



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday, 17 February 2021**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday, 17 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.

## *Bills*

### **WARNERVALE AIRPORT (RESTRICTIONS) REPEAL BILL 2020**

#### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

### **STRATA SCHEMES MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (SUSTAINABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE) BILL 2020**

#### **Amendments**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council not insisting on its amendment No. 1 disagreed with by the Legislative Assembly, and agreeing to amendments Nos 1 to 3 proposed by the Legislative Assembly.

## *Notices*

### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** I have to be consistent in my rulings, therefore I will have to cut off the member for Heathcote from continuing to give notice of his motion.

## *Bills*

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

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 16 February 2021.**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (09:48):** I speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021. I note from the outset that the Opposition supports this excellent amendment to the current Act. I note the fantastic contributions yesterday from the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the member for Albury, the member for Camden, the member for Goulburn, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Holsworthy, the member for Oatley and the member for North Shore. I also note the absolutely outstanding contribution from my fellow Whip, the member for Cootamundra. This legislation is also known as the Four Angels Law and is in response to the truly tragic deaths of Antony, Angelina and Sienna Abdallah and their cousin, Veronique Sakr. We are all aware of some horrific crashes when drivers have made the choice to drive after consuming alcohol and taking drugs.

I note that many regional members contributed to the debate yesterday. As a regional member on the Central Coast, it was tragic to hear of loss on the road because of somebody's appalling behaviour. The incidents that have occurred on the Central Coast have rocked our community to its core. I acknowledge the amazing work done by our first responders, the Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Lakes police and our ambulance and Fire and Rescue services. They are often the first on the scene at what is usually a tragic and/or fatal incident and they have to live with those images for the rest of their lives. They are images they cannot unsee. I have an uncle who is now a retired sergeant. His greatest stresses in his years of policing were attending road accidents caused by the appalling actions of somebody not doing the right thing—either drink driving or drink and drug driving. He has told me that the images from those accidents will stay with him for the rest of his life.

Drink and drug driving has an impact on the broader community as well. Brothers, sisters, mothers, cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents have not returned home because of an appalling decision of somebody thinking it was perfectly appropriate to drink or take drugs and get behind the wheel. Those are the choices that people make after taking alcohol and drugs. I cannot express how frustrated, saddened and angered I am when a



life is lost on the Central Coast and I see the impact on people because of these actions. My heart goes out to the families and loved ones in those sorts of incidents. What we saw last week when the Minister for Transport and Roads spoke to the parents of the four angels was very moving for all of us. I was in the Chamber for the Minister's second reading speech. The compassion from those families is testament to their strength. The whole State was shocked by the actions of the driver who committed that act. I am so pleased to be part of a government that is taking action to introduce new combined offences for people who recklessly put lives in danger by driving with illicit drugs and illegal levels of alcohol in their systems. I commend the Minister for his excellent second reading speech last week. I suspect it was a very difficult speech for him to give with the families in the gallery.

There is clear evidence that alcohol and drugs separately increase crash risk but together that risk is significantly increased. Numerous studies show the increased risk. One of the most robust and least contentious pieces of research is an American study showing that the risk of a fatal crash is 23 times higher. Other studies put the risk rate at around 200 times higher. But I am not here today to analyse the research or the work of experts in the field. I am here to support this excellent amending bill that does something to try to reduce the number of people driving after drinking and taking drugs. When I drive around the Central Coast in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary, it heartens me to see the proactive policing and the high-vis buses pulling people over en masse. As the Minister highlighted last week, if you choose to drink and drive, or to take drugs and drink and drive, you will get caught; it is just a matter of time.

The Government has funded a massive increase in the rate of testing to ensure that people doing the wrong thing get caught. The bill is based on strong evidence from across the nation, and around the world, that the combination of swift and certain penalties really does help to deter people from engaging in such risky and reckless behaviour when getting behind the wheel. Currently, offenders can only be charged separately with drink-driving and drug-driving offences. That legal framework fails to account for the increased risk arising from the mixture of those substances. The bill creates a new combined drink- and drug-driving offence to address this specifically. The penalties for the new combined offence reflect the seriousness of the offending behaviour and have been designed specifically to increase deterrence and reduce the road toll.

For example, the penalties for a first combined mid-range prescribed content of alcohol [PCA] and illicit drug presence offence include a maximum court fine of \$3,300, a minimum disqualification period of 12 months, a mandatory period on the alcohol interlock program and a possible 12-month term of imprisonment. For the more serious second or subsequent combined high-range PCA and illicit drug presence offence within five years, the penalties include a maximum fine of \$11,000, three years disqualification, possible imprisonment for up to two years, participation in the Mandatory Alcohol Interlock program and vehicle sanctions including numberplate or vehicle confiscation. Again, I commend the Minister for Transport and Roads for introducing such harsh penalties because we see people reoffending time and again, and the community has had a gutful of that sort of behaviour. Hopefully, this will also continue to act as a deterrent for the recalcitrants who keep reoffending with no concern for the danger they put the community in.

Importantly, all offenders will be required to attend an education and behaviour change program focusing on supporting them to make decisions that reduce the likelihood of repeat offending. That is an excellent initiative. It is not just about the punitive measures but also about the education that goes with it. It ensures that people are being educated on what their actions do to others. There will be no change for first-time low, novice and special range alcohol offenders who, since 20 May 2019, can be served with swift and certain penalties, including an on-the-spot fine and immediate licence suspension, and can also be prosecuted separately for illicit drug presence. The new offence will only apply to drivers with lower levels of alcohol if they have a previous combined offence. Victoria introduced a combined drink- and drug-driving offence into Parliament in 2014, which commenced in 2015. Victoria has a penalty framework with the same core components, although the penalty amounts are higher than those in New South Wales.

Penalties comprise fines or disqualification from driving for a minimum of 12 months. In 2020 Western Australia introduced legislation for a new combined drink-driving and drug-driving offence—colloquially referred to as polydrug offences—as part of a wider reform bill focused on substance-impaired driving and speeding. New polydrug driving offences in Western Australia recognise the exponentially increased levels of driving impairment that result from the potential interaction between certain drugs and alcohol. To reflect the seriousness of those new offences, the penalties are generally set at around 1.5 times the penalty for current drink-driving offences. I am pleased that New South Wales is joining these jurisdictions with these combined offences. The Government is continuing to show its commitment to reducing the road toll and preventing tragic deaths on our roads. [*Extension of time*]

To paint a picture of the serious effect that drink and drug driving has on areas around the Central Coast, I will provide the House with a few statistics. In the electorate of Terrigal, 12 people lost their lives and 185 people were seriously injured between 2015 and 2019. Those are 12 people who will never go home to their families

again because of a potentially preventable motor vehicle accident. Eight per cent of fatalities and 11 per cent of serious injuries in the Terrigal electorate involved alcohol consumption. To put a dollar value on it, those 197 serious casualties in my electorate alone racked up a cost of about \$185 million over that five-year period. That money could have been spent on things for our community, but it instead represents the tragic cost of people losing their lives or being seriously injured. To put that in perspective, those 197 people who were killed or seriously injured in the Terrigal electorate alone represent 89 per cent of the population of the suburb of Wagstaffe. Those are the sorts of figures that show the truly horrifying impact.

