years TAFE has been delivering right across our State. From time to time we buy and sell different campuses right across our State because we have to adapt to the different needs of our industry, our community and our learners. Over time we have to change our footprint to suit the economy, to suit the businesses we serve and to suit learners. It was with great pleasure last year that we opened the Scone Connected Learning Centre [CLC], which is a multimillion dollar investment in Scone.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Opposition members do not like to hear good news. It is a ridiculous proposition to think that the Government has to keep the exact same infrastructure we had 50 years ago.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Cessnock will remain silent. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the third time.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** This CLC echoes the Government's commitment in TAFE to deliver infrastructure where industry wants it, where students want it and where the community wants it. Recently for the first time ever in Yamba we opened a CLC. This offers opportunities for people.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is a shopfront.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It's useless.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is appalling, Jodi—absolutely appalling. You should apologise to the staff.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question is specifically about the sale of the Scone TAFE campus.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied the Minister is being relevant. The Minister may continue.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I would ask that the Minister provide the answer in regards to the Scone TAFE campus.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister may continue.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I draw that to the attention of the House and ask if the Opposition leader could apologise to the staff and our teachers who work at CLCs right across the State. We have 14 CLCs right across the State. If the Leader of the Opposition had ever bothered to see one, visit one and talk to the teachers, she would understand these are great facilities that add valued courses right throughout our State for the people in our regions who do not have access to Sydney, Newcastle or Wollongong TAFEs, so they can have an increased number of courses and can learn expertise.

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

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** As I was saying, TAFE NSW is committed to delivering high-quality training in Scone and across the Upper Hunter.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Once again, the question was: Why are you selling Scone TAFE?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has answered the question and is being relevant. The member for Lakemba will resume his seat. The Minister may continue.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Sorry, Mr Speaker. May I?

**The SPEAKER:** No. I have ruled. The member for Lakemba will resume his seat.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Mr Speaker, you said if we kept our question specific—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lakemba will resume his seat.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Since its opening in July 2019, which was a little while ago, the new connected learning centre at Scone has boosted the training available in Scone by offering a wide range of courses that were never previously available at that site or in that area. How good are CLCs?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** So why are we selling the campus?

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Jihad, can you give me a small extension because I would like to talk about the anecdote?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Well, if only you could answer the question I asked you.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I was at Scone during the drought and the bushfires. I was talking to a lady for the first time during that time when she had no animals on her farm. The only opportunity she and her husband had for social interaction was to go to TAFE at the Scone CLC to talk to different people. [*Time expired.*]

## SOCIAL HOUSING

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:03:1):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will she update the House on how the Government's record spend on social housing is delivering jobs and skills in New South Wales?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (15:03:3):** I thank very much the member for Myall Lakes for his question and his interest in improving the community in which he lives and proudly represents. I am delighted to inform the House that in a couple of months 10 new houses will be built in Taree, creating 11 jobs and \$2.3 million in economic activity. This is a social housing revolution that is going on in New South Wales under the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. We are making a stronger and safer New South Wales, undertaking the largest social housing renewal in Australia. It is a two-pronged approach: more homes for the vulnerable and opportunities for jobs and training, making the builders of tomorrow.

In November's budget the Treasurer announced a \$900 million expenditure in the NSW Land and Housing Corporation and in our social housing, an 80 per cent increase on the money spent in previous financial years. It will bring forward the building of thousands and thousands of new homes and create up to 3,000 jobs across New South Wales. For every million dollars invested in social housing, five new jobs and one apprenticeship are created. Whether it is in Dubbo, where we have joined with TAFE on three special projects totalling \$2.2 million to get young people into the building sector, or at Warwick Farm, where we are turning two housing sites into 52 brand new apartments that are under construction, that is the change that we are making across Sydney and New South Wales.

Forty per cent of our expenditure is going into regional New South Wales. In south-west Sydney we are working on more than 40 sites and precincts with 11,000 homes, 3,500 of which are social housing. Last year the Treasurer and I went to Arncliffe, where we created 142 new homes, renewed 142 apartments. We are changing lives. One of the residents who moved in is a fellow who was living in his car. He is 51 years of age with two children, a boy and a girl. Now with an apartment he has his mental health issues under control. He is able to look after his kids a couple of days a week. And the best thing is he is being a mentor and a leader to the other residents at Arncliffe so much so that he is conducting cooking classes at Arncliffe for other people to retrain and go to work. That is an example of the life-changing things that we are doing, making New South Wales safer and more secure. It is an exciting project.

At Moree we are delivering 13 new Aboriginal housing properties, the largest the town has seen in many years. Those homes will be completed by the end of the year and, more than that, the homes are supporting 25 new apprentices from the Gamilaraay community. We are putting Indigenous young people into jobs and training with

this social housing renewal. Yesterday I was surprised as I listened to the Victorian Premier, Dan Andrews. It is like compare the pair. You want to compare Victoria and New South Wales?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** He is the meerkat.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** He is the meerkat, is he? I thank the member for his interjection. I thought as such I would compare the social housing investment in Victoria versus that in New South Wales. Would you be surprised, Mr Speaker, that Victoria has 76,000 social housing properties whereas New South Wales has more than double that: 155,000 social housing properties. Victoria's per capita investment in social housing is \$101. New South Wales invests 60 per cent more: \$161 every year. In fact, New South Wales is leading Australia in regards to securing social housing funding.

Of the \$562 million of Commonwealth funding that has been distributed across Australia, New South Wales has received 82 per cent or \$460 million in partnership with the NSW Land and Housing Corporation and our community housing providers. We are using the Commonwealth money that is on offer to build more homes and to create more jobs and more apprenticeships to make this State safer and secure. Labor around the country has a very big problem. It has turned its back on the vulnerable in our community. No wonder amongst Labor voters the Premier is respected for the job she is doing at 59 per cent compared to 39 per cent of Labor voters supporting the Leader of the Opposition, Jodi. That is polling analysis from *The Sydney Morning Herald*. [Extension of time]

It is important to understand the hard work we have done as a Government to be able to manage the economy and ensure that we had money in the kitty to get us through this stimulus and it is actually now being provided to improve social housing outcomes. While the focus all seems to be on Anthony Albanese's leadership, you can be sure the sharks are circling over there around Jodi's leadership. It is interesting that the contenders come from all areas, whether it is Kogarah, Wollongong or Londonderry, and even old Maroubra is back in the mix.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that the member for Myall Lakes asked for further information and then he walked out.

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

**Mr Jihad Dib:** It is Standing Order 129. He asked for further information and then he left before it was delivered.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member for Lakemba will resume his seat.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** But, Mr Speaker, he did not even want to hear it.

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

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** Mr Speaker, I cannot even mislead the House and tell you that you are in the mix, because you are not. All these members are worried because they see that we are delivering for their constituencies. We are building new properties, we are increasing the maintenance and looking after more people. Labor is out in the wilderness. It is the Liberals and The Nationals making New South Wales a stronger, safer State.

#### PUBLIC HOUSING PEST CONTROL

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:10):** I direct my question to the Premier. Given the unacceptable situation of public housing tenants living in properties infested by vermin, including cockroaches and rats, due to negligence by the Land and Housing Corporation, will the Premier commit to an urgent rollout of regular pest control in public housing across the State to ensure that people's homes are safe and suitable to be able to live in?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:11):** I thank the member for Newtown for her question. I thank Minister Pavey for her answer just then in the House, because she has given a very good assessment of the investment that the New South Wales Government is making in social housing. She and Minister Ward work together closely in relation to providing assets and support to our citizens who require that social housing. This is an important issue and the Government is committed not only to increasing supply but also to increasing—

[An Opposition member interjected.]

I again thank Ministers Pavey and Ward, but I also state that, as I understand it, as of December 2020 we conducted a survey of all the tenants, and the minimum requirement is that 75 per cent say that maintenance work is satisfactory to them. We actually had a response of 85 per cent. There is more work to do, I understand, but of course it is encouraging to know that 85 per cent of tenants regarded their experience as positive. In relation to

the specific issue of pest control raised by the member for Newtown, I want to say this: All public housing properties are let to incoming tenants in a "clean, safe and habitable standard in accordance"—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is giving a serious response.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** That's not serious.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Auburn to order for the first time. I call the member for Auburn to order for the second time. The member for Shellharbour will leave the Chamber for an hour under Standing Order 249A.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Shellharbour left the Chamber at 15:12.]*

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am simply quoting the Residential Tenancies Act on what is the legal obligation but then what the Government is doing on top of that. The Land and Housing Corporation accepts—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As the member for Newtown alluded to in her question, the Land and Housing Corporation accepts responsibility for any vermin or pests that are identified in the incoming property. So obviously if there are new tenants coming in, the Land and Housing Corporation is responsible for that, or for issues identified within three months of the tenancy commencing. As with private rentals, public housing tenants are generally responsible for getting rid of vermin after that three-month time period elapses. However, knowing that social housing does have some of our community's most vulnerable, our Government provides additional services to those who need it most, as we did during COVID-19, including outreach phone calls to elderly and vulnerable tenants, information and assistance on preventative health issues, and not counting additional Commonwealth support payments as part of their incomes so at least that frees up their income for other things. In relation to additional maintenance and cleaning in high-rise and complex buildings—

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. With respect to the Premier, I was asking whether she would commit to or at the very least look at a review, because we know that public housing tenants are living in unsafe conditions with cockroaches and rats.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is being generally relevant to the question.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** I am asking the Premier to have a look at whether she can commit to investigating this further—

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough, thank you. The member for Newtown will resume her seat.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** —because no matter what is being set as the requirements, the requirements are not being met.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am simply providing advice to the House on the lengths the Government goes to in relation to supporting the State's social and public housing tenants. In relation to a specific issue, whether it is pest control or anything else regarding maintenance, the Government reviews its position on an ongoing basis. Nobody should be living in substandard conditions. In fact, as Minister Pavey articulated in a previous answer, the Government is investing more in social housing than any other State per capita. Of course there is always more work to be done, but if you look at the progress we have made in recent times—the way in which we have reduced homelessness and, in particular, reduced the period that people are waiting in order to get into accommodation—we have come a long way. Is there more to do? Of course there is. I thank the member for the question.

#### **JOBTRAINER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:15):** I address my question to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education and Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government's JobTrainer package has assisted New South Wales jobseekers impacted by COVID-19?

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (15:16):** I acknowledge the member for Albury for his great question and his passionate interest in all things TAFE. I was very surprised when I was in Albury about a month ago to see the love of the member's community for him. I commend the member for absolutely delivering for his community. I went to a staff forum with the TAFE staff; whether they were teachers, admin staff or security staff, all of the staff were invited along. I commend the teachers at Albury

TAFE for their passion. I commend the staff for coping with COVID; it has not been an easy time this past year because of COVID—right across the economy but especially for TAFE. TAFE, including Albury, has risen to the occasion of looking after the State's students, making it a safe place to learn, to work and to visit. I thank the member for Albury for having me in his electorate and for such a great question.

JobTrainer was implemented to look at the effects of COVID-19. The Government saw a devastating time for the economy and it needed to give people the opportunity to get a job, get a new job or get a better job. JobTrainer is an initiative between the State Government and the Federal Government. A record \$320 million will be put in over the next two years to provide 100,000 fee-free short courses and full qualifications; that is a record amount. I thank the Treasurer for signing off on the program and the Premier for her support of this record investment in skills training for New South Wales.

The Government is not just training people for training's sake. It is training people so that they can get a job, improve their job or increase their productivity to the State. The Government thinks the most important aspect is to make sure people have a job, and that is what JobTrainer is directed at. JobTrainer is targeted at 17- to 24-year-olds; it is for the underemployed, unemployed and jobseekers. People can also qualify if they are in an industry at risk, like the airline or tourism industries—industries that have faced difficult times during COVID. The Government is proud that this is just one of the things that it is doing to address COVID-19 and its devastating effects on the community.

There are over 360 courses—even one for you, Mr Speaker. There would be one for you, if you like. You probably would not qualify because you have a job and, without insulting you, you are not 17 to 24. But any 17- to 24-year-olds will qualify. Courses can be done in business, health, construction, agriculture, community services or in an industry of the future—digital industries, technology, cybersecurity, autonomy or robotics. They are wonderful courses that will meet the skills shortages not just during COVID but also in the future, and there are more on the list.

I encourage people to have a look at the JobTrainer website, especially those students who completed year 12 last year—and I know that many of them are listening to us in the Chamber today and a big shout-out goes to all the year 12 leavers. There has never been a better opportunity to upgrade their skills and try a new trade or profession. It is time now for them to start planning for a new career. We know it is going to be a difficult time to get a job. Many of our young people have not been able to go overseas—they have not been able to go on a Contiki tour. This is an ideal excursion for 17- to 24-year-olds—they can learn at the same time, absolutely free.

We have already had great results with our Summer Skills. We released the Summer Skills program in November. Over 2,000 young people who have left school have already enrolled in the fee-free courses. But, as I said, it is not just for young people; it is for unemployed people and for people whose industries or jobs are at risk. There are so many courses on offer and I implore people to go and have a look at the Training Services NSW website for a list of those courses and their availability. That is in addition to the 100,000 fee-free apprenticeships that we are offering over the next four years, 70,000 fee-free traineeships, 30,000 fee-free mature age scholarships, 35,000 fee-free infection control courses—the list goes on. This Government is committed to the skills needs of New South Wales.

#### *Business of the House*

#### **BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 (3) general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 1724 to 1753 will lapse tomorrow.

#### *Budget*

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2020-2021**

#### **Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:22):** At this point, having finished speaking about the projects around the Conservatorium of Music in Wagga Wagga, I will now turn to the issue of social housing. I congratulate the Government on the announcement of the Tolland renewal project, which is an important development for the city of Wagga Wagga. There is a need in Wagga Wagga for better social housing and it appears to me that currently there are a number of empty social housing sites in the city that need to be repaired, renovated and made available to people on the long social housing waiting lists. These properties are not being used and, worse than that, they are an eyesore for the suburbs where they are. In the midst of a long waiting list it really is a shame that those properties are not being renovated and social housing addressed.

But I have great hopes for the Tolland renewal project in Wagga Wagga. I think it provides the opportunity to renew a suburb—not only to renew the infrastructure in that suburb but also to provide people with the supports they need to live the best lives that they can. In the meantime we have a whole range of issues in many of our suburbs. I have worked with government agencies and the not-for-profit sector to address those issues and I will continue to do so. There is much to do. An important part of tackling these issues is that we address the issue of the structure and quality of our social housing. Investment in social housing is an excellent way of stimulating our economy and making lives better. It provides the opportunity for jobs and building, but at the same time social housing provides better conditions for the people living in it. But infrastructure is just one part of the issue; our vulnerable need to be well supported with the wraparound services that address their needs so they can participate in building our communities. For that, government agencies must work together to address those needs.

The Together Home initiative is a successful program that provides support for the homeless. In my electorate in the Riverina region some very real gains have been made in helping people find stable accommodation. That comes about because of a model in which the support provided addresses the health issues of many of those who are struggling with homelessness. Rather than taking a purely social-welfare approach, the model addresses underlying concerns around drug use, mental health and basic health conditions. I understand that approach has had great success and I look forward to its continuation. It is a model that we can build on when tackling issues of social disadvantage. Many people suffer that disadvantage because of issues relating to mental health, drug and alcohol use, and very real underlying health conditions.

In 2021 we will get back on our feet. I commend the budget, while noting the important work that we all still have to do to rebuild after 2020, the bushfires and the COVID pandemic. Once again I comment on the importance of the current and ongoing funding for bushfire recovery and the infrastructure projects currently underway.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:26):** In the last few days of December 2020 my social media feeds were full of memes that were happy to see the back of 2020 and celebrating the promise of a better 2021. Much has been said about the past 18 months. We had to endure droughts, bushfires, flash flooding and then the COVID-19 pandemic. In Australia and New South Wales, and especially on the Coffs Coast, we have had it better than most of the rest of the world. Earlier this year in the United Kingdom over 1,800 people were losing their battle with COVID-19 daily. Accounting for the difference in populations, that would be the equivalent of losing 700 Australians per day. Since the start of the pandemic last year New South Wales has lost 54 people to COVID-19.

In New South Wales our lockdown was short, our health response has been effective and most sectors of the community have returned to some sense of normality. Over the Christmas holidays the beaches on the Coffs Coast were packed with holiday-makers who might have been enjoying a holiday overseas otherwise or, heaven forbid, in Queensland. That has had great flow-on effects for our hospitality and tourism industries. Every restaurant and cafe I visited during the holidays had adapted quickly to the Service NSW sign-in requirements. With the COVID vaccine rollout likely to take some time, it looks like we will be living with those requirements for the foreseeable future.

Late last year the Treasurer handed down a great budget, which is a great blueprint for creating and supporting jobs, economic growth and prosperity as the New South Wales Government charts a course out of the pandemic. Regional areas like the Coffs Coast are the primary beneficiaries of the Government's record billions of dollars of investment in key areas, such as infrastructure, health, education and the livelihoods of local families. Local residents will benefit from the \$100 out-and-about vouchers, which will stimulate our hospitality and cultural economy, as well as provide much-needed relief for families. Payroll tax relief and small business grants are at the budget's forefront, providing billions of dollars of support. An unprecedented 18 months, such as we have had on the Coffs Coast with bushfires, floods and COVID-19, demands an unprecedented funding program. That is what the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government has delivered.

The budget highlights for the Coffs Coast include \$135 million for early works on the Coffs Harbour Bypass—I will say more about that later; \$72.6 million as part of a \$194 million project for the expansion of the Coffs Harbour Base Hospital; \$5.7 million worth of upgrades for TAFE NSW Coffs Harbour Education Campus—a total value of \$16.6 million; \$5 million out of the \$20 million for the Coffs Harbour Jetty Foreshore Precinct; an additional \$4 million on top of the \$10 million committed to the Coffs Harbour boat ramp for planning, design and construction; \$5 million to construct a new slipway in Coffs Harbour; \$10 million for the Coffs Harbour Airport out of the Economic Activation Fund; \$2.3 million for Aboriginal Housing Office capital works; and \$1.2 million for the Lees Bridge in Karangi. This budget will be delivering significant outcomes for the Coffs Coast community for many years to come.

Just before Christmas last year I was thrilled to join with my State and Federal colleagues to announce the official start of work on the Coffs Harbour Bypass. It is Coffs Harbour's biggest ever infrastructure project and it

will deliver thousands of jobs and inject millions of dollars into the local economy. Once completed, the bypass will improve road transport safety, efficiency and connectivity for local and interstate motorists. It is a massive undertaking and a huge investment in our future. I have listened to the community and have advocated hard to get the tunnels that people requested. To start work in 2020, as we have always promised, is a great win for our region.

I am very happy that the local community has played a major role in developing the project, from helping shape the design of the bypass to engaging with experts in the field, to ensure that the Government can get on with the job of delivering on its promises. So many locals have told me that they just want to see the bypass built. This next step ushers in a new phase, bringing a vital boost to the local economy while construction is underway. Without doubt, the Pacific Highway is a major contributor to Australia's economic wellbeing and I am very proud that the Coffs Harbour Bypass will be a key link in this vital piece of the nation's infrastructure. The first work includes building a new NSW Rural Fire Service station to make way for the bypass near the Korora Hill interchange. As part of the Government's commitment to supporting local contractors, North Coast company Dingo Demolitions are removing the property that is currently standing, while another local contractor, C Build, will build the new solitary RFS facility on the site.

Early work will continue with the demolition of acquired buildings and adjustments and relocations of utilities such as power, water, sewerage and telecommunications, as well as the at-residence noise treatments. Planning approval for the bypass was received only in December, so it was very satisfying to see shovels already hitting the ground. The new road will completely change the journey of more than 12,000 vehicles a day. It will get them out of the centre of Coffs Harbour, bypass 12 sets of traffic lights and save them around 11 minutes in travel time. Tunnels will be constructed at Roberts Hill, Shephards Lane and Gatelys Road, delivering safer, quicker journeys for the thousands of locals, tourists and freight operators who use this route daily. Signifying its critical importance, the 14-kilometre bypass is one of 15 major Australian projects the Federal Government committed to fast-tracking in June 2020.

Transport for NSW received the final stamp of approval after close scrutiny by the New South Wales Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Federal Minister for the Environment. The approval process included assessing the project for its social, environmental, heritage and economic impacts before giving the project team the green light to go ahead with major work. The Coffs Harbour Bypass will link the now fully upgraded Pacific Highway, further transforming journeys along the key route. It is great to see work officially starting on the bypass, which is the number one project that the community has desired for decades. There has been much community consultation in the lead-up to the commencement of the bypass.

I was pleased to hear RFS superintendent Sean McArdle praise Transport for NSW for its inclusive approach to developing the plan for the new RFS shed. He said that RFS volunteers appreciated being able to organise site visits and ensure the plans for the new station met their needs. The agreed location will give the brigade better access to the new highway and provide better parking for the members when attending the station. The Coffs Harbour Bypass is jointly funded, with the Australian Government committing \$1.46 billion towards the \$1.8 billion project and the New South Wales Government committing \$365.4 million. It will deliver major benefits to local businesses, contractors and suppliers for years to come. The project is expected to take about five years to build, weather permitting.

It is also pleasing to see how local, State and Federal governments have worked together to enable the \$23.1 million West Woolgoolga Sports Complex to go from concept to reality. Last November, accompanied by Federal member for Page, Kevin Hogan, and Coffs Harbour mayor, Councillor Denise Knight, I broke ground on the project, which will bring many benefits to our area. There is no doubt the project is a game changer for the entire northern beaches. I am well aware that our community has been fighting to make this a reality for more than 10 years. I congratulate and applaud everyone involved for their commitment and for their invaluable contributions to the project over that time.

Special mention should go to the tireless community working group led by Alastair Milroy. The project is about creating and supporting local jobs. It will generate more than 140 jobs during construction and will support many more into the future. At the same time the establishment of the Woolgoolga Sports Complex will allow Woolgoolga to host major sporting and cultural events, drawing more people to our region. As I have said many times, I want our community to have access to the best possible recreational facilities. The complex includes a multipurpose centre that will feature two indoor courts, a stage, a kitchen, a cafe, multipurpose rooms and amenities.

When complete, the facility will cater for AFL, cricket, basketball, netball and touch football. The project received funding from the Coffs Harbour City Council, the New South Wales Government and the Australian Government through the Building Better Regions Fund. The project has evolved after significant community consultation and input over the last decade. The detailed design phase, led by renowned sports architects Populous and supported by a number of local design consultants, has validated previous concept design, engagement and

input. The project includes the West Woolgoolga playing fields to cater to AFL and cricket, with tournament overlays for touch football, as well as multi-use fields that include lighting, drainage and amenities; the Northern Beaches Multi-Purpose Centre, which contains two indoor courts for basketball and netball, a stage, a kitchen, multipurpose rooms and amenities; and civil works, which include roadways, shed pathways, car parks and services. The project vision for the Woolgoolga Sports Complex is to deliver an inclusive, vibrant and healthy community space for locals and visitors to gather, play, compete, practice, learn, perform and celebrate.

The first stage involves connecting the water and sewer network to the site. Following a competitive tender process, local company Burnett Civil was awarded the contract. The major construction tender is due to go out to the marketplace shortly. Contracts are expected to be agreed upon early this year and work will begin as soon as they are in place. The project is expected to be completed by late 2022. I am also excited to announce that the Coffs Harbour boat ramp will be a key beneficiary of the New South Wales Government's \$205 million maritime stimulus to kickstart the economy and create more local jobs. In great news for our community and for visiting boaters, \$4 million will go to upgrading the boat ramp, dredging the boat ramp basin, extending the breakwater to improve access to the ramp and installing new pontoons and parking. Detailed planning for the work is well underway. The concept designs were developed in consultation with Coffs Harbour City Council and the local community, which has championed the need to upgrade the facility.

A further \$4 million in stimulus funding has been added to the existing \$10 million commitment that was made by the New South Wales Government. That will allow the boat ramp project to better align with the overall *Coffs Harbour Jetty Foreshore Precinct Concept Plan*. The first stage of work involves extending the breakwall by 75 metres, widening the ramp to six lanes and carrying out dredging of the basin. That additional funding will allow for the second stage of the project to be brought forward, including upgrading the car and trailer parking, realigning the access road and entrance and upgrading features such as fish cleaning tables. It makes good sense that the Coffs Harbour boat ramp upgrade also ties in closely with the broader foreshore master plan that was carried out by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. We are supporting New South Wales tourism by making those important maritime upgrades and across the State we are creating 425 jobs in our regional and rural communities to help recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

It gives me great pleasure to pass on the news that my Coffs Harbour electorate is about to receive more than \$5 million in funding for a range of local improvement projects for Crown land reserves and community facilities in our region. It is fantastic to report that \$5,005,100 has been secured for projects this year under the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program. The money will be used to maintain and upgrade reserves as well as the facilities that are located on them. The major projects include a much-needed revamp of the grandstand at the Coffs Harbour Showground and construction of a new glasshouse at the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden.

Local projects that will be funded and the amounts allocated to them include \$4 million to demolish the existing grandstand at the Coffs Harbour Showground, constructing a new one as well as new amenities and a kiosk; \$597,300 to construct a replacement glasshouse at the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden; \$250,000 to renovate and upgrade the community hall, with the addition of an amenities block and the installation of a kitchen at Sawtell Reserve and Holiday Park; \$86,075 to remediate the foreshore area of Boambee Reserve; \$39,725 to upgrade the road, the path access and paving at Corindi Recreation Reserve; and \$32,000 to replace and repair walkways from the reserve area to the beach and headland at the Red Rock Holiday Park.

I am proud that the New South Wales Government is providing \$51.7 million from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund in 2021 to support more than 700 maintenance and upgrade projects on Crown reserves across the State. This year's fund receives a \$40 million boost to support communities that have been impacted by bushfires and COVID-19. It will be used to help fund infrastructure improvements and support jobs for local trades and materials suppliers. Local cricketers are celebrating State Government funding that upgrades cricket facilities across the Coffs Coast. The Coffs Harbour District Cricket Association has been allocated \$20,000 under the Community Building Partnership program and the Local Sport Grant Program. This is exciting news for local cricket clubs as they work to increase community participation in their sport. Improved facilities are certainly helping them to achieve this.

I congratulate the Coffs Harbour District Cricket Association on its stewardship of the game in our region. The association is using a \$8,229 grant to renovate wickets at Reg Ryan Oval, at ARW Forsyth Park in McLean Street, Coffs Harbour, at Toormina Oval and at Woolgoolga's High Street playing field. It is upgrading storage for maintenance and playing equipment at Woolgoolga, thanks to State Government funding of \$12,000. I am extremely pleased to see the Government supporting grassroots cricket in this way. I say well done also to Sawtell Cricket Club for its \$35,000 New South Wales Government grant under the Community Building Partnership program. The funding has helped the club and its hardworking members with their cricket nets complex at Sawtell's Richardson Park. I applaud Sawtell Cricket Club for seeking to offer greater opportunities to community members and aspiring male and female cricketers in our region to hone their skills in a safer environment.

Cricket is an important part of our local community and the club wants to give as many people as possible the chance to enjoy the benefits of playing sport. The nets at Richardson Oval were in poor condition and were inadequate to serve the high level of demand. This project allows Sawtell Cricket Club to continue to grow participation in its sport. I am pleased that this grassroots funding is delivering much-needed improvements at this popular facility. The funds have directly helped create a more vibrant and inclusive local community with positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes.

A welcome injection of \$25,000 brings much-needed upgrades for Coffs Harbour Rifle Club members. The improvements include expansion of the existing awning and flooring, along with target frames to increase the number of lanes. The club can purchase and install two electronic target systems for long-range target matches. The funding has been made available under the New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership program. Coffs Harbour Rifle Club is one of many organisations in our community that are thriving. The club has developed into a vibrant space where people from all walks of life and ages can come together to share their passion and encourage each other in pursuit of their chosen sport.

The Community Building Partnership program has helped deliver 17 projects on the Coffs Coast, thanks to \$300,000 in funding from the New South Wales Government. State Government funding has delivered a \$20,000 boost to the Coffs Coast Outrigger Canoe Club. The Community Building Partnership program grant has helped the club to buy a new OC6 outrigger canoe. With its lightweight design, the new OC6 encourages greater participation by females and adaptive paddlers, while improving club members' health and safety. Newer canoes are lighter, safer, more stable and easier to steer, and have less drag. The Coffs Coast Outrigger Canoe Club is committed to involving community groups in its sport and hosts regular "come and try days" for those groups and for the general public.

Late last year I was honoured to have Premier Gladys Berejiklian join me to turn the first sod for the next stage of Coffs Harbour's world-class regional sports hub. We held a small ceremony to break new ground and construction has now begun on the new synthetic fields. I am proud to say that the New South Wales Government is committed to improving the quality and quantity of sports venues in regional cities. The Coffs Coast Regional Sports Hub is a great example of the benefits of investing in high-quality sports facilities in regional New South Wales. The hub has already attracted major regional and national sporting events, including the first Big Bash League match in regional New South Wales last January, when some of the biggest names in world cricket blasted boundaries.

These events attracted visitors and encouraged spending in regional communities, creating employment and stronger regional communities. Three new rectangular fields and inclusive amenities will be built as part of stage two of the Coffs Coast Regional Sports Hub, creating 68 local jobs during construction. The project is funded through a \$10 million grant from the New South Wales Government's Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund and is one of 21 projects in the regions to benefit from the \$100 million in sports infrastructure funding. The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund ensures that regional New South Wales has a network of spaces and places. Locally, this investment will further encourage the people of the Coffs Coast to get involved in sport and active recreation. I am confident that it will bring huge improvements to a vital piece of infrastructure for the Coffs Harbour sports sector and broader community. It will boost the tourism industry, bringing bigger and better events for the region and, in doing so, create more jobs for the Coffs Harbour community.

Without doubt, we are the first-choice regional destination for major sporting and entertainment events. The real winner from this latest innovation will be our community, which will benefit from the opportunities that the events will offer and the economic value they bring. The Coffs Coast Regional Sports Hub Stage 2, with its fantastic new facilities, including the only synthetic football fields in the area, can only add to our attraction as a place to hold local, regional, national and international events. It will also reinforce our reputation as a welcoming city that offers excellent event experience. The Coffs Coast Sport and Leisure Park precinct, where the regional sports hub is located, comprises 16 hectares of sporting facilities and fields that service football, Oztag—which is hosting a major tournament there next week—AFL, cricket, touch football, rugby league, rugby union, baseball, hockey and athletics at district, regional, State, national and international levels. [*Extension of time*]

Stage two of the Coffs Coast Regional Sports Hub will include two rectangular synthetic fields with lighting; a rectangular turf field with lighting; a four-change-room amenity block, including public toilets, canteen, and officials' rooms; and car parking. Components of the project already completed include a two-change-room expansion to existing amenities, which includes canteen, storage and officials' facilities, and footpath connectivity between the Coffs Harbour Health Campus, Coffs Harbour Education Campus, and Coffs Coast Sport and Leisure Park precinct. On that very same visit, New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian and I greatly enjoyed celebrating the inspirational work of our local community champions, who have changed lives for the better. We had the honour of presenting NSW Government Community Service Awards in recognition of the extraordinary

contributions made by the following Coffs Coast residents: Alison Johnson and Debbie Worldon for their remarkable efforts in the 2019-20 bushfires, and Dean Evers and Aunty Kerrie Burnet for their care and compassion for people in need.

