



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 11 February 2021

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 11 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

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Given that the 30 seconds allowed for the giving of a notice of motion has expired, the member for Orange cannot start the fourth point of his motion.

Later,

The SPEAKER: Sorry, I cannot accept paragraph (4) of the motion. The member for Vacluse has gone well over the 30 seconds allowed for the giving of a notice of motion. I have to be consistent.

Later,

The SPEAKER: The time for the giving of notices of motions has expired.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2020-2021

Debate resumed from 10 February 2021.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (09:48): As I was saying in this place yesterday, many residents in my community who came as part of the fifties and sixties migration wave lacked educational opportunities. As soon as they arrived in Sydney, they moved into share houses in places like Newtown, Erskineville or Redfern. Then, over the course of the next few days, they were off working in factories, whether in Camperdown or Alexandria, because that is where the work was. For many of those migrants, all they knew was to work hard and build for their community to ensure that their children were able to access opportunities here in their beautiful new country of Australia. All of my community became Australian citizens. Their children were born; they educated their children. They volunteered; they were involved in building the local churches or mosques or temples or synagogues. Many of those community members are now in their 70s and 80s and they need urgent medical assistance.

As I said yesterday, if they are going through cancer treatment, they cannot just catch the bus to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. They cannot just catch the bus and the train to St George Hospital in Kogarah. They cannot just catch the bus to Concord. Many of them do not have a car; they do not have private transport. I urge the Government to urgently look at the strategic plan for Canterbury Hospital. I will continue to campaign on that, and I thank the member for Summer Hill, the member for Lakemba, the Federal member for Barton and the Federal member for Watson, who have been part of our campaign. We have a petition and thousands of people have been signing it. We hope to have a debate in this place. In all seriousness, it has been 20 years since that hospital had a major redevelopment. Last night when I left this place, I thought about the women who are in the antenatal clinic at Canterbury Hospital today. They are not in a little private room. They are with 14 other people, as well as the carers, nurses and doctors.

I know a lot of those women are not going to be able to disclose very private, intimate information. For some, language is a barrier; for some, discussion about certain issues is taboo. I understand that because I am the daughter of migrants and I had to translate and interpret for my mum. Those issues can be so embarrassing and so taboo to discuss. For many women who do not disclose information because they are embarrassed to talk about it in front of other people, it means they have ongoing negative health effects. I am passionate about this issue and I urge the Minister to come to the hospital with the local members and listen to what the staff and the community are saying. My community is urging the Government for funding for the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital. That has not happened. There was also an interim care agreement that had \$1 million of planning money. The final agreement does not have that \$1 million; it is missing. I call on the Government to tell me why that \$1 million is missing. That has caused a lot of anxiety among the medical staff.

We will continue to campaign; we urge the Government to provide the much-needed funds in this budget. I am sick and tired of hearing about pork-barrelling; need should not be based on pork-barrelling. The service needs of my community should be based on a black-and-white proper assessment process. The need is already in black and white. On a positive note, I acknowledge the Treasurer. I am a fair person—

Mr Geoff Provest: In the last 20 seconds.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: No, I seek an extension of time because I have a nice story to tell about the Treasurer, former Prime Minister John Howard and Canterbury Boys' High School. It is a nice story. [*Extension of time*]

Despite my electorate not receiving funds for the hospital—and we will get there with the help of our community and the member for Summer Hill, who is in the Chamber and is an avid campaigner for Canterbury Hospital—the people of Canterbury are very happy and very excited about the funding to finally build a school hall for Canterbury Boys' High School. This has been a very long campaign. The school is over 100 years old. Back 100 years ago students would come from kilometres away to go to Canterbury Boys' High School. It was a selective high school and many successful people have attended Canterbury Boys' High School. One of those is former Prime Minister John Howard, and he has been an avid supporter of Canterbury Boys' High School. He attended the 100th anniversary. When he is invited to attend a speech night or a presentation he always attends. We acknowledge his contribution as Canterbury Boys' High School's famous alumnus but I thank him personally for the support that he gave to me and to the community in ensuring that we received funding from the Treasurer in the last budget.

I acknowledge that \$1 million has been put aside for the school hall, but obviously it is going to cost a lot more. I thank the community, those who signed our petition and those who for many, many years have been campaigning very hard to get this school hall. Our young men have been going to presentation nights at Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL—that is their hall—or in the school yard. That is not appropriate. The school is on a big site. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Strathfield, is in the Chamber. Many of her constituents also attend Canterbury Boys' High School. If the Government listens to us, there is an opportunity to increase enrolments, but we need to provide those additional specialist resources for the school. As both our leader, the member for Strathfield, and the member for Summer Hill will attest to, Ashfield Boys' High School, which is shared by their electorates, is a success in public education and in implementing the vision that was set 10 years. That is what we would like to see happen at Canterbury Boys' High School. I am very grateful that funding has been provided for the school hall and I acknowledge that the Treasurer did listen to our community and to Mr Howard. The hall will be built this year and hopefully will be opened next year.

On a final note, our electorate has been left behind. As I mentioned yesterday, the dirty deals that have been done by "Dirty Deal" Daryl Maguire—Maguire's metro, the overdevelopment in my community—and the decisions that have been made are absolutely appalling. That is why I am urging the Government to revisit these planning decisions and to look at particularly the population growth over the next five to 10 years in our electorates. We need additional funding for Canterbury Road and for services. I have mentioned the council rorts. Not only has the Government failed in its forced mergers but also our community is going to be left paying for the disaster of council mergers. As I said yesterday, my community are humble people, they are entrepreneurial, they work hard and they pay taxes. They do not ask for much, but they want services and the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital. We will continue to work hard. I acknowledge as well the Leader of the Opposition, who is very supportive, the member for Summer Hill and other members in our community.

I urge the Government to look at the strategic plans for both 2013 and 2018 and reconsider investing in Canterbury Hospital. Those plans contain all the necessary information, and I have given Government members anecdotal information about what many residents in my community are going through. They are suffering. We need the funding now.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (09:59): It is with a great deal of pleasure and pride that I speak in debate on the budget estimates and related papers for 2020-21. I have been in this place a bit longer than many other members. I have seen fairly stringent grants programs and know you need to lobby hard, and I note that John Howard once said that members in marginal seats try a lot harder to deliver to their electorate. I am very pleased to run through a number of items in the last budget. We have very strong advocates in our Aboriginal housing sector. Many fine people are involved with the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council and South Sea Islander association. Those groups have had an increase of \$1.9 million in Aboriginal housing funding, which is extremely important within my area.

A big ticket item in the budget is approximately \$140 million for ongoing upgrades to our local schools, including the great Tweed River High School, Tweed Heads South Primary School, Kingscliff High School and Kingscliff Public School. Those upgrades are much needed to bring those students into the twenty-first century

and give them more support. I am a big believer that the children are our future. The more we can do to cement their future, the better life will be here in Australia. Going back a number of years, a former member for Pittwater was also the Minister for Education. He visited my electorate and turned the first sod on the famous Pottsville Beach Public School, which is now in full operation and has received a funding increase of \$25 million for upgrades. Most of our schools are going extraordinarily well and I pay tribute to the principals, staff and P&Cs. I meet with them on a regular basis. I know they are very pleased with the progress and our involvement with the school community and wider community.

Another highlight in the budget is the \$4.7 million program for a new fire station and fire engines at Kingscliff. The old fire station at Kingscliff was built in 1954 and has one toilet and one shower. That is unacceptable now that Kingscliff is growing and the fire station has two female retained firefighters coming on duty. After we announced the new fire station I was approached by some female senior citizens who live in an apartment block overlooking the station. They were concerned that the male firefighters had started shutting the shower door because female retained firefighters were coming on board. They could no longer look into the shower at the Kingscliff fire station from their apartment block, so they asked me to ask the firemen if they could possibly leave the door open for their benefit. That caused great amusement among our local fires; they thought it was rather funny, bearing in mind that the ladies had an average age of about 85 or 90!

Another big highlight that members opposite know about fairly well relates to Tweed Valley Hospital. In this budget we received another \$91 million for the hospital following the \$600 million originally announced. In the past few weeks I was pleased to welcome the Premier and the Minister for Health and Medical Research to see the pouring of a big 700 cubic metre concrete slab. The concrete was obtained from a local provider, and it is really good to see the project create local jobs. The new Tweed Valley Hospital is well on track for completion by 2022 and the aim is for it to be operational by 2023. Each year around 5,000 to 6,000 Tweed residents have to leave the area to seek further medical treatment. About 1,800 people in the Tweed suffer from some form of cancer and require radiation, but the nearest public radiation treatment service is in Lismore. That is about an hour and 10 minutes away and public transport is not available. Other options are Gold Coast University Hospital, one of the Mater hospitals or a hospital in Brisbane, but they all have fairly extensive waiting lists. We are pleased to announce that the new Tweed Valley Hospital will offer radiation treatment, which is a great plus.

I have often said that the new Tweed Valley Hospital is being built not only for New South Wales residents but for all Australians. I know my illustrious colleague over the border Anastacia Palaszczuk holds the view that Queensland hospitals are for Queenslanders only, but my view is that the new Tweed Valley Hospital is for everyone. Last year around 6,000 Queenslanders were treated at the current Tweed Hospital, and that is fine. The new hospital will be a significant employment hub and will increase the range of medical services available to the great people of the Tweed. It will also become a drawing hospital from Murwillumbah. Contrary to what some Federal members have suggested, Murwillumbah District Hospital is not shutting; it and the famous Byron Central Hospital will be feeders for the new Tweed Valley Hospital. The hospital is being designed to have a capacity of upwards of 499 beds and will be able to treat a community of 149,000 people.

The current population of the Tweed is around 90,000 people, so the new hospital will have plenty of capacity now and well into the future. It will take up only 11 hectares of the 18-hectare site, so in 50 years it will be able to expand as the population and demand grows. The new Tweed Valley Hospital is also getting a catheterisation laboratory, or cath lab. The nearest publicly available lab is at Gold Coast University Hospital. When the Premier visited the existing hospital just over a year ago, she met an elderly lady who required stents in her heart. If the existing hospital had its own cath lab, the lady could have been treated within 24 hours. Instead, she had to go on a waiting list for the Gold Coast hospital and had to stay in Tweed Hospital for an extra three days. That is unacceptable, so I am pleased that the new Tweed Valley Hospital will get a cath lab. The size of the existing Tweed Hospital pathology lab is 250 square metres. The new pathology lab will be up to 1,000 square metres, which is an enormous increase.

I am excited that the new Tweed Valley Hospital will get an automated pathology machine. In layman's terms, it means a surgeon or clinician in an operating theatre will be able to take a sample, drop it in a tube and down a pipe and get the results back within 10 minutes. That will be an enormous plus for the people of the Tweed. But it does not end there. I am also excited about the additional \$4 million being allocated to this development. Usually when a hospital of the calibre of the new Tweed hospital is built, a dummy ward and dummy operating theatre are included to allow staff to train on the new equipment and machines for about three months. In this case, a permanent ward and permanent operating theatre will be available as a training facility at the adjacent TAFE NSW Kingscliff, which is amazing. From day one, training will be available to young people and middle-aged people seeking career changes in the ever-growing field of medicine. The new hospital will employ around 2,700 people, whereas the existing hospital employs about 1,200. So there will be a significant increase in staff numbers.

There is also potential to train at our TAFE. I am very proud of the Kingscliff TAFE. Enrolments are right up. There has been an increase of around 20 per cent in apprentices right through the TAFE system. A lot of those apprentices are doing work experience on the new hospital site. The initial target by Health Infrastructure was to have 8 per cent to 9 per cent of Indigenous apprenticeships there. Currently they are running at about 14 per cent or 15 per cent, which is great to see, and it is well received within the wider community. It does not end there. As part of the budget, local bus services have increased by up to 440 per week. From Pottsville to Tweed, which is 30-odd kilometres, a bus service runs every 15 minutes from 5.00 a.m. right through to 11.00 p.m. seven days a week. That has been well received, including by young people seeking employment, further training or simply the basics of life, such as transport to the shops and things of that nature.

The budget is so broad for us. I am very excited—I am just waiting on the Queensland Government to move a bit quicker—that we received money for a feasibility study. For members who do not know the plans for the light rail and heavy rail in Queensland, the heavy rail runs to Varsity Lakes at the moment. Ultimately, it will end up at the Coolangatta airport. Half the terminal and half the runway is in New South Wales; the other half is in Queensland. They call it the Gold Coast Airport, but I prefer the "Gold Coast-Tweed Airport". The new \$300 million international terminal, which obviously is not being used at the moment, is wholly within New South Wales. The heavy rail will come down the existing M1 and come in under the runway, which has already been strengthened and elevated. It will be like a skytrain near the terminal. The light rail, which is being debated at the moment, is north of Burleigh Heads. It will eventually come down through Palm Beach, Currumbin and Tugun, and eventually come to the airport. Believe it or not, it will continue down to Coolangatta. A bit of history is that the Tweed used to have its own train station, but men of wisdom, or people of wisdom, many years ago in 1964—

Ms Jodi McKay: And women as well.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: And women as well. They decided to rip up that track back in 1964. Many years later the Queensland Government is spending billions of dollars to put it back. But we do not stop there. Part of the feasibility study is the growth and success of public transport. Currently, Transport for NSW is working with Queensland Transport to work out the feasibility and the business case so we can apply for funding to bring it from Coolangatta down to South Tweed. For those who do not know, Tweed, South Tweed and Banora Point are more densely populated, so we will see the light rail. But equally as exciting is something very dear to my heart. I will probably cop some criticism for this, but currently you cannot buy an Opal card in Tweed Heads. Currently, you cannot use an Opal card in Tweed Heads because—guess what—all our buses come from Queensland and they use the go card. It is exactly the same but has a different branding.

So we have been lobbying—and I believe we are very close now—for Tweed to go onto the Queensland public transport system using the same database. Cubic Transportation Systems runs the software behind the Opal card and the go card. We will have a seamless border, which is a great plus. Currently, if a person wishes to travel north from Tweed Heads—believe it or not—they have to buy a paper ticket. I have not seen them for years. They get to the border and then get out their go card for the next leg of the journey. Coming home, they have to use the go card but because a paper ticket cannot be bought in Queensland they have to wait until they get to the border and then buy a paper ticket. It has been a bit of a bureaucratic nightmare. I was pleased to find out that the Opal card and the go card are exactly the same, with different branding. That is a great plus, but it is not quite seamless.

One of the joys of living on the border is that currently in Tweed we have a time difference of one hour across the street. All bus timetables are in two time zones. Around the Tweed you will see clocks painted in maroon and clocks painted in blue. It has got worse in the past few years. Many of us who use a smart device or a watch connected to a smart device to tell the time can physically stand well inside New South Wales and the device will jump to the Telstra tower in Coolangatta. You gain an hour or you lose an hour. It has caused a lot of people to miss appointments and flights and so on, so it is rather confusing. We are working through those issues. Another pet issue of mine is our local environment. Last year in this place we had robust discussion on State environmental planning policy 44 and koala plans of management, and things like that. A number of years ago, through then environment Minister Gabrielle Upton, we embarked on a program and signed up with partners.

Our partner in crime, in a way, is the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, which has been renowned for many years. Dr Michael Pyne is the head vet and koala expert. He has been looking after koalas for 40 years. A number of years ago we became aware that he treats, on average, 300 to 400 New South Wales koalas a year. They come up across the border, are rehabilitated and then sent back. On that fateful day he gave me a significant lecture about not only providing habitat, but also funding research into chlamydia. Chlamydia is a major and fairly insidious disease affecting koalas. Around 30 per cent of koalas in the Tweed and further south show some signs of chlamydia. The disease will eventually cause them to lose a lot of their faculties: They go blind, wander onto roads, get run over and so on. One might ask why chlamydia is so rampant within the koala community. One reason is that they have a retrograde gene, which is very similar to a gene that causes susceptibility to the AIDS virus.

There is a number of research activities into that. At the moment there is a trial vaccine. It does not cure the koalas; it prevents them from getting the disease. It is a case of getting a "clean" koala—one without the virus—and vaccinating it, waiting a month for another vaccination, and waiting another month for a final vaccination before the koala can be released. One major reason chlamydia spreads quickly through the koala community is the scientific fact that during breeding season it is not uncommon for koalas to have four or five sexual partners within 24 hours. Therefore, the disease spreads fairly rapidly. That could explain why koalas sleep for 20-odd hours a day. I am not a scientist, so I really cannot comment on that. It is an amazing thing, but that is the science.

The program we funded bought around 100 hectares of land at Pottsville a few years ago and planted 40,000 or 50,000 feed trees. The trees are designed to be pruned low because with a large number of koalas in captivity every day you need fresh food. It has now become a rehabilitation site. I am pleased to announce to the House that this week we have started to move in our first vaccinated koalas. It is not for tourism; it is scientific. It is simply for the protection of our koalas. It is the first place in the State to do that. It is the first joint venture with our colleagues across the border. I am very pleased with that success. If we start looking through the budget, we have achieved \$1 million or \$2 million in terms of cyber waste through the Tweed. [*Extension of time*]

Business interrupted.

Bills

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) AMENDMENT (RECKLESSLY DESTROYING GOVERNMENT RECORDS) BILL 2021

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (10:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I say from the outset that I am both shocked and disappointed that I even have to bring the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Recklessly Destroying Government Records) Bill 2021 to the Parliament. But the Coalition Government now presents to us such a circumstance in New South Wales. Last year we sought to ban Ministers from taking commissions from property developers. That was a direct result of the Premier having a conversation with Daryl Maguire on an intercepted phone call in which she congratulated him on the commission that he received from a developer. Labor sought to close that loophole last year. Again, I was shocked and disappointed that I even had to do that, because it should be obvious that Ministers and MPs should not accept commissions from property developers. It has now again fallen to the Opposition to seek to ban the reckless destruction of government records because of the behaviour of the Premier and other Government MPs.

It is extraordinary to think that in the oldest parliament in Australia we need to legislate against destroying government records in the Premier's office and, indeed, that in the people's House we need to prohibit officials destroying records of public expenditure. That is what this bill seeks to do. It seeks to make it an offence to recklessly destroy government records and, in the case of the Premier, records about public expenditure. How did we come to this? It is important to reflect. We may now face a new year, but last year we learned some pretty terrible things about this Government from sick and injured workers being ripped off by icare—that was under the Treasurer. Then we had the Premier turn a blind eye to the corruption of her partner, the former member for Wagga Wagga, Daryl Maguire. We also saw a freefall in education standards in New South Wales and a terrible record of health care in Sydney's south-west and now in rural and regional New South Wales.

We have seen entire suburbs, particularly in western Sydney, simply left behind because of a failure of basic infrastructure. Last year we also saw the Premier admit to "toll mania", which is a policy of this Government in the building of major toll roads. Time and time again, we have seen a government that looks after itself: MPs, Ministers and even the Premier look after themselves. Of course, they also look after their mates, their lobbyists and property developer friends. That means they are leaving the rest of the community behind. That is why the bill is important. The Government should not act in its own interests or that of its mates; it should act in the best interests of New South Wales and every citizen, who must never be left behind. But that is what is happening.

The parliamentary inquiry into the rorting of grants has heard some extraordinary and shocking evidence. My colleagues in the other place the Hon. John Graham and the Hon. Courtney Houssos have done a terrific job exposing what the Government never ever wanted us to know. They have investigated how it was that 95 per cent of the Stronger Communities Fund was allocated to Coalition seats. The Stronger Communities Fund was for local councils. It was meant to support them in their amalgamation, which members will remember was a failed

policy of the Government. But that funding did not go to local councils; it was distributed amongst Coalition electorates—Liberal and National Party electorates—ahead of crossbench and Labor electorates. A quarter of a billion dollars was allocated in the lead-up to the last election. It is extraordinary that I have to bring the bill to the House. The investigation into the Stronger Communities Fund found that the Premier was involved in the perverse manipulation of taxpayer funds. Then the documents that proved that were shredded, and that is what the bill is about.

It is important to note that the Premier has simply refused to appear before the parliamentary inquiry. This week in Parliament I asked her three times whether she would appear before the inquiry, but she refused. She has an obligation to answer questions on this issue in the House and in the parliamentary inquiry, and she simply refuses. This week the Deputy Premier made some amazing comments and said that pork-barrelling is commonplace, and that it is what you do and how you buy elections. We were all stunned by that evidence. That is how this Government thinks. But at least the Deputy Premier appeared before the inquiry and fronted up to answer questions. The Premier will not front up. I know that the members on the parliamentary inquiry have issued a standing invitation to her to appear and answer questions.

Let us look at what has transpired at that inquiry, which has led to us introducing this important bill. Last year the Premier's senior policy adviser gave evidence to the inquiry that not only did the Premier approve part of the grants associated with this quarter-of-a-billion-dollar program but also the documents were destroyed. We found that out when the committee asked for the documents that show the Premier's involvement—that is, the working documents where the Premier writes, "I approve this for this reason; this is what I want you to do." It was all done under her direction. When the committee asked the adviser to provide the documents, she admitted in stunning evidence that they had been shredded.

Not only that, the soft copy that implicated the Premier had also been deleted—that is, the email associated with the grant had also been deleted. Not only did the Government treat taxpayer grants like an election slush fund; it also then destroyed the evidence to cover it up. Again, that is why Labor brings the bill to the House. My colleague the shadow Minister for Local Government, Greg Warren, referred the matter to the State Archives and Records Authority [SARA]. He also referred it to the Information and Privacy Commission. Last month—on a Friday, of course, when everyone was focused on something else—the Government released the findings of both those investigations. SARA found that the Premier's office breached the State Records Act when it shredded those documents. In the watchdog's own words:

The Authority finds that the Office of the Premier breached section 21 (1) of the State Records Act with the unauthorised disposal of the working advice notes.

That means that the Premier and her office broke the law. They did not just do the wrong thing; they broke the law when destroying and shredding those documents. At the same time, we learnt the outcome of the Information Commissioner's investigation. Again, I will directly quote the commissioner's words. She stated that she "was not satisfied that the primary guidance manual, the ministerial handbook, provided to all ministerial offices and staff provides the necessary guidance to support officers exercising significant functions under the GIPA Act as authorised by the NSW Premier." She also went on to say that "this presents a significant risk to lawful management of Government information". The commissioner then referred that matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

So while the Premier's involvement with Daryl Maguire is being investigated by the ICAC, she now finds herself in its sights yet again. That is what that means. Two matters involving the Premier are before the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Finally, and importantly, the commissioner recommended that Parliament consider the creation of an offence for the reckless destruction of government information. She used those words and they are in the title of the bill—"reckless destruction of government information". It is not just us trying to blow up the significance of this matter. The commissioner used the words "reckless destruction" because that is what this was. It appears that the current law is not wide enough to address the vast extent of this Government's maladministration.

Those reports are a combined total of 40 pages. The conclusion we can draw from those reports is that the Government broke the law and the law must be stronger—that is the bill's intent. I thank the shadow Attorney General, who is in the House, for his help in drafting this legislation. Section 120 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 provides:

A person who destroys, conceals or alters any record of government information for the purpose of preventing the disclosure of the information as authorised or required by or under this Act is guilty of an offence.

The object of the bill is to extend that offence to the reckless destruction, concealment and alteration of those types of government information records. It addresses a significant shortcoming in the existing law, which is that section 120 only applies to the intentional destruction of government information that must be proactively

released. The bill broadens that provision so that the Parliament will ensure that the reckless destruction of government information that must be proactively released will also be an offence. That is an incredibly important change. When the people afford their government with the power of the State, it forges an important bond of trust with the community. As all members on this side of the House know, with the power of government comes enormous responsibility. I hope all members in this place appreciate that.

People trust that the powers of government will be exercised responsibly and that funds will be allocated fairly. Under this Government, the responsible and fair allocation of government funding has not occurred. People across the State have missed out. Our system of government has sensible checks and balances in place to ensure that happens, which includes the right to freedom of information and with that comes a level of transparency. Members on this side of the House regularly lodge freedom of information requests and there is a general acceptance that the Government Information (Public Access) Act must change. The bill that we bring before the House is specifically related to the reckless destruction of documents. This Parliament needs to look into that.

We have seen a breach of trust under this Government. When it comes to the bushfire grants, we have seen what I never thought I would see: disaster relief funding being politicised. In the past two weeks we have found out that \$177 million in funding that was meant to help communities across New South Wales recover from the bushfires that occurred over a year ago was distributed based on election chances and the benefit that the Liberal Party and The Nationals will receive. That has to stop. It is extraordinary that we have stooped to the level where disaster relief funding is politicised and used to benefit the Liberal Party and The Nationals. When grant funds—no matter what they are—are manipulated and evidence is destroyed, the community's trust is broken. Worse still, it undermines the faith that the community has in its Government. When that trust is broken, it is corrosive. It eats away at the integrity of the institution. Bit by bit, it chips away at what was, and should be, a strong foundation.

From ICAC to icare—and now with manipulating government grants—we are seeing that the Berejiklian Government is benefiting a few in our community, not many. After almost 10 years in office, this Government has become so arrogant that its members think they can get away with that inappropriate behaviour. When the Premier was asked about the manipulation of those grants, she admitted that pork-barrelling occurs and that her Government thinks it is okay. She admitted that government funding is used to curry favour with certain electorates. How can the Premier think that is okay? It is not okay and will never be okay. It should not be okay now and it will never be okay under a Labor government. The revelations of the grants inquiry are shocking. The Premier had a chance to apologise during the press conference that I mentioned in which she talked about how grants are used to curry favour. She did not.

The Premier is not appearing before the parliamentary inquiry to answer questions and she is refusing to acknowledge that what she did was wrong. She is also refusing to apologise to the community. She could have taken responsibility and acknowledged the blatantly obvious: What her Government is doing is not right. This week the Deputy Premier said:

You want to call that pork barrelling, you want to call that buying votes, it's what the elections are for. It's the democratic process.

No, it is not. A government cannot buy votes with grant funding; it is absolutely wrong in every sense. Whichever way one looks at it, it is wrong. It is not what elections are for. Pork-barrelling with the taxpayer's dollar, with public funding, is not okay. Rorting taxpayer grants for electoral purposes is not okay. Manipulating grants that were meant for bushfire victims and recovering communities is not okay. Shredding important government documents is not okay. Deleting sensitive government documents is not okay. This bill is required because trust, integrity and doing the right thing matter. I commend the bill to the House and I ask those opposite to give serious consideration to supporting this important bill. The Government's support for the bill, if it is offered, will go some way to ensuring that whoever is in government will never think shredding government information and deleting important files is okay. It is not okay.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMES (DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL VIOLENCE) AMENDMENT (COERCIVE CONTROL— PREETHI'S LAW) BILL 2020

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 24 September 2020.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (10:39): On average, one woman every nine days and one man every 29 days is killed in Australia by a current or former partner. An estimated one in six women, or 1.6 million women, aged 18 years and over have experienced violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15, according to the findings of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Personal Safety Survey. In response to these damning statistics, we have amended both policy frameworks and criminal justice responses to domestic and family violence, and

especially for violence within intimate partner relationships. In this time we have come to understand that not all experiences of domestic violence are the same, but we do know that the impact is the same. It is both deeply traumatic and long lasting.

Addressing domestic and family violence is one of this Government's highest priorities. We have delivered record investment to address the scourge of domestic and family violence. We have funded programs and services that focus on victim survivors and on perpetrators. We have run awareness campaigns across whole communities and for niche audiences. We have amended civil and criminal laws to support all these endeavours and, importantly, to ensure the safety of victims and to hold perpetrators to account and yet, tragically, across Australia the rates of domestic violence, perpetration and victimisation remain persistent. And, more tragically, domestic violence homicide rates remain stubbornly high.

Vexed public policy matters like domestic violence often require a generation or more to achieve real and lasting change, especially when cultural change is required. A bright light has been shone into the deep, dark corners of our communities and revealed the true and full extent and experience of domestic violence. We talk far more openly now, than ever before in our history, about how to address this wicked problem. That is as it should be. This discussion has resulted in changed law, police practice and policy approaches; created better support services; devised more innovative programs; and encouraged better data collecting and refined research. Importantly too, the response includes the voices of victim survivors and their loved ones.

As the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, I have heard stories of horrific abuse, suffering and shame, but I have also heard stories of profound strength and resilience. I have come to better recognise the complex mix of fear and love that so often underpins a relationship when abuse is present. Motivated by these stories, informed by the literature and using data, early last year I began to examine coercive control more deeply—those ranges of behaviours so interwoven with intimate partner violence and homicides. I am keenly interested in legislative reform to address coercive and controlling behaviour, but we have to make sure that any reform is the right one. No-one in this place could dispute that domestic violence is appalling.

What is coercive control? We are all familiar with the physical forms of abuse that leave bruises, scars and broken bones, and which can have long-lasting consequences, including acquired brain injury or ongoing trauma. What we are now contemplating are the forms of domestic abuse that occur within intimate partner relationships that are not so obvious and not so easily captured by criminal law. These non-physical forms of violence commonly remain in the dark, often unseen outside of the relationship in which they occur. These repeated forms of abuse are coercive control. Coercive control describes patterns of abusive behaviour that are designed to exercise domination and control over another party in a relationship. The development of a power dynamic is created through the cumulative effect of these forms of behaviour. They are experienced gradually and ramped up over time.

The ultimate goal of coercive control is to rob a person of their independence and autonomy. Perpetrators seek to impose a kind of entrapment that renders victims hostage like, impacting their dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood. It also undermines their physical and psychological integrity. Evan Stark, the originator of the term, describes how behaviours combine to become "coercive control". He details four key aspects: violence, intimidation, isolation and control. Applied together, the perpetrator creates a world of confusion and contradiction. Perpetrators are overwhelmingly men. A perpetrator creates his own set of rules and arbitrary demands. Not meeting these demands or abiding by the rules has serious consequences for his partner, and victims are most often women. The threat of physical violence, even if it does not occur, is ever present. Fear is a constant. Victim-survivors have bravely recounted their stories to me, and I hope my description of their various experiences does them justice. Not all experiences of domestic violence are the same, but I will describe some common patterns.

Having created rules and demands, a perpetrator may change these rules and demands at will, leaving the victim confused. This is the "walking on eggshells" so eloquently described by victims of not knowing what each day might bring. A perpetrator may gaslight her, making small changes to reality, convincing her that her memory, views and judgements are wrong so much so that she questions her own sense of reality. A perpetrator may alter his behaviour to appear charming to outsiders while simultaneously being unbearable to his partner. This Jekyll-and-Hyde reality is a confusing contradiction. A harmonious relationship is presented to the outside world, and he is convincing. She is constantly degraded and belittled. He negatively comments on her body image and what she wears. This undermines her ability and confidence, impacting on her ability as a good worker, friend, sister or parent. This causes her a lack of self-belief. It erodes her confidence and agency.

He may monitor and micromanage her daily activities, and he uses technology to facilitate this. The constant check-ins to see where she is and who she is with—the hypervigilance is exhausting. She may be coerced into drug taking or alcohol addiction. He may force her to engage in criminal activity. He may convince her children to do likewise, and use them as tools of influence in his isolating and gaslighting. He may deprive her of

sleep, impacting on her mental health. He may take her wages or benefits. He may coerce her into spending her money rather than saving it. He may preclude her from the title of shared property or from being named on tenancy agreements or with utility providers. This undermines her financial security and credit rating, and this has lifelong impacts on her economic security. He may isolate her by forbidding her from seeing family and friends. He may threaten her, her friends and family or her pets with violence. In extreme threatening behaviour, he may even threaten to kill her or himself. Fear is ever present.

Sexual abuse may also involve the use of image-based abuse such as threats to share intimate images against the victim's wishes. Some victims may appear complicit, but her wellbeing and even her survival depend on knowing the signs. She knows the minute when things may trigger his anger and what a glance across the room signifies. She modifies her behaviour to keep him happy and, importantly, to ensure her own safety. These are not single events or incidents; these are repeated time and time again, forming an ongoing pattern of threat and fear. This is coercive control. This is the non-physical abuse that can precede intimate partner violence and homicide. Other jurisdictions, including England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, have introduced specific criminal offences as their next step in addressing coercive control. Their approach is a genuine attempt to address non-physical forms of intimate partner abuse, to assist in making prosecution more effective and to better reflect the true nature and experience of this crime.

Is criminalisation in New South Wales the right solution? The criminal justice system is not a single panacea for intimate partner violence but, together with changing attitudes and improving gender equality, it has a central and important role in the response to all forms of domestic and intimate partner abuse. We need mutual and collective strategies, and deep and constant collaboration between police, the criminal justice system, the non-government specialist services sector and our corporate sectors to ensure the safety of victims and hold perpetrators to account. There is the potential for overreach if we simply resort to criminal law without those other elements, and that is a reason to proceed carefully and methodically. It is a serious matter for consideration. We need to know how to best judge when the normal highs and lows of a relationship are actually abuse. It is not, however, a reason not to try to address the core elements of coercive control.

Sadly, there are those who cheapen debate, who characterise this as a war on men and who run their own culture war. It is not a war on men. I expect that any legislation in this area will be gender neutral in the sense that it will apply irrespective of the genders of the perpetrator and the victim. The overwhelming majority of men are not abusers but the overwhelming majority of abusers are men, and while we do not want to criminalise normal or innocent behaviour, there is nothing normal or innocent about the conduct I have described. Abuse lies in the presence of threat and fear because one partner constantly undermines and controls the other. I want to make sure that anything we do is workable and ultimately meets the needs of the people it is designed to best serve—the victims impacted by acts of violence. Last March I indicated that I wanted to review the experience of other jurisdictions that have introduced coercive control laws. I have gathered information and feedback from those jurisdictions, both formal data from relevant agencies as well as the views of those who work as first responders.

I am keen to avoid the risk of introducing well-intentioned but ultimately unworkable legislation. Law reform must impact the rates of homicide, perpetration and victimisation. I doubt that any of us in this Chamber can truly understand the grief and trauma suffered by the family and friends of Dr Preethi Reddy, after whom the bill has been named in recognition of her tragic death at the hands of her former partner. Dr Reddy was 32 years old when she was violently murdered by her former partner. At the time of her death Dr Reddy was a young and enthusiastic professional with the world at her feet. She was a loving daughter and sister and a respected and dedicated dentist looking to further her career. Her life—like all domestic homicide victims—was taken violently by someone who professed to love her.

It has been reported that, although their relationship did not involve physical violence, Dr Reddy's family believe her partner was possessive of her during their relationship and that his behaviour escalated after she ended it. In an interview in September 2019 with *The Sydney Morning Herald* Dr Reddy's sister, Nithya, said:

There had never been any hint of physical violence in their relationship. I'd never been worried about my sister's safety, physically ... but non-physical coercive control is just as dangerous.

As the findings of the NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team and research by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety and other academics demonstrate, the presence of coercive control is a common precursor to domestic violence homicide. I acknowledge the impact of domestic violence on all other members of a family and the community who experience it or are affected by it. The Government is firmly committed to improving outcomes for victims and holding perpetrators to account for their actions.

Last October I released a discussion paper and the Government moved for Parliament to establish a joint select committee for further inquiry and report on coercive control in domestic relationships. The Government has undertaken significant and detailed initial thinking in developing the paper. It provides a robust framework

for public consultation but is by no means intended to limit the ambit of the committee's deliberations. The committee has been asked to answer questions posed in the discussion paper and to make recommendations to the Government. The joint select committee is ably chaired by the Hon. Natalie Ward, MLC, my Parliamentary Secretary in the other place. The shadow Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the member for Blue Mountains, is the deputy chair. Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC, and the Hon. Rod Roberts, MLC, complete the representation from the other place. The member for Albury, the member for Cootamundra, the member for Camden and the member for Shellharbour, who has introduced this bill, are also members of the committee.

The committee clearly has broad representation and that is consistent with my wish to work with everyone in this Parliament in a bipartisan way to achieve the right outcome. The committee called for submissions from stakeholders and community members, and submissions closed on 29 January. A hearing is scheduled for 22 February and the committee is due to report by the end of June. I am grateful to the committee for its hard work, careful consideration and what I anticipate will be robust debate, and I look forward to receiving and reviewing its recommendations on this important issue. The work of the committee, including significant community and stakeholder consultation, is critical when we are considering law reform of this magnitude.

I now turn to the private member's bill. I acknowledge the shared commitment of my parliamentary colleagues in making domestic and family violence a priority, but the Government cannot support the bill as drafted. I described earlier the characteristics of coercive control. It contrasts with our conventional understanding of domestic violence, which we usually regard as a single physical incident, even if there are repeated acts of violence and assault within the relationship. Some will try to rationalise the use of violence if we consider it as a one-off, single event; we find a reason for it—we hear about an argument, we refer to stress, we find drunkenness. A single act or incident might in some cases be easier for some people to try to rationalise than the endurance required for substantial ongoing abuse. According to some, those single incidents are more easily investigated and prosecuted. Equally, criminal offences ordinarily address particularly instances of offending conduct or individual acts.

There are limited instances where the criminal law looks to protracted and cumulative behaviour, the impact of which is experienced incrementally and over time. The challenges in defining and identifying coercive control should not be taken as a sign that it is not critically important to respond. The evidence is clear: Coercive control is a significant predictor of intimate partner homicide. The 2017-2019 Domestic Violence Death Review Team report highlighted that in 99 per cent of intimate partner domestic homicides that occurred in New South Wales between March 2008 and June 2016 the relationship was characterised by the perpetrator's use of control and coercion over the victim.

It is widely understood that intimate partner violence does not always involve physical violence but, given the persistent rates of domestic homicide, it is not clear that the criminal law is as effective as it could be in dealing with psychological abuse and, with it, coercive and controlling behaviour. But law reform must be approached carefully. We need to take into account academic research as well as the experiences of other jurisdictions that have implemented coercive control in their criminal law. Like any important law reform, consultation with peak stakeholders across the specialist domestic violence organisations, victim-survivors, legal practitioners, the police and other frontline responders and the community at large is crucial.

The bill, while well intentioned, at this stage does not reflect the level of analysis and consultation required. For example, it departs in significant respects from the approach taken in other jurisdictions, including the so-called gold standard of Scotland. The ultimate effect is that on its face the proposed offence is extremely broad and potentially captures a wide range of behaviour that falls outside the meaning of control and, subject to the further deliberations of the joint select committee, should not be the subject of a criminal offence. So there is a risk that the offence will not be able to be readily operationalised and would be underutilised by the police and the courts. I note some scepticism about criminalisation of coercive control that was expressed in the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2010 report *Family Violence - A National Legal Response*; the Queensland Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland 2015 report *Not Now, Not Ever; Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*; and the 2016 Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

None of that is to say we should not criminalise coercive control. If I had formed that view, I would not have been pushing for a discussion paper and a joint select committee. But it does identify the need to prepare and proceed carefully, cautiously and methodically. The risks with this private member's bill that may lead to excessive criminalisation include the breadth of the relationships to which it applies; the inclusion of single instances of conduct, rather than a course of conduct; in some respects the lack of an objective community standard of behaviour; the effective reversal of the onus of proof; the absence of a mental element; and the severity of the penalties. I will address each of those in turn.

First, I address the breadth of relationships covered by the bill. The basis of the concept of coercive control, as initially developed by Evan Stark in 2007 and expanded on by academics and experts since, highlights coercive control as a phenomenon occurring primarily in intimate partner relationships. For this reason, other jurisdictions have confined the offence of coercive control to intimate partner relationships—spouses, partners or ex-partners. In England and Wales it is intimate personal relationships, or where people live together and are members of the same family, or live together and were previously in intimate personal relationships. That is broader than in some other jurisdictions but, importantly, expressly it does not apply to parents against children. In Scotland it is partners or ex-partners living together or in an intimate personal relationship.

In Tasmania, which is the only Australian jurisdiction that, on one view, might criminalise coercive control to some extent—but it has been a relatively sparsely utilised offence there—it is spouses or partners. In Northern Ireland, where the legislation has passed Parliament but has not yet commenced, it applies to married people, civil partners living together or who have lived together or are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship, or members of the same family—widely defined—but with an express exception for parental responsibility for under 16-year-olds. In the Republic of Ireland it is a spouse or civil partner who is or was in an intimate relationship. This private member's bill casts a much wider net. By adopting the existing definition of "domestic relationships" in section 5 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, the private member's bill captures a very wide category of relationships.

In addition to spouses and partners, this includes people who live or have previously lived in the same household, regardless of their relationship with each other; people who live or have previously lived in the same long-term residential facilities, again regardless of their relationship with each other; paid or unpaid carers; relatives, including parents and their children; and in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, any member of their extended family or kinship group. The definition of "domestic relationship" also captures people who have had intimate relationships with the same person. That means that a person's new partner and their former partner—or even two former partners of the same person—would be defined as having a domestic relationship with each other, even if they had never met. This range of relationships is a departure from the primary bodies of research into coercive control and from the approach taken in other jurisdictions.

The definition of the relationship to be included in any offence requires exploration. In particular, we need to carefully consider any risk of unintentionally criminalising behaviour in relationships that are peripheral to the intention of the legislation. That is why we have a committee process, and that is why I want the committee to look into and report on the scope of the relationships that could be caught. The bulk of analysis of coercive control is in the context of intimate partner or ex-partner relationships. To go beyond that context, we need clear reasons. That is why there is a committee process, which this bill pre-empts.