In The Entrance electorate eight people were killed and 204 were seriously injured, which represents almost 70 per cent of the pupils enrolled at Lisarow Public School. Imagine saying that a number of those students were never going home to their families or others were going to be seriously injured and suffer the lifelong effects of a car accident. In addition, in the electorate of Gosford 22 people were killed and 474 people were seriously injured during the five-year period. Twenty-seven per cent of those fatalities and 8 per cent of those serious injuries were directly related to alcohol consumption. That is a \$400 million drain on the public purse because people were not doing the right thing. Those 496 people in the Gosford electorate represent almost 90 per cent of the pupils enrolled at Ettalong Public School. That figure is truly staggering. Finally, in the electorate of Wyong 22 people were killed and 270 were seriously injured. For those who will read this *Hansard*, that equals 81 per cent of residents of the suburb of Dooralong. Those are the cold, hard facts about what happens when people choose to do the wrong thing.

As I said, I have a retired police sergeant in my family. The images of traffic accidents and fatalities live with our first responders for life. These are the same people who have to knock on doors in the middle of the night and say to somebody, "I'm sorry to tell you this but your son"—or daughter, husband or wife—"will not be coming home." They are the sobering results of the actions of those who continue to drive while influenced by drink or drugs, or both. It is totally unacceptable behaviour. Our community is appalled by what we have seen. I commend Minister Constance for this amending bill. It is the right response.

I acknowledge Michelle Harris and Catherine McLachlan from the Minister's office, because as ministerial staff they have been responsible for putting together this excellent bill. I also acknowledge Nick Chilton from Minister Toole's office. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Staysafe committee and have had many briefings from Bernard Carlon, the Executive Director of the Centre for Road Safety. Listening to those briefings and statistics has an incredibly sobering effect. Again, I acknowledge the great work that has been done and will continue to be done by the Centre for Road Safety. This is an excellent bill and I am pleased to be able to speak in support of it. Finally, I acknowledge the great contributions yesterday from members on both sides of the House, especially on the Government side. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (10:05):** In reply: I thank members for the way in which they have responded to the Four Angels Law and the contributions they have made to the debate. Seeing the Parliament come together in a bipartisan way is very humbling. I acknowledge all members on both sides who have spoken and thank them for their contributions. I recognise that a number of members have been close to and supportive of the Sakr and Abdallah families. I thank in particular Danny Abdallah, who very kindly sent me a rose the other day. The bill will pass this House without amendment, and I hope that the upper House does not amend it. I think that is important. I know that The Greens intend to amend the legislation, but we are not going to see this bill watered down. I believe the Labor Party also holds that view. We are not going to see it amended in relation to tetrahydrocannabinol—THC—levels, which I know is where The Greens are heading. We just cannot accept that.

We have introduced this combined offence to send a clear message about what is happening not only on our roads but also more broadly across society. Members on both sides reflected on that in their contributions, but it is important that the upper House knows that this bill will be passed in the lower House without amendment by members who represent constituents and who are in touch with the community's view and response to this type of initiative. I particularly acknowledge the member for Kogarah and the member for Lakemba for their contributions about the need for pedestrian safety campaigns. I agree with them. We have to do more in this area, but we are investing in such campaigns. We do need behaviours to change. The terrible tragedies involving pedestrians that are happening all too regularly across the road network show that drivers must be more aware of how easy it is to lose control of a car. We have invested \$6.5 million over the past five years and I can confirm that a further campaign is currently under development and will be launched this year.

I know that, on behalf of The Greens, in the lower House the member for Newtown referred to the need for a combined offence to apply to first-time low-range offences. I refer her to the evidence. We are focusing on drivers who put themselves and others at the greatest risk. As I indicated in my second reading speech, between 2015 and 2019 there were 101 serious casualty crashes involving alcohol and drugs, resulting in the deaths of 98 people. Eighty-four per cent of those crashes involved drivers whose alcohol levels were in the middle or high

range. I remind members that we also made some changes in May 2019 in relation to low-range drink and first-time drug-presence offences. Preliminary monitoring undertaken by the Centre for Road Safety indicates that the reforms are being implemented successfully. They include an immediate loss of licence for three months when people are caught. It is not a case of going through the Local Court system. I ask the member for Newtown to consider that, given the fact that she raised it. As I said, The Greens have foreshadowed that they will be moving amendments to the bill. I indicate to The Greens that the Government is not going to shift on this bill. It is an important piece of legislation.

I know there is full bipartisan support for trying to reduce crash rates and the road toll. I endorse what the member for Lake Macquarie said about the need for cultural change. We are building on reforms that have been implemented as part of the Road Safety Plan, which was announced in November 2020 and designed to accelerate the package. We have seen changes in relation to mobile speed cameras, which was a decision based on modelling provided to the Government that forecast the saving of between 34 and 43 lives and reducing by 600 the number of people hospitalised with serious injuries every year. This State has close to 11,000 people who end up in a hospital bed for at least one night a year as a result of crashes. The member for Terrigal touched on the obvious social impact of that, but imagine if we did not have that burden on our hospital system. Imagine if we could stop people going to hospital in the first place by changing cultural behaviour on our roads.

Every year we see an enormous focus by the media on road tolls but we cannot forget their impact on health and its associated costs, which are in the many hundreds of millions of dollars every year. We have done an analysis based on every electorate and I am happy to provide every member in this House with the statistics relating to their constituency over the past five years—the member for Wollongong has just put up his hand. It is horrific. In my patch, the electorate of Bega, over the past five years \$300 million was spent on treating car accident victims alone. The community needs to be aware of that. When we implement tough measures across the road network we are not doing it for fun. We are not doing it for the purposes of raising revenue, because fine revenue goes into the Community Road Safety Fund. It is designed to have people survive, and it is very sad that drugs and alcohol account for 17 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, of the fatalities on our roads each year. That is 40 per cent.

Someone makes a decision before getting behind the wheel of a car to impair their body, and as a result they lose their life. They were doomed before they even got in the vehicle. Coming back to the point made by the member for Lake Macquarie, we have to look at cultural change in the community. I have indicated that combining alcohol and drugs when driving can increase the risk of a fatal crash by 23 times. That is proven evidence—23 times. You are at risk of not only losing your own life but also killing the innocent, and that is where these four beautiful children come into this—because they were completely innocent. They were walking to get an ice cream on a warm summer afternoon. It is hard to describe that scenario. The tragedy of the Abdallah and Sakr families has impacted us all and given us reason to pause and reflect.