During the bushfires that affected Nana Glen two years ago, Alison Johnson was the community's first point of contact. She helped residents with emergency advice and her cafe was a drop-off for emergency supplies. She helped the RFS by providing advice, food and drinks in very stressful and emotional circumstances. During those same bushfires, Debbie Worldon coordinated the storage and distribution of essential items to affected families, such as blankets, food and household items. She helped arrange temporary accommodation for people who had lost their homes and helped organise the clean-up of their properties. Dean Evers started Hope for the Homeless some four years ago when he saw a need for an independent charity to help people who were homeless. The charity provides household items to people in need, free of charge, when they are fortunate enough to find suitable accommodation. Dean has a caring nature and his door is always open to those people in need.

Aunty Kerrie Burnet gives her time freely to help young people from disadvantaged families in the Toormina area lead a happy and healthy life. She provides food to young people and holds Christmas and other festivities for children whose families are unable to do so. On that same visit by the Premier, the close-knit Nana Glen community was also boosted by State funding for local organisations, which are the heart and soul of a vibrant village life. During her visit to the area the Premier and I were pleased to announce \$25,000 for Nana Glen Heartstart and \$10,000 for Nana Glen Preschool. Heartstart is raising funds for a vehicle that can be used by the Nana Glen Community First Responders, while the preschool project includes new playground fencing and driveway improvements.

The Park Beach Bowling Club has also welcomed upgrades, thanks to \$15,000 in State government funding. The club made a successful application under the Local Sport Grant Program to improve facilities for lawn bowlers, installing seating and shade structures as well as irrigation for the greens. The Park Beach Bowling Club is among a number of Coffs Coast sporting organisations to secure funding under the local sports program, which helps clubs buy equipment, improve facilities and increase participation. I believe sport is a vital part of the fabric of our society. These grants provide essential funds to help our organisations increase participation as we slowly ease COVID-19 restrictions, ultimately benefiting our whole community.

I also congratulate the Coffs Harbour Country Women's Association [CWA] on attracting a State government grant of \$7,880. The Coffs Harbour CWA branch has received the funding under the Community Building Partnership program to install rooftop solar panels and replace old-style interior fluorescent lights with LED lighting. The Coffs Harbour CWA branch was formed in 1931 and has 38 active members. The Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre was also very fortunate to receive a New South Wales government grant. The Stronger Country Communities Fund provided \$50,000, allowing them to buy a new bus. This means local residents have benefitted from low-cost day and overnight trips for seniors in our area.

Since then a further \$5,000 grant was approved by Minister Geoff Lee and the Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre has been busy buying items that have been on its wish list for quite some time. Some members of the indoor bowling group are encountering mobility issues and finding it increasingly difficult to take part. The new mechanical bowler arms have helped keep participants in this sport for longer, promoting physical and emotional wellbeing. The centre has also used its grant to invest in equipment to reduce window glare and to buy new kettles that reduce the risk of scalding. The Woolgoolga Seniors' Centre provides an important outreach in our community and I am pleased the State Government has been able to support it in this way. The new equipment has helped make the centre even more member friendly and enhance the experience of all attendees.

More than \$400,000 in State government funding is improving community infrastructure and delivering an important youth initiative on the Coffs Coast. The Boambee East Community Centre has been allocated \$223,651 for its refurbishment, while \$193,698 has been secured for the RISE Youth community football and wellbeing program. After 15 years the Boambee East Community Centre is undergoing a major facelift to ensure its long-term viability and to improve accessibility. Included in this is an enhanced kitchen and play area, the provision of multimedia facilities, secure storage, improved shade areas and new flooring. RISE Coffs Harbour Incorporated enhances the life skills, wellbeing and employability of Coffs Harbour youth. Following the successful rollout of a community outreach program and annual charity football match, RISE has expanded its activities to establish a community football and wellbeing program. The program provides participants aged 12 to 17 years with the benefits of organised sporting activities in return for participation in a wide range of social and educational activities, together with volunteer community service.

I also say well done to the Englands Park Tennis Club, which has been successful in attracting a \$20,000 grant to carry out significant improvements. The planned work is part of the club's ongoing maintenance program to ensure safe and functional courts for the community. The fund has allowed courts three and four to be resurfaced. The Englands Park Tennis Club is a popular facility that is used widely by the community. It caters

for children and adult coaching, competition players and many social groups. The court improvements provide better facilities for all participants and increased opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

Improvements to the Korora squash club are a big win for the local community, thanks to a successful application for \$15,000 in State government funding. The Local Sport Grant Program is supporting the club's facility development project, resulting in improvements to disabled access. This grant allows people of all abilities to easily access Korora squash club to participate in healthy fitness and social gathering through regular exercise programs. The club will install a new covered walkway with a non-slip surface, lighting, safety railing and a swing door as well as upgrades to the current seating and equipment area for group activities. These upgrades benefit disability support groups and the wider community, expanding the use of the facility for exercise classes and individual needs. I congratulate the club and its membership on their continuing pursuit of excellence.

Golfers at Sawtell can roll along on a new concrete cart path, thanks to a \$15,000 grant to Sawtell Golf Club. I am thrilled the club has been able to secure the funds through the New South Wales Government's 2019-20 Local Sports Grants Program. The concrete cart paths will provide a more accessible golf course for Sawtell Golf Club members and their guests and attract a wider range of user groups from the Sawtell community.

A \$31,250 State Government grant is delivering important upgrades to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia's Coffs Harbour branch. The Community Building Partnership funding helps the branch with its project to provide disability-accessible pathways, a firing line area, additional shelter for people with disabilities and a container for secure storage. Upgraded clubhouse facilities and shelter mean that members can sponsor and train wheelchair shooters and cater to school sports shooting programs and junior development, allowing a variety of programs to be offered for the greater community.

Children at the Aspect school in Coffs Harbour are the big winners from a \$15,500 grant enabling the installation of soft-fall surfacing and new playground facilities. This great project provides a safe and appropriate environment for children with autism to develop the skills needed to participate in community-based sporting and recreational activities. The soft-fall playground surfacing encourages physical activities that help children address developmental delays in motor skills and coordination. The playground gives the children much-needed regular sensory input, which is proven to reduce the incidence and severity of challenging behaviours. The playground upgrade is all the more important considering children with autism experience ongoing barriers to accessing community activities.

I am very excited to talk about big improvements at the Coffs Harbour Lapidary & Associated Crafts Club, thanks to an \$11,500 grant. The club's 50-plus members, who use the clubhouse at the Coffs Harbour Showground each week, are deserving beneficiaries of those important upgrades. The funds will provide for the purchase of two new cabbing machines, new energy-efficient lighting and other small upgrades to the club. Over time, two-wheel cabbing machinery has become outdated and members must wait for lengthy periods to use a six-wheel machine to complete their projects. The two new six-wheel machines are welcome additions. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (15:56):** I speak in the budget take-note debate, although in reality there is not much to take note of in this Government's budget when it comes to the electorate of Auburn. The Government works on the principle that it delivers infrastructure and jobs; that is the truth it would like to put out there. The reality is that that is where it fails, and fails significantly. It might be good at building toll roads where it can sell them off to private operators and rip the money out of the people of western Sydney—10 bucks alone to drive up the M4 and the M4 East. By the way, the M4 has already been paid for twice by the people of western Sydney and the people who are most affected by the changes, the people of Auburn, by tolls imposed by Liberal governments. The Government's mantra is delivering those tolls. But when it comes to the infrastructure that it promised to deliver in areas like Auburn, such as stage two of the light rail, it just does not happen.

It is a failure to deliver on the Government's promises regarding infrastructure and a failure to support jobs in New South Wales. The electorate of Auburn is the second-largest in New South Wales, not in terms of voters but in terms of people. I hear members opposite complain about 700 apartments going up on top of their railway stations. Come down to Carter Street in Lidcombe, where it was 5,500 apartments and the Government has just approved an increase of 700 apartments on top of that. The increase was premised on the fact that the Government was building stage two of the light rail. While the transport Minister has now said that he is not committing to stage two of the light rail, and the Government is breaking that promise, there are apartments in Wentworth Point that have been redesigned so light rail can run through the area. The Carter Street precinct has been designed specifically because the light rail goes there, and what does the Government do? It is western Sydney infrastructure, so those opposite will chuck it out the door. It is not only western Sydney infrastructure but also infrastructure that goes to support Sydney Olympic Park and Silverwater.

Government members bang on endlessly about what they are doing in the Parramatta CBD but, at \$5.4 billion, Silverwater and Sydney Olympic Park generate a great economic output in New South Wales. It is

the eighth biggest local economy in the country, yet the Government delivers nothing so that people can go to where the jobs are. In Silverwater we have advanced manufacturing, but this Government is not interested in that. Government members stand up here and say that they want to have some advanced manufacturing. We have it in droves in Silverwater, but where is the infrastructure to deliver the jobs that the Government promised it would deliver? It is a broken promise.

Another broken promise is the Hill Road exit off the M4—the one thing the Government actually did put in the budget. The Hill Road exit was meant to deal with the overwhelming congestion in the electorate that has been caused by the reintroduction of tolls on the M4. The Government put in \$10 million to add to the \$12 million worth of planning done on the Hill Road exit. We are now in February and the Government has already broken that promise. Government members did not even have the courtesy to let the local member know that they were breaking their promise. They put out a glossy flyer to the electorate with an update on transport issues, but in the bottom corner it said, "By the way, we're not building the Hill Road exit." I found out when everyone got the flyer in their letterbox and gave me a call. That shows this Government's commitment to infrastructure; it just cannot deliver the infrastructure it promises unless it involves privatisation and a toll whacked on the people of western Sydney.

Let us remember the other infrastructure the Government promised it would deliver to the Sydney Olympic Park and Silverwater region, the Metro West, which was to be delivered by 2028. That has now blown out to 2033 and it will cost another \$3 billion, if it happens at all. That is how the Government delivers infrastructure. Like the light rail in the city that went over budget and over time, the Metro West was promised by 2028 and is now scheduled for 2033. In addition, the Minister for Transport and Roads has abandoned stage two of the light rail and the Hill Road exit. But members opposite do not care as long as they can spin it their way by saying, "We're creating infrastructure. We're creating jobs." They do not worry about where the jobs are. We know where the jobs are, but they just do not care.

Government members do not care about the congestion they have created. It is absolute gridlock from Woodville Road to the other side of Rookwood Cemetery and you cannot move on Mona Street and Wellington Street between South Granville and Granville and Auburn and Berala because of the tolls they have put on. Unlike the city and inner city where the Government has built nice little bike parks and bike lanes, we have got nothing. There is no infrastructure to help us deal with the congestion. Government members talk about the Parramatta Road beautification program that they are investing in and say they have given Cumberland council some money for that. I had a look at the projects; not one of them has anything to do with Parramatta Road. They are about parks somewhere else and have nothing to do with congestion. Not one cent has been spent on bike lanes.

In the inner city the Government has built pop-up bike lanes everywhere. But in western Sydney, where you cannot move for the gridlock, this Government just does not invest. It is fine when Government members are dealing with inner-city trendies, but when it comes to the Parramatta CBD, Auburn and Granville it is just too bad. We can see that by their decisions on schools. Overwhelmingly, my electorate is bursting at the seams. Thousands and thousands of apartments are going in—much more than the 700 apartments that people are whingeing about on the North Shore. Newington Public School is at absolute capacity. It is a rabbit warren where eight teachers are needed for playground duty because there are so many demountables. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority, which the Government tried to sneak into the sporting venues bill and break up, has had to loan the school some swampland to use as a playground because there is no space left. Yet the Government is putting 6,200 apartments right on the edge of Newington when Newington Public School is at absolute capacity.

When people were buying those apartments the Government said in its master plan that it was going to build Carter Street Public School, but it has not even got the land. The developer will not hand the land over until 2023, yet all these apartments are going up. When the Government was told to build the school at Wentworth Point for up to 1,000 students, what did it do? It just did not do it. Within a day of its opening that school was at capacity and within two years it had demountables covering its playgrounds. There is no capacity in the schools, yet members opposite think we can take thousands more families in one of the most congested parts of Sydney where we cannot move.

Under this Government, Parramatta Road is a parking lot because of the tolls. Truck drivers tell me, "Look, I'm just a truck driver with my own little business. I pay \$350 a day in tolls." That is how much money is coming out of their pockets when they pick up the goods that they are delivering. But members opposite do not care because they have no compassion and no empathy. As long as their people say, "I'm all right Jack", they do not have to deal with it. If they thought about anything, they would look at the homelessness figures in my electorate to see that building more houses has taken the homelessness rate in Auburn from the fifth to the second highest in the State. The more houses that are built in my electorate, the more overcrowding and congestion I have to deal with. People are suffering because of it.

Families of 18 people are living in two-bedroom flats. I had a man in my office the other day who has 10 children and lives in a three-bedroom house. There is no capacity to get people into housing. The more flats the Government puts up, the more people come there and the more overcrowding and homelessness we have in our electorate. It is just a simple matter of looking at the data, but this Government does not care. If it cared, schools like Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School would have had the investment that it is crying out for. To be fair to her, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, who I am quite fond of, did visit that high school with me. But every statistic will say that a school in South Granville would be number one on the list of schools to invest in to give kids a really good future.

In the Sydney metropolitan area, South Granville has the highest number of single mothers living in poverty and the largest number of refugees living with no income. It also has second highest unemployment rate in the State. If the Government was going to make the best investment it could, it would invest in Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School. Instead, where did its investments go? They went to schools such as St Ives High School that get all the additional things. Schools in my electorate do not get performance spaces or fancy sports infrastructure. They just get ignored. All I have been asking for since the last election is to get rid of a community garden with fencing around it that the school in South Granville thinks is dangerous. Two years later, I am still waiting for an answer. It is not a big ask of money; it is \$100,000. If the Government cared about the kids that need its support the most, that is where it would start investing.

The reality is that we cannot go on in my electorate in the way that we have been going. If the Government thinks this is how the future of Sydney is going to develop, we will have a huge divide between people in one half of Sydney and people in the other half. At the end of the day, that does not produce economic growth. While this State is dealing with COVID-19 and the Government says it will invest in infrastructure, there is a tremendous opportunity to start considering the suburbs that are taking the most hits associated with economic growth—the most congestion, the most overdevelopment and the poorest people. Every socio-economic indicator tells us that that is where the Government should invest and deliver.

The Government should stop breaking its promises on infrastructure. Government members should stop coming into this Chamber and saying, "We deliver infrastructure." They do not. If they delivered infrastructure, stage two of the light rail would have been delivered. How do Government members think the kids in those 6,200 apartments in the Carter Street Precinct will get to their high school, which we hope the Government will build, at Wentworth Point—not at Sydney Olympic Park where it was supposed to go, and 10 years late? How are they going to get to school? The light rail was meant to take them. That was the infrastructure that goes that way. There is no other way. There is one road into Wentworth Point and one road out and it is a dangerous road.

Wentworth Point is a good example. The Government increased the height limits of buildings from four storeys and eight storeys to 15 storeys and it did so on the basis of "Oh well, other heights have been broken so we will increase the height here." At the corner of Bennelong Parkway and Hill Road—which is possibly one of the most dangerous intersections in Sydney and the scene of accidents every week—a set of traffic lights, which is all that is needed, has not been delivered. Near that intersection the Government has increased the height of buildings to 15 storeys. The schools are at capacity and there is nowhere for kids who live in the area to go to school. The Government finally announced a site for a high school a decade after it should have been delivered, but there is no high school. The inability of this Government to put infrastructure into an area before houses are built and people move in is absolutely astounding.

Sports facilities are another good example. Where are the sports facilities for teenagers in these areas? They simply do not exist. There is not a basketball hoop that teenagers can throw a ball into. The place is overrun with apartments. High-rise development works only when infrastructure and green space is built around it. That is the only way it works because people can get out of their apartments and go somewhere. But that just does not exist in Wentworth Point in the way the Government built it. The reality is that this Government fails on every level. As the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, I see these failures all the time. Government members are always in this Chamber banging on about their sport. We have just heard the member for Coffs Harbour say, "Now we are investing in sport and we are doing this and that". No. The Government is not doing that. Every dollar the Government spends on sport does not mean that the sport is bad or not deserving. The Government never looks at the sports, where they are played and who is playing them.

The Government's grants program is a perfect example. Do members in this Chamber understand that there is not one eight-court basketball facility in the Sydney Basin—not one. We have a lot of them but they are all outside the Sydney Basin. Sydney has a huge population and basketball, particularly for young men, is one of our biggest sports. It is so important but there is not one eight-court basketball facility in Sydney. There is also not one regional netball facility outside the Sydney Basin, so anyone in the regions has to come to Sydney if they want to compete or play representative sport. What the Government is doing is just nuts. The Government gives sports grants to whoever has the ear of Government members at the time, rather than saying, "Well, here are our

top 10 sports and here is who plays them. We know who is playing sport." The Government should fund those sports.

Poor old gymnastics is one of the biggest girls sport: 120,000 girls do gymnastics. But I have never heard the Minister for Sport say, "Hey, we're going to prioritise women's and girls' sport. And do you know what? The first thing we're going to do is give money to the sports that women and girls play. We're going to give money to those quarter of a million women and girls who play netball and make sure that there is a regional netball facility outside Sydney so people in the bush don't have to travel to Sydney to compete. We're going to give money to gymnastics so that every mother and father who has to take their kid to gymnastics doesn't have to pay \$2,000 a year and so that there is actually some investment in their sport." But the Government just does not do that. The Government says, "We're putting in a synthetic field here and that's great." But who is using it, how many people are playing on it and who are the people who are playing sport?

I played sports for a long time. I played the non-traditional sports right from the start. I played in the first women's rugby competition and I played in the first women's team that played on the Sydney Football Stadium. I know how sports grow and how they deliver. I have coached girls teams, rowed surf boats and done all those things. The Government never looks at the statistics to determine where it should invest the money; if it did, it would invest its money differently. If the Government looked at the statistics for its infrastructure, schools and programs it would start with Auburn, because it has the second highest unemployment rate and the second highest number of homeless people. It is the second largest electorate in the State and is extremely congested because of the Government's toll roads. The strength in that community is driven because of its diversity. Its diversity provides the greatest opportunity. All economic theories demonstrate what migration has done for our country and it is great to drive change.

That is probably why Auburn has droves of advanced manufacturing because those people have driven change and developed factories. This Government does not invest in research and development in a meaningful way. Government members should not talk in this Chamber about infrastructure and jobs because in this take-note debate we know that they are not delivered. I always read the little brochure that the Government sends me about Auburn. This year my electorate's big spend was \$10 million for Hill Road, which has gone already. Normally the only big investment in my electorate is for extra beds in Silverwater jail. If the Government wants to change the future of this country it would invest differently and not give a spin in this Chamber. It would deal with investment and determine where it should go.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (16:15):** I am proud to be the member for Goulburn, representing communities in my electorate. I am proud to be part of the Liberal-Nationals Government delivering for the people and businesses across the Goulburn electorate. I commend the work of our Treasurer for ensuring our Government is creating jobs, stimulating local economies and supporting rural and regional communities. Regional and rural New South Wales has endured so much. It has had the impact of the drought, bushfires and COVID-19. The Liberal-Nationals are renowned for their strong financial management, which has allowed us to assist the community and businesses when they need it the most. We are helping people with the cost of living and we are helping businesses by reducing red tape. We are supporting businesses and communities that have endured so much. All those initiatives make the Goulburn electorate a better place to live, work, invest and visit and I will continue to advocate for investment in our rural and regional areas.

I want to talk about the importance of having strength in our community. We have a mothers' group that lends support as new mums struggle with the demands of a new baby; there is the local football coach who hits the right spot with troubled youth and sets them on the right path; and the Rural Fire Service volunteers who risk their lives to save the lives and livelihoods of others, and those who support them. The New South Wales Government is investing in infrastructure projects to support the community. They deliver positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes, while promoting community participation, inclusion and cohesion. Whether it is a new kitchen that helps to host and cater events at Bannister District Hall or a hydraulic scissor lift nappy change table at KU Children's Services in Moss Vale, the Community Building Partnership program is improving lives across New South Wales and in my electorate.

Recently I went to the First Yass Scout Hall that was the recipient of a \$19,000 grant from the Community Building Partnership program. This grant will allow for a huge renovation, including recladding and repainting the interior of the old hall as well as the removal of asbestos. This great old hall has a lot of history about the Scouts organisation, which was delighted to receive funding from the Community Building Partnership program to assist it in making the place where they meet and encourage young people to be fantastic. It is one of the many community organisations that has not only benefited from the State's strong economic management across this budget but also for many previous years. A few thousand dollars to a small organisation may seem like a drop in the ocean of a billion-dollar budget, but these groups are filled with individuals who put their heart and soul into these projects. We take great pride in these community volunteers, who do an amazing job supporting

communities. Incredibly valuable discretionary funding is also available through ministerial portfolios and the Premier's grant.

Small amounts like the \$10,450 that was given to the Tirranna Public School for new shade sails can make a huge difference. How many sausage sizzles or gold coin mufti days would it take for that tiny school of just seven students to raise that kind of money? The staff and students gave a presentation to me on the day I visited. They were so excited about their new shade sails, and so they should be because they could not control the wind that ripped their previous shade sail off its structure. It was incredible. The beautiful children were so grateful that the New South Wales Government was supporting them and their tiny school.

The Stronger Country Communities Fund is another program that is providing for both my electorate and the State more widely, with more than \$400 million allocated across 1,500 local projects to improve our communities. I am delighted that an additional \$100 million will be made available in round four of the fund when it opens on 1 May 2021. This funding round will highlight women's facilities, as well as other high quality community and sports-related infrastructure projects. This new funding is welcome in the electorate of Goulburn. The \$300 million investment by the Government through the Regional Growth Fund in 2021 will take the total investment since 2017 to an enormous \$2 billion. This sort of money has not been seen in the regions. Under 16 years of the previous Labor Government, regional and rural communities received nothing. The amount of investment in these areas is creating fantastic communities that people want to come to. It is incredible. I thank the Government for its focus on regional and rural areas.

This vital funding supports grassroots projects that reinvigorate rural communities such as the Goulburn Motor Cycle Club, which after working diligently for years was awarded \$491,000 for the construction of the Goulburn Moto Park. Many community volunteer hours have gone into this park so that it can attract world-class competitions, and it is well on its way to doing that. This grant will allow the club to open to the public for recreational riding, as well as extending opportunities to the wider racing community, bringing training, coaching and high-level competitions to the Goulburn area. This sort of investment really helps the community.

The Crescent School Goulburn P&C received \$174,823 to purchase a bus replacement for run 7874. The bus the school currently uses was manufactured in October 2006, so it was well and truly time for an update. It is the only school for specific purposes in the Southern Tablelands, with 75 students enrolled needing transport either to and from school, or to special events. The day the grant was allocated to the school was very exciting, and everyone involved was delighted.

Robertson Men's Shed Inc. also received \$62,140 for a building refurbishment of the community technology centre at the Robertson facility, which has ensured that the CTC can continue as a comfortable, attractive, safe and serviceable community hub. The money funded the upgrade of the kitchen, internal and external painting, a lighting upgrade and the construction of a storeroom. Next door the Robertson Men's and Women's Shed was allocated \$291,000 to construct a new shed to use as a community facility on separate days by each organisation—they like the men and the women separate—to ensure that both organisations have their independence.

The organisation also hopes to use the facility for youth workshops in woodworking and metalworking as well as other activities for the community. The community is ecstatic about the new building and I am really looking forward to going to the opening in the next couple of weeks and seeing the finished product. There will be new skate parks at Boorowa and Bundanoon, providing kids and adults alike a welcome activity in those small rural towns. Those sorts of facilities are making a difference and those sorts of activities are fantastic for the youth of those communities. I am delighted that the New South Wales Government has been able to contribute to those projects. I thank the many volunteers across the electorate who provide social opportunity and raise funds for important community projects and people in need.

The redevelopment of the Goulburn Aquatic and Leisure Centre is well and truly underway. I had the pleasure of joining the Goulburn Mulwaree Council Mayor, Bob Kirk, to turn the first sod on 14 August last year. The project was an election commitment and I cannot wait for the whole picture to come together. The new aquatic centre will be a very welcome addition to Victoria Park, as will significant infrastructure like the adventure playground, the rage cage, the skate park and the cricket facilities that the State Government has contributed funding to. That sort of funding is not only used by the Goulburn township; it is used by regional areas as far as Crookwell—all of the community villages that surround Goulburn—so it certainly is a worthwhile investment.

Construction on Goulburn's new \$18.5 million Performing Arts Centre has also well and truly commenced. The centre will be a valuable asset to the region and the construction has boosted jobs and brought economic benefits to Goulburn. The project is a wonderful example of three governments working together and is funded by \$11.2 million from council, \$1 million from the Federal Government, \$4.5 million from the State and

\$2.5 million from the Veolia Mulwaree Trust as a community partner. Working together and building great things for the community is what it is all about.

Last year was extraordinary in regard to incidents like the bushfires and the floods in the district. The community and volunteers that support the emergency service agencies are incredible. There are many organisations across the electorate with hundreds of volunteers and each one of them is an outstanding member of the community. I am thankful for the quiet summer we just had compared to 2019-20, but I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for an extraordinary organisation that has done so much for the community, particularly last year with the bushfires but also with the recovery efforts that are still ongoing today.

The State Government has committed more than \$2.3 billion to assist communities impacted by bushfires, which includes supporting a temporary accommodation program, property clean-up and mental health services. The latest of those investments is the \$250 million Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund, which has already been very well received in the Goulburn electorate. Jointly funded by the Australian and New South Wales governments, the package will support social and economic recovery in the most affected regional communities, like the Goulburn electorate. By providing \$250 million of further funding to support the social and economic recovery of the communities affected by bushfires in 47 regional New South Wales local government areas, the program aims to support projects that retain and create jobs in regional areas, build resilience and increase preparedness for future bushfire seasons. Two early announcements with shovel-ready projects have already been made through this program, including \$8 million to help the Southern Highlands on its path to bushfire recovery.

The Federal member for Hume, Angus Taylor, and the Wingecarribee shire mayor, Duncan Gair, joined me to announce the upgrade of the Wombeyan Caves Road at Bullio after it was severely damaged by the 2019-20 bushfires and floods. I thank Mark, Shannon and Renae, who joined us at the announcement. I particularly thank long-term residents Mr Rowan Berry and Mr Geoff Holt, who have been great supporters and advocates for making improvements to the road. When I was first elected to my position in the electorate of Goulburn, they approached me and said they were concerned about the maintenance of the road and the danger it had become to the communities that utilise the road.

The road connects the caves. I approached the council and asked what the story was in regard to funding some of the maintenance. Of course, sometimes councils are very stretched and not able to do everything they need to do so I advocated that we needed to look for a better maintenance program for the road. Unfortunately, the area was very badly affected by bushfires and had been closed as a result of the bushfires and the floods that had hit the region. It was pretty much a no-brainer to make sure that funds from this funding opportunity were put towards ensuring that people could access not only their properties but also Wombeyan Caves.

The next announcement from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund was \$2 million towards the Wollondilly Walking Track in Goulburn. The track is already 10 kilometres long and is very well patronised by locals and visitors alike. The track goes along the beautiful Wollondilly River and is attracting lots of people to the region. It is an absolutely fantastic project that was shovel ready, and I commend the council for putting the project forward. I am sure the program will only bring more good news for the communities in the Goulburn electorate in the next funding announcement.

In addition to our RFS, the State Government has invested significantly in our police and emergency services, including two new ambulance stations across the Goulburn electorate, in Yass and Goulburn. The new ambulance station was particularly welcomed in Goulburn as it moved our ambos out of the 87-year-old Clifford Street station. The new station is located in the former NSW Health building opposite the Bourke Street Health Service. It is 1,200 square metres in size and includes internal parking for eight ambulances, administration and office areas, staff amenities, a multipurpose meeting and training room, logistics and storage areas, and staff parking at the rear. There is also an indoor wash bay, a secure delivery room for couriers, and CCTV cameras. The new ambulance station was funded under the \$122 million Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration program and it is an absolutely topnotch facility. I am so pleased that the ambos have such a facility to work in.

I am also pleased that our paramedics are finally in and using this remarkable purpose-built facility. Not only will it support their clinical capability but also it is now a much nicer working environment for our hardworking paramedics. The investment from the New South Wales Government in ambulance infrastructure in the region has been transformational for the organisation, for the people who work in it and for the communities they service. I acknowledge and thank our ambulance paramedics and medical staff for the incredible work and sacrifice they make in providing emergency medical care, particularly during the pandemic.

Another issue close to my heart is support for police. I welcomed the recent announcement from the State Government of a \$60 million upgrade for the New South Wales Police Academy in Goulburn—which is so needed—as a part of the 2020-2021 New South Wales budget, providing state-of-the-art training facilities for our NSW Police Force. It was such an important announcement in this year's budget. The capital works will increase

service capacity, enhance training capability and deliver a long-term infrastructure and development strategy for the academy. This is in addition to the New South Wales Government's \$583 million investment to introduce 1,500 extra police over four years to enhance community safety across New South Wales. This investment is about giving our police recruits the best possible training, supported by modern and well-equipped facilities. These upgrades will also support jobs as we get the economy back on track post-COVID.

Another significant investment locally is the redevelopment of Goulburn's police station as a part of the \$100 million capital works election commitment. It is another significant investment locally for our community. Police infrastructure is currently undertaking due diligence around consultation and planning for the existing site and has commenced a search for an alternative location within Goulburn, with construction targeted to be completed in late 2023. Both of those projects are significant to the Goulburn electorate. In particular, the police academy is an important part of our community. I look forward to seeing both facilities receive the state-of-the-art upgrades they require and deserve.

I cannot express how much the Active Kids and Creative Kids programs mean to the Goulburn electorate. We love our sport. Again, while some people may consider \$100 to be a drop in the bucket, it certainly makes a big difference to most people in my electorate. Doubling that amount is significant for families with multiple children. The program provides those families with huge cost-of-living relief, especially when so many people have been affected by the natural disasters we have lived through since the program began. I have talked to many people who are very grateful for that funding opportunity.

Not every child wants to play sport. The Creative Kids program has the answer by providing opportunities for those who are not athletically inclined. Service NSW provides savings for all residents, from young to old, right across the electorate. Creative Kids is only one of the fantastic initiatives from Service NSW. It is a great organisation—absolutely amazing! The program is a fantastic service to our communities. The Cost of Living assessment continues to offer hundreds of dollars in savings. I acknowledge the hard work that the Minister for Customer Service is doing in that space. I cannot tell you the impact it is having on our communities. Bundanoon and Boorowa are villages without a Service NSW centre, but they are lucky enough to receive regular visits from the mobile service. [*Extension of time*]

The mobile services are important for villages and small towns because residents can access services similar to those available at physical sites in larger communities, including driver licence and photo card applications and renewals; tests; birth, death and marriage certificate applications; and of course the fantastic Cost of Living service to access more than 70 government rebates and savings. They always provide excellent, fast and compassionate service for those who need it. The team that has been assisting businesses to set up their QR codes has also been most welcome. During coronavirus the hotline was valuable, always providing a quick answer when many things were changing quickly.

I turn to education. As part of the New South Wales Government's record commitment to school infrastructure, the Goulburn electorate has already benefited from many school upgrades and improvements. Over \$6.7 billion will deliver more than 190 new and upgraded schools to support communities right across the State, including the Goulburn electorate. It is the biggest investment in education infrastructure the State has ever seen. Specifically, the Yass region will benefit from a brand-new primary school at Murrumbateman, thanks to fast-tracked funding as part of the New South Wales Government's COVID-19 Recovery Plan—a most welcome announcement for the Murrumbateman and Yass communities.