A second issue arising with the expansive nature of the bill is that it refers to "conduct", rather than a course of conduct. Other jurisdictions have ensured their legislation captures a course of conduct or behaviour that is repeated, continuous or persistent. In the Republic of Ireland it is "persistently engages in behaviour"; in Northern Ireland, "a course of behaviour"; in England and Wales, "continuously engaging"; in Scotland, "a course of behaviour"; and in Tasmania, "a course of conduct". That approach taken by other jurisdictions more appropriately aligns with the conceptual framework of coercive control.

The very nature of coercive control requires an approach that is different from the traditional incident-based perspective, instead looking to the accumulation and pattern of abuse occurring over time. In contrast, the bill's reference to "conduct" would capture single incidents of behaviour. This risks criminalising individual acts without regard for the context within which they occur, including whether they form a pattern of abusive and harmful behaviour. This fails to properly address coercive control, which is the stated purpose of the new offence. It is important that any new offence captures the full experience of behaviours that in the appropriate context amounts to coercive control.

The third issue is the question of an objective standard of behaviour. The bill has defined "coercive control" as behaviour that has or is likely to have one of a defined list of effects on the victim. It is not necessary under this definition that the behaviour has the specified effect, as long as it is reasonably likely to have that effect. The range of behaviours described in the bill is broad and encompasses a variety of negative impacts on a person. Some of these behaviours are already captured by existing criminal law, such as depriving a person of their freedom of action or frightening or threatening a person. It is not necessarily problematic on its own that the conduct defined in the bill is so broad. It is certainly important that any definition of "coercive control" is wide enough to capture the insidious nature of what it involves.

That is the approach in other jurisdictions. But the approach here departs from the approach of other jurisdictions insofar as there is a relative lack of an objective standard. In the Republic of Ireland the offence requires that a reasonable person would consider the conduct to be likely to have a serious effect on a relevant person. In Scotland it is that a reasonable person would consider the course of behaviour to be likely to cause the

victim to suffer physical or psychological harm. In Northern Ireland it is that a reasonable person would consider the course of behaviour likely to cause the victim to suffer physical or psychological harm. In Tasmania it is that the accused knows or ought to know that the behaviour is likely to have the effect of unreasonably controlling or intimidating. Because of the complex and nuanced nature of coercive control, there is a risk that seemingly innocent behaviour may be defined as an offence. There is a significant risk of criminalising what might be regarded as normal or innocent conduct.

This is problematic when you come to the fourth issue, which is the reversal of the onus of proof on the defendant. It could be argued that, even without a direct requirement for behaviour to be unreasonable, the bill is okay because there is a statutory defence of reasonableness. While on face value this might seem to achieve the same outcome, it may not be the case when applied in practice. The effect of this defence is that a person will not be guilty of an offence if they can prove to the court on the balance of probabilities that their conduct was reasonable in the particular circumstances. Scotland, England and Wales have included similar statutory defences, but each of those jurisdictions has only imposed an evidentiary burden. This means an accused person is only required to adduce evidence to the court that raises the possibility that their conduct was reasonable.

The prosecution then has the burden of proving that the defence does not apply. In contrast, the bill provides a complete reversal of the onus of proof on the issue of reasonableness. The Crown has no obligation to prove this element; instead, the burden falls entirely on the accused person to disprove it. This is inconsistent with the fundamental principle of criminal law that, except where expressly provided otherwise, the prosecution bears the burden of proving all the elements of an offence. While a reversal like this might be appropriate in some circumstances, it is particularly problematic in the context of other shortcomings of the bill, in particular, the fifth issue: the absence of a mental element for the proposed offence. Traditionally, the criminal law—and we are talking about criminal law, not just social policy—only punishes conduct that a person knows will cause harm or intends to cause harm, or that they foresee or ought to have foreseen will cause harm.

There are elements of intention and recklessness that are found across the breadth of the criminal law. It is also the approach that other jurisdictions have taken in criminalising coercive control. In Tasmania the accused has to know or ought to have known the behaviour is likely to have the requisite effect. In Scotland the accused has to have intended to cause or is reckless to causing physical or psychological harm. Certainly there is a reasonableness test—a requirement that a reasonable person would consider that the behaviour would cause harm—but there is still a mental element of intention or recklessness. In England and Wales the accused has to know or ought to have known the behaviour will have the requisite serious effect. In Ireland the conduct has to be done knowingly: direct knowledge only. But in the case of the private member's bill, it is strict liability. The prosecution would not need to prove any mental element: intention, recklessness, knowledge, constructive knowledge, criminal negligence or whatever.

Ordinarily, strict liability only applies to minor or regulatory offences like traffic offences. For an offence of this seriousness to be treated as a strict liability offence requires very close consideration. That is why we have the committee process. The lack of a mental element in the bill means that a person engaging in a single instance of behaviour, without intending or being reckless towards causing any sort of harm, or having knowledge or constructive knowledge, may be guilty of a serious criminal offence. Finally, it is worth noting the severity of punishments under the private member's bill. With the exception of Scotland, each of the other jurisdictions that have criminalised coercive control have imposed maximum penalties of no more than five years' imprisonment. This bill carries a maximum penalty for the aggravated form of the offence of 10 years' imprisonment. That is a higher maximum penalty than, for example, a serious assault resulting in actual bodily harm, or even a reckless act that results in grievous bodily harm.

While it is important that any new offence should impose penalties that reflect the devastating impact of domestic violence, it is still important that proper consideration be given to the location of the offence on the scale of penalties under the criminal law. It would be particularly unusual for a strict liability offence to carry a maximum penalty in this range. This highlights a number of issues that the bill raises that can only be resolved by careful consideration and consultation. I give an example of the possible consequences of the proposed offence under the bill to highlight these issues. Under the proposed offence, a single act of a parent directed to their own school-age child could be a criminal offence if it has the effect of controlling, regulating or monitoring their child's day-to-day activities. A parent who directs a child where they can or cannot go after school may be committing a criminal offence under the bill.

I know that one or more members of the Opposition will say that is not right because there is the statutory defence of reasonableness. The problem is that a single instance of parental control may not be cruel, harsh or oppressive and it may not involve any physical conduct whatsoever, but if a court considers that it is unreasonable then it is potentially caught by this legislation. I would be amazed if that is the intention of the member for Shellharbour. She is shaking her head, so of course that is not her intention but that is the potential problem with

this drafting. A statutory defence of reasonableness is too shaky a ground to wave this legislation through and it highlights how important this drafting is. If we do criminalise coercive control I do not want to give a free kick to culture warriors elsewhere who want to turn a blind eye to behaviour that is gross, appalling or unacceptable or that is way beyond the norm by including trivial matters that deflect our attention from the real vice we want to address.

That is why we need legislation that is workable and why we have a committee process to look at all these issues carefully—not only what the member for Shellharbour or the member for Blue Mountains thinks or what I think, but also what victim-survivors, frontline services and the police tell us they can and cannot do. We are committed to taking a careful and considered approach to law reform in this area, informed by robust research and extensive consultation. I want to make sure that the joint select committee established last year by the Parliament will pursue reform holistically and genuinely consult and get expert input from all stakeholders. This is a very important potential reform and it is one that I encourage the joint select committee to explore vigorously, in particular to explore the experience in England, Wales and Scotland to see what lessons can be learned from there. I had a number of discussions with prosecutors and others in England and Scotland to understand their experiences and insights, and I encourage the committee to do that.

Why do we need to look at other jurisdictions? For example, it has been suggested that following the introduction of coercive control laws in England and Wales police lacked an understanding of coercive control. They maintained a focus on physical violence consistent with current incident-based and practised responses to domestic violence rather than taking into account the broader cumulative existence of behaviours within that relationship and the gathering of evidence accordingly. I am not saying that is right or wrong, but that is what the committee should be looking at hearing to see what, if any, lessons can be learned. In contrast, I am told that Scotland consulted widely and took a multi-tiered approach to the introduction of its offence. Training frontline police officers and other relevant staff, undertaken in partnership with domestic violence specialists, supported the introduction of the offence.

A criminal offence may not be the only, or the most appropriate, means of reform. Other opportunities may exist to improve our response. As recommended by the Domestic Violence Death Review Team 2017-2019 report, the Department of Communities and Justice has been examining how existing New South Wales laws respond to non-physical forms of violence and patterns of violence. For example, under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 there are criminal offences for stalking or intimidation with an intention to cause fear of physical or mental harm. Importantly, with this offence the court may have regard to any pattern of violence, especially violence that constitutes a domestic violence offence, in determining whether conduct is stalking or intimidation. In effect, this offence goes some way to prohibit some elements of coercive control.

For example, an individual act that, when looked at in isolation, appears innocuous—or at least not serious enough to reach the threshold of criminality—may constitute an offence of stalking when it forms part of a broader pattern of threatening behaviour towards the victim. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is conducting a review of court and police data to better understand how existing stalking and intimidation offences are currently applied. This research will inform our progress on this issue. Our regime of apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs] also plays a role in responding to coercive control. A protection order aims to protect a person from further or future harm. All ADVOs prohibit stalking, harassment and intimidation, which may address some instances of coercive control.

Additionally, a court may specify further conditions in an apprehended domestic violence order as necessary or desirable to protect the victim, including children. This means that behaviours deemed to be coercive and/or controlling could be managed through conditions within a protection order. Breaching a condition is a criminal offence. I anticipate that the committee will consider a broad range of other potential avenues of reform in addition to the consideration of a specific criminal offence. This could include, for example, reviewing evidence or sentencing procedures. This range of legislative reforms speaks to the need to take a nuanced, detailed and systemic level consideration of the full experience of domestic violence, including physical and non-physical forms of abuse and how the justice system can best respond.

This is why the work of the committee is an important undertaking before proceeding to any law reform. I strongly encourage domestic and family violence experts, legal practitioners, frontline responders, academics, victim-survivors and members of the community generally to continue to engage with that joint select committee. Their input will be key to shaping reform opportunities. Coercive control is complex and challenges many pre-existing beliefs and attitudes, such as the view that domestic and family violence only consists of physical violence. It will be essential to identify opportunities to raise awareness and understanding about the nature and meaning of coercive or controlling behaviour as domestic violence. This is not just about the criminal law; it includes other forms of education and awareness raising about healthy relationships to improve interventions.

The release of the Government's discussion paper reflects the deep and lengthy consideration we have already given to coercive control in our consideration of better approaches to domestic violence reform. We are committed to a process of exploration, consideration and consultation through the joint select committee to hear from a broad range of stakeholders to shape how our criminal justice system responds to domestic and family violence. The committee will hear the views of victims and those who work in this field to understand how to offer the best possible protection against domestic abuse. Changing the law can only ever be one part of an overall strategy to end domestic abuse. I again thank the victim-survivors who have so willingly and bravely shared their stories with me. I acknowledge the suffering of families and friends of the victims of domestic homicide, which the members of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team have considered with great seriousness and empathy, and which has informed our approach.

I truly hope that we can progress a multi-partisan approach to the next stages of reform in responding to the scourge of domestic violence. There is no doubt that the bill is well intentioned. I do not for a second doubt the passion, dedication and determination of the member for Shellharbour. But what worries me is that a kitchen-sink approach may make perfection the enemy of the good. Trying to give the bill the widest possible ambit in terms of the relationship court, the absence of a mental element, the severity of the penalties and the breadth of conduct that is caught—including single instances—is potentially counterproductive in two ways: It criminalises behaviour that none of us wish to see criminalised and it gives a free kick to those who will pick apart legislation, find the loopholes, exaggerate and sensationalise extreme examples and use that in some sort of culture war to stymie our war against domestic and family violence. I do not want to see that.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:26): In June 2020 I joined my parliamentary colleagues in supporting a motion introduced by Ms Anna Watson, MP, the member for Shellharbour and New South Wales Opposition Whip, calling for coercive control to be criminalised in the State of New South Wales. Today I once again speak in support of that motion and of the amendment being proposed under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive Control—Preethi's Law) Bill 2020. The legislation intends to create an offence of engaging in conduct that constitutes coercive control in a domestic relationship. I support the proposed amendment under schedule 1. It recommends the establishment of four new sections under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal) Violence Act 2007, which criminalises coercive conduct. I urge the New South Wales Government to support and pass the bill.

Over the past two decades, New South Wales criminal law has come a long way in condemning domestic violence, punishing offenders and appropriately protecting victims. As a society, we finally understand the true weight of domestic violence and its negative impact on victims and survivors. It is not merely physical abuse but includes emotional, sexual, psychological and financial abuse. However, current New South Wales law fails to criminalise one of the worst forms of domestic violence: coercive control. Often referred to as "intimate terrorism", coercive control covers a broad range of conduct that creates a pattern of abusive behaviour within a relationship. Clause 14A (2) of the proposed amendment defines coercive control as:

- (a) making the other person dependent on, or subordinate to, the person,
- (b) isolating the other person from friends, relatives or other sources of support,
- (c) controlling, regulating or monitoring the other person's day-to-day activities,
- (d) depriving the other person of, or restricting the other person's, freedom of action,
- (e) depriving the other person of, or restricting the other person's, access to support services, including the services of health practitioners and legal practitioners,
- (f) frightening, humiliating, degrading or punishing the other person. Professor Evan Stark, a sociologist and forensic social worker from the University of Wisconsin who developed the concept of coercive control and first used the term, defined it as a "pattern of domination that includes tactics to isolate, degrade, exploit and control". Professor Stark goes on to include in his definition, "to frighten them or hurt them physically". Behaviours can range from an individual deleting contacts from their partner's phone, using tracking devices to monitor a partner's location and movements, and threatening to harm children, relatives and pets. Research undertaken by Professor Stark highlights that 60 per cent to 80 per cent of women who seek assistance and support as a result of domestic violence have experienced coercive control. Further, Professor Stark's review of domestic violence related homicides in New South Wales found that in 99 per cent of cases the relationship involved domestic violence that can be categorised as "coercive control".

The COVID-19 global pandemic presents enormous challenges for victims of domestic violence. The Australian Institute of Criminology has noted that the need for assistance during the pandemic has increased dramatically. Hayley Boxall, Research Manager with the Women and Children Research Program, Australian Institute of Criminology, provided key findings on the prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. From an online survey of 15,000 women in Australia, it was found that 4.6 per cent of women experienced physical or sexual violence, 6 per cent of women experienced coercive control and almost 12 per cent experienced at least one form of emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour. Those numbers are highly concerning and demonstrate the necessity for legislation that criminalises coercive control.

Last month I had the opportunity to visit the Zen Tea Lounge in the electorate of Prospect. The Zen Tea Lounge assists women in the community suffering from domestic violence and to date has assisted 18,000 survivors from western Sydney, mostly women from multicultural backgrounds. Amy Nguyen, Director of the Zen Tea Lounge, and her team support women who are dealing with the effects of coercive control. In fact, Ms Nguyen stated to me that every case of domestic violence she has encountered involves some form of coercive control. The Zen Tea Lounge intends to build the skills of domestic violence survivors and assist them in obtaining training, employment, financial independence and personal freedom. The Zen Tea Lounge provides victims of domestic violence with a support group, ensuring women do not feel hopeless or unworthy. This enterprise is an inspiration for all of us to do more to assist those members of our community who are suffering.

Today this Parliament finally has the opportunity to step up to the challenge and assist domestic violence survivors, current victims, and organisations and enterprises working to assist and support victim and survivors of domestic violence, such as those at the Zen Tea Lounge, and make a positive difference to our communities. It is time the New South Wales Government supports vulnerable women in abusive relationships and takes action which criminalises coercive control. To date, Tasmania is the only State in the country that has appropriately advanced provisions criminalising coercive control. However, other State jurisdictions have considered or are considering similar provisions. This is due to the belief that law enforcement lacks the ability to identify and punish instances of coercive control. Further, just as stalking—which was criminalised under section 13 of the Crimes (Domestic Violence and Personal Violence) Act 2007—is difficult to prove, it does not mean this issue should not be dealt with and criminalised.

Rather than simply objecting to this legislation, the Government can deal with the issue by providing the resources and training the NSW Police Force needs so our law enforcement officers can recognise coercive control in abusive relationships and act accordingly. Training should also be provided to the staff of the Director of Public Prosecutions and healthcare professionals in public hospitals so that they can better understand and identify coercive control. It is time for New South Wales to join Tasmania and make coercive control and controlling behaviours illegal. It is time for New South Wales to join common and civil law jurisdictions such as England and Wales, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland, which criminalised coercive control in 2015 and 2019 respectively. As a Parliament, it is our duty to stand with victims of domestic violence and protect the most vulnerable members of our society.

Existing criminal laws in New South Wales are robust and stern and demonstrate a zero-tolerance approach to domestic violence. However, the four amendments proposed to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act will ensure that vulnerable women in abusive relationships throughout the State are protected further. By criminalising coercive control in New South Wales, this Parliament can ensure that we legislate the leading domestic violence laws in the country. [*Extension of time*]

The Attorney General spoke well on this issue. However, the issues and concerns that he has raised regarding this bill can be addressed through negotiation, discussion and amendments in the House. It is as simple as that. Both sides of this Parliament know and understand how important this issue is. Let us not delay by waiting further for a joint committee in the upper House or by playing partisan politics. The legislation needs to go ahead. We must not delay further. I ask the Government to step up and have discussions with the Opposition so that this bill can pass this House with amendments and become law. I urge every member of the House to support the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive Control—Preethi's Law) Bill 2020. I commend the bill to the House. I congratulate the member for Shellharbour on introducing this bill. I thank her on behalf of all members for her tireless work in this area of domestic violence.

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (11:37): The concept of coercive control is an extremely complex issue that has significant legal and practical difficulties. It is imperative that the complexities and nuances associated with coercive control are considered carefully to avoid unintended consequences. We need to ensure that if any reform is made, the law works fairly for alleged victim-survivors and alleged perpetrators. Over the past 10 to 15 years there has been a significant focus on better understanding the dynamics of domestic and family violence. This focus has been an attempt, in part, to address the horrific and stubborn statistics associated with domestic violence perpetration. Notably, the fact that in our country on average one woman a week is murdered at the hands of her partner or former partner is clearly tragic and completely unacceptable.

In response, England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland, in particular, have recently introduced specific offences for coercive control to punish alleged patterns of abuse that, at their worst, could lead to homicide. In 2004 Tasmania criminalised economic and emotional abuse, both of which are commonly used as tactics to coerce and control. But that is the only jurisdiction to criminalise this kind of alleged conduct. New South Wales is one of the most multicultural jurisdictions in the world. The ability of law in practice to take into account all the subtle cultural differences in domestic relationships is highly questionable. The potential for laws of this kind to be wrongly used in the highly emotional circumstance of relationship breakdowns is obvious. False allegations in

the area of family law have been a concern of the courts for some time and have caused the need for process to be developed to ensure fairness to all concerned. Laws are an important signal to the community about acceptable standards of behaviour, however they must play more than a symbolic role to achieve their objective. Care must be taken to ensure there are no unintended consequences.

The bill seeks to introduce a new offence of coercive control. The offence as drafted raises a number of risks and issues that, if passed, would have significant negative implications. The proposed offences would apply to an extremely broad set of relationships. In New South Wales a domestic relationship includes spouses, de facto and other intimate partners. Most other jurisdictions have adopted offences that are limited to intimate partner relationships. The use of the existing New South Wales definition of a domestic relationship will mean it applies to other domestic relationships such as other family members, non-relatives living in the same household and the new partners of a person's former partner even when they have never met one another. On this point I also add that many multicultural families and Indigenous families live in multigenerational domestic environments.

The proposed offence describes a range of conduct, and whether it is abusive is likely to depend on the context of the situation, making its interpretation subjective. There is no requirement that it be unreasonable or contrary to community standards, raising a risk that it may criminalise behaviours that may be trivial or harmless. In addition, the proposed offence focuses on conduct that could potentially be interpreted as a single incident, making it no different from the current approach. There is a significant departure from action taken in other jurisdictions that refers to a course of conduct or pattern of coercive and controlling behaviours. The drafting of the proposed offence does not seek to take into account a person's state of mind or intent, making them offences of strict liability. That would mean an individual would be guilty of committing an offence if they had engaged in conduct that fell within the scope of the offence regardless of their intention. It would also be up to the accused to prove that their actions were otherwise reasonable in the circumstances.

That reverses the onus of proof on an accused, which is a departure from general criminal law principles and is a higher bar than other jurisdictions have sought to impose. That is of particular concern when an individual charged with an offence of alleged coercive control in a domestic arrangement pits that person against the full legal powers and police resources of the New South Wales Government. The penalties attached to the proposed offences are also more severe than in other jurisdictions, with the exception of Scotland. The risks and issues raised by the bill mean it is not possible to remedy them. It is vital that careful consideration be given to law reform to ensure it is balanced and appropriate. The joint select committee established to inquire into coercive control provides a forum for genuine consultation with domestic and family violence specialists, frontline service providers and victim-survivors, legal practitioners, academics and members of the community on this critical issue. We should therefore await the considered report and recommendations of that committee before proceeding to legislative reform.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:42): Domestic violence, as many know but many more do not know, is rarely a one-off event. Domestic violence or abuse offences take many shapes and forms. What they have in common is the intention of perpetrators to control and assert power over their victims. As has been stated many times—but is important to repeat—domestic violence usually forms a pattern of behaviour that may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, spiritual, social, financial and material abuse. Some of those behaviours, such as physical abuse, are visible and are easily and clearly identified as abuse. However, there is a range of behaviours that is more subtle and less visible to the victim, her friends and family. These include emotional and verbal abuse, intimidation and other controlling behaviours. In spite of the backlash against a feminist view of domestic violence, abuse is a gendered crime that must be seen through a gendered lens.

The Public Health Association of Australia identifies domestic and family violence as an important public health issue requiring a comprehensive range of public health responses if we are to reduce and eliminate violence. Overwhelmingly, the association says that domestic and family violence is perpetrated by men against women and children. Factors that contribute to violence against women at a social and structural level include broader cultures of violence, including attitudinal support for violence against women. The determinants of domestic and family violence include inequitable power relationships between women and men and adherence to harmful gender stereotypes. What is clear is that domestic and family violence is dangerous and places the lives of women and children at risk. Women and children are at greater risk of harm in their homes, and coercive control is a key behaviour and the most common risk factor.

Again for the record—although it has been repeated many times before in this place—according to the NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team [DVRT] report 2015-2017, 77 out of 78 domestic homicides were characterised by the abuser's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim. We cannot stress that enough. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has undertaken extensive research on domestic and family violence. Its 2017 report identified domestic violence as the leading cause of hospitalisation following physical assault among women and girls. It is a national crime. Nearly 6,500 women and girls in Australia were

hospitalised due to assault, with the violence usually perpetrated by a partner or spouse. The data shows that over half of hospitalised assaults against women and girls were perpetrated by spouses or domestic partners, with injuries to the head most common.

When place of occurrence was specified, 69 per cent of assaults against women and girls took place in the home. The 2017-2019 report of the DVDRT identified that a number of its cases were not preceded by an evident history of physical abuse; instead, homicides were preceded by histories of other forms of coercive and controlling behaviour. Victims did not always identify that what they were experiencing was domestic violence or abuse, instead believing their experiences were part of ordinary relationship dynamics. In many cases, the relationship between the perpetrator and victim appeared to be normal from the outside—for instance, to friends and relatives—despite perpetrators using a range of controlling but not physically abusive behaviours against the victim prior to the fatal episode. This appeared to be particularly prevalent in cases involving a murder-suicide.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research also found that emotional abuse is correlated with the future likelihood of physical violence and recommended that this be considered in risk assessment tools as a way of better triaging domestic and family violence matters, and understanding risk. The evidence for the need to expand legislation to include coercive control is overwhelming and this change is long overdue. Between 2000 and 2019, 272 women, 155 men and 103 children lost their lives to domestic violence. I acknowledge the work of the NSW State Coroner and convenor, Magistrate Teresa O'Sullivan, and the NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team, who have reviewed these horror cases and recorded their findings. I will refer to some of the cases, because we can talk about statistics and about need but it is not until we place the very personal story of a family at the centre of the need for legislation that people seem to sit up and listen.

Case Review 3333 concerned the homicide of Felicity, aged in her 30s, by her former boyfriend Jordan, aged in his 40s, at her home in metropolitan New South Wales. Felicity ended the relationship two months prior to the homicide, and there was no known history of physical violence. Jordan began stalking and threatening Felicity as soon as she ended the relationship. He followed her interstate and to a work conference. Felicity reported Jordan's behaviour to police, but they did not take any action. They could not take action because it was not criminal behaviour. A week later Jordan killed Felicity after following her home from an exercise class. He fatally stabbed her.

Case Review 3743 involved the murder of Sofia, aged in her 50s, by her former boyfriend George, aged in his 60s, at his residence in regional New South Wales. Sofia and George were in a relationship for three years. There was no known history of physical violence prior to the homicide. He owned firearms, though, and had a firearms licence despite a history of mental health issues. George was very controlling of Sofia. He called her constantly, demanding to know her whereabouts. He isolated her from her friends and spread false rumours about her to people in the town. Sofia disclosed to friends that she was very concerned about George having access to firearms. In the weeks prior to the murder Sofia decided to end her relationship with George. In response, George told Sofia he could not live without her and attempted suicide. Shortly afterwards Sofia agreed to see George at his house. She had no plans to reconcile with him and was about to embark on a long holiday overseas. She felt sorry for him. When Sofia attempted to leave George's residence, he shot her in the back and killed her. [*Extension of time*]

Recently in the House I acknowledged the murder of nurse Gihan "Gigi" Kerollos, a loving mother of three whose life was brutally cut short when she was murdered by her husband as she was leaving work in 2019. Clearly, Gigi was a victim of coercive, controlling behaviours. She deserved to be safe. However, on that particular night the system and the law failed her. I pay tribute to Gigi's children and family whose lives will never be the same. In particular, I thank her son, Paul Kerollos, and her good friend Jackie Crombie who have met me in this Parliament to discuss coercive control. We agreed to honour and remember Gigi, so today I speak her name.

I pay tribute to the workers and advocates in the domestic and family violence sector. The Women's Legal Service NSW, Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia, Domestic Violence NSW and Women's Safety NSW, Women's Electoral Lobby and the Australian Services Union, all of whom have undertaken reviews of current legislation—or the lack thereof—and proposed reforms. Others, such as Women's Health NSW, have participated in consultation discussions. They hold a variety of positions on the need for coercive control legislation. However, they are very clear on the need for a new approach that recognises the many facets and characteristics of domestic violence, and the need to ensure the safety of women and children.

Over recent years many have reached out to support coercive control legislation as an important first step in acknowledging the need for recognition of the harms of coercive control and its links with escalating domestic violence and homicides. Recent research by Women's Safety NSW quantified women's experience of coercive control: 100 per cent of survivors experienced emotional and psychological abuse, and 86 per cent experienced financial abuse. The research confirmed that non-physical forms of domestic violence can be just as detrimental as physical violence and will often entrench offenders' control over victim-survivors.

Conversations with the sector have deliberated on the best way forward. Liz Snell from the Women's Legal Service NSW comes back to the need to focus on patterns of violence, including non-physical violence. An incident in isolation may seem insignificant, but its significance emerges when viewed in the context of a pattern of ongoing violence. A focus on context and identifying the person most in need of protection are key to ensuring the primary or predominant victim is not misidentified as the primary or predominant aggressor. A significant education campaign and training strategy needs to be rolled out alongside legal reforms. This includes information and awareness raising in the wider community about the harm caused by coercive control, the legal reforms, and what that means to women and children and their families. Training will be needed for the domestic violence, health, women's health, education and other sectors.

There will need to be reviews of the many policies, protocols and tools currently in operation to reflect this change. Police and the judiciary, who are at the front line of responses to domestic violence, will need particular training. I acknowledge the work undertaken by my colleague the member for Shellharbour, and I thank her for bringing this private member's bill to the House and for recognising Preethi Reddy and her family. I thank my colleague Paul Lynch, the member for Liverpool and shadow Attorney General, for his gentleness, intellect, work, collegiality and wisdom. Across the Chamber, I recognise the efforts of the Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence for recognising the critical need to do something about this scourge on society. We have dragged him to the table, figuratively speaking, to discuss criminalising coercive control—but here we are. The comprehensive work of the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control is important. I appreciate the Minister's establishment of that committee, which includes members from across the political spectrum.

I acknowledge the work on this issue in the other place by the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. Adam Searle, the Hon. Rose Jackson, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Natalie Ward and the Hon. Emma Hurst, particularly. I honour the brave efforts of those who have come before us—those women who have worked bravely in a less than progressive place but who have nonetheless walked the tough journey of reform. I name just a few of them: former MLCs Helen Westwood, Meredith Burgmann and the late Ann Symonds; former MPs Barbara Perry, Kristina Keneally and Carmel Tebbutt; and my colleague, dear friend and powerhouse in the Federal space Tanya Plibersek. I thank the brilliant former Prime Minister Julia Gillard for her bravery. I also acknowledge and respect Linda Burney, Jenny McAllister, Dr Anne Aly and the late fabulous Susan Ryan. To all the children who are victim-survivors of horrors—like I was—we hear your voices and see your pain. We are changing the world—slowly, but we are making change for the next generations. Here's to reform!

Labor supports legislation to criminalise coercive control. As shadow Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I am proud to speak to my colleague's bill. I finish by noting an Instagram post that went up just over a year ago. A very strong and courageous Hannah Clarke was finally finding her feet after leaving her husband. She wrote:

I am a Strong Woman, I don't sit around feeling sorry for myself nor will I ever let anyone mistreat me again. I don't respond to people who dictate to me or try to bring me down. I am a survivor not a victim. I am in control of my life and there is nothing I can't achieve. My girls will grow up being strong women who understand their worth.

But they did not have that chance. That is why we have brought this bill to the House. Here's to reform! I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (11:58): On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive Control—Preethi's Law) Bill 2020. I thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing this incredibly important issue to the House today. We have previously debated a motion brought by the member for Shellharbour along similar lines and, as we consider this bill, we recognise the importance and the significance of what is before us. The Greens absolutely support reform to criminalise coercive control behaviour in New South Wales and absolutely welcome the support of the Opposition and the Government. We agree that urgent reform is needed, but The Greens can only support the bill on the basis of recognising that significant amendments will be required to achieve its aim. We certainly appreciate the intentions of the member for Shellharbour, but the complexities of the issue mean that much more needs to be done to ensure the bill delivers what is needed.

Obviously The Greens will offer in-principle support to this bill in this place. Were it to pass this Chamber, we would work collaboratively and constructively to move a significant number of amendments based on expert and stakeholder views in the other place to ensure this legislation truly does achieve the goal of effectively criminalising coercive control in a manner that is supported by evidence, experts and key stakeholders, and delivers on the needs of victim-survivors. I give the Attorney General credit for the detail and specific nature with which he has engaged with the content of this private member's bill and his response, which shows his commitment and respect to the significance of this issue. Given the concerns he raised and outlined, it is clear that it is unlikely we will see the passage of this bill today. But, having said that, I can absolutely give The Greens' support in this Chamber to whatever form we end up seeing of the criminalisation of coercive control in New South Wales.

I know my colleague the Hon. Abigail Boyd in the other place gives her commitment to work constructively to make sure that stakeholders are consulted, listened to and engaged with. Due to the sheer limits of time I will not go through in detail all the suggestions and amendments that we would bring were we to get to the other place. We would hope to be in that situation but, given the Attorney General's comments earlier, it is unlikely so I will not go into detail on those amendments here.

I note that my colleague in the other place and The Greens spokesperson for domestic violence, Abigail Boyd, also has a bill to criminalise coercive control. That bill was the product of wide and extensive consultation over the course of a year or more. It has strong support from key stakeholders, experts and victim-survivors. I urge members in this place to take a close look at that bill, because it is the model of best practice in terms of coercive control legislation. We need that type of legislation to properly address this issue in New South Wales. The members in this place, and indeed the Attorney General, have made it very clear in recent months that domestic violence and abuse, such as coercive control, cannot be tolerated. Recently some important reforms have been achieved together across party lines.

It was extremely powerful to hear the Attorney General just moments ago, as the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, acknowledge that reform in this area of law is required. Hearing someone in his position acknowledge in this place that we need to address this issue is something. It is very rare that a member of the Liberal-Nationals Government sends shivers down my spine and makes me feel proud to be a member of this place, but I was watching the proceedings from my office and felt genuinely proud. I think all of us would have stories and know of incidents where this has occurred and felt hopeless in situations where we could do nothing about it. The acknowledgement from the Attorney General of New South Wales that this issue needs to be dealt with, the establishment of the joint select committee, and the recognition of the need for cross-party support, education and training around this are absolutely important steps forward.

Domestic violence remains far too prevalent in our society. There is still a lot more to be done in this place and in the community to ensure that first responders, courts and social services have the tools they need to properly protect victim-survivors and deal effectively with abusers. Perhaps the most pressing issue in this space is the one that appears before us today: to acknowledge in law that domestic violence can take many forms and that in almost all cases of domestic violence reported in New South Wales coercive or controlling behaviour on the part of the abuser is a key factor. Coercive and controlling behaviour is domestic violence. It is well past time that our laws reflect that. Only then can abusers be properly held to account and victim-survivors receive the support and justice they deserve. Only then can we be in a position to perhaps prevent the inevitable progression into extreme physical violence and, far too often, the murder of women and children across this State.

That is what we are talking about today. In almost all serious domestic violence cases, coercive and controlling behaviour is a prevalent aspect of the relationship long before the situation escalates to unthinkable and horrific violence. Coercive and controlling behaviour is a precursor to almost every domestic homicide in New South Wales and around the world. Currently in New South Wales being physically violent with your partner is illegal, but controlling your partner through fear of this violence is not. Telling your partner who they can or cannot talk to, isolating them from their support networks, denying them access to financial independence, monitoring calls or reading texts—these behaviours are not currently illegal. But we all know they are happening. We all know they are happening every day. I would bet that every member in the Chamber could think of one incident in the past 12 months where they have suspected this kind of behaviour from someone they know, a constituent they have met or potentially someone in their office.

We all know it is happening but that it is not a problem in law; it is clearly a problem in society. Our justice system has no legislated understanding of domestic abuse outside of physical or sexual violence or as a pattern rather than individual instances. But that is what domestic violence is. That is how it exists in our society. Only by recognising that can our laws enable us to appropriately support victim survivors and prevent escalation. The criminalisation of coercive and controlling behaviours in the context of domestic and family abuse will allow the justice system to more appropriately respond to patterns of abusive behaviour, particularly where physical and sexual violence is not present or cannot be documented. Members in this place have listed the stark statistics many times. Some have shared, and continue to share, personal stories and case studies. I hope they do that with the consent of the victims' families, recognising that these people deserve the dignity in death that was not afforded to them in life. We recognise the humanity of victim-survivors of this abuse.

Once again I acknowledge the passion and commitment of the member for Shellharbour, who clearly feels strongly about this issue. I also reiterate the significant amendments that are needed to the bill and recognise the complex area of law means that consultation and input from experts, stakeholders and victim-survivors need to be undertaken. I acknowledge the work that my colleague Abigail Boyd has done in this space. I also acknowledge the families impacted by the trauma and tragedy around coercive control. They have my utmost respect for their strength and determination, because nobody wants to be in that situation. By becoming advocates to try to achieve

change, they show a level of strength that we can only respect and acknowledge. I also acknowledge and thank the advocates in this space, the experts: Domestic Violence NSW; Hayley Foster at Women's Safety NSW; Sally Stevenson and others in her team from the Illawarra Women's Health Centre; the New South Wales team of Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia; Women's Legal Service NSW; and Rebecca Glenn, a friend and advocate and founder of the Centre for Women's Economic Safety.

They do incredible work as advocates for the need for action on issues of financial abuse, coercive control and domestic abuse. Together we will get there. We have known this is a problem for too long but we must do more than just recognise that. As Abigail Boyd said when introducing her bill in the other place:

Criminalising coercive control will not wipe out domestic abuse. Only drastic cultural change can do that. But a real commitment to resourcing, community education, training and education of the police and judiciary, and significant funding for crisis and support services, can end the abuse for many people who currently live in fear.

We have that responsibility in this place, and I look forward to working with everyone collaboratively until we deliver on that need.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (12:08): I speak to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive Control—Preethi's Law) Bill 2020. The Government is committed to protecting victims of domestic and family violence and holding perpetrators to account for their actions. This includes considering ways in which legal and other responses to domestic and family violence can be further improved. There is a range of complexities in identifying and responding to coercive control. Coercive control focuses on the patterns of dominating and controlling behaviours rather than individual incidents of abuse. Abusive behaviours may be physical, sexual, psychological, financial and emotional and victims may experience one, some or all of these behaviours. Coercive control is characterised by the sustained pattern of abuse and the loss of individual freedom and agency of the victim by the perpetrator. A perpetrator uses these behaviours to manipulate, alienate and degrade their partner.

In isolation, some of these behaviours or incidents may seem trivial. However, the cumulative impact of abuse on a victim can be utterly devastating and may last for years, even after the abuse stops. Victim-survivors often say it is the hardest part of their experience to recover from. Due to the nature of coercive and controlling behaviours, determining appropriate and effective responses—whether they be legislative or non-legislative—raises significant complexities. It is critical that full consideration be given to those complexities, particularly when considering criminalisation of coercive control. Any reform undertaken must be appropriately balanced and considered in the context of the broader legal and social policy that frames domestic and family violence. This is essential to avoid unintended consequences. Full consideration of this complex and wicked problem requires extensive consultation and expert advice. This is recognised by a broad range of key stakeholders across the domestic and family violence sector.

For example, an opinion piece published on 23 September 2020 by the Women's Legal Service NSW highlighted that, while it welcomed the multi political party focus for this important issue, the public consultation that the Attorney General has committed to is both required and well regarded. The referral of a terms of reference for a full examination of coercive control to a joint select committee is designed to facilitate this extensive consultation process. It is an important first step in ensuring that any future reform is informed by input from all stakeholders, including victim-survivors, and expert recommendations from the domestic and family violence services sectors and legal practitioners. The Attorney General has released a discussion paper that provides a detailed framework that may assist consultation. The committee is encouraged to consider the paper as a point of reference in undertaking its inquiry.

Debate interrupted.

Motions

CENTRAL COAST ROADS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:11): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes round two of the Government's Fixing Local Roads Program opened on Monday 2 November 2020.
- (2) Notes this program provides a total of \$691 million through single grants to local government councils, including Central Coast Council.
- (3) Thanks the Government for providing \$2.7 million for nine local projects through round one of this program in July 2020.
- (4) Encourages Central Coast Council to apply for funding to help repair and maintain local roads across the Central Coast region.

I am pleased to be moving this motion this afternoon. I note that the member for Wyong is in the Chamber and I am sure there are some roads projects in his electorate, which is great because that will cover from one end of the Central Coast to the other. I appreciate his thumbs up gesture. I note that the former roads Minister is also in the Chamber. I thank her for her support of the funding for roads on the Central Coast when she was Minister and I thank Minister Toole as well. I welcome the \$136.4 million that was made available by the New South Wales Government for round two of this program. The millions of dollars on offer are to repair and maintain more of the Central Coast roads. Let us be clear: There is a road network of 2,200 kilometres from one end of the Central Coast to the other. We are talking about an area the size of the Australian Capital Territory with a population of the Northern Territory. This funding is targeted to small projects that can make a big difference to the Central Coast community in a short amount of time.

I do not want to verbal the member for Wyong, but as a local member I know that some of our main complaints are about smaller local roads. We are seeing hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on upgrades to State roads and, effectively, billions of dollars on State and Federal roads across the Central Coast. Recently we saw the M1 upgrade completed. I have to say, I have driven on that road and it is absolutely stunning. It is a credit to Transport for NSW. This program goes to the heart of local roads issues, which we all drive on every single day. We often get complaints about their condition—the potholes, et cetera. I am pleased that the guidelines of the Fixing Local Roads Program stipulated that the project would need to be delivered within two years of receiving the funding. That is important because, when we provide funding to upgrade roads, people want to see the work getting done. They do not expect planning to go on for years and years.

The smaller projects can be delivered in a short space of time, which ensures that our community on the Central Coast benefits from smoother and safer journeys as quickly as possible. It also means more construction jobs and more local economic activity. That is more important than ever in regions like the Central Coast in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The applications under round two of the Fixing Local Roads Program were open until Friday 4 December. I wrote to the council members to encourage them in the strongest possible terms to make sure that they submitted applications for Fixing Local Roads projects. I outlined before that \$2.7 million was delivered to nine projects. That is a very large number of roads and good money spent in the Central Coast local community. I congratulate council on submitting those funding applications to upgrade some of the 2,200 kilometres of road network on the Central Coast. As the member for Wyong was nodding furiously in agreement earlier, every corner of the Central Coast is covered in some way by the first round of funding.

Gorokan Drive at Lake Haven received \$783,750 for in-situ stabilisation of the road pavement and resurfacing to increase structural capacity. Wattle Tree Road in Holgate, in my own electorate, is receiving \$421,500. Given its design, it has always been a very precarious road, especially in the wet. It is getting in-situ stabilisation of the road pavement and resurfacing to increase structural capacity and restore consistent road surfacing between 57 and 181 Wattle Tree Road—quite an area of road. Gregory Street in Berkeley Vale is receiving \$321,250 for in-situ stabilisation of the road pavement and resurfacing to increase its structural capacity. Cornwall Avenue in Gorokan is receiving \$259,500 for stabilisation of the road pavement and resurfacing. The Scenic Road at Kincumber—an extremely busy road in my electorate—is receiving \$255,750 in funding for stabilisation of pavement and increasing the structural capacity of the road.