We are not talking about statistics when we talk about these numbers. When we talk about numbers we are trying to justify a position or justify expenditure, but we cannot lose sight of the fact that each number represents someone who is not going to live their full life. It was stripped away from them, and that is especially true of the innocent. Through survey work that has been done, we know the community understands the importance of alcohol and drug testing when it comes to driving. No-one regards drink or drunk driving as socially acceptable—nobody. The statistics are in. But if nobody regards them as socially acceptable, why do we have these statistics, and why are so many people caught still doing it? It comes down to personal decision-making, personal choice.

I have had a lot of people tell me they have made a purposeful decision never to drink before getting behind the wheel of a car. Other jurisdictions around the world have lowered the blood alcohol limits from .05 to .02 and what have you. I have a lot of faith in our community. I think people would respond if we started to say, "Why don't you make the right decision? Don't do drugs, don't drink. But if you choose to do that, never ever get behind the wheel of a car. Ever." That is where this law comes into effect. Creating cultural change is going to be very important. There is no doubt that the Four Angels Law is a good first step but many more steps have to be taken. i4give Day, which was observed for the first time this year, will build into the future to be an ongoing and special part of our calendar but it is something that needs to happen every day.

Danny and Leila, in particular, have impressed upon me the need for forgiveness every day—the ability to forgive yourself and others. The ability to forgive when tragedy occurs is something we all need to learn from. i4give Day is an excellent initiative to sit alongside our efforts to get towards zero fatalities, where we do not see any loss of life on our roads. The bill's penalty framework is designed to get people to change their behaviours by sending a very clear signal, and to give the authorities the ability to protect drivers and protect the innocent. That is why I am very honoured and proud to be able to introduce the bill at this time, in light of what these beautiful families and the community have been through.

I hope the upper House sees the need for this bill to go through unamended. We will work with members in the other place, and I will work closely with The Greens in relation to their concerns. But having thought about it overnight after a crossbench briefing I had yesterday, it is really important that we leave this bill intact. On that note, I reiterate my thanks to the House and, in particular, to those members who have been very supportive of road trauma victims across the State, not just the Sakr and Abdallah families. I know the way in which those families touched people—the member for Lakemba, who is in the Chamber, and people like the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Parramatta right through to our political leaders like Leaders of the Opposition, Prime Ministers, Premiers and the like. The families probably reflect on that and in a strange way wonder why. I say to them all: Thank you for what you are doing. Everyone is going to be right beside you as you continue on your pathway in life based on incredible humanity and an incredible faith. We will be with you every step of the way. I thank the House for supporting this legislation.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 9 February 2021.**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (10:19):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I note at the outset that New South Wales has the lowest penalties for cruelty to animals in Australia. There is widespread public support for increased penalties and widespread public outrage over recent cases of animal cruelty where the penalties imposed have been regarded as being too light. This has been an effect of the legislation: New South Wales currently has the lowest penalties in comparison to other jurisdictions. For example, the maximum penalty in New South Wales for individuals is \$5,500 with up to six months' imprisonment and \$27,500 for corporations. In comparison with other jurisdictions around the country, Queensland has penalties for individuals of up to \$40,035, Tasmania \$34,000, South Australia \$20,000 and Victoria \$19,826. When it comes to custodial sentences, New South Wales is lighter as well. The highest custodial sentence is five years in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and between two and four years in most other States. No other State has a custodial sentence of less than one year.

It will come as no surprise to the Minister to hear me say that we will support this legislation, but I need to address it in more detail. The Government is well behind its own deadlines in the implementation of its Animal Welfare Action Plan, one of the major tasks of which was to review penalties for animal cruelty. This was supposed to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2018. In June 2018 a Department of Primary Industries discussion paper compared those penalties for offences and clearly identified that the penalties in New South Wales were far below other States. Yet here we are, nearly three years later, only just getting to that issue, which the Minister identified in his second reading speech as a topic of intense urgency. Labor took a comprehensive 10-point animal welfare plan to the 2019 election, which included a root-and-branch review of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [POCTAA]—which is now more than 40 years old—which the Government has been conducting for more than three years.

In May 2019 Labor agreed to support the Animal Justice Party in the other place in establishing an upper House inquiry into a review of POCTAA, which met one of those election commitments. The report of the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws was delivered in June 2020 and the response was due on 4 December. The report made 14 recommendations, including that the Government increase penalties for animal cruelty offences, which is recommendation 2. That recommendation is the genesis of the bill, but I note that that was first enacted by the Animal Justice Party in the other place. The Government has been brought to this issue. The bill has a number of objectives, including to increase the maximum penalties for certain offences; to enable certain powers of the court under the principal Act to make orders or discharge a defendant and issue a summons against an alternative person under sections 79, 80, 530 and 531 of the Crimes Act to allow a court in proceedings for an animal cruelty offence to make an interim order against a person if the court is satisfied were the person to be in charge of an animal the person would be more likely to commit an animal cruelty offence; and to remove the maximum penalty available in proceedings brought before the Local Court.

I have been in long consultation with a variety of stakeholders on these issues. Organisations such as the RSPCA, and Animal Welfare League—which are the key enforcement agencies in the State—Animal Care Australia, Dogs NSW, the Australian Veterinarians Association, NSW Farmers and NSW Young Farmers, the Pet Industry Association of Australia, the World Animal Protection, the World Wildlife Fund, Kellyville Petts, Animal Liberation, Invasive Species Council, the Nature Conservation Council and a number of unions, including the Australian Workers Union, United Meat Workers Union and the United Services Union. All of those organisations expressed their frustration at the delay in undertaking this review of POCTAA. I note that they were all supportive of increased penalties: We cannot support a situation where people who perpetrate cruelty against animals are not given any form of deterrence through a penalty regime or are given a very light sentence for committing horrific acts of animal cruelty.

One of the things I am pleased to see in the bill is the amendment to section 30B that enables a court, if it is likely that a person who is charged with an animal cruelty offence will offend again, to order that the person cannot acquire any more animals. I understand there has been some concern amongst stakeholders that section 30B (2) takes that away from existing animals. I need to talk to the Minister about that and get a briefing, but in the meantime I put it on the record. I get where the Minister is coming from: We do not want the courts making decisions that someone is likely to reoffend. That is not how our justice system works. I note the Minister's comments in his second reading speech that enforcement agencies can remove animals if they are required to do so if there is evidence of abuse. The concern would be if that abuse goes underground. We need to be clear that these enforcement agencies do not always have the resources to keep going back to people who have been apprehended for cruelty. They are looking for it everywhere. But I have concerns about removing that exemption, because I am worried about the legal aspects and the precedents it would be set.