Last year I joined the education Minister at Yass High School to open the science, technology, engineering and mathematics facilities upgrade. Yass High School received several new classrooms, including science and computer classrooms, a new theatre and multimedia room. Plans are also forging ahead at Yass High to deliver a new hall, with the first designs now released. I welcome the progress on the project, and I was delighted to share the first images of the hall with the community. The hall will benefit the school and the wider community for many years to come. School halls are the natural gathering point for students and staff. They can also be a vital part of a thriving local community. The new and upgraded hall has been custom designed to suit Yass High. The Department of Education is working to complete the detailed hall designs and initiate a tender process, with construction scheduled to start early this year. The new facilities at Yass High are beautifully designed. I have no doubt they will ensure that students continue to receive the best education in a supportive environment.

The Murrumbateman community will get its new primary school sooner than expected, with the allocation of \$3 million in 2021 with which to commence construction. That demonstrates the New South Wales Government's commitment to delivering the project as soon as possible. The new school will accommodate up to 370 students and will deliver 16 learning spaces, including special education spaces, a library, a covered outdoor learning area, administration facilities and green space. The funding commitment builds upon the recent announcement of the site of the new primary school: 2 Fairley Street, Murrumbateman. The school will be located on a 1.5-hectare site in the centre of town with dual road frontage.

During consultation I visited the site and inspected the community engagement hub. Located on site, the hub provided the community with an opportunity to meet members of the School Infrastructure NSW team, and to learn more about the plans and the building process. Health service upgrades across the electorate are also progressing, including the \$150 million Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Redevelopment, the \$8 million Yass hospital and the \$2.5 million Crookwell emergency department improvements. Construction is progressing well at the Goulburn hospital. The community has seen the installation of retaining walls, as well as services and formwork being erected across the redevelopment site. The concrete pours for the new clinical services building started in April and scaffolding was erected soon after.

I was delighted to host the Premier and the health Minister at the topping-out ceremony at the end of last year. The Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Redevelopment includes construction of the new four-storey clinical services building, with a new main entry and hospital reception; new emergency department, medical imaging department and intensive care unit; new operating theatres, day surgery and recovery areas; new medical, surgical, paediatric, rehabilitation and geriatric inpatient units with specific designated palliative care beds; and a new maternity unit and birthing suite, as well as ambulatory paediatric and antenatal clinics.

There is also the \$8 million redevelopment of Yass hospital. Construction of the new emergency department has been completed and operations commenced from the middle of last year. The new ED delivers a dedicated ambulance entry point to go with the new ambulance station next door, as well as an additional emergency department treatment bay. Once completed, the Yass hospital redevelopment will include an increase of inpatient beds from 10 to 12, improved community and allied health facilities, and ongoing access to X-ray services. In 2019, \$2.5 million in funding was allocated to the district as part of a Liberal Party election commitment. At the Crookwell hospital, after the project's initiation and site investigations were completed in September 2019, the ED schematic layouts were developed in consultation with key stakeholders. There is so much happening in the Goulburn district.

I move on to roads and transport. I am delighted to see the continuation of extensive transport funding, including the improvement of accessibility and safety at Moss Vale station, creating around 50 local jobs. In addition to the Moss Vale upgrade there is a \$2.7 million accessibility upgrade to Goulburn station, which will deliver improvements to the station's entrance, new ambulant toilets and upgraded accessible parking spaces, improved lighting and wayfinding, path upgrades, new kerb ramps, upgrades to the waiting room and ticket counter, and accessible help points. That is thanks to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole, and the New South Wales Government delivering an additional \$112 million in the 2020-21 budget as part of the Transport Access Program, with a further \$80 million to progress future upgrades.

More than \$2 billion has been committed to the Transport Access Program since 2011, with more than 470 projects either completed or currently underway in New South Wales. Upgrades like those ensure that stations have the amenities to support growth in public transport, and they build upon the Government's vision to make public transport a first choice for everyone living in the regions. Another important service that has been funded is the extension of the Canberra commuter coach service. After being suspended due to low patronage during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the service has started again and will continue on a trial basis until June this year. Running from Monday to Friday, the service heads to the city with stops at the airport, university and shopping centres. I truly hope the community sees the value of the service and uses it.

The sod has been turned for the duplication of the Barton Highway. That project will improve safety, reduce travel times and increase freight productivity for the 13,000 motorists who will use the corridor every day. I thank the Australian and New South Wales governments for investing \$100 million to upgrade the Barton Highway. It was a great day to turn the first sod and to see those works get underway. I remember when I was mayor of a small local council making representations to the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to fund upgrades to that road. Finally the Australian and New South Wales Liberal-Nationals governments are delivering on those commitments and I am very happy to see that it has started. Of course, over 80 jobs will be supported by the project over a three-year period in the duplication of the existing highway, which is currently a single lane in each direction from the ACT border towards Murrumbateman. The start of the works followed a number of smaller projects, which included safety upgrades to intersections and bus stops and the installation of a \$3.25 million intelligent transport system.

The initial stage of duplication is expected to be completed in 2023. I will talk about the fantastic funding that was recently announced to repair bridges in my area. A number of bridges have been awarded funding under the Fixing Country Bridges program. I am delighted to announce the successful applications with the mayors whose councils were awarded funding. That is an absolutely fantastic program. There is so much to tell about the Goulburn electorate. I thank the New South Wales Government for its commitment to my electorate, regional and rural New South Wales and our communities across regional and rural New South Wales. I want to ensure that people know that Goulburn is a great place to be. I have had numerous phone calls from people looking to invest

in the Goulburn region, and that is because we have such great people. It is a great place to visit, live and work. I commend the budget to the House.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:46):** I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to debate on the budget and related papers. Unfortunately it seems that yet again the Government has missed the electorate of Canterbury—unless you are Daryl Maguire and you are doing deals with developers in my electorate, as has been stated at ICAC. That is how some of those projects have gone ahead. For instance, the Maguire metro had no business case. There has not been a lot of information about that and we do not know why the Government has removed a heavy rail line for that metro. Our community has not been informed and work is soon starting on the Sydney to Bankstown part of the line. The issue is that we have a perfectly good heavy rail line. I would still like to know—after the questions that were asked at the inquiry and after what we saw at ICAC—how a member of this place who had an office five metres from this Chamber was doing deals in my electorate.

As the member for Canterbury, I was not aware of the type of transactional arrangements that that former member of this place was making with developers in my electorate. The deals that we have seen include high-rise development rezonings around the station as part of that metro. I will have a lot more to say about that in the coming weeks and months. Once again, that those arrangements have been made is very dishonest and very corrupt. That member had no rhyme or reason and did not disclose any of the dealings or transactions that he had conducted in my electorate. It is because of that metro, along with the priority precinct and the rezoning, that we are now lumped with a disgusting development along Canterbury Road. It does not make sense, because we already have a heavy rail line. But we know that what has happened in my electorate is because of those dirty deals that were done by Daryl.

These dirty deals have meant that there is no money in the budget for Canterbury Hospital. Canterbury Hospital was last redeveloped in 1998, and that was because former Premier Bob Carr had made a commitment before the 1995 election. The former Liberal Premier wanted to close down the hospital. After a huge campaign, then Opposition leader Bob Carr made a commitment to the people of Canterbury and the people of New South Wales that, one, Labor would fight to make sure that Canterbury Hospital was not closed and, two, that it would redevelop the hospital. That redevelopment happened in 1998. Fast-forward from 2011 to now—10 years. I note that the Treasurer talked about this Government's illustrious 11 years in office et cetera. History will judge the legacy left by this Government. I will acknowledge that the Government has done some things. But history will judge the legacy that this Government has left in metropolitan and urban Sydney. The mishmash of overdevelopment has resulted in a lack of public spaces, a lack of services, a lack of infrastructure and a lack of upgrades to existing schools and hospitals.

In my part of Sydney, which is growing because of the dirty deals that have been done between a number of individuals to increase density, we have a catastrophe on Canterbury Road. The planning was greenlit and now we have a disaster on Canterbury Road. Forced mergers were imposed on my community. After suffering the failed forced merger policy, my community now does not receive any funding. We received no funding because of the sort of \$252 million in grants. Both the Premier and Deputy Premier have acknowledged, "Well, you know, pork-barrelling is okay." I believe in proper administration of government priorities. What is proper? Certainly, parties go to every election with a list of priorities that have to be properly assessed and costed to ensure they satisfy key criteria. I am talking about competing when you do not even know the criteria. My council did not even know that there was a second round. How could it compete when there were no criteria and no papers? We heard about the shredding of government documents. The senior elected officials—the Premier and Deputy Premier—say that it is okay. Well, it is not okay. It is not okay to shred public documents and it is not okay to have this dodgy process.

There was no proper process of assessing a \$90 million grant to Hornsby council, which had not been merged. My council was forced to merge because of dirty deals, and now my community has to deal with three issues. They have to deal with the failed forced merger by this Government, with overdevelopment and its constraints on services, and now they are coping it because of the rate rises that the Government is imposing because the Government decided to fund Hornsby council. Again, it is competing priorities. There was no proper assessment process. Then there is all this development that the Government has imposed on my community. I do not see this development in Hunters Hill, in Woollahra or on the lower North Shore. I see Canterbury Road—a main arterial road, with two lanes each way—with 50,000 cars going up and down. It is a main arterial road. Firstly, it is not being upgraded. Secondly, there are no proper setbacks. A few years ago a report stated that a development of that height was inappropriate for Canterbury Road.

Despite all of that, the Government is imposing on our community 50,000 dwellings and 100,000 additional people over the next decade. But where are the services? People in my community are very humble. They are very hardworking, entrepreneurial and extraordinary. They go about and do their business. They work hard, want to send their kids to a school of their choice and want to build for the future; they are always looking toward the

future. But they also expect government, regardless of political party, to provide services. Elderly people in my community are suffering because the Government has not funded our hospital. We have an explosion in population and overdevelopment but we are not getting the services. I urge the Government and the health Minister: There needs to be that investment in Canterbury Hospital. We need that upgrade and see it redevelop. We need a world-class facility. Why is my electorate and Canterbury Hospital being left out? Is it because—I do not want to say this—we have a very multicultural community? We have a lot of elderly migrants who have lived, contributed and paid their dues and taxes for 50 years to build our nation and our New South Wales.

Whether they run small businesses or have worked at the local Sunbeam factory or factories in Camperdown and Redfern, which are now housing, they have toiled, sweated and given their entire life to build our great State. Do my multicultural community residents not deserve a world-class hospital and facility? We have extraordinary rates of cancer in my community: lung, kidney and stomach cancer. Where do my elderly residents with those types of cancers go? They have either got to go to Royal Prince Alfred [RPA] Hospital or St George Hospital. What if they do not have a car? "Oh, just catch the bus when you are getting treated for cancer." Yes, I know that. I went through cancer and treatment. I got looked after at St George. It has amazing staff and people. I acknowledge our health professionals and, more importantly, what they have done in the past year. They have gone to extraordinary lengths to keep our community safe and ensure that lives and livelihoods are saved. We acknowledge and continue to acknowledge and never forget what they have done.

I would get driven to treatment. I cannot complain at all. I was very fortunate. But there are elderly people in my community who do not have a car, do not have relatives and cannot access community transport. I see many of them in my electorate office. They come to me crying because they cannot catch the bus to get treatment. They cannot get treatment at Canterbury Hospital so they have to go to either RPA or St George. I know that there are Government documentations and two public strategic documents and plans, one from 2013 and a recent one from 2018, for Canterbury Hospital. I know that the plans are in place. I say to the Government: Do not look at Canterbury Hospital and say that it is in the Canterbury electorate; look at it strategically. If we invest in that hospital, it means we relieve pressure from RPA, St George and Concord. Canterbury Hospital should provide a specialisation.

When the Government talks about this pork-barrelling it is affecting people's lives. If it is pork-barrelling on the basis of a seat or an electoral margin is it saying that the people in my electorate are irrelevant? Is it saying that they are insignificant? It is as though it is saying, "They don't speak English, they're just multicultural. They're not going to raise any issues. That's okay. Who cares? They don't need the attention." Is that what the Government thinks of my community, which has invested and given its soul to this nation? My elderly residents worked at a time when there was no OH&S. When they worked at Metters gas factory—my dad worked there—do you think that they wore gas masks? They just went in there. At the asbestos factories they used to just walk in there in their T-shirts. There was no protective gear. Thank God for the union movement in New South Wales.

**Debate interrupted.**

*Public Interest Debate*

## REGIONAL MOBILE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Barwon, I note that not only are a number of members on both sides of the House on two calls to order but also a number of them are on three calls to order. The member for Barwon will be heard in silence.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:00):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises that mobile and digital connectivity in regional, rural and remote New South Wales are grossly inadequate.
- (2) Recognises that without adequate mobile and digital connectivity the safety of people in the bush is compromised, our businesses suffer and our children's educational opportunities are limited.
- (3) Notes that to date the Deputy Premier has not responded to correspondence from October last year regarding the issue.

"Hello? Hello? Can you hear me? Hang on, I'm just in a dip. I'm just going up a hill. Can you get me?" Beep, beep, beep—call failed. "Yeah, hang on a minute. Hang on. Just going to where I can pick up a bit more service. You there, mate?" Call failed. That may sound comical, but imagine you have just had a car accident. You have broken bones. You are bashed up. You are pretty sure your mate is not going to make it. To get phone reception you have to run five kilometres in the dark for help. You are able to get one or two bars, enough to make a call. In a nearby community the first responders are notified. They kit up, ready to head out. Before they set off they have to make doubly sure that they know where they are going because as soon as they leave the town limits they have no ability to communicate back to base—nothing. They cannot check Google Maps. They cannot call anyone.

One person in my electorate does not have to imagine this situation because it happened to that person. Tragically, that person's friend did not make it. This was last year. Out west our phone reception is worse than it is in some Third World countries. When a bloke driving a bullock cart on a dirt road in rural India can cruise by me on the phone and people in the middle of towns in my electorate cannot get service, you know there has been a monumental stuff-up in Australia. Why are we in this place talking about mobile phone blackspots? Because the NSW Nationals made the election pledge to rid New South Wales of mobile phone blackspots. I commend the Deputy Premier for taking on such an ambitious task, one that I note the State and Federal governments have not been able to fix in the 40 years we have had mobile phones in Australia.

It is a task that he is seemingly willing to tackle alone. I wrote to the Deputy Premier in October raising the issue of connectivity and the fact that across my electorate there are over 100 blackspots that have been identified by the community through emails to me. Despite the big dollars announced by the Government to fix this problem the Barwon electorate is yet to see any real benefits. I am still waiting for my response from the Deputy Premier. A number of people across my electorate have said to me, "Roy, it's all part of their plan to keep us in the dark on what's happening in Government and to hold us back."

Unreliable and non-existent mobile coverage impacts negatively on almost every aspect of people's lives in the bush: business and academic success or failure, the tourist economy we are so desperately trying to bring into our small towns, connectivity for the agricultural industry that will drive modernisation and provide for compliance, and day-to-day transactions with government. People living in the city will never know the frustration of being told you have to go online to access a government service after you have struggled to get enough mobile service just to make a call. Scanning a QR code is not a possibility when the service that is supposed to support it is coming from a mobile phone booster.

Recently Tilpa, a town in Barwon, went without mobile or internet service for 11 days straight. Can you imagine the uproar if Sydney, Armidale, Tamworth or Dubbo were without service for 11 days? Think about what relies on this service: phone, internet and EFTPOS machines. For 11 days the telecommunication provider allowed that remote town, which relies on the Royal Flying Doctor Service for medical care in emergencies, to be without service. They could not call. The provider said, "It's not a priority. It will be fixed when we're next in the area." The problem is that the Government is beholden to the telcos. If it were serious about addressing the problem of mobile blackspots, it would fix the power imbalance. I have written to the Federal Government about the issue. It said that ultimately it is a commercial decision for the mobile network operators as to whether to invest in mobile infrastructure in the area. It comes down to a commercial decision for my communities—how disappointing!

The Government throws millions of taxpayer dollars at telcos to build phone towers, but only when they can make a buck. How is that an acceptable situation? We are lucky—and I say that a little bit sarcastically—to have phone towers and equipment in some towns, but it is not making huge dollars for telcos and they neglect their responsibility to maintain the infrastructure. After I did a call-out to Barwon for them to tell me their issues with mobile connectivity, the Louth Chamber of Commerce forwarded me a rather frustrating chain of emails between its president and Telstra. Louth was really fortunate to have second-hand 3G mobile equipment installed a few years back, which gave them a bit of service. They humbly asked Telstra to have a look at whether there could be a 4G upgrade, because the service had been patchy at best. Telstra did a review and said, "We'll give you some new batteries." The issue persisted and locals could not make calls or send text messages. The Louth race day rolled around and members can imagine how quickly the network capacity was maxed out—no calling and no EFTPOS at the pub.

The Louth Chamber of Commerce are a tenacious bunch and went back to Telstra again. They were told their 3G was okay; they just needed to get the NBN so that they could use the internet to call people over wi-fi. The email tennis continued and a month later I received an email from Telstra saying, "With 5G rollout proceeding at pace, we have decided it no longer makes sense, from commercial or customer experience perspectives, to maintain the legacy 3G service offering." So what happens to Louth? Will the New South Wales Government leave it to the telcos to sort out a solution based on what is best for their bottom line?

I will finish by telling members about the town of Tooraweenah, a fantastic village not far from where I live. Fed up with waiting for the Government to act and given the run-around by Telstra, local businesses, community groups and residents dug deep into their own pockets to raise \$10,000 for a small cell tower so that they can have reception in town. The tower was originally going to be installed by the end of October, then January. Now it will be March—perhaps. Is this the type of action my communities have to take, using their own money to pay for essential infrastructure? I look forward to hearing from the Government about its record investment in mobile blackspots. Perhaps members opposite could talk to their colleague in the other place who finds himself in my electorate frequently about just how much investment is needed in Barwon to bring us up to par with the city. I commend the public interest debate to the House.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:07):** I thank the member for Barwon for the opportunity to speak on this important issue, although I do feel that the motion is fairly pretentious. I move:

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

this House:

- (1) Recognises that mobile and digital connectivity in regional, rural and remote New South Wales is improving thanks to the record investment by the Government, including its \$50 million Connectivity Country Communities Fund and the \$400 million Regional Digital Connectivity Program.
- (2) Recognises that without adequate mobile and digital connectivity the safety of people in the bush is compromised, our businesses suffer, and our children's educational opportunities are limited.
- (3) Commends the NSW Nationals and Liberals for taking a leadership role in fighting for regional and remote communities to have access to better connectivity services, to build a safer stronger regional New South Wales.

I am very familiar with this issue. I live, work and travel through regional and rural New South Wales on most days that I am not here. The Deputy Premier has advised me that the member for Barwon has written to him about this issue. His detailed response outlines the leadership role that the New South Wales Government is taking in delivering digital connectivity to the people of regional New South Wales. The member for Barwon, as he outlined, should really have directed that letter to the Federal Government as it is traditionally a Federal issue. But the point is that the New South Wales Government is taking control of the issue and making a difference.

In the letter the Deputy Premier has compiled the latest facts and figures to update you on exactly how the New South Wales Government is leading the charge. Of course, digital connectivity is hugely important for my electorate. My electorate of Dubbo will be a big winner through the New South Wales Government's \$400 million digital connectivity program, but so will the electorate of the member for Barwon. It will benefit from a huge investment, not necessarily thanks to him but thanks to the work that the New South Wales Nationals are doing to support regional New South Wales. No doubt the member for Barwon will claim credit for it, as he does with a few other things, but The Nats will be and have been supporting Barwon long before Mr Butler's time and will continue to support Barwon when he is gone in just a couple of years.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Dubbo has the call.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** As I mentioned, it is important to note that digital connectivity is primarily a Federal issue.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Dubbo to direct his comments through the Chair. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** I have been; I am talking about the member for Barwon. It is important to note that the digital connectivity program that I am talking about is a Federal issue, but New South Wales is leading the way. The Government is committed to ensuring that families and businesses across regional New South Wales have better access to mobile, internet and digital services than ever before. We are all about building a safer and stronger regional New South Wales. The Government understands that it is important and that it leads into our future in which parents and children, individuals, schools and educational facilities, service providers, industry and government all need to be able to connect with each other. We must do that to maintain health and wellbeing, to remain competitive, and to grow and prosper.

Only a week ago I was with the education Minister in Dubbo, rolling out the very first schools in the pilot of the Rural Access Gap Program, which will result in complete upgrades to SMART boards in every regional school's classroom and internet speeds that are five times faster. That is a massive improvement and it is changing education right now. That is part of why the commitment has been made to go beyond a normal State Government's responsibility by investing in connectivity under the \$400 million Regional Digital Connectivity Program, which builds on the \$50 million I mentioned earlier in the Connecting Country Communities Fund.

In this debate we are talking about things that are making a difference and a program that is focused on mobile coverage to eliminate mobile blackspots where people live and work. It is not 100 per cent done now but the work is being done and that is the point. The Opposition cannot say the Government is not doing anything when in fact every day stuff is being done. The Government is also focused on the Gig State project to bring metro-level internet speeds to regional New South Wales through investment in network infrastructure, including data hubs that benefit the Dubbo electorate and many others.

Another program, the Farms of the Future program, is showcasing the benefits and opportunities that agricultural technology can deliver for drought resilience, improved productivity and enhanced water security. Pilot programs are happening now in Blayney and Coonamble, and Narromine, which is in the Dubbo electorate. The Government understands and knows what is needed in western New South Wales. The Government wants to ensure that it gets it right. We want to make sure we deliver on the commitment and make sure that we have robust

digital infrastructure. We want to ensure that we have fit-for-purpose digital activities and that people in regional locations can remain safe and healthy. The Government is forging ahead with that work. I assure members that implementation of the program is an absolute priority and the Government will continue to deliver.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:12:3):** On behalf of the Labor Opposition I support this public interest debate. I thank the member for Barwon for bringing such an important issue to the attention of the House. It is 2021—a time when all kinds of amazing things are possible. Gene editing tools can make detailed changes to an organism's DNA. Mind-controlled prosthetics have been developed for people who have lost a limb. Even Elon Musk reckons he is building a rocket ship that will carry people to Mars. If you can dream it, you can do it—unless, of course, you are in New South Wales. Today large parts of regional and rural New South Wales remain without access to mobile and digital connectivity because of the New South Wales Government.

The importance of digital communication in the twenty-first century cannot be overstated. It increases efficiency and effectiveness across every sector of the economy. It enhances the quality of life and we all know it has the ability to save lives. Yet the Government is leaving communities behind by allowing the lack of connectivity to disadvantage them in a whole range of ways. The lack of connectivity inhibits health services. We have seen that in the recent rural and health review. It limits education opportunity. It prevents economic participation. It stops regional businesses from accessing new markets and technologies and it affects social inclusion and access to services.

We often hear the Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade say that mobile and digital connectivity is the sole domain of the Commonwealth. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The Minister often says that telecommunications is not the Government's responsibility. Before the last election the Minister was boasting about his \$400 million digital connectivity fund, but I have bad news for the member for Dubbo. The Government's own budget papers state that whilst that amount was mentioned in the 2019 budget, when it allocated \$90 million to the fund, it has now halved to just over \$200 million. Guess how much the Government spent out of that \$90 million last year? It was just over \$1 million. I will table that for the Government members. Now we know why there is such a divide. Now we know the answer to the question asked by the member for Barwon.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Dubbo will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order. I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** In addition, the New South Wales Government maintains a range of infrastructure that could support the rollout of greatly superior digital communications in rural and regional New South Wales. The State has the Government Radio Network, the NSW Telco Authority and fibre in the ground in rural and regional New South Wales. We definitely know that the Government will argue that it is not its job to fix connectivity but, quite frankly, that is all BS. The Government has the necessary infrastructure at its fingertips.

It beggars belief that the Deputy Premier has not responded to the correspondence on that matter from the member for Barwon—although now we know why. This is the same Deputy Premier who neglected to adequately inform bushfire-affected councils of \$177 million in bushfire recovery grants. I have a media release from the Deputy Premier that refers to a \$50 million Connecting Country Communities Fund. I again advise the member for Dubbo that his electorate will not get any of that either because it was quite a rort-worthy occasion, according to the Deputy Premier. The funds were supposed to deliver faster and more reliable wireless broadband internet to regional communities.

But the Deputy Premier's own press release, which I will also table, says that of 11 areas in New South Wales to benefit from the fund, seven were in his own electorate. Again, I suspect that that is another reason why the member for Barwon has not heard from the Deputy Premier. With the Government's mobile blackspot program and free wi-fi program between Hornsby and Wyong, we have seen that where there is a will, there is a way; we know it can happen. But unfortunately the lazy Government lacks the will to even respond to this very simple piece of correspondence. The only way we will see more digital connectivity in rural and regional areas is when we see fewer Nats in rural and regional electorates.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind members in the Chamber of social distancing.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:16):** I commend the member for Barwon for the motion. The issue needs the attention of this Parliament because the Deputy Premier is certainly not giving it the attention it deserves. We know there is a clear and present digital divide between the city and the country. Locals in my electorate of Lismore contact me about woefully low levels of mobile phone and internet coverage. Even when I drive around my electorate my mobile phone drops out. Other members who live in the country know that well. Even on the Tweed Valley Way where one would think there would be mobile phone reception, there is not, as it

drops out. Mobile and internet coverage are what people in the city take for granted if they can afford it. Ensuring decent digital connectivity is core business of government, not of the commercial sector.

The core business of government is to ensure that we have essential services and this is an essential service. We should not have to even have this debate because our communities should be connected. We should know what the plan is and where it will be rolled out to see if it is fair, equitable and transparent. A lot of the programs being rolled out by the New South Wales Government, particularly those that have the fingerprints of the Deputy Premier on them, lack transparency and clarity. Members are not even told about them. As a country MP, I must speak out on the digital divide. When I talk to local small business owners and industry representatives, they all complain about the inferior connectivity. It puts them at a great disadvantage. The Government should be doing everything it can to help small businesses in my electorate recover from COVID, the bushfires, the drought and the floods. That would need a communication superhighway, but, as former NSW Farmers president Mal Peters said, we have a goat track.

I will defend the Deputy Premier on one point. In the media release he put out on 24 February 2019 he said that \$400 million would be allocated for faster mobile and internet coverage in regional New South Wales. I am not sure how that came down to \$50 million but he said \$400 million. He said that historically it was a Federal responsibility, but the urgent need for internet and mobile connectivity for regional New South Wales meant that the Government would step in to combat the issue. That is great and my community welcomes that, but we want to see him and The Nationals really combat the issue. If you step up and take on a responsibility, you have to ensure that it happens. I could spend 15 hours talking about the Federal Government and the abomination of what it did to the NBN, but I am here as a State member so I will let that one go for now.

Recent investments have benefited the radio network in the electorate of Lismore, but it was not until the terrible fires that I found out that the network did not provide coverage to many places. That created terrible situations during the fighting of those fires. I have been told that the towers will be in places like Cawongla and Sunnyside, but I want to see the detail with a proper briefing provided. Local members and their constituents deserve that, but we do not always get the civility of someone who comes with the history of the Country Party from the Deputy Premier. Somehow when the word "Country" was removed from the party name and they became The Nationals, that civility went as well. It is time the Deputy Premier brought it back in.

This public interest debate is a good start, but regional communities really need to be connected well. Digital poverty must be factored into every policy decision, as we saw with COVID and schools. Health is one area where the digital divide can mean life or death, so for that reason we have to ensure that we have good connections. How many times can the Deputy Premier announce this? We have heard announcement after announcement, but we want to see runs on the board. We want to see connectivity. All members must work together to ensure that the people of rural and regional New South Wales have strong digital connectivity for jobs, business, health and safety.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (17:22):** I welcome the opportunity to speak on this public interest debate. I thank the member for Barwon for bringing the debate before the House, and I thank the member for Dubbo for the important amendments proposed. All regional members understand the challenges that face their communities when it comes to digital connectivity, like mobile blackspots. I have met business operators in Rand who have two internet connections due to the frequency of connection failures. I speak to people like Jenny McFarlane from Bidjemia, who told me of the troubles she and her husband have had with digital connectivity and educating their grandchildren during the COVID crisis. The irony was not lost on me when I tried to engage with Telstra about a mobile blackspot, and when they called me I was heading up to a mobile blackspot in Tumberumba.

My community appreciates the challenges and recognises the importance of regional and rural connectivity. I firmly believe that to move forward into the twenty-first century, the digital road is just as important as the physical road to connect our communities. I see opportunity as well. It was fantastic to be at Old Coree, Rice Research Australia's property west of Jerilderie, and to see where the internet can take us—for example, digital sensors on irrigation channels to get the right volume of water into the channels to water land. The opportunity there is significant and it will help advance our regional communities in the twenty-first century.

I appreciate fully that the important area of telecommunications is in the domain of the Commonwealth, and I know that the member for Barwon appreciates that. In that sense, New South Wales welcomes the funding that the Commonwealth makes in that area, but continues to urge our Commonwealth colleagues to continue that investment to enable regional communities. The New South Wales Government recognised that in its last term of government. When New South Wales got \$50 million for blackspots from the \$100 million rollout of funding across the nation, the New South Wales Government matched that with a further \$25 million. That is where the New South Wales Government has recognised the importance of investments in digital connectivity and has stepped up to be alongside the Commonwealth.

The \$39 million from the Connecting Country Communities Fund to build 140 mobile phone towers was touched on by the member for Dubbo. I know that there are already two new towers funded by the New South Wales Government servicing 394 square kilometres at a cost of \$730,000 in the Albury electorate. In the Murray electorate, six new towers have been built for 291 households across 2,329 square kilometres at a cost of \$1.83 million. Those towers that are operating are funded by the New South Wales Government.

As a local member, I strongly believe in collaboration. I acknowledge people like Dan Brear from NSW Farmers, Edwina Hayes of RDA Murray, and Bridgett Leopold, who is the executive officer for Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation. We have been having conversations about how we can work together in our community to improve literacy when it comes to telecommunications and how we can work together to improve telecommunications in our electorate. I find it absolutely fascinating; I love the opportunity that we could have with collocation. We have TransGrid going across our electorates. I am sure the member for Wagga Wagga has had conversations with TransGrid about the opportunity for collocation, what we can do to utilise existing infrastructure, the fact that optic fibre is already running through there and it has backhaul, that the opportunity is there and leveraging that.

The Government also has the schools rollout. The member for Dubbo has already spoken about the \$365 million going to schools. My conversations with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Customer Service, whom I thank for talking with me, are about how we can leverage off that infrastructure and how we can improve it. There is fast internet going into our schools. How can the community benefit from that as well? The member for Barwon has written two letters: a letter to the State Government and a letter to the Federal Government. It is much more than about writing letters; it is about working with your community on how we can collaborate and enable infrastructure.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:28):** I contribute to the debate on the motion moved by my colleague the member for Barwon. As regional members, we all know the issues affecting communications in our areas. That is a key element in fostering the growth of rural and regional New South Wales. Connectivity to the outside world is essential in providing confidence for businesses to establish in the country. Blackspot-free communication is needed to unlock the economic potential of regional New South Wales. Decentralisation is also stifled in the absence of reliable, blackspot-free communications. People are looking to escape the rat race of the city, and in this COVID world where employers are providing remote work opportunities, reliable communications—or lack thereof—can be a decision-maker or decision breaker.