The Scenic Road gets a lot of traffic and is an incredibly winding road. In the wet, a bit like the road at Holgate, it can be quite treacherous for drivers. I am really pleased that it was also a recipient. Donaldson Street in Wyong is receiving \$228,000 for in-situ stabilisation between Lucca Road and 11 Donaldson Street, which is a fantastic upgrade. Lakeview Avenue in Gorokan is receiving \$212,250 for road pavement stabilisation and resurfacing. North Burge Road in Woy Woy—again a very busy road—is receiving \$186,750 for stabilisation of pavement and resurfacing to increase structural capacity between 58 and 163 North Burge Road. Hillview Street in Woy Woy is receiving \$81,000 for stabilisation and resurfacing to increase structural capacity.

Drainage has always been one of the problems that we face on the Central Coast. Every time it rains, the same old potholes open up on a regular basis. That causes frustration at a local level. I am really pleased that the State Government has provided the funding to tackle the roads that council members identified as their priorities in round one. I wrote to council members saying they need to make sure that they submit as many applications as humanly possible for round two. Those nine road projects, which literally cover from one end of the Central Coast to the other, delivered \$2.7 million in funding. I hope that the Central Coast Council has gone hard in round two, looking at as many roads as possible to try to secure additional funding for this fantastic program. I congratulate the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole, on his support and the team on putting this together.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (12:18): It may come as a surprise to many members that I support this motion moved by the member for Terrigal. It is always good when additional funding is allocated for our local road network. The member for Terrigal mentioned that the Central Coast has 2,200 kilometres of road, some of which is quite isolated. In round one funding the area received \$2.7 million. I do not know whether the

Government was feeling particularly benevolent or whether it is because I am a good local member but, of that funding, my electorate received 55 per cent, which is more than half. As the member for Terrigal said, \$783,750 went towards an upgrade of Gorokan Drive; \$259,550 on Cornwall Avenue, Gorokan; \$228,000 on Donaldson Street, Wyong; and \$212,250 on Lakeview Avenue, Gorokan. I have inspected the work and it is very much welcomed. That funding is in conjunction with the Federal Government's road funding on the Central Coast.

However, the Federal Government was not so generous. Of the Federal Government grants, 90 per cent of the funding went to the south and we got the other 10 per cent. But I certainly welcome the money that was spent in my electorate. That included funding for Woodbury Park Drive, Mardi, which residents of the area would know turns into a rat run because of traffic on Tuggerah Straight due to the fact we are waiting for the road through Wyong to be upgraded. That project has progressed so hopefully it will be finished sooner rather than later. Funding was also received for upgrades to Tuggerawong Road, Gavenlock Road, Craigie Avenue, Fravent Street at Toukley, Oleander Street in Noraville, Hibbard Street at Canton Beach, Albert Warner Drive at Warnervale and The Corso at Gorokan. It is good that our local roads are getting some attention because some of them are pretty awful—I think we would all agree on that.

I too would like the council to make sure that it applies for funding for projects. I note that the maximum a local government area can apply for is \$5 million. Hopefully the local council has projects to that value. Particularly given its current financial situation, it needs all the assistance it can get. I note that a report from the NRMA made some good suggestions on how regional roads could be funded in the context of the longer term. The NRMA estimated that it would take \$900 million to bring all regional roads in New South Wales up to an acceptable standard, which is not the best they can possibly be but is a reasonable standard. The NRMA also suggested ways that might be achieved, one of which was to have between 2¢ and 5¢ from the fuel excise tax directed specifically towards regional roads. Certainly regional MPs would think that is a particularly good idea.

At the moment, governments provide one-off funding programs for a specific time but the NRMA is looking for long-term sustainability. We know that people drive on roads, the roads are repaired and then the potholes reappear—particularly in adverse weather, as mentioned by the member for Terrigal. All sides of politics should be looking at how we fund regional roads in the longer term. Using the excise tax for regional roads is not creating a new tax and it is not increasing taxes; it is making use of an existing tax and directing it towards regional roads specifically. In my role as shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty and shadow Minister for Regional Transport, I have the pleasure of travelling around the State. I like to drive because when you drive you get to see every town. You stop off and talk to people and you see what is going on around the place but you also get to experience the roads. I have to say that some of the roads I saw when I was up—I do not think it was in the electorate of the member for Myall Lakes—

Mr Stephen Bromhead: It would be.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: It was in your electorate?

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Yeah.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: There was one place where they had just put in a new concrete bridge, which was really good. It may not have been in the electorate of the member for Myall Lakes because it was on the other side of the highway; I was heading up to Ellenborough Falls.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Yeah, that's mine.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: The road either side of the bridge was brand new. The concrete bridge was fantastic, but the road had been patched up so many times for a kilometre either side that even in my four-wheel drive it was bumpy. Local councils have so much trouble, particularly with tourist drives, keeping these roads up to standard. I welcome the motion from the member for Terrigal. I welcome the funding that has been provided to the electorate of Wyong. Members need to look carefully at that NRMA document and look at long-term solutions so that recurrent funding is made available to councils across the State to keep roads up to the required standard.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): It is wonderful to hear the unity being expressed in the Chamber today. On that basis, I am very happy to call the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:25): I compliment the member for Terrigal for moving this motion. It is an important motion for regional New South Wales. Roads and bridges are the connectors between our communities. They are the things on which our children travel on the school bus. They need to be safe. Roads and bridges bring produce from the farm to the highways and on to our capital cities. That is why it is so important and fantastic that The Nationals in government with the Liberals have provided this funding for regional roads. In my electorate, MidCoast Council received almost \$2 million to upgrade the intersection between

Cowper Street and the main road going through Taree. I have been on it and it is absolutely fantastic—a great job has been done. Muldoon Street between Patricia Avenue and Whitbread Street has also been upgraded. As the member for Wyong said, we will look at ways of getting funding for regional roads. He is obviously a great fan of the movie *Back to the Future*, because of what he spoke about with the NRMA's suggestion of the 2¢ to 5¢ a litre going towards regional roads.

Wal Murray and the Greiner Government brought in the 3x3 fuel levy that extended for the length of their Government, 3¢ a litre, 60 per cent of which went towards regional roads. What happened to that? When Labor and Bob Carr came in that all went into consolidated revenue and that was the last cent regional New South Wales ever saw from that scheme. This program is just one program for regional roads; there are many other programs such as Fixing Country Bridges and the like. Just this week we announced over \$20 million for MidCoast Council and almost \$20 million for the replacement of the Cedar Party Creek Bridge, which is the main timber truss bridge going into Wingham. That replacement has been planned and talked about for a number of years, and is among six other bridges to be upgraded, including one from Elands.

The member for Wyong talked about going up to Ellenborough Falls. The Falls Bridge will be replaced, along with the Kimbriki bridge and the Kings Creek Bridge at Krumbach. So many bridges are getting fixed under the program. Again, it is about the safety of our communities and the safety of our kids going to school, as well as getting produce from farms to our towns and cities. The member for Wyong spoke about driving up to Ellenborough Falls. That is a shocking road out in my neck of the woods. The Government has recognised that and announced a \$100 million package for MidCoast Council, \$50 million of which is a low-interest loan especially for amalgamated councils. The council said, "If we are able to borrow that money from the Government and ratepayers pay that \$50 million off, will the Government match it dollar for dollar?"

A couple of years ago I spoke about that in this House and the Government agreed. The overall package is \$100 million to try to break the back of the roads backlog in the electorate. Going back to country bridges, the council has 170 wooden bridges and hopefully it will make an application for every wooden bridge in the next round of the Fixing Country Bridges program.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:29): I support the motion because it is non-partisan and is about our region. It is about a program where you can say for once the Central Coast is getting its fair share. It is a good program because it is a fully funded program of works; it does not require the council or any other body to put in a portion of the money. It fully funds a project put up by a community on the basis of need. On that basis, and when the Government occasionally does the right thing, it would be remiss of me not to support it. It is not like the other funds that have no rules or loose rules attached to them that are given over to the pork-barrelling system of government. It is freely admitted that is the system of government we operate under most of the time in this State.

Compared with all that, the program is good and the outcomes for my electorate have also been good. Gregory Street, Berkeley Vale, has been resurfaced as a result of the program and Shirley Street, Ourimbah, and Cresthaven Avenue, Bateau Bay, have been maintained and upgraded as well. That is good for and welcomed by my community. The existence of the program recognises that councils need supplementation. They do not have the capacity within their own funding envelope to fully maintain roads to the standard expected by the community. To maintain safety standards on the roads network throughout the State, we need the State to provide the funds councils need to do that work. I support the motion and I look forward to seeing more allocations to the Central Coast, and my electorate in particular. I look forward to a continuation of the program, which provides regular, full funding for road maintenance throughout the State.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON (Upper Hunter) (12:32): It is an absolute pleasure to support the member for Terrigal in this very important motion. It is wonderful that, like all programs the Government funds, it is based on a fair and flexible needs-based arrangement, and there is no greater need than in regional New South Wales when it comes to infrastructure like local roads. In the first round my electorate alone received just over \$17 million in road funding. My electorate is one of the shires in New South Wales that is traditionally recognised as having some of the worst roads in the State, particularly after the Labor Government—I think the Minister at the time was Michael Daley—gave back State roads, and therefore the funding that goes with it, to the local council. But there was compensation of \$200,000—whoop-de-do, that does a few tens of metres of road. Now we are looking at not only taking back a lot of those roads but also investing enormous amounts of money.

Do not underestimate the ability of the Minister for Transport and Roads to negotiate with the Federal Government to top up the funds, as occurred in round one of the program. I think \$191 million from the Federal Government was attached to the \$500 million in this particular pool of funding. In the Dungog shire, for example, there is \$1.65 million for Paterson River Road, \$1.275 million for Summer Hill Road and \$1.56 million for Salisbury Road. I know many members would not know where Dungog shire is, and that is fine, but those roads are particularly important for communities that often can be isolated in many ways. When that is added to the

Fixing Country Bridges program it means not only are we building new bridges and replacing the old timber bridges but also we are upgrading those roads. Overall, this magnificent program is helping kids get to school safely on the bus and helping people get to work. It is getting produce to market and giving people options in their lifestyle. It is also giving people the opportunity to live in a safe environment because they are not having to travel on unsafe roads.

In addition, Liverpool Plains Shire Council and Muswellbrook Shire Council will be given \$5 million in the first round for improvements. That is an enormous amount of money for the Muswellbrook Shire. Singleton shire received several amounts of money—\$713,000, \$248,000, \$64,000, \$610,000. In the Upper Hunter shire, the Moonan Brook and Barrington Tops Forest roads will be upgraded to link the Upper Hunter Valley in the west of New South Wales to the coast. We have started that process by allocating \$4.9 million for that road. The long-term vision and the plan is that we will end up sealing—working towards this plan—around 52 or 53 kilometres of road, which will make a huge difference to the communities on the mid North Coast and in the Upper Hunter.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (12:36): It is with great pleasure that I support the member for Terrigal in his motion today. It is fantastic to see government funding going equitably across all the electorates of the Central Coast. Regional roads and our smaller roads across the community are really important to people of the coast and more so to people on the peninsula. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast for the money that has come into our community that has allowed the upgrades of North Burge Road and Hillview Street in Woy Woy. I will continue to thank the Government when it does things equitably because, unfortunately, the people of the coast are not seeing that all the time. The community saw clearly that the Terrigal electorate got nine big chunks of money from the Stronger Communities Fund whereas the Gosford electorate got only two chunks of money. We are seeing boardwalks and all sorts of things being built across the Terrigal electorate but, most importantly, we are feeling the hard hits of the bushfire recovery funding.

Our communities asked for upgrades to halls and that conversation within the council seems to have completely disappeared in round one of funding and nothing has come of it. I have been to see the Deputy Premier about round two funding and support for our community and, hopefully, because of what we have revealed in the Parliament we may see an equitable distribution of funds. Today I thank the people within the Ministry for Transport for their fair distribution of this funding and the transparent process in which it is given to our councils. I encourage the member for Terrigal, and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast to oversee fair distribution into our community every time the Government puts money on the table. Our poor old council puts in a grant application for dredging and the Government does not get it right. Surely it is the job of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast to make sure that every bit of funding comes into our community and that he supports our council, rather than batting it away.

We know the Central Coast is not in great financial circumstances, but we also know that money from the State Government is not trickling down equitably to the Central Coast community. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Terrigal, for his effort to deliver fair funding for our community. I encourage him to make sure that guidelines are clear, transparent and adhered to in the future so that the Central Coast ends up with its fair share.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:39): By leave: I add my voice to the chorus supporting the motion moved by the member for Terrigal. The Fixing Local Roads Program is undertaking vital repairs across the State, improving safety and creating the road infrastructure needed to ensure that every driver who leaves home returns safely. This funding round is a team effort from the New South Wales and Federal governments. I commend them for working together to deliver so much funding for the program, injecting funds into projects that otherwise may have waited years to be completed. It has rewarded councils across the State that have shovel-ready projects. Under round one of the Fixing Local Roads Program, my electorate of Cootamundra received \$21,839,163 for 43 projects across nine local government areas [LGAs]. A further \$2.1 million from this fantastic program was allocated to upgrading sections of the Tara-Bectric Road near Temora—a very busy thoroughfare. That project alone created 12 jobs, which is a huge impact for a town of 4,000, 5,000 or 6,000 people.

It is only one of more than 250 examples from around the State. Councils would have been unable to provide that staggering amount of funding on their own. The funding has created jobs, increased safety and improved local infrastructure. In my electorate the Bland Shire Council manages the second largest local road network in New South Wales—a staggering 3,237 kilometres. The council describes the area as the equivalent of land from Gosford to Wingecarribee or Manly to the Blue Mountains, so the network covers a large area. Under the first funding round the council received \$1,618,500 for three road rehabilitation and safety projects. That included the construction of a connector road at Quandialla and the reconstruction of a section of road at Kikiora. The Junee shire, one of the smallest LGAs in the Cootamundra electorate, received \$2.6 million to seal

some 310,000 square metres of road. As Junee shire Mayor Neil Smith put it, "Country roads are the lifeblood of all rural and regional Australia."

The funding means that we can travel safely on foggy mornings, there is less slipping and sliding after heavy rainfall, and everyone can have safer journeys, including our kids who are on school buses. I have mentioned before in this place that the Cootamundra electorate has 80 schools, so a lot of buses are on the road twice a day picking up our kids and taking them to and from school. It is also good for our farmers who are moving product across the region. It is a fantastic program. The nearby neighbouring electorate of Barwon received \$32.7 million. I am a little jealous about that, but there are more funding rounds coming up. Nonetheless, right across New South Wales we are investing heavily to ensure that our roads are as safe as possible. I thank the member for Terrigal for bringing this motion to the House. I fully support it.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:44): In reply: I start by thanking all members who took part in the discussion on this motion for realising how important it is to fund local roads. This fantastic system is providing funding for roads that people drive on every day and is supporting local councils to fix those roads. It is interesting to see the bipartisan nature of the feedback on this issue. The only thing I would call out is the comments of the member for Gosford about equitable funding. The electorates of The Entrance, Wyong and Gosford receive significantly more State road funding than does the electorate of Terrigal. When it comes to equitable funding, they receive more than their fair share. With regard to the Stronger Country Communities Fund, I remind the member for Gosford that council projects were put forward after community consultation. Unfortunately, she did not even have a representative sitting at the table when they were being discussed. It is a little hard for her to criticise the process if she does not take part in it.

I congratulate the members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Wyong, The Entrance and Upper Hunter and the member for Cootamundra, who secured an enormous amount of funding for her electorate. This is how government works to support local roads and local councils. I am really pleased that Minister Toole has put forward the option for councils to look at which roads potentially could be handed back to the State Government. It is an excellent initiative and it is how State Government works constructively with local government to deliver those projects. On the Central Coast hundreds of millions of dollars are being delivered from one end of the coast to the other, such as the \$178 million upgrade to the Pacific Highway at Ourimbah and Lisarow in The Entrance electorate; the fantastic upgrade at the Tuggerah interchange, which has made an astonishing difference to the flow of traffic on Wyong Road; and the intersection near Mingara Drive, which is again a multimillion-dollar upgrade.

The big funding announcement was the \$387 million to upgrade the Central Coast Highway. The upgrade spans two electorates: Terrigal and The Entrance. Every day 26,000 people use that particular road, and it is the missing link in the upgrade of the Central Coast Highway. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to funding the delivery of a long-term project that everybody will benefit from. It is not electorate specific, as I have just outlined; it covers two State electorates. This Government is focused on delivering for everybody on the Central Coast and for all our roads. I am pleased that local roads will be addressed. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, it has been my pleasure to write letters of support for every local council application for road funding and infrastructure funding, regardless of where that funding is being allocated. My opinion is that as long as the Central Coast receives the funding, it does not matter which State electorate it is in.

It is about the Central Coast benefiting, because that provides the jobs, the opportunities for tradies and the long-term employment and stimulus that the Central Coast requires—especially with what we have seen during COVID-19. I know that my parliamentary colleagues do the same in their electorates. They do not mind where the money is being spent in their region as long as their region gets the funding. Again, this Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering record funding in an unbiased way to areas right across New South Wales. Members on this side of the House are all very proud of that. I commend Labor for supporting this motion and for recognising the great job that this Government is doing to deliver hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions of dollars, to State and local road projects right across the entire State of New South Wales.

I hope that the Central Coast Council has done a very good job in applying for funding for as many roads as possible in round two. We look forward to the outcome of that in the not too distant future. I know that the member for Wyong and I will be champing at the bit to get local roads upgraded. I commend the council for taking the initiative to apply for this funding, which has been an absolute boon to our region.

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

Motion agreed to.

NAIDOC WEEK

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:48): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises 8 to 15 November 2020 marked NAIDOC Week across Australia.
- (2) Acknowledges NAIDOC Week celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures, the First Peoples of this continent and oldest living cultures in the world.
- (3) Congratulates the Arakwal Bumbelin community and Bunyarra Culture Collective on their excellent art exhibition on Sunday 8 November 2020 that the member for Ballina was privileged to formally open, featuring 19 artists from across the Bundjalung area.
- (4) Recognises the dedication of curator and native title holder Nickolla Clark, Elly Davidson and Mullumbimby & District Neighbourhood Centre.

I am very privileged to be moving this motion. I will start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which the Parliament sits, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and recognise the Arakwal people of the Byron Bay area—whom I am speaking about today—from the Bundjalung Nation. As I said, it is my absolute privilege to introduce this motion to the Legislative Assembly and to seek support from all members in this place. The Arakwal Bumberlin people are the native title holders of Byron Bay. It was momentous for my community in 2019 that members of this Chamber unanimously supported a motion to recognise, under colonial law, that they become native title holders of the Byron Bay area. They and the Bundjalung people have lived and cared for their country for more than 60,000 years.

The Bunyarra Culture Collective specifically is a local expression of Bundjalung traditional and contemporary Aboriginal dance, music and painting. It promotes and supports leadership and confidence among Aboriginal youth and the broader community. With the permission of the traditional custodians, I inform the House that the Bundjalung meaning of Bunyarra is "more than good". I congratulate the Bunyarra Culture Collective on the amazing events it hosted during NAIDOC Week last year and the superb art exhibition that I was privileged to formally open at the Bangalow A&I Hall. The event saw the exhibition of Bundjalung artists from across the region and was sensational. The leadership of Arakwal custodians Nickolla Clark and Elly Davidson cannot be overstated. Nickolla and Elly are young women in their early 20s and, as artists and curators, they put on a world-class event.

I also thank and recognise the support given to them by the Mullumbimby & District Neighbourhood Centre, which members will have heard me mention many times because it continues, time and time again, to rise to the occasion and support our communities through thick and thin. As we know, the acronym NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. The history of NAIDOC traces back to Aboriginal activism since invasion. We know that in the 1920s Aboriginal rights groups boycotted Australia Day in protest against the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians. This continued in the 1930s and 1940s with the national Day of Mourning, which was held annually on the Sunday before Australia Day and was known as "Aborigines Day". In 1955 it was shifted to the first Sunday in July. It was decided by Aboriginal people that the day should become not simply a protest but a celebration.

In the 1950s major Aboriginal organisations, State and Federal governments and a number of church groups supported the formation of a formal body known as the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee. Today and in the past 60 years this has become the title for the whole week, not just for a day. As we know, each year a theme is chosen to reflect important issues and events. With significant moments towards reconciliation occurring in the past 60 years—including the Bridge Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Commonwealth Government's National Apology to the Stolen Generations and, indeed, the upper House inquiry into the impacts of the Stolen Generation in New South Wales, chaired by former Greens MLC and dear friend Jan Barham—NAIDOC today recognises both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

In 2020 the theme for NAIDOC Week was "Always Was, Always Will Be". It recognised that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years. We know that we are still many miles away from redressing the injustices of the past. The Greens and so many people in my community want to see the date of Australia Day changed to celebrate modern history on a day that is not Invasion Day. I am pleased to see members in this place who are absolute champions of the need for change. It is pleasing to see in my area that both councils have resolved to change the date. Out of the 2017 First Nations National Constitutional Convention, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from all points under the southern sky made the Uluru Statement from the Heart. That statement is an invitation to the people of Australia to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to see fundamental changes in the relationship between colonial Australia and our First Nations people: treaties delivered, constitutional recognition, voice and truth telling, and restorative justice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands and possessed it under their own laws and customs. Ownership was never ceded or extinguished and it coexists with the sovereignty of the Crown. With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through

as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood. Intergenerational trauma and dispossession exist and have existed since colonial invasion. The Uluru Statement calls for fundamental change: a Makarrata Commission to develop a national framework to negotiate respective treaties in each State and Territory; constitutional reforms to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enable them to take their rightful place in their own country and the establishment of a First Nations voice enshrined in the Constitution; and truth telling and restorative justice processes that expose the full history of this continent. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues the member for Balmain and the member for Newtown as well as Government speakers on this important motion relating to NAIDOC Week 2020.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:55): I acknowledge the member for Ballina and thank her for bringing this motion to the House and providing an opportunity to talk about NAIDOC Week and its importance across all of our communities. As a local member, I—as I am sure do many local members in the House—love the opportunity to come together with my community, whether it is for NAIDOC Week or other events, to acknowledge and celebrate. As a result of COVID, we have missed the opportunity to be out there with our communities. I know many in the House share my view that the week of events I really miss is NAIDOC Week because it is such a time of celebration and acknowledgement. It is a shame that we missed out pretty well altogether last year. Some low-key events were held, not only in Ballina but across all electorates, and the week was delayed significantly to November.

This year, due to COVID restrictions, we will again miss out on the full opportunities we would normally enjoy. As a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, some of my fondest memories are of NAIDOC Week celebrations across the State. They were inspiring events where I learnt so much more about our Aboriginal culture and our Indigenous heritage. I treasure those times. I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the member for Wyong, who was also shadow Minister when I was the Minister of that portfolio. It was great to be with him at many of those events to celebrate with the communities. As has been iterated by the member for Ballina, NAIDOC Week is a time for all Australians to come together to celebrate the history, culture and, importantly, achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From its initial conception as a day of mourning and sadness, it has evolved into a week of commemorative stoicism and celebratory mirth. It presents us with a beautifully poignant week of sadness and also of joy.

NAIDOC has its origins in the 1920s and 1930s. During this period an Aboriginal rights group decided that a new strategy was needed to get the attention of the Australian public. It is a day steeped in history and a desire for real social change. On Australia Day in 1938 protesters marched through the streets of Sydney. This was followed by a congress attended by over a thousand people. This event, which became known as the Day of Mourning, was one of the first major civil rights gatherings in the world. After that Day of Mourning there was a growing feeling that it should be a regular event, and in 1939 William Cooper, the founder of the Australian Aborigines' League, sought assistance from the National Missionary Council of Australia to support and promote it as an annual event. It was then known as Aborigines Day and became a celebration of Aboriginal culture and also a protest day. The origins of this week of commemoration and celebration are an amazing testament to the vision and integrity of William Cooper, an Aboriginal activist and leader of the 1930s.

In 1956 the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee was established and the day became one of remembrance for Aboriginal people and their heritage. In 1974 the day became a week-long celebration held from the first to the second Sunday in July, a celebration that continues to this day. As has been highlighted by the motion moved by the member for Ballina, unfortunately we saw that celebration postponed until November 2020. I will talk briefly about an event that occurred in my electorate that I was able to celebrate, which coincided with the lead-up to NAIDOC Week: the celebration of and emergence of the Sista Connections program at Hastings Secondary College. I again applaud and commend the program, which is aimed at targeting educational gaps for young Aboriginal girls while improving access to health and education outcomes. "Wiyabu" means hello in the native Birpai language. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that I represent, the Birpai people, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

"Wiyabu" was the beginning of an inspiring speech on cultural identity and inclusion delivered by year 10 student Zara Bryson, who proudly represented Hastings Secondary College in the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. On 3 November last year I attended the official launch of this new and exciting Sista Connections program at the college. It was fantastic to be there with the young Aboriginal students to see the refurbished and revitalised classroom that would be their home base for this wonderful program. On that day, as with many significant events in our community, our dear Elder, Uncle Bill, attended. Uncle Bill is an incredible man who is much loved and respected in our community. I caught up with him on Australia Day and he is always a proud participant on that day. I was able to acknowledge his welcome to country and the incredible contribution he has made to our community over many years, and continues to do so. He has been rightfully acknowledged not only with an Order of Australia but also with the Charles Sturt University Order of the Companion of the University. He is a proud

man and I cannot tell you how proud we are as a community to have him as one of our leaders. He is just so inspiring.

In closing, on behalf of the Government, I congratulate the Arakwal Bumbelin community and the Bunyarra Culture Collective on their excellent art exhibition. I congratulate the member for Ballina on opening that exhibition. It would have been a real privilege to formally open it and highlight the incredible Aboriginal artists from her community in the Bundjalung area. I also pay tribute to the dedication of the curators and native title holders Nickolla Clark and Elly Davidson, and all those who were involved in the Mullumbimby & District Neighbourhood Centre. I am pleased that the Government continues to strongly support NAIDOC Week through the NAIDOC Week Grants program. I again congratulate all communities on the upcoming events for 2021.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:03): I speak in support of the motion moved by my Greens colleague and member for Ballina, who has a strong connection with not just the NAIDOC Week celebration but also the First Nations communities in her electorate and a commitment to First Nations justice. I also acknowledge that the land I am standing on is Gadigal land, as is the Newtown electorate, which—as was the theme of the 2020 NAIDOC Week—always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We also acknowledge Elders past, present and future. As has been the case with other members making contributions, I touch briefly on an incredible NAIDOC Week celebration that I was able to join at Newtown Public School. Obviously it was not during the week that NAIDOC Week usually falls, but it was wonderful to be able to be there in person.

This school assembly was the culmination of a collaboration between the school and Reconciliation NSW. Elder Uncle Jimmy Smith and Kerry Johnson had been collaborating with student and school leaders throughout the year and had worked to develop a series of artworks. It was perhaps not up to the professional level of the exhibition that the member for Ballina was able to launch—no offence to the students of Newtown Public School!—but incredible and colourful artworks ran all the way along the school fence so that the community could view them in a COVID-safe way. It was an opportunity for the school community to recognise its connection with Elders and Aboriginal culture, but also to make incredible pledges. One student leader from each class stood up at the school assembly and made a pledge of commitment to Aboriginal justice, caring for land and country or recognising the importance of culture. It was powerful to hear those young people make pledges on behalf of their class.

I thank the member for Ballina for moving this motion. Every day that we are in this place we must remember that we are on Aboriginal land. It was stolen land and was never ceded. We must celebrate the survival of Aboriginal people in this country, but we must also do more to ensure that there is justice for First Nations people in this State and across the country.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (13:05): I speak in favour of the motion and thank the member for Ballina for moving it in this House. I also congratulate the Bunyarra Culture Collective on what I am sure was a wonderful exhibition. NAIDOC Week is a time for us all to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is an important week focusing on the commemoration and celebration of Aboriginal culture and survival in Australia. It has come a long way in showing the broader Australian community the importance and diversity of our Aboriginal communities. The 2020 theme, "Always Was, Always Will Be", recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 40,000 years. Like most things over the past year, dates for NAIDOC Week in 2020 were impacted by COVID-19. In June the national committee made the decision to postpone this year's celebration in order to protect Elders and community members with chronic health issues.

Locally, Liverpool City Council hosted its NAIDOC Week online via the council's Facebook page. The fantastic online program was created by council in collaboration with Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and Liverpool City Library. The virtual program was made up of activities that honoured and celebrated the local Aboriginal community. It also highlighted the Aboriginal culture that will always be a part of the local area's history and future. I commend Liverpool City Council, Casula Powerhouse and Liverpool City Library for successfully hosting a NAIDOC Week event in a COVID-safe way. Our community appreciated the opportunity to be a part of that celebration while remaining safe. The Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre restored its Koori Floor in the centre's turbine hall. The Koori Floor artwork was designed to acknowledge the Aboriginal presence on the land on which the Casula Powerhouse is situated. It is a fundamental part of the heritage of the Casula Powerhouse, and restoration works ensure that it will remain that way.

The artwork was designed and created by contemporary Aboriginal artists from the local community and across the State. To assist with the running of NAIDOC celebrations, the New South Wales Government provided support for over 95 activities throughout the State using NAIDOC Week grants and close to \$160,000 worth of funding. This year we hope that, COVID permitting, NAIDOC Week is bigger and brighter and better than ever. We look forward to all joining together in expression of the 2021 theme: "Heal Country!"

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (13:08): I recognise that we want to conclude debate on this motion, so I will be brief. I take this opportunity to recognise NAIDOC Week and the wonderful celebration of the diverse history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in New South Wales last year. I congratulate the Bunyarra Culture Collective on its excellent exhibition. The theme was an important one for NAIDOC Week: "Always Was, Always Will Be". The electorate that I represent in this place is on the land of the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. While NAIDOC Week is a time to celebrate that Australia is home to the oldest continuing culture on the planet, we also must recognise that First Nations sovereignty was not ceded.

Today I acknowledge all the wonderful organisations that have been leading change in the Balmain electorate, including Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Tranby College, Strong Mothers and Gunawirra. I also acknowledge the work of incredible community leaders like Aunty Kath Farrowell and the work of Glebe Public School, in particular. I recognise the Glebe Youth Service—where 75 per cent of its clients identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders—Chief Executive Officer Kieran Kevans and the art training grant received from the New South Wales Government for those young people. Aunty Farrowell was acknowledged by ABC News for her great story about why art and the mural that was commissioned and painted at the Glebe Youth Service is so important. I thank the member for Ballina for her motion and offer my wholehearted support. I also thank all members who have contributed to this debate.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (13:10): I make a brief contribution to debate in support of this motion. On behalf of NSW Labor, I pay tribute to people from Aboriginal nations right across this State and I commend them for their celebrations during NAIDOC Week. I congratulate all the people involved in the activities outlined by the member for Ballina.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (13:10): In reply: I sincerely thank all members for their shortened but respectful contributions to this debate. I thank the member for Port Macquarie, and former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who mentioned events in her electorate including the Sista Connections program, which focuses on improving outcomes particularly for Aboriginal youth and women, and the Birpai people and their incredible foresight in that program. I thank the member for Newtown, who referred to the long history of Newtown Public School celebrating NAIDOC Week. In fact, public schools right across the State hold extraordinary events during NAIDOC Week. I thank the member for Holsworthy, who referred to celebrations hosted by Liverpool City Council. I thank the member for Balmain, who spoke about the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative and Tranby College.

Lastly, I thank the member for Wyong, and shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, who is a great champion of reconciliation. We know that New South Wales has incredible bipartisan support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is time that we support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and take more action. I pledge that today on behalf of The Greens, and I seek support of this motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

Rulings

POINTS OF ORDER

The SPEAKER (14:17:5): Yesterday a number of members continued to speak to their point of order or made a statement to the House after I had asked them to stop speaking. I will not be as tolerant of that behaviour today as I was yesterday. When a member persistently and wilfully disregards the authority of the Chair or is otherwise disorderly, I will either place that member on a call to order or name that member. I refer to what happened to the member for Campbelltown some time ago. If I ask members to stop speaking, I expect them to stop.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge my guest today at lunchtime, former Treasurer of this country and our most recent ambassador to the United States, the Hon. Joe Hockey. He is with us in the Chamber. Obviously he cannot be in the public gallery, so he is in the Speaker's gallery.

*Announcements***SIMON JOHNSTON, DIRECTOR PROCEDURE AND SERJEANT-AT-ARMS**

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge Simon Johnston, a member of our Clerks team. Simon is 50 years old today. Happy birthday, Simon.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: In the absence of the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Minister for Transport and Roads will take questions on his behalf.

*Question Time***WESTERN SYDNEY ROAD TOLLS**

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:20): I direct my question to the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney. Economic modelling shows that over the next decade the average Camden family will pay almost \$10,000 in tolls. By 2033, tens of thousands of families in Liverpool and Fairfield will pay \$10,000 in tolls every single year. I ask the Minister: How is that fair to western Sydney?

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. You can tell when the Leader of the Opposition is under stress—she runs back to the issues that she is never going to change. She has never gone out to anyone in western Sydney and said, "I am going to change the tolling position on any road in New South Wales." If the Leader of the Opposition is going to do that, she should go out to Camden and tell the people what she is going to do. Until that stage, we will believe the Leader of the Opposition has no plan for people in western Sydney. Chris Minns might have a plan for people in western Sydney. Prue Car might have a plan for people in western Sydney. Even Ryan Park will have a plan for people in western Sydney. But the one thing we all know is that Jodi McKay does not have a plan for the people of western Sydney, and she just made that clear to everyone in western Sydney with her question today.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:21): I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is providing students with education and skills of the future?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21): I thank the member for Oatley for that outstanding question. I thank him for his efforts in supporting public schools in his electorate and Catholic and independent schools as well and for his commitment to pursuing not just the bricks and mortar of education but also what happens in the classroom. I digress and acknowledge the Speaker's guest, a former Treasurer of Australia and former Ambassador to the United States, Joe Hockey. I think he started his career a couple of decades ago in the exact same spot he is in now. It is good to have him visiting the Chamber today.

The issue the member for Oatley raised is a very pertinent one because COVID has taught us that disruption means people are worried about their jobs. A good grounding in education allows people to adapt, to acquire new skills and to participate in the workforce, no matter what it looks like. That is why the Government is redoubling its efforts not just in preschool and primary and secondary schools but also in the vocational education and training sector. I acknowledge the outstanding work done by local members in advocating for their communities, as well as the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning in the other place and the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, Dr Geoff Lee, who is in the gallery today.

The Government is reviewing the school curriculum, for the first time in 30 years. The last time the curriculum was reviewed—and I know I am getting on—I was sitting the HSC exams about 30 years ago. Since that time the curriculum has not been reviewed and, regrettably, the curriculum was cluttered with subject upon subject. It was not allowing teachers and school communities to focus on literacy and numeracy skills, which are so important in making sure our students—our children—have the capability to transfer their skills to any industry and emerging technology. For that reason, I am pleased that one of the three major planks of our curriculum review is to declutter the curriculum by reducing unnecessary subjects. The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and I announced recently that already about 80 courses have been removed. Those courses included subjects like circus skills and bushcraft puppetry. They are noble professions but those subjects can be included in an art course or another area of study rather than being a specific study course. This allows teachers both the time and resources to deliver those essential things for students.

In addition to decluttering the curriculum, the second plank of the curriculum review is to make sure that we get back to basics so that every child—no matter their postcode, no matter their circumstances—has the ability to be their best through having a good grounding in literacy and numeracy. We are making sure that, as well as literacy and numeracy, the teaching of science and the teaching of technology are key platforms in all the areas that I have outlined. Our students need to be equipped with the skills to be able to transfer their learnings from one occupation or one job to another, and that has been brought home to us in the past 12 months. I am very pleased that, in addition to the great work done by Dr Lee, Mr Gonski and Dr Shergold are supporting the Government in providing a wholesale list and range of pathways for us to improve the system of higher learning in this State. The Government is absolutely committed to doing that.

It is extremely pleasing that during COVID, whilst many of our citizens were confined to their home—especially during Easter last year—100,000 free training courses were offered. Many people took up the offer and many people, especially in the area of medical administration and in other areas where there was a demand for more employees, were able to do their courses free of charge and then get a job in those key areas. That is an example of how our Government, through flexibility, managed to provide those essential services. We are also pleased to see the development of further vocational education training courses in years 11 and 12. We want those students who do not necessarily want to go to university or to enter the workforce immediately to have the ability to start their apprenticeships or courses in year 11.

We know that happens to some extent, but we want this available to most students across the State and it will be an area of focus for us moving forward this year. It is important for us not just to back in these new policy reforms but also to back in the resources. That is why it is so important for us—whether it is education, health or transport—to be in the strongest budget position we can be. That is why we are grateful, through the efforts of the Treasurer and the team, that we have the resources to make sure we are building the bricks and mortar of our education system and providing the extra courses. [*Extension of time*]

Yesterday I was asked a number of questions by the Opposition about our school infrastructure program. I stress that in the past two years alone we have upgraded or opened 100 new schools throughout the State. Yesterday a number of members opposite asked me questions about various schools in their communities. Before I move on, I particularly acknowledge the staff and students at Penhurst Public School. When the member for Oatley, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and I visited that school the students were ecstatic about their new school buildings. It is a wonderful school community. I thank everybody for our warm welcome to the school that day and I wish the students well in their studies this year and beyond. Penhurst Public School alone had 47 new classrooms—a \$45 million upgrade delivered on time and on budget. I thank the school community for that wonderful progress.

Those opposite might be interested in some of the schools that we have delivered for their electorates because these are facts that they like to forget. Under this Government, as I said yesterday, Macquarie Fields has four new schools. Other new schools are: Canley Vale High School; Fairfield High School; Canterbury South Public School; Banksia Road Public School, Lakemba; Ashbury Public School, Summer Hill; Hunter School of the Performing Arts, Newcastle; Bolwarra Public School, Maitland—surely the member for Maitland can smile about that—Gwynneville Public School, Wollongong; Yagoona Public School, Bankstown; Jordan Springs Public School, Londonderry; Gosford Public School; and Marie Bashir Public School, Strathfield.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Never before have we had so much investment in our schools. We look forward to delivering even more schools into the future.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (14:28): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. Greg Paltar is a disability support worker in my electorate. As a result of the Minister's rising tolls and the new M5 East toll, he has had to stop working with a client in Bondi. Why is Greg missing out on work and vulnerable people missing out on support because of the Minister's tolls?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (14:29): I like the question from the member for Macquarie Fields. Before he comes in here and highlights an individual case like that, particularly one involving a person with disability, he might have had the good sense to have contacted me so we might have been able to get some support for that person.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields has asked a question. He will listen to the response in silence.

Mr Anoulack Chanthivong: This is about tolls, mate.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: No, if you were in touch, you would know that with individuals in circumstances like that there is an ability to talk to Transurban, which is also able to provide hardship assistance. Of course, this Government has been providing pretty significant toll relief to a lot of people. I am glad to say that 200,000 motorists—there you go, there's a number—have taken up the relief package offered through the motor vehicle registration discounts run by the Minister for Customer Service through Service NSW.

Mr Anoulack Chanthivong: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being relevant. The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Don't you love it when they get up and take a point of order to change the question that they asked originally because they do not like the answer? I have to say to old mate over there that this Government has had to retrofit the M5 because members opposite—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: We should refer to members by their appropriate title. That is a rule for both sides.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Minister will continue, and will refer to the member by his proper title.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The member for Macquarie Fields is an ex-transport employee like the good member for Keira. They were involved in a transport agency under the last Labor Government, and we remember what they got up to.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This Government has had to build the M8 tunnel to retrofit the M5 because Labor built a two-lane tunnel that was a car park from day one. The magic thing about Labor members is they think things can be built for free.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I will hear the point of order from the member for Campbelltown, but I warn the member for Macquarie Fields that if he continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Greg Warren: It is under Standing Order 129. We are not here to debate the good work of the former Labor Government. We are here to talk about the hardship being felt by south-west Sydney motorists.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being generally relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am talking about the M5 East toll, which is what the member for Macquarie Fields asked about. We had to build the M8 to retrofit a tunnel that you people opposite failed to build right in the first place, you lunatics. While we are here, let us also talk about some of the travel time savings that are being realised through the Government having built the M8.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the third time. I direct the member for Macquarie Fields to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of one hour.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Macquarie Fields left the Chamber at 14.31.]

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: A half-hour travel time saving is now being realised from Liverpool to south Sydney because this Government has built—

Ms Sophie Cotsis: No-one is using it. No-one can afford it from my community.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: No-one is using it? Is that right? That is not backed in by the numbers.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The reality is this Government has had to retrofit a badly built piece of infrastructure. The last Labor Government built a four-lane tunnel, or twin tunnels with two lanes each, and we have had to come along and retrofit it 20 years later. That is really smart!

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: If members opposite looked at the half-hour travel time savings from Liverpool to south Sydney, they would see that it is a 50 per cent reduction for their constituents. Time equals money. Members opposite do not understand that.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 70. The Minister is being argumentative. The question that was asked was about fairness to people in western Sydney and the tolls that the Government is putting on old roads. I ask that the Minister answer the question that was asked of him.