The other concern that a number of stakeholders have expressed to me, and there have been quite a number of them, is around enforcing a minimum penalty. That is something that Labor cannot support. I recognise it is not in the bill, but I foreshadow that. Once we start going into minimum mandatory sentencing, we are creating problems with our legal system. It does not fit with our values and our long precedence of law in this country that we would impose on the courts a direction to impose a sentence that could have unintended consequences where people are not convicted. We put judges in place because they are the people who can decide what is an appropriate sentence on an individual basis. I want to talk about some of the regulatory changes and I note that the Minister talked about not imposing changes to the legislative framework—not creating new laws, not creating new breaches. Again, I understand that.

Because of inaction over a long time and the very long and drawn-out consultation process, there is an urgency to upgrade the penalties. I get that. But the problem is that right now, under the Government's task force on puppy farms, breeders are facing penalties for infringements of animal cruelty when they have been, to the best of their knowledge and ability, following established guidelines and international best practice. I alert the Minister to this issue. I understand that last year the Minister made a very strong announcement on the puppy farm task force. It is appropriate to have oversight of those organisations and individuals who are breeding animals in a distressing way, who are overbreeding and not caring for those animals and who are doing things to those animals that we do not want to see in our society.

You can talk tough and empower bodies like the RSPCA to do more enforcement work by providing them the resources they so desperately require, but the problem is the codes and regulations that are in place are out of date. I have heard some horrific stories of RSPCA inspectors going onto people's property when they have not been home. Those allegations may or may not be proven, but the problem is that there is a missing link of transparency because the RSPCA is not a government agency. It is very hard to get the details of those 44 return visits after the 84 initial visits under the provisions, for example, or the 71 section 24 notices or the 25 penalty infringement notices that have been issued. Reports have come back to me from hobby breeders in this area.

A woman in my electorate called me a couple of weeks ago. She has a chronic health condition and struggles quite a lot, but she has a couple of dogs whom she dearly loves. Maybe once a year she will breed and sell a litter and she is a registered member of DOGS NSW. This woman loves and cares for those dogs. They sleep on her bed with her. I understand that, when trying to look at an accreditation scheme and audit the industry as a whole to see where there are gaps in law enforcement, we want to make sure that enforcement agencies can go out there and have a look at everyone to see what they are doing and get the lie of the land. But this woman is fearful and anxious that the RSPCA will come and take her dogs because she is applying best practice international vaccination schedules that conflict with the code, which is outdated and old.

It is an insane proposition that somebody who is doing the very best for her animals and following the most modern health advice is living in fear of a knock on the door from a non-government enforcement agency—which we all support and want to succeed in its mission of stopping animal cruelty. When I was in the bus industry, there was a move to safety accreditation and a change in the way that the sector was regulated. It has to come from a

level of education. One of the things I think is a big miss in this bill is that there is no capacity in the penalties for education of people who have been breached for animal cruelty. In the actions that the Government is taking through the task force, it seems that it has not provided the capacity for the RSPCA to have more of an educative focus, because it is not in the legislation and the RSPCA has to work with the legislation that is there.

Other examples of things I have heard that are quite strange include the 1.8-metre requirement for fences. That makes really good sense if one has a Great Dane, a mastiff or a German shepherd, but not if one has a Chihuahua—I could not get over a 1.8-metre fence so I do not know how a little puppy that size is going to get over it. I understand that there are important biosecurity concerns, and breeders have raised those with me. But one was telling me that they are aware of a breeder with a farm—they have farmland on which they have their breeding facility—who was told that they would have to have their whole fence at a height of 1.8 metres. If we are not asking farmers to put up 1.8-metre fences for biosecurity reasons then I do not quite understand why it would be justified for animals in the breeding sector. There are a lot of inconsistencies.

Some breeders also raised privacy issues about having to put their personal phone number on the door. We are talking about people who are just living a normal life in the community having to put their phone number on their front door to meet some of the codes. This State does not make a differentiation between hobby breeders and commercial breeders. That is the whole issue we have been talking about. I note that the member for Sydney, the member for Balmain and the member for Barwon are in the Chamber. I remember talking to some of them at the rally that was held earlier this year about banning illegal and cruel puppy farms that are just there to exploit dogs. If we had had legislative change then a lot of smaller issues would be resolved because we would have clarity around what is proposed, what is supposed to be happening and what is happening on the ground.

I have spoken to the Hon. Emma Hurst from the other place about this issue and I learned that hobby farmers are not within the sights of the Animal Justice Party. It understands that people want to own pets but they should be able to get them from someone who breeds them with love and good care and not someone who is just taking a puppy mill approach. There should be some best practice around that. I am really concerned about that and I ask the Minister to try to speed up the process of the Animal Welfare Action Plan and get that legislation back on track. I also ask him to look at existing consultation processes. I was quite surprised last week—I was not too surprised because it is kind of grist to the mill these days—when the Minister introduced the bill with no consultation, and not even the courtesy of saying, "Here's the legislation I'm going to be moving", or that he would be bringing in legislation.

That is normal for me, but I was meeting with NSW Farmers and they were surprised that I had to leave the meeting to come to the House and debate a bill in which they had quite an interest but which they had no idea was coming to the House that day. I think it undermines the Minister's consultative approach. He should perhaps look at how he can improve that to make sure everyone is on the same page. Animal welfare is a growing area of concern in our community. We have seen horrific incidents. We have seen the abuse of animals in and of itself. We have seen the abuse of animals as part of abuse of humans in domestic violence relationships. We want to look after animals' quality of life. During COVID, people—particularly those who live alone or do not have children—have developed a great new appreciation of the animals in their lives. Their fur babies—the puppies and kittens whom they will live with all their lives—are really important to them.

This issue will become increasingly important in our community, and I urge the Minister to engage with it more openly. It is not an issue that should be used for political pointscoring. We should not politicise it and it should not be used to create divisions within our community. If we look at where animal welfare sits within legislation in the State, it is spread across a number of different Acts. We have the Companion Animals Act, we have medical research legislation and we have the Exhibited Animals Protection Act. We need to make sure that we are moving towards a comprehensive, rational and reasonable approach that ensures the health and safety of animals in our community while at the same time enabling people who are doing the right thing to continue to do so. People who are engaged in farming and in producing the food and fibre that is needed in our State and our nation—and indeed across the world—must be able to do so without fear.