It is obvious that phone connectivity is conducive to safety, as has been alluded to by the member for Barwon. Education is the foundation of a First World society and is, in this day and age, reliant upon reliable digital communications. Without that reliability, the disparity broadens in the development of our children, and their future study and work opportunities. The effectiveness of police and emergency services is often reliant upon inter-agency communications, and communications with the broader public. Police often use mobile phone towers to triangulate a mobile phone, which is a tool often relied upon in search and rescue operations, or to locate missing persons, often in a potentially life-critical stage of an operation or investigation.

When this information is unavailable through lack of connectivity it can mean the difference between life and death. There are also obvious social benefits of telephone and internet connectivity as people interact and remain connected. In the absence of reliable connectivity, people with mental health may suffer. Isolation is exacerbated by an absence of the availability and reliability of communications, particularly in our more remote areas. It is no coincidence that in the remote areas, both physical and virtual isolation are conducive to poor mental health and, in some cases, even suicide.

In February 2018 the Deputy Premier said that his government had an ongoing commitment to eliminate blackspots across the State. The election rolled around and he said his plan was to see regional New South Wales blackspot-free for telephone calls and data. The Deputy Premier said that over the next four years his government would make regional New South Wales mobile blackspot-free and digitally connected across every corner of the State through the Government's \$400 million Regional Digital Connectivity program. That is a bold statement, but for the people of rural and regional New South Wales it is a welcome one. I do not want to be a cynic because it is my hope that this Government pulls this off before its promised 2023 deadline; however, remember that a blackspot-free New South Wales does not mean only in electorates held by the National Party. People everywhere in rural and regional New South Wales are of equal value and deserve to have access to the rest of the world.

In October last year I asked the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Regional New South Wales, what his time line was on achieving the Government's commitment of a blackspot-free service across regional New South Wales. It will not surprise members on this side of the House that he did not provide a time line. In his response to my question, the Deputy Premier said that all mobile blackspots in regional New South Wales are given due consideration in the design and delivery of government mobile connectivity investments. Due consideration?

I submitted a question on notice and I will quote part of the response from the Deputy Premier that was received on 18 November 2020, only a couple of months ago. He said:

... \$400 million through the Regional Digital Connectivity Program, including \$100 being delivered through the Gig State project ...  
The Government has already invested \$39 million—

so not even 10 per cent of that \$400 million two years into this Parliament is being delivered—

with 120 towers in operation and a further 20 coming soon.

I specifically asked about Barwon, Murray and Orange electorates and the Deputy Premier said that there were 15 new towers across those electorates that represent over 50 per cent of New South Wales. That is 15 towers for 1,500 families and there are more than 600 mobile blackspots in those three electorates. The Government needs to do more. The Government needs to realise that western New South Wales specifically and regional New South Wales is no different to metropolitan Sydney. We are in need of our fair share. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:33):** In reply: I thank the member for Dubbo, the member for Swansea, the member for Lismore, the member for Albury and the member for Orange for their contributions. It is a bit rich for the member for Dubbo to take credit for the hospital at Dubbo when the hospital is the work of the former member for Dubbo, Troy Grant. It is great to hear that we finally got a response to our letter to the Deputy Premier. Perhaps if the member for Dubbo spent more time helping his constituents they would not feel the need to contact me about their mobile phone connectivity. In the 100-plus submissions from people and groups, one of the most startling submissions came from a young lady from Narromine who could not access remote learning at home. She can only get reception in one place in the house.

We gave that information also to the Deputy Premier on the member's behalf. I thank the member for Albury for his more sincere approach in addressing this issue than shown by the member for Dubbo. For the member's information, I cannot count the number of letters and the many meetings with the Federal regional communications Minister. I agree 100 per cent with the member for Lismore that adequate digital connectivity is the core business of government, not the core business of the corporates—hear, hear! It is a sad reflection on the Government that in 2021 some people in New South Wales cannot call 000 in an emergency.

Eliminating blackspots is not a mechanism that should be deployed to buy votes. It is the difference between a couple in Balranald being able to call an ambulance for their son who has had a farm accident and not being able to call one. It is about the ability of a business to offer EFTPOS transactions and the ability of our kids in the bush to access online learning opportunities. My colleague the member for Orange is absolutely right: The Deputy Premier's statement that his Government would make regional, rural and remote New South Wales blackspot free and digitally connected across the board is bold but welcome. We have another two years of this Government's term. The Deputy Premier and his Government have two years to deliver on the promise to eliminate every blackspot in the State. Every blackspot eliminated and every community online is a bold commitment, and my communities are watching.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Barwon has moved a motion, to which the member for Dubbo has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....43  
Noes .....36  
Majority.....7

#### AYES

Anderson, K	Griffin, J	Provest, G
Ayres, S	Gulaptis, C	Roberts, A
Barilaro, J	Hancock, S	Saunders, D
Bromhead, S	Henskens, A	Sidgreaves, P
Clancy, J	Johnsen, M	Sidoti, J
Conolly, K	Kean, M	Singh, G
Constance, A	Lee, G	Smith, N
Cooke, S (teller)	Lindsay, W	Stokes, R
Coure, M	Marshall, A	Taylor, M
Crouch, A (teller)	O'Dea, J	Toole, P
Davies, T	Pavey, M	Tuckerman, W
Dominello, V	Perrottet, D	Ward, G
Elliott, D	Petinos, E	Williams, R

AYES

Evans, L  
Gibbons, M

Preston, R

Wilson, F

NOES

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

Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Kamper, S  
Lalich, N  
Lynch, P  
McGirr, J  
McKay, J  
Mehan, D (teller)  
Mihailuk, T

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

PAIRS

Berejiklian, G  
Hazzard, B  
Speakman, M  
Upton, G

Hornery, S  
Daley, M  
Car, P  
Hoening, R

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....43  
Noes .....36  
Majority.....7

AYES

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Barilaro, J  
Bromhead, S  
Clancy, J  
Conolly, K  
Constance, A  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Coure, M  
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  
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  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Ward, G  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

NOES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Catley, Y

Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Kamper, S

Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Piper, G  
Saffin, J  
Scully, P

## NOES

Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P

Lalich, N  
Lynch, P  
McGirr, J  
McKay, J  
Mehan, D (teller)  
Mihailuk, T

Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)  
Zangari, G

## PAIRS

Berejiklian, G  
Hazzard, B  
Speakman, M  
Upton, G

Hornery, S  
Daley, M  
Car, P  
Hoenig, R

**Motion as amended agreed to.***Private Members' Statements***NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:05):** On Australia Day we reflect on our history. We respect the stories of others and we celebrate our nation, its achievements and, most of all, its people. We acknowledge and celebrate the contribution that every Australian makes to our dynamic nation, from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—who are part of the oldest living culture in the world—to those who have come across the globe to call Australia home. Modern Australia has an Aboriginal heritage, a British foundation and a multicultural character. We honour the ancestors who were the custodians of this ancient continent and we pay tribute to those who enshrined freedom, fairness and unity in our Constitution.

This Australia Day was recognised differently from previous years. With the COVID-19 pandemic still very much a part of our daily lives, we were not able to gather together for our usual large celebrations. Particularly absent were some of the wonderful events that we normally see on Sydney Harbour: the tall ships race, the harbour parade, and I always love the yacht ballet. Fortunately, many councils were still able to host citizenship ceremonies to welcome our newest citizens, which to me is the most exciting part of the day. I was lucky this year to join Mosman Council to acknowledge our new citizens and welcome them, and in particular to celebrate this year's Mosman community award recipients.

I congratulate Mosman's Citizen of the Year, Kathrina Doran. Kathrina was awarded for her outstanding community work, particularly restoring and bringing back to life the iconic 109-year-old establishment Mosman Rowers Club. She worked tirelessly with many others to save it for the benefit of the community. Kathrina herself was an immigrant to Australia, coming from Ireland. She spoke on the day about never failing to show kindness for people. She has a passion for our community and works with people to achieve outcomes locally.

I congratulate also George Scammell, whom I have recognised in this place before. He was awarded the Mosman Young Citizen of the Year award. Many members in this place would recognise George and his siblings, Harry and Gracie. With the help of their parents, Amanda and Dave, they launched the Thank You Project Australia. This initiative saw students and young people from across the country write thankyou cards to our frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19. George spoke eloquently about how he and his siblings thought of this concept one night while sitting around the dinner table and how proud he was to receive the award, recognising his own work and also on their behalf. Both Kathrina and George demonstrate the prevailing virtues of kindness for others and community, both local and global, that we have all relied on throughout the past year.

I also acknowledge the North Sydney Council Australia Day ceremony and our new citizens in that local government area. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend because both ceremonies are held at the same time but I acknowledge Elle Prevost for representing me on the day. She is also married to a new citizen—her French husband, Emmanuel. She represented me and welcomed the new citizens on my behalf. I also acknowledge our mayor, Jilly Gibson, and deputy mayor, Stephen Barbour, who also participated in welcoming citizens to North Sydney. Just prior to Australia Day I joined North Sydney Council for its community awards ceremony. While we recognise the hard work and commitment of our community every year, it felt even more important this year to recognise those who have gone above and beyond throughout a challenging 2020.

I congratulate this year's community award winners and thank the council for the work it does in bringing our community and our volunteers together. This year two recipients were recognised for the North Sydney Citizen

of the Year Award. Jane Boyd is a musical educator and through her unique teaching programs she has been able to enrich the lives of students and their families. Jane highlighted this by speaking about musical education being crucial to society. She spoke particularly about early childhood music learning and the work that she has done with the North Sydney Community Centre. The other recipient was Davie MacDonald and Zara, the therapy dog, who is a bit of a celebrity on Instagram. Zara and Davie support vulnerable people across our community. Zara, as a therapy dog, works with domestic violence survivors and victims at the Manly Courthouse and provides them with support. Zara also worked with Davie throughout last year's devastating bushfires by providing support at the refuge at the emergency bushfire recovery centre in Ulladulla. At the awards ceremony Davie spoke about the importance of family and identity, loss and grief.

The North Sydney Young Citizen of the Year Award was presented to Pratham Gupta, who is the former school captain of the Cammeraygal High School. He spoke quite a bit about creating community and finding opportunities to make a difference in our local community. Congratulations also to Sunny Lin Jiang and Pool Pod, who were awarded the North Sydney Environmental Citizen of the Year, and to the Student Green Team from Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, who were awarded the North Sydney Young Environmental Citizens of the Year. I also congratulate Phoenix House and the Student Reference Group, who were awarded the Community Group of the Year.

### COOGEE ELECTORATE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:10:1):** I bring to the attention of the House the need to address the disparity of resources for mental health support between the public and private schools within the electorate of Coogee. Every year I hold a leadership breakfast for all senior leaders of schools within my electorate to discuss the opportunities and challenges of their final years. This not only allows me to meet some incredible young leaders but also enables me to gain significant insight into the pressing concerns of our younger generations. After an extraordinarily difficult year for senior students, including those trying to complete their HSC during a global pandemic, the need for students to be able to access sufficient counselling and mental health resources at school has become even clearer.

When speaking to students at the leadership breakfast, I asked what the most difficult challenges faced by senior students were, particularly during a national lockdown. The most significant response was the need for all schools to take appropriate measures to address mental health issues during those last years. Many students agreed that days like R U OK? Day are an important starting point but are simply not enough to address the incredibly pressing issues of identifying, recognising and supporting students who are suffering from mental health issues. While days like this are helpful in starting a conversation about mental health, they are often perceived by students as tokenistic and do not get to the root of the issues that they and their friends are facing. Students expressed to me the need for practical skills that they can apply in their day-to-day lives—skills that help them manage their own mental health and skills that provide them with knowledge so they can support their friends, help identify those who are in need, and know where they should turn to.

The final years of school are, for some, the most memorable; yet they can also be some of the most difficult years that any young person can face. The pressure that senior students are subjected to—to get the best score and to get into their first preference at university while also trying to enjoy their final years at school—would be mentally and emotionally taxing for anyone. That is why it is of paramount importance that all schools are provided with sufficient and accessible mental health support and skills for students not just during their HSC, but for the duration of their school life and beyond. By far the most concerning issue that was revealed at my leadership breakfast is the significant difference in the access to counselling and other professional services available to students within the public school system compared with those within the private system.

Those within the private system in my electorate were able to access a counsellor or professional support services at any time while students attending Randwick Boys High School or Randwick Girls' High School were subjected to a three-month waiting list, just to speak to a counsellor. A waiting list for any kind of mental support within the New South Wales public school system is simply unacceptable. Child and adolescent mental health support should be one of the primary concerns of the New South Wales Government to ensure that all students have access to these critical services. This accessibility to mental health support is even more critical in times of a global pandemic, when students have been dramatically affected by the limitations on their social interactions and ability to attend face-to-face classes or tutoring.

The waiting lists experienced by the students within my electorate make it clear that we are in the middle of a mental health crisis and that the amount being invested by the New South Wales Government in mental health services in our public schools is nowhere near enough to sufficiently meet the need. I previously raised the deeply concerning issue of the increasing number of young people who, sadly, are choosing to take their own life, particularly in my electorate of Coogee. Although the causes of each suicide are complex, accessibility to mental health support in schools and providing students with the skills they need is the first step in preventing the tragic

loss of a young life. If the correct early intervention services are available for students, whether they are in the public or private education system, this professional support will ensure that every student has a reliable support system to turn to.

### MANNING RIVER NAVIGABLE ENTRANCE

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (18:14):** Recently in Taree a petition was launched to garner 10,000 signatures in order to debate in the House the issue of a navigable entrance to the Manning River and for the Minister to respond. The petition calls on the Government to fund a permanent navigable entrance between Harrington and Manning Point and a permanent entrance at Farquhar Inlet at Old Bar. The mighty Manning River is 156 kilometres of navigable waterways. It has the only delta formation in Australia, probably in the Southern Hemisphere. It has myriad islands and tributaries and two entrances.

During the times of the first settlement of the Manning Valley and Taree, very large timber ships plied the Manning River. At that time the river was the lifeblood and vein of the valley. Produce was moved up and down the river and out to sea to go to Sydney and other places. Since that time, because of silting and the movement of sand, the bar across the river has become extremely dangerous. Alan Steber, who is the manufacturer of Stebercraft—one of the best, if not the best, boats in the world—and who has contracts to build defence ships in the coming years, had the scare of his life last year trying to cross the bar when the windscreen of the boat he was navigating was smashed by a wave.

A permanent navigable entrance with breakwalls will be transformational and generational. It will still be there in 200 years' time. The Manning River and communities will be transformed. It will bring economic benefit and it will provide safety for boating, both socially and environmentally. At both entrances of the Manning River migratory birds nest at the sand spits at Harrington and at Farquhar Inlet, which are the only places in the world where these birds nest. But with the ever-moving entrances, north and south, sometimes the nests are washed away. Because of those ever-moving entrances, areas cannot be fenced off to stop people walking or four-wheel driving in the area and interfering with the nests. If permanent structures are installed, we can better fence off the area and protect those birds.

The community is not calling for a navigable entrance at Farquhar Inlet, just a permanent entrance to flush out the southern channel. At times it can become putrid and the algae build-up can make it unsafe. With a permanent wall and entrance, the channel will be continually flushed. It also means the sand spit will be able to be consolidated and protected. The Manning River community has been calling for this project for over 140 years. In the 1880s plans were drawn for two breakwalls. The northern breakwall at Harrington was built with rock light-railed from Crowdy Head but the southern wall was not built because of World War I, when civil engineering ceased because of the war effort.

Since that time the communities have called for the second wall to be built and for a permanent navigable entrance. The million and one studies on floodplains and sand movement are gathering dust in the council chambers. Environmental impact statements and other studies have been done but nothing has occurred. I compliment the community and the Manning River Action Group on their efforts in driving this project, which will bring prosperity and economic, social and environmental benefits to the area. The petition calls on the Government to back them, back the community and fund the recommendations of the ministerial task force.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:19):** I prepared this speech for my excellent local independent media on New Year's Eve 2020. This time last year I attended sombre yet angst-ridden morning briefings at the Blue Mountains fire control centre. The calm voices that described the plans belied the fear of the intensity of unpredictable raging fires. It was very hot and very dry. The State was burning and worse was to come. Residents were on high alert and had high anxiety. In the lead-up to the 2019-20 bushfire season, the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments received endless warnings from experts about what could unfold. They knew that we were in drought, the land was dry, the water supply would be challenging and the summer would be hot—potentially one of the hottest on record—but they monumentally failed to respond to those warnings. They failed to listen and prepare, and they failed to protect our State from what was ahead.

Despite the warnings, the bushfire season began with fewer people and resources than normal. Within the RFS, after an imposed "productivity savings" spill, there were almost 200 vacancies and Fire and Rescue NSW was drastically short of firefighters—it currently requires an additional 500 across the State. Both agencies had faced funding cuts on the ground that were hidden behind big one-off budget items. The National Parks and Wildlife Service staff numbers and budget had been slashed, leaving it depleted of resources. On 13 November 2019 in the Parliament I warned that the situation was dire, but I was shouted down by the Premier and Minister

Elliott. I was told that I was being dramatic, alarmist and political. I was told rudely and ignorantly that I knew nothing, yet the Government's line that the State had never been better resourced was political spin.

The neoliberal focus has always been on privatisation and cuts. It is about reducing jobs and relying more and more on an army of unpaid labour, in this case RFS volunteers. Heroic though they are, they need to be resourced and supported. As the fire season unfolded, the funding shortfalls within our firefighting agencies gained national attention. I hoped that out of all of this heartbreak and devastation perhaps this Government would adequately fund our emergency services. I had hoped that they would invest in more uniforms, better PPE, safer trucks with better protections, more appliances in brigades outside the city stations, better training, better communications systems, better inter-agency coordination and planning, more firefighters, upgraded and inclusive stations, effective and sovereign aerial firefighting capabilities, and recovery and mental health support for emergency services personnel given what they had been through and will continue to endure as the start and end dates of our fire seasons become blurred. None of this has happened.

The Government makes announcements about shiny new things. It can talk the talk but it doesn't walk the walk. When you are dealing with fires, a government's words and plans after the fact do not mean much; listening to firefighters on the ground and then taking real and meaningful action does. For all those fires who feel forgotten or unheard; for those struggling with memories of a year ago; for those who suffered horrendous experiences, were left scarred, shattered, and eventually cynical and disappointed with Government promises and meaningless words in reports and inquiries and royal commissions; and for the fires who believe that nothing ever changes, this statement is for you. I remember.

The boots on the ground are suspicious at least and scathing at worst of the higher-ups. They are rotable that these shysters shop around a narrative about fires being heroes but fail to respect, resource and protect them. I thank the mighty Fire Brigade Employees Union for consistently and strongly advocating every day for and with their members. I thank all the RFS brigade members and the Rural Fire Service Association at a local level for their honesty and service. Many of those workers are traumatised, despondent and have lost faith in the Government.

Some firefighters did not come home after the Black Summer fires. Others almost did not make it when their trucks, which were not fit for purpose, burnt to the ground. My 21-year-old son was one of those who had prepared to die. When the old brake lines melted, rendering his truck inoperable and immobilised in the midst of a fire inferno, and without a halo system in place those workers thought it was the end. They prepared for the end. I can only imagine how horrific that was. As I have before and will again, I pay tribute to and thank all of our firefighters. They have not been forgotten due to the COVID pandemic and never will be.

We need politicians who speak up and act for workers and who champion their rights. It is time to act on the ugly truth of a Coalition government that lies. Last year we saw Government members slapping each other on the back for investing \$192 million over five years to equip the State's firefighters. That is not enough and they continue to pork-barrel based on politics instead of need. Our firefighters deserve better; we expect them to protect our lives, our homes and our environment every day, not just during a catastrophic bushfire. For me, this is personal.

#### **TAMWORTH ELECTORATE REGIONAL WORKFORCE PRINCIPLES**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (18:24):** I recently joined Deputy Premier John Barilaro and my Nationals colleagues in the electorate of Clarence to announce a bold vision to grow regional New South Wales over the coming decades. This was a significant day for The Nationals, a party that has been the voice and vision for regional New South Wales for over a century. In 2018 the NSW Nationals launched our vision for regional New South Wales—a 20-year economic blueprint for sustainable, long-term economic growth. Since then, so much has changed in this State and we have changed our vision to account for that. Our refreshed 20-year plan outlines the next steps in our commitment to this regional renaissance, empowering regional communities by giving them the same level of access to facilities, services and resources as their peers in the city.

In my electorate of Tamworth it has the potential to be a game changer. In recent years my electorate has suffered at the hands of one of the worst droughts on record and a global pandemic that ground the tourism industry to a halt. The impacts of those run deep, and will for many years to come. Too many farmers in my electorate have been on the brink and small business has also suffered. However, the plan will play a critical role in helping to turn that around. The new Regional Workforce Principles will help grow the public sector and increase the number of highly skilled jobs in the Tamworth electorate. Tamworth's big skies, beautiful scenery and vibrant business and cultural attractions make it a perfect location for those jobs. This plan will result in many more people calling Tamworth home.

We are also making sure that our kids in the bush have access to all the education opportunities of kids in the city. Over the next two decades we will bring more and more high-quality teachers to the regions. Our students will not be left behind. We will improve digital access and wellbeing support for rural and remote public schools. The education Minister, Sarah Mitchell from Gunnedah, outlined part of that vision. At the heart of the vision is a commitment to develop diversified regional economies able to support people and businesses through future challenges. Tamworth has moved on a lot from where it was 20 years ago. The plan will help us to keep moving forward—a hub of innovation, an economic powerhouse, a mass producer of sustainable agriculture that will help feed the nation.

The Deputy Premier is to be congratulated on the work he has done to pull our vision together. I am excited to see it get underway and to play my part in making sure that the Tamworth electorate reaps the benefits of the new Regional Workforce Principles for the next two decades.

### WOLLONGONG ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (18:27):** This year must be the year of jobs in Wollongong. It must be the year that the Government addresses the shortcomings in employment growth, job security, wages growth and service decline in Wollongong that have taken hold on its watch. In 2021 the new normal for the Government must be supporting Wollongong rather than ignoring and excluding it. At the start of the COVID recession I pointed out that the economic recovery was likely to be patchy and long. The economic recovery relies on billion-dollar projects in Sydney with little thought for areas surrounding it, as has been the case with this Government over its nearly 10-year life. Wollongong, like many other communities, can no longer afford to be left behind. Yesterday in question time the Treasurer was full of self-praise on job creation; well, it is time for the Treasurer to put his investments where his mouth is.

While Government members will scoff at suggestions that the economic recovery is not taking off as quickly in Wollongong as it is in other places, the facts support the assertion. In January the Australian Bureau of Statistics released regional labour market statistics that include a disturbing trend of a declining labour market in the Illawarra over recent months while other parts of the State have grown. In October last year nearly 162,000 people were employed in the Illawarra. By December, when part-time employment growth accelerates to accommodate Christmas trade, the number of persons employed in the Illawarra had fallen by 1,100.

Further details show that there was a reduction of 3,500 men employed while the number of women employed grew by around 2,000. Distinction is not made in these statistics between full-time and part-time work, nor among age groups. The trend in employed and unemployed persons alone is worrying, but a longer-term issue is highlighted by the fact that nearly 2,500 men left the Illawarra's labour force—a reduction of nearly 2 per cent. There is no indication of the industries that have shed jobs. Sadly this result is unsurprising to many in the Illawarra, but has probably gone unnoticed in the Cabinet room, largely because the Illawarra, unlike almost every other corner of the State, does not have Cabinet-level representation.

I am not calling on the Government to double its efforts in Wollongong, because doubling very little is still not much. Instead, I am demanding the Government get on with the job of making investments in the region that we have been seeking for years. There are plenty to choose from—or, better yet, do them all. It is time the Government awarded tenders for the lifts at Unanderra and Towradgi stations, with priority given to Wollongong-based firms to do the job. It is time for the Government to invest in the Wollongong Entertainment Centre and upgrade the now 22-year-old venue to one that the third-largest city in the State deserves, one that will attract events, conferences and entertainment that will help to create more local jobs.

It is time that infrastructure projects and renewable energy infrastructure were delivered using local steel. Labor legislated for a local content plan for renewable energy to be developed by mid this year, but the board tasked with devising the plan has not even been appointed yet. It is time that the Government committed to improvements to Wollongong Hospital to take the pressure off its emergency department waiting times—now the longest in the State—and fast-tracked construction of the new Shellharbour Hospital, for which there was a bipartisan approach.

It is time for the Government to address the ageing Port Kembla Hospital and consider the construction of a new health facility closer to transport and Warrarong town centre. It is time for the Government to reduce travel times on the Wollongong to Sydney rail corridor and to increase its capacity with track duplication south of Unanderra to service the growing West Dapto area. And it is time to commit to connecting Wollongong and the new Badgerys Creek airport via a rail link so that the Illawarra is better connected to its economic and jobs future.

There is a raft of smaller projects to enhance community amenity, such as connecting escarpment walking tracks or supporting the September 2022 UCI World Road Cycling Championships to be held in Wollongong, which would enable Wollongong to maximise the benefit of being the only city in the Southern Hemisphere named

a "bike city". The Government could also start getting serious about backing Port Kembla as a hydrogen hub. Last week National Energy Resources Australia announced 13 hydrogen hubs, but, sadly, the region that produces the largest amount of hydrogen and is likely to have the largest customer in steel production in Port Kembla was not on the list. If we are going to produce "green steel" in future decades when the technology is commercially available, we need to develop hydrogen supplies as well as demand for Port Kembla steel because you cannot transform an industry that no longer works.

In the immediate term, Wollongong should be added to the rollout locations for the Government's long-promised Dine and Discover vouchers. The Government has already adopted my "work from Wollongong" plan, which will see New South Wales public servants spend less time commuting and more time in Wollongong. It is a start. But if the Government adopted some of these ideas, that would be positive steps to address the emerging trends in Wollongong's labour market. Over the past few months Wollongong has seen job losses at the university, an extended shutdown of the Metropolitan mine and the rejection of the Dendrobium mine expansion, which together create a climate of economic, investment and job uncertainty. There are opportunities aplenty for this Government to support existing jobs, help create new jobs and attract investment. We have the capacity. We are ready to go. We just need this Government to deliver the support we have been calling on for years.

### TRIBUTE TO MAI DONNELLY

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:32):** I pay tribute to an extraordinary woman who touched so many lives. Mai Donnelly was the heart and soul of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai District Tennis Association. She spent over two decades dedicating her time, hard work and enthusiasm to help that great organisation thrive. Having lost her battle with breast cancer in August last year, I was honoured to return to her beloved Mills Tennis Centre at Asquith to open the Mai Donnelly Gardens—a tribute to this amazing woman. Mai and her husband, Marc, first joined the committee of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai District Tennis Association in the mid-1990s. It is their hard work and dedication that has seen it become the successful organisation it is today. Mai had an energy that could not be matched. She brought a breath of fresh air to the association, with new ideas and ways to increase membership numbers.

Her social comps on Wednesdays and Sundays brought in many new players. She also started family comps for parents and kids to play together. She was always at the courts making sure everyone was having a good time and was well fed, and I believe she even did some match-making between members. She was passionate about giving back and raised thousands of dollars for Hornsby hospital and Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter. She did this through her 24-hour tennis event, which was held annually at the Mills Centre in Asquith. The event was always a huge success and I was thrilled to join Mai and her husband Marc when they visited Hornsby Hospital to donate the proceeds they raised. She did not stop at the local tennis club either, holding the position of social secretary of the Hardcourt Tennis Association for 12 years.

Everyone who had the privilege to know Mai, to be showered in her love and friendship, is bigger, better and stronger because they knew her. Marc may have been president only because Mai instructed him to join, but he also made a big impact on the organisation. He held the president's position for 11 years and to this day still sits on the committee. Marc and Mai made a huge contribution to our local community. I acknowledge that achievement and say thank you. They can be proud that the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai District Tennis Association has grown to over 1,000 registered players. From kids through to adults, there is a comp for just about everyone. They have three social comps each week, seven competitive comps and one schools comp that stretches right across Sydney.

They offer coaching services and manage thousands of hours of court hire time. They also resurfaced two courts after upgrading two courts last year. The committee works extremely hard to ensure the best possible facilities for its members and will continue to work to get further courts updated. Recently I was pleased to award the association \$10,000 through the Community Building Partnership program, which will see new steps built at the complex that will provide better access to a court that we have to climb a hill to get to. In the past I assisted with a grant to upgrade the lighting at the complex. Recently the club received \$3,800 from the ATP legacy fund.

I acknowledge the current committee and the great Eddy Watson, who is serving as the current president. I was told it was Mai who encouraged Eddy to join the committee many years ago. He is assisted by vice president Matthew Noone, secretary Stuart Hillier, treasurer Jonathan Gray and general committee members Laneth Bissett, Theresa Johnson, Henry Chim, Tony Foster, and of course Marc Donnelly. I also acknowledge the association's life members: Rex Taylor, Harry Beck, Vivienne Beck, Dick Wright, Cliff Baum, Ian Pack, Lorraine Dallinger, Marc and Mai Donnelly, and Rosemary Jill Matthews. To receive life membership shows a significant commitment to the association. I thank those members for their dedication. COVID impacted the club during the 2019-20 season, forcing it to close temporarily, but tennis is the ultimate in socially distant sport so they were able to open up earlier than other sports.

Last year the club had a huge increase in casual bookings of the courts. Along with strong financial management, that has meant the club is in a good financial position despite the tough year. The juniors have had an outstanding last couple of years with Nikita Volonski earning an Association of Tennis Professionals world ranking. Juniors from Hornsby also made the nationals finals: Taylah Lawless, Bojana Marinkov, Andre Flip and Pavle Marinkov. Bojana is now on scholarship at Texas Tech University. Aarush Sethupathi, Vesna Marinkov, Renee Alame and Chanel Awkar all made New South Wales State training squads. I witnessed not only strong serves at Mills Park but also a dedicated club that is working hard to ensure tennis is promoted in our local area. I thank each member who has given their time to this organisation, whether on the current committee or over the past nearly 100 years. It does not go unnoticed. I thank you for keeping tennis live and thriving in our community.

#### **FAIRFIELD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR TOM MURPHY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:37):** Recently I had the great pleasure of watching one of our most popular citizens, Mr Tom Murphy, win the Fairfield City Council Australia Day Citizen of the Year award. It was an honour to join the mayor, Councillor Frank Carbone, and the Hon. Chris Bowen, MP, Federal member for McMahon, to present Tom with his award. Tom is a great friend and a tireless volunteer in the Fairfield electorate. In the time that I have known him he has always put others before himself and has supported those in our community who have needed a helping hand.

For 15 years Tom has organised the Fairfield Uniting Church Christmas Trolley Drive to help with the enormous task of sourcing food to run the soup kitchen for the homeless. Tom never flags in his enthusiasm in rallying the community, including schools, scouts and local businesses, to donate trolleys full of items that are then paraded down to the Uniting Church soup kitchen. In the days before COVID-19, the Fairfield Uniting Church Christmas Trolley Drive, spearheaded by Tom Murphy, was a massive event involving schools, local businesses and organisations who, under Tom's instruction, would gather a trolley-full of non-perishable food items for the Fairfield Uniting Church diner and then parade them down Ware Street accompanied by the NSW Police Force band. The event heralds in the Christmas season and gives our Fairfield residents a true sense of the spirit of Christmas.

The trolley drive is usually accompanied by cheers from well-wishers lining the streets, waving at the parade as it makes its way through Ware Street in Fairfield. This year the trolley drive was held in a COVID-safe manner. While we could not have the usual fanfare, the spirit of Christmas was still in abundance, with items being collected and taken to the diner at intervals throughout the previous weeks. Tom was largely responsible for geeing everyone on and making sure that stock for the diner continued to come in some form or another so that it would not miss out. I was happy to see the diner was able to replenish its stock, particularly as it serves a mammoth 30,000 meals each year to those in need throughout our community. I acknowledge Tom Murphy for his contribution to making that happen.