The SPEAKER: I will hear further from the Minister, but I ask him to bear in mind the point of order taken by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This Government will invest \$21.96 billion in non-toll roads that will deliver infrastructure generations ahead of time because of tolling concessions. We have a toll relief package to assist residents in western Sydney and a \$50 cap on Opal fares for western Sydney residents. The Government continues to drive down the cost of living and deliver massive travel time savings. Members opposite have opposed every new piece of infrastructure from NorthConnex to the M4 East and, of course, the M8 tunnel.

REGIONAL JOBS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:34): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is inspiring a regional renaissance by supporting valuable jobs in the bush?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:34): I thank the member for Clarence for his question. It is a good question from a great member who has overseen significant investment in his electorate and on the North Coast. We were lucky to be up there before Christmas celebrating the duplication of the Pacific Highway—a \$15 million investment and a commitment by this Government. We achieved it; we honoured what we said. People will judge us on what we do. Through that project, the local member and most of the members for coastal electorates have delivered a significant piece of infrastructure. The member for Clarence fights for his community—be it for the upgrade of the Grafton hospital or the new Grafton prison. It is about jobs. He recognises that the New South Wales Government, through its infrastructure pipeline of \$107 billion over the next four years, will continue to lead jobs creation right across the State. But jobs are just as important in regional and rural New South Wales. Through building infrastructure, we will lead the private sector and we will see job creation right across the board.

Three years ago we were in Dubbo at that great newspaper *The Daily Telegraph's* Bush Summit, where it all felt like doom and gloom. The drought had bitten; it was very tough. Regional communities and businesses were struggling, farmers and communities were struggling. And then off the back of drought came the bushfires. At *The Daily Telegraph* Bush Summit in Cooma, again it felt like there was no future for regional and rural New South Wales. That was about 15 months ago. How quickly things change in 12 months! The rains have come, the season has produced bumper harvests and stock prices are at a record high. The bushfires are in the past, and thank God this summer we did not see the same impact of bushfires across the State.

Further, confidence has been created in resilient communities in regional and rural New South Wales, which goes to the heart of our confidence about the future in regional and rural New South Wales. That is why last week in Grafton we announced our vision. That is why we have a future and a blueprint for the regions for the next 20 years. One way we can lead is through our public service. The other day I touched on that point in relation to governments leading job creation and building diversity in regional and rural economies. We are a great supporter of the public service in regional and rural New South Wales. Some 77 per cent of my Department of Regional NSW reside, live, work and play in regional and rural New South Wales. As I said earlier, when we work in our communities, when we drink at the same pub, when our kids go to the same schools and play together at the same parks and in the same sporting teams, we start to understand what our communities are about.

When government decision-makers in the public service live within the regions, we get better decisions and better outcomes for regional and rural New South Wales. The traditional way we have done it, and will continue to do when we have the opportunity, is to build hubs in regions and relocate full agencies. More than 30 years ago, Ian Armstrong took the Department of Primary Industries to Orange. It changed the shape of that little town of Orange and it is now a cosmopolitan city. There is no doubt that the Government can lead with the public service to create jobs in regional and rural New South Wales. I previously touched on the opportunity at Armidale. We moved TAFE Digital to Armidale, with 60-plus jobs. We are moving more regional New South Wales departmental jobs to Armidale, because we can.

We learnt a lot from COVID. I want to go back to a point I made a couple of days ago, which might have been missed, when I answered a question about jobs in the bush and how the Government could lead. It is through public sector jobs and doing it differently. We have learnt from COVID that people can work remotely, from

home, from a car. Many of my staff in the regions spend a lot of time in their cars travelling the regions because geography is what regional people deal with each and every day. That is why the Government and Cabinet have backed in a policy—and I thank my Cabinet Ministers for backing in this cross-Government policy—that when advertising public service jobs that are not specific to a particular location, they will be advertised as "regionally preferred". That gives us the opportunity to make sure we have more people and more decision-makers living in regional and rural New South Wales.

I want to expand on that because the decision was not only about advertising public service jobs. We also gave the guarantee that a community with a population of 5,000 or fewer will not lose public service jobs from their small community, because we know how important those jobs are to them. We also made a commitment that by 2023 we want to see more of the public service, such as Grade 11/12 clerks and executive levels—those who make important decisions about what happens at your local hospital or school, what happens to investment and what happens to value—in regional and rural New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

We sometimes have to battle with Treasury over benefit-cost ratios and the value of investment in parks, footpaths and sporting and cultural facilities. Sometimes it is very hard to articulate until you go to the regions and recognise it. I touched on the loss of our great mayor of Cobar Lilliane Brady. I will never forget the day that I turned up there and we saw the playground that we had built in the heart of the town. That playground has now become a centre for communities and families to come together. That is the investment that we make when we build social amenity. It is not just about the hard infrastructure. It is not about the bricks and mortar when we build hospitals and schools.

It is what happens inside: building great schools for our teachers to teach our students and to offer all of those courses; or building hospitals to ensure that we attract the best GPs, specialists and nurses into regional and rural New South Wales. When we build roads and bridges, yes, it is great to put bitumen down; it creates jobs and supports small businesses. But it is about making sure that the school bus gets home safely with the greatest and most precious treasure of all: our children. Our investment in the regions is to build a region that is strong for the future. That is what I will keep fighting for.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (14:40): My question is directed to the Premier. Recently I met Lorry, who for seven years travelled on the M5 to work at Mascot. Last year, when the Premier introduced a new toll on this old road, Lorry could not afford the \$120 a week in tolls and was forced to leave his job. Why is the Premier putting new tolls on old roads that are costing people their jobs?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:41): I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question, and I acknowledge that cost-of-living pressures are a big issue in New South Wales—especially this year, as people are worried about their jobs and job security, given the past 12 or 18 months of drought, bushfire, natural disaster and, of course, the pandemic. We know that jobs, job security and the cost of living are important issues that our Government needs to address day in and day out. On that point, I say this: We appreciate cost-of-living pressures mean that many households have to forego something else to pay more for the basics. That is why, through Service NSW, we have in excess of 70 basic rebates that return billions of dollars to our community. Those who regularly pay more than a certain amount in tolls every week get free car registration. Yes, for some it is only a small component of their overall bill, but at least it is money back in their pocket. Those who pay some tolls during the week get a discount on their car registration. Those who exhibit safe driving and do not have demerit points get a free car licence. Those who cannot afford energy bills get rebates back in their pocket.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. Taking your advice yesterday, Mr Speaker, the question was specific.

The SPEAKER: Yes, it was.

Ms Jodi McKay: It was: "Why is the Premier putting new tolls on old roads?"

The SPEAKER: I have heard enough. I will rule on the point of order. The Premier was being generally relevant. I remind her, for the next 3.5 minutes, that it was a specific question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I make this genuine point to all members in this place: If you have any constituents who are going through financial hardship, please call Service NSW on their behalf and make an appointment with a cost-of-living specialist. They will support those constituents to save money.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: If the point of order goes to relevance, I have just ruled on that. I will not rule otherwise.

Mr Greg Warren: Yes, I heard that. It is Standing Order 73. If the Premier would like to debate cost-of-living pressures, she should do so by substantive motion. The question was about her new toll on an old road and the effect it is having on people's lives.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. Standing Order 73 is the wrong standing order. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I repeat what I said before: If any member in this place—it does not matter what side of the House they sit on—has any constituent going through financial hardship, please contact Service NSW. The cost-of-living specialist can help manage that. In 1997 when Labor signed the longest toll contract from the date of opening that New South Wales has ever seen—the Eastern Distributor—the contract period of 49 years, ending in 2048, was five years longer than the WestConnex stage one contract.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 76. This is of absolute no relevance to the hardship that this toll is creating for south-west Sydney motorists.

The SPEAKER: I rule against the member's point of order. The Premier will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Let us not forget the Opposition's record when it actually did build anything—the one or two times in 16 years. In 2003 those opposite made a deal that landed us the most expensive piece of road in the world: 200 metres going onto the Warringah Freeway, the Military Road off ramp. You had to pay \$1.71 for 200 metres, which would have equated to \$8 a kilometre. If you look at their record and do a per kilometre reference as to who had downward pressure on that, it is this side of the House. I also say this and again stress: Please know that the Government has more than 70 or 80 available ways in which people can save money through Service NSW. It is also important to note that, unlike those opposite, we never, ever build a toll road that does not have a free option. We never force people—

[Opposition members interjected.]

It is true.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Many people save hours a week, spending more time at home with their families and more time at work. They are not in congestion. Since 2011 we have built the M5 West widening, the WestConnex M4 widening, the new M4 tunnels, the WestConnex to M5—as we have been talking about—the M8, Princes Highway upgrades and NorthConnex. If those opposite cared about cost of living, they would have demonstrated it. They are hypocrites. I say to all of them: Please know where your constituents go if they need any help.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (14:46): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will he update the House on confidence in the New South Wales economy?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:46): I thank the member for Wollondilly for his question and for his confidence and the confidence of the Wollondilly community in the New South Wales Government. Yesterday the consumer sentiment index [CSI] for February was released. In New South Wales the CSI rose, increasing 3.5 per cent to 111.7 index points. The index now sits 20.1 per cent higher in through-the-year terms. New South Wales residents are more positive about economic conditions in the next 12 months. Sentiments rose 10.5 per cent from the previous month. There we have it: more optimists and less pessimists right across the State. I spoke to Treasury and asked it to give me the top 10 areas that were driving confidence in New South Wales. Coming in at number 10 was economic growth in the State. Over the Government's time in office, there has been 2.3 per cent growth. As I said to the House on Tuesday, that is 500,000 jobs over 10 years. I know the member for Keira likes to talk about youth unemployment. That is the lowest youth unemployment rate of any State.

Record infrastructure investment comes in at number nine. Members opposite were talking about roads. We are not just building major roads, whether it is the WestConnex, which they love. The member for Hornsby loves the NorthConnex. There is now tumbleweed on Pennant Hills Road from Pearce's Corner to Thompsons Corner. It is a great toll road that is not just providing a great solution and fast trips from the north to the south but alleviating pressure on Pennant Hills Road so people can get home to their families faster. Metros are everywhere. You cannot stop the transport Minister. We are building metro after metro. There is over \$100 billion, as we know, in infrastructure over the next four years, recovering from those dark days of Labor when it was \$30 billion in infrastructure backlog.

The next is housing affordability: more supply of homes, stamp duty concessions—I will say a lot more on that shortly—and helping young families get their keys to their very first home. Number seven is planning reform. Rob Stokes makes the list—the vice-chancellor of planning. He has ripped up more than 170 restrictive rules, policies and guidelines. He is speeding up assessments and incentivising councils to get development applications moving, which is a positive step. He has some strange views on architecture, but outside of that he is doing a wonderful job.

Number six is getting big government and bureaucratic barriers out of the way for businesses to thrive. That has to go to the Minister for Customer Service. We were in The Rocks this morning where we saw alfresco dining and spoke to many businesses who very much support the Dine & Discover NSW vouchers and the Easy to Do Business Program. Under Labor, setting up a bar or restaurant in New South Wales took 18 months. Under Victor Dominello, it is three months. No-one really knows what he is doing but it is working. We have no idea what he is talking about, but it works.

Number five is the 70 cost-of-living measures, as referred to by the Premier. The Opposition whinges and complains. I will get it fact-checked and if I am misleading the House I will come back, but my understanding is there is no jurisdiction in the world that has more cost-of-living measures than we do—70. Active Kids vouchers are helping young people play sport for the very first time, as the sport Minister knows. My kids love it. I am making a profit off the Active Kids vouchers. We have free preschools, as the Premier said, free vehicle registration, energy affordability vouchers and payroll tax concessions. There is no other State doing this. My favourite one is the Regional Seniors Travel Card, which is going gangbusters. That was a good one. They will not continue in perpetuity.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Number four is a sound fiscal position. As I said before, until the coming of the pandemic— [*Extension of time*]

This State has the strongest balance sheet in the nation and the asset recycling approach we have taken has ensured that New South Wales—

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

The net worth of the State continues to grow and is much stronger than it was under Labor. By making better use of our assets and having a very low net debt position, we are able to make the investments that matter. Number three from Treasury is a world-leading response to the pandemic. One jurisdiction sounds very well: the health response from the Minister, Kerry Chant, Susan and Elizabeth; and the economics team with Stuart Ayres and Victor Dominello driving it, as well as the Deputy Premier of course. We are driving that balance to ensure that we have a strong economy, jobs, keeping businesses open and being able to put \$30 billion into stimulus investment.

Number two from Treasury: Gladys being Premier—with more trust shown in her than in any other leader in the country. Number one: Jodi not being Premier. There is no confidence in that ever happening. Sportsbet is not even offering a market at the moment. As the Labor members in the upper gallery know, they are not even in the ballpark. That does not come from us; that comes from them. That is why they are up in the nosebleed section. In the middle of a pandemic, there are more optimists now in our State, and that is a very positive thing. While the Liberals and The Nationals are talking the State up, the Opposition continues to talk our State down. We know that the great people of New South Wales will come through this pandemic stronger than ever, and that is because they are listening to us and not to the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: I advise members in the upper gallery, particularly the member for Heffron and the member for Lakemba, that their voices carry. Members in the upper gallery will remain silent.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:54): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. Given that this month the Reserve Bank predicted inflation of just 1.5 per cent and real wage growth of 0 per cent, how can the Government justify toll increases of 4 per cent each year, every year, for decades?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (14:54): I recognise an interview the member for Kogarah did on 2GB the other day when he announced that he would cancel about \$21 billion worth of free road alternative investments this Government is making on the motorway network. It is absolutely absurd that when Labor was in office it built five toll roads but in opposition it wants to pretend that it did not. Let us call a spade a spade: Tolls exist so that the infrastructure can be built generations ahead of time so that families across the State can save time when they get across town. Some 60 per cent of Sydney motorists pay less than \$10 a week in tolls.

Mr Jihad Dib: Because they're using the service roads.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: How are the numbers going, Jihad? Because I know that Parky and Chris have been having lunches over summer trying to work it out.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I saw a poll recently and I am polling 22 per cent approval rating amongst Labor voters and the Leader of the Opposition is at 19 per cent. What does that say? A Liberal Minister is more popular than the Labor Opposition amongst Labor voters. You guys need to do some reflection.

[Members interjected.]

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: As I said, the reason we have tolls is so that we can build infrastructure off balance sheets so that we can continue to build police stations, schools, hospitals and all of those things. That is eminently sensible. But we are also investing in public transport at record levels with over \$70 billion over the next four years. We are investing \$21.96 billion in the free road network—a lot of that investment is happening in western Sydney—and Labor is coming up with some magic pudding scheme to pretend that tolls do not exist. We have put in place tolling concessions that are designed to pay for the infrastructure responsibly.

We have put in place cost-of-living measures not only in relation to motor vehicle registration but also, as the Premier outlined this afternoon, across the board. We have also made sure that there is a free road alternative for motorists to continue to use. If we did not have tolls on motorways with that infrastructure being built today, imagine what Sydney's road network would be like. Just imagine. The Premier outlined that when those opposite were last in office, they proved that they did not know how to manage PPPs. In fact, I will give them credit for building one piece of infrastructure: the Cross City Tunnel. Guess how many times that has gone broke? Twice.

Mr Ryan Park: How much did it cost the taxpayer?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Hang on, you were in charge because you were Deputy Secretary of Transport. So do not come at us with that. The reality is work, we have cost-of-living measures.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This ridiculous campaign of Labor—

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I have finished.

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has concluded his answer.

ISOLATED PATIENTS TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (14:58): My question is directed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. I accept that it is not possible to deliver every specialist health service in every town and there will always be some health services people in my electorate need to travel for. People in my electorate incur significant costs travelling for health care but the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS] does not cover those costs—it barely makes a dent. Will the Minister agree to review how people access IPTAAS and the rates to bring them into line with commercially accepted rates over the next six months?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (14:58): I thank the member for Barwon for his question. Before I address it I will update the House on COVID. Members of Parliament know that today is our twenty-fifth day with no reported locally acquired cases. We are doing well, but the message remains to members of the community that if they have any symptoms of cold or flu-like illness, we still really need them to get tested. They are providing the armoury and the weapons for public health to address those concerns, particularly when we see that there is still a very real danger. Every day over the past few weeks, 3,000 people have died in the US and 1,600 people have died in Europe. It is still a very serious issue and we are still in the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

Regarding the issue of the IPTAAS, the member for Barwon would certainly have the experience of local residents having to travel very long distances. I have been to Broken Hill many times. It is a wonderful city and a wonderful community, with a very proud mining heritage. But from time to time, locals obviously do have to travel from the far-flung parts of his electorate to receive assistance from specialists. I thank him for

acknowledging that no matter what application and effort our Government makes—or any government makes—there will always be services that just cannot be delivered where there are relatively few people. Consequently, there will be a need to travel to visit specialists.

Recently I noticed that I was misquoted by the Labor Party regarding telehealth services substituting for GPs. I never said that and members well know that I would never hold that view. If we can encourage GPs—who are managed by the Federal Government and not the State Government—into regional areas then we will continue to do that, but it is not always possible. Our Government will certainly continue to work with the Federal Government to ensure that we will do everything that we are humanly capable of to try to get doctors into regional areas and establish relationships with the community. But, particularly for specialist services, it is obviously a challenge. Particularly off the back of the experience of COVID, telehealth may provide a launching platform for people in remote areas not to have to travel anywhere near as much to access services and meet with specialists—particularly after the first consultation.

The IPTAAS budget currently sits at around \$25 million, although last year the budget was exceeded because quite a number of people were seeking assistance. It was about \$26 million, give or take. That is double the amount of money that the Labor Government distributed in its last year in office. The State Government is certainly doing all it can to increase the funding and look at a range of services to support people who need to come from remote areas. That will continue. I am not sure if the member for Barwon knows that there was a review two or three years ago regarding IPTAAS. A range of initiatives were taken to make it easier for people to apply and to increase the subsidies that are given, but I am aware that services continue to increase in cost: public transport from long distances, car travel, flights and so on. Some people have to take flights from the Barwon electorate.

I indicate to the member that I am more than happy to instruct Health to look at the issues and ensure that we are trying to keep pace with it. It will never be perfect because there will always be some need for people to contribute to the expenses themselves, for obvious reasons. Otherwise taxpayers may end up paying out funds in circumstances where it is not reasonable. There has to be some balance, but I give the member for Barwon the undertaking that I will ask NSW Health to look at the issue again and report back to me on it. Finally, the member raised an issue to do with GenesisCare cardiology services in the Barwon electorate. While the local health service was looking at changing the provider of cardiology services in the Barwon electorate, I have asked them to defer that by a year so that they can work through those issues and consult with the member and the community.

COVID-19 AND BUSINESS RECOVERY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:04): My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government has assisted businesses during the pandemic and is providing assistance during the recovery?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (15:04): I thank the member for North Shore for her question and her advocacy for the people of the North Shore, particularly during the pandemic. The member for North Shore works very hard to ensure that her constituents are enjoying the benefits provided by Service NSW. The Minister for Health and Medical Research referred to telehealth and eHealth and I am so inspired that one of the few silver linings that will come out of the pandemic is the enormous transformation that the State is going through with the adoption of digital processes. We have the ability to help people in need remotely through telehealth, eHealth, Seniors Travel Cards, the advocacy of the Deputy Premier or a lot of other initiatives that I have walked through today.

I am inspired by the people of this great State to adapt during a tumultuous period. It has been phenomenal. In the past three months alone, just in relation to QR codes, there have been over 85 million check-ins. Across the State almost four million people, young and old, have downloaded the Service NSW app. The myth that technology is a barrier has been destroyed. The people of the State have shown in force that they can adopt en masse to change and that is a great credit to them. Because of their agility it means that they are so much a part of the team effort in New South Wales to keep business open and people safe.

Opposition members talked about the cost of living but I emphasise what the Premier said. In relation to the cost of living, officers in Service NSW has had more than 100,000 appointments, which has meant an average saving of \$500 to \$600. I have seen examples of \$2,000 to \$3,000 being saved, which is extraordinary. As the Treasurer said, nowhere in this country or, I think, the world does that exist. I disclose that I bank with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia [CBA]. It has a cost-of-living widget that very much mimics what Service NSW has. As they say, flattery is—

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: An indication.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Yes, absolutely. It is great that the CBA provides that service on the back of what Service NSW is doing. In relation to the question from the member for North Shore, the past 12 months have been breathtaking in terms of what we have had to deliver to help the people of New South Wales, in particular, businesses. As the Treasurer said, it has been a treacherous time, particularly for those in crisis Cabinet, who have seen the trauma that has been imposed on businesses. The Government has done its very best to keep businesses open and the community safe. I think we are one of the few governments in not only the country but also the world that have managed to balance that tightrope. We have done that because we have reached out and worked with the community, in particular the business community.

For example, at the outset in New South Wales 490,000 businesses have registered with a COVID Safety Plan. Right from the start, we had to get businesses opened in a COVID-safe way. Almost half a million businesses answered the call, and I give a great shout-out to them. More than 93,000 customers went through the Service NSW Business Concierge Service to help them navigate some of the complexities around COVID-19—whether it was a business plan, the provision of financial assistance or interpretation of the various public health orders. Then there were a series of small business grants. Initially there was the \$10,000 grant from which over 52,000 grants have been issued, totalling half a billion dollars. [*Extension of time*]

That has been a godsend to businesses, particularly in the teeth of the pandemic. The Treasurer, the Minister for Finance and Small Business and I can vouch for how many businesses were on their knees. They really appreciated the support at a very dark time. That was backed up by a recovery grant of \$3,000 amounting to over \$109 million. The Southern Border Small Business Support Grant offered more than 2,000 grants totalling over \$15 million. I appreciate the advocacy of the member for Albury for his great work for the businesses down there. As part of the northern beaches hardship grant, businesses were offered \$3,000.

I will go over the Dine & Discover vouchers that the Treasurer and I announced today. One of the people whom we approached was Chris Kriketos from the Bakers Oven cafe in The Rocks. The Treasurer and I said our piece about the Dine & Discover vouchers, but it was very touching when listening to Chris speak to the hardship that he has gone through and the appreciation that he has for the assistance that the Government has provided. It was really moving to see how hard it has been on the ground. He said to the Treasurer and me that the QR code has been helpful in the sense of bringing everybody onto the one platform. It has made it easier for customers and, therefore, produces confidence. He said, "Rolling out the alfresco seating made a significant impact. In fact, the last time I checked, foot traffic was up by 25 or 35 per cent, and gross turnover was up beyond that as well." Those are concrete examples of what the Government is doing to help businesses during this tough time.

WILD DOG FENCE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (15:11): I address my question to the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's delivery of the world's longest wild dog fence and the many local jobs it has created?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (15:11): Happy New Year, Mr Speaker. You look very happy to be here. I know the member for Dubbo is happy to be back in this place, and so are we. There are not many smiles from those opposite, though. Another year of the opposition—the looks of resignation on their faces. Not even having the member for Bankstown back on the front bench can make them laugh and be happy. It is good to see her there. And Jodi is not here. I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. I know why he is happy to be back, because he is a damn good fighter for his electorate. Plenty of jobs are coming his way this year. A regional New South Wales department division is coming his way, as well as the maintenance facility for the regional train fleet in Dubbo. Those are just two of the things that he has been lobbying for very hard. I say well done to him.

To the world's longest wild dog fence, something that I know captivates everyone in the House, particularly those opposite. It is big news for western New South Wales and the primary industries sector. The Deputy Premier and I were there last September at Hungerford—it is out in country New South Wales—turning the first sod on the first 15 kilometres of that project. It is interesting that while the other States are playing silly games with our borders in terms of restrictions, New South Wales is building the only State barrier we will ever need: the world's longest wild dog fence to keep the pests out, not people. Although in terms of Queensland, I would be happy to keep some of them out anyway.

The wild dog fence will be the largest in the world. The Government is undertaking a \$37.5 million investment, which is unprecedented. Those sorts of investments do not come about by accident; they do not simply fall out of the sky. The Government intrinsically believes very strongly in supporting not only the primary industries sector but also the economies of rural, regional and, importantly for this project, remote New South Wales. The 742-kilometre extension of that fence all the way along the New South Wales-Queensland border

from Cameron Corner past Hungerford to Mungindi and from Cameron Corner down the South Australian border to the Murray River will create 85 jobs in western New South Wales in some of our most remote communities.

Importantly, many of those jobs will be taken by Indigenous Australians because in the first stretch we engaged Aboriginal contractors from Enngonia to undertake a lot of that work. Currently, the Government has a \$17 million tender out to market for firms in rural and regional New South Wales to build the rest of that fence. Importantly, we made sure that the tenders and the construction periods were broken down into 50- to 100-kilometre sections so that bush businesses like Ben Ritchie's Bourke Steel could put in tenders to secure that work, keeping the money and the jobs in western New South Wales—in rural and regional New South Wales. When the Deputy Premier and I were out there turning the sod at Hungerford, Ben Ritchie from Bourke Steel & Hire—

Ms Trish Doyle: Sing us a song.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: You're confusing me with the member for Tamworth. I don't sing.

Ms Trish Doyle: I'm sorry. I was asking the member for Tamworth to sing a song and spice it up a bit.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: He sings; I build fences. Ben Ritchie, the Bourke Steel supplier, who was engaged to provide the materials for that first section near Hungerford, was very pleased to be involved and said, "It's great to see local businesses get the contracts because it means the money is staying out here in western New South Wales." That is what the project is all about: ensuring that farmers and key biodiversity assets, like the bilbies that the member for Hornsby released up there near Cameron Corner, can survive, and that wild dogs are kept out. Wild dog predation costs farmers over \$25 million a year in lost stock—lost goats, sheep, calves and other livestock—and that loss of productivity will be removed by the construction of the fence and the seven full-time ongoing jobs that will be created to join the existing 12 full-time jobs based in western New South Wales to maintain that fence.

A fence that is 1,400 kilometres, 1.8 metres high and 300 millimetres buried deep into the soil takes a lot of work to maintain. That is a huge investment from the Government, again supporting the economies and communities of western New South Wales that need all the help that they can get. We will be there supporting them and supporting farmers out in the west and our primary industry sector at the same time.

ROAD TOLLS

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:16): In question time today I correctly said that you get free car rego if you pay a certain amount in relation to your tolls. In relation to your car licence, it is a 50 per cent discount if you have no demerit points at 100 per cent. But, as I said in my answer, I encourage everybody to contact Service NSW in order to get the full extent of their benefits.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

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

Wingecarribee Shire Council

Petition requesting the Government to direct Wingecarribee Shire Council to defer the appointment of the general manager until after 4 September 2021 when a newly elected council is confirmed, received from **Mr Nathaniel Smith**.

Community and Small Business CCTV Fund

Petition requesting the Government to expand the eligibility of the Community and Small Business CCTV Fund to include the Maitland local government area and provide funding for the Rutherford precinct from the Department of Communities and Justice crime prevention grants program, received from **Ms Jenny Aitchison**.

Private Members' Statements

VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE SCHOOL AWARDS

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (15:18): Our local schools were one of the groups most affected by the impacts of COVID-19. Despite having to take on remote learning and changes to routines, they have done a great job getting through the last 12 months by supporting each other through their strong school communities. As we approached the end of the school year, I was really looking forward to attending the many end-of-year school presentation days. But, of course, that was not to be the case, for good reasons. I did visit McAuley Catholic Primary School in Rose Bay early in December for its amazing outdoor Christmas Around the World concert.

With international travel being very limited due to COVID-19, the students took us around the world through singing and dancing performances. I was very excited to get my invitation in the form of a "boarding pass" to the special Christmas service. I say well done to the teachers, students, parents and principal Nicole Jones for hosting the concert.

Galilee Catholic School in Bondi held its year 6 graduation ceremony on Friday 11 December at St Anne's Church in Bondi. I was glad that because it is a small school with a small number of year 6 students, they were able to receive their graduation certificates with their families present. I presented the leadership and citizenship award to year 6 student Charlotte Gillespie. It was not my first time meeting Charlotte; she was a runner-up in my 2019 Season's Greetings Card Competition. It is clear she is an excellent and creative student, and I wish her the best of luck settling into high school.

Although I was unable to attend the presentation day for Bellevue Hill Public School, I made a video recording and congratulated the two winners of the Vacluse Award, acknowledging their outstanding citizenship. I congratulate Stage 2 winner Sophie Antic and Stage 3 recipient Ronen Barski. Last week I presented Ronen with his award and book voucher at my electorate office. It was good to meet his parents, Alexander and Marina, and his charming younger brother. Ronen is now studying at Moriah College. Having had a look at the many awards he brought in to show me, I am sure great things are ahead for him as a student. I will also invite Sophie Antic to my office so I can congratulate her in a similar way.

I congratulate year 2 student Audrey Caltagirone from Bondi Public School, who received the Vacluse Award K-2 Citizenship Award. She is a great example to all her school peers of what a good community citizen looks like and why that is important. I commend Audrey. I also recorded a congratulatory video for Rose Bay Public School in which I presented the School Values Award to a student who is a great role model and firmly embodies the school values of compassion, fairness, honesty and responsibility in the way they go about their schoolwork and demonstrate leadership. That award went to year 6 student Jake Holzman. I congratulate Jake.

I could not attend the senior school speech day of The Scots College in Bellevue Hill. Normally it is an amazing spectacle at the Opera House, but I did record a video introducing the school's annual Duke of Edinburgh Awards. I served as deputy chair of the national awards before I became a member of this House. I did want to send the awardees my best wishes. Among the schools that run the awards program in this State, I imagine The Scots College would have one of the largest groups of gold awardees through its program every year. I congratulate those awardees at The Scots College.

I mention a couple of other awards. Octavia Attard from Vacluse Public School received my Community Service Award for being an outstanding member of the school community. I congratulate Charlotte Le Moing from Woollahra Public School, who received the Vacluse Citizenship award. I am sure they are very deserving. I will meet them in person soon. I have invited them to my electorate office to acknowledge their great work and to give them their book vouchers and certificates.

The end of year is also a time for me to connect with our local schools through my annual Season's Greetings Card Competition. This year, despite COVID, I was overwhelmed by all the fantastic entries: Ascham School, Double Bay Public School, Galilee Catholic School, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, Reddam House School, Bondi and Vacluse Public School. It was incredibly difficult to decide whose creative idea would be on the front cover of my Christmas greetings card. The winner was Ruby Levitt from Reddam House School, Bondi. Runners-up were Sophie Gray from Double Bay Public School and Maisie Scott from Vacluse Public School. I congratulate all students who entered the competition. I thank the schools for the amazing work they did last year. They pushed ahead. They will do so well, and I am there to support them wherever needs be. I hope to connect with all of them in person soon. It may not be soon, but I look forward to that day.

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (15:23): I recognise and congratulate the outstanding recipients of this year's Canterbury-Bankstown Australia Day awards. The awards recognise selfless and inspirational people, and groups from across the Canterbury-Bankstown area. After such an unprecedented year the awards are of particular significance now more than ever. In these challenging times most memorable have been the extraordinary acts of kindness, the civic mindedness, and the many ways in which community members have come together and looked out for one another. The 2021 Canterbury-Bankstown Citizen of the Year is Chester Hill Neighbour Centre's manager Dale Donadel. Dale is also a dear friend and a community worker with whom I have been privileged to work for many years. During the two decades that she has managed the organisation, Dale has exemplified consistently all the values I mentioned.

In that time, Ms Donadel has consistently exceeded what could have been expected of the role. In addition to managing the centre and the vital support it provides to the local community, Ms Donadel has increased the

centre's capabilities, initiated new programs and expanded the remit of services that the centre provides. Together with centre chairman, Mr David Crawford, and the other members of the management committee, and supported by her wonderful staff and volunteers, Ms Donadel has overseen extraordinary growth at the centre. It now provides services as diverse as child care, community gardening workshops, computer literacy programs and social support for youths, seniors and people with disabilities. Those incredibly important programs are utilised by many people. I have been proud to support the organisation's successful applications for Community Building Partnership grants.

Those who pop by the centre are equally likely to see Ms Donadel directly working with volunteers and clients or unloading goods, in addition to managing and growing the centre's day-to-day operations. She is often seen driving the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre bus to deliver goods and to assist people in their travels. Ms Donadel is also a member of a committee within the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area that oversees community initiatives. She has worked with a Western Sydney University School of Medicine program to provide medical students with the experience of working in a diverse and disadvantaged community. For such diverse and important contributions to the wellbeing of disadvantaged and vulnerable people in south-west Sydney, the recognition of Ms Donadel as Canterbury-Bankstown Citizen of the Year is well deserved. I congratulate her again on this accolade.

I also recognise the other outstanding award recipients. I congratulate the Canterbury-Bankstown Young Citizen of the Year, Mr Lachlan Hyde, who was recognised for his volunteer work and advocacy in south-west Sydney. Mr Hyde is a longstanding member of the Australian Air League. In 2020, while the COVID-19 pandemic halted the league's usual meetings, he took the initiative to establish an "e-squadron" that could continue to participate in the league's activities virtually. Mr Hyde also volunteers his time with NSW Health as an accredited mental health first aider. I met with Mr Hyde in November to discuss another of his volunteer projects: his advocacy for the Prospect Creek, which runs through the Bankstown electorate, to be upgraded to a river and renamed the Lennox River after the nineteenth-century master stonemason who designed the Lansdowne Bridge. We are still waiting for an answer to that from the Geographical Names Board of New South Wales. The passion and initiative that Mr Hyde has displayed across these projects is commendable.

I congratulate the Canterbury-Bankstown Volunteer of the Year, Mr Salim Diab, who as President of Saint Charbel's Youth Association has devoted much of his time to supporting Saint Charbel's parish, college and care centre activities. Mr Diab was particularly invaluable during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he ensured that the youth association's members were able to keep virtually connected with the parish through online spiritual sessions. I congratulate the recipient of the Jack Munday Environment and Heritage Award, Mr Peter Stevens, who was recognised for his longstanding service with the Wolli Creek Preservation Society, with which he has volunteered for 17 years.

Mr Stevens has advocated tirelessly for the appreciation, care and preservation of the Wolli Creek Valley and has mentored a new generation of environmental volunteers. Lastly, I congratulate the Community Organisation of the Year, Lighthouse Community Support, on its work during the past 12 months in particular. The organisation provides essential services to at-risk people and provides mentorship and leadership services to young people. I recognise its founding members Mr Gandhi Sindyan and Ms Najah Zoabi and its board, staff and volunteers for their phenomenal work. Once again I congratulate all the Canterbury-Bankstown Australia Day Awards winners.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:28): I inform the House of a number of projects that are being planned for the Myall Lakes electorate. The Government has just announced a further \$2 million for the Tuncurry boat maintenance facility or slipway. There are two parts to the \$3 million project. Firstly, there is the rehabilitation of the ground underneath the slipway after decades of boats and ships being cleaned and restored there. The chemicals that were used in the past were not good for the environment, so there will be environmental rehabilitation of the area. Secondly, there is the new slipway motor and house to keep the motor under cover. It is important because boating is becoming more and more popular. Because of that, we need that marine infrastructure. This public slipway is being used by many boats coming not only from the Myall Lakes electorate but also from Newcastle, Port Stephens and other places. It is one of the few public slipways that will take larger boats. This is fantastic news for the boating community and others who enjoy boating as well.

Further to that, another \$60,000 for sand scraping at the Old Bar Beach in the Myall Lakes electorate has been announced this week. The Old Bar Beach is one of the coastal erosion hotspots on the coast. A couple of years ago we did some sand scraping there and found that helped preserve the beach. It will help while the council goes about preparing its coastal management plan, which will then guide it to other medium- and long-term solutions for the beach. It is great news to hear about that funding. I have spoken to the council's environmental

officers, who are very happy. They have used sand scraping twice in the past, which helps to protect assets such as the Old Bar Surf Club, access ramps and houses. It is really great news that we are able to do that.

The other great news I will talk about is the announcement on fixing and replacing country bridges. Over \$20 million will go to seven bridges in the Myall Lakes electorate, including the very important Cedar Party Creek Bridge at Wingham. The Cedar Party Creek Bridge is being replaced as well as the Falls Bridge, Parsons Creek Bridge, Killabakh Creek Bridge, Cox Bridge, Little Tiri Bridge and Kings Creek Bridge. The member for Blue Mountains might think this is very funny and not very worthy but safety is important for children to catch the school bus along those country roads so they can get from one facility or town to another. It is important for The Nationals. It might not be up in the Blue Mountains, but it is important where we come from. The bridges are extremely important not only for the safety of children but also to take freight from one area to another area.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Members will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: It is important that we improve the roads all the time. This is great news. That funding is on top of fixing country roads. Cowper Street in Taree just got a new resealed and upgraded intersection, making it a lot safer. Muldoon Street is being upgraded. Those projects are being delivered in the Myall Lakes electorate by this Government and The Nationals. In recent days a number of new fire trucks for the Rural Fire Service have been delivered. Tuncurry brigade received its new CAT 1 in December and Tinonee brigade has its new CAT 1. Very shortly we will open the fire station at Rainbow Flat that was burnt down during the fires last summer. Obviously it is being used, but the official opening will be in a few weeks time. That is great news for those first responders and others who did such a great job during the fires last year.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:33): I put on record the Central Coast community's frustration and disappointment at the fiasco unfolding on the Central Coast due to the failed council amalgamation agenda by the Liberal Government. As we know, the community was totally opposed to council amalgamations, but those opposite pressed ahead to spite that view. It was mainly councils in Labor and The Nationals electorates that were forcibly amalgamated. The Nationals MPs paid the ultimate price in Orange, Wagga Wagga, Murray and Barwon. Meanwhile, there are councils like Mosman, Hunters Hill, Canada Bay and Woollahra in Liberal electorates that were left untouched by amalgamation, despite some of these councils being the size of a postage stamp. But I am not here to talk about the members for Drummoyne or Bellevue Hill, I am here to talk about the member in front of me, the member for Terrigal, who has been asleep at the wheel since 2016 when our community was blindsided by the forced amalgamation of Gosford and Wyong councils. Mr Crouch has done nothing to help, and made no effort to fix the problems at Central Coast Council.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that private members' statements should be about a member's electorate.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Can we not attack other members.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is a very important matter for the community that I represent.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am giving you the heads-up. As the member knows, I play fair.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I am very clear on what I want to say.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I want to make sure before the member goes on that this is about her electorate.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: This is about the electorate I represent. I would never not adhere to the rules.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: So far you have mentioned the member for Terrigal's name five times.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In the electorate that I represent on the Central Coast.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member may continue.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: If the member had stood up for the community and stopped the forced amalgamation from the get-go, then Central Coast Council would not be in this situation. This is not a personal attack or reflection, it is just the truth. There is no standing order in this place yet that prevents me from doing that, surely. The people of the Central Coast are fuming at the State Liberal Government because they know that the collapse of their amalgamated council is completely the fault of the Government and the successive Ministers for local government who have ignored the structural problems that were baked into the council on day one. We have been suffering from this since day one. Of course, there are rumours that the current Minister will be expelled

from the Cabinet. I am surprised that this is such an open comment, which was made to me in the coffee line today in the cafe.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I will start removing members if they continue to interject.

Mr Adam Crouch: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Terrigal will remain seated. I have asked the Clerk to stop the clock. The member for Swansea will resume her seat. I remind the member for Swansea that the purpose of a private member's statement is to speak about one's electorate. It is not about attacking either the member for Terrigal or any other person in this place, on either side, or the Minister for that matter. With two and a bit minutes left I ask the member to revert to speaking about her electorate without attacking—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Central Coast is my electorate. You are obviously not aware of that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I know my geography pretty well, thank you.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Then why are you questioning me?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: If members start interrupting me, they will be asked to leave the Chamber. I do not care if I am the only one left in the Chamber. I am politely asking the member for Swansea to revert to what her private member's statement is all about.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I want clarification here about this and I am being genuine. You are asking me to talk about my electorate. These residents who live in the Central Coast local government area are the people I represent, so how am I not talking about my electorate?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Please refrain from attacking other members of the Chamber.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: To be clear, when I talk about the Central Coast I am talking about the people that I represent.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: In some parts you were, but to be honest you were attacking the Minister for Local Government.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I was telling the facts that I heard today.

Ms Anna Watson: We are allowed to speak the truth. I know the truth hurts.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Shellharbour will leave the Chamber for—

Ms Anna Watson: For how long?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: About an hour, under 249A.

Ms Anna Watson: You need to know you are doing a great job. Where are the standing orders, mate?

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Make that two hours.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Shellharbour left the Chamber at 15.38.]

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Shellharbour is very close to not coming back for 24 hours. Under Standing Order 249A the member for Shellharbour will leave the Chamber for an hour. The member for Swansea may resume.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The Minister for Local Government needs to intervene and demand that the council administrator provide a referendum to Central Coast residents on the question of demerger. This will not cost one extra cent as the administrator has already made plans and asked the Minister to put forward a referendum on council ward numbers, and the number of councillors in this council. It will not cost extra to ask the question of the people who want a chance to answer and to do what they want: demerge the council. The forcibly amalgamated council was a failure from day one. That failure is the responsibility of then Premier Mike Baird and every Liberal member who voted with him in 2016 to amalgamate Wyong and Gosford councils.