When there is a lack of resourcing for oversight in parts of the sector and there is a piecemeal approach to improving legislation—such as having to debate this penalty bill because the matter is urgent—we start creating problems. We create a lack of trust in the system from stakeholders on all sides and a lack of confidence that people will be treated properly and animals will be looked after, which in the end is the aim of the game. I urge the Minister to take those points on board, and I am sure he will. I know that he is very keen to hear feedback on legislation that he puts forward and I note his presence in the Chamber today. I also note the presence of the Minister for Local Government. She has a very important role in the administration of the Companion Animals Act, which is of course a target for a large part of what I have spoken about today. I want the Government to come up with a comprehensive plan. Do not make the mistake of having harsher penalties—which are important, valid and fine—without actually reviewing the Act and ensuring that they achieve its aims.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (10:39):** I am pleased to support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021, which addresses critical issues in the animal welfare framework, increases penalties for key animal welfare offences and strengthens provisions regarding court orders. The bill makes court orders that are available currently under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [POCTAA] available under the Crimes Act 1900 also. The New South Wales Government is committed to safeguarding animal welfare and providing the strongest possible regulatory framework to promote responsible animal ownership in New South Wales. As the Minister jointly responsible for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and for the Companion Animals Act 1988, I am interested in the continued improvement of the protection of our animals and in ensuring that we work with relevant stakeholders to meet community expectations. New South Wales has the strongest framework in the nation for protecting animals, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021 will ensure we have some of the strongest penalties.

Some aspects of animal welfare legislation in New South Wales are almost 40 years old. A lot has changed in our understanding of animals, particularly our companion animals, during that time. The amendment bill proposes to increase the statutory maximum penalties for the offences of cruelty, aggravated cruelty and failure to provide food, drink or shelter. The maximum penalties for cruelty will rise from \$5,500 and/or six months' imprisonment to \$44,000 and/or 12 months' imprisonment for individuals, and from \$27,500 to \$220,000 for corporations. The maximum penalties for aggravated cruelty will rise from \$22,000 and/or two years' imprisonment to \$110,000 and/or two years' imprisonment for individuals, and from \$110,000 to \$550,000 for corporations. The maximum penalties for the failure to provide food, drink or shelter will rise from \$5,500 and/or six months' imprisonment to \$16,500 and/or six months' imprisonment for individuals, and from \$27,500 to \$82,500 for corporations.

Penalty infringement notices, or PINs, are also proposed to increase. New South Wales will have the highest PINs amounts for animal welfare offences in the country. PINs for cruelty will rise from \$500 to \$1,000 and PINs for failing to provide food, drink or shelter will rise from \$200 to \$500. The bill will also make a number of changes to increase the range of tools that are available to courts when dealing with animal welfare cases. The proposed changes will make existing court orders available under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 also available for the more serious animal cruelty and related offences under the Crimes Act 1900, including orders regarding the care of animals, destruction of animals, payment of care and maintenance costs, and disqualifying convicted persons from owning animals; introduce an interim disqualification order, which prevents a person from acquiring new animals while proceedings are ongoing and which will be available for animal welfare and related offences under both POCTAA and the Crimes Act—I note the contribution from the member for Maitland and I am sure that we will have further discussions on that very point—increase penalties for failing to comply with a court order so as to increase the deterrent effect, up from \$2,750 to \$5,500; and introduce a maximum six-month term of imprisonment.

Those are important changes. Enforcement of animal welfare legislation in New South Wales is undertaken by RSPCA NSW, the Animal Welfare League NSW and the NSW Police Force. The changes in the bill have been requested by the enforcement agencies to enable them to better protect the welfare of animals in New South Wales. As I mentioned earlier, I am most interested in making sure that we protect animals, and the Government has invested in helping companion animals right across the State. In June 2019 I was really pleased to announce \$12 million to expand the RSPCA's animal shelters. The RSPCA centre in Yagoona is highly valued by the community for its shelter, animal welfare enforcement services, veterinary clinic, and the education and training programs it runs. That investment built on a previous \$7.5 million contribution from the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government that was used to rebuild and refurbish veterinary facilities at the centre. I have been back to the centre on more than one occasion since awarding that money and I am really pleased that work is well underway.

The new companion animal village will expand and improve kennel and cattery facilities, which will allow for even more furry friends to find a home, as well as increase capacity for various educational, training and community programs. Last year I was also pleased to secure half a million dollars for the State's many council-run pounds and animal shelters. That money was used to upgrade facilities and assist with the purchase of equipment and essential goods. Our Government is taking a zero-tolerance approach to factory-like dog breeding operations that do not comply either with our animal welfare laws or with our breeding standards. On 22 October 2020 the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, Adam Marshall, announced that the Government was cracking down on illegal puppy factories across New South Wales through the creation of the Puppy Factory Taskforce, a dedicated hit squad tasked with weeding out rogue operators.

Puppy factories are abhorrent and are in clear breach of the State's animal protection laws. With demands for pets skyrocketing during the COVID-19 period and reports of puppy factories on the rise, it is critical that we throw additional resources at that growing and deeply concerning problem. With that in mind, the Government has provided funding for four new RSPCA inspectors—making six in total—who will inspect breeding facilities

and ensure they meet this State's robust animal welfare requirements. Within two weeks of creating that specialised hit squad to take down rogue operators, the Government's task force conducted its first simultaneous raids on suspect facilities in southern New South Wales. That task force will continue to police and enforce the State's animal welfare laws and breeding standards.

Cowards who are caught committing acts of animal cruelty will soon face the harshest set of penalties in Australia. The New South Wales Government is set to dramatically ramp up punishments for animal cruelty offenders, with eightfold increases set to come into effect following legislation that has been introduced by the Government. The new set of measures will dramatically increase financial penalties and jail time, and will introduce new offences to stop offenders from ever being allowed to own, care for or breed animals in New South Wales. The message is clear: If you abuse animals in New South Wales or simply fail to care for them, you will be caught and it will cost you. Further to that, in May 2018 the New South Wales Government released the first ever NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan, which strives to ensure that people who are responsible for animals provide for their welfare in line with the best available science and community expectations. The bill is a step forward in modernising our animal welfare legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with Minister Marshall on future reforms that come from the work that was undertaken in the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (10:47):** Animals are emotionally intelligent living beings who experience hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, happiness and sadness, fun and boredom, and an array of other feelings. They form bonds with other animals from both the same and different species, including humans. They are capable of communicating with others. Everyone who has a companion animal can tell when their pet wants a pat or a play; they know when their pet is annoyed with them or when it feels jealous of another animal. Someone who exercises cruelty to animals is exercising cruelty to beings who are not unlike humans. Indeed, cruelty to animals is akin to cruelty to humans, both in terms of the suffering that is experienced by the victim and also the wilful brutality of the perpetrator. Animal cruelty entails gratification in or neglect of the suffering of another being. It is no surprise that those who engage in animal abuse are more likely to be perpetrators of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse and general violence in the community.

Animal cruelty contributes to the suffering in this world and should be stamped out. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021 increases the maximum penalties for animal cruelty offences and enables the courts to prohibit someone who is convicted of a high-level animal cruelty offence from owning animals. I support the bill, which brings animal cruelty penalties into line with community values and expectations. The bill follows a similar bill that was introduced in the other place by the Hon. Emma Hurst from the Animal Justice Party. I thank Ms Hurst for her leadership in this space and for being a tireless advocate for animals. Ms Hurst pointed out that New South Wales currently has some of the lowest penalties for animal cruelty offences in Australia because the courts rarely issue maximum penalties. Most convicted offenders—even those convicted of heinous crimes—get off with very low fines.