This is not the only way Tom has contributed to our community. He has been a great asset to the Little Athletics Fairfield fundraisers, where everyone has been delighted to hear that familiar voice calling out the bingo numbers. Tom has also provided assistance with the Fairfield Relay For Life to raise funds for those who have been affected by cancer and also to raise awareness for the preventative measures we can all take so that we can look forward one day to a future without cancer. He is an active parishioner at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Fairfield and a prominent member of the Patrician Brothers' College "old boys" club. Our local Scouts have been fortunate to have Tom in their corner as an active supporter.

It is interesting to note that Tom seems to always be emceeding something around the traps. He is always behind a microphone, rallying people to support a cause that is of particular concern to our area. In fact, there are not many organisations in the Fairfield electorate that have not been assisted by Tom at some point; he really is Mr Fairfield. A passionate advocate for Fairfield, he has put his all into the community and is a wonderful example and an inspiration to us all. Even at times when he has not been well, he has been there to help others. I am very proud to have a friend like Tom, whose vivacious personality, boundless energy and caring nature have given him the motivation to do so much for our community and so much for people in need. On behalf of the Fairfield electorate, I thank Tom for all the work he does for the electorate and I congratulate him on his well-earned award and title of Fairfield City Citizen of the Year.

#### **KIAMA ELECTORATE ROADS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (18:41):** One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to fix the Princes Highway, and one of my projects that I am proud of is the Albion Park Rail bypass, which is nearing completion. I cannot wait to see the opening of this project later this year. For those who are unfamiliar with the project, it will see the eradication of the only set of traffic lights between Bomaderry and Heathcote. It has been a major investment—in fact, the largest ever single piece of infrastructure in the Illawarra region and the largest ever single investment in the history of the Princes

Highway. My community demanded it and I fought for it, and it has been an incredible journey to secure the project and see it delivered. I know that the community is very much looking forward to the relief that the bypass will provide to one of the most notorious sections of road. In fact, it was voted one of the most hated sections of road in all of New South Wales by NRMA members.

I know the entire community has really enjoyed watching the project come to life, seeing new pieces extended and added on, and new bridges. I know that we are very much looking forward to what will be a region-changing project. One of the last pieces in the puzzle of this whole infrastructure investment is coming to the fore at the moment. The bridge on the East West Link road over the northbound entry ramp to the new motorway is a spaced plank bridge around 14 metres long. The installation of the final 31 bridge planks commenced at 7.00 a.m. and work is expected to be completed tomorrow, weather permitting. The bridge has a partially open deck like the bridge over the motorway at Yallah. The largest of the 31 planks weighs around 13 tonnes. The planks will be installed over the next two days using a 250-tonne crane. More than 2.1 million worker hours have contributed to the project and more than 2,800 people have been inducted on the project.

Sadly, not everyone was in favour of this project. Members of the New South Wales Labor Party voted against funding this project. One of its chief critics is the member for Shellharbour. That master of disaster, matron of misinformation and high priestess of propaganda is spinning the greatest yarn. That svengali of socialist rhetoric is saying that she wants to extend a project that she voted against. Indeed, I was delighted on 3 December last year to make an announcement that we had secured \$5.6 million in funding to deliver significant road projects.

**Ms Anna Watson:** You are kidding yourself.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member for Shellharbour has woken up. She is up at the crack of noon each day. I am sorry to awaken her from her slumber. At a press conference last week she called for a project that she voted against to be extended.

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

**Mr GARETH WARD:** We announced funding last year for her benefit for West Dapto and Calderwood areas pending agreement from local councils.

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

**Mr GARETH WARD:** These funds will get vital projects—projects that the member keeps voting against—moving on West Dapto and Calderwood roads so they suit thriving communities. We have allocated \$4.2 million in funding to Shellharbour Council for upgrades to Tripoli Way as an alternative route to the Albion Park town centre so that traffic from the growing Calderwood area will not clog the Illawarra Highway. Again, that was opposed by the member. She is yelling, ranting and carrying on because she just votes against investments in the Illawarra.

Pending the council's acceptance of the agreement, the funding will be used to prepare detailed designs, acquire land and gain environmental approvals. All those things have to happen and the member for Shellharbour, that svengali of socialist spin, simply does not understand. We also look forward to supporting easier travel to and from new housing estates in West Dapto by providing Transport for NSW with \$1 million to undertake a traffic study into the M1 between Figtree and Dapto. This could inform planning for new on-off ramps or additional lanes. A further \$400,000 in funding—you totally ignored this when you got up and did your embarrassing press conference last week because you were asleep during this particular period.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** The Minister will address his comments through the Chair. The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** She was out like a light when we gave funding to Wollongong City Council to help plan upgrades on Northcliffe Drive, Wylie Road and West Dapto Road, pending formal agreement. This funding will allow Wollongong City Council to prepare concept designs and a business case for upgrades that will provide a fast and effective link between West Dapto and major roads. This Government gets things done and delivers on its promises. The Opposition votes against infrastructure investment in our region.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I thank the member for Kiama for bringing some colour to the Chamber and waking everybody from their somnambulant state.

#### CANTERBURY PARK RACECOURSE

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:47):** As development intensifies across Sydney, Canterbury Racecourse has become something rare and exceptional: thirty-five hectares of precious open green space. Up until now, the community has held back proposals for high-rise towers on the site, but it is now understandably concerned that developers are back on the march. The Australian Turf Club has submitted a development

application to rezone the car park on the corner of Princess and King streets as a surplus to needs for the ever popular night racing at the track. While it might seem inconsequential, the community knows that this is the thin edge of the wedge for high-rise development at Canterbury Racecourse. We cannot allow it to be sold off piece by piece to developers. I acknowledge the important work being done by local residents to save the racecourse, including the Ashbury Community Group, the Canterbury Racecourse Action Group, and the Sydenham to Bankstown Alliance. They know that the future of the site lies in a planning process that is clear, transparent and fair. They also know that it is under threat.

Ashbury is a small, quiet heritage suburb, but it speaks with a loud and determined voice when it comes to threats of overdevelopment. When the Chubb and Tyres 4U sites were initially earmarked for development in 2015, Ashbury residents organised and fought against the proposal for 21-storey towers in the middle of their suburb. The Ashbury Community Group doorknocked every household, delivered a thousand-strong petition to the New South Wales Government, and organised planning meetings to express concerns about the development and put forward a collective vision for their suburb. They lobbied their elected representatives and navigated the complex and difficult planning processes of the State Government and the now disgraced Canterbury Council. Working with the new Canterbury Bankstown council it was able to successfully scale back development at the site, an outcome that validated its principled stand against the original proposal. The Ashbury community is not anti-development; it just wants a place at the table when it comes to decisions being made about the future of its suburb.

The development at the Chubb and Tyres 4U sites pales in comparison to what could be in the pipeline for the Canterbury Park Racecourse. In 2017 the Australian Turf Club [ATC] and Mirvac signed a deal to develop surplus land at the site, and the community was horrified when Mirvac began advertising the partnership in early 2018. In a press conference at the time with my Federal colleague the member for Watson, Tony Burke, City of Canterbury Bankstown Mayor Khal Asfour said:

The entire racecourse isn't even zoned to allow for residential housing, so it's outrageous a developer can openly start to market a housing development which has not even been lodged with council, let alone approved.

Of course, the New South Wales Government had set the scene for such outrageous overreach by including the entire racecourse site in the revised Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Corridor Strategy, slating the site for high-rise of up to 18 storeys. Canterbury has already been subjected to rampant development, with many of those approvals now subject to investigation by the ICAC. The community is sick to death of developers bypassing the planning process at the expense of good design and fair planning.

Canterbury Bankstown Council and Mayor Khal Asfour get this, and have worked to restore transparency. They know just how important it is that any change to the racecourse site be approached holistically and informed by community input. They have earmarked the racecourse site for a master plan process with a significant contribution towards open space. They have established the Canterbury Racecourse Coordination Committee to help guide future planning for the site, chaired by the Greater Sydney Commission's Central City and South District Commissioner, Mr Peter Poulet. A community voice panel of up to 10 local residents will provide input and feedback directly into the process. The process is due to get underway early this year and it is the right approach. However, all that work is undermined by the club's development application. Similar DAs have been withdrawn in the past following strong campaigns from local residents. Residents are understandably alarmed that this new DA, lodged over the summer holidays, presents an attempt to circumvent the master plan and coordination committee processes.

Given the important work being done by Canterbury Bankstown Council and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, it is imperative that the New South Wales planning Minister urgently intervene. The member for Canterbury and I have written to the Minister asking him to commit to processes that give residents the strongest voice possible when it comes to the future of their suburbs. It is clear that Canterbury Park Racecourse offers an extraordinary opportunity for our local community. I have argued that the site is perfectly suited for the establishment of an inner-west parklands, a substantial open green space to rival Centennial Park or the Western Sydney Parklands. The inner west has some of the lowest ratios of open space per capita in the city and creating open, green, recreational space would go a long way to filling the gap. It would also reflect the rich history of the site and acknowledge the important role the racecourse has played in inner west life for many generations.

#### **KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (18:52):** Australia Day is a day when we pause to reflect on the great qualities of our nation. It is a day we acknowledge our history, and celebrate our diverse and ever-changing country. We have so much to be thankful for, and it is remarkable to think that this time last year our State was in the midst of a bushfire crisis. This summer we had another crisis. It has been just over a year

since COVID-19 reached our shores and our Aussie spirit has never been more visible. When the northern beaches cluster emerged just before Christmas our State was put back on high alert. I praise the amazing northern beaches community solidarity which, after enduring weeks of lockdown and additional restrictions, helped our State avert a major COVID-19 outbreak. I acknowledge the work of my impacted colleagues, the members for the electorates of Manly, Pittwater, Wakehurst and Davidson. To have gone 24 days without any community transmission as of today is a remarkable achievement.

Despite some restrictions that were in place we were still able to gather in person to celebrate Australia Day this year. I was fortunate to attend the Ku-ring-gai Council Citizenship and Awards Ceremony as well as the Hornsby Shire Council Citizenship Ceremony along with my State and Federal parliamentary colleagues, councillors and the broader community. Each year I am amazed by the generous spirit of our local citizens who make outstanding contributions to our community. I acknowledge the following recipients of the 2021 Ku-ring-gai Community Australia Day Awards. I congratulate Kissing Point Sports Club, which was the joint winner of the award for Outstanding Contribution by a Community Organisation.

Since 1957 the club has been an integral part of the South Turramurra community and in 2020 alone it catered for more than 2,000 players. The second award for outstanding contribution by a community organisation went to Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury volunteer Christmas hamper coordinators. The Lifeline appeal has been run by local volunteers since 2008, supporting our most vulnerable. I commend both groups for promoting physical and mental wellbeing in what was a very distressing year for many in our community. I also note that Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury CEO Mrs Wendy Carver, OAM, received Australia Day Honours for her dedication to community mental health. I congratulate West Pymble resident Ella Di Moro on receiving the Young Environmental Citizen of the Year Award for her generosity and leadership in helping the local environment. Ella encourages gardening and composting in her neighbourhood, operating a free pantry from her home.

I commend Edward Giles, who in 2019 partnered with the council to implement and promote mental health resources and initiatives at his school, Killara High. Edward and his family have been known to me for most of his life. It is outstanding to see him grow into an influential voice for his peers and community and receive the Young Citizen of the Year award. The final award went to the Ku-ring-gai Citizen of the Year. I congratulate Pymble resident Michelle Key. She founded North Shore Mums Smiles2U, which became an official charity in December 2020. Smiles2U provides activity and care bags to children in local hospitals and care packages for parents staying at the Bear Cottage children's palliative care facility. I congratulate all nominees, as those recipients are only some of the many people who serve our community on a daily basis.

Following the awards, 93 people hailing from 24 countries around the world pledged their loyalty to Australia. It was an honour to share the event with everyone and to publicly recognise the steps that were taken. I had the opportunity to address the crowd, shining a light on our resilient nation and emphasising the importance of our democracy—something that I truly value. We should all be proud to be Australian. Afterwards I attended the Hornsby Shire Council Citizenship Ceremony. Hornsby Shire welcomed 80 new Australians from 24 countries on what was the perfect Aussie summer day. I thank all of our newest citizens across the State for choosing to call Australia home.

Three Ku-ring-gai residents in addition to Wendy Carver received Australia Day Honours. I acknowledge Mr Bexon Whang, OAM, from Wahroonga for his extraordinary service to veterans of the Korean War. Pymble resident Mrs Janet Kneeshaw became an OAM for her service to the performing arts and to the community. Professor Markus Seibel became an AM for his achievements and services in medical research and endocrinology. I greatly admire their community service and those honours are very well deserved. We are a nation that rewards hard work, values freedom and sticks together in hard times. We have much to celebrate.

### CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (18:57):** I speak this evening about an issue that is very close to my heart and vital to the people living in Canterbury. It is with displeasure that once again in this place I have to talk about Canterbury Hospital. I am afraid it is not a good story. Canterbury Hospital has terrific staff. They speak multiple languages, come from many different backgrounds and are doing a phenomenal job—particularly in the past year. I thank them as their local member. We owe our health professionals a debt of gratitude for working above and beyond the call of duty. When they were called, they delivered for the people of Canterbury. The way that they treat our patients is phenomenal in preventing illness and giving their all, but they are working in a building and with equipment that is outdated and broken. They are highly trained experts in medicine. Those doctors and specialists are the cream of the crop and I take my hat off to them all.

Our junior doctors, who come from all walks of life and from across New South Wales, come to Canterbury and they love it; but we want them to stay because we know that they will become excellent medical professionals. But they have to work in a building that is crumbling at the foundations. Having listened to many of these stories,

I know that sometimes they are crammed into little doorways and do their work in cramped conditions. There are numerous stories that I would not be able to relate to the House in three minutes, but I urge the Government to examine its strategic plan and fund the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital.

Recently accompanied by the member for Lakemba and the member for Summer Hill I released a petition to bring to the attention of this House the conditions of Canterbury Hospital. We have been inundated by people and their horror stories about what has happened to them. I know that the staff could not work any harder, faster or longer hours, but they need modern equipment and private spaces to consult with their patients. How is it acceptable in 2021 that a woman who is due to give birth or has just given birth has to meet her caregivers—our specialist nurses, midwives and specialist doctors—in a crammed room with 14 other people. There is no privacy. Can members imagine having to discuss your mastitis, your episiotomy, your haemorrhoids, your domestic violence that may be occurring in the presence of 14 other people in the room?

People must understand that in my community there are women who present at the hospital who have modesty issues. We need to be culturally sensitive and we must remember that the Canterbury Hospital is the only place for them to find medical care. They cannot pay for an obstetrician so they come to our best staff at the Canterbury Hospital. They cannot disclose information about their conditions because, in front of everybody, are they likely to talk about their issues with breastfeeding? No, because it is a very private matter. It is embarrassing and degrading, and it is not good enough. They should not be put in that situation or subjected to these conditions in 2021. At one of the most intimate times in a woman's life we expect that she will be given privacy and a discreet space in which to talk about her pregnancy and the enormous life changes she has gone through.

I am also very concerned that NSW Health use these vital pre and post emergency appointments to do screening for risks of domestic violence, perinatal depression and diabetes. It has been reported to me that a woman is far less likely to ask for help or address these concerns when she cannot do so in confidence or with dignity and privacy. The hospital needs to have spaces for these women and their families. Canterbury Hospital staff have also been waiting for 15 years for a renal dialysis unit. I will talk about that at another time in the next two sitting weeks. In conclusion I again urge the Minister to listen to our stories and to redevelop Canterbury Hospital.

#### **TRIBUTE TO BRUCE GREEN**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (19:02:4):** Last Friday I attended the funeral of a great mate of mine and a great friend to everyone in the Lower Clarence, and in fact a great mate to nearly everyone in regional New South Wales and Queensland. Bruce Green was farewelled at the Maclean Showground with over 2,000 people attending. Bruce was a cowboy and the most passionate country man I have ever met. The service was a very unique and moving tribute to a rough diamond who had a heart of gold. It was a farewell that John Wayne would have been proud of.

The arena of the showground that Bruce loved so dearly was adorned with timber stockyards, an old timber humpy and a rodeo chute with a yard attached. Forty horsemen and horsewomen sat astride their horses holding Australian flags throughout the service. His coffin had horses and cowboys painted over it and his saddle and hat lay on top. Bruce was never one to mince words. He called a spade a shovel and if you deleted the expletives from his conversation you would struggle to understand exactly what he said. And his service expressed the way he lived his life—warts and all. But he touched so many people with his generosity and passion that there was not a dry eye in the showground when they loaded his coffin onto a dray, which was pulled by a draught horse around the showground with the cavalcade of horsemen and horsewomen riding behind with their flags flying in the breeze and the theme from *The Man from Snowy River* booming from the showground loudspeakers. It is something I will never forget and Bruce is someone I will never forget.

I first got to know Bruce just over 20 years ago when I was mayor of Maclean shire and Bruce was a member of the sports council, forever lobbying for more money for the showground, always pushing for more upgrades, more projects, more ways to get people excited so we could pack the showground. Whilst he was passionate about the showground, he was also a fierce advocate for any sporting body or any organisation that was struggling and needed assistance. He always fought for the underdog and that is why we loved him. Bruce was passionate about his country lifestyle. He loved the agricultural shows, the local showground and farming, but most of all he loved the rodeos.

Bruce was president of the Lawrence Rodeo Committee from about 1982. The committee held a twilight rodeo in Maclean every New Year's Day. It was a massive event with big name professional riders always in the line-up, the best bulls and horses, and enormous screens to give the huge crowds a close-up view of the action. There was food and drinks for adults and kids. It was just a magnificent country event and it was all organised by Bruce. Bruce used all his persuasive means to attract riders, get the stock to the showground, deal with council

and insurers, get the support of community organisations to help run the event and pack in the crowd. He would talk, cajole, swear and twist arms until he got what he wanted. And the rodeo was always a resounding success.

But it did not just end with the rodeo, because Bruce rewarded all those who helped on the night and those organisations in need, and he would distribute the profits from the rodeo to the community organisations at a barbecue that he again organised. Through the rodeo committee Bruce distributed nearly \$1 million to community organisations in the Clarence Valley. Bruce showed us how to look after ourselves, and he led by example. He did exactly the same with the Maclean Show. He always wanted to bring something new, big and innovative to the local show.

After a visit to the Royal Easter Show in Sydney, Bruce brought *The Man from Snowy River* to the Maclean Show. He and a bunch of riders rode down the steep embankment at the Maclean Showground, cracking whips in an astonishing display of horsemanship. This was Bruce at his best—a horseman, a showman, a legend. So it was with disbelief that I heard that Bruce was critically injured by a charging bull at a rodeo in Tamworth only a few weeks ago. Like everyone else, I thought he was indestructible. The man is gone but the legend lives on. My sincere condolences to his family. We will sorely miss him. So long, Bruce.

### OATLEY ELECTORATE SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:07):** I extend my support on behalf of the residents of my local community and, in particular, Peakhurst, Lugarno, Riverwood and surrounding suburbs for a direct bus service to Aquinas Catholic College in Menai. This is a longstanding issue as students from the area currently need to catch a bus to Riverwood, followed by a train to Padstow and then a further bus to Menai, which makes the travel time to school over one hour. Late last year I received an online petition—I have also since started my own—from local residents with 278 signatures in support of this service and I am committed to seeing it established for our local community. It is an ongoing issue that has gone on for more than five years. I know from my personal discussions with members of the community that many parents and grandparents are concerned for the wellbeing of their children under these circumstances.

Travelling across multiple modes of transport and waiting for connecting services, particularly during the early morning and the late evening, can be daunting for children. On top of this, it is also impractical that it forces students to spend additional hours each day travelling to and from school. Whilst it is only a 15-minute drive from the school to my local community, not all students have this option. The alternative takes them in a completely different direction through Riverwood and Padstow, with a fourfold increase in the commute time. This means that children are spending less time with their family and friends, and less time studying at home. I am married to a schoolteacher and together we are raising our two children under seven—we know that this is not a viable option for students and we need to see this fixed.

I thank the Minister for Transport and Roads, Andrew Constance, for his willingness to discuss the feasibility of this service and for continuing to communicate with me on this important issue. We will work together to find a solution. I can assure members of my community that the Government and Punchbowl Bus Company are working together for local residents. Last year this cooperation led to a similar service being offered when a direct bus service to my former school, Marist Catholic College Peshurst, was provided for the new second campus at South Hurstville. This is fantastic for students living locally. Additional bus services have also been provided for the Georges River College network, both GRC campuses at Peakhurst and Oatley, and the school campus at Peshurst.

In 2016 the Government provided a direct bus to Inaburra School in Bangor to benefit students from Oatley, Mortdale, Peshurst, Peakhurst and Lugarno. More recently additional services have been provided to take kids from Riverwood station to Lugarno, most of whom go to St Ursula's College at Kingsgrove. This has given students more options when it comes to their choice of school because of the transport network available. Parents also have greater confidence that their children are safe when travelling to and from school. I say to all of my constituents that I will continue to fight to make this service a reality. Aquinas Catholic College students and their families deserve these services. I will continue to keep them and the House updated on this development as it progresses.

### WENTWORTH POINT OVERDEVELOPMENT

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:11):** I speak on the issue of overdevelopment in Wentworth Point in the electorate of Auburn. As I have spoken about earlier today, this region is seeing an incredible amount of development, with 20,000 apartments being built in Wentworth Point alone. An original master plan was delivered on the basis of which local residents purchased their properties and formed their expectations. Included in that master plan were things such as the foreshore park that the State Government promised would be delivered in 2016. The most important park in the area, it is meant to be residents' access to the waterfront, but we are now in

2021 and still not one sod has been turned on that foreshore park, despite the superlatives from those opposite about how much they love open spaces.

The bigger issue for residents is that what they envisaged they would get is not what they have received from this Government. The corner of Hill Road and Bennelong Parkway, the most dangerous intersection in my electorate, is the site of constant accidents. Because of this Government's failure to deliver stage two of the light rail, no traffic lights have been put in and now the council is dragging its feet despite the Opposition's two-year fight for traffic measures at that spot. In certain precincts buildings had envelope height restrictions imposed due to the size and extent of some of the developments.

On the corner of Hill Road and Bennelong Parkway they were restricted to four storeys and eight storeys. However, to the outrage of local residents—who, over three development applications, put in 1,525 submissions objecting to the development application—a new 15-storey building is going in there. Given how much development has happened and given the community expectations, this is the straw that is breaking the camel's back. Only 32 submissions were received in support of the construction. Parramatta council itself—a council run by a Liberal Party mayor—objected strongly to each proposal to increase the height of the buildings. However, the Government is ignoring the advice of its own party members in that area with regard to the development. The planning department said:

The Department acknowledges Council's position and the strong community opposition to any increase in height and density on the site. Notwithstanding, the Department is of the view that the character of Wentworth Point has evolved and now includes taller building heights. Yes, it has evolved and includes taller building heights because the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment keeps giving them approval.

It continues:

It would not result in significant traffic generation as no additional car parking is proposed, and the adjacent intersection of Hill Road and Bennelong Parkway will be upgraded by Council in 2021/22.

Let us hope it is upgraded in 2021-22 because there are no plans by the council to do that. It says it does not have the money to do anything in 2021. Unless the State Government comes up with some cash readies to pay for the huge increases in the amount of traffic—increases that are being generated by the developments the Government is putting in there—it will not have any traffic controls on that intersection. The reality in Wentworth Point is that there is one way in and one way out. It is not like anywhere else; it is a peninsula with only one way in and one way out. Now there is no public transport because the light rail that was promised is not being delivered.

When the department said that it would increase the height, the assessment it referred to refers to a 25-storey and 40-storey tower development of 3 Burroway Road, Wentworth Point. We know what that is; it is the site of the Government's proposed Sydney Olympic Park High School, which has since had a State environmental assessment requirements request. The fact the department is using a Roads and Maritime Services site that the Government envisaged putting a 25-storey and 40-storey tower on, which is now a high school site, as the basis for allowing an increase outside the envelope that will impact on the apartments around it, shows why people have absolutely no faith in government, no faith in planning and no faith in the Government's proposals on open space. Whatever the Minister says about planning, it is just not delivered.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (19:16):** Let's talk about the elephant in the room; let's talk about suicide. Claims were made in the media last December that suicide deaths had dropped by 5 per cent, attributing New South Wales Government data. But, since the suicide register which I managed to get the Government to agree on implementing has not yet provided accurate suicide statistics, I think that downward trend is far from certain. The informal reports of suicide deaths I have received would indicate that rates of suicide have not decreased. Men in the 20 to 35 year age group are at the highest risk of taking their own lives. Suicide deaths outnumber road trauma by three to one and yet we throw tens of millions of dollars at safety and improvements to roads, road safety programs and media campaigns. Suicide prevention does not benefit from the same funding or focus. Far more people have died from suicide than COVID, which we have spent billions of dollars on.

Sadly, I have learned that Lifeline relies on grants funding for much of its counselling services and programs, for which it has to compete with sports clubs and other community organisations. That is just not right. The truth is that the available resources are either insufficient or ineffective. I am aware of instances where people who have sought urgent help have been turned away from health services and made to wait because of limited appointment availability. In some cases where people have been turned away, they have tragically taken their own life.

Government has a major part to play in leadership on this important issue. It is essential that the Government sufficiently funds mental health services and programs which are easily accessible and delivered in a timely manner. While I will continue to persuade the Government to review and adequately fund mental health

services, I will encourage the community to do its part too. Community interaction is an important element to social inclusion, reducing loneliness and fostering friendships and connection. I do not have all the answers and I do not think we will ever have all the solutions, but we all have a part to play in suicide prevention.

Gathering around food is a social activity which many people comfortably engage together in. I felt that hosting free community barbecues was something I could do in the community to gather people in a positive social setting. For 2021 I have teamed up with a charity called Mr Perfect, agreeing to be their Orange host of free monthly barbecues for men's mental health. We know that three out of every four suicide deaths involve males. Blokes are notorious for bottling things up and not looking after their health, so targeting blokes is important. Like me, my good friend and former colleague Carl Smith is a passionate advocate of men's mental health. In our lives and careers Carl and I have seen the tragic realities of suicide and the heartbreak such a premature death causes to families, friends, colleagues and the wider community.

Last Sunday Carl Smith and I co-hosted the very first Mr Perfect barbeque event for Orange at the picturesque Cook Park. The weather was perfect, but when we were setting up I was still unsure whether many would actually turn up. I was overwhelmed; the turnout to the event by local blokes was simply amazing. Our meat supplies vanished in no time and a few helpers made a quick run to the shops to replenish the meat supplies. The barbie was reloaded and the event rolled on for hours, with lots of well-fed and cheery blokes having great conversations. It was great to see a few old faces and lots of new ones too. It was great to see members of the Men's Shed, the Cancer Council and the Prostate Support Group there as well.

I make a special mention of the guys who helped run the barbeque. A big thank you to Glenn Floyd, Gary Sanders, Brett Cook, Matthew Barr and my son, Mathew Donato, for helping run the hotplate and keeping all the blokes well fed and watered. The Mr Perfect barbeque was, in my opinion, highly successful and, whilst it is a simple thing to do, I think it will prove highly effective at decreasing isolation and loneliness, and improving social inclusion and mental health generally. When we were saying our farewells at the conclusion of the barbeque, one local fellow said, "Thank you, that's the best I've felt in a very long time." His words have fuelled my determination. I look forward to hosting next month's Mr Perfect barbeque at Cook Park on 7 March. I am hoping it will be even bigger and better than the last one.

I encourage all members in this place to consider this initiative and any other initiative they might consider to be appropriate to improve mental health in our communities and to prevent suicide. This needs to be a community conversation. There needs to be a community effort and response. Community is a critical element in addressing this issue. Let us talk about the elephant in the room, and let us do something about it.

### **MEDOWIE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:21):** It is no coincidence that I am starting this parliamentary year with the issue that started it all for me: public education. Not only am I a product of public education, but it was the desperate need for a public high school in my town of Medowie that first made me consider putting up my hand to represent Port Stephens in this place. Fifteen years ago my family moved to Medowie. I had two small children and another was born within a month of the move. When my oldest started school at a local public primary school I joined the P&C. It was then that I became aware of the longstanding, long-running local campaign for a public high school in Medowie, a campaign that culminated in the Department of Education forming a local committee tasked with assessing the provision of secondary education in western Port Stephens.

I sat as a P&C representative on that task force alongside the local principals, a TAFE representative and other community members. I juggled toddlers and nursed my baby at those meetings. Eventually a plan was formulated—a plan that put student outcomes first, a plan for public secondary schooling in Medowie operating in a collegiate way with the high schools in Raymond Terrace. We were told by the department that when student numbers reached a tipping point the plan would kick in. Since that plan nothing has happened, despite Medowie's population growing exponentially. Right now, 1,000 more homes are being built in Medowie. That is on top of the 10,000 people already living in Medowie, the 7,600 people on the Tilligerry Peninsular, 1,500 in Karuah and 1,100 in Salt Ash—all communities that would use a public high school in Medowie.

But the plan created to cater for the growing population has been ignored by this Government. The land that was purchased in 1983 by the Department of Education for the purpose of building a public high school still sits vacant alongside Medowie's largest primary school. For the past three State government elections I have—and the Labor Party has—committed to putting that plan into place and building a public high school in Medowie. Ahead of the 2011 election the Liberal Party did too: It committed to making the public high school shovel ready. But it never did. It is immensely frustrating to think that had Labor formed government at any of the past three State elections local kids would be sitting and learning in a local public high school in Medowie today. Local people would have local jobs.

Instead, under this Government, it has been a decade of decline for our public schools and public education standards in New South Wales. Instead of a public high school being built in Medowie, a new Catholic high school was built and opened. It is at the end of my street and I literally saw it grow out of the ground. Now my town has a beautiful new Catholic high school and a terrific independent Christian school but no public high school. Meanwhile, more than 1,000 kids are bussed out of Medowie and surrounding towns each morning and every afternoon they come home. After a decade of denials and inaction, what is the Government's plan for the kids of Medowie, Karuah, Salt Ash and the Tilligerry Peninsula?

The Government has a plan, but it does not want us to understand what it is. Its plan is to upgrade Irrawang High School and Hunter River High School in Raymond Terrace. That sounds okay. Do those schools need an upgrade? Yes, they do—desperately. Both schools have great staff and great leadership. Student outcomes are on the rise and they are now close to capacity or beyond. They desperately need better facilities, more classrooms and better resources to support the students they have. But let me be clear: The Government's so-called upgrade is to expand both schools to squeeze more kids in. It is a plan designed to give it an excuse to never deliver a public high school in Medowie. It is a plan that will continue to see our kids being bussed long distances every day to get to school. So today I call on the Government to come clean. If its plan means it will never build a public high school in Medowie, it should be honest and tell us. If its plan is to squeeze more kids into the schools at Raymond Terrace while failing to provide a public high school in Medowie, it should be honest and tell us.

The Government should tell us what it plans to do with the Department of Education land that still sits vacant in Medowie. Will we see a "for sale" sign on it soon? Is that how the Government plans to fund the upgrades to the two high schools in Raymond Terrace? The education Minister must rule out selling off our kids' futures. She must come clean with her plans for our community. For my family and so many others, it is too late. Two of my kids have finished their schooling, and my Medowie baby is now in year 10. It is time that the Government told the truth. It is time to put students first. It is time to value public education and deliver a public high school in Medowie.

#### GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:26):** As The Greens member for Ballina and in line with Greens NSW's strong opposition to greyhound racing and its exploitation and cruelty, and our concerns about gambling and the use of public money to support such practices and industries, I voice my intention to collaborate with informed and experienced organisations like Animal Liberation and the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds to oppose a proposed development for a new greyhound racing track in the Tweed region.

The greyhound industry cannot be reformed. It will never recover from the public exposures that demonstrated clearly the systemic and inherent cruelty entrenched in the industry. The member for Tweed spoke out against the cruelty to animals in the greyhound industry. This is not coming from The Nationals; this is coming from an outdated and out-of-touch, small sector of the community. Frequently the greyhound industry has been plagued with accusations of wrongdoing. It has been steeped in serious allegations of mismanagement, inappropriate distribution of TAB funds, widespread mistreatment of dogs, allegations of race fixing, drug use, money laundering and alleged criminal activity. As we know, the catalyst for significant and sweeping government scrutiny and change was the ABC *Four Corners* program *Making a Killing* in February 2015.

As I have said in this place before, the community has moved in a different direction. My grandparents liked to bet on the greyhound races. It was a very different world. Unfortunately, the economies of scale and increasing competition in the gambling space have meant that the industry is deeply flawed. Certainly from the perspective of the North Coast, Greyhound Racing NSW is not showing any real, genuine commitment to reform.

The industry is no longer mum-and-dad trainers. Even if we thought the proposed new tracks in the Tweed would represent a new era and a new style of racing, we would be sadly disappointed because the design of the tracks is curved, which we know causes more deaths and injuries. This is happening despite the fact that the independent study into optimal track design for greyhound racing conducted by the University of Technology Sydney strongly recommended that the industry move away from curved tracks. I say to those proponents: Why are they doing that? We know it comes down to profits before the welfare of their dogs. That is a very sad state of affairs.

The history of greyhound racing in New South Wales provides a sobering reminder of a deeply entrenched culture with issues that span animal cruelty, gambling, secrecy and a real failure to bring the industry into the twenty-first century. In the current New South Wales climate of heightened public concern, national surveys show how many Australians are deeply concerned about animal welfare—whether in the beef industry or across a whole range of animal welfare issues. The average Australian believes animals are sentient beings. The majority of Australians believe that and the majority of Australians do not support any industry that involves cruelty to

animals. It is time that the relevant Minister and the Premier of this State confirm what is the future of greyhound racing in New South Wales.

The greyhound racing industry and those who participate in and profit from the exploitation of greyhounds through racing and breeding continue to commodify those dogs as commercial objects. That is simply out of step with the community. The greyhounds' welfare is sacrificed and people are very concerned. The industry does not have a social licence. I encourage the proponents of the industry in the Tweed to axe it now. There is a concerted campaign against it and the broader community does not support it. Together with my Greens colleagues and collaborating organisations, we will vigorously oppose the proposed Tweed greyhound track and we call on all compassionate members of both Houses of our Parliament to do likewise.

#### **PETER SPEET**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:31):** I commend Hawkesbury local Mr Peter Speet for obtaining a 60-year National Long Service Medal and fourth clasp for his 63 years of service to the Rural Fire Service in November 2020. This is a very rare honour and one that Peter and his family and friends should be incredibly proud of. At 79 years of age, Peter has spent the vast majority of his life in service to the RFS. As his local member, I am extremely proud to have such a dedicated individual within the Hawkesbury electorate. I am thankful for the blood, sweat and tears that Peter has shed over the years while putting himself in harm's way to defend lives, property and livestock in our community from the perils of Mother Nature. Since joining the Oakville Rural Fire Brigade in 1957, Peter has held the positions of brigade callout officer, permit officer, group captain and captain. He has faced bush, grass and structural fires, as well as tragic vehicle accidents. In 1990 Peter received the prestigious National Medal with clasp in recognition of over 25 years of service to the RFS. In 2005 he received the National Fire Service Medal.

I pay tribute to Peter's family, friends, employers and colleagues for their ongoing support and everything they do to enable Peter to serve his community and save lives and property. The Speet family have a long connection to the Hawkesbury area. Peter attended Oakville Public School and then Richmond High School. He married his wife, Roslyn, in 1976 and they celebrated 53 years of marriage in February last year. Their four children, Sally, Katrina, Melanie and Heidi, as well as many of the grandchildren, have followed in Peter's footsteps as members or supporters of the RFS. Roslyn herself spent many years working for the RFS catering corps. The Speet family are early settlers to the district and Speets Road in Oakville is named after them. The family farmed their acreage at Oakville for many decades, chiefly growing strawberries.

Their paddock has long been used to train new generations of RFS cadets both in the practicalities of firefighting and the finer art of hose and reel events—Oakville being frequent champions of highly competitive RFS field days for many years. There is a glass cabinet at Oakville fire shed full of trophies and ribbons; you cannot count them. It is a source of pride for Peter and the whole Hawkesbury community, who value the contribution of Peter Speet and the whole Speet family to our region. The Oakville brigade has been a mainstay of the Oakville community for over half a century. It has provided protection to life and property, and attended motor vehicle accidents. It has served the community with an outreach cadet program in local schools, especially Windsor High, and has even rescued cows from dams.

Peter's wisdom and the positive effects of his contribution are of a great magnitude. Generations of young people grew up under Peter's wing and were taught the importance of the virtues of volunteerism and service to the community. Thanks to Peter's contribution over many decades, the brigade is in an extremely healthy state. I thank Mr Speet and congratulate him on his strong service and on reaching this incredible milestone. I wish him all the very best in the years to come.

#### **HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:35):** I am excited to announce tonight the successful applicants that will share \$300,000 in funding from the 2020 Community Building Partnership program in the Holsworthy electorate. All of the grants are going to extremely committed community groups, ranging from local sporting groups to disability services and pretty much everything in between. This funding will come as a big boost for those 12 organisations and will help them provide positive social and recreational outcomes, especially as times are a little tough at the moment for many of our organisations—particularly financially—since COVID hit. I have had the pleasure of visiting many of the Community Building Partnership recipients and have seen firsthand the hard work they do.

Local sporting organisations are an integral part of the community, which is why I am pleased to say that many sporting groups benefited from the program. Moorebank Rams Rugby League Football Club received \$57,000 to upgrade the lighting for the floodlights on its main field. This will allow players and spectators to have improved lighting and to play in the evenings. Chipping Norton Lake Sailing Club received \$11,600 to replace a

sailing dinghy that was over 25 years old. The club's boats are used weekly to teach all members of the community how to sail, so it was about time they were replaced. Having a new boat will increase community participation. Previously, people would wait until the old boats were repaired and that often took a long time. I am glad to know that more people will be able to get involved thanks to the program's funding.

Illawong Marlins Baseball Club was given \$26,000 in funding to go towards re-levelling the surface of its senior baseball diamond. I joined the club on the weekend at its Ladies Day to discuss how the upgrade will positively impact the club. It is an awesome club. I know the funding will be used very well to upgrade the playing surface. It will be safer for players and less impacted by weather as drainage will be improved, so there will be more playing time. It is pretty simple, and awesome for the players. Moorebank Baseball Softball Club was also a recipient of the grants program. It received \$33,928 for the construction of a brand-new storage shed. At the moment the club has restricted storage abilities and both change rooms are being used for that. The club can now store all its equipment securely and go back to using its change rooms as a brand-new storage shed will free up the space.

Fairfield Liverpool Cricket Association also received funding of \$19,613 for the renovation of Amalfi Park's cricket pitch. This renovation will ensure that the ground is compliant with Cricket Australia's format guidelines and provide a new wicket facility for the community to use. It is a popular playing field in the area so I am glad it is getting a bit of a refurbishment. As many in this House know, I am extremely passionate about our disability services. I have the great pleasure to announce that the Australian Foundation for Disability received \$25,909 to go towards resources for supporting employees with disabilities at AFFORD in Prestons. Prestons Disability Enterprise employs over 160 people with disabilities in a supported environment. This funding will go a long way in supporting those employees and allow them to thrive in a working environment.

I am also pleased to announce that the Miracle Babies Foundation—one of my favourite charities—received \$26,000. This will go towards funding a vehicle to help support families with premature or sick babies. I have spoken about Miracle Babies many times in this House, and I know that this vehicle will make a huge difference to local vulnerable families. After everybody donated to the bushfires and then struggled financially during COVID, it would have been hard for the foundation to fundraise this money, so I am glad to see it go to good use. I am also glad to announce that Moorebank Anglican Church received \$44,040 to renew its car park, a project that is well overdue. A complete resurfacing will increase capacity and accessibility for community members, particularly older members and those with mobility aids. It will make for far safer access to the church.

Other projects that received funding in my electorate include the Scout Association of Australia, which received \$13,410 to go towards upgrading the kitchen at the scout camp. Core Community Services received \$20,000 for the refurbishment of the youth refuge kitchen; Menai Men's Shed received \$7,500 to go towards a new table saw; and Menai Bushfire Brigade received \$15,000 to go towards a Little Ed fire truck, which is a very useful tool to teach kids about fire safety. One of the most important parts of our job as members is making our community better and stronger. That is why I have worked with my local groups to secure this funding. I know this funding will go a long way to improving the services and safety of the people living in the Holsworthy electorate. I thank all of the community groups that applied for funding and I look forward to seeing more grant applications in the new year.

#### WAYNE PHILLIPS

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:40):** Tonight I talk about a man of steel. After almost 40 years in the trade union movement, the Australian Workers' Union [AWU] Port Kembla Assistant Branch Secretary Wayne Phillips retired on Friday 11 December 2020. Wayne started his union career with the Metal Workers' Union in 1982 after being among the workers retrenched from the Port Kembla steelworks in the grim days of the early 1980s. He moved over to the AWU in 2005 and was union branch secretary in 2015 when BlueScope put the closure of the steelworks on the table. BlueScope gave the union an ultimatum, a do-or-die offer that would require a great deal of fortitude from Wayne and the other union officials. Wayne was faced with the choice of the impending disaster of the closure of Port Kembla and the subsequent loss of all the jobs in the steelworks or to trust the company—something that does not come easily or instinctively to a union official.

The union and BHP had to find \$200 million in savings or the gates of Port Kembla would be closed. The decision to trust the company was a big step for the union. It was not automatic and only occurred after due diligence was done on the documents that prescribed the impending disaster. Along with others, Wayne would have to sell the idea that wage freezes and redundancies were something the workers needed to embrace for the greater good. The Fraternity Club was the venue for the meeting on 8 October 2015. The issues were sensitive and tough to sell. However, after what was at times a very heated meeting, Wayne was able to convince the members to vote in favour of the proposal. Many years later Wayne reflects on the decision he made and is sure it was the right decision—and I am too. We still have the steelworks and it employs many people. For Wayne

there have been many tough calls during his career, with countless issues that require the finesse and guile to guide innumerable others safely through the maze of the modern industrial system.

On a lighter note, being a union official has its drawbacks, believe it or not: long hours, lots of driving and eating on the run. But for Wayne there was a saving light, a yellow light with black writing that spelled "Macca's"—just what you need in a sedentary job! The doctor told Wayne and his wife that this was not good for him and he needed to cease that kind of diet. Wayne was warned off: "No more Macca's for you." Increasingly his work colleagues became aware of the health order on him, so Wayne went underground—in a work car plastered with AWU stickers. It was a bad move on Wayne's part. He was spotted, ratted out and told to stay away. Sometime later, in an alleged conversation between a union official and a police officer on a break at the Fairy Meadows Macca's, the subject of Wayne's barring from those particular restaurants came up. The officer said, "Does he have a car with AWU stickers on it?" He described Wayne's car exactly. "His car is here," he said. Wayne would make a lousy spy, but he was an absolutely brilliant union official.

Some mentions of Wayne's character in the local newspapers are worth recounting. One observes, "There are some amazing people in the world and you're up there with the best of them, Wayne. Another calls him "a tireless advocate for working men and women". Still another notes, "A great debt is owed to Wayne for his outstanding leadership in keeping the steelworks open." Another declares, "Good on you, Wayne, for fighting the never-ending battle." There are a number of others, but members get the picture. I add my voice to the many others and thank Wayne for his service and constancy in helping countless people during his time as a union official. He is a thoroughly decent human being and has earned his retirement. I hope he enjoys it.

### MAITLAND ELECTORATE HOMELESSNESS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:45):** I plead with the Government to make more social and community housing properties available to address the epidemic of homelessness in Maitland. The wait for community and social housing in Maitland is well in excess of a decade. At the opening of some community housing in Thornton last year, the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and I met a woman who had waited for over 19 years—nearly two decades—for a home. This woman shared with us the impact on her children, her family life and her professional life of being forced to live on the road for that time. But this is just one woman. Tonight I will talk about the severe impact that homelessness is having on other people in our community who suffer the comorbidities of complex trauma, mental and physical ill health and the lack of a support network.

Just two weeks ago, a man came to my office in desperation. He arrived in Maitland late last year seeking a fresh start after a history of child sexual assault and violent family relationships. He was under the incorrect impression that the local community housing provider had a property waiting for him. In fact he was just on the priority waiting list. There were another 30 people in Maitland on that list and another 732 people who are potentially waiting up to 10 years—or 19, in reality—for public housing in Maitland. This man's mental health issues include depression, complex trauma, borderline personality disorder and schizophrenia. Unmedicated, he is a danger to himself and others. Medicated, he is heavily sedated, vulnerable and an easy target for robberies and further violence.

He received temporary accommodation in a motel for 60 days, but when this expired he ended up in a boarding house. In the boarding house he experienced a distressing incident when he was woken up in the early hours of the morning by people banging on his door, seeking a previous tenant who apparently owed them a drug debt. This was a powerful trigger for him, given his history of violence and abuse, so he fled in fear in the middle of the night. Since then he has quite understandably refused to live in any form of group accommodation, preferring instead to sleep outdoors under bridges or behind shops. Even the former Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, previously indicated that one of the boarding houses that this man had been referred to never should be included in the list of temporary accommodation providers that were to be used for people in vulnerable situations. What has happened?

After weeks of living rough on the streets, this man came back to my office. He threatened to take his own life or perform an illegal act so that he could be sent to jail to access shelter and a decent meal and get back on his medications. My staff convinced him to seek treatment for his mental and physical complaints at the Maitland Hospital. He was turned away after walking there on a 40-degree day, with hives, sweating profusely, complaining of internal injuries that created incontinence issues for him and just in a terrible state. This man then attended my office again in person after walking back.

I rang Hunter New England Health and arrangements were made for him to be seen on re-presentation to Maitland Hospital. When he was told there that he would have to go to the psychiatric unit where he had been earlier, he was so scared that he told staff if they took him down there he would bash them. So a man who has reported suicidal thoughts and threatened violence against others was released back into the community, but with

no access to private accommodation that would keep him, and perhaps other people in the community, safe. Minister Ward's office transferred my inquiries to the Department of Housing, which advised that Link2home would extend his temporary accommodation at the discretion of the local community housing provider. We were advised that neither Housing NSW nor the Minister could direct Hume to provide out-of-guidelines extensions or take any other expedited action. What a disgrace!

This man spent nearly two solid days sitting in my electorate office while we called agency after agency. Throughout that time we found he failed to turn up to appointments, left abusive messages and refused offers of shared accommodation. I am not saying that he was not a difficult person to help. I accept that, for the safety of workers in our community services and our public health system, we have limited options for this man. But have we got no options? How did it get to this—being covered in hives and bites, crying, begging for a roof over your head, a shower, a place to wash your clothes or yourself, to have a meal, a safe place where you can lock the door and take your medication and not be assaulted? This should not be too much to ask. This is a gross simplification of the man's complex needs but I urge the Government to realise this: Its system is broken. People like this man need help. Please act now.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **NORMA COWPER, OAM**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:51:0):** I welcome Port Macquarie's newest Medal of the Order of Australia recipient, Norma Cowper, who was recognised in the 2021 Australia Day Honours List. Norma Cowper is simply a gem in our community, supporting a variety of organisations in a range of roles that strengthen and build relationships across our region. Growing up in Sydney, Norma's diverse interests and passions led her to undertake work with Twentieth Century Fox, the RSL Youth Club Swimming, and Enfield Swimming and Life Saving Club before moving to Port Macquarie 30 years ago.

As an outstanding community representative, Norma continues to inspire others to be better versions of themselves through her track record of volunteering in a long list of organisations that include the Armistice Day Band Concert, Better Hearing, Lake Cathie Bowling Club Committee, Port Macquarie Probus Club, Sea Acres Rainforest Centre, the Koala Hospital—and the list literally goes on. One of Norma's standout accomplishments was being awarded the NSW Torchbearers life membership for her service as president on two separate occasions, secretary for five years and a committee member for over a decade—a truly inspirational woman. I congratulate Norma on a well-deserved Medal of the Order of Australia, acknowledging her incredible work in our community.

#### **GRANVILLE ROTARY CLUB**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:52:1):** I take this opportunity to congratulate the Rotary Club of Granville for its efforts in thanking frontline workers this Australia Day. I was fortunate to join the secretary of the Rotary Club of Granville, Mr Renga Rajan, on Australia Day at Auburn Hospital, where club members had organised to distribute some delicious lamingtons to the frontline nurses and doctors who have worked so hard to keep our community safe and healthy through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Rotary club then also visited police officers from the Cumberland Local Area Command to deliver some lamingtons as a thank you to those frontline officers for their work during the pandemic. Well done to Renga and the Rotary Club of Granville for living up to the Australia Day 2021 theme of Reflect, Respect, Celebrate.

#### **ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:52:5):** I recognise the generosity of the students of St Joseph's Primary School from Grenfell. Each year the Grenfell Food Hall puts together Christmas hampers to assist the local community. In December 2020 the staff and students from St Joseph's Primary School held a food drive at their school to help those less fortunate than themselves. The students with their teachers collected non-perishable items for their donation and were very eager for the food hall to include the items in the Christmas hampers. The Grenfell Food Hall were very appreciative of the school's donations of treats and the staple items that are always needed at home. This was a fantastic experience to nurture the students in helping their local community. Well done to the students of St Joseph's Primary School, Grenfell!

#### **NEIL CROMARTY, OAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:53:4):** There is little that defines the fabric of Australia better than our willingness to salute those who served in our armed forces in active service or who were impacted by the service of another. We lean in to support those who carry the scars from their service, and we mourn those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is therefore very fitting that the dedicated service of East Maitland RSL Sub-Branch stalwart Neil Cromarty has been recognised with the presentation of a Medal of the Order of Australia. Neil, a veteran of Vietnam, has been a member of the sub-branch for more than 40 years and has served as its secretary

for almost a quarter of a century. He has been integral to so many successes during this time—procuring massive grants to improve facilities, organising Anzac and Remembrance Day ceremonies, and serving as welfare officer while our veteran community was fragmented and isolated in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to all the work I have referred to, he also worked very hard in the Royal Newcastle Aero Club. Neil has done a marvellous job caring for and connecting members of our veteran community, and I know he is not done. Congratulations to Neil on his OAM—it is a most deserved honour.

#### **ILLAWONG MARLINS LADIES DAY**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:54):** I refer to the annual Illawong Marlins Baseball Club's Ladies Day, which I attended on 6 February 2021. It was a great day out, celebrating the special ladies who are involved in the club and the sport. The Ladies Day was held at their sporting field at Barden Ridge and the club put on a very classy and special day. It provided beautiful food and refreshments. The ladies were great company and I was glad to be a part of it. I also enjoyed taking along my girls; I think they will want to play baseball after learning about it. I loved the idea of having some of the mums go onto the field for the first play and getting involved with their kids on the day. I heard about the club's plan to upgrade its diamond and some other works using the \$26,000 from the New South Wales Community Building Partnership. I was happy to see the funds being put to good use, which will allow the club to enjoy its fields with less impact from bad weather. Its reconfiguration will reduce maintenance issues too. I acknowledge Illawong Marlins Baseball Club for running such a successful club and I thank them for asking me to attend its Ladies Day.

#### **ALLAN HEPPLWHITE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:55):** The beautiful community that I represent would not be what it is without those who volunteer their time to make our community safer, healthier and happier. Today I recognise someone whose contribution to our community has been extraordinary. Mr Allan Hepplewhite of Raymond Terrace has been an integral member of the Port Stephens State Emergency Service [SES] unit for over 50 years. Allan has attended over 2,500 rescues during his career in the SES, and has been instrumental in the establishment of key disaster plans, equipment training and competing at the Australian National Rescue competitions.

Allan was there for people during the Newcastle earthquake of 1989 and he was there during the 2012 and 2015 super storms. He has witnessed the aftermath of some of the worst road accidents working alongside police, Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Ambulance, often battling high-risk and dangerous conditions to save lives. At the age of 82, Allan is now an honorary instructor. He still attends weekly SES meetings and training sessions and helps with recruiting new members. On behalf of the people of Port Stephens and this Parliament, I thank Allan and recognise him for his extraordinary service to the SES and our community.

#### **LIAM HINCHCLIFFE**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:56):** I recognise the effort and achievement of Moss Vale High School year 12 graduate Liam Hinchcliffe in the State's cross-country championships. This young man ran six kilometres in a phenomenal time of 19 minutes and 28 seconds and was crowned the New South Wales under-18 State champion. Liam has spent many hours training solo in the highlands to keep himself in peak condition. With competitions cancelled, it took a great deal of motivation to maintain his training schedule and mental strength, whilst awaiting competitions to recommence. Liam has also maintained his diligence in his studies, which has seen him graduate from year 12 on 16 October 2020. Recognising that this has been an extraordinary year for our young people with COVID-19 restrictions and the many changes and disruptions to everyday life, Liam has demonstrated his resilience, self-belief and the love of his sport to achieve these outstanding results. I congratulate Liam.

#### **DECCAN AUSTRALIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:57):** I thank the Deccan Australian Welfare Association [DAWA], which held its sixth DAWA Cup in 2021. It was a successful couple of weeks at Parry Park. From the bottom of my heart I thank the DAWA team—the president, secretary, executive and volunteers—who worked hard during that two-week event. I appreciate and thank Greg Matthews, a former Australian cricketer, who came and inspired the team. I attended with former deputy mayor Khodr Saleh from Canterbury-Bankstown Council and many others. I thank the families and everybody who attended and enjoyed a fantastic cricket game. I congratulate the Auburn Thunder team that won. I advised the member for Auburn and she congratulated her team. Cricket is an amazing game and I thank the association for its wonderful work.

### I4GIVE DAY

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:59):** On 30 January 2021 I attended the inaugural launch of i4give Day, an annual day of remembrance organised by Minister Bronnie Taylor, MLC, and the families of the four angels who were tragically killed by a drunk and drugged driver at Oatlands on 1 February 2020. I4give Day will be held on 1 February each year and honours brother Antony, sisters Angelina and Sienna Abdallah, and cousin Veronique Sakr. The compassion and strength shown by parents Danny and Leila Abdallah, Bridget Sakr, Craig and Bob is so inspiring.

We are so fortunate to have these brave people to teach us how to forgive. It starts in the heart, spreads to the family and then reaches the community. Leila says forgiveness gives you freedom and is the greatest gift you can give yourself. I commend and thank Danny and Leila Abdallah, Bridget Sakr, Craig and Bob for teaching us how to forgive. I also acknowledge Minister Andrew Constance, who today presented the second reading of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021, which will be known as the Four Angels bill. It was an honour to have Leila Abdallah and Bridget Sakr in the public gallery to hear the second reading speech.

### TRIBUTE TO PHIL MEDEW

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:00):** I remember the life of a member of the Central Coast community, Phil Medew, who sadly passed away at the beginning of January. Phil exemplified everything that makes the Central Coast such a wonderful place to live. His patience and dedication to helping those around him was shown through his work with vulnerable and disadvantaged youth at the Wyoming Community Centre. Phil was always there to lend an ear to those in need.

In his spare time, he built and extended community gardens across the coast. He worked on projects across Point Clare, Long Jetty, Wyoming and many other locations. Ever the devoted community member, in his spare time Phil volunteered at Marine Rescue. He removed fishing line from pelicans and rehomed snakes that were found in community gardens. Phil Medew was a dedicated community member, father and friend. He will be missed by many across the coast and beyond. I sincerely thank Phil for his extensive contributions to my community and send love to his family. Vale, Phil Medew.

### EAST HILLS ELECTORATE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (20:01):** I congratulate a number of amazing volunteers from my electorate on being acknowledged for 50 years of service to the community as justices of the peace: Peter French, Ross Brown, Phillip Mahoney, Neil Larnach, Richard Dobson, Pearl Savage, Douglas Hardwick, Ronald Thompson, Denis Gallant and Dorothy Drake. Lynne Ford has not quite hit the 50 years of service club but has been a JP for 36 years. They have all donated countless hours of their time to help local people. I look forward to holding a morning tea with them in March, along with the Attorney General, Mark Speakman, to thank them for their service and present them with a commemorative certificate. JPs provide their services on a voluntary basis, and our community is grateful for the work they do.

### CIAN PRENDERGAST

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (20:02):** Central Coast students have been named among the top performers across regional New South Wales at the fortieth annual Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition. In August 17,500 students put their skills to the test with zero help from calculators, rulers or other mathematical instruments. Wyong Public School student Cian Prendergast was recognised as a very bright mathematician and for his achievements. He took out a year 5 district award. Teacher Anna Carter has been teaching Cian for a short time using her power of yet method, which oversees a student's thoughts of achievement and bettering themselves in areas they never thought they could. I congratulate Cian on his hard work and accomplishments and wish him good luck in 2021.

### KILLCARE WAGSTAFFE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:03):** On Wednesday 25 November 2020 I was delighted to join David Elliott and RFS Superintendent Viki Campbell to present Killcare Wagstaffe Rural Fire Brigade with a new fire truck just in time for the 2020-21 bushfire season. This vital resource will enable this brigade from my electorate, as well as other brigades on the Central Coast—including Ourimbah and Wadalba—to better respond to emergencies such as bushfires, grassfires, structure fires and motor vehicle accidents. I am delighted that these state-of-the-art vehicles are being provided by the New South Wales Government.

Having seen firsthand the invaluable work of our RFS volunteers, the least this Government can do is ensure that they have these kinds of resources and equipment at their disposal. I want to ensure that our courageous volunteers have access to modern firefighting technology. I am incredibly proud of the local volunteers who work

tirelessly to save lives and property. I am thrilled to present this new equipment, which will support the outstanding work of the RFS.

#### **PAULA HARDWICK**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:04):** I acknowledge and thank Paula Hardwick for her dedication and contribution to the Central Coast community. Paula has been a volunteer with Meals on Wheels for the past 21 years. Throughout that time she has ensured that nutritious meals are delivered to the region's seniors and people with disabilities to help them live happily, healthily and independently. Being passionate about bringing happiness and cheer, Paula has at times even donned a costume to make her deliveries and brighten the lives of those she delivers meals to. During the Central Coast Council's Australia Day awards ceremony Paula was named Central Coast Citizen of the Year. I congratulate Paula on the well-deserved recognition of her outstanding contributions to the Central Coast community. On behalf of my electorate, I thank her personally.

#### **LORNA REBERGER 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:04):** I congratulate Mrs Lorna Reberger on celebrating a century. She recently celebrated her 100th birthday. In Lorna's lifetime she has witnessed the Great Depression, a world war, huge social and economic upheaval and now the wonders of the modern world. Lorna fought for equal pay with her male counterparts when she worked as a cook at Merribee Station south of Binya. Mrs Reberger spends her downtime reading and knitting squares for charity. Lorna is a much-loved resident at Teloca House by fellow residents and staff. Once again, I congratulate Lorna on reaching this fantastic milestone.

#### **PASTOR ROBERT "BOB" COTTON, OAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:05):** I acknowledge the passion and advocacy of Maitland Pastor Robert "Bob" Cotton and congratulate him on his well-deserved receipt of an Order of Australia Medal on 26 January 2020. Bob received his award in recognition of his service to the community, particularly his formidable lobbying in the area of child protection. Some years ago Bob learnt that no clergy had ever been legally penalised for concealing the alleged child sex offences of another, and that the penalty for concealing a child sex offence drew no harsher penalty than that of common theft.

Bob set out to change this. He made the community aware of this flaw in the system and worked with a small group of other passionate people to gather more than 13,000 signatures to a Hunter-based petition calling for harsher penalties. Ultimately, his groundswell of support helped push the New South Wales Government to change the legislation and in 2018 the maximum penalty for concealing child sex abuse increased from two years in jail to five years. Bob still thinks this penalty is inadequate and this heinous violation of trust demands even stronger sentencing, and he will fight on. I thank Bob for making our community a safer place for our children.

#### **ST FRANCIS XAVIER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, LURNEA**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (20:06):** I congratulate St Francis Xavier's Catholic Primary School at Lurnea on recently being approved by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to receive capital assistance as part of the 2020-21 Building Grants Assistance Scheme. The Building Grants Assistance Scheme is funding building projects at independent and Catholic schools across the State. Already \$208 million has been committed to 48 schools in New South Wales—and I am excited to see that a school in my local area is one of the recipients. The funding for St Francis Xavier's will go towards the demolition of obsolete areas as well as the construction of 14 new general learning areas, an administration centre and student amenities. Additionally, the canteen and walkways will also be refurbished. Once again, I congratulate St Francis Xavier's Catholic Primary School on its receipt of funding and I look forward to seeing the completed works.

#### **JOHN CHAMBERS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (20:07):** I recognise a quiet hard worker in my community of Port Stephens. He is someone who recognises need, rolls up his sleeves and does what needs to be done. In recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the community, John Chambers of Raymond Terrace was recently named Port Stephens Citizen of the Year. John is a longstanding member of Raymond Terrace Rotary Club and supports vulnerable people across the community through a number of initiatives that he has established. He helped establish a driver training program to help kids get the hours they need to get their licence and created a furniture bank. John collects stores and distributes furniture to those who need it most across the community. He works collaboratively with everyone. He is a very hard man to say no to. He volunteers over 40 hours of his time per week, which is an extraordinary effort. On behalf of the Parliament and the people of Port Stephens, I thank John for his ongoing commitment to the community.

**BRIAN MULQUINEY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:08):** I recognise the extraordinary commitment, knowledge and passion that Bryan Mulquiney has demonstrated to be awarded the 2020 NSW Senior Volunteer of the Year at the Southern Inland Regional Award Ceremony, held on 8 October 2020. Mr Mulquiney has worked in the museum section of Goulburn Mulwaree Council over the past seven years. He has dedicated his time to attend to work at the Goulburn Historic Waterworks and he is always willing to provide additional assistance at the Rocky Hill War Memorial and Museum. The variety of work and event preparation undertaken by Mr Mulquiney demonstrates his authentic and passionate drive to not only support the upkeep of the museum sections of the council but also to share the unique and historical value of the venues. Mr Mulquiney's generous and positive attributes and unfailing commitment to assisting wherever is needed has certainly gained admiration from many individuals and groups. I congratulate Mr Mulquiney on his outstanding achievement.

**TOUKLEY HAWKS RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (20:09):** Toukley Hawks Rugby League Football Club is opening new opportunities for women players, announcing that it will enter a team in the 2021 Newcastle Hunter women's tackle competition. It is great news for the Toukley Hawks club and the Central Coast area to be bringing more women's tackle games to the region. Club coach Troy Agar believes the girls can foster and develop their talent at Toukley. The club is passionate about providing a pathway for women to make their way to a professional level. Women's rugby league is one of the fastest growing areas of the sport and it is set for more expansion. The Toukley Hawks are also looking at expanding their offering for girls, with the club looking to also field girls' tackle teams in other age groups in 2021. The Central Coast has some outstanding women's rugby league players, such as Isabelle Kelly and Melanie Howard, amongst others, and I am sure that the Toukley Hawks will develop young girls into fantastic women's National Rugby League players in the future.