We cannot allow a situation where ratepayers are forced to cough up 15 per cent extra in taxes every year, where hundreds of jobs are lost and where services across the council area are slashed to reduce costs. Those measures are all on the table because members in this place, including the member for Terrigal, let the Liberals bankrupt the Central Coast. If rates on the Central Coast go up by one cent, the member for Terrigal must take responsibility. If a single job is lost on our council, then the member for Terrigal must take responsibility. We are looking down the barrel of job losses, rate rises and service cuts. The member for Terrigal must take responsibility

because he is responsible. He must go to the Minister's office and tell her that they need to help fix the problem that was created in this place.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:40): I remind the member for Swansea that the administrator released an interim report, which the member obviously has not read. It clearly outlined that the administration and the amalgamation of Central Coast Council had absolutely nothing to do with the financial situation the council finds itself in. The administrator made it crystal clear to the 340,000 residents of the Central Coast—excluding the member for Swansea, who has just walked out of the Chamber—that the responsibility lies solely with the collective body and the senior executives.

I also remind members that the person at the helm of the council was a Labor mayor—a Labor mayor who was asleep at the wheel—with a block of eight councillors, including six Labor councillors. They hid every financial decision in a confidential meeting, to the point where they did not even disclose it to the Minister until the day they could not pay wages. Let us be clear: The people who cannot run a budget or a council are Labor members on the Central Coast. They should be ashamed of themselves.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for his contribution. I remind members that the purpose of private members' statements is to speak about one's electorate. I do not like it when I hear insulting remarks thrown from either side of the Chamber. Some 10 minutes ago I asked the member for Shellharbour to remove herself from the Chamber for one hour. I remind members, particularly Government MPs—including the Minister for Local Government—to not run into the Chamber and start screaming. Next time that occurs the Minister will also be directed to leave the Chamber for an hour.

TAHMOOR COALMINE

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:42): I advise the Parliament of the successful public community meeting held on 1 February at the Bargo Baptist Church. I called the meeting to discuss the Tahmoor coalmine expansion plans. Tahmoor coalmine is an underground mine located between the townships of Tahmoor and Bargo in my electorate of Wollondilly, approximately 75 kilometres south-west of Sydney. In January 2019 foreign-owned Tahmoor Coal lodged a development application for the Tahmoor South Coal Project. Originally impacting 751 homes, the project was revised in February 2020 and again in August 2020. It is now proposed to affect 143 homes.

Using longwall mining techniques, the project would mine directly beneath the northern and north-eastern outskirts of the township of Bargo, including homes, rural properties and public utilities such as the Main Southern Railway and the Moomba to Sydney Pipeline. If approved by the Independent Planning Commission, this is proposed to happen within Greater Sydney. Let me be clear: The original development application gives clear insight into the intent of this project to eventually mine directly under the entire township of Bargo. Whether 751 or 143 homes are affected, the lives of those families will be changed forever. Those numbers are simply unacceptable.

The 166-page planning department report that recommends the project predicts maximum conventional subsidence of up to 1,450 millimetres for homes in the area. That is almost 1½ metres. Alarming, it also finds that the mine site is susceptible to non-conventional subsidence that may increase those predicted maximums. This is due to geological anomalies such as the mine site's close proximity to the Nepean fault zone. Even at conventional levels of subsidence, the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment predicts that at least 22 homes will be affected to such a degree that offers of acquisition may need to be made. In other words, those homes will be completely destroyed.

Yesterday I met with the Premier to put forward my concerns about this very bad proposal. Without trying to verbalise her, she was very receptive to my assessment of the destructive nature of mining beneath family homes. That concern is not surprising. Since my election to this place in 2019, my office has dealt with more than 50 mine subsidence victims. I have heard heartbreaking stories of the misery of dealing with mine subsidence. I have seen doors that will not open, walls that are cracked and sewerage pipes that are broken. Many of those repairs have to wait until the subsidence has stabilised, which may take at least five years. It disrupts family life and undermines the social fabric of the community. Even taking a simple shower in the morning can be pot luck.

It is those stories that drive my motivation to oppose this mine expansion. This is now in the hands of the Information and Privacy Commission, which will decide the matter at arm's length from the Government. I am hopeful that they will take into consideration the enormous social impact that mine subsidence has had on my local community and the threat that it poses to the township of Bargo. The current mine expansion plan beneath parts of Bargo is an embarrassment to the industry. As someone who supports mining, it is an embarrassment to me. My electorate is unique in being the only one to be affected by active longwall mining in urbanised areas.

I thank those colleagues who have found the time to engage with me on this issue to fully understand the impact of this project. Like me and my community, they are shocked and dismayed.

BALLIMORE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (15:47): Last week I was in Ballimore, a village that may be quite small but where the community spirit is absolutely enormous. The purpose of my visit that afternoon was to spend some time with members of the local Rural Fire Service brigade and recognise their invaluable contribution to the fight against the horrific 2019-20 summer of bushfires. On this type of occasion, one of the first things you notice when you arrive and speak to the members is the low-key and very humble way they go about things. For the members there on that afternoon, it was fairly clear they were almost embarrassed to be there receiving Premier's citations or Long Service Medals. None of the members who join the RFS do so for that reason; they do it because it needs to be done to keep their community safe. It is often a generational scenario as well.

Ballimore's RFS brigade has been protecting its community for decades. It is part of the overall Orana team, which on a wider scale has 60 brigades and more than 1,800 members covering townships in the western area of New South Wales. In fact, it covers about 12,500 square kilometres of very diverse terrain. It was an honour to be there on behalf of the Premier to present 19 members of the brigade with a Bushfire Emergency Citation, which recognises their significant role in the emergency response effort to combat the 2019-2020 summer of fires.

Those to receive awards were Captain Ben Maher, Senior Deputy Captain Colin Buckler, Deputy Captain Robert Conran, Deputy Captain Greg Court, Deputy Captain Benjamin Whillock, Rhonda Buckler, Cristen Buckler, Matthew Buckler, John Cass, Shane Court, Joshua Darlington, Harley Darlington, James Doyle, Joshua Giddings, Glen Manson, Joel McInnes, Neil Nixon, Dale Stewart and the late Luke Reeves, who sadly passed away in 2020 but was posthumously given this award. As you would appreciate from hearing some of those names, quite a few surnames pop up on multiple occasions. In regional communities right across the State being part of the RFS really is a family affair. We certainly see that at Ballimore.

As well as presenting those citations, I also had the opportunity to recognise some of the brigade's longest-serving volunteers. In total, the 10 clasp recipients have combined for 247 years of service to the Rural Fire Service. The awards were a deserving recognition of what they have done, and continue to do, for their community. Allen Diggelman, Stephanie Duffus and Neil Nixon each received Long Service Medals recognising 13 years of service to the Ballimore brigade. Miranda Whillock's 14 years was recognised, as was Ben Maher's 16 years, Rhonda Buckler's 23 years and Ben Whillock's 26 years. Both Rhonda and Ben received the Long Service Medal 1st Clasp for more than 20 years' service.

Richard Hicks received a Long Service Medal 2nd Clasp for reaching 31 years as a volunteer. He joined the brigade in 1989 and during his time in the brigade he has undertaken training up to crew leader level, and has served as a deputy captain for three periods, 2001-02, 2004-09 and again from 2017-20. He also served as the brigade president from 2005-06. In recent years Richard has used his industry experience to qualify as a heavy plant supervisor. This role is critical within the incident management teams to effectively task and track the often numerous items of plant on the fireground and to ensure the welfare of the contract personnel.

Ron Blekmore received a Long Service Medal 3rd Clasp in recognition of the 46 years he has been involved with the brigade. Ron joined the Ballimore Brigade in what was then the Talbragar Shire Council area in about 1968, although the official records show his commencement with the Bushfire Service as 1974. During Ron's time with the brigade he has had training up to crew leader level, and was a deputy captain from 1977 until 1981 when he became the captain; a position he held until 1999. He also served as senior deputy captain on two occasions from 2004-05 and 2008-09. From 1988 to 2002 Ron was also the group captain for the Dubbo East Group, responsible for the Ballimore, Boothenna, Wongarbon, Eulomogo and Eschol brigades—an amazing achievement from Ron. Well done.

The final recipient on the evening was Greg Court, who received a Long Service Medal 4th Clasp for an amazing 52 years of involvement. Greg has been a local farmer and a respected member of the Ballimore district community all of his life. He officially joined in 1969 at the age of 16; however, unofficially, he attended fires with his father well before that, as many had. Since joining he has been a very active member—vice-president, president, deputy captain and brigade captain for 15 years. He has inspired many. He has led the brigade in friendly and quiet terms, but also very confidently. He is certainly part of the reason why Ballimore Brigade is so well looked after.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:52): For the past six months, people in my electorate have contacted my office with photos, videos and stories of how their local roads have been swamped with the traffic as thousands

of cars and trucks try to avoid the new and unfair \$7.23 each way toll on the M5 East. What my community has known all along has now been confirmed—the \$4.8 billion M8 toll which was designed to reduce surface traffic on local roads has instead increased local traffic as trucks and cars refuse the exorbitant toll on a road—the M5—that has been toll free for 20 years and has seen no upgrades. Weekly traffic between 1.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. has increased from 2,043 vehicle movements before the tolls to 4,852 after the tolls, representing a massive 137 per cent increase in traffic movements. And it does not let up for residents living along these surrounding roads.

Traffic volumes are still bad approaching the morning peak with weekly vehicle movements increasing from 5,227 movements at 6.00 a.m., before the tolls were introduced, jumping to a massive 9,367 afterwards—a 79 per cent increase in traffic movements. It should be remembered that this \$4.8 billion piece of infrastructure was designed to reduce surface traffic, but it has, in fact, doubled and even tripled it at different times of day. Residents have told me that their lives have become difficult with cars and trucks driving past at all hours of the morning—and now we have the proof. The Government's environmental impact statement predicted a 35 per cent increase in surface traffic outside peak hours after they put the toll on the M5 East, so they knew before the toll was introduced that there would be a negative impact. How can anyone argue that Sydney families can afford the exorbitant tolls? How can this Government expect Sydney families to spend thousands of extra dollars a year to drive on a road that used to be toll-free?

The new tolls are a multibillion-dollar failure that are killing local suburbs in my electorate for one simple reason: Sydney tolls are too expensive. To make a bad situation even worse, the toll roads are subject to an annual 4 per cent increase. That is more than double the rate of inflation. It is time that all members started thinking about Sydney families and their ability to pay exorbitant tolls. We must stop the urgent rush from NSW Treasury to privatise the rest of WestConnex. Members should reflect on the fact that with the cost of tolls financially crippling thousands of families in Sydney, we may end up with a 100 per cent privately owned toll road monopoly in Sydney. That is not good for New South Wales and that is not a fair deal for the people of this State.

SERVICE NSW COST-OF-LIVING APPOINTMENTS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:55): I am delighted to inform the House that Central Coast families are now saving hundreds of dollars through cost-of-living appointments with Service NSW. On Monday new data revealed that each appointment on the Central Coast had resulted in an average saving of more than \$500. At the Gosford Service NSW centre the average saving is \$570, while customers in Woy Woy and the fantastic Erina centre in my electorate are saving an average of \$570 and \$558 respectively. Since the cost-of-living appointments first became available in 2018, more than 6,000 Central Coast residents have benefited from meeting a specialist, through whom they can access a range of government rebates and savings. As the Premier outlined today during question time, more than 70 hip pocket savings can be made.

Central Coast community members tell me that the most popular savings so far are the regional seniors travel card—which I know will benefit constituents in your own electorate, Madam Deputy Speaker—the National Parks Concession Pass, the New South Wales gas rebate, pensioner concessions on vehicle registrations and the Low Income Household Rebate. Cost of living is of high importance for local residents in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, so I am pleased that all the 70 rebates, savings and discounts are now under the one roof with Service NSW. They are becoming so much easier for families and individuals to access, and the \$500-plus savings that people make are a testament to this program. I encourage everyone on the Central Coast to call Service NSW on 13 77 88 or visit a service centre to make a cost-of-living appointment with a specialist. They can walk into the centre at Erina and be greeted by Michael, who is a fantastic guy with an amazing accent, and then have an appointment with Tiffany. I have met Tiffany on multiple occasions. Her children attend Copacabana Public School. She is so proud that she is delivering thousands of dollars of savings to people on the Central Coast.

As part of a new cost-of-living initiative from the New South Wales Government, every adult aged 18 and over will receive four \$25 vouchers. These can be spent at a range of participating businesses across the Central Coast and New South Wales more widely as part of the Dine & Discover NSW voucher program, which will help boost the dining, arts and tourism industries. Whether it is a cafe, restaurant, or amazing wildlife park or museum on the Central Coast, the Dine & Discover NSW program will be a game changer for local economies and will give businesses a much-needed boost after the busy summer period. Over the past 12 months Central Coast residents have all experienced the triple whammy of bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. This stimulus is exactly what the community needs to boost businesses and get people out and about in a COVID-safe way.

The Dine & Discover NSW voucher program is designed to help businesses keep their doors open as well as help them grow. I encourage Central Coast business owners to register online so that they can accept that \$25 voucher. Every eligible business on the Central Coast needs to register online. They should avoid the rush in a few weeks time, get online and do it now. A dedicated team of Service NSW business concierges are in place to assist local businesses with the registration process, including offering information on how to redeem the vouchers. Once registered, businesses will be able to track the progress of the application through their

MyServiceNSW Business Profile. As of last Thursday, there were 70 Central Coast businesses registered for the Dine & Discover NSW voucher program. But we need hundreds more to register.

I encourage every business on the Central Coast to make sure they register for the fantastic Dine & Discover NSW voucher program. The vouchers will roll out statewide in March and will run until 30 June 2021. I also encourage everyone on the coast to download the Service NSW app now and be ready to reap the rewards when Dine & Discover NSW goes live soon. Once again, I highlight the fantastic work being done by the amazing team at Service NSW centres right across the Central Coast. The member for Wyong has two centres in his electorate. That is how good they are; we gave him a second one. The team at Erina are absolutely fantastic. I again congratulate the amazing team at Service NSW right across the Central Coast. I know they will keep up the good work helping our community.

Petitions

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the petition.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (16:00): The petition that we are discussing this afternoon states:

This petition of concerned residents brings to the attention of the House our strong community concern over the broken planning system presided over by the NSW Government, in particular the current situation where developers can circumvent local planning rules and request a 'Rezoning Review' directly with the NSW Department of Planning.

It goes without saying that in a growing city like Sydney, a planning regime must have integrity. If you get it right, you get yourself a beautiful city. There are examples of that all over the world. If you get it wrong, it is not hyperbole to say that poor planning can lead to the diminution of the quality of life of citizens. Many factors contribute to a good planning system; fairness and certainty are two of them. Over the years in this place businesses have called upon members and governments to provide certainty to industries, businesses, developers, investors, purchasers and the like. We agree with that 100 per cent. But residents deserve certainty too, and that has been forgotten with this deliberate circumvention of the planning system.

The loophole I refer to is the Government's deliberate change in the policy a few years ago that stated that zoning lived with local councils. In the past, council made a local environmental plan [LEP] and reviewed it every five years. If someone wanted to change the zoning, they spoke to the council planners before the LEP was adopted or they lobbied the Minister. That is how the zoning could be changed. Now developers can use a loophole to go to a council and ask for a rezoning of their property—notwithstanding that the LEP review is years away. When the council says no, developers can go behind the back of the council and straight to the State Government to make the council change its mind. This loophole is only available to developers, not to normal citizens, and it can have a devastating effect.

If anyone thinks I am exaggerating, I will give an example from my electorate. There is a site of about 12 hectares on Anzac Parade at Little Bay that the University of New South Wales used to own. In 2009 a master plan was made by the developer who purchased it for the University of New South Wales to permit the construction of about 450 dwellings. That master plan was reaffirmed by Randwick council in 2012 and again as recently as 2019 and 2020 when it did its local strategic planning statement. The council set a limit of five storeys and both the developer and the community were happy. Those were the rules in 2017 when Meriton bought the site. But Meriton never plays by the rules. I do not know why, but under this Government it always gets too much.

Meriton sought a rezoning to increase the number of dwellings from 450 to almost 2,000, and to increase the maximum building heights from five to 23 storeys. When we went nuts about it the Government said, "You're right. Twenty-three is way too high. Let's make it 17." The Government permitted the construction of an entirely new town centre with a hotel, shopping centre and gym. It is totally over the top. It is comprehensive garden-variety overdevelopment. It is not a loophole that permits this; it is a deliberate change in policy. It is wrong, it is bad for the community and it is a disaster for residents. Half of those dwellings have already been built—about 200. Residents have spent millions of dollars purchasing a unit on the promise that the site has been master-planned—not disparate ownership, but the ownership of one entity—and they have expected that when they bought it and spent a million or two on a one-bedroom unit that they would have the views that they were promised. Now they are facing the sun being blotted out and property values that will go to hell. That is not fair. This policy is wrong and it needs to be changed.

The Labor Party took a policy to the last election under my leadership that this policy would be stopped and that the developers and property owners who sought a rezoning of property would have to sit down with council planners, the department, the Minister and the Greater Sydney Commission—whoever took part in the discussions—and that it was at local environmental planning time that they would change it. That was our policy. We did not get the opportunity to enact it in law but I notice that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is

in the Chamber. He is a good man in a bad government, and having listened to this debate firsthand I am calling on him now to please change the law back.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:05): The New South Wales Government is committed to improving the transparency and integrity of the planning system. Independent planning panels are an established standard across councils in our State. Under Labor, there was no independent process for assessing or advising on planning proposals. This Government instituted a clear process for assessing planning proposals, with safeguards to ensure transparent consideration and review.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Manly will be heard in silence.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: Through this process, planning panels act as an independent arbiter on rezoning decisions, providing a high degree of probity and accountability to the decision-making processes for development applications and certain planning proposals. The rezoning review for the planning proposal at 1406-1408 Anzac Parade, Little Bay, known as Little Bay Cove, will be determined by the Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel as to whether the planning proposal should progress. The site is next to the Long Bay Correctional Complex, the residential precinct at the former Prince Henry Hospital and a Land and Housing Corporation estate. The rezoning review mechanism allows proponents to make a request that an independent body review a request for a planning proposal and recommend whether a Gateway determination should be issued.

The rezoning review has two tests. The first is the strategic merit test, which puts the onus on spot rezoning proponents to show how their proposal is consistent with the relevant Region Plan, District Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement. The panel may also consider whether the planning proposal is responding to a change in circumstances, such as a major infrastructure investment. Only if the planning proposal meets the strategic merit test can the panel consider the second test of whether the proposal has site-specific merit. This has regard to the natural environment, the existing and likely future uses of land in the site's vicinity, and the capacity of existing or proposed infrastructure. The independent body in this case is the Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel.

The rezoning review for Little Bay Cove will not be up to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, nor the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to decide. After looking at the Greater Sydney Region Plan, Eastern City District Plan and council's Local Strategic Planning Statement, the panel will need to decide whether the additional 1,900 dwellings are appropriate for the area. The panel will also consider the proponent's proposed voluntary planning agreement, with public benefit amounting to an estimated \$142 million, including affordable housing, open space and monetary contributions for infrastructure delivery.

The rezoning review was accepted on 25 June 2020. A rezoning review briefing report will be submitted to the planning panel's secretariat, who will set a meeting date for the panel to consider the rezoning review. The future of the site will need to be considered in the context of transport capacities along Anzac Parade. The recent release of the South East Sydney Transport Strategy will be a critical component in the consideration of transport issues. The panel's recommendation on the Little Bay Cove rezoning review, whatever it may be, will not be taken lightly. The panel will carefully and independently consider all the issues raised throughout the process and weigh up the strategic and site-specific merit before making its final recommendation.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:09): I support the petition brought to the House by the member for Maroubra. I thank the member because I wholeheartedly support the sentiment of the petition. I thank every person who signed the petition because it shows the commitment of east and south-east Sydney residents. They are vehemently opposed to the out-of-control development that this Liberal Government is obsessed with. Every signatory knows that the Liberals cannot be trusted when it comes to development. Under this Liberal Government it has been open season for developers. All the Liberals want to do is take power away from the people and give it to their mate Harry. As the member for Maroubra said, there is one set of rules for everyday citizens and a completely different set of rules for developers. As a result, they are destroying our beautiful communities.

Two examples to which I was deeply committed long before I entered this place hit home for me. The first is 194-214 Oxford Street. Since 2015 Waverley Council and the community have totally opposed that development. Why did they oppose it? First, the development would see height standards change from 15 metres to 36 metres—roughly three storeys to 13 storeys. Secondly, four heritage terrace homes would be ripped out so that those towers could be built. Those monstrous towers will overshadow our great Centennial Park that is located right next door and will cause significant environmental impacts. Waverley Council rejected the development again because it was grossly outside the local environmental plan [LEP] and the council's planning standards. What did the developer do when he did not get what he wanted from council? He went straight to the department and the Minister to get it approved, bypassing the council.

The second great example that everyone in the eastern suburbs is familiar with is the old Bronte RSL site. Again, the development application was well outside the LEP and the development control plan [DCP]. It was not supported by council because it was grossly inappropriate. Anyone who has ever been involved in a local overdevelopment campaign knows firsthand that the system designed by the Liberal Government grossly favours developers over communities. The Liberals' system takes the power away from residents and local governments, and gives all the power to the developers. It is an unjust system that must be reformed in order to return the power to the people and to local governments. Developers have way too much control. The current planning system makes it extremely difficult for local governments and residents to have any real say or certainty in how their neighbourhoods look and feel.

LEPs and DCPs are meant to be strategic documents designed by local councils in collaboration with their communities. However, those documents mean nothing because developers are not required to comply with them because they have backdoor access to the Minister. Let's start calling him "Backdoor Bob Stokes"! Those two examples are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to planned overdevelopment in the east. We know this because the Liberals have declared that a metro will come to Randwick and south-east Sydney, but that metro is not about transportation solutions for the east. If it had anything to do with improving transportation, the Liberal Government would not be removing 17 bus services over the next few weeks or it would not have built the world's slowest and most expensive light rail—the Premier's pet project.

We all know the only reason the Government would build a metro in the east is so it could rezone Randwick to at least 20 storeys. Doing so would destroy all the conservation areas and make the most densely populated part of Sydney even more densely populated. This petition is before the House because we know that we cannot trust the Liberal Government when it comes to development. It has one set of rules for developer mates, who get whatever they want, and another set of rules for everyday people, who continue to be left behind. The Liberal Party's planning laws are destroying our beautiful communities—communities like mine of Coogee, or like Maroubra or Heffron. I look forward to hearing the contribution from the member for Heffron. Our communities are fighting back to bring an end to this madness. We want fairness in our planning. We want certainty in our planning. This must come to an end and there must be reform.

Mr Michael Daley: The member for Ku-ring-gai is going to lecture us about overdevelopment? He doesn't have a block of units in his whole electorate.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (16:14): You need to get out more, mate. In my experience of the way in which rezoning applications have operated in my electorate, local councils are involved in rezoning proposals and are an important part of the process. Since I have been the member for Ku-ring-gai, both Aldi in 2016 and Harris Farm Markets in 2019 have tried to rezone the old Parkers nursery site—in a residential area on Eastern Road, Turramurra—from R2 residential zoning to B zoning to allow the development of a supermarket. With the community, I strongly opposed those rezoning applications because of adverse traffic and other amenity impacts of the proposals.

In the Aldi case, the local councillors unanimously killed the rezoning application. In the Harris Farm Markets case, to the eternal shame of mayor Jennifer Anderson and councillors Donna Greenfield, Martin Smith, Cheryl Szatow and Callum Clarke, the rezoning planning proposal was approved by the council on multiple occasions using the mayor's casting vote—notwithstanding the opposition of the local ward councillor, Cedric Spencer, and of councillors Christine Kay, Sam Ngai, Jeff Pettett and Peter Kelly. If councillors Greenfield, Smith, Szatow, Clarke and Anderson, who approved that rezoning, are re-elected in September, no residential street in Ku-ring-gai will be safe, given their track record of rezoning land in residential streets, from inappropriate commercial developments.

My understanding of the Little Bay Cove proposal is that Randwick City Council had 90 days to consider the rezoning application under the relevant planning policy. It did not make a decision on the planning proposal within 90 days, which triggered a right for Meriton to request a review by the planning panel. For more than 30 years in New South Wales there has been a requirement under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act—and councils are well aware of it—to move quickly to consider and exercise their responsibilities regarding planning matters within 90 days or there will be a deemed refusal. Randwick council has a Labor mayor and a Greens deputy mayor. Of the 15 councillors, eight are Labor and Greens councillors, with only four Liberal councillors.

The question has to be asked: Why did the Labor member for Maroubra, Michael Daley, fail to encourage Labor mayor Danny Said and his fellow Labor and Greens councillors at Randwick council to speedily consider the rezoning matter and ensure that the council dealt with the matter within 90 days? Democracy delayed is democracy denied, and that applies to local government as well as any other level of government. The Little Bay Cove planning proposal to rezone the land was first submitted to Randwick council in September 2019 but was not subject to a council determination until 23 June 2020—a period in excess of 90 days, after which the horse

had bolted. The delay by Randwick council gave Meriton the right to seek a review by the planning panel. The recommendation of whether the planning proposal should proceed to Gateway determination is now subject to a thorough and independent review by the Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel. The report to Randwick councillors by the council planning section will be part of the material before the Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel, and the council will have the right to put submissions to the panel.

What Randwick council did in delaying its decision in this case is something that other Labor councils have been doing around Sydney and the rest of the State. In the case of the Canterbury-Bankstown Local Environmental Plan [LEP], I understand that recently the Labor-dominated Canterbury-Bankstown council refused to do its job and deal with the council-prepared proposal to amend its LEP, which wanted to create in some cases widespread and inappropriate high rise and excessive densities in the council area. Instead of considering the matter on behalf of the community, the Labor councillors raised spurious conflict of interest matters, denying a quorum on council. As a consequence, the LEP went to a planning panel.

I also understand that the now disgraced, bankrupt, former Labor-dominated Central Coast Council had multiple deferrals of its proposed new consolidated LEP. These are a few examples of the same problem which our citizens need to be aware of in advance of the September local government elections. Labor-dominated councils have started avoiding or deferring their obligations to make decisions for their communities as a political ploy so that they can try and blame the State Government for the decisions they should be making which may be unpopular or of some concern. I would encourage members like the member for Maroubra to call out Labor councils that are cynically delaying making hard decisions. Labor councils should be embracing the opportunity to stand up for their communities.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:20): The Tories cannot help themselves. As soon as they get elected to the Treasury bench it does not matter what they have promised, it matters not what they have guaranteed, the developers can take control. I was going to say that they are answerable to the big end of town—but they are the big end of town party. It just morphs into their planning system. Politics is at a stage in New South Wales where governments are not held accountable for their promises. They can say whatever they want to get themselves elected and everybody forgets. The media does not hold them to account. But does the House remember the words "returning planning powers to local communities"? I want to refer the House to a document entitled "Start the Change—Make NSW Number One Again", issued by the Liberal Party and The Nationals of New South Wales—the O'Farrell promise. Let me read it to the House:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Will Rewrite The State's Planning Laws

...

The NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to returning local planning powers to local communities (through their councils). We believe that local residents—through councils—are best placed to make local planning decisions affecting their suburbs. After all, it is local residents—not Macquarie Street planners—who have to live with the results of these planning decisions.

This is a document, promise, guarantee, mandate from when the Government was overwhelmingly elected. The member for Pittwater, who has a PhD in planning law and who is the planning Minister, mark II, knows exactly what those promises were. Not only does he know what they were, he knows better than any member of this House how to introduce this mandate. Instead of introducing it, in craven cowardice he creates and hides behind planning panels to make decisions that operate over the top of local communities and democratically elected councillors.

Instead of answering a matter on which no doubt he has advice from his department, he sends the member for Ku-ring-gai, the man from Killara, to represent the Government's point of view. The member for Ku-ring-gai has no planning knowledge. An eminent silk he might be; qualified for the frontbench he is not. He passed the intelligence test and that disqualifies him. They send him out and he has no idea about planning law. Every councillor in New South Wales and anybody in the planning field knows that there is no "90 days" to consider a rezoning application. That applies to a development application [DA]. This is a rezoning application.

Mr Alister Henskens: Do you want to read the policy?

Mr RON HOENIG: Do not talk about guidelines. You can write as many guidelines as you like, like your accelerated planning guidelines, which you just ignore.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Ku-ring-gai to order for the first time.

Mr RON HOENIG: When your mates want a DA under an accelerated planning policy that does not comply with the guidelines, you just look after them like you always have.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Ku-ring-gai to order for the second time.

Mr RON HOENIG: Do I have to remind the Tories that they were thrown out on their rear in 1995 because they were looking after developers through overdevelopment? They got themselves elected because we were silly enough to introduce part 3A. We were silly enough in government to take planning powers away from local government. If they want to know why we were on the nose in 2011 and why they got their mandate, it was over our introduction of part 3A and taking planning powers away from local communities. Those opposite were elected under a written promise.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Heffron will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr RON HOENIG: Here it is. A written promise. How does the Government explain that? How does it explain something it expressly has a mandate in that it can ignore? It is a pretty poor state of politics in New South Wales when the government of the day that has been in for 10 years ignores a fundamental promise that caused it to be elected and pretends it does not exist. The Minister for Planning and Public Places sits there quietly and sends the member for Manly, who would not have a clue, to contribute to this debate. Quite frankly, those opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (16:25): This has been an edifying and interesting debate, but it is about something quite serious. I have been amused that I have been called a craven coward and also Backdoor Bob, which is a moniker I really hope does not stick. I pick up on something that the member for Heffron raised about the commitment to rewrite the State's planning laws, which was made upon coming to government in 2011. I note that was made good on and comprehensive legislation was brought before this House. It failed to pass the Parliament. We tried again in 2018 with legislation that did receive the support of the Opposition of the time. As a result, we have moved to a strategic plan-led planning system. I think the excellent member for Maroubra—I acknowledge at least he said nice things about me—is a great man in a great opposition, so great I hope it stays there, it is very good at it. There were some contributions strong on rhetoric but not fact.

Part 3A that the member for Heffron referred to stood alongside the rezoning process and took entirely out of the hands of local councils planning matters that were effectively spot rezonings with no appeal rights that went straight through an opaque process and were determined by autocratic administrative fiat by the Minister of the day. What we are talking about is something altogether different, that is a review of a government decision, a review mechanism that was never available in the past. For example, if property owners, mums and dads, do not like the decision of the council, they can seek a redetermination of that decision. If they do not like that, they can go to the Land and Environment Court. I note the member for Ku-ring-gai has appeared in the Land and Environment Court and does know quite a deal about planning law.

There is nothing inappropriate about a process that allows a review of a government decision, whether it is a review by council or State Government. There is nothing inappropriate that that goes to an independent panel at arm's length from government to make appropriate decisions. What I will contribute fundamental to this debate is that a rezoning review is there to look at whether a proposal exhibits strategic merit. There is talk of future transport to Little Bay and it may well be that future transport at some time may facilitate additional development. Obviously the panel needs to make its decision on the facts that are before it. I encourage them to do so and I am sure they will do a great job.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (16:28): In reply: I thank all members who have contributed to the debate this afternoon, but I find the identity of the speakers on the other side intriguing. They are all from the northern beaches and the leafy North Shore. They would have a heart attack if a developer put an application in for 23 storeys in their electorates. The residents in the electorates of the members for Pittwater and Manly would have their heads on pikes if 20-storey buildings went up in the northern beaches. Under this Government there is no prospect of that happening. That is for Labor electorates and for others to bear the burden. It will never happen in their electorates. As for the member for Ku-ring-gai, for three decades Ku-ring-gai Council has been notorious for resisting any attempt to put up anything over three storeys—or even up to three storeys—in that area.

The member for Manly spoke about probity, accountability and independence. We, as the Minister quite rightly points out, vote for those proposals. I support Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels and other planning panels. Where people in my party do not, I do. I once again thank the Minister for being in the Chamber. I take him back to a discussion he had circulated in the media a couple of years ago when he spoke about the alternatives between the Hong Kong model and the Barcelona model—the Barcelona model being the default position of five storeys across Sydney. We could all live with that; that could lead to a lovely city. But what we are getting through this circumvention of councils is the Hong Kong model foisted upon communities where it should not be.

The Minister said that this is a serious matter and it is. He spoke about strategic merit but we are not arguing about strategic merit; we are arguing about the timing of the rezoning. It should not be done ad hoc, willy-nilly

by well-heeled developers that can crush citizens in court and trample over the top of councils. Residents and citizens deserve a planning system that protects them. At the moment, it does not. We must change the law. I conclude by thanking the residents who signed the 10,000-signature petition to enable it to be debated in the House. I also thank Save Little Bay, which is a stand-out community group.

Petition noted.

Private Members' Statements

M5 EAST TOLL

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:31): I once again raise the concerns of my constituents in Rockdale about the terrible impact the new toll on the old M5 East is having on my electorate. As has recently been revealed under freedom of information laws by my colleague Chris Minns, since the new toll was introduced we have seen an average of 7,500 new vehicles flooding local roads such as Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road. That is more than 300 extra cars and trucks flooding past suburban houses every single hour, or around five extra vehicles every minute. The impact of this toll has been simply horrific. I cannot stress enough how much this requires urgent change. The transport Minister says that a report will be prepared 12 months after the toll's implementation but that is simply not good enough.

When the NorthConnex was opened on 31 October last year, it quickly became clear that heavy vehicles and trucks were rat-running along Pennant Hills Road to avoid the NorthConnex toll. When heavy vehicles were avoiding this new toll road and impacting on local roads in a Liberal Party electorate, did it take a 12-month review to see change? No, of course it did not. Just over a month later the Government introduced a blanket ban coupled with heavy fines for trucks trying to avoid the toll. If it is good enough for the north, it should be good enough for the south. It is as simple as that. There never should have been a toll put on the M5 East in the first place because it was built and paid for by the people of New South Wales more than 20 years ago. If members opposite are intent on keeping this outrageous and unfair toll, the least they could do is ensure that the road will be used.

That would require fair compensation to trucking operators, particularly those operating out of the industrial precincts along the M5, including the port and airport. The fact that the Minister would introduce a huge new cost on trucking operators on a major freight route during the middle of a pandemic shows just how inept and out of touch this Government really is. Last night at a Bayside Council meeting Councillor Bill Saravinovski established a campaign to fight this unfair toll on our local community. The campaign committee will bring together residents, businesses and local representatives to overturn the M5 East toll and move the 7,500 cars and trucks that are invading our local streets every day back to the motorway. Unlike those opposite, Councillor Saravinovski remembers when the M5 East was opened.

The New South Wales Government promised that it would be toll-free and that it would lead to fewer cars and trucks on our local streets. It is like we are living in a parallel universe, because 20 years later we have more vehicles than ever on our roads and we are paying a toll that we were promised would not exist. My local residents are crying out for relief. They know that what has happened is wrong and are furious at being treated like this. Residents can feel their houses shaking as trucks drive past every minute of the day. It is easy to understand why they think that the Government simply does not care about them when it can just ignore problems like this that it has created. Those opposite should not just ignore those people. The Government's own environmental impact statement predicted that surface traffic volumes would increase when the toll on the M5 East was introduced, but it nevertheless went ahead with this reckless and unfair decision.

Members opposite knew that what they were doing would hurt people, but they did it anyway. They just do not care. What they did not realise was just how much traffic volumes would increase by, with the actual outcome far outstripping what they predicted. To introduce the toll, even knowing what would happen, was cruel. To do it based on faulty data is simply stupid. I thank the council and local residents for speaking up and fighting for a decent outcome. The M5 East toll is entirely unsustainable. The additional traffic volumes on surface streets are outrageous and my community will not stop fighting until we see the removal of this unfair toll.

COMMUNITY FUNDING

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:36): The principle that incumbent political parties govern for all, and not just for a select few, is one of the core pillars of our democracy in New South Wales. I have watched aghast as the Government continues to act with impunity when it comes to grants, rorts and schemes that benefit Coalition electorates whilst ignoring electorates held by New South Wales Labor and crossbench members. The community in the electorate of Prospect has been incredibly disappointed to know that this Government has acted in such a partisan way, and this view is shared around the State. One of the fundamental elements of our system of democratic governance is that our community expects the government of the day to govern for all people in the

State equally. After the repeated rorts and pork-barrelling, which go against the high ethical standards and due process that our community expects, enough is enough.

The people of New South Wales deserve better from the Berejiklian Government. Our communities deserve to be treated equally, no matter what electorate we reside in or how we vote. Government decisions should not be so heavily influenced by partisan politics. Frankly, like many of my New South Wales Labor colleagues, I am angry. The Government has accepted pork-barrelling as part of the political process. Rather than calling it out for what it is—a shameful act that leaves our communities' economic recovery behind—the Government continues unperturbed. The Government's track record is clear. The rorts from the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund denied funding to hardworking local clubs, which are run with the dedication of volunteers, parents and players. The clubs that missed out on funding were looking to the Government to support new facilities and programs. Local clubs have gone to tremendous efforts to source information and apply for those grants, only to be rejected based on the electorate in which they reside.

The Government has acted disgracefully towards the arts community, where \$44 million in funding from the Regional Cultural Fund again went only to Coalition-held electorates. In the last week the Government has shown that there is no level to which it will not sink, rorting our economic recovery from the Black Summer bushfires. The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund has distributed \$177 million in taxpayers' money. Of that, only \$2.5 million was allocated to Labor-held electorates. That is just 1.4 per cent of the funding distributed. It reeks of a complete lack of due process and shows disrespect to many bushfire-affected communities. The Premier has visited Labor-held electorates impacted by the bushfires in the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and Gosford. Those communities are yet to benefit from the funding that the Government has splashed around. It would appear that communities in which New South Wales Labor holds electorates are being punished simply for not voting for the Coalition.

Why do people living in Labor-held seats mean less than those living in Coalition seats in the eyes of this Government? There are those across this Chamber who have begun to pick and choose their departmental spending for partisan political purposes, ignoring the advice of the public service. It puts the public service in a near impossible position. How can the public service continue to provide bipartisan advice to Government when this Government shows repeatedly that it will be ignored, with adjustments made to suit the political desires of those opposite? It is a truly dangerous act to witness, and damaging to our democracy. This Government needs to be held to account for the constant rorts, pork-barrelling and shredding and damaging of important documents, as well as its lack of communication and transparency.

How can we trust this Government to manage the pandemic and our economic recovery if we cannot guarantee that it is not just governing for New South Wales Coalition seats and Coalition votes? The Berejiklian Government sees our electorates as different colours of red and blue on a map. The Premier must answer how the people of New South Wales can have the confidence in this Government to govern for all people in this State when the Government acts in such a vindictive and partisan way. I call on the Berejiklian Government to establish an inquiry into the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund so that the people of this State can understand how and why this money was distributed. The Premier must front such an inquiry and answer these questions. It is time for the Government to come clean on all of these rorts, which attack the fabric of our democracy, and end this shameful practice.

GALUNGARA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (16:41): On Friday 5 February I was privileged to visit the brand new Galungara Public School at Schofields in the company of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, to mark the school's opening at the commencement of this school year. We were greeted by founding principal Tracy Anderson, deputy principal Renee Brown and a number of beaming students from stages 2 and 3. We were shown around the school to see some of the wonderful facilities, a number of learning activities already underway and the very popular playground equipment. During its planning phase the school was known as the "Alex Avenue precinct primary school", as that was how this part of Schofields had been designated by the planning department during the land release process.

The name Galungara has been adopted from the local Dharug dialect, referring to a grass tree naturally occurring in the western Sydney region. Principal Tracy Anderson is committed to ensuring that the Indigenous heritage of the locality is respected and incorporated into the life of the school as it grows. The school has begun with students enrolled from kindergarten to year 6 from day one. The younger cohorts are greater in number, ensuring that the enrolment will grow rapidly as time passes. As housing development in the area is far from complete, there is no doubt that more and more families will be arriving and looking to Galungara Public School for their children's education.

The school has been built in a modular prefabricated style, with accommodation initially for 500 students but with a master plan already complete to allow expansion to accommodate 1,000 students in future. The modular method of construction means that additional buildings can be constructed offsite and transported and assembled at the school in a short time, minimising the impact of future construction on the school community. This method of construction is being employed for a number of schools in the current education infrastructure investment program and can reduce the time taken between site acquisition and the opening of a new school to students.

It was the Government's commitment that Galungara Public School would open for the 2021 school year, and that is exactly what has happened. This comes on the heels of upgrades delivered within the electorate of Riverstone at Quakers Hill East Public School, Riverbank Public School, Schofields Public School and Riverstone High School over 2019 and 2020. All of those schools have been provided with new buildings, classrooms and staff facilities, increasing both the capacity of schools and modernising their facilities. These projects are all part of the Berejiklian Government's record investment program in education infrastructure. They have all been delivered exactly as promised.

Similarly, two years into the Cooler Classrooms five-year program, air conditioning has already been installed in Quakers Hill High School, Wyndham College and Marsden Park Public School, as well as in each of those four schools in the Riverstone electorate which had upgrade projects, and of course air conditioning is installed in the new Galungara Public School. As we approach the halfway mark of this term of Parliament, these education projects delivered already in the Riverstone electorate should give the community great confidence that the delivery of new and upgraded schools will continue exactly as promised over the remaining two years of the term. It is wonderful that Galungara Public School has commenced its service of the community of Schofields. I wish every member of staff and every student all the very best as the school begins to build its own culture and traditions and write its own story. May the new school play its part in giving the young people of our community the very best start in life.