The bill increases the maximum fines for animal cruelty offences by between three and eight times, depending on the offence, and doubles most maximum prison sentences. The new penalties will better the ability of the courts and infringement officers to ensure that punishments reflect the true nature of the crime. Low penalties create a narrative in our legal system that animal abuse is a low-level crime that is not important and does not warrant the full force of the law. I welcome the elevation of the magnitude of animal abuse offences in the bill. Much animal cruelty is sanctioned through intensive battery farming, archaic entertainment and unnecessary experiments, for example. Treating animals as mere commodities legitimises the view that they are lesser and therefore do not deserve respect or a life free from pain and suffering. To end animal cruelty we must treat animals as live, sentient beings. I am committed to working with the Animal Justice Party, the Government and all members of both Houses of Parliament to ensure an end to animal cruelty. The bill is a good move in that direction.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (10:50):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. The Greens support the bill but I want to raise some issues more broadly. I flag that we are working on amendments to move in the Legislative Council to tighten up aspects of the bill. The bill goes some way to protecting animals but it needs to go further. The approach to animal welfare needs to shift to align with community values even more. New South Wales has some of the most lax animal cruelty legislation in Australia. The strengthening of our animal cruelty legislation to bring our laws into line with community expectation is long overdue.

I have spoken before in this House about a national survey conducted two years ago. It was one of the most in-depth surveys on people's attitudes to animal welfare. It was overwhelming: Over 80 per cent of Australians were concerned about animal welfare and believed animals are sentient beings who have a right to exist and a right to humane treatment. That shows a really high level of community expectation in this space. The Greens



have been campaigning for better animal cruelty protections for the better part of two decades. This legislation comes off the back of work by the Animal Justice Party and the inquiry conducted last year by the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales. My colleague Ms Abigail Boyd played an instrumental role on that committee, which recommended increasing penalties dramatically for animal cruelty offences.

The bill is a welcome start but needs to be strengthened. In the other place The Greens are working on amendments to ensure that the bill meets its intended goals. Increased penalties must be coupled with a commitment from the Government to significantly increase funding to more adequately staff and resource RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW. The Minister for Local Government talked about RSPCA funding that she was responsible for; I note the weird situation with the Department of Primary Industries and that the RSPCA—a charity—is going to have the added responsibility of basically being the watchdog. There are real issues that need to be ironed out to enable the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League NSW to perform that compliance and enforcement role effectively and conduct regular inspections without reliance on charitable donations.

I raise concerns about the fact that under the legislation animals on farms and other animals are being lumped into the same category. They are being seen through a similar lens—a utilitarian lens—in which their use is about humans. The Greens think animals deserve their own rights and we would like to see that given a much higher status moving forward. We want the issues of domestic animals and animals in agriculture to be separated, not because they need to be viewed differently but because we believe the usage model is problematic. We look at animals through the lens of usage for humans; we do not look at the rights of species in their own right. Increasing the penalties for animal cruelty is only as good as the capacity to enforce them. It is all well and good to expect the RSPCA to be the enforcer, but it cannot know what it does not know.

We have seen that any independent awareness of what is happening on farms has changed dramatically with laws that have been passed in this place. With the way right to farm laws have gone in this State, how can the community raise concerns about animal cruelty on farms? Schedule 1 to the bill will increase the maximum penalty for failing to provide an animal with food, drink or shelter to \$16,500 and will increase corporate penalties up to nearly \$83,000—that is welcome. The maximum penalty of a \$5,500 fine and six months' imprisonment will shift to a \$44,000 fine and 12 months' imprisonment. The corporate penalty will increase from \$27,500 to \$220,000. The bill focuses on penalties for three classes of offence: cruelty, aggravated cruelty and failure to provide food, drink or shelter.

I note that the shadow spokesperson, the member for Maitland, raised the review process that the Minister alluded to in his second reading speech about penalties for less common offences. The Greens look forward to seeing where that goes. We believe the community expects high penalties, but there must also be mechanisms for the RSPCA to become aware of what is going on. The Greens and I support the Minister's intention to close the current loophole in court orders, in which orders available to a court under the legislation are not available under the Crimes Act. It is a travesty that serious and appalling animal welfare offences cannot be dealt with by the types of orders in this legislation under the Crimes Act.

The bill allows for orders to be imposed under the Crimes Act. It closes the loophole by ensuring that the prosecution in a criminal proceeding can seek a disqualification order upon conviction, regardless of whether the charge was brought under this legislation or the Crimes Act. Other court orders and the use of alternative summons provisions will also be available—that is a very welcome change. Additionally, the bill proposes to introduce a new interim disqualification order that is currently not available, meaning that the new order will be available to the courts under this legislation and the Crimes Act. The interim disqualification order will allow a court to prevent a person charged with an animal cruelty offence from having control or influence over additional animals until court proceedings are finalised. That is a welcome change because, in that intervening period, there is every reason to suspect an offender will continue behaving in the appalling manner that we have heard about.

In closing, on behalf of The Greens, I mention the final report of the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales. Page 44 of the report raises the issue of the Department of Primary Industries and conflict of interest. The report's recommendations include:

**Recommendation 3**

That the NSW Government move responsibility for animal welfare matters out of the Department of Primary Industries.

And:

**Recommendation 14**

That the NSW Government establish an independent statutory body, the Independent Office of Animal Protection, to oversight the animal welfare framework. Further, that the NSW Government consult stakeholders on the appropriate functions of the new body. I encourage the Minister, who is in the Chamber, to look carefully at those recommendations.

The Department of Primary Industries is an excellent department that does great work. To say that it has too little work would be a ridiculous statement; its officers are very busy people. The Greens think animal welfare is a huge area that needs and deserves its own independent office of animal protection. I note the comments of Ms Abigail Boyd, The Greens spokesperson in the upper House and a member of the committee. The report states:

... we are of the view that the Department of Primary Industries views the concept of 'animal welfare' within the context of agricultural industries as being synonymous with 'quality of stock'. The community, however, increasingly views animals as sentient beings, regardless of their use to humans.

The report continues:

Given the Department of Primary Industries' role in supporting agricultural industries, the committee is concerned that the Department of Primary Industries risks maintaining a narrow and outdated view of animal welfare matters which is out of step with the broader community.