**PEARLS OF AUSTRALIA BROKEN BAY PEARL FARM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:10):** I am pleased to inform the House that the Central Coast has its very own pearl farm right in the heart of Brisbane Water. The Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, Adam Marshall, and I visited the Pearls of Australia Broken Bay Pearl Farm on Monday 23 November—which seems like a long time ago now—with the farm's owner, James Brown. During the tour we visited the oyster punt, where we saw the pearl seeding in full swing. It is absolutely fascinating. It was fantastic to meet the team behind the pearl-seeding process and, might I add, all the employees at the Pearls of Australia farm, who are privileged and lucky enough to live in the electorate of Terrigal. James took the time to talk us through the process of how they achieve a pearl at the end of the day, including examples of each step—with each step just as interesting as the other—including the final reveal, after approximately 12 to 18 months post-seeding. I thank James and the team for hosting the Minister and me.

**NORM BURTON, OAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:11):** If you mention Maitland outside the city limits there is a fair chance you will be greeted with the response, "Ah! That's where Steamfest is, isn't it?" Down the road in Newcastle, Surfest has for decades showcased our magnificent Hunter beaches and coastal lifestyle to a global audience. The Hunter can thank Maitland benefactor Norm Burton for his longstanding support of these iconic events, plus a laundry list of other events and organisations that enrich our community.

Norm is Maitland born and bred. He still lives in the home where he was born, he still plays a part in the business he founded 50 years ago on a handshake agreement, and he is still a very much loved and valued member of the East Maitland RSL and many other community organisations. He has lived by the credo that the heart and soul of any good business is giving back to the community, and it has been a win-win formula. His business acumen and service to local charities was honoured on 26 January, when he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal. While Norm is best known as the man behind Maitland and Port Stephens Toyota, there are countless people in Maitland who have benefited from his generosity. Thanks to Norm, and congratulations.

**BARRY MAYNE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:12):** I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Barry Mayne on being awarded the Narrandera Shire 2021 Citizen of the Year. Barry, who was a founding member of Narrandera Community Radio in 2005, served as committee chair for three years before taking on the mantle of station manager in 2007. He has also served as an active member of many local community groups, including Grong Grong Sports Club, Narrandera Lions Club, Murrumbidgee Aero Club, and as a volunteer community driver and a Narrandera Shire councillor in 2012 and 2016. I again congratulate Barry on being the recipient of this prestigious award and thank him for his contribution to the community.

### WARNERVALE MACKILLOP CATHOLIC COLLEGE MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (20:13):** Congratulations to the 22 students from Warnervale MacKillop Catholic College on winning the group award for Outstanding Dancing at the 2020 OzTheatrics Junior Theatre Festival Australia. The group was presented as a hybrid in-person and online event in October at the Civic Theatre in Newcastle. The students, aged 11 to 17, showcased parts from *High School Musical Junior* as part of their entry as well as leading musical theatre personalities from Australia, including Erin James in *My Fair Lady*, *Love Never Dies* and *Cats*; Alinta Chidzey in *Chicago* and *West Side Story*; and Eddie Perfect in *Beetlejuice on Broadway*.

The students nailed a wonderful performance—clean presentation, stylised and enjoyable. MacKillop's leader of learning and teaching performing arts, Sharon Baird, praised the students for their efforts in singing, dancing and acting. It really all came together, creating an entertaining performance of *High School Musical Junior*.

### ANSTO SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (20:14):** I acknowledge the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO] for recently offering a school holiday program to school-aged children in the local area. The holiday program involved several workshops for children to get involved in science and tech activities. The program was developed with COVID safety in mind so, happily, it was able to continue in an enjoyable and safe way. The programs were held at Westfield Miranda and the ANSTO Discovery Centre. The school holiday program offered a range of interesting and unique experiences that enabled the children to learn new things whilst meeting new friends. ANSTO's school holiday program also gave working parents the chance to have their children entertained and engaged during the break whilst knowing they were cared for and learning in a COVID-safe way. I commend ANSTO for offering this school holiday program to families in our local area and for keeping it COVID safe.

### SEA SHELTER

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (20:15):** In Port Stephens we love our environment. We live in it, we support it, we campaign for it and we often have to fight for it. So the competition for the Port Stephens Council Environmental Awards is always stiff. When the nominees are announced, it is a much sought after and hotly contested recognition. I congratulate Lia and Ryan Pereira, who are the owners of Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters in Port Stephens and also the operators of the not-for-profit Sea Shelter. Their Sea Shelter organisation is a marine rescue centre that rescues marine animals—sharks, rays and turtles—in the Port Stephens area. The couple are incredible. They serve our community by conserving the marine environment and educating people about it. I congratulate them on their recent award.

### JAMES SMITH

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:16):** I recognise the efforts and achievements of James Smith, the recipient of the Moss Vale Soccer Club Person of the Year award. James has been recognised for his commendable volunteering commitment in rolling the pitches throughout the season. His work has improved considerably the appearance of the pitches, which have received acknowledgement they are the best they have looked for many years. James plays in the under-15s morning competition and then makes himself available to back up for the youth grade team in the afternoon. James is recognised as a valuable member of the teams. He has demonstrated his genuine commitment to volunteering and is eager to contribute to a range of working bees, assisting with younger teams and helping to run a collaborative event between Moss Vale Soccer Club and the Police And Community Youth Club during the school holidays. It is encouraging that James has taken on this role and can be seen as a mentor for other young inspiring volunteers. I congratulate James.

### MAITLAND CROQUET CLUB

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:17):** I celebrate the opening of the Maitland Croquet Club extension and congratulate the club's members and members of the executive on their fantastic new facility. In 2020 the club received a Stronger Country Communities Fund grant of \$267,100, which allowed it to extend the covered verandah area for spectators, expand the club room, create storage space for lawn maintenance equipment, and build two new unisex bathrooms and a shower. As the proud patron of the club, recently I was granted the honour of officially opening the extensions in the presence of former mayor of Maitland Mr Peter Blackmore, OAM, and now the Emeritus Mayor of Maitland. Peter attended with his wife, Robyn. It was very special because Peter had opened the initial clubhouse in 1998. The upgrades and modernisations will ensure the club's continued place in the Maitland community and its significance in the lives of many of our seniors. It has a long legacy of service to our seniors. The club had a difficult year during COVID but it has really come through. The extensions are a great way to celebrate that.

### CREEKSIDE KIDS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:18):** It has taken only three months for Creekside Kids to build and open their new preschool in Cootamundra. Congratulations to Jessica Roberts and her dedicated team of educators, tradies, families and friends, who have overseen the development and expansion of Creekside Kids. Children can now transition from early childhood to preschool at the new site, which will continue to encompass Creekside Kids' philosophy of learning in the natural environment with different spaces and resources. I am passionate about making sure that children get the best start in life. It is fantastic to see more facilities and choices being offered to Cootamundra families. Regional New South Wales is a great place to raise a family.

### TRIBUTE TO PAT BARDEN

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:19):** I pay my respects to the late Pat Barden and offer my condolences to her neighbours, many friends and beloved family members. Pat was born Mary Patricia Vile some 96 years ago on a farm at Hillsborough, near Maitland. She went on to attend Maitland Girls' High School between 1937 and 1941 and served as school captain in her final year. During the school week Pat boarded at the hostel located in Brough House. The friendships she forged during this time and her affection for Brough and Grossmann houses endured throughout her life.

In 1955—the year of Maitland's great flood—Pat married Geoff Barden. In time they became parents, then grandparents and finally great-grandparents. Pat was a founding member of the Maitland repertory society, which was formed in 1947, and was involved in beekeeping for 70 years. She was also the first librarian at Cessnock library. Over the years Pat made substantial contributions to the oral and written family and local histories of our area. Her memories—and her memory—will live on, both in the hearts of those knew and loved her and through the enduring legacy of her recollections. Vale, Pat Barden.

### GRAHAM KINDER

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:20):** I recognise the efforts and achievements of Mr Graham Kinder, who was awarded the 2020 NSW Volunteer of the Year for the Southern Inland region. Mr Kinder's colleagues at the Australia Vietnam Business Council nominated him for the award, acknowledging his unfailing commitment and contribution to the community. Mr Kinder has provided over 20 years of volunteering across the emergency services and social support sector within his local community of Windellama and more broadly across New South Wales. Mr Kinder is also recognised for his role as the district training coordinator for the RFS. He supports the Windellama Landcare Group and the Australian Vietnamese Business Council, and is the emergency services group coordinator for the Salvation Army. Mr Kinder's humble attitude, together with his exceptional personal attributes and professional skills, have provided him with the opportunity to pursue his passion for volunteering and benefiting the community at large. Congratulations to Mr Kinder.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

### TRIBUTE TO THE LATE FAYE SCHERF, HIDDEN TREASURE AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I WOULD** like to honour the memory of a much-loved and prolific community member, Mrs Faye Scherf, who sadly passed away recently. Faye was loved by her community in Nimbin, a town in the Lismore Electorate, because of her tireless work for community and her obliging, generous, loving spirit that saw her achieve great things, including having her name added to the NSW Hidden Treasures Honour Roll recognising rural women for their volunteering work. Faye Scherf worked ceaselessly for her community in many roles, including the Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary, the Nimbin Soup Kitchen and the Country Women's Association's Nimbin branch. She was a wonderful community mentor who would never turn anyone away and always greeted people with a warm smile. Faye was instrumental in establishing Mulgum House, an independent living house for elderly people and people living with an intellectual disability. Later, Faye went on to advocate to ensure Mulgum House's doors remained open when the property was threatened with redevelopment. Faye was loved for her compassion and her generosity and her energy. She will be very much missed by the people of Nimbin and the wider Lismore Electorate.

### CHESTER HILL ANGLICAN CHURCH

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**It was my pleasure to visit the Chester Hill Anglican Church on 14 January 2021, where I had the opportunity to view the Church's recently installed rooftop solar panels. Chester Hill Anglican Church operates a multicultural network of churches in South West Sydney, including its church at Chester Hill, and is committed to bringing together diverse communities, while also providing religious services to youths of all ages. In 2019, Chester Hill Anglican Church successfully applied for a Community Building Partnership (CBP) grant of \$8,000 for the supply and installation of solar panels on top of the Church's auditorium, to sustainably power the Church's activities and services. I was pleased to support Chester Hill Anglican Church

in securing this funding, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge Reverend Paul Webb, Mandarin Ministry Leader Pastor Tom Wu, Youth Ministry Leader Mr John Pement, and Ministry Director Mr Hayson Lo, as well as Ministry Apprentice Mr Hamish Sullivan, and commend them for their efforts in securing this grant, and overseeing its implementation.

#### **EL DUNNIEH**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—It was my pleasure to attend El Dunnieh's facility in Villawood on Thursday 14 January to inspect the progress being made towards its major facility upgrades and renovations, partially funded by Community Building Partnership (CBP) grants. Since 1994, El Dunnieh has provided valuable religious, social and cultural services to the local Lebanese and broader Arabic community in South West Sydney. El Dunnieh has received three CBP grants totalling a combined \$105,000 for various parts of the facility upgrade project, including a roof replacement, renovations of the bathroom and kitchen, and to supply new aluminium windows and doors. The facility upgrades will enable the organisation to provide quality services to the many local residents who seek El Dunnieh's support. I would like to acknowledge El Dunnieh President Mr Mahmoud Yousef, Vice President Mr Omar Yassine, Secretary Mr Mostafa Najm, Treasurer Mr Shami Abdul, and Vice Treasurer Mr Mohamed Derbas, and commend them for their dedication to overseeing this extensive project.

#### **FLOW HIVE – CEDAR AND STUART ANDERSON**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—FLOW Hive is a unique Australian invention which allows honey to be harvested easily without the back-breaking work and without disturbing the bees. Before Flow Hive came along, harvesting involved lifting the honeycomb out of the hive, upsetting the bees in the process and then using equipment to process it, but now it's relatively easy due to the revolutionary design created by father-and-son team Stuart and Cedar Anderson of the Northern Rivers. The Flow Hive design allows an apiarist to simply turn a tap and the honey flows out directly from the hive, and this technique has become a big business for this local family. The Flow Hive company has 75,000 customers to date and it is a very hands-on production. It has become a certified B corporation which acknowledges the ethical and sustainable practices the company uses. By 2030, the company is committed to net zero emissions alongside 500 other B Corporations from around the world. I would like to congratulate Cedar and Stuart on their imagination, dedication and hard work in creating a niche in this industry and providing more than 40 jobs for workers in the Northern Rivers. Well done!

#### **ROSEMARY KARIUKI-FYFE 2021**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I congratulate Rosemary Kariuki-Fyfe for being recognised as Australia's Local Hero of the Year in the 2021 Australian of the Year Awards. Rosemary has overcome many of the challenges that migrant women face. Rosemary left Kenya in 1999 to escape abuse and intertribal conflict. It was not long after coming to Australia that she volunteered with multiple organisations. She started the African Women's Dinner Dance in partnership with the African Women's Group and I am privileged to have attended several. This year, in its 14th year it continues to bring together over 400 women and support them in overcoming isolation, language and cultural barriers, domestic violence and financial distress. Rosemary was also instrumental in establishing the African Village Market in Parramatta, which assists migrants and refugees in developing their own businesses. At work, she is a Police Multicultural Community Liaison Officer at Parramatta and at home, Rosemary is a single mother who balances the many commitments young families face. Her life story in the award-nominated documentary film 'Rosemary's Way' and her involvement with Baulkham Hills African Women Ladies Troupe have touched the lives of many. My congratulations for well-deserved recognition of a lifelong commitment to supporting the community.

#### **VALE RAY GILLARD**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Merrylands recently lost a local legend. Ray Gillard joined the board of Merrylands Bowling and Sports Club in September 1995 and in only the next year he became Chairman. He was passionate about lawn bowls as a player, as a club committee member and as a zone selector. He oversaw millions of dollars of Community Grants donations and oversaw the growth of the Merrylands Bowling Club for members and the community, from 5,000 members to 24,000. Ray was instrumental in pursuing the successful amalgamation with the Guildford Bowling Club in 2015 to ensure it kept its doors open and continues to provide this important amenity for the local community of Guildford. I know one of Ray's passions was the support he gave for the "Ready set go for Kindy" initiative at Hilltop Road Public School. It started in 2015 and is a school readiness program for families with children starting school in and aims to introduce school in a fun, exciting and welcoming way. He was an active member of the Club's Charity Committee which in 1997 raised funds for the Children's Hospital Westmead. He will be sorely missed by the members of Club Merrylands Bowling Club. Vale Ray Gillard.

### **RIDE FOR YOUTH**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I rise to offer my congratulations to the all those involved in the annual Ride for Youth that was conducted late last year. I had the privilege of officially starting the 2020 Ride for Youth. The Ride originally commenced in 2015, to raise the awareness of youth mental health, and funds to support youth mental health projects within the Clarence Valley. Sky Sear from the New School of Arts, along with former Yamba resident Morgan Pilley – a professional cyclist, professional mountain biker and an endurance runner, have been involved each year, with Morgan making arrangements, even during the pandemic, to fly back to the Clarence Valley from his home in Italy to be able to participate. It is always encouraging to see members of the community come out and participate in this event and I trust will be continue on for many more years to come.

### **LINDARA MARKET**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Lindara Market is held several times during the year in my electorate of Davidson, providing support to families that are homeless or in crisis. Over 30 years ago Lindfield and Killara Uniting Church launched the Lindara Family Program charity, with all proceeds from Lindara Market funding a social worker for the charity. The market brings volunteers together from all over the community, with many people donating second-hand and new items, including jewellery, clothing, books and furniture. It also creates connections between people in the community. I commend the volunteers at Lindara Market, Lindara Family Program, the Lindfield and Killara Uniting Church, and the wider community for regularly supporting the market and its important cause. I note that the next market will be held in Lindfield Uniting Church on Saturday 17 April.

### **SINGERS LUKE GABBEDY AND BRADLEY COOPER**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—My electorate of Davidson is home to many talented people, including singers Luke Gabbedy of Roseville, and Bradley Cooper, who grew up in St Ives. Luke and Bradley have recently performed as principle cast members in the Opera House production of 'The Merry Widow'. Bradley attended St Ives Primary School, where he was a member of the Ku-ring-gai Boys Choir. He went on to study at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and now performs internationally. Luke, who lives in Roseville, has also performed at the Sydney Opera House. In wake of the lockdowns over the last year they were unable to perform. With restrictions now easing, they can again provide joy and entertainment to people across Sydney. Well done to Luke and Bradley for their resilience and success.

### **DR KELVIN KONG – NEWCASTLE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Dr Kelvin Kong, Jill Emberson, Mark Hughes and Kurt Fearnley, OAM, all have something in common. They have all been recipients of the Newcastle Citizen of the Year Award. Kelvin is a Worimi man, an ENT surgeon, a researcher of chronic ear disease with the Hunter Medical Research Centre, a lecturer at University of Newcastle and an advocate for Indigenous people and their health. Not only was Kelvin the recipient of the Newcastle Citizen of the Year Award for 2021 for his work in health and the broader community, he also received the honour of being named Australian Indigenous doctor of the year in 2017. Kelvin currently works out of his practice in Broadmeadow, but spends much of his time working in remote communities with Indigenous Australian every year. Kelvin grew up in a house full of Indigenous medical workers. His Mum, Grace, was a community nurse, his sisters Marilyn, Australia's first Indigenous obstetrician and Marlene, a general practitioner. Thank you, Kelvin, for your passion and assistance in ensuring the Indigenous community receive the health care they require, and congratulations on being named Newcastle Citizen of the Year.

### **GRACE TAME – AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2021**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Grace Tame is a Survivor. A fighter. An advocate. An inspiration. Grace was 15 when she was groomed and sexually abused. Her trust was betrayed by someone who was supposed to look out for her. For years, Grace was unable to speak out about the assault publicly. Unable to fight and advocate for herself. Tasmania's outdated gag laws prevented her from telling her own story. In 2019 Grace was the first woman in Tasmania to be granted special leave from the Supreme Court to speak publicly about her abuse. Whilst fighting her own private battle, Grace was working with anti-sexual assault advocate and journalist, Nina Funnell. The #letherspeak campaign was created and an online petition calling for Section 194K of the Evidence Act be scrapped. This year, Grace was named Australian of the year for her advocacy for survivors of sexual assault. She is the first Tasmanian to have received this award. To receive an Australian of the Year award is an incredible honour and is richly deserved. Grace accepted her award with an incredible speech, stating to all survivors of child sexual abuse "this is for us". Thank you, Grace.

### RED FROG RECYCLING

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—It was a pleasure to have visited Red Frog Recycling to mark the third anniversary of the NSW Government's Return and Earn Scheme late last year. Since the program began the scheme has collected over four billion containers across NSW. Managing Director of Red Frog Recycling, Anthony Morrissey has been an avid supporter of the programme since its inception. I would like to commend Anthony and his staff who have facilitated approximately \$400,000 in charity donations in the past three years through the Return and Earn Scheme at his two local recycling depots at Prestons and Gregory Hills. In addition, Red Frog Recycling have raised close to \$700,000 for local charities through their recycling in schools program. This is a truly remarkable effort and very much appreciated by the local community who have benefitted as a result. Congratulations and thank you Red Frog Recycling, Anthony and staff.

### 2020 TEACHER APPRECIATION AWARDS

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the 2020 Teacher Appreciation Awards ceremony organised by the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA). The Awards ceremony was held at Bankstown on 25 November 2020. The purpose of the event was to recognise and honour educators who "go above and beyond their roles to help students reach their potential". The Awards celebration aimed to showcase the achievements of educators and to encourage a culture of autonomy and confidence and risk-taking and resilience. Quite obviously effective teachers are a critical element contributing to student achievement. As the LMA noted, teachers are often unsung heroes. This celebration was one way of remedying that. It's particularly appropriate to do that for 2020. This was a year showing the dedication, patience and resilience of educators. Among those who addressed the ceremony were Sahar Dandan, Hala Ramadan, Amer Etri, and Barbara Arambatzis.

### ITALIAN AUSTRALIAN SERVICES INC.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise CNA - Italian Australian Services Inc. In particular I wish to acknowledge the official opening of their Multicultural Community Garden on Saturday 21 November 2020. The garden is in a property in Coolatai Crescent, Bossley Park. The opening featured a number of elected representatives together with the President of CNA- Italian Australian Services Giovanni Testa and Tony Paragalli, a Board Director of Club Marconi. The 'My Garden, Your Garden' project was funded by Fairfield Council and Club Marconi through the Club Grants Program, together with extra funding from CNA - Italian Australian Services. Work on the project commenced in August. It aims to provide community members with a place that allows social interaction in the context of COVID-19. It aims to foster participation and inclusion of different cultures. This also has advantages for mental health and positive ageing.

### MACARTHUR BULLS FC

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—I have spoken on several occasions in this place about Macarthur Bulls FC. But it would be remiss of me not to talk about the A-League's newest club given the success it has had so far both on and off the pitch. It was a big coup for Campbelltown and the entire Macarthur region when the A-League's newest side entered the competition. As one of the fastest growing regions in the state, it is imperative that Macarthur residents are able to watch professional sport locally on a regular basis. A handful of NRL games did not satisfy our region's sports craving. But the introduction of the Bulls has certainly helped. As of today, the Bulls, in their inaugural season, sit third on the ladder in the A-League. It's a tremendous achievement for the team that has been led by inspirational skipper and Soccerroo, Mark Milligan. Of the pitch, the Macarthur region really has embraced the A-League newcomers. Crowds have been healthy and everyone at the club has made a huge effort to engage and embrace the local community. One again, well done and thank you Macarthur Bulls FC.

### ALANA WILLIAMS

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise Forster local, Alana Williams, who has been awarded a scholarship to study a bachelor of Business Management at the International College of Management in Sydney. The Forster teen's scholarship at the well-regarded College is worth \$28, 800 in her first year. Alana has had her heart set on attending the college since hearing about it at a careers expo in Wingham, when she was fifteen. The now eighteen year old is excited to dive into her first year of tertiary education and keen to explore the industry placement the college can offer her over the next three years.

### ALEX CROSS, SPORTS STAR OF THE YEAR

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise Alex Cross who was recently named the Ken McDonald Sport Star of the year at the Taree Australia Day Awards. Alex is just the second cyclist to take out the honour in sixty years. The fifteen year old was the youngest member of the NSW under 17 women's team in 2020. Alex made the team after the State time trial, road race and criterium championships, where she

finished third in the Road Race. The Taree Teen has also been named in a NSW Institute of Sport talent program aimed at selecting the Australian under 19 team for the world championships in Wollongong in 2022. The young athlete trains five to six days every week clocking up an impressive 300km per week. I again commend Alex for her sporting achievements and wish her luck in achieving her ultimate goal of riding professionally in Europe.

#### **ANNETTE 'NETTIE' JOHNSON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—A well-deserved congratulations to Port Macquarie local Annette Johnson for shaving her locks to raise money for Liberty Domestic & Family Violence Specialist Services. Nettie, as she is like to be known is a survivor of family violence, sadly encountering the problem at a young age. Now an early childhood educator of 25 years, Nettie is committed to shining a spotlight on this systemic issue that affects 17 per cent or 1.6 million women each year, with most occurrences from the young age of 15. To raise awareness and promote change, Nettie coordinated a fundraiser on the 6th February to shave her golden locks to showcase the brilliant work undertaken by Liberty in tackling domestic and family violence. Before the event, Nettie had already collected an astounding \$3,700 from donations, from a target of \$5,000. Liberty is a locally run, family and domestic violence specialist service in Port Macquarie, offering counselling, crisis accommodation, risk assessments, safety planning and temporary housing, depending on the person's need. I applaud Annette's contribution in facilitating a positive and reassuring dialogue in our community that violence against women and children is unacceptable.

#### **BLAKE STEEP**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to congratulate Port Macquarie Sharks junior Blake Steep for signing a two-year contract with the NRL Sydney Roosters. When it comes to dedication, commitment and talent, Port Macquarie's very own Blake Steep has it in spades. Setting his sights on a first-grade rugby league career, Blake has literally travelled 1800 kilometres every week, over the past three years to achieve his goals. Blake officially made the move to Bondi Junction last month to cement his position in the side after wearing the jersey for the first time in a trial match against the Manly Sea Eagles last year. At just 15-years of age, Blake is setting the benchmark as one of the youngest players in the squad by 12 months as he prepares to play for the Roosters Harold Matthews under-17 team this year. Local rugby league is going from strength to strength in Port Macquarie and it is largely because of inspirational young players like Blake Steep who lead the way and sacrifice much to reach the top of their career. This is notwithstanding the professional team behind the scenes that coach and train our young football players into the first-grade athletes we see today. Congratulations Blake.

#### **BEST DRESSED FIRE ENGINE**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—In the book of Ecclesiastes it says:

"There is a time for everything...

A time to weep and a time to laugh

A time to Mourn and a time to dance."

This time last year our community was still reeling from the devastating effects of the bushfires and local fires were hard at work saving lives and properties. Late last year, a few days before Christmas, the crews were able to get together for some light-hearted work. The Best Dressed Fire Engine competition took place in Eridge Park in Burradoo, with Fire and Rescue crews from Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale and Bundanoon fiercely competing against each other. Wingecarribee Shire Mayor Duncan Gair and Southern Highlands Fire and Rescue Duty Commander Bruce Dowling were the judges. They carefully appraised the trucks covered in tinsel, ornamental figures, and festive messages. In the end, it was Mittagong crew that emerged victorious and was awarded the honour of best dressed truck. Congratulations to the Mittagong crew and I will say it's great to see firefighters able to relax and laugh together this summer.

#### **OLIVIA WALES**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort and dedication of Olivia Wales, from Picton in my electorate of Wollondilly, who has been awarded "Highly Commended" in the Student of the Year category for Community Colleges Australia. Last year, Olivia completed a Certificate III in Business Administration Medical. These studies were undertaken whilst enrolled in a traineeship at a local medical centre. I understand that she completed her 13 unit course 2 months earlier than her traineeship completion date. It is not surprising that prior to the completion of her traineeship, her employer promoted her to Assistant Practice Manager. Olivia is also involved in the local community playing, coaching and umpiring local netball, and volunteering at nursing homes. I commend Olivia for her hard work and thank her for the difference she is making to the lives of those in the community with whom she works.

### **BECAUSE WE CARE BOUTIQUE**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I acknowledge the important work done by Because We Care Boutique. This includes the leadership provided by coordinator Sharyn Becker and the contributions of a team of volunteers. The boutique supports women in need from the Central Coast and the Hunter by providing them with clothing and accessories suitable to wear to important commitments, such as job interviews and court appearances. All the clothes and accessories at the boutique are donated by the community. The boutique ensures women are provided with clothes that fit well, look great and, more importantly, make them feel confident. The boutique also provides women with support to develop their resume, as well as training to build self-esteem, public speaking skills and resilience. I thank the wonderful people who have made the boutique a success and congratulate them for their efforts, which have helped many women reach important personal and professional milestones.

### **DARRYL HAMILTON, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to congratulate Mr Darryl Hamilton, on being awarded the 2020 Blacktown Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Citizen of the year award. Mr Hamilton has served as the Aboriginal Community Liaison officer with the Mount Druitt police department for over 2 decades. He, also works in the Breaking Barriers Fitness program, which aims to direct Aboriginal youths in our communities down more fulfilling paths in life. Mr Hamilton's dedication to his work has played a vital role in assisting my community, and I wish to thank and congratulate him on his award, which is deserving of his accomplishments.

### **SOD TURNING CRICKET NSW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai)**—I recently joined Federal Member for Reid, Dr Fiona Martin MP, Cricket NSW CEO, Mr Lee Gorman and Buildcorp Managing Director, Mr Tony Sukkar AM at the official Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Cricket NSW new Centre of Excellence in Sydney Olympic Park. The NSW Liberal and National Government has invested \$30 million towards this project, which will see world-class facilities for our NSW Blues, NSW Breakers, Sydney Thunder and Sydney Sixes Big Bash League and Women's Big Bash League squads. Not only will this centre provide much needed jobs during the pandemic, it will also be an important community asset, with more than 35,000 club cricketers using its facilities year round. Supporting cricketers at every level, the Centre of Excellence will be a place which strengthens player pathways of both men and women athletes for generations to come. Stage 1 of the \$50 million development is scheduled for completion in mid-2022. The designs of the new centre look sensational and as a big cricket fan, I can't wait to see this project take shape.

### **WIN FOR PEOPLE POWER IN MINTO**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)**—A long and hard-fought successful community campaign to stop a contentious development proposal in Minto shows the value of people power. Over two years, Ingle Park Estate residents and I have fought to maintain their suburbs' character, green open space and quality of life. The proposal for 23 townhouses in Francis Street was incompatible with the local area. Residents expressed concerns about the impact of overdevelopment, such as more congestion, lack of parking and overcrowding. A group of concerned residents took action and in December received the best Christmas gift when the Sydney Western City Planning Panel refused this inappropriate development proposal. Victories like this take time and they take effort. I congratulate all of the residents involved and thank them for their passion for their local area. I'd particularly like to thank Michael Delmage for coordinating the community campaign. Ingle Park Estate residents fought hard to have their say on their suburb's future, and now finally their voices have been heard. My hope is that other campaigns to stop overdevelopment in our community results in the same positive outcome.

### **HANK LAAN AM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate Hank Laan on being made a Member of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day 2021 Honours list. Mr Laan was awarded for his extensive service within the building and construction sectors. As the inaugural chief executive and director of the Darling Harbour Authority, Mr Laan ensured the major precinct was finalised in time for the 1988 Bicentenary celebrations. This was particularly noteworthy, given that he had inherited a project that was hampered with delays. Mr Laan later became a leader in managing commercial disputes within the construction industry. The award also recognises his local community service as a member of the Port Hacking Protection Society and director of the Sutherland Shire Bicentennial Community Committee.

**VIOLET VENN**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—I am always delighted to see young local students excel, and this year's Young Citizen of the Year Violet Venn is certainly an exceptional young woman with a very bright future ahead. Violet is 15 years old and an active member of our community, serving as Vice-President of Youth4Change and volunteering her time as both a drama teacher and community radio host. Violet is passionate about the environment and has continued to successfully lobby for this cause, showing incredible leadership among her peers and working as a role model for others. I have no doubt that Violet will go on to do great things within our community and wish her all the best. Thank you Violet, for all you do to support the Shoalhaven and congratulations on this fantastic award.

**IAN MAYER OAM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—Ian's Mayer's Medal in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Australia Day Honours list is deserving recognition of his longstanding commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others. Mr Mayer has been with the Cerebral Palsy Alliance for 25 years and currently chairs an event – the CBD Golf Escape – that raises over \$1 million annually for the organisation. To date, the CBD Golf Escape has raised \$17.5 million for the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. Mr Mayer also coordinates an annual Newington Golf Day to improve awareness of mental health issues and to raise money for the ONU Mental Health Fund. I congratulate Ian Mayer, both on his award and his extraordinary community service.

**TALKING MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I take this opportunity to commend the Cultural Diversity Network Inc for hosting the "Talking Mental Health" program for refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities on Saturday 21st and 28th November, 2020. The event would not have been possible without the support of partnership organisations: The Australian Man Cave Support Group and the Arakan Rohingya Development Association. Thank you also to Fairfield City Council for funding this important project. The overall aim of the two day workshops were to raise the awareness of mental health in the community. It was touching to listen to speakers from refugee backgrounds, sharing their stories regarding personal mental health experiences and the stigma associated with speaking out, seeking support within respective cultural groups.