SHOALHAVEN ANGLICAN SCHOOL SITE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (16:44): Unfortunately, over the past few weeks rumours and misinformation have been spread through the community of the southern Shoalhaven that the Shoalhaven Anglican School site, purchased by the New South Wales Government in 2018, is either going to be sold or used for purposes other than education. This has caused a great deal of anger and angst in the community, but I assure everybody—as I have tried to do in recent weeks—that that is not the case. Let me be very clear: The site on Croobyar Road is not for sale by the Department of Education.

The purchase of the site was an enormous win for the community and it remains a priority for this Government. Since purchasing the site the Government has continued to work to identify options for its use as an education precinct on Croobyar Road in Milton. The intention has always been to utilise the entire site for educational purposes. I have been meeting regularly with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, to ensure that the future use of the site remains a priority. Minister Mitchell has assured me that the Department of Education is committed to retaining the site for educational purposes and that any decision on its use will be made in consultation with local school communities.

Last month the Department of Education engaged with local school principals and other government agencies to continue our work to identify how best to utilise the facilities. Early on we identified the need to relocate Budawang special school, which has been our focus since 2018. I am pleased to see the commencement of the construction getting much closer. It is vital that the Government delivers on its commitment to relocate the school and provide world-class facilities for the most vulnerable students in our community. Budawang will offer new facilities, including seven learning spaces, a hydrotherapy pool and a possible expansion of the school for specific purposes.

Alleviating the pressure on schools in our community is my focus as the member for South Coast. I will continue to represent the community to ensure that these commitments are delivered. As a former teacher at Ulladulla High School, I am all too aware of the need for additional facilities in our region. I can assure the community that I will continue to advocate for the educational needs of the southern Shoalhaven, just as I have done successfully in the past. The purchase of the former Shoalhaven Anglican School site has opened up a world of possibilities for the region. It comprises of world-class facilities, including a commercial kitchen, sports facilities, administration buildings, a school hall and learning spaces in perhaps one of the most beautiful towns in the State.

The decisions around the site and its future use should be well considered. The Government will continue to consult carefully and review the needs of the area now and into the future. Last year I was advised that the Department of Education had been working with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to assess the need for new school facilities in the Milton-Ulladulla region. Transport for NSW's Regional NSW Services

and Infrastructure Plan predicts that the population of the Shoalhaven will increase from 400,000 in 2016 to 470,000 in 2036, a 17.5 per cent increase, and that by 2056 the local population is predicted to exceed 530,000 people, a 32.5 per cent rise.

The Shoalhaven is one of the fastest-growing regional areas in New South Wales, and the COVID-19 pandemic has placed additional pressure on housing stock across the region as Sydneysiders seek a sea change and working from home becomes the new normal. This is placing additional pressure on schools in the region and will continue to burden the education community into the future. We must plan and act now, and we are—delivering additional infrastructure to address the booming population. The community has worked really hard to secure this school, and the Government will continue to consult with them into the future. It is their school and they deserve to have their say on its future use. I look forward to continuing my work with the community, the Department of Education, the education Minister and the Premier to deliver the new purpose-built Budawang campus and deliver scope for further educational facilities for local residents.

Finally, I reiterate that this site will not be sold. It will not be used for any other purposes than educational facilities. We saved this school from developers that wished to develop and turn this site into goodness knows what. We saved that. The former Minister for Education, the Hon. Rob Stokes, agreed to purchase the site, and we were so pleased as a community because we had worked so hard collecting signatures on petitions and the like. It was a win-win for the community and will continue to be into the future. It is a wonderful educational precinct for the future.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (16:49): The financial situation of Central Coast Council is a very important issue in our community. I acknowledge award-winning journalist Jackie Pearson, who provided a precis of the LG Solutions report, which I will refer to. LG Solutions provides financial software to New South Wales councils and publishes a best practice newsletter. It published an analysis about the financial situation of Central Coast Council in the November 2020 edition of its newsletter *Debits and Credits*, which has most of the 120-plus New South Wales local governments as subscribers. LG Solutions' analysis appears to back up the conclusions drawn by DMB Consulting in September and Grant Thornton before that. According to all three of those consultancy firms, Central Coast Council staff, the NSW Office of Local Government and the Audit Office of NSW have serious questions to answer regarding financial accountability.

LG Solutions looked at the audited financial statements of the Central Coast Council to determine if there were signals that indicated the council was heading into financial trouble. In everyday language, a council must break down its cash expenditure into different buckets—externally restricted funds, internally restricted funds and unrestricted cash. The latter is what the council may spend for liquidity purposes on everyday expenses. It cannot spend internally restricted funds without a council resolution, which in this case never occurred. It can only spend externally restricted funds with the permission of the Minister, and the Minister never gave that permission. At no time prior to the September 2020 crisis did Central Coast Council staff inform councillors that they were spending restricted funds.

In its audited reports, Central Coast Council understated its externally restricted funds by \$129 million. That means it overstated either the amount it had in internally restricted funds or in unrestricted day-to-day cash. Council must produce a separate, audited financial report for its externally restricted water and sewer fund. The total cash available in the water and sewer fund special purpose financial statements was less than the total in the same fund when it was reported in council's overall financial statement. The overall consolidated figure in the council's audited accounts was correct but it was broken down incorrectly. At first glance, Central Coast Council's books look pretty good—a healthy cash position, everything going well. It is only when the figures are validated that there is a realisation something is wrong. It is difficult to believe the mistake happened. Local government auditors would surely check that the total of restricted water and sewer funds was the same across the two sets of accounts.

According to LG Solutions, this problem did not suddenly occur in 2020. They looked at three years of post-amalgamation audited reports and the problem was across all three years, getting bigger every year. LG Solutions checked other councils' reports to convince themselves the anomaly was not widespread. It was not. The LG report goes on to say:

On the face of it ... Central Coast's audited financial statements for YE 18/19 suggests nothing untoward: a net operating surplus result for the year of 62,397K (a stable result when compared to the previous year's \$66,214,000 figure); a net operating deficit result before capital income of -\$5,126,000 (which while a disappointing result was a 75% improvement on the previous years). In terms of rankings ... there were 21 Councils who reported worse deficits before capital ... Capex cash outflows of \$169 million (at an average of \$170m pa over the 4 years since merger compared to an \$144m pa pre merger); no new debt since the start of the merger; and the repayment of \$100 million in loan liabilities over the same period. The Council had \$478 million dollars in cash and investments at June 30, 2018 (with an average annual balance of \$418 million over the 4 years of merger).

The council's performance ratios were close to or exceeding the industry benchmarks. The question that needs to be answered next is: How and why did this disaster happen? We, as a community, are asking the Minister, who is here in the Chamber this evening—and I acknowledge her support with the council; I have spoken to her about my concerns with the council—for an independent inquiry to find out why this happened. It started pre-merger and continued post-merger. All of these government organisations looked at their accounts and they all missed what was going on. Ratepayers should not have to pay the penalty for these mistakes.

RYDE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (16:54): Our State has been confronted by many challenges over the past 18 months. We have faced ferocious bushfires, a stubborn pandemic and a wave of economic difficulties, and we have all had to face down the same temptation to turn inwards and think about ourselves before others. But that is not what New South Wales is about. One of the greatest things about our State is the spirit of volunteerism and service to others that runs so deep among so many. The NSW State Emergency Service, or SES, is a marvellous example of that spirit. At the end of last year I had the privilege of attending the Ryde SES unit's annual awards ceremony and presentation night. Throughout the evening I was struck by the strength of character on display among the unit's volunteers, especially the unit members to whom I had the honour of presenting the National Medal.

The National Medal recognises 15 years of service within the SES. Clasps may also be added to the medal to recognise additional 10-year periods of service. I extend my warm congratulations to Ryde Deputy Unit Commander, Dianne Gibson on receiving the National Medal. I also congratulate the hardworking Simon McNamara and Karen Carran on receiving the National Medal Clasp One and the National Medal Clasp Two respectively. Together these medals and clasps represent a combined service period of 75 years—a remarkable feat and a tremendous example of service to others.

Dianne, Simon and Karen are joined by many Ryde SES members in receiving recognition for lengthy service to the Ryde community. I congratulate Ryde SES Unit Commander Keiran Gibson on receiving the NSW SES 20 Year Long Service Award; unit volunteers Josephine Bezzina, John Ha, John Hayes, John McCory, Anthony Montgomery, Julie Murray, Greg Shepherd and Warren Smith on receiving 10 Year Long Service Awards; and volunteers Matthew Belcher, Aaron Binns, Colin Button, Daniel Cassar, Joseph Gallagher, Dan Hinton, Linda Power, Tina Raiss and Colin Willis on receiving 5 Year Long Service Awards. Together these awards total an astonishing 220 years of combined service. I have no doubt that the Ryde community is deeply grateful for the enduring service of these fine men and women.

Unit members from Ryde SES certainly did our community proud during the 2019-20 bushfires, with many receiving the New South Wales Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation. The Premier's citation recognises the outstanding contribution of volunteers and service agency personnel who played a significant role in responding to the bushfires. I warmly recognise Ryde SES unit members Josephine Bezzina, Aaron Binns, Kathryn Crofts, Blake Derriman, Clifford Fenney, Joseph Gallagher, Keiran Gibson, Ann Greco, Dan Hinton, Luke Kechagias, Mark Lim, Simon McNamara, Anthony Montgomery, Robert Morton, Julie Murray, Tina Raiss, Fred Maobin Shao, Jade Victoire-Walsh, Oliver Williams and Colin Willis for their outstanding conduct in responding to the worst bushfire period our State has seen in decades.

The fact that so many Ryde SES personnel travelled to assist fire-damaged communities elsewhere in New South Wales is astonishing, but it is nothing new. In the past three years the unit has responded to 1,273 requests for assistance, averaging around 400 jobs per year. These jobs are predominantly outside of the Ryde area, demonstrating the depth of the unit's commitment to serve anyone in need of assistance, within or beyond Ryde. No matter the time or place, Ryde SES gets in, gets on and gets out when the job is done. Finally, it is important to recognise members of the Ryde community who support our SES members, allowing them to get on with the job.

I draw particular attention to the vital support provided by family members and employers in the Ryde area, who each play a vital role in supporting the unit's important work. It is also important that I recognise Unit Commander Keiran Gibson, who kept Ryde SES active in a COVID-safe manner throughout the lockdown period. I am told the unit missed only one week of training throughout the entire year by continuing to engage its members online. That ensured the unit not only stayed active but also remained ready to confront the next natural disaster or storm. Once again, I congratulate Ryde SES on a job well done throughout 2020.

BALMAIN ELECTORATE GREEN SPACE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:59): Australia is one of the world's most urbanised countries. Some 89 per cent of our population live in a handful of urban areas, mostly along the coastline. Nature can feel far removed from much of our urban environment, which is a major failing of our planning system. At a time when

the world is losing its biodiversity at an alarming rate, urban nature is more important than ever. But urbanisation is a major cause of habitat loss, which drives much of the staggering loss of biodiversity. If we are to conserve biodiversity, we must bring back nature to our cities. That should not be the goal only of those who know the intrinsic value of nature because increasingly research shows that nature has a highly instrumental value as well.

Nature can help us tackle a range of urban challenges, including stormwater management, water filtration, the cooling of our cities and erosion reduction. A robust urban canopy intercepts airborne particulates, reduces smog and enhances a community's respiratory health. Trees and plants sequester carbon, reducing the overall concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They also reduce the urban heat island effect and keep our city cool. Nature and green space provide a critical habitat for bird, insect and animal species. Importantly, nature also supports the health and wellbeing of people who live in cities. Urban environments are improved by the existence and promotion of nature on our streets, in and next to schools and hospitals, and outside our windows.

Wherever people are, they can benefit from nature. Those benefits include reduced recovery time for hospitalised patients, increased motivation for healthy behaviours such as exercise and even therapeutic benefits for people living with mental health disorders. That is why many mental health facilities have been built traditionally on extensive grounds. In particular, I am thinking of Callan Park in my electorate. Being close to nature has a remarkable restorative quality for all people. We see it in our children and we feel it ourselves when we walk through beautiful areas. Nature also holds a key to the development of our children because it has impacts on childhood obesity levels, attention disorders and depression in the community. It also brings significant economic benefits.

A 2017 study focusing on three Sydney suburbs found that a 10 per cent increase in street tree canopy could increase property values by an average of \$50,000. But our community cannot unlock those benefits because Sydney has a problem. A 2014 report by the Institute of Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney, entitled *Benchmarking Australia's Urban Tree Canopy: An i-Tree Assessment, Final Report*, revealed that my community of the inner west is underperforming when it comes to tree canopy coverage, with 16 per cent canopy coverage in the former Marrickville local government area, 19 per cent in Ashfield and 20 per cent in Leichhardt. The average across Sydney is now 23 per cent. The Greater Sydney Commission says that figure must increase to 40 per cent. We all must take responsibility. That requires the inner west to double its tree canopy.

Unfortunately, our local council is going in the wrong direction by implementing new rules that make it easier to cut down trees. We are already seeing a significant increase in the number of applications for tree removals. Green space is also a key indicator, and the results in the inner west are equally poor. According to the Office of Local Government, the three councils in the inner west have the least amount of public open space per person in Sydney. Burwood Council has more than 1,000 people per hectare of public open space, followed by the Inner West and City of Canada Bay councils, both of which have more than 700 people per hectare. That means not only that limited physical space is allotted to nature but also that the little space we have is trampled by people, dogs and litter, with scarce room for the natural world to thrive and produce all the benefits that I mentioned.

This is reflected in the limited available data on wildlife. A recent wildlife survey conducted by Brigitte Sharp in Callan Park—the largest green space in the inner west—found only 146 individual vertebrates recorded across the six sites, representing a total of only 23 species. Those results are extremely low and are unexpected for such a large established park. They signal a huge problem and should ring alarm bells. Our cities and towns can be home to forests, wetlands, and other native ecosystems. Where no land is available, we can engineer solutions such as streetscapes, rain gardens, bioswales and green walls and roofs. We need better natural infrastructure that provides opportunities to people and wildlife in our communities to help them thrive, and we need it now.

SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:04): Being back at Parliament gives me an opportunity to speak on the 2020 Higher School Certificate successes shared by year 12 students in the electorate of Seven Hills. The Higher School Certificate embodies years of hard work by New South Wales students and is an impressive feat to achieve. Creatively gifted students can choose visual arts, drama, music and design and technology and can produce finely tuned masterpieces for the wider community to enjoy. Students who seek to be challenged academically have a variety of choices at their fingertips as well. For the logically inclined there is mathematics and science, which can extend all the way up to university levels. Those looking to develop workplace skills can choose subjects such as business, economics or legal studies. The Higher School Certificate is designed to cater for all individuals regardless of their passion, culminating in a well-rounded and thoroughly accomplished student.

Even in the best of circumstances the HSC is a trying experience, as students sacrifice numerous hours immersing themselves in study or perfecting their craft for assessment. In 2020, students and staff across

New South Wales were faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools were impacted by lockdowns, forcing students to study from home via their computers. The lack of person-to-person interaction was a difficult hurdle to overcome for the HSC class of 2020, but our senior students powered through and made the best of the circumstances. Teachers and community leaders stepped up and adapted through this period, streaming classes online for their pupils and tailoring lessons to maintain high levels of interaction. Many students and teachers—and particularly school leaders—across the Seven Hills electorate sacrificed numerous hours throughout the pandemic. I give them my sincerest thanks. Despite the countless challenges faced by students in the Seven Hills electorate in 2020, they showed true tenacity and powered through with some fantastic results.

HSC students in the Seven Hills electorate attended nine main secondary schools in the local community. A number of celebrated achievements by the year 12 cohort at each school should be acknowledged. From Parramatta High School, I particularly congratulate Dean Jacobson on topping New South Wales in Studies of Religion 1—certainly a magnificent achievement. I also congratulate the students from Parramatta Marist High School and Catherine McAuley Westmead who achieved the highly acclaimed All Rounders title, meaning they obtained a top result for all subjects they studied throughout the year. They include Marc Caramoan, Nash Hawkins, Daniel Stooze, Luke Mawad, Elizabeth Brown, Sian Vaz and Alysha Rose Sinclair. Students from across the electorate made the Top Achievers list, meaning they placed in the highest ranks for one or more of the courses they took. Those students include Marc Caramoan, Steven Chidiac, Nash Hawkins, Karl Holzmann, Joshua Madeleine, Christian Tanna, Adrienne Limjap, Leah Salt, Holli Smith, Sian Vaz, Anoushka Venkatesh and Arzycki de Vera.

Finally, the Distinguished Achievers list represents students who attained a Band 6 result in their HSC overall assessment. I congratulate all the students who worked hard on their fantastic results. The Pendle Hill High School HSC cohort received three Distinguished Achievers, The Hills Sports High School received five, Blacktown Boys High School received nine, Toongabbie Christian College received 11, Model Farms High School received 14, Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School received 26, Blacktown Girls High School received 28, Catherine McAuley Westmead received 47 and Parramatta Marist High School received 90. In a year full of distractions, it was brilliant to see so many outstanding results from our local students. The skills they gained last year will be carried into their professional life and beyond. I wish all the 2020 HSC students from schools in the Seven Hills electorate the best of luck for their future endeavours.

LISMORE ELECTORATE BATTERY STORAGE PROJECT

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:08): I speak about an issue that is on the border of my electorate and concerning some local residents in my electorate of Lismore and also some residents in the Clarence electorate. It is about a battery storage development that will be in the Lismore electorate. I will give a bit of the history and outline some concerns of the local residents. I first heard about it when a local resident sent an email to both me and the member for Clarence. He said that he was concerned because the first he heard about it was, I think, in the media, which had covered it. I had some communication with him—I spoke with him and others—and thought I had better find out what this battery storage is. I say this recognising that there is overwhelming support for renewables in this place and with all of us in the community.

I did a bit of research. I had contact with the company, which is called Maoneng. I talked to a representative of the company, got a briefing and asked a lot of questions. The representative said that it had secured a contract with AGL to increase the secure provision of power in New South Wales and that the battery will be connected to the TransGrid network. I am told that, at the public meeting where the company came to meet with the locals who are really concerned about it, a company representative said that, because TransGrid was privatised, it could not do it directly with them. I am yet to understand all of that. The company representative said the battery must be at a strong connection point and that a local landowner has consented for it to be on his property. It is in a rural area between Lismore and Casino, and at McKees Hill. At the meeting that was held on 3 February, there was overwhelming opposition to it.

I could not go, but I was represented at the meeting by my electorate officer. About 70 locals were present and not one was in favour of it. McKees Hill is not exactly a big place, but a lot of local people were there and they said that they felt the battery was being forced upon them and did not trust that process. It is under State significance. I will talk a little bit about that because it seems like we first got to know about it ad hoc. There was no notification of the local community. If I were to recommend any change, I would say that that process should be changed. The first people we dealt with were from the company. When we thrust things on people and do not approach them in a way that is inclusive and do not want to talk to them, include them and consult them, then people immediately start to get concerned. They get their hackles up and sometimes the whole thing falls apart.

Some of the concerns community members raised obviously were visual impact. I am told that there will be 50 containers, like shipping containers. Shipping containers are quite sizable. One particular landowner will look directly at it and the neighbours said they do not want to look at it. Some of them raised the question of how

safe the batteries are, whether there will be any leakages and whether it will leach out into surrounding the farmland and water. We are asking those questions. I have raised it with the two Ministers and asked for a briefing on the environmental and planning aspects of it so that I can explain that to the locals. As we roll out this infrastructure around the State, it is really important that we do it in a proper way so that locals can be included and not have it thrust upon them. I felt compelled to raise it tonight for the sake of the residents.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:14): The drought recovery across much of regional New South Wales started in the eastern areas of Barwon with rain in February and March 2020. Improvements in drought conditions further west took many more months. We all know it does not rain money, so getting rain and soil moisture turned into income and employment takes some time. As 2020 drew to a close we headed for the best grain harvest we have seen since 1996, both in volume and quality. It goes to show, when we have rain and a moisture profile we can go to work and turn it into something. That is not to say drought or the impact of drought is finished. Let us not forget the people still looking to the sky, checking the various forecasting sites and apps, and waiting for rain in their area. People went into debt. Repaying that debt will slow recovery. People sold equipment for cash flow. Replacing those assets will take time. Repairing the mental health of people will take many years.

Let me provide some context. The easy answer to calls for financial support for farmers has been that it is an unnecessary subsidy. The context I provide is that once COVID-19 hit the economy, our governments correctly provided large amounts of cash in a very short period to many of our business sectors, with minimal paperwork required. Farmers are expected to survive years of cash deficiency; the rest of the economy is assessed in weeks. Our farmers are also expected to provide reams of paper to prove they are worthy of assistance, paper they have to pay thousands of dollars to accountants to provide. It would be folly not to review what happened and the way State and Federal governments dealt with it. The two key areas to review are the incentives to increase resilience and at which point resilience is exceeded and cash support is provided. It would seem sensible that the point where resilience is exceeded is then identified through graduated increases in cash support.

New South Wales should be congratulated on previous efforts to increase agricultural resilience through grants, loans and subsidies to purchase transport and fodder. A review should also check the levels of interest rates for the loans and consolidation of loans across various schemes. The interaction between the Commonwealth and State governments must be assessed. Many effective tools for resilience are held within Commonwealth responsibilities, such as tax and laws relating to financial institutions. The extension of the Farm Management Deposits scheme to associated service and product suppliers must be considered. These businesses have as peaked a cash flow as farmers. I am calling on State and Federal governments to develop a phased and structured approach to drought assistance and drought recovery that, in the first instance, is guided by the findings of an external review. We need a structure that has trigger points that gives primary producers certainty about what would happen and when. Any plan should also acknowledge and deal with the broader impacts on whole communities through drought.

A key measure of support is through finance for those who can access and afford it. My offices were constantly in contact with desperate people who were unable to access sufficient assistance to keep their heads above water. The offerings of loans were a problem. To qualify for a loan people need to meet the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority lending criteria. People with no equity available and no prospect of income cannot qualify for a loan. State and Federal politicians of all political persuasions offered their thoughts and prayers, and I have to believe their sentiments were genuine. But what people needed at that time was cash, money to pay bills, buy food, put clothes on their children's backs and fuel to get to town. This was not about subsidising luxuries; it was about necessities.

Where agriculture forms a significant component of a rural economy, whole communities suffer when agriculture is compromised. Employment is down, business turnover is down generally and towns lose population. I have spoken in this place previously about the importance of population. This acknowledgement of the community-wide impact of drought was never in the headlines enough. Whilst we have what looks like a good season ahead—and I hope it is followed by many more—the only certainty is that we will one day go back into drought. The biggest future cost from this most recent drought would be to fail to plan for the next one. Australia has one of the lowest levels of subsidy for agriculture in the world. If we are going to run with low levels of subsidy to primary production—and there are many reasons we do that—the flip side is that when agriculture is struggling, we need to offer genuine assistance to keep people on the land and to keep populations in towns.

I call on the New South Wales Government to establish an independent review into the matters I have raised in this speech. Some names that indicate the type of character and experience that I would like to see on such a review are: Mal Peters from the Regional Australia Institute; Wayne Dunford, former Chair Drought Taskforce; Fran Rowe, a highly regarded rural financial counsellor; Katrina Humphries, the Mayor of the Moree

Plains Shire Council; and Danica Leys from the Country Women's Association. It is such individuals who have the capacity to honestly look into drought policy in New South Wales.

INDIA FARMER PROTESTS

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:19): I am proud to be the member for Coffs Harbour. It is a great honour to represent citizens of my electorate, home to the first Indian community in Australia with some settlements dating back to before Federation. Since then, many more communities have grown around the country, including in the Northern Rivers, the Riverina and, of course, a large and diverse Indian community in Greater Sydney. My election gave hope to those communities that Australia is an accepting and diverse nation, and I represent them in this place as well. The Indian-Australian relationship is an important relationship on many levels, and it is a relationship valued by both nations. We have a shared history and connection that is recognised worldwide.

When I was elected to this place nearly two years ago, many groups representing the Indian community in Australia wrote to congratulate me. Over the past few months I have had a lot of correspondence from those same people who are very concerned about a large protest occurring on the borders of the Indian capital, New Delhi. These protests have been held on the bitterly cold highways outside the capital since late November where an estimated 300,000 farmers and supporters are protesting agricultural reform bills passed by the Indian Parliament last year. As an elected member of this Parliament, I will not offer comment on the bills themselves—that is a matter for those democratically elected representatives to resolve—but I do wish to raise concerns about the reports of human rights violations and police brutality.

I wish to raise concerns about the reports of police allowing anti-farmer thugs to beat and harass protesting farmers. I wish to raise concerns about the internet being shut down in protest sites, having the same effect as a media blackout. I also wish to raise concerns about the foot-long sharpened metal spikes installed near the protest sites, which could have fatal consequences. But what is most concerning are the calls from some people to "eradicate" protesters. A tweet from Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut expresses delight at a potential genocide. It reads:

I feel so elated, I don't remember being so happy/excited ever, the cancer in the body of this nation we were looking for has been located, identified, and now the process of eradication will start.

"And now the process of eradication will start" are bone-chilling words from a public figure. Interestingly, Twitter is yet to delete her account. Complaints about the protesters are moving worryingly along sectarian lines, yet the protesters are from many States and from all religions and backgrounds. Locally, a Mr Rahul Jood from the Sydney area has said on Facebook, "They should be burnt along with their flags." These comments have no place in a modern and inclusive Australian society. Statements like these are very concerning, and I call on the Indian Government to condemn statements advocating genocide. I call on the Indian Government to ensure the safety of the peaceful protesters, and I call on the Indian Government to work with farmer groups to come to a peaceful solution to this situation.

India is a wonderful nation with a rich and ancient history. It is one of the cradles of our civilisation, and much that we take for granted has its origin on the subcontinent. The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s transformed India and allowed it to re-emerge on the world stage as a vibrant and advanced nation. India and Australia have a unique connection among nations, a connection forged on the battlefields of places like Gallipoli and Singapore, and it continues to be strengthened at places like the Sydney Cricket Ground. We share a common set of beliefs, one of which is a belief in the power of democracy. As the world's largest and most complex democracy, it is important that the confidence of the system is maintained.

INCARCERATION RATES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:23): Australia's per capita imprisonment rates are at their highest since 1900 and are above those of any western European country or Canada. Prison is a socially and economically costly way to deal with the social challenges that lead to offending. My constituents want the Government and Parliament to work to reduce incarceration rates and their impact on people's lives. Jailing is failing the community, from those caught up in the justice system to victims of crime to taxpayers. It costs over \$100,000 a year to keep someone in prison. Meanwhile, prisons fail to address the underlying issues associated with offending, which often lead to reoffending.

The experience of jail itself increases reoffending, with 50 per cent of people who were imprisoned returning to jail within two years. We in this House know the damning statistics that show the unfair impacts and biases in our justice system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only 3 per cent of the total population but 28 per cent of the adult prison population and 59 per cent of young people in detention. Most young

people in juvenile detention have experienced neglect or abuse or have been placed in out-of-home care. The "Family Matters Report" showed 40 per cent of children in out-of-home care in this State are Aboriginal.

The incarceration rate of women is growing, with a disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Women prisoners have largely not committed violent crimes but have been victims of horrific domestic abuse. The children of women prisoners suffer from being separated from a loving mother and primary caregiver, or even ending up in out-of-home care. More than half the adults in prison suffer or have suffered from a mental illness and over 80 per cent of young people in custody have been diagnosed with a psychological disorder. It is estimated that as much as 20 per cent of the prison population have an intellectual disability or borderline intellectual disability.

Addressing the high prison population will require better responses to complex social and health challenges associated with disadvantage, including homelessness and housing, mental health support, education and employment and, importantly, closing the gap with First Nations peoples. Improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be a priority. All governments supported the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendation to make imprisonment a last resort, and the New South Wales Government committed to reducing the rate of Aboriginal incarceration by at least 15 per cent by 2031 under Closing the Gap. The 2018 Australian Law Reform Commission *Pathways to Justice* report recommended a specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sentencing court with individualised case management and wraparound services that is culturally competent, safe and appropriate.

A specialist Walama Court within the District Court was also supported by the Special Commission of Inquiry into the drug "ice". The Walama Court provides intensive sentencing and post-sentencing processes that involve Elders and respected community members. Participants get intensive supervision, access to wraparound services and are monitored to ensure they get support. Team meetings are held every day with the presiding judge before a case is heard and the involvement of Elders and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services strengthen cultural understanding, belonging, pride and respect. The process aims to produce better outcomes, reduce recidivism and address the underlying causes of offending, similar to the Drug Court. The business case identifies that the court would reduce annual costs of Aboriginal incarceration by more than \$216 million. That is a no-brainer.

Reducing the number of children in detention must be a priority. It is inconceivable that children as young as 10 continue to be incarcerated. The experience of jail, including the trauma of detention and being apart from parents or guardians at such a young age, puts many on the path of a life of offending. The NSW Children's Court, the National Children's Commissioner, the Law Council of Australia, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child all recommend raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 12 years. Raising the age would protect vulnerable children and better reflect the modern understanding of brain development.

Other important reforms include a harm minimisation approach to drug use, with personal use decriminalised; tough bail and mandatory sentencing laws repealed; and rehabilitation, training and education programs in prisons expanded. I welcome the new Justice Reform Initiative, an alliance of people across the political spectrum, and will work with it to push for evidence-based policies to reduce the prison population. I start by calling on the Government to establish the Walama Court and reduce the age of criminal responsibility.

MONA VALE HOSPITAL

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (17:28:0): I am bursting with pride at what my community has been able to achieve by working together. In one of my first speeches in this place, shortly after my election in 2007, I spoke about my community's fervent desire to provide inpatient palliative care at Mona Vale Hospital, calling specifically for the number of dedicated palliative care beds to be increased to 10. It has been a long journey and a protracted campaign involving many dedicated citizens. Last week it was my profound privilege, on behalf of my community, to attend the opening of the inpatient palliative care unit at Mona Vale Hospital. There are now 10 palliative care beds and 10 geriatric beds immediately adjacent to a specialist palliative care outpatients service, which has greatly expanded owing to community action and contributions in the years since that vision in 2007. They all look out over the south Pacific Ocean, ensuring that some of the most vulnerable, fearful and anxious people in our community enjoy some of the best and most peaceful views on the planet.

The enormous effort by the community and the incredible outcome for the community remind me of words attributed to William Wilberforce, "We are too young to realise that certain things are impossible ... So we will do them anyway." Looking back, the dream of an inpatient palliative care unit at Mona Vale Hospital seems impossibly naive. The government of the day was certainly not interested in making any investment in the future of Mona Vale Hospital. The sword of Damocles hung over the very future of any hospital at Mona Vale or even

public ownership of the land on which it stood. Palliative care was not a priority of the health system at the time. Almost fantastically, the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised by the community to co-fund a long-forgotten promise by government to build a hospice on the grounds of Mona Vale Hospital was trapped with what was called the Commissioner of Dormant Funds, an office that could only have been dreamed up in some fevered nightmare world of Franz Kafka.

Today it is a very different situation. I am pleased to report to the House that I was joined by my colleagues the Minister for Health and Medical Research, Brad Hazzard, and the member for Manly, James Griffin, to tour the new purpose-built palliative care unit at Mona Vale Hospital. This is the first time a specialised palliative care unit has been provided on the northern beaches. As mentioned, the new unit has two wings: a 10-bed geriatric evaluation and management unit and a 10-bed palliative care unit. It will join the urgent care, community health, diagnostic, rehabilitation and other specialty services provided at Mona Vale Hospital and further boost the number of medical staff on site.

The journey to this point started more than 30 years ago when a local specialist called John Doran and a wonderful lady called Cora Adcock, both of whom have passed away, had a vision. They supported the idea of an inpatient hospice on the grounds of Mona Vale Hospital. It is important to acknowledge so many people who have been part of this journey, people from the Mona Vale Hospital auxiliary—Yvonne Parsons, Gail Carew, Waveney Parsons and Jim Parker—and the chief executive of Northern Sydney Local Health District, Deb Willcox. I also acknowledge former chief executive of the Northern Sydney Local Health District Vicki Taylor; former Minister for Health Jillian Skinner; Jacqui Edgley; former and current acting general managers of Mona Vale Hospital Frank Bazic and Jennifer McConnell; Jo-Ann Steeves and Dr Philip Macaulay of the Palliative Care Working Group; Dr Yvonne McMaster; Geraldine Dixson; Kelly Arthurs; Andrew Johnston; Councillor Kylie Ferguson; and the wonderful Dr Peter Moore.

There are so many people to acknowledge. The incredible Kay Millar chaired the group looking specifically at how the palliative care unit should be configured from a community perspective. I leave the final word to an amazing lady, Eileen Gordon. Eileen recently lost John, her husband of more than 60 years. She is an indefatigable campaigner for Mona Vale Hospital and has devoted her life to achieving this vision of a palliative care unit. It is my fervent desire that the unit be named after Eileen Gordon in recognition of the incredible efforts that she has made. I will conclude with the words of John Tolkien, who wrote, "No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take." It is wonderful to know that this journey for residents of the northern beaches is now not taken in fear and not taken alone. It is taken in love, in compassion and with great hope.

GRANVILLE ELECTORATE CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:33): Xin nian kuai le. Happy Year of the Ox. The ox symbolises hard work, positivity and honesty. I am looking forward to celebrating Lunar New Year even though we will not be able to have large parades and gatherings due to the pandemic. This weekend I will be attending smaller local celebrations, and further events next week. There have been huge celebrations for Lunar New Year in Parramatta and Auburn for many years, funded by local councils with the support of sponsors and stallholders and attended by 10,000 to 15,000 people from all backgrounds and all walks of life.

There are large Chinese-Australian, Vietnamese-Australian and Korean-Australian communities across the area and it is wonderful to come together to celebrate the major cultural festivals of all the large local communities. It promotes economic activity and community development and breaks down barriers between cultures by creating opportunities to embrace and explore difference. It says that we all belong. Lunar New Year is celebrated across East and South-East Asia and has been celebrated in Sydney since the early years of Chinese settlement.

Chinese trade with Australia predates 1788. Macassan traders from Indonesia harvested trepang—or sea cucumbers—off the coast of Arnhem Land, which was exported to China at least as early as the 1700s. Three of the First Fleet ships returned to Britain via China to bring tea and other goods from Shanghai. Trade between the United Kingdom and China was incredibly strong at that time, and with that came cultural influences such as the English fondness for tea. The first local business established by a Chinese settler in the Parramatta or Cumberland areas was the Golden Lion Hotel, opened in Parramatta in 1829 by John Shying, who had moved from Guangzhou to Sydney in 1819.

I was horrified last Sunday when I read the comments by the Mayor of Cumberland, Steve Christou, about non-Western cultural festivals in our local area such as Lunar New Year and Diwali. In *The Sun-Herald* he was quoted—or, as he claims, selectively quoted—as saying that the council should not fund cultural festivals. He said diaspora communities should fund these themselves—the exception being celebrations of Western culture such as Christmas Day and Australia Day. Cultural festivals, according to the mayor of the second most culturally diverse council in New South Wales, are not the core business of councils.

Those comments are ignorant, racist—explicitly so as they say that some cultures are more worthy of celebrating than others—cruel and divisive. I am glad that other mayors and councillors do not share his narrow-minded views. This is the very same embarrassing mayor who challenged other local government areas not to be bedwetters and to host Australia Day events during COVID-19 despite the most active COVID hotspot anywhere in Australia on 26 January being in Berala in the Cumberland local government area. He accused other mayors of being cancel culture warriors and using COVID as an excuse to cancel things. Yet cancelling culture is what he is doing by not hosting any Lunar New Year celebrations—cancelling a culture that clearly offends his precious sensibilities.

Prior to Sunday's article there was already an online petition calling for the mayor to be stood down for his racist views and actions towards the Muslim community, triggered by his media release gloating about a mosque development being refused. That petition has now gone viral, with huge support from the Chinese and Indian communities, who are rightly hurt and offended by his attitude to them. There have been over 8,000 signatures compared with the Support Steve Christou petition, which has 75 signatures. His opposition to COVID restrictions is also certainly at odds with his media attacks on the health Minister and the Turkish mosque at Auburn for hosting a large Eid gathering that was approved by the health department across multiple buildings on the Gallipoli Mosque site. He complained that the Minister did not consult him before giving approval and he incited fear that it would be a superspreader event. Yet he was silent on the pub down the road from the mosque being fined for its blatant disregard of COVID rules around the same time.

Of course there is also Diwali. I am not the only person who noticed that the council did not even bother to put up its Diwali banners last year. I opened Exotic Indian Beauty, a new beauty salon in Wentworthville, on 13 November—the day before Diwali and an auspicious day to open a new business. Yet unlike the previous two years, when there had been council-funded Diwali festivals in Station Street attended by over 10,000 people and banners celebrating Diwali everywhere, there were no Diwali decorations. Instead, the Christmas banners were up along with the Christmas tree in Friend Park—six weeks before Christmas—wiping Diwali off the calendar altogether. Surely that could have waited a week or two.

A council that values its community and its ratepayers in all their diversity does not do that. After a massive backlash, the mayor has capitulated and committed the money saved from not hosting Lunar New Year to next year's celebrations. This is yet to be adopted by council. There is no mention of doubling funding for Diwali or the other cultural festivals that were also cancelled due to COVID—the Ramadan night street festival and the massive cherry blossom festival. I hope that will happen. Tomorrow marks the start of the Year of the Ox and it is a good opportunity to put what has been a terrible year for so many behind us with hard work, positivity and honesty. It is a time for new beginnings, and I hope in my community we can from now on be led by a mayor who values all of us and all our cultures.

PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:38): This is the story of Australia—the story of an extraordinary nation. The story begins 60,000 years ago and new chapters are written every day. On Australia Day we reflect on our history, its highs and its lows. We respect the stories of others and we celebrate our nation, its achievements and, most of all, its people. We are all part of the story. This was the message from the Australia Day Council for 2021—a poignant message that adequately describes the pains of a "one and free" sunburnt nation and its transition from a First Nations people to a multicultural society. The words "reflect, respect and celebrate" indicate it is incumbent on us, as Australians, to live and lead by example for our next generation.

Today, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in my electorate, the Birpai people, and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I also applaud Biripi Elder and community leader Uncle Bill O'Brien for his participation in the Australia Day events. Senior Australian of the Year and Aboriginal Elder Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, AM, from Nauiyu said:

We learnt to speak your English fluently, walked on a one-way street to learn the white people's way. Now is the time to come closer to understand us and to understand how we live and to listen to what needs are in our communities.

Wise words from a worthy recipient and role model of reconciliation and connection to country. The Australia Day awards were celebrated in my electorate and marked the tremendous contributions of our community champions in the service of others. I stood alongside the Port Macquarie-Hastings Australia Day nominees and listened to their truly inspirational stories that marked a year of hardship and turmoil that none of us will ever forget.

Robyn Rawson was conferred the 2021 Citizen of the Year. She was recognised deservedly for establishing a group that provides essential donations of food, toiletries and pet supplies for farmers facing financial hardships during the drought and bushfires that plagued 2019 and 2020. The title of Senior Citizen of the Year was awarded to Phyllis Hollis for what could best be described as a lifetime of service across a number of community

organisations. The 2021 Young Citizen of the Year award was given to surf lifesaver Molly Kemp for her outstanding contribution to the Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club. Molly's past accolades include bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards. She is currently completing her gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, reflecting her dedication and commitment to the community. I was so excited that our local Lake Cathie RFS brigade was presented with the Community Group of the Year award for the invaluable role it played during the 2019-20 summer bushfires and its commitment to protect life and property. The Environmental Citizen of the Year award was presented to Judy Love for her instrumental and ongoing efforts to remove harmful waste and noxious weeds in Bonny Hills.

The coastal town of Harrington celebrated Australia Day by acknowledging the quiet achievers that go above and beyond to make a difference in their community. Eric Mason was named Citizen of the Year for his exemplary service in a number of volunteer roles. This is a well-deserved accomplishment. The Youth Volunteer of the Year award was given to 18-year-old Tyler Blake in acknowledgement of his hard work and commitment to the Marine Rescue Crowdy Harrington unit. Tyler is the youngest volunteer of the unit to become a licensed radio operator. Volunteer of the Year went to Phil West. Phil has served on the John Oxley bicentennial committee, researched and coordinated interpretive signs in the town, and facilitated a number of essential community projects. Volunteer Group of the Year was presented to Marine Rescue Crowdy Harrington for its outstanding efforts to maintain the safety and welfare of vessels and their passengers on the Manning River and nearby coastline. Last but not least is 2021 Junior Citizen of the Year Tia Bensen, a student who leads by example through her commitment and due diligence to her studies.

Reflecting on the year that has passed, which has seen so much pain, suffering and unrest across the globe, I am reminded of how truly blessed we are in Australia and of the enormous contributions both the State and Federal governments have made to ensure that the health and safety of our citizens remains the highest priority. No matter whether we were born Australians or have become Australians, we are all well aware of how fortunate we are to be Australian.