That is not the fault of any person who works for the DPI. It is about the statutory framework in which they are allowed to work. Further, The Greens have noted that the appropriateness of the approved charitable organisations as enforcement bodies and their relationship with the Department of Primary Industries as the administrator of the Act raises potential conflicts of interest, not the least of which is funding. The Greens support the bill and look forward to the penalties being tightened when the bill is debated in the other place. More broadly, we encourage the Minister to go much further and consider establishing an independent statutory body to administer animal welfare in New South Wales across the board and to elevate the status of animals, and animal protection and welfare in the State.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:00):** I speak in debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the Minister, who is in the Chamber, and thank him for bringing the bill before the House. "The greatness of a nation ... can be judged by the way its animals are treated," said Mahatma Gandhi, the great leader and humanitarian. That is immediately understandable and reasonable. It makes a profound connection between a society and its actions towards other species. Who can disagree with that sentiment? In 2021 perhaps we would not use quite the same language. Arguably, we are not quite so keen—or is it educated?—to boast of a nation's greatness. It is not very Australian in a land that represents so many nations and races. Yet Gandhi, a truly significant individual whose ideas have spread across the world, placed animal welfare squarely in the context of the reputation and global status of a nation. Gandhi is not the only one to have drawn that connection. English poet and painter William Blake made the following prognostication:

A dog starv'd at his master's gate  
Predicts the ruin of the State.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021 sends a strong message to our society that the courts should have more tools to use when imposing sanctions on those who harm animals. The bill has two themes: first, updating penalties; and, secondly, introducing flexibility while closing illogical loopholes. Schedule 1 to the bill increases penalties for acts of cruelty by individuals from \$5,500 and/or six months' imprisonment per offence to \$44,000 and/or 12 months' imprisonment. The penalty for a corporation will become \$220,000, up from \$27,500. Significant increases also apply to acts of aggravated cruelty. An offence by an individual such as failure to provide food and shelter will have a threefold increase in penalty, from \$5,500 to \$16,500, while for corporations the lift is from \$27,500 to \$82,500.

The bill increases options and flexibility for the courts. It is noteworthy that loopholes are being addressed regarding the sanctions provided for animal cruelty offences under the Crimes Act 1900 and under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. Currently, several useful court orders available under the latter Act are not available as options under the Crimes Act. For example, those orders include orders to pay for care and maintenance of an animal; to limit or even disqualify a convicted person from having control or influence over an animal; or to require that a person produce an animal before the court. The bill extends the courts' access to those orders. The bill omits section 31 (1) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and replaces it with a new section 31 (1) and 31 (1A). New subsection (1) focuses on the issue of a disqualification order. It provides:

- (1) If a court has convicted a person of an animal cruelty offence and the court is satisfied that, were the person to be in charge of an animal, the person would be likely to commit another animal cruelty offence, the court may make either or both of the following orders—
  - (a) an order for the disposal of an animal of which the person is a person in charge,
  - (b) a disqualification order.

New section 26 defines "disqualification order". It provides:

**disqualification order** means an order that a person must not, for the period specified in the order, do one or more of the following—

- (a) purchase or acquire, or take possession or custody of, an animal,
- (b) keep, or participate in keeping, an animal,

- (c) be party to an arrangement under which the person is entitled to control or influence the keeping of an animal, including an animal owned by another person or in another person's possession,
- (d) otherwise be involved with the keeping or care of an animal, including an animal owned by another person or in another person's possession.

New section 30B permits a court to issue an interim disqualification order. A court will be able to make an order that a person charged with an animal cruelty offence is not to have control or influence over additional animals until the court proceedings have concluded. The order can be used by the courts to reduce the risk of further acts of animal cruelty while the case is being heard and determined. I emphasise a point that the Minister made in his second reading speech: The bill is not intended to target any sector or industry, nor does it set out to disrupt or replace normal, routine agricultural practices. That message is important to my community and for acceptance of the bill. The point of the bill is to provide more flexible and stronger sanctions and options for dealing with behaviour towards animals that presently is illegal in the State. Those improvements derive from last year's NSW Animal Welfare Reform Issues Paper and the community consultation that drew upon more than 1,100 submissions and survey responses. The community supports broader animal welfare reform, and the Government is delivering.

What amounts to animal cruelty? Of course any definition will include clear acts of violence intended to cause harm. The RSPCA reminds us that it also includes "animal neglect or the failure to provide for the welfare of an animal under one's control". That definition goes beyond the physical to take in the causing of "distress, torment or terror". Many people would have heard their vet talk about mental or psychological conditions that may affect their pets. I believe in past times that aspect of pet care and wellbeing was underplayed or misunderstood. Increasingly, from my perspective as a working vet, psychological pet care is entering the conversation in the surgery consulting room. As a society, we turn to organisations such as the RSPCA when we see an animal that has been mistreated or is in apparent distress. In the financial year 2019-20, 112,530 animals spent time in the care of the RSPCA. Nationally, in 2018 -2019 the RSPCA received just under 58,000 cruelty complaints. That number rose to just under 74,000 in 2019-20, with 359 prosecutions undertaken and 609 cases pending.

Some 169 inspections were carried out nationally, most of which took place in New South Wales, with inspectors routinely visiting everything from abattoirs and feedlots to guard dog firms, hobby farms, kennels, markets, circuses and scientific establishments. I draw on my career as a veterinarian in saying that I have witnessed many people who give great care to their pets and many farmers who care for their livestock. Any bill should not target the good behaviour of good people; rather, by increasing the penalties and sanctions against people who are cruel to the pets and their livestock, the bill must focus on those who do wrong. Last year Parliament debated a bill that recognised that pets and other animals could be harmed when caught up in family and domestic violence. The Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 duly became law in New South Wales. When I spoke in debate on the bill, I said:

The reforms help provide greater protections for domestic violence victim-survivors, improve court procedures for criminal and apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] proceedings and explicitly recognise the intersection between animal abuse and domestic violence.

Today we are tightening the framework for animal protection another degree and from another perspective. If people, or someone they know, are looking for assistance for an animal requiring protection, they should call the RSPCA in New South Wales on 1300 278 3589. If it is in the context of family or domestic violence, they should call the RSPCA Community Programs helpline for confidential assistance on (02) 9782 4408. I support the bill.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (11:10):** I make clear from the outset that cruelty to animals and neglect of animals are detestable behaviours that I do not tolerate in any form. My constituents do not and will not tolerate intentional or deliberate cruelty to animals. In the Barwon electorate our pets are part of our family; they are also part of our businesses—a good working dog on any day can be worth 10 men. Our livestock is core to our prosperity: Their health and wellbeing is paramount to a successful farming operation. I do not refute that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and its penalties must be reviewed. However, my constituents and I hold concerns regarding the appropriateness of having two charitable organisations—RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW—responsible for the compliance and enforcement of the Act. When we look at RSPCA Australia's website under the "What we do" tab, the problem is clear. It states:

... RSPCA Australia works to influence animal welfare policy, practice and legislation across the country.