Thank you to the guest speakers on hand to offer words of encouragement and insight into mental health matters: Dr Sabrin Farooqui, Sabia Tabassum, Linda Sun & Nagendra from CDNI; Lou Greco from The Australian Man Cave Support Group; Mohammad Rouf from Arakan Rohingya Development Association Australia; Sera Yilmaz Fairfield City Council; Bijan Kardouni PhD candidate; Pan Sandar Myint Ms Australia World National Finalist 2020; Gina Barjeel Fashion Designer.

**MARIA VENUTI**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—It was an honour and a privilege to meet Australia Day Ambassador Maria Venuti at the Fairfield City Australia Day Awards Ceremony. Maria is a well-recognised Australian entertainer and an iconic advocate for migrant women. She has been on the Australian entertainment circuit for over 50 years and I have had the privilege of hearing her sing many times. In fact, Maria has performed both nationally and internationally in Asia, Europe and America and her performances are iconic of the Australian entertainment industry. She recently played Mama Gigliotti in the Australian comedy Fat Pizza. Maria is also a wonderful charity worker. She is the founder and now patron of the Australian Ladies Variety Foundation and has won awards for her work with Variety the Children's Charity. Maria Venuti is a valued member of the Australian entertainment industry and it was a pleasure meeting her on Australia Day.

**FAREWELL NEAL GARRETT FROM MOSMAN COUNCIL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a long time staff member of Mosman Council, Neal Garrett, who retired on Australia Day after 42 years. In January 1979, Neal was appointed as a labourer for the Council, and then in 1988 he was appointed as Council's Caretaker, a role he held for over 32 years. Neal has been a much valued member of Mosman Council. He was responsible for the care, cleaning, maintenance, and security of Council's Mosman Junction buildings, and servicing and catering for Council's meetings, functions and events. Throughout his career, Neal has conducted himself with discretion, dedication, and loyalty. This professional conduct has been regularly acknowledged by staff, councillors, community members, and visitors. Neal will be sorely missed by our local community, and I would like to wish Neal all the best for his retirement.

### **MOSMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE THINKS MOSMAN FIRST**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, As we know many local businesses across the state have been doing it tough due to the impacts of COVID-19. While many businesses were able to quickly adapt to the new norm of lockdowns, some certainly struggled. Today I would like to acknowledge the Mosman Chamber of Commerce, a terrific organisation in my electorate of North Shore, whose primary charter is the promotion and support of local business within the community. Last year the Chamber launched an initiative to encourage our local community to 'Think Mosman First' whenever they have a need for goods and services. This fantastic local initiative has reminded everyone to continue shopping local and support businesses within our local community to get back on their feet. I would like to recognise the committee of the Mosman Chamber of Commerce for all their work; President Pat Purcell, Paul Ward-Harvey, Kim Wright, Treska Roden, Christine Ling, Anjel O'Bryant, Marina Kuo, Karen Hall, Shannon Chin, Kevin Seeto, Ilona Vass, Tamara Keniry, and Denise Corscadden. Thank you for all your efforts.

### **EMERITUS PROFESSOR ALAN RICE AM AND MRS JOYCE RICE OF NORTHMEAD**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I acknowledge the sixtieth wedding anniversary of Northmead locals Emeritus Professor Alan Rice AM and Mrs Joyce Rice. The Rices were married at Hornsby Baptist Church in December 1960. Both dedicated their working lives to education and I thank them for their many years of service to public education across New South Wales. Mrs Rice began her career as an infants educator before becoming principal of Mowbray Road Public School and Dundas Public School. Since her retirement she has continued to inspire as a specialised religious education teacher. Emeritus Professor Rice began teaching in small rural schools being elevated as a school inspector and later serving in various director positions in the Department of Education. He was also a professor in the early education field at Macquarie University. In 2000 he received an Australian Sports Medal for his services to cricket and in 2004 was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to education. I congratulate Emeritus Professor and Mrs Rice on their sixtieth wedding anniversary and wish them all the best.

### **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SARAH ZAMAN OF WESTMEAD HOSPITAL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—Today I seek to acknowledge Associate Professor Sarah Zaman of Westmead Hospital for being awarded the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand Bayer Young Investigator Grant. Associate Professor Sarah Zaman is an internationally revered clinician and academic, publishing papers across the world on cardiothoracic disorders. Despite her international accolades, Associate Professor Zaman spends most of her clinical hours in the Western Sydney Local Health District. Associate Professor Zaman is one of two people in Australia to receive this grant in 2020, the most revered and prestigious award for young investigators. The grant will be used to lead an Australia-first study into lesser known causes of heart attacks in women under 50 years of age by isolating potential risk factors. Associate Professor Zaman's dedication to the local Seven Hills Electorate community and beyond is clear when she discusses the importance of this research in preventing further heart conditions in women. I wish Associate Professor Zaman the best of luck with her study and all future endeavours.

### **HELEN SEAGE – WARIALDA LIBRARY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Warialda Librarian Helen Seage, who is another example of the kind of excellence that makes the Northern Tablelands a great place to live. Helen brings education, challenge, fun, and friendship to her readers, making the library more than a distribution of books but a place to gather, relax and enjoy life. As much as the children thrive on the reading programs, Helen loves bringing creative ideas to her young members. A favourite is the Readers Theatre where children share a book reading and then act out the story. She involves STEM activities for all ages including computer technology and after school innovations including age old craft such as knitting and crochet. As far as craft – there isn't much in the budget to extend to that but in using recyclables and some creative imagination Helen says there is no end to possibilities. So, of course the people come to the library for a learning experience which they call "fun". I congratulate Helen Seage for her inspiration and creativity that has made Warialda Library a popular learning centre for the community. I commend Helen on the commitment and love that she has shown for her profession.

### **2020 WESTFIELD LOCAL HEROES PROGRAM**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate the recipients of the 2020 Westfield Hurstville Local Heroes Program. Liz Diab from The Crateful Group, Sue-Ellan Vasiliou from Little Legs Foundation and Najwa Sawan from Aspect South East Sydney School will be awarded a \$10,000 grant each for the affiliated organisations to continue their work. The Crateful Group, based in Beverly Hills, is a volunteer-run food rescue organisation that has provided nutritious food to those in need during the pandemic. Little Legs

Foundation work tirelessly to raise awareness and support in the fight to find a cure for brain cancer- a disease hurting too many of our little friends and their families. Finally, Aspect South East Sydney School is Australia's largest service provider for people on the autism spectrum. They share evidence-informed autism practice and applied research nationwide. I would like to congratulate all three associations, as well as Peter Allen, CEO of the Westfield Local Heroes Program, on the resounding success of this year's program. Now in its third year, the Westfield Local Heroes program has recognised 363 local heroes and organisations, and provided \$3.62 million in community grants.

#### **NICO MARCAR AND LAKE MACQUARIE SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD ALLIANCE**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of the volunteers behind Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance based at Toronto, and in particular Nico Marcar from Carey Bay. Nico is somewhat of an environmental champion in Lake Macquarie. In addition to serving as chairperson of the Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group for the past several years, he's also worked tirelessly to phase out single-use plastics in Toronto's CBD via partnerships with other Lake Macquarie community groups. Each year the volunteers in the alliance contribute many thousands of hours working towards noble environmental goals such as increasing community involvement in protecting and caring for our environment, increasing the community's wellbeing and pride in our local area and fostering sustainable neighbourhoods and a healthy local environment. Last year the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance took out two prestigious accolades in the Lake Mac Awards 2020, winning the Community Group of the Year Award and the Environmental Leader Award. I offer my congratulations and thanks to Nico Marcar and all of the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance volunteers for all they do for the Lake Macquarie community.

#### **VICTORIA ELLIS AND BRANDON JOYNSON**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—It's always wonderful to see young people accept responsibility and become leaders, whether it's within their immediate friendship group, broader school class or their entire school. With that in mind, I'd like to congratulate Toronto High School's Victoria Ellis and Brandon Joynson on their recent election as the school's 2021 School Captains. Victoria is widely respected by her peers and will no doubt prove to be an effective leader. She has participated in school service from a young age by making morning announcements on roll call since Year 8 and mentoring Year 7 students through the Peer Support program while in Year 10. Brandon is already a strong leader and is well liked by his peers who describe him as determined, polite and affable with a great sense of humour. He has always had excellent academic record and was accelerated for biology, completing his Preliminary and HSC course a year earlier than his peers. Young people who take on such responsibility are very likely to go on and be leaders in their adult lives. I believe we'll see great things from Victoria and Brandon in the future.

#### **CHLOE FLEGERBIEN - ARTEXPRESS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise the distinction awarded Chloe Flegerbien for her Year 12 HSC body of work which has been chosen to be included in the prestigious ARTEXPRESS exhibition this year. The honour is well deserved to acknowledge Chloe's inspired medium using innovative alcohol inks applied creatively to give an original effect to portray her home town of Moree as Chloe sees it "through rose-coloured glasses". The project includes 18 pieces of art of various sizes. I congratulate Chloe on being selected as one of the elite artists to be part of the ARTEXPRESS exhibition and I wish her well following her artistic passions. I also commend Chloe for her commitment to her artistic endeavours and to ARTEXPRESS for its encouragement to excellence.

#### **CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield)**—I bring to the attention of the House the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS). CASS is a charitable organisation registered in 1981, servicing metropolitan Sydney and Wollongong. CASS is an amazing organisation providing quality access to childcare, aged care services, and a wide range of programs supporting our multicultural communities. I am pleased to inform the House CASS has expanded their services beyond the Chinese Australian community to also service the local Korean, Vietnamese and Indonesian Australian communities. I am fortunate to have both their Burwood Activity Group and Ashfield Dance Group in my electorate of Strathfield. I take this opportunity to commend the leadership of the Board of Directors which includes Chairperson Dr. Bo Zhou, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary Mr. Anthony Pang, Honorary Executive Director Mr. Henry Pan OAM, Emeritus Chairperson Dr. Leng Tan, Vice Chairperson/Treasurer Mr Sean Zhang, Vice Chairperson Prof. Stephen Li, and Board Member Mr. Tao Bai. It is important the Parliament also acknowledges the staff and volunteers at CASS who work tirelessly to support our community, particularly during the pandemic. I congratulate CASS on their 40th anniversary.

### **SOUTH SYDNEY INDIAN ASSOCIATION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the continued commitment of Jagrati Lalchandani and the entire team at the South Sydney Indian Association for their commitment to connecting our Indian community here in the St George area. The organisation is known throughout the community for their fantastic celebrations for occasions like Diwali and the birthdays of members as well as their loyal support for their members. Last year I had the opportunity to present the South Sydney Indian Association with a group award as part of the St George Community Awards after they received a record 27 nominations. This highlights the value of this organisation within the community and it was also a privilege to acknowledge their President Jagrati Lalchandani with an individual award for her outstanding service over a number of years. I always enjoy attending their wonderful events and meeting all of their fantastic members and I look forward to continuing this connection in the future. Well done everyone, I wish you all the best for the year ahead.

### **COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate I would like to commend The Compassionate Friends NSW for the emotional support they provide to bereaved families after the death of a child. The Compassionate Friends offer a lifeline to grieving parents, siblings and grandparents who have experienced the loss of a child. Local chapters host inclusive gatherings that foster physical and emotional health during a time of deep pain. Volunteers who understand the power of listening draw upon their own lived experience to share a genuine understanding of grief. Their 'Phone a Compassionate Friend' program extends comfort and support. The Compassionate Friends also provide resources such as books, DVDs and media articles. On a recent visit to their Sydney office I saw the invaluable printed support materials they produce for members and was pleased to help support the group through a Community Building Partnership grant for a photocopier. This practical support paired with enduring, friendship gives hope and connection to people in a time that is painful and often isolating. I thank The Compassionate Friends NSW for their commitment to the bereaved in our community, ensuring that people need not walk alone.

### **GIVE A DOG A BONE, KEEP KITTY HAPPY CHRISTMAS APPEAL**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I recognise Nicola Addison and the 'Give a Dog a Bone Keep Kitty Happy' Christmas Appeal. The volunteer-run appeal has provided toys, food and treats to animals for the last 13 years. Sadly, the 2020 appeal was cancelled due to COVID-19. The appeal asks people to add an item for a dog or cat to their shopping basket and drop it at a donation point, where volunteers collect and deliver to animal shelters, rescue groups and homelessness services across Sydney, the Blue Mountains, and the Central Coast. Nicola started small collecting donations from her friends, family and social network to support companion animals of people who are homeless and pets in shelters and foster care in 2007, and by 2019 the appeal provided food and toys to 25 organisations from a range of donation drop off points, including the Sydney electorate office. I thank Nicola and the dedicated volunteers for their contribution to helping homeless pets, and look forward to working with them again in the future.

### **PAM CAREY 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—I would like to congratulate Pam Carey of Hornsby Heights who celebrated her 100th birthday in November 2020. Pam tells me the secret to her longevity is working hard and good genes, as her Mother lived to the age of 104. For 35 years, Pam has been a member of Soroptimist International, and served as President of the Hornsby Branch. Soroptimist International is a worldwide volunteer organisation which works together to transform the lives of women and girls. The Hornsby branch has supported the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter, Beecroft House, Day for Girls, The Dish, Project Humanity and the Smith Family's Learning for Life Program. Pam worked right up till her 70th birthday and then spent 15 years giving up her time as a volunteer, what a remarkable woman! Congratulations on this wonderful milestone and the Hornsby community thanks you for your many years of dedicated service.

### **BALLINA SHIRE AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I congratulate the Ballina Shire Council's Australia Day Citizen of the Year Award winners. Citizen of the Year Barbara Swain started the Mental Health Support Group more than 20 years ago following the loss of her son due to depression. Sharing the Senior Citizen of the Year award are: John Beasley OAM, secretary of Lennox Head-Alstonville Surf Lifesaving Club; Geoff Harris, president of the club for many years; and the late Pat Kennedy, Father Christmas to the community. The Volunteer Organisation of the Year Award was shared by two organisations, the Jet Boat Surf Rescue and Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond for their tireless work. The 2020 ANZAC Day live broadcast from Paradise FM won the Community Event of the Year. Clare Southwell, winner of the 18-foot skiff State Titles in Queensland as part of

a three person crew, was Sporting Achievement Award winner. Lachlan Mumford received the Arts and Culture Award for his photographic work at HSC ARTEXPRESS. Young Citizen of the Year Ryan Webb has helped the vulnerable and less fortunate, in Alstonville and abroad. The Environmentalist of the Year Award went to Maria Matthes, a devoted threatened-species ecologist for more than 30 years.

#### **NAISDA END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Speaker, I would like to send a belated congratulations to NAISDA Dance College on the occasion of their 2020 end-of-year performance. NAISDA is located at Kariong, which means their campus is located on Darkinjung Country. I am disappointed I could not attend the end-of-year performance but I am told it featured the talent of developing choreographers and dancers in cultural and contemporary dance and physical theatre performance. NAISDA have embraced the changes that COVID-19 threw at us in 2020. NAISDA engaged Cultural Elders, community members, visual artists and musicians, visiting cultural dance groups, school students and audiences, in an intimate combination of indoor and outdoor events centred on the four elements of air, land, water and fire. I commend NAISDA's Chief Executive Officer, Kim Walker, Chief Operating Officer, Debra Schleger, Head of Dance, Deon Hastie as well as Elder and NAISDA's cultural Artist-in-Resident Uncle Gavi Duncan on an outstanding year. I also acknowledge Kim and Debra for their passion and commitment – they have a big vision for the future of NAISDA and we are working together to realise this.

#### **40 YEARS OF WOMEN AT CLOVELLY SLSC**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—It was my pleasure to attend the Clovelly Surf Lifesaving Club on Sunday 7 February in my capacity as Member of Coogee, rather than on patrol as one of their Surf Life Savers, to celebrate 40 years of Women in Lifesaving. Surf Life Saving Australia first allowed women to achieve their Bronze Medallions and actively serve as surf lifesavers by patrolling Australian beaches on 1 July 1980. Before this, women were prevented from participating in active patrol duties, with their roles restricted to supporting. It was inspiring to hear the stories of Anne Ryan, Deb Reynolds and Cerin Campling, the first women to attain their Bronze Medallion at Clovelly SLSC. I am honoured to be the beneficiary of their endeavours and I'm conscious of how much I have been able to achieve because of their efforts and the many women that followed. Congratulations to Clovelly SLSC for hosting a wonderful celebration of the accomplishments and contribution of women in Surf Lifesaving, along with the unique bond of all who volunteer their time to keep our beautiful beaches throughout the Eastern Suburbs safe for all who visit them.

#### **PROFESSOR MARK FERSON**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The COVID-19 pandemic has been an extremely difficult period for many, but the work of our contact tracers has made our response to the virus more effective, and has saved lives. That is why I am extremely proud to congratulate Professor Mark Ferson, who won Randwick City Council's Mayor's Award. Professor Mark Ferson and his team of unsung heroes have been at the forefront of controlling cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. His team at South Eastern Sydney Local Health District of Epidemiologists, COVID tracers and hard-working COVID contact staff are the reason NSW has been at the forefront of controlling this virus. Mark and his team are true professionals who have worked tirelessly to keep us safe, and I again take this opportunity to congratulate Mark on this award, and that him and the entire team for their invaluable work.

#### **ISABELLA ENNEVER**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I rise to offer my congratulations to Casino High School student Isabella Ennever who last year won a place on the National Youth Science Forum 2020, was named a recipient of the National Youth of the Streets 2020/21 Scholarship programme and was also named as one of the winners in the Country to Canberra 2020 Leadership competition. This high achieving young lady is focussing on her dream to be a flight surgeon at the American based National Aeronautics and Space Administration organisation (NASA). I wish Isabella every success in all that she does in the future.

#### **DANIEL BRYANT STATE REPRESENTATIVE AWARD RECIPIENT**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—Congratulations to Daniel Bryant for receiving a State Representative Award for the 2019 School Sport Australia Under 16 Hockey Championships. I commend him on this outstanding achievement and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

#### **SISTER NOELENE WHITE - GOOD SHEPHERD**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Sister Noelene White has dedicated the past 37 years to the Marrickville community and to supporting those confronting substance abuse, homelessness and mental illness. Sister Noelene served as Chaplain at the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Kings Cross for over a decade,

providing counsel and support to those living with drug dependency. In 1983, Sister Noelene pioneered the creation of what we now know as the Waranara School, a day program for teenagers facing complex home-lives or who struggle to thrive in mainstream schools. She served as the Manager of the Rosemount Service in Marrickville and served on the board for 30 years. I had the pleasure of joining Sister Noelene at the Waranara School graduation ceremony last year, where 51 students graduated from Year 9-12. Sister Noelene is moving to be with family in Victoria and will be sorely missed by our local community. She is as a passionate and dedicated local leader and is a source of inspiration and guidance for so many. On behalf of the community, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Sister Noelene for her years of service and for helping change the course of hundreds of young lives.

### **RACISM NOT WELCOME**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Inner West residents will have welcomed 40 new street signs installed across our suburbs with the simple message, #RacismNotWelcome. The inner west is the birthplace of multiculturalism in Australia and the Racism Not Welcome campaign strongly affirms that racism has no place in the inner west. The campaign is coordinated by the Inner West Multicultural Network and Addison Road Community Centre, with the support of Inner West Council. Our community has been built on First Nations land and shaped by generations of migrant communities. Despite our rich diversity, we must always confront the fact that systemic racism exists in our community. These street signs are an important and powerful symbol of solidarity with those in our community who experience racism and are a call to action to acknowledge and call out racism where we see it. Thank you to the advocates and activists at Inner West Multicultural Network for raising your voices stridently against racism and calling for community connection; For ensuring people of colour, First Nations peoples, and culturally and linguistically diverse people know that the inner west community stands with them.

### **MAITLAND NEWSAGENTS LINDSAY AND LYN PATFIELD RETIRE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—If there's a couple in Maitland who deserve a sleep-in, it's Lindsay and Lyn Patfield. For the past 25 years, in all seasons and weather, the two have risen in the wee hours to get the news on the stands and the doors open at Maitland West End News, in the city's CBD. During that quarter of a century, they have only taken 19 days off, and the only day they closed was Christmas Day. Lindsay and Lyn didn't just sell the news. They delivered the news, with Lindsay clocking up 145 kilometres on his paper run each day, and as any of the journalists around town will tell you, they were a pretty good source of news themselves. If it was happening in Maitland, the Patfields were on it. Lindsay and Lyn have sold Maitland West End News and are on the countdown to retirement. I congratulate them on running a very successful small business for 25 years and for providing such friendly and reliable service to our community. Enjoy your retirement, and lots of sleep-ins. I hope you manage to catch up on all those books you've collected over the years.

### **RETIREMENT OF JOHN MILLBURN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Congratulations to former NSW Education's Educational Leader and Hunter Network Director, John Millburn on his retirement. John's 33 year career in public schools across regional, rural and remote NSW spanned classroom teaching (particularly music), leadership as principal, and work as an executive. His career began in Broken Hill and included stints in Armidale, Nyngan, Wallabadah, Paterson, Telarah, Bellbird and Thornton public schools. In John's last school, Thornton Public School, he fostered and encouraged excellent and unique initiatives that inspired a generation of students to thoroughly engage in the military history of our nation, and made their commemorations of the ANZAC service of our local ancestors more meaningful for everyone. On his retirement, John was presented with a medal for his Service to Teaching. I'm delighted (and relieved) to report John's talents won't be lost. He will continue as a principal mentor, enabling him to share his vast experience and teaching talents with aspiring educationalists. Thank you, John, for your contribution to public education in NSW and for the outstanding leadership and support you've shown to your colleagues, students, families and community during an inspirational career. I wish you every joy and success in "retirement".

### **AUSTRALIA DAY IN THE HILLS 2021**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—It was recently my pleasure to spend Australia Day travelling around my electorate visiting several Rotary Clubs' annual flag-raising ceremonies, followed by attending the Hills' Shire Council Citizenship Ceremony. Starting off the day was the Castle Hill Rotary Club's Flag Raising Ceremony at Heritage Park. It was wonderful to see traditions such as these remain part of the Day's celebrations, albeit occurring in a Covid-Safe way, with QR Code check-ins and social distancing the order of the day. I would especially like to thank long-time President Mike Blair for his work in organising the ceremony. Next up was the Kenthurst Rotary Club's Flag Raising Ceremony, this time being held at the immaculate John Benyon Park, and I was glad to say a few words on the occasion. As usual Paul Rapp ought to be commended for his organisation

of the day. Finally I was able to attend the Hills Shire Council Citizenship Ceremony, taking the opportunity to meet and welcome our newest Australians. Australia's role as a multicultural society is never more obvious than at these ceremonies, when people of many backgrounds unify around becoming a citizen of our Country. There really is no better way to spend the day.

#### **LIONEL SMITH – 75 YEARS IN THE RFS**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Local Hills Resident Lionel Smith, who has recently notched up 75 years as a part of the Rural Fire Service. Lionel was a founding member of the Oakville Rural Fire Brigade in 1946, and has served continuously since then, most notably as Fire Control Officer of the Hills Shire. In his time in the RFS he has served with distinction on many boards and committees, including The Technical Committee of the Bushfire Council of NSW, The Radio Sub-Committee of the Bushfire Council of NSW and the Fire Control Officer's Association of NSW, where he was the chairman. Lionel was also the developer of the Foam Proportioning System used across the RFS, an invention that has had an immeasurable impact on the capability of the RFS in putting out fires. Lionel has previously been recognised in his firefighting efforts, holding an Australian Fire Service Medal and a National Medal. Lionel is still serving in the RFS as a Deputy Captain at Kenthurst, and still attends fire calls and activities. 75 years with the RFS is simply a tremendous achievement, and my congratulations and thanks goes out to Lionel on this momentous occasion.

#### **OPAL HEALTH CARE, BOSSLEY PARK**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—The dedicated staff at Opal Health Care, Bossley Park Aged Care Centre have done an amazing job- keeping residents safe and upbeat, with a positive and friendly attitude to all of their work. I recently had the pleasure of visiting the staff and residents at Opal Health Care. It has been a difficult year for residents of Aged Care centres, who have lived under strict COVID-19 protocols to protect our elderly from the virus. I would like to thank all of the staff for their service to the community. Without the dedication and care shown by the nurses, doctors, cleaners and staff, the residents at our aged care facilities would not have been able to continue living fulfilling lives. I would like to especially thank the Manager, Wendy Sievert for welcoming me for a COVID safe visit, and allowing me to meet some of the amazing team. Wendy spoke of the challenges of caring for residents and their families through this difficult period and how this has been a unique period for her staff but they have consistently risen to the challenge. Thank you to the team at Opal Health Care.

#### **SAINT JOSEPHINE BAKHITA**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Saint Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of victims of modern slavery and human trafficking as well as Sudan and South Sudan. On the 8th of February a feast day mass was held at Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, St Patrick's Church Blacktown, hosted by the Reverend Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta. Saint Josephine was sold into slavery as a child, stripped of her identity, she was beaten and tortured. She was freed from her enslavement by the Italian courts and was able to live out her life in freedom as a Canossian Sister. Together we prayed for the victims of human trafficking, that they may find peace and rebuild their lives after the traumatic experiences that they have suffered. We recommitted to the fight against modern slavery, to free all those who have been trapped in this barbaric practice. Modern Slavery continues to be a blight on all of us and Saint Josephine Bakhita should be an inspiration for the people of NSW to fight to end slavery. Together we will continue to press for the introduction of the Modern Slavery law that will protect victims of human trafficking.

#### **MITCHELL OLD**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Mitchell Old of Galston whose production *The Last Five Years* will be opening in Castle Hill this week. Mitchell, who I first met when he was school captain at Northholm Grammar in 2019, is studying a Bachelor of Music Education at the Conservatorium of Music. After seeing how COVID has hit the performance art industry, Mitchell decided he wanted to make opportunities for young performers to showcase their skills. That was how the Mitchell Old Company was born, to give emerging artists and young people a chance to get on stage. Their first production, *The Last Five Years* will feature actors, musicians and theatre technicians all under the age of 26. As well as performances between the 11th and 14th of February you can also purchase a digital ticket to watch the performance online later in February. The Mitchell Old Company will focus on excellence, innovation and opportunity and at just 19 years of age Mitchell is cementing himself as a force to be reckoned with in the arts industry. Congratulations Mitchell on your production, I am sure this will be the first of many as your star continues to rise.

**DR PHILIP LAIRD**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Philip Laird from my electorate on his recent achievement of being awarded the Medal of Order of Australia. I have had the pleasure of knowing Dr Laird over the years I have been the Member for Keira and I admire his dedication and knowledge of transport, in NSW but more specifically for our region. This prestigious award is in recognition of Dr Laird's outstanding contributions and achievements with his research in transport, particularly in the Illawarra. This accolade is significant and reflects the good work and contribution Dr Laird has achieved over many years of hard work. Congratulations again on your outstanding contributions to the Illawarra community and your continuous work to make the region the vibrant, harmonious and connected community we love.

**MARIE CLARKE**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Marie Clarke of Goolgowi is an active member of her community with an indomitable spirit. She is this year's recipient of Carrathool Shire Council's "2020 Citizen of the Year". Advocating for increased access to mental health services, Marie has brought together the Goolgowi community through a shared purpose. Once celebrated for its wheat farming, the township is now better known for its disproportionately high level of suicides. Marie wants to see this change and soon. Looking for innovative ways to draw attention to mental health, Marie organised a public meeting allowing the community to express thoughts and voice possible solutions. She also organised for Joel Thompson from the Manly Sea Eagles to visit and share his mental health journey. Marie has established a petition calling for increased mental health services, and worked alongside Council to provide every household with a fridge magnet, listing helpline phone numbers. I admire Marie's community spirit and her willingness to help individuals who reach out as they struggle to maintain good mental health. Congratulations Marie for your tireless commitment to the Goolgowi community.

**AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS 2021**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate the following winners of the Liverpool Plains Shire Australia Day Awards 2021.

Citizen of the Year – Sally Alden

Young Citizen of the Year – Faith Green

Marie Maunder Community Service Award - Madge Martin

Local Legend - Melissa Stubbs

Emergency Services Community Award - John Maunder

Sports Person of the Year - Molly Elford

Junior Sports Person of the Year - Lucas Percy

The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Liverpool Plains Shire and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

**BURMESE (MYANMAR) MILITARY COUP PROTESTS**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—On behalf of the Balmain Electorate today I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding passion and commitment of all those who rallied at Martin Place last Wednesday to denounce the February 1st Burmese (Myanmar) Military coup. In under 48 hours the Burmese community from the Balmain Electorate and across NSW came together in a united sea of red to peacefully recognise the 2020 election results, and support democracy in Burma (Myanmar). Six years ago we shut down the Australian Coalition for Democracy in Burma because we thought the transition to democracy had been won. But now, the movement is back and I am deeply inspired by the emerging generation of activists who are speaking out. I was so proud to address a crowd of hundreds last week and on behalf of everyone in our community I thank the activists in the Balmain Electorate, across the country, and those in Burma for their tireless commitment to democracy.

**GEORGES RIVER FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Georges River Football Club who are the successful recipients of \$43,101 from the NSW Government's 2020 Community Building Partnership Program. Founded in 1960, Georges River Football Club started with a mere three teams in the local competition. The Club quickly grew and established brick dressing sheds and kiosk facilities on the newly developed and now home ground of Oyster Bay Oval. I am delighted that through this grant, the Clubhouse will be upgraded to provide a more accessible and functional space for club and community members, and will include a commercial dishwasher,

portable BBQ unit, new furniture and solar panels. Of course none of this is possible without the hard-working and dedicated volunteers behind the organisation. I acknowledge the 2020 executive committee including President Dale Graham, Vice President Matthew Shaw, Secretary Debbie Kearns, Treasurer Laura Croxson and Registrar Melissa Gassman. I thank Georges River Football Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing this incredible project implemented for our community.

#### **PANTRY FOR THE PEOPLE**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron)**—Covid-19 has posed a lot of challenges for our community, but it has also brought out the best in so many of us. I draw to the attention of the House the efforts of Rachael Smith of Botany, who late last year opened "Pantry 4 the People" on Botany Road, Botany. With so many in our community out of work and struggling to put food on the table, Rachael decided to set up a 24/7 rainproof community pantry inspired by the Newtown Blessing Box. The motto is "Take what you need, give what you can" and its helping to feed hundreds of locals every month. Anyone can discreetly come and take food from the pantry at 1555 Botany Road, no questions asked. The pantry is supplied by the generous donations of locals and businesses, sometimes being refilled three times a day. Fears of theft or graffiti were unfounded – a testament to the generosity and kindness of the Botany Bay community. Rachael and her family keep a close eye on the pantry and reach into their own pocket to replenish the pantry if donations slow down. It is a remarkable thing to do for complete strangers.

#### **FRED VEARING**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Speaker, I wish to acknowledge Mr Fred Vearing who for the last 18 years has cared for the lawn and gardens at The Peppers, Seniors Housing Complex, Aria Park. Fred took over the garden maintenance during the Millennium drought and after his many hours of watering and care has created a garden delight at the Complex as you come into the main street of Aria Park. Fred has often been ably assisted by his wife Patty who has provided expert advice on what plants to put where. Thank you Fred and Patty for your years of passion and dedication to The Peppers. I wish you both a happy retirement and you'll now have time to enjoy more road trips around our beautiful state and country.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 20:21 until  
Thursday 11 February 2021 at 9:30.**