LOCAL PLANNING POWERS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (17:42): In my first speech to the House I said that decisions in planning and development that may impact a neighbourhood for decades should be made only by local experts who are elected representatives of the people. For the most part, those people should be local councillors or Ministers who are accountable to the Parliament. Funnily enough, this was also the view espoused by Coalition Government members before the 2011 election. They told the people of New South Wales:

The NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to returning local planning powers to local communities (through their councils). We believe that local residents—through councils—are best placed to make local planning decisions affecting their suburbs. After all, it is local residents—not Macquarie Street planners—who have to live with the results of these planning decisions.

Despite being elected on this pledge to "return planning powers to local communities", the Coalition Government has spent 10 long years doing completely the opposite. There has never been less power in the hands of local communities to determine planning matters. The Government has steadily eroded the planning powers of local government to a point where most Sydney councils cannot even determine a development application. Where developments are not approved by a private certifier, council staff exercise delegated authority. Councils were compelled to establish local planning panels made up of non-elected representatives, and State Government-dominated regional planning panels determine developments deemed too significant for local councils.

Elsewhere, the Independent Planning Commission wields enormous power over the most significant of developments, with its members hand-picked by the planning Minister. Even when a council retains its power to determine its local environmental plan, developers can simply lodge a planning proposal to amend the zoning and have it approved by the State Government, contrary to the wishes of the council. The planning powers of local councils are at their lowest ebb in a century, as are the quality and standards of local government as a whole. This was the view expressed by Darcy Byrne, the mayor of one of Sydney's largest councils, Inner West Council, in a recent opinion piece in *The Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "Our enfeebled councils: the arm of government closest to the people is powerless to act for them". Mayor Byrne wrote:

Sadly, under the stewardship of the Berejiklian government, which through the Local Government Act controls the sector, councils are becoming increasingly unaccountable to the communities we serve. For the past half-decade, the government has gone about systematically removing the power of communities to influence how councils operate.

Elected councillors and mayors have now been removed from overseeing executive staff, determining the organisational structure, assessing development applications, and supervising the regulatory, legal and planning decisions of councils.

I have raised my concerns on a number of occasions about the practice of local planning panels meeting, deliberating and determining development applications in private. The conduct of the Inner West Planning Panel was recently brought to my attention and has again raised those concerns for me. A decision was brought to my

attention recently—it does not matter which one—where the Inner West Planning Panel granted consent to a development contrary to council's development control plan without explanation. It is a requirement of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act that planning bodies make their meetings public. The press and public are entitled to know not just what the decision of a planning body is but what is in the minds of the decision-makers at the time they make the decision, so that even when a person might not agree with a decision they can at least understand the merit reasons for that decision.

In this instance, after brief contributions from objectors, the panel deliberated entirely in private and gave its approval. There was no explanation as to why consent was granted contrary to council's planning controls and the panel did not indicate why it had to deliberate in private. There might have been a merit reason for this decision but that information was never given to the public. Panels might need to discuss sensitive matters in private on occasions but those situations should be the exception and not the rule. It is that sort of abuse of power that erodes what little faith the public has in the planning system and in the elected people generally. There is not one member in this House that I have spoken to who does not privately express the view that the public has little faith in the planning system or the decision-making process that operates at local levels. It is important that the Coalition makes good on its broken promise and returns planning powers to councils.

BAXTER HEALTHCARE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:47): I acknowledge the important work of Baxter Healthcare amid the recent pandemic. Baxter Healthcare is an advanced medical manufacturing and supply company that is located in the heart of the Seven Hills electorate at Old Toongabbie. Baxter has been engaged in advanced manufacturing in western Sydney for over 45 years. Of its 1,047 employees nationally, Baxter employs 650 people at its Old Toongabbie site and, of course, many of those are locals in my electorate of Seven Hills. It is one of the largest diversified healthcare companies in Australia. Baxter has been working around the clock to ensure that local health districts across New South Wales, and indeed our entire country, were and are equipped to respond to the current global pandemic.

Late last year I had the pleasure of meeting with the senior management team for a tour and to discuss their plans for the future of the Old Toongabbie site. The briefing was led by General Manager Stephen Flynn of Baxter Australia and New Zealand. We were joined by directors Ramy Khalaf, Phil Mealey and Martel Davison to discuss the work taking place across their respective divisions as part of the firm's response to the pandemic. Baxter has played a critical role as Australia's only manufacturer of intravenous [IV] fluids and as such stepped up its manufacturing operations 24/7. Baxter took on additional employees to meet and prevent the IV fluid shortages that were taking place in our hospitals.

At the Old Toongabbie campus Baxter was already producing more than 50 million units of IV, irrigation and dialysis fluid solutions each year. Baxter is a supplier of IV medicines to all Australian States and Territories. For intensive care units, Baxter secured supply of its continuous renal replacement therapy machines from the United States along with infusion pumps and medicines used in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. Hospitals across Australia and New Zealand partnered with Baxter to fast-track the rollout of Baxter's ICNET contact tracing software for hospitals. Towards the end of the briefing I was shown the products made from the empty Baxter bags of IV fluid that are collected by Baxter from hospitals and converted into Australian-made goods such as garden hoses and even rubber gumboots or wellingtons. Baxter also collects empty bags from home dialysis patients as well as the aluminium bottles of Baxter's gas anaesthesia for recycling and, in doing so, prevents more than 200 tonnes of PVC from ending up in landfill across our country.

I also had the opportunity at the time to meet members of the Baxter team and to speak with some of them about their many, many years of service with Baxter and of the benefits of living so close to the facility. Baxter contributes to the New South Wales economy with approximately \$425 million in gross revenue—\$205 million of which is direct revenue and \$148 million in value add. Baxter supports 1,254 jobs and creates \$228 of value add per worker, per hour. I am personally very grateful to have such an advanced manufacturing organisation in my electorate. It demonstrates how well positioned my community is to create many more jobs for locals, given its broad skills base and how accessible it is to both commuter and commercial transport hubs that connect it with the rest of Australia. I am particularly proud that a business in my electorate is able to contribute so significantly to our State's response to the current pandemic. It just goes to show the importance of private enterprise being capable of adapting its business activities to meet changes in demand and challenging times. I am sure all members in this place will join me in congratulating all of the staff at Baxter at Old Toongabbie on their fantastic work during the current pandemic.

*Community Recognition Statements***BARBARA TRY**

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:51): Congratulations to another local, Barbara Try of Tuggerawong, on being recognised for her service to creative arts, particularly lapidary, with the award of the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Honours List. Barbara is the vice-president of the Australian Federation of Lapidary and Allied Crafts, as well as chair of the Judging and Rules Committee and National Judge Training Coordinator. Barbara has been the coordinator in updating the judging and rules manual since 2015 and is a judge of competitions in the crafts of cabochon, faceting, metal craft, jewellery and enamelling. She is the president, State Judge Training Coordinator and competition organiser for the Gem and Lapidary Council of New South Wales. Barbara has served as president of Northern Districts Lapidary Club and has also served on the executive committee for 30 years, now being a life member. On three occasions Barbara has been the Australian lapidary champion and she is currently a member of the Central Coast Lapidary Club, teaching the craft at Ourimbah. Well done to Barbara for her nomination and for showing commitment and dedication in the community.

REVEREND CRAIG HAMILTON

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:52): Tonight I pay tribute to Reverend Craig Hamilton, who recently joined the senior ministry of the Pitt Town Anglican Community Church. The local Anglican community has played a vital role in the history of the Hawkesbury and continues to do so. I met Reverend Craig Hamilton and his beautiful family recently when the Pitt Town Anglican Community Church celebrated and welcomed him to the senior ministry. It has been a tough journey for this church community. Hawkesbury has been through bushfires, floods and COVID-19, and the church family has rallied around to support those in need. Then there was the sad passing of senior pastor Greg Peisley last year. So there is hope that the prayers for leadership of the community will rest assuredly with Craig. Reverend Craig Hamilton and his family have the full support of the community. I congratulate him and welcome him and his family to Hawkesbury.

TOM AND MARJORIE JACKSON

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:53): Today is a very special day for Dubbo couple Tom and Marjorie Jackson. They were married in Dunedoo on this very day, 11 February, 60 years ago. The couple first met at a dance at Berriwa Hall in the Dunedoo-Gulgong area. Marjorie told me it was one of the places everyone went to because, apparently, the floorboards were really good to dance on. The happy couple has a son, a daughter, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and they are really looking forward to a family get-together at the end of the month. Marjorie and Tom have lived in Dubbo for just over 20 years, but Marjorie also told me about their fond memories of Coonabarabran, where they lived for 30 years, and Tom's 26-year association with Siding Spring Observatory, where he was a bit of a Mr Fix It. It was lovely to speak to Marjorie this morning and hear her reminisce about the couple's time together across the region and also hear some of her very special memories. A 60-year wedding anniversary is incredibly special. I wish Marjorie and Tom all the very best.

CENTRAL COAST COVID-19 TESTING FACILITY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:54): I thank Woy Woy local Molly Ryan and her fabulous neighbour for helping seniors and locals across the peninsula nail a COVID testing clinic in our community. After Molly was forced to catch a train to Gosford Hospital for her test, her neighbour brought it to my attention that we needed a testing facility close to home, rather than the great drive-through facility available at Koolewong. That facility is not accessible to those of us who cannot drive off the peninsula. I thank Minister Hazzard and his team for their work in securing the testing facility, which is open from 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at the sea scouts hall at the Woy Woy Lions Park. I send a shout-out and huge thanks to all the teams involved in COVID testing across the Central Coast over the past 12 months. Every person I speak with talks of the efficiency and care taken. Molly explained that, despite the distance travelled, the staff at our Gosford Hospital COVID testing clinic were wonderful, friendly and helpful. I thank everyone involved in providing this fabulous service.

LIFELINE CENTRAL COAST

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:55): We are two months into 2021, but I thank the team from Lifeline Central Coast for personally delivering to me in December last year a 2021 Ade's winter calendar, which features 12 fantastic coastline photos from across the Central Coast. The calendar came to fruition in 2019 after Adrian Byrnes joined his cousin in a challenge to walk on the beach every Monday before the sun rose during summer. On the last day of summer Adrian decided to keep up his daily exercise throughout winter. After 10 consecutive days of photographing Shelley Beach at sunrise, Adrian began exploring and photographing other beaches across the coast. The Central Coast is blessed with a magnificent coastline. All proceeds from the calendar that Adrian produces each year go to Lifeline Central Coast to support local suicide prevention. I thank

Lifeline Central Coast and Adrian Byrnes for partnering to showcase our beautiful coastline while financially supporting local mental health work.

DR SEAN TURNELL

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:56): I place on record the fine contribution of my friend, colleague and fellow Macquarie University graduate Dr Sean Turnell to the people of Myanmar in his role as economics adviser to the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Ki, and as director of the Myanmar Development Institute over the past three years, in particular. Sean has done Australia and New South Wales proud with his outstanding work in Myanmar, which has been directed to the development of sound economic and investment policies and to helping lift people out of poverty and to enrich their quality of life through the creation of jobs. Dr Turnell is a humble and learned man, a gifted teacher and communicator. For someone in the economic field, he is adept at using clear, ordinary language to communicate. He is currently being detained by the Myanmar authorities. We express our deep concern for him. I thank our embassy, which has acted admirably in a situation that requires delicacy and diplomacy.

SOUTH COFFS COMMUNITY GARDEN

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:58): South Coffs Community Garden is a little oasis that provides plenty of joy and fellowship for like-minded local residents. Recently I caught up with those hardworking gardeners to announce a \$15,515 grant under the New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership program. They will be able to dramatically increase their composting production with the purchase of new equipment for their tractor and extra composting bins. I applaud the leadership of president-treasurer John Higgins and those who have put up their hands to serve in key roles: Graham Davey, Robin Irwin, Marie Davey, Christine Higgins, Bill Tindal, Helen Ekert, Grace Wasley and Bob Rodgers. The South Coffs Community Garden boasts 35 members, and they are always on the lookout for more to join their ranks.

TRIBUTE TO KARL-HEINZ FUSTING

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:58): I acknowledge the sad passing of Karl-Heinz Fusting, long-serving president of the Concordia German Club in South Murrumbidgee. For decades Karl has been the heart and soul of Sydney's German community. He was passionate about creating a home away from home for German Australians and about sharing German culture with our inner west community. Karl championed the club's restaurant, Oktoberfest events, the German Film Festival, the Concordia choir and the chess club. Each time I met with him he would explain that when he came to the Concordia Club the three things he was most proud of were the club's extraordinary staff and members, getting rid of the pokies, and the number of families who have joined in recent years and have come to love the place as much as he did. Karl understood that the future of the club lies with young people. Nothing brought him more joy than seeing the kids running around outside the club. On behalf of the Murrumbidgee community, I send my deepest condolences to Karl's family, to all those in the inner west community, and to the staff and regulars at the Concordia Club. We have lost a great man.

PIPER HARRISON

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:59): I acknowledge one of the most impressive young people I have ever had the opportunity to meet. Piper Harrison was recently awarded the Freshwater Community Bank Branch Ken Ward Memorial Scholarship. Named in honour of the late branch manager, the incredibly competitive tertiary scholarship is awarded annually to a Northern Beaches student. Students are nominated by their school principal and need to meet three requirements as part of the scholarship criteria: They must reside and attend a school within the designated area, be likely to achieve an academic result greater than 90 per cent in five HSC courses and be actively involved in their community, either within their school, locally, statewide or internationally. Piper Harrison of NBSC Mackellar Girls Campus is a worthy recipient of the scholarship, having not only been school captain but an academic powerhouse and full of community spirit. I am incredibly proud of Piper. She is a credit to her family and school. I wish her all the best with her studies at the University of Technology Sydney.

PLAY IT SAFE PROGRAM

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (18:00): There were lots of activity and plenty of smiles at O'Hearn Street Park in Tenambit over the Christmas school holidays. The Play it Safe program, funded by Maitland City Council Community Grants, Youth Week and Hume Community Housing, saw local kids across various neighbourhoods in Maitland get together to enjoy each other's company and participate in many different activities including juggling, basic bike maintenance, unicycling and footy skills. The event was part of Hume Community Housing's free week-long school holiday activity program designed for children aged six to 12. It brought together local community, friends and neighbours, seasoned with some fun competition, education, and useful handy maintenance skills. I thank Hume for inviting me to come along to watch the fun and engage with the kids. The children were certainly engaged and looked like they enjoyed the challenges of performing circus tricks in a mini

show that they put on at the end of the session. Most importantly, I could see their increasing confidence, optimism and engagement with each other even in that one short session. I congratulate Hume Community Housing and Maitland City Council on such a fun and positive initiative.

HURSTVILLE GROVE INFANTS SCHOOL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:02): It may be one of the smallest schools in my electorate but it is certainly one of my favourites. Today I am proud to update the House on the progress of Hurstville Grove Infants School. Last year we delivered on our election commitment and I had the honour of opening their brand new multipurpose classroom with everything from a kitchen, quiet room, drawing tables and even a television as well. It truly is a modern state-of-the-art facility and I know that the children at Hurstville Grove Infants School are going to love it for years to come. This is a fantastic school and it is only made better by the wonderful Kylie McKinnon and her team of staff, who do their best each and every day to provide the best possible outcomes for students. I thank the P&C and in particular Kylie for her role in seeing this project from planning right through to completion. She is an excellent principal and I wish her all the very best for the year ahead.

MASCOT JUNIORS RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB 110TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (18:03): I recognise the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Mascot Juniors Rugby League Football Club—the Mascot Jets. The Jets are the oldest and most successful junior rugby league club in Australia, having won more premierships and club championships than any other. The Jets are one of the great nurseries of rugby league, having produced 11 internationals and rugby league greats like George Treweek, Mario Fenech, Brian Hambly, George Piggins, Ian Roberts, John Sutton and Cameron Murray, to name a few. This is a point of pride for every single Jets player, coach and volunteer, and indeed the entire Mascot community. Mascot is more than just a football club; it is an integral part of the fabric of south Sydney and has an outstanding history of service to our community. While the club's celebrations were scheduled for June 2020, the pandemic had other ideas. On behalf of the Parliament of New South Wales and the entire Botany Bay community, I congratulate this fine institution on its 110th anniversary and on the centenary of its first-ever premiership.

13 THE MUSICAL PRODUCTION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:04): I recognise the local premiere of *13 the Musical* in Port Macquarie—a production that will generate funds for Young Carers NSW, which is an organisation that aims to make a difference for young carers and their families. Displaying their marvellous, youthful talents on stage at Panthers Port Macquarie were the cast of *13 the Musical* led by Jack Kirk and crew: Alexander Ford, Teoni Nelson, Bridgette Ford, Piper Graham, Moya Wills, Isaac Long, Michael Walsh, Indiana Jones, Kye Dennis, Rebecca Crundwell, McKenna Dennis and Tara Mitchell. All proceeds from the production will be directed towards youth-focused initiatives. Directed by Kathleen Ford, the production explores the complicated circles of teenage life, family separations and school crushes depicted through comedy and infectious laughter from a skilful cast of young local performers.

Audiences of all ages were extremely impressed by the talent on stage, especially when practice and rehearsals were largely delivered online to abide by COVID-19 restrictions. It is estimated that more than 87,000 young people in New South Wales provide care to someone close to them. The Young Carers program offers training, counselling and support options for our youth who are caring for a loved one. It was a fantastic relaunch of a 2008 Broadway hit. I congratulate everyone involved.

MIKE SAMSON

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:05): I take this opportunity to recognise Mike Samson Clothier, a small business based in Winston Hills Mall. It is set to close its doors after 38 years of service to the local community. Mike Samson runs the store and will be retiring shortly, at the age of 78. His wife, Denise, and two daughters, Paulette and Barbara, manage the store with him. Mike opened the menswear shop in 1983 after working in retail for 10 years while living in Parramatta. Mike recently told *Parra News* that many of his customers "came in as strangers and become true friends over time". He also noted that a successful retail business is "about being of service to the customer, listening and helping them get what they need". Mike's retirement plan is to relax and spend more time with his family. I thank Mike for his many years of dedication to the people of Winston Hills and surrounds.

CENTRAL COAST AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:06): I congratulate year 10 student Jackson Lantry from Warnervale's MacKillop Catholic College on being recognised for his generosity and community spirit. Jackson was nominated for the Community Service Award at the Central Coast Council's Australia Day Awards ceremony, along with

MacKillop students Caleb Pantos, Ember-Rose Rutherford, Samuel Wolscher and Trinity Young. The five students are members of the college's Josephites Undertaking Mission Project group, which facilitates and delivers social justice and outreach projects around the school and in the local community. Each nominee has completed 300 hours of community service volunteering at Coast Shelter in Gosford and OASIS in Wyong. They have dedicated their time to raising money for various charities, supporting local neighbourhood centres, packing Christmas hampers for families in need, marching in support of White Ribbon Day, volunteering at nursing homes and packing Zonta Birthing Kits. The five students have been great role models in the College JUMP program since 2017. Jackson has also supported many charities, including the MacKillop Ghana Appeal, White Ribbon Australia, Relay for Life and more.

MR ALEX VOLCOV

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:07): I recognise the wonderful effort of Mr Alex Volcov of Koorawatha. Mr Volcov has served as a justice of the peace for the past 50 years. It is a wonderful achievement for Mr Volcov to have reached this milestone. In December 2020 he was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for his service by the Attorney General. A justice of the peace performs an important public role that shows a dedication and service to the community. This role is more important in regional areas where towns and villages are spread over large distances. I personally thank and congratulate Mr Volcov on his service.

DUBBO ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:08): It was great to be on hand for this year's Australia Day presentations, as a number of locals were recognised for their community contributions in the Dubbo region. Terry Clark was presented the award for 2021 Australia Day Citizen of the Year thanks to his incredible contribution to the Royal Flying Doctor Service [RFDS] and its Dubbo support group. We all know the massive contribution that the RFDS makes to the health and wellbeing of remote communities, but there has also been a real focus on allied health support in recent years, and much of that is off the back of community support. Terry started volunteering with the RFDS Dubbo Support Group in 2001, and only a few years later became its president. He served in that role for 17 years, only stepping down last year. During this time Terry drove his Holden EH all around Australia in the RFDS Outback Car Trek, raising in excess of \$330,000 in the process. The support group has raised millions of dollars. Terry is a great bloke and a real asset to our community who deserves the recognition he has now received. I say to Terry: Well done.

SUMMER HILL ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:09): I congratulate the local clubs and organisations that received funding in the 2020 Summer Hill Community Building Partnership grants. The pandemic has placed an incredible strain on inner west community groups and clubs, many of whom have been unable to engage with volunteers or undertake fundraising. This funding will go a long way towards helping them out. Kids at The Infants' Home in Ashfield will enjoy a newly upgraded play space, while Australia's next basketball or netball star will get their start on the new rings at Ferncourt Public School. The Western Suburbs Junior AFL team has a new PA system, while new soundproofing at the Flight Path Theatre means that actors will not have to compete with aeroplanes roaring overhead.

St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church will refurbish one of its classrooms, St John Ambulance will purchase a new stretcher bed and the Haberfield Association will fence the heritage sunken garden at the beautiful Yasmare estate. I also congratulate Yeo Park Infants School, 3Bridges, Dulwich Hill Public School, Marrickville District Lawn Tennis Club, Marrickville West Primary School, the River Canoe Club, the Exodus Foundation, Petersham Public School and Marrickville Occasional Child Care, which were successful in this year's grants. I thank everyone who applied and the thousands of local residents who completed my grant survey and had their say.

JANNALI PRESCHOOL KINDERGARTEN

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (18:10): I acknowledge Jannali Preschool Kindergarten, which was the successful recipient of \$25,000 from the New South Wales Government's 2020 Community Building Partnership program. Led by president Troy Nyssen, director Simone Taylor and educational leader Lisa Rowan, Jannali preschool provides a nurturing environment where children are able to thrive, have fun and learn many vital skills they need to transition to school and beyond. I am delighted that, through this grant, Jannali Preschool Kindergarten will be able to develop its existing outdoor play area through the construction of a "fort", which will include multiple elements to encourage imaginative play and support gross motor skill development.

I commend the amazing team at Jannali Preschool Kindergarten for their dedication to early childhood learning and the continued support they provide to our littlest learners. I acknowledge educators Carolina Roberts, Belinda Fellingham, Helen Ponsonby, Nicole Peterson, Gabrielle Fenner, Kelly Powell, Torren Eyles-Balukea, Nicole Wallace, Ursula Hicks, Lisa Worland, Neika Tong and Melinda Guest. I thank Jannali Preschool

Kindergarten for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and I look forward to seeing the fantastic fort in the near future.

NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:11): Today I acknowledge the incredible efforts of students from my electorate of North Shore, who received outstanding marks in their HSC results. Given the tough year that was 2020, it is a testament to their ability and the support of their schools and families that our year 12 students were able to achieve their absolute best. North Sydney Boys High School has cemented its ranking of third out of more than 500 campuses and North Sydney Girls High School was not far behind, with the combined achievements of its HSC students earning the school a fourth-placed ranking. I congratulate Rowan Silcock and Desmond Ma from North Sydney Boys, who placed first in German extension and legal studies. I also congratulate Angela Wen and Sharon He from North Sydney Girls, who placed first Japanese extension and visual arts. I congratulate all students across my local community and New South Wales who completed their HSC exams for 2020, particularly year 12 from Cammeraygal High School, which was the first year for the new school to sit the HSC. I wish students all the best of luck in their future endeavours.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:12): Early childhood education is extremely important for our community. Educators play a vital role in the early years of our littlest learners. That is why the New South Wales Government's 2020-2021 Early Childhood Education Scholarships are such a welcome initiative. I was pleased to meet our successful Coffs Coast applicants, who will each receive a generous scholarship to help with the cost of study, making it easier to commence or upgrade their qualifications to a bachelor degree in early childhood teaching. I congratulate Ms Stevie King and Ms Laura Goodenough on their scholarships. I wish them well in their studies. Their success is great news for local families and for our local community.

CUPID'S UNDIE RUN

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:12): I recognise a courageous but humble family in my electorate for challenging the community to donate to the 2021 Cupid's Undie Run, which raises funds for the Children's Tumour Foundation. Peter and Sharon Kirkpatrick know firsthand the impacts of neurofibromatosis [NF] on a family. Their daughter Emily was diagnosed with NF at the young age of 10 months and has battled the disorder ever since. Now 13 years of age, Emily is determined not to let her diagnosis rule her life. As her array of interests shows, this brave young woman continues to inspire us all through her love of drawing, swimming and even learning French. Coordinating the Cupid's Undie Run this year, the Kirkpatricks hope the community will dig deep and donate to support the one in every 2,500 people who are diagnosed with a genetic disorder. Emily's condition causes tumours to grow on nerves throughout her body, which has tragically resulted in a prosthetic limb, epilepsy and two NF brain tumours. The Children's Tumour Foundation supports families with NF through knowledge, connections and support while focusing funds on medical research and new treatments. I call on the Hastings community to support and donate to Cupid's Undie Run.

OATLEY LIONS CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:14): I acknowledge the wonderful work of Oatley Lions Club for its fantastic end to 2020 with its Annual Charity Golf Day and Bush Bash Project, both of which raised money for charity. The Annual Charity Golf Day in 2020 raised \$13,000 for charity, which included money for children's cancer research, the St George Hospital Neonatal Special Care Nursery and the Lions Operation Smile project. The Bush Bash Project saw members head out to Central West New South Wales to help drought-affected communities by giving them gift cards to purchase essential items and Christmas goods. They were also able to provide to local children over 300 Christmas gifts, which were very kindly donated by students at Oatley and Oatley West Public schools. I thank a number of community businesses and organisations including Club Rivers, Georges River Council and The Rotary Club of Hurstville for helping sponsor the projects. It goes to show that the community spirit of our region is alive and well. I look forward to seeing another great year for the Oatley Lions Club this year.

NORTHMEAD BUSHFIRE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:15:1): On 29 November 2020 Northmead faced a bushfire. The fire began in Water Dragon Way in Moxham Park, which climbed to Whitehaven Road, Northmead, causing alarm to families and causing fire at a heritage home. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Fire and Rescue NSW teams from Beecroft, Cabramatta, Concord, Eastwood, Guildford, Horningsea Park, Hornsby, Huntingwood, Kellyville, Parramatta, Schofields, Seven Hills, Silverwater, Smithfield and Wentworthville for their assistance with that large fire. I also thank NSW Rural Fire Service, North Rocks, for its efforts in controlling and putting out the blaze. Approximately 100 firefighters were on the scene across the 11-hour period the fire

occurred. I particularly acknowledge the efforts and bravery of the Campbell Rogers family children—Eleanor, Erica and Peter—who assisted in evacuating their mother and paralysed father whilst staying and assisting neighbours in protecting their homes. I thank the Campbell Rogers family and all of the community for their assistance in what was a difficult time.

COWRA BOWLING CLUB

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:16): I draw members' attention to the Cowra Bowling Club and bowlers, who were recently recognised as part of the 2020 Club Champions presentations. In no particular order, congratulations to Noel Hubber, Bruce Oliver, Jack Martin, Greg Nicholls, Dorcas Presnell, Robert Oliver, Ken Porter, Brian Duff, Alan Anderson, Trevor Pullen, Wayne Davenport, Paul Druery, Shane Lauritzen, Michael Munn and Simon Bray, Norm Egan, Bruce Oliver, Shane Egan, Bob Morgan and Sonia Morgan—all recognised for their bowling prowess. I note that the club has 34 teams participating in its Business House Bowls competition at the moment and soon it will host the thirty-sixth annual Cowra Festival Fours competition. That follows an Australia Day social competition and recent fundraising efforts by the Cowra lady bowlers, who donated \$400 to the Cowra and District Cancer Action Group. That is an amazing effort—thank you. I congratulate the Cowra Bowling Club on its hard work to keep the fantastic sport thriving.

LEOPOLD COLIN

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:17): I acknowledge Mosman International Baccalaureate student Leopold Colin, who achieved an outstanding HSC result of a 99.75 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank. That incredible result was obtained despite Leopold battling acute appendicitis the day before his first exam. Many in this place would know that it is difficult enough to sit the HSC exams when you are healthy, let alone facing appendicitis. Fortunately, Leopold was able to sit his first exams, and was operated on for the condition at 11.00 p.m. on the Sunday night prior to his final exam block. As well as obtaining Dux, the 18-year-old Redlands student has been offered a place in the Sydney Scholars Program and the Daylell Scholars Program at the University of Sydney. Leopold is looking forward to commencing a double degree in Engineering and Commerce with honours in Civil Engineering. He aspires to be at the core of developing smarter and more sustainable cities to mitigate the challenges of the twenty-first century, and to improve lives through infrastructure, which is close to the hearts of members of the Berejiklian Government. Once again I congratulate Leopold on his outstanding achievement and wish him the very best of luck as he continues his studies.

ALEX BONEY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:18): There were many worthy recipients of Australia Day awards this year, but I make special mention of Dubbo's Young Citizen of the Year, Alex Boney. Alex has worked with LeaderLife at Apollo House in Dubbo since 2017 and is well-known across Dubbo for his readiness to help and encourage kids, his active involvement in community events and youth programs, his great sense of humour and his passion for sport. It is great to see the positive impact Alex has on kids' lives, particularly through his involvement in community youth programs, and his work in the Soil2Soul lime farm business, which I was delighted to present with \$50,000 recently to value-add to production by making lime cordial. Alex regularly ferries children to and from school, runs school holiday activities and plays in a weekly touch football comp with at-risk youth and police. He is hoping to build on some of the programs at LeaderLife, and to help grow the opportunities for young people in the Soil2Soul program. Speaking about the award, Alex says, "This award isn't for me, it's for all the kids up at Apollo Estate and all the vulnerable kids I work with in Dubbo". Well done Alex, we are very lucky and grateful to have you in our community, and keep up the good work.

GUY DUCKWORTH

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:19): I congratulate RFS officer Guy Duckworth on being recently awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal as part of the Australia Day 2021 Honours List. Acknowledged for valiantly serving his community for nearly four decades, Guy Duckworth was honoured for his years of dedication and commitment to the RFS in our community. Since joining the NSW Rural Fire Service family in 1984 Guy has never looked back, seeing his role as a calling to support his community during times of danger and distress. Recognised early as a leader with promise, in 2000 Guy was elevated to deputy fire control officer for the Port Macquarie-Hastings rural fire district. Since then he has progressed to second in command of the Mid Coast district and is also the representative for response coordination and infrastructure. In his time with the Rural Fire Service, Guy has courageously led strike teams in Canberra to fight the 2003 bushfires. Not surprisingly, he will never forget last year's season, describing the fires as ferocious, while acknowledging and paying tribute to the volunteer teams who risked their lives for our communities. I congratulate Guy on this milestone achievement in his career.

SHARE SMR

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:20): I am proud to recognise the hard work of SHARE SMR in Hurstville, which did an outstanding job during the COVID-19 pandemic to support those in need. This wonderful organisation posted exercise videos on YouTube, ran online Zoom classes, offered nurse services, provided free food hampers and arranged phone support for those doing it tough. I particularly mention general manager Adrian Prakash, who won an individual award at last year's St George Community Awards, and Carmela Durdano, who won a senior award. Adrian and Carmela are both integral members of the team who have utilised their professional experience to continually improve the organisation. Carmela has been a fundamental member for over 20 years and is always there to assist and nurture others. The organisation received a group award for its contribution to the community during the pandemic and for reaching 35 years of service. The St George Community Awards have been running for 10 years and honours men and women from the region across a range of categories who go above and beyond every day.

STELLA FENECH

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:21): I recognise Stella Fenech of Seven Hills for recently completing 21 years of service at the Crown Princess Mary Cancer Centre at Westmead Hospital. Stella has worked as an administration officer during her time at Westmead Hospital and is well loved by her co-workers, who will miss her dearly. She has worked on the switchboard throughout her time at the centre and has enjoyed assisting those receiving life-saving cancer care through their journey and connecting them with the right medical staff when needed. Stella has commented that Westmead is a second home. I know many administrative, environmental and professional healthcare and related staff from across the Seven Hills electorate feel the same way. I congratulate Stella on over two decades of service to the Western Sydney Local Health District on behalf of those from across the State who receive care at the centre. I wish her and her husband a terrific retirement.

Community Recognition Notices

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DOUG ANTHONY, AC, CH

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I wish to pay tribute to an icon of the Country Party and Northern Rivers region—the late, The Right Honourable Doug Anthony AC, CH, former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and former Federal Member for Richmond. I pay my respects to Doug's widow Margot, his son and former Federal Member for Richmond Larry Anthony, Larry's siblings Dugald and Jane, and their families, after attending a State Memorial Service in his honour at Twin Towns Services Club recently. Doug Anthony was well respected as a political leader over many decades, and was blessed with an easy, casual style. Larry reflected on how Doug, with press secretary Barry Virtue, ran the nation's affairs from a caravan at New Brighton over summer holidays. Less well known were his abiding passions for the arts, education, agriculture and commerce. He was actually, in a sense, quite an internationalist; he understood trade in a very fundamental way—we're an island continent but not isolated from the world. Doug and Margot formed a partnership for life and their legacy will be their patronage of the Tweed Regional Gallery—Margaret Olley Arts Centre in Murwillumbah.

MS DALE DONADEL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I was delighted to see Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre Manger Dale Donadel recently receive the Citizen of the Year Award 2021 at the Canterbury-Bankstown Australia Day Awards. In her capacity as the Manager of the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre, Ms Donadel has provided invaluable guidance and support to the organisation for over two decades, enabling the Centre to thrive and expand the services it provides to Chester Hill and the broader Bankstown community. Ms Donadel has consistently demonstrated her passion and dedication towards the local community, assisting with numerous community initiatives in her role as a committee member within the Canterbury Bankstown Local Government Area 'Connecting' project. Ms Donadel has also worked with Western Sydney University's School of Medicine program to provide medical students with an opportunity to learn how to work in a multicultural community. I congratulate Ms Donadel on her well-deserved achievement, and I commend Ms Donadel for her tremendous contribution and commitment towards the local community. I am proud to support Ms Donadel and the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre, and look forward to their continued success in 2021.

BANKSTOWN DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I am pleased to recognise the success of the Bankstown District Cricket Club during the 2020/21 season and congratulate the Club's 1st Grade team on their recent triumph over the UNSW Cricket Club in the Kingsgrove Sports Twenty20 Cup Grand Final. The team, led by Captain Daniel Solway, had an undefeated competition taking all ten wickets a total of five times, including in the Grand Final. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Club's President Mr Scott Grant, Senior Vice Presidents Mr Reza Bilimoria and Mr Darryn Bull, Head Coach Mr Gary Crowfoot, Honorary Secretary Mr Martin Klumpp,

Assistant Honorary Secretary Mr Brian Freedman, Treasurer Mr Meegan Smith-Grant, Assistant Treasurer Mr Eris Dignam, and Chair of Selectors Mr Dean Magee, along with the coaches, players, and volunteers, and applaud their hard work and dedication towards promoting cricket in our local community. I am proud to offer my continued support to the Bankstown District Cricket Club, and wish them all the best for their remaining games this season.

RISE OF INDEPENDENT PRINT MEDIA ON THE NORTHERN RIVERS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Seven months on from NewsCorp closing or downgrading its regional newspaper assets in New South Wales, there has been a resurgence of independent weekly newspapers to fill the void. Even before this we were well served by established papers including The Tweed Valley Weekly in Murwillumbah, The Tenterfield Star on the Northern Tablelands, The Nimbin Good Times, The Byron Shire Echo in Mullumbimby, Talking Turkey in Kyogle, The Village Voice in Drake, and other local journals. Newcomers include, in order of establishment, The Northern Rivers Times out of Casino but with a footprint from the Clarence to the Tweed; The Richmond River Independent, also based in Casino; and The Northern Rivers Review, a glossy stablemate to Australia Community Media's Tenterfield Star. Of course, behind these new mastheads are people with entrepreneurial and journalistic flair and I acknowledge Jeff and Sharon Gibbs at The Times, Susanna Freymark at The Independent and Sophie Moeller at The Review. There is healthy competition in media, and we are also fortunate indeed to have ABC North Coast, the Lismore App, NBN, Prime 7 and community radio stations covering breaking news across our diverse part of Australia.

ASSOCIATION OF ZGHARTA YOUSSEF BEY KARAM BATAL LEBNAN AUSTRALIA INC

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I acknowledge the Association of Zgharta Youssef Bey Karam Batal Lebanon Australia Inc, President Ms Eva Mouawad and other management committee members. 2020 was an especially difficult year for senior citizens. The Zgharta Association worked hard to connect with seniors during the pandemic. They made every effort to stay in touch with older people through phone calls and working with families to ensure the elderly are connected online. The seniors group meets every week and recommenced meeting in a COVIDsafe way as soon as they were able. Their end of year Christmas lunch was especially enjoyable and their delicious food and hospitality was appreciated by all. Senior citizens from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are not accustomed to spending time alone suffered a great deal during the pandemic. The relief and care provided by the Association was especially valuable for those who were unable to see their extended families regularly. I commend the work of the Zgharta Association and all they are doing to ensure local senior citizens are well looked after as well as providing relief for the carers. I wish them all the best in the future.

NEW ROSEVILLE PARK

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—Abingdon Road Reserve, located in Roseville in my electorate of Davidson, was recently upgraded by Ku-ring-gai Council. The new playground has accessible pathways and play equipment for a range of ages and abilities, as well as new fencing, seating and landscaping. Importantly, the upgrade aimed at creating an accessible and inclusive playground, with a \$50,000 grant as part of the broader Everyone Can Play program of the NSW Government. Community consultation was also instrumental in the final design, and the park has been very popular due to the large number of families in the area. I acknowledge local community feedback during the planning period, the Ku-ring-gai Council, the NSW Government, and all involved in delivering this accessible and inclusive playground.

CHEMIST DAPHNE KAPETAS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—I acknowledge Daphne Kapetas, a chemist from Frenchs Forest in my electorate of Davidson. Daphne helped to develop a cream that is intended to treat and prevent chafing among athletes. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, people discovered that it also helps to alleviate dermatitis caused by hand sanitiser. Nurses at Northern Beaches Hospital, as well as other frontline staff such as teachers, report that it has significantly helped them during the pandemic. In addition to being a chemist, Daphne is a lifesaver and athlete. She created the product to help her mother as well as athletes more generally. I commend Daphne for her commitment to treat skin irritation in athletes, for her service as a lifesaver, and for her cream that has helped many frontline staff during this pandemic.

AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATION BY ASSIDA

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—It was great to attend the Australia Day Celebration at Auburn Town Hall organised by the African Sub-Sahara International Development Agency (ASSIDA) on 26 January 2021. ASSIDA is a not for profit international development agency which provides support for those in desperate need as a result of poverty at a local and International level. Australia Day 2021 was unique compared to recent years with various COVID-19 restrictions in place however ASSIDA was still able to bring together 94 people. I understand they

would otherwise have had an attendance of 250 people. This fantastic organisation brought locals together to celebrate Australia Day with the intention of raising awareness about Australia Day within the African community. Participants included musicians and dancers such as The Triumph Sound, Mao de Sydney, Vasco Official, TWIC, The Neon Stars, Lucky African Dance, DJ Bampia and Tanganyika TV. Last year ASSIDA also organised "Happy day" on 17 July 2020, showcasing local African bands, activities and stories. Thank you to ASSIDA Managing Director Theophile Elongo for organising these fantastic events and the invitation me to attend. Your efforts have been recognised and are greatly appreciated. Well done ASSIDA.

PORT HACKING PUTT PUTT REGATTA

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—55 vessels took part in the annual Port Hacking Putt Putt Regatta on Saturday 6 February. The regatta celebrates the history of boating on Port Hacking; raises funds to support the local Marine Rescue Botany Port Hacking volunteers; and helps to improve safety awareness, with skippers encouraged to Log On and Log Off with Marine Rescue NSW's free smartphone app. The coveted 'Pride of the Port' award went to Don Parker's 16-foot steam-powered 'Choof N Puff' and Tom McGann took home the Heritage Award for his beautifully restored 1910 RME. I congratulate regatta commodore Brad Whittaker and Fiona Bell-Whittaker on another successful and highly entertaining regatta.

CRONULLA SHARK ISLAND SWIM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)—The Cronulla Shark Island Swim has become an iconic sporting event for the Sutherland Shire. This year the race attracted 573 entrants in the Ace Gutters 2.3km Swim and 391 entrants in the PULSE 1km Beach Fun Swim. I congratulate all the competitors, in particular Cronulla's Jay Furniss, who won the open men's event with a time of 31:06, and Taylar Puskaric, who closely followed in the women's event with a time of 33:43. Thank you to Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club and the many volunteer race officials who make this event attractive and safe for competitive and recreational ocean swimmers alike.

BILLY CALLAGHAN JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Speaker, I rise to recognise Billy Callaghan who was recently named the Junior Citizen of the year at the Taree Australia day awards. Billy's award is largely thanks to his outstanding support as a volunteer at the Wingham Akoostik Festival in 2019 and 2020. The teen went well beyond what was expected of him displaying great intuition and maturity. Billy is a talented multitasker able to successfully juggle school, work, volunteering and his responsibilities as School Captain of Wingham High. He's excelled in his job at Bunnings earning the award 'rookie of the year'. The impressive teen has also received a Queen's Scout Award, which is the highest honour a Venturer scout can earn. Billy is also now an RFS volunteer having completed his youth Rural Fire Service course.

COMMUNITY ACHIEVERS LENNORA CHATFIELD AND LEONARD KING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Speaker, I rise to recognise Lennora Chatfield and Leonard King who were recently names the community achievers of the year at Taree's Australia Day Awards. Lennora and Leonard have been foster carers for the past eighteen years, the pair often providing a safe and nurturing environment for children with complex needs and significant trauma. The pair are also respected elders of the Biripi Nation who have played a significant role in helping children develop strong connections to their culture. Lenora and Leonard are also a great support to new carers offering mentorship, the pair keen to pass on their eighteen years of knowledge.

MICHAEL COFFEY OAM

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise the untimely passing of Michael Coffey OAM, on 11 January this year. He was aged 79 years. Michael became President of the Liverpool Catholic Club in 2016 and held that position until his death. He'd been a member of the Club since June 1998. He became a member of the Board in February 2004 and was assistant treasurer for 2004 to 2015. In 2015 he became vice-president of the Club. During his time as president, there were a number of significant additions to the Club. He also made significant contributions to the community during his life. He was recognised in the Australia Day Honours in 2015 when he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal. He became a Board member of Karitane Mothercraft Society in 1998 and subsequently became Honorary Chairman. Among many other involvements, he was a former national president of the Australian Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a Board member of the Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies and the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies. He was also, in my experience, a genuinely good and decent man. He will be sorely missed.

MARGARET PARKER

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I am delighted to recognise Margaret Parker, who was the recipient of the Macquarie Award at Liverpool Council's Australia Day event this year. Margaret is a long-term resident of Heckenberg who has been extremely active in over 50's organisations and networks within her community. She was the second Director at the ANZAC Village Preschool and a foundation member of the Education Union of NSW. She has been a volunteer for 27 years on the board of a local non-Government organisation, South West Child Adolescent and Family Services. The Macquarie Award is given to a person or group selected by the Mayor who has made a significant contribution to Liverpool. Margaret's award is well-deserved and reflects the very considerate contribution she has made to our community.

MINMI FOOTBALL CLUB – MOVEMBER

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Every November, men right across Australia take the opportunity to put away the razor and take part in Movember to help raised funds for mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. From humble beginnings in 2003 when 30 friends grew a Mo, more than 5 million people have taken this important fundraiser to a truly global one. One local football club decided to take up the challenge and help change the face of men's health. The Minmi Wanderers, aka the MinMO Wanderers Movember team raised an amazing \$7,827 dollars for men's mental health. They joined with the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group and combined they raised an astonishing \$33,578 all going towards Lifeline Hunter and Central Coast. Congratulations and thank you to Michael Baillie, Jarryd Callaghan, Trent Partridge, Kannon Ford, James Barnes, Lachlan Shrume, Nathan Ham, Blake Dickinson, Courtney Joshua Perry, Nick Ryan and Alex Brandrick for taking on the Movember challenge. Thanks to everyone who donated and supported this important cause.

MALTNHOP BREWHAUS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—We are a Nation of beer lovers and the craft beer and small independent brewers are a major growth industry. The Wallsend electorate now has their very own award winners, the MaltNHops Brewhaus, based at Beresfield. Recently the MaltNHops Brewhaus took out 4 silver and 3 bronzes medals at the nation's biggest and most prestigious award, the Independent Brewers Association awards. Eight beers entered, seven medals won. By any reckoning that's a great effort, but when you are up against 340 IBA registered breweries, it's an even bigger result. There is a lot of competition. Congratulations to dedicated Brewer Dan Lindon and the awesome team of Cameron McDonald, Phil Lyne and Ebonie Reeves on a great outcome. The beers that picked up medals were the Red Ale - Silver Medal, the Lemon Myrtle - Silver Medal, the NIEPA, their biggest seller - Silver Medal, the IPA - Silver Medal, the Coffee Stout - Bronze Medal, the Pilsner - Bronze Medal and the Session Ale - Bronze Medal. It's great to see a local business kicking goals on the national scene. Congratulations to MaltNHops Brewhaus on your success.

JOY ROSS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—For almost 17 years, Wagga Wagga's Joy Ross worked with the support of Calvary Riverina and I-MED medical imaging as the manager of medical specialist recruitment. Mrs Ross "travelled far and wide" as she pursued her goal of attracting medical specialists to Wagga Wagga. Her role included promoting medical positions, communicating with potential recruits, arranging visits for them and assisting with relocation and professional opportunities for partners when required. Additionally, Mrs Ross helped find childcare, school options and accommodation. She helped with relocation issues and did her best to make new recruits welcome in our community. According to her former colleagues, she not only travelled to find potential candidates, she also "went on tour" to introduce them to general practitioners across the region. Working with the Riverina Medical Specialist Recruitment and Retention Committee, Mrs Ross helped to recruit more than 100 specialist doctors to the region. Mrs Ross's work has enabled more diverse and specialist care for our region. As we know, attracting doctors to rural areas is challenging. Mrs Ross has made a substantial, long-term, contribution to improving health care in the Riverina.

BLUE MOUNTAINS PARAMEDICS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains)—It is with great appreciation that I rise to recognise our Paramedics for their extraordinary efforts to support our communities. The strains and pressures placed on all of us have been exceedingly high throughout the crises of fires, flood and COVID-19, and particularly for the hardworking Paramedics of NSW. It is important that we acknowledge their unrelenting work, their skill, precision and capabilities. Paramedics are graduating from University but there are not enough positions. Despite our communities needing them, there aren't the jobs. Those that save our lives - when time is of the essence - do not have the workforce numbers to respond to critical calls. We MUST acknowledge that NSW has the second longest ambulance waiting time in the country. And this Government must do something about it. We need more

Paramedics! It is a matter of anger and despair to me that in spite of life-saving work, Paramedics were forced to take on a wage cut in the middle of the worst health crisis in living memory. My deepest respect and thanks to those Paramedics from Katoomba and Springwood Ambulance stations. You are heroes – covering such a large geographical area and housed in archaic locations. You deserve better.

TONY BURNS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—Wagga Wagga's Tony Burns never wanted the type of job that saw him working from a desk five days a week. After a 45-year career in public health, the senior environmental health officer has had anything but a career behind a desk. Mr Burns' career has seen him involved in everything from illicit cigarette busts to investigations into legionella outbreaks. He works to prevent Ross River fever outbreaks and is responsible for spot checks on businesses which pierce people's skin, from tattooing to piercing and dermabrasion. Mr Burns, a father and grandfather, also had a proud history of community service. For more than 10 years he was chair of the local fundraising committee for the former Child Flight service, was a president of its board and, at one point, served as the organisation's acting chief executive officer. More recently, Mr Burns was one of the founders of the Specialist Medical Resources Foundation, a not-for-profit, community driven, charity for the Riverina that helps 'bridge the gap' for people by helping fund medical equipment. I commend Mr Burns for his dedication to our community and its health.

ROXBOROUGH PARK ROSE GARDEN

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—Many constituents from across the Seven Hills Electorate, particularly those from across Baulkham Hills, Northmead, North Rocks and Winston Hills talk about and often visit the terrific Roxborough Park Rose Garden. The Rose Garden is one of the largest in Sydney and showcases 80 different species and many of these varieties have been donated by local nurseries and rose societies. The Garden is also undergoing some works in conjunction alongside the Waves Fitness and Aquatic Centre renewal project. Works will be carried out on the rotunda with improved pathways, edging and irrigation systems. Due to the works some flowers have been relocated to newly constructed garden beds in locations throughout The Hills Shire Council. The Council's Mayor, Dr Michelle Byrne, is urging locals to come and view the many roses on display and support the Roxborough Park Rose Garden located at Alfred Henry Whaling Memorial Reserve on Roxborough Park Road, Baulkham Hills.

BLACKTOWN CITY SALVATION ARMY

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I take this time to acknowledge and thank the Blacktown City Salvation Army for their involvement in our local community, particularly over the recent Christmas period. The Seven Hills Electorate was lucky enough to have live performances from the Blacktown City Salvation Army carolling band through the holiday season. The group of gifted musicians brought their talents to Seven Hills Plaza, playing over multiple days and spreading the Christmas spirit to the community. Members of the Salvation Army in the electorate of Seven Hills have tirelessly worked over the last year to provide services to those in need. The Salvation Army has a strong presence in the community, with a welcoming Church located in Blacktown and multiple Salvation Army stores across the Greater Western Sydney Region, including stores in Blacktown and Seven Hills. Organisations like the Salvation Army have helped keep our local area vibrant and connected through the period of the pandemic. I thank the Salvation Army for all their engagement in the community.

SACKVILLE STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL VISIT

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)—Stories are powerful and transformative. Through the joy of reading, stories are shared and passed on through generations. I recently participated in Sackville Street Public School's World Read Aloud Day, held to celebrate the start of the new school year. I was one of many special guests and community representatives who joined classes at the school to share a love of reading. I read one of my personal favourites, *The BFG*, and enjoyed sharing Roald Dahl's imaginative use of language. It brought back fond memories of when I was first introduced to the book decades earlier. I commend Sackville Street Public School's commitment to literacy, which forms one of the key priorities of its School Improvement Plan. Literacy sets the foundation for lifelong learning and is a vital part of a child's overall development. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of newly appointed principal Kylie Lyneham, who has served the school community in various roles for the past 26 years. Kylie's outstanding leadership, together with exceptional teachers and staff, and strong community partnerships, lives up to the school motto 'Sharing and Caring.'

GEORGES RIVER YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2021

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I had the honour of attending Georges River Council's Australia Day award ceremony in Hurstville this year. Congratulations to Young Citizen of the Year, Kurt Cheng. At just 20 years of age Kurt has already had significant and positive impact within his local community. Kurt was a

member of the Georges River Council Youth Advisory Committee and was instrumental in introducing the first mental health program in partnership with Headspace. This partnership saw mobile Headspace booths across Georges River Council public libraries, catering to Year 11 and 12 students undertaking the HSC. The program was so well received, and through his advocacy and hard work it has been adopted as an annual program by the Georges River Council Youth Advisory Committee and will benefit young students for many years to come. Kurt is a positive role model and an inspiration because of his work and ambition to lead community-based projects. Congratulations to Kurt, this is a very well deserved award. I offer my congratulations and thanks also to all the winners and nominees for their dedication and service to our community.

KOGARAH ELECTORATE CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION 2020

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—The Kogarah Christmas Card competition was a huge success again in 2020, with my office receiving hundreds of entries from Year 3 student's right across my electorate. It is always a wonderful time of year looking through such creative and imaginative artworks. It was a very close contest this year, with many excellent entries, and I would like to congratulate Lucas Zhong from Carlton Public School for being selected as the winner. His artwork was a wintery themed watercolour featuring a very well-drawn snowman. I'm sure it brought joy to the people of Kogarah as it landed in their mailboxes at the end of last year. Congratulations to Lucas, and a big thank you to every student and school that entered my Christmas Card competition for 2020.

BEROWRA CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION GROUP

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—Last week I attended the re-launch of the Berowra Climate Change Action Group. The group, which was started last year had stopped meeting due to COVID restrictions. However, now they are able to meet again safely, they decided to re-launch to encourage additional members to join the team. I would like to congratulate the Chairperson Kate Friend who I met with last year. She has been the champion of this group and I thank her for her passion for our environment. We all need to stand up and make a difference and this group is a great example of how the community can work together to make changes in our own lives. The first meeting was extremely well attended and I was pleased to be able to speak on the night about the work I have been doing as Minister for Energy and Environment. I thank everyone who attended and those on Facebook who have joined the group and are looking for ways to ensure we leave this planet in better shape than we found it.

ZOE HENDRICKX

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today I would like to acknowledge Zoe Hendrickx from Loreto Normanhurst. Zoe, who is now in Year 11, reached out to me last year to assist her to complete her community service. She had noticed an increase in the amount of rubbish in the bushland around her home of Berowra Heights and decided to do something about it. She committed to 10 hours of community service where she collected rubbish on the paths and around the drains in the National Park. It is taking small steps like this which will make a big difference. I would like to thank Zoe for putting our local environment first. I hope she inspires many others to do the same.

MR GRAHAM ALASTAIR ROSS AM

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Graham Alastair Ross AM, an Epping constituent and Beecroft local for being made a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Australia Day honours list, for significant service to the broadcast media, particularly to horticulture, and to the community. Graham is a well-known media personality, with a career spanning many decades as a radio broadcaster and television gardening presenter. In 2011, Graham was presented with the prestigious Gold Veitch Memorial Media from the Royal Horticultural Society in London by HRH Princess Alexandra on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen for his lifelong contribution to the advancement of the art, science and practice of horticulture. Graham was only the fourth Australian to receive this medal since its creation by Queen Victoria in 1870. Graham has been with Channel Seven for more than thirty years, having spent most of that time presenting Australia's top ranking lifestyle show, Better Homes and Gardens. He has presented over 900 episodes. In 2015 Graham was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian Garden Council. Thank you Graham, for your contribution to this important field, and congratulations again.

PETER DOVER

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)—On Australia Day earlier this year, Shoalhaven City Council awarded a number of outstanding locals for their work within our community, and Peter Dover was presented with the Outstanding Contribution to an Inclusive Shoalhaven award. Peter's passion is to help those in need, assisting local homeless people and providing hundreds of families in the Shoalhaven with food, accommodation, clothing, prayer and support for more than 8 years, alongside his team at

Salt Ministries. As well as assisting families with weekly food hampers, Peter runs Safe Shelter Shoalhaven, Salt Store and Salt Assisted Housing. Just before Christmas I had the pleasure of facilitating the handover of toys, food and clothing from Turbans 4 Australia to Peter and his team at Salt Care who distributed the goods to Conjola Park and Lake Conjola families. I would encourage anyone who can to contact Salt Ministries to offer assistance with their many programs. Thank you for your local leadership Peter. May you and your team continue to help those who need a hand in our community.

SAMANTHA COSGROVE – MOREE PHYSICAL CULTURE CLUB

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise the commitment to excellence and overcoming challenges shown by Samantha Cosgrove and the members of the Moree Physical Culture Club. Club members have won many awards since its opening in 1994 and that is due to the club providing "More than just dance classes" and the motto, "Empowering girls for life". Because of COVID restrictions, 2020 was a difficult year for students to learn movements through zoom lessons. However, members did well through perseverance at the Junior Zone Competition held in Tamworth in October. All of the Moree competitors qualified for the semi-finals and 14 went on for the finals out of which 9 girls received top placings. The ladies and seniors competed in Coffs Harbour in October with three ladies taking part in the finals. I congratulate Samantha Cosgrove for her part in the success of the Moree Physical Culture Club. I also commend Samantha for the dedication she has shown in ensuring the survival of the Club during challenging times and the contribution she and the club have made in "Empowering girls for life".

PETER MUNSIE OF KELVIN GROVE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise the contribution the Munsie family of Kelvin Grove has made to animal farming in the Northern Tablelands. Their property lies east of Uralla and boasts four generations of good grazing practices raising sheep and cattle. Peter is currently breeding Poll Dorset rams over Border Merino Cross ewes and this year has enjoyed a lambing percentage of around 150 per cent. Peter is using natural pastures mixed with clover or rye and says that he doesn't need to supplementary feed the ewes before joining during normal conditions and the rams are treated the same. His regime has proved successful and Peter intends to keep this practice as a sustainable system. I congratulate Peter on developing his Poll Dorset /Border Merino Cross breed which has proved so successful. I commend Peter for the hard work a successful agricultural enterprise requires and for his contribution to the grazing industry.

COLIN COOPER – JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Speaker, Recently it was my privilege to present a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr Colin Cooper of Grenfell for completing 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace. The Certificate of Appreciation was awarded by the Attorney General the Hon Mark Speakman SC MP. A Justice of the Peace performs an important public role that shows a dedication to service for the Community. This role is more important in the regional areas where towns and villages are spread over large distances. Colin became a Justice of the Peace in October 1970. Congratulations Mr Cooper!

STEPHANIE COOK

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I talk a lot in this house about the unsung members of the St George region whose selflessness and dedication makes a huge difference to our community. Today I would like to recognise Stephanie Cook who is the uniform shop co-ordinator at Peakhurst South Public School and she is also a learning support officer at the school. The school staff, P&C Committee and the parents of the school are all very appreciative of the work that Stephanie does to run the uniform shop smoothly and effectively. She has been in this role for the past three years and has been so important for the school through managing year 6 commemorative shirts, PSSA shirts and organising uniforms for the kindergarten students every year. The entire school community is grateful for everything that she has done in her time at the school and we all hope that she continues this pivotal role for many more years to come. Well done Stephanie, all the best for the year ahead.

50 YEARS AS A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise several members of my electorate who recently passed the milestone of having served as a JP for 50 years. Salvatore Russo, Dale Rodham, Alan Eipper and Robert Burke should be congratulated on this achievement, with each of them showing a determined commitment to this particular volunteering opportunity. JP's are an important check and balance within the Australian Legal System, ensuring that anything from court documents to mortgages to academic qualifications are accurate and signed by who they are supposed to be. It can sometimes be a thankless job, with JP's needing to devote the time and effort in order to scrupulously analyse each document that comes their way.

Again, I would like to thank and congratulate the above recipients, and wish them the best as they continue to serve the community.

RAY WILLIAMS ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—Every year it is my pleasure to issue the Ray Williams Encouragement Award to a Year 6 or Year 7 student in every school within my electorate. This award is an opportunity to highlight particular students who try their very best, both at school and within the broader community. It is to reward hard work, persistence, respect for others and a positive attitude. This year the recipients of the award were: Gabrielle Bechara, Sarah Schwartzel, Kobe Hudson, Idin Zahraei, Joshua Gava, Keely MacPherson, Elizabeth Drayton, Harrison Davis, Beau Binns, Jade Micallef, Madison Gale, Gwendolyn Brooker, Ethan Phelps, Tara Manghooli, Madeleine Sills, Jack Goodwin, Matthew Barone, Fatima Chauhdary, Leila Balangon, Freya Begg, Lachlan Sherry, Zachary Dayball, Savion Lovric, Amalia Fernandes, Hannah Beedell, Michael Cummins, Amber Trethowan and Shelby Dyson. My congratulations go out to all award-winners, and I wish them all the best for their future studies.

LIZ BARLOW

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I know first-hand the power that local Council representatives have in making our community a better and safer place to live, work and to raise a family. I rise today to acknowledge the dedication and persistence of Bayside Councillor Liz Barlow who has continued to improve the St George area after reaching 25 years of service to NSW Local Government in 2020. Whilst I never served with her during my time as a Councillor, we were in adjoining Council areas and she was always there to cooperate and assist when required. She was first elected to the former Rockdale City Council in 1995 and rose to become the first female Deputy Mayor in 2002. Since then she has stood on a long list of Council boards and committees. Her enthusiasm and commitment to others is a part of who she is. I would not be surprised if she continues to serve our community for another 25 years Mr Speaker. I wish Liz all the best moving forward and I sincerely hope that she continues to serve our community for many more years to come.

HERMIZ SHAHEN

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Hermiz Shahan on being awarded a Medallion by Fairfield City Council for Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. The City of Fairfield has the highest concentration of Assyrian migrants in Australia. Hermiz is Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance and continues to advocate for the Assyrian community in Australia. Hermiz co-hosts a weekly radio program that discusses the activities of the Australian Assyrian community in NSW. Over the course of many years he has helped to keep the Australian Assyrian community informed and ensured ongoing discussion of issues affecting the community. He has continually advocated for contemporary issues related to the Assyrian diaspora, and those living in their indigenous homeland in Northern Iraq. Hermiz has stood up for his community and at times has even had threats directed towards him. He takes it all in his stride and is not afraid to be a voice for Australian Assyrians. For members of the Assyrian community, it is important that these issues are discussed. It helps bring people together for a common cause. Congratulations Hermiz on your well-deserved award and thank you for everything you do for our community.

DAVID DAVID

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to David David who was awarded a medallion on Australia Day by Fairfield City Council as a Volunteer of the Year. David is the President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation and is an outspoken voice for his community, always working hard for the benefit of others. David David is one half of a weekly radio program that discusses the activities of the Australian Assyrian community in NSW as well as contemporary issues related to the Assyrian diaspora and those living in their indigenous homeland in Northern Iraq. David David has stood up for his community and at times has even had threats directed towards him. He takes it all in his stride and is not afraid to be a voice for Australian Assyrians. For members of the Assyrian community, it is important that these issues are discussed. It helps bring people together for a common cause and creates conversation within between families. Congratulations David David and thank you for your continued efforts to serve our community.

EASTS CRICKET CLUB – GIRLS' CRICKET PROGRAM

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)—Community sports are such an important part of our local community – they provide us with a way to keep healthy and fit and build our understanding of one another. That's why I was especially excited last Friday to announce the award to Eastern Suburbs Cricket Club of a \$6,000 NSW Government grant under the NSW ICC T20 World Cup Cricket Legacy Fund program. The grant will expand the Club's Girls' Cricket Program. It also follows on from a \$12,100 Fund grant in 2019 which was used to develop and promote the program and provide equipment and coaching for the junior female players. At

the announcement I met some amazing young girls from the Junior Cricket team including Clementine Knox. They told me what they best like about cricket and how excited they were to be training that afternoon with Sydney Sixers star and Junior Girls Cricket Ambassador Maddy Darke. I thank Maddy, Club President Jim Maxwell AM and Vice-President Peter Lovitt for supporting these young cricketers. It was clear how much the girls loved the sport and what a difference the funding will make. Congratulations to the Club!

BALLINA DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—I rise to applaud the excellent work of Ballina Shire Dementia Friendly Alliance, an organisation whose value was recognised last year by Dementia Australia. Ballina Shire Dementia Friendly Alliance does an outstanding job of raising awareness about the issues facing local people living with dementia. As we know dementia also affects the family members of loved ones, carers and advocates. The Alliance takes a holistic approach and provides support to improve the quality of all their lives. Their overall aim is to ensure that the local area is dementia inclusive. Among the Alliance's key achievements are Dementia Action Week, which in 2019 was marked by pots of lavender with swing tags highlighting dementia care guidelines. The Alliance provided comprehensive updates to hundreds of businesses and organisations in the Ballina Shire alerting them to its activities. My congratulations goes to all of the Alliance's 47 members and in particular the Co-Chairs Anne Moehead and Valerie Schache. Anne was the first psychogeriatric nurse practitioner in NSW and Valerie, who is living with dementia, has played an invaluable role since the Alliance's inception in 2018 in challenging stereotypes in the community about living with dementia.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2021 – FEDERATION COUNCIL

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I congratulate the following constituents who have been recognised in this year's Australia Day Honours and Awards. These individuals have served our community through their commitment, selflessness and dedication. Citizen of the Year and Local Achiever: George Jenkins (Mulwala), Kathryn Bruce (Savernake), Vivian Spilva (Mulwala); Cassandra Hughes (Corowa), Meredith Miegel (Corowa); Wayne Lamb (Howlong), Yvonne Smith (Urana). Young Citizen of the Year Awards went to: Maxim Blockley (Corowa), Zall Peters (Mulwala), Dylan Forge (Corowa). I thank you all for your contribution. Your efforts are making a difference for our regional communities.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2021 – GREATER HUME COUNCIL

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—The following constituents have been recognised in this year's Australia Day Honours and Awards for serving with commitment, selflessness and dedication.

- Citizen of the Year 2021 - Murray Jones, Holbrook
- Young Citizen of the Year 2021 – joint winners Daniel Hawkins, Lankey's Creek and Alexander Toogood, Henty.
- School Citizenship Awards 2021:

o Billabong High School	Lucy Way
o St Paul's Lutheran College	Noah Wilson
o Brocklesby Public School	Amelia Severin
o Burrumbuttock Public School	Abby-Rose Young
o Culcairn Public School	Ava Smith
o Holbrook Public School	Annabel Pincott
o St John's Lutheran School	Norah Johnston
o St Joseph's Primary School	Riley Turner
o St Patrick's Primary School	Neve Scholz
o St Paul's Lutheran Primary School	Layla Bahr and Chantelle Cunningham
o Walbundrie Public School	Angus Coyle
o Walla Walla Public School	Bridgette Le Busque

The Mayoral Award for Outstanding Achievement to Dr Chevalla Janardhen Reddy for his contribution to the Culcairn and District over 46 years; a special award to Max Webb for his contribution to Walbundrie. Thank you for your contribution. Your efforts make a difference for our regional communities.

HANDS OFF GLEBE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I bring to the attention of the House Hands Off Glebe, an organisation that does remarkable work in the Balmain Electorate to protect our community and preserve its heritage. Inner city areas like Glebe are under a special type of pressure, constantly being eyed off by developers. But for over a decade, Hands Off Glebe have been staunch advocates for public housing and worked tirelessly to defend the existing residents and communities that currently thrive in Glebe. Over the years I have had the pleasure of campaigning alongside them to ensure the preservation of heritage in this historic part of Sydney and to protect public housing. I would particularly like to acknowledge Dennis Doherty, Hannah Middleton, Emily Bullock, David Watson, Susan Copeland, Kathy Kang and Julie Brackenreg for their tremendous leadership and passionate advocacy for Glebe. I commend to the House their wonderful work in the local area and thank Hands Off Glebe for making our community a better place.

PETER FITZPATRICK – WENTWORTH

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Speaker, today I would like to recognise and congratulate Mr Peter Fitzpatrick of Wentworth. Mr Fitzpatrick retired from the position of Registrar at Wentworth Local Court on 29 January 2021 after a 50 year career with the NSW Department of Justice. Joining the courts in January 1971, Mr Fitzpatrick spent several years on the eastern seaboard before arriving in Wentworth in 1978 as the courthouse's sole Registrar. A major focus of Mr Fitzpatrick's role was to ensure files were prepared for the arrival of the sitting magistrate each month. Trials were heard in the Wentworth Court House, for many years after Mr Fitzpatrick's arrival. In the early days of the Court House, there was no air-conditioning or heating, aside from Mr Fitzpatrick lighting the fires within the building, which all parties appreciated. Mr Fitzpatrick has provided excellent service and is highly respected member of the community with membership of various organisations, including the tennis club and progress association. Congratulations Peter on your many years of valued service. I trust you will enjoy the extra time with family and the occasional round of golf.

QUEEN'S SCOUT AWARD FOR 1ST BALMORAL SCOUTS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge Charlotte Mason and Lawson Bartlett of the 1st Balmoral Scout Group for achieving the Queen's Scout Award. The Queen's Scout Award aims to widen the interests and knowledge of venturer scouts, and encourage them to 'look wide'. Completion of the Queen's Scout Award is a major milestone in a venturers scouting journey, and carries an outstanding reputation within scouting and the community. Congratulations to Charlotte and Lawson on this incredible achievement. I always enjoy joining with our local scout and sea scout groups, and particularly enjoy seeing the enthusiasm these scouts have for their scout group and each other. I would also like to acknowledge Matthew Brownlie and Libby Wyse who both stepped down as Scout Section Leaders, and I thank them for their dedication to the 1st Balmoral Scout Group and to our local community. I would also encourage any of our young people who want to get involved to reach out to their local scout group and 'be prepared' for the fun and enjoyment of being a scout.

NORTH SYDNEY GIRLS WIN PHILOSOTHON

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, today I acknowledge the incredible students from North Sydney Girls High School, who have for the sixth year in a row, won the NSW Philosothon. The competition which was held late last year saw a team of students compete against each other in challenges of critical and creative thinking. Congratulations to the team on their success, and I am particularly impressed they were also able to enjoy outstanding results in the four age divisions. Students Belinda Shang and Ella Uhlmann ranked second and third in their age groups, and Chaewon Park and Renee Nayager (NAH Year Ger) ranked first in their age groups. The NSW Philosothon is an annual competition where students explore philosophical and ethical issues. They are assessed by university-based professional philosophers, and score highly when they demonstrate rigour and clarity of thought. Congratulations to these outstanding students on this result, and I look forward to seeing you take on the 2021 NSW Philosothon with the same determination.

MARDI GRAS 2021

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I commend Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for the innovative response to COVID-19 so that a safe Mardi Gras parade can go ahead in 2021. Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant Pride celebrations have been cancelled or moved online; these events are vital for our visibility and ongoing march to equality. This new way of proceeding despite the restrictions of a pandemic have resulted from constructive collaboration between Mardi Gras, Destination NSW and NSW Health, along with the SCG. Sydney's Mardi Gras 2021 won't only be a celebration for our city, but a beacon of hope for LGBTQIA+ communities around the world. The 2021 event will be different, but more important than ever before, with discrimination and criminalisation still prevalent around the world, especially in

our region. Thank you to Mardi Gras CEO Albert Kruger and his team for finding a way to make this iconic and important event possible. Thank you also to SCG CEO Kerry Maher, Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Jenny Leong Member for Newtown for their support for this important celebration of diversity and inclusion.

MILLICENT CHALMERS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to put on record the passing of community organiser and advocate Millicent Chalmers. Millicent was a lifelong community development worker. More recently she was a key driver for the Millers Point Resident Action Group (RAG) and the campaign to save social housing in that precinct. Millicent was also central to the local community managed and non-profit Darling House Aged Care centre. Few people with any connection to Millers Point, Dawes Point, The Rocks and Walsh Bay would not have known or known about Millicent. Along with her sister Marcia, Millicent dedicated much of her life to building a stronger community and fighting for those more vulnerable and making sure that ordinary citizens got to be part of decisions about their lives and their future. Inner city communities are so much richer and supportive as a result of people like Millicent and her sad passing.

PAMELA PRICE

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, today I congratulate Pamela Price on being a Joint Winner of the Volunteer of the Year category of the Central Coast Australia Day Awards. Pam is the founding member of the Doyalson Squadron of the NSW Australian Air League. The purpose of the Doyalson Squadron was to establish a female group on the Central Coast and provide equal opportunities and experiences for females through the Australian Air League. Pam worked tirelessly in her role; organising camps, excursions, flying experiences and educational activities, which have all been extremely valuable to cadets. Pam ensured the squadron's work continued despite COVID-19 restrictions, last year organising meetings and sessions to be held over Zoom. I congratulate Pam, as well as the other eight winners and three highly commended recipients for being recognised in this year's Central Coast Australia Day Awards. I thank them all for their generous and invaluable contributions.

FRED TURNER

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter)—I would like to congratulate Fred Turner who was named Singleton Council's 2021 Citizen of the Year at the recent Singleton Council Australia Day Awards. Fred is to be commended for his community work within the Singleton community. A long-standing stalwart of the NSW Rural Fire Service for more than 40 years who has dedicated decades to volunteering with local community groups. I thank them for his contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

30 YEARS NSW POLICE FORCE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise three outstanding police officers in my electorate who have recently been acknowledged for 30 years of service. Celebrating this remarkable milestone in the NSW Police Force is Acting Sergeant James Styles, Senior Constable Allan Rider and Detective Senior Constable Richard Broomby. Each of these men who have spent over three decades protecting and serving the people of New South Wales. The three senior officers commenced their training in Sydney at the Academy and have served in various stations across the state, before taking a post in Port Macquarie. Committed to making a difference in our community, the influential trio have witnessed a number of changes in the Force from typewriters and charges books, handcuffs and guns to body cameras, portable radios, tasers and computer technology. Officer Rider comments on his service and sacrifice in the force and the ever-present danger police men and women face each and every day to ensure the safety and welfare of others. Involved in a fatal car accident on pursuit of a vehicle, nearly 28 years ago, Officer Rider is grateful for his friends, family and work colleagues who have supported him throughout his career. Congratulations on this extraordinary achievement.

AIMEE DAY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I am always humbled to acknowledge the community champions that work tirelessly to raise funds for worthy causes both locally and nationally. Today, I highlight the extraordinary efforts of local pastry chef Aimee Day for pledging her support for the 2021 World's Greatest Shave. A diligent campaigner for cancer research, The Taste Bakehouse owner from Laurieton recently made the ultimate sacrifice for a young woman by donating 51cm of her beautiful locks and collecting over \$3,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation. Inspired by her children Ashton, 6 and Darcy, 4 Aimee recognises the challenges young people and their families face when dealing with a cancer diagnosis prompting her to take action. Supported by Mandi Hillin, hairdresser and owner of Glamour Ends Hairdressing in Port Macquarie, the hairstylist generously donated her salon on the 19th January to showcase the event, with social media pictures capturing Aimee's transformation and selfless contribution. The annual World Greatest Shave will be held this year from 10 to 14 March 2021 and aims to raise vital funds for the 47 Australian's that will be diagnosed each day with some form of blood cancer. I congratulate Aimee for her commendable efforts in raising funds for cancer research.

SOLAR MY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Congratulations to the inner west schools who are among the first to receive solar panels as part of the Solar My School Program. Dobroyd Point Public School; St Joan of Arc Primary School; St Vincent Primary School; Casimir College and St Brigid's Primary School have all become solar schools. The Solar My School Program is helping the inner west community move towards net zero emissions and fight the ongoing impacts of climate change. The program also creates resources to teach kids about how solar energy is created, stored and used to reduce carbon emissions. Locally, the Solar My School Program is run by Inner West Council through its newly established Office of renewable Energy Innovation and since 2018, 22 inner west schools have now signed up. The Solar My School program has now seen a total of 322kw of solar be installed on rooves across inner west schools. It is great to see local schools and councils stepping up to tackle the impacts of climate change. Thank you to the parents, teachers and students who are showing extraordinary leadership and making a real difference, now and into the future.

LITTLE GREECE: MARRICKVILLE ROAD

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—The Marrickville Road precinct is now known as "Little Greece" in honour of the invaluable and ongoing contribution the Greek community has made to Marrickville and the Inner West. The decision by Inner West Council confirms what Marrickville residents already know - Marrickville is a little slice of Greece, right here in Sydney. In addition to the nearby St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and Hellenic Theatre, Marrickville is home to long-running family businesses like Lamia Deli, Hellenic Patisserie and Gelato Bar, Athena Cakes, Faros Seafood, Cafe Kafedaki and the Corinthian Rotisserie. High school teacher Vasilis Vasilas has captured the rich history of these and the 80 other local Greek businesses that have built Marrickville for over 50 years in his book, Little Athens. Little Greece in Marrickville now joins Little Portugal in Petersham and Little Italy in Leichhardt and Inner West Council has also indicated they are working to establish Little Vietnam on Illawarra Road, Marrickville, to recognise the contribution of the Vietnamese community. I congratulate all Greek Australians who call the inner west home and thank them for all they do to make Marrickville the extraordinary place it is today.

MAITLAND'S NEW CITIZENS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I was honoured to congratulate and welcome 28 new citizens to the Maitland electorate on Australia Day. This time last year I was hearing from drought and fire impacted people across NSW, some who had lost everything and others who were slowly rebuilding. I was inspired by the hard work, the resilience and the care and indeed love that people demonstrated. It is this community spirit, this love for others, this desire to help, to care and to protect, that makes me proud to be an Australian Citizen. There is no greater privilege than our citizenship. It's a life-long commitment to Australia's values of freedom, democracy, equality and respect. It was heart-warming to see so many new citizens showing their commitment to our great nation and reflecting on the meaning and importance of Australian citizenship and the shared values that unite us. On behalf of everyone in Maitland I welcome our new citizens to our family.

MAITLAND TOY DRIVE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—Over the Christmas period, I was utterly humbled by the generosity of the many individuals, families, organisations and businesses who dug deep to help others in our community in desperate need. My annual Christmas Toy Drive, now in its third year, was the most generously supported to date with hundreds of donated toys and gift cards dropped off to my Electorate office. There were some outstanding individuals and groups including the West Maitland Centennial Lions Club and the Club Maitland City and East Maitland Bowling Club, who bought more than a hundred toys, worth thousands of dollars from a local toy shop. We delivered several carloads of toys to the Maitland Neighbourhood Centre, where manager Sarah Adams and her dedicated team prepared Christmas hampers and age-appropriate gifts for children under 15. I thank all of the donors from the bottom of my heart. Your generosity put smiles on the faces of many local children on Christmas Day, and was such a relief to their loving parents who are struggling to afford food and shelter in a time of desperate need. Your actions really proved the adage that "it is better to give than to receive."

SENIORS' STORIES

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Caitlin Larbalestier of GyMEA, Marjon McNamara of Como, Kathryn Herring of Oyster Bay and Robyn Schiralli of Miranda, who have shared their tales of triumph and tragedy in Seniors' Stories Volume 6. Our seniors hold remarkable lived experiences, and the Seniors' Stories Book provides a fantastic opportunity for our local community to and learn from their fellow residents. It is apt that the theme of this edition is Resilience, which we have needed an abundance of in 2020, and is reflected through each of the stories in its own unique and inspiring way. Caitlin's story, 'A Day I Will Never Forget' tells

a story of Australian courage and bravery as her family faced devastating bushfires which threatened their home, whilst Marjon sensitively takes the reader through journeys of loss and new life in her story 'Grace'. Additionally, Kathryn, shares a humorous story of the persistent frog who became her dearest house-mate, and Robyn's inspiring story of education imparts wisdom upon her readers. I congratulate Caitlin, Marjon, Kathryn and Robyn on having their stories published, and commend them for sharing their important experiences with the members of our community.

COUNCILLOR CAROL PROVAN

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the incredible Councillor Carol Provan, who has been recognised with an Outstanding Service Award by the Local Government Association of NSW. By way of background, Carol has served our community for over 20 years, joining Sutherland Shire Council in 1983 and being elected as President from 1987 to 1988. Returning to Council in 2008, she again served as Mayor between 2011 and 2012. Residing in the Sutherland Shire for over 50 years, Carol has a deep connection to the community which she serves and is ever present at local events. During her years of service, Carol has championed a number of major projects including the Cronulla Town Centre upgrade and the Bate Bay Coastal Management Program, from which all Shire residents benefit. To this day, Carol continues to advocate for building a community that supports small businesses and residents alike, and our community is fortunate to have such a strong role model as a representative. I commend Carol for her hard work and achievements, and thank her for her service and dedication to our community.

CHARLI RYAN

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—Congratulations Ms. Charli Ryan for being our young Australia of the year for Shellharbour, being nominated for your dedication to making a positive change to students at Warilla High School and the greater Shellharbour community. Thank you for your involvement in organising school fundraising events and wellbeing initiatives including, White Ribbon and Harmony Day, for R U OK Day, for the foresight in developing an initiative to encourage students to check in with one another concerning their mental health, which I believe was extended on to local police and for investing time and effort to improve the effectiveness of a guidance program for younger students. Thank you Charli for your commitment to community fundraising events, to little athletics and the ParkRun volunteering for these events, your donations and support for community members through assisting with dog walking and baby-sitting, it all helps. Last but not least, helping out with the emerging need for face masks due to COVID-19. Taking the initiative to buy material and elastic and set to work sewing masks in pretty designs, distributing them to family, friends, elderly neighbours, her school bus driver, the Salvation Army and a nursing home. Congratulations and well done Charli.

DONALD MARTIN

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—Congratulation Donald Martin for being awarded citizen of the year for Shellharbour, for your long term dedication to our community. I note you are a founding member of the Foreshore Improvement Group (FIG) and an advocate for a cockle moratorium as I am also for the protection of our lake Illawarra environment. I congratulate you on your dedication to the clean-up Australia, every year taking on the task of cleaning the lake Illawarra foreshore. Also for your engagement with community initiatives to improve the local environment, being constantly on the look-out for illegal dumping and the over harvesting of cockles from the lake Illawarra surrounds. You have been a dedicated Legatee for over 30 years, devoted to supporting Legacy families by selling badges, volunteering at an annual camp for Legacy juniors, and providing regular assistance to widows. I can't thank you enough for your dedication for more than 30 years to a cause where so many are in need of help. Volunteering in our community is so very important. Thank you once again for your tireless work in our community and winning Australian of the year for Shellharbour.

NEW BREAD FIGHT NIGHT

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—Recently I attended the "New Bread Fight Night" at the Bonnyrigg Sports Club hosted by Team Jez Promotions. On this night local martial artists had the opportunity to enter the ring and display their kickboxing skills. I would like to congratulate all participants for their efforts throughout the night. We have so much kick boxing talent to be proud of in our local area. A special mention must go out to officials, trainers, coaches and COVID-19 staff for making the night a success. After a long absence due to COVID-19 restrictions it was wonderful to see two fight cards on the night. I would like to express my thanks to the legendary Steve Jez for his kind welcome on the evening. As always it was a pleasure to provide some ringside comments with my old sparring partner Lou "The Bear" Greco. I congratulate Team Jez Promotions for a successful event.

MEDICAL FORUM END OF YEAR DINNER

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I recently attended the Medical Forum End of Year Dinner organised and hosted by the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter Inc. (VCA). The Medical Forum is a three-monthly information program held with the aim of providing free medical advice to the public in Vietnamese and has been running successfully for the past two years. Medical practitioners and specialists get together on a volunteer basis to share their skills and knowledge on a wide range of medical topics. This dinner has been organised by the VCA to thank these wonderful volunteers for their time and dedication to the Vietnamese community. I would like to thank Mr Paul Nguyen, President of the VCA and Ms Kate Hoang, Vice President and all of the members of the VCA for inviting me along. I would also like to acknowledge and thank these volunteers for sharing their knowledge and providing such a valuable service to the Vietnamese community.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 18:22 until
Tuesday 16 February 2021 at 12:00.**