That is the organisation charged by the Government with enforcing the bill: an agency that publicly states it works to influence policy. How can we trust that the way it is going about enforcing the law is within the bounds of how that law should operate? How can we trust that its behaviour is not pushing the boundaries towards where it, as an animal welfare agency, would prefer to be? Under the "Take Action" tab on its website the RSPCA openly states its opinions on certain farming practices, which are in opposition to the regulations that the Government

has in place around those practices. How can an organisation be both an activist against government and an enforcement agency of government?

For people in my electorate, that relationship makes for strange bedfellows and does not pass muster. My concern is that the RSPCA is a charitable organisation charged by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act with policing the rules, but there is no mechanism to bring oversight to the behaviour of an agency charged with those significant powers. With great power comes great responsibility and, dare I say, great accountability. Why is holding the RSPCA accountable so vital? It is because there is an imbalance and some individuals within the RSPCA appear to have abused the power they have. I am not talking about all of them—I know a local gentleman in my community who works for the RSPCA and I would trust his judgement every day of the week. I have no problem with his ability to come and assess a situation. This is about some people, not everyone. When we give an entity such significant power we need to balance that with accountability and transparency for public confidence.

When I worked for the NSW Police Force there were many mechanisms that sought to balance the legislated power given to police officers with the accountability, transparency and procedural fairness that allowed an avenue of complaint, appeal or independent review. Whilst I absolutely condemn any cruelty to animals, I cannot support increasing penalties until we see a higher degree of transparency, procedural fairness and accountability for the organisation that is given such significant powers. Farmers in my electorate tell me that they have found RSPCA officers in their paddocks unannounced. For a rural land holder, that is not so different from finding someone in your urban lounge room. It demonstrates a massive amount of power.

One farmer in my electorate no longer owns her property; the RSPCA does. The penalties and legal costs meant her property was forfeited to the RSPCA. She is allowed to live there until she can no longer live on a farm or passes away, but the property will never again be hers and will never be her children's. That farmer has significant health issues and it was her intention to sell the property, using the proceeds to move closer to her children, which can never happen now. I encourage the New South Wales Government to review and remedy that situation. It is a significant amount of power and any government agency has multiple ways for a person to seek justice when an injustice occurs. The RSPCA is a proxy for government. If the Government outsources a role in the community, it cannot then outsource responsibility for getting it right.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (11:15):** There can be no question that, as members of Parliament, the care we have for our communities extends to all the living creatures that play a part in our lives. I am pleased to support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill and share some of the concerns around animal welfare raised by my local constituents in the Summer Hill electorate. The bill amends the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. It increases maximum penalties for certain animal welfare offences and promises a simpler, stronger and more transparent regime to protect the welfare of animals by better aligning the Act with the Crimes Act. It is a sad fact that currently New South Wales has the weakest penalties for cruelty to animals in the country. The bill changes that. In fact, the Minister claims that New South Wales will now have one of the strongest penalty regimes when it comes to the harm and negligence of animals.

Fines and penalty infringement notices will be increased significantly—in some instances, up to eight times the rate of existing penalties—for offences including failure to provide food, drink and shelter; acts of cruelty; and acts of aggravated cruelty. Prison terms for offences will also increase. The bill also allows a court to make an interim order prohibiting a person from owning an animal if it believes that person may commit an act of animal cruelty. The bill removes the maximum penalty available in proceedings brought before the Local Court. As my colleagues have outlined, Labor does not oppose the bill. I note that the bill has been introduced at the same time as a similar bill by the Animal Justice Party in the other place. I acknowledge and commend the Animal Justice Party members of Parliament for their principled and passionate defence of animal rights and animal welfare. There can be no doubt that this bill would not be before the House today if it were not for their advocacy and the principled positions that the NSW Labor Opposition has put forward over successive election campaigns.

I am proud of Labor's leadership on animal rights and welfare. We took a comprehensive policy to the 2015 and 2019 State elections. I particularly mention the work of my friend and colleague the Hon. Mick Veitch in the other place. He put together a package of important reforms that would have seen increased funding to animal welfare agencies, a ban on the sale of puppies in pet stores, cracking down on puppy farms, mandating CCTV in all abattoirs and combating native wildlife crime by establishing a native wildlife protection squad. Federally, Labor built on our principled policies on live animal exports with a six-point plan to confirm Australia as a leader in our region for the care and protection of animals, including the establishment of an independent inspector-general of animal welfare. We continue to push for critical protections for native animals, including koalas. I note that the Government's obsession with land clearing has our precious native species on a collision course with extinction.

We know that our local communities expect and want us to protect our native species and all the animals that enrich our lives and share our planet. While I acknowledge the work done to strengthen transparency around companion animal breeding and the establishment of the NSW Pet Registry, the fact is that the Government has dragged its feet when it comes to implementing its own promises on animal welfare. In 2018 it released its Animal Welfare Action Plan, which, amongst other reforms, promised to increase penalties for animal cruelty by the end of that year. Back in June 2018 a discussion paper from the Department of Primary Industries identified specific concerns with the relative weakness of the penalties for animal cruelty in New South Wales. The fact that the Government is updating penalties over two years later speaks to the priorities of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition when it comes to the rights and welfare of animals. That is incredibly disappointing and many of my constituents have raised how long it has taken; the pace of reform does not meet the expectations of our community.

Inner westies and those who live in our cities are passionate about animal welfare and I am very pleased that constituents continue to raise these issues with me. Animals are supported by incredible organisations in my part of Sydney and I love visiting many of them. They include Maggie's Rescue in Marrickville; WIRES Inner West, a fantastic volunteer organisation; the Tempe Birdoes; the Inner West Environment Group; and neighbouring organisations such as the Sydney Dogs and Cats Home in Strathfield and the Cat Protection Society of NSW Adoption Centre in Enmore. Local residents want to see these organisations properly funded and supported, as well as animal welfare agencies including the RSPCA.

Some of the other issues raised by local constituents include the need to act on illegal puppy farms, supporting abandoned pets and cracking down on blood sports, which is a very disturbing practice in our community. They want to see pet bans in strata schemes and rental properties lifted and for companion animals to be able to travel on public transport, as is the case for many global cities around the world, such as New York. My constituents want to be able to take their pet on a short train trip, in particular, so that they can be together and they can exercise them at local parks. Residents have raised concerns about animal testing on cosmetics and for commercial purposes and also want to see stricter protections when it comes to testing for scientific purposes.

Despite what some others claim, inner west residents care deeply about farmers and do not want to see the ethical treatment of animals and agricultural production as a zero-sum game. They support our farmers and agricultural industries and are also passionate about issues like live export, transparent standards for free-range egg production and ending the practice of chick shredding. One resident recently wrote to me requesting that glue traps be banned in our State, as is the case in Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. Residents have also written to me in large numbers calling for exotic animals to be banned in circuses and the exhibition of whales and dolphins to be stopped. I note that the Minister has indicated further legislation to improve animal welfare in New South Wales and I recommend these particular issues to him for consideration. No doubt residents in my electorate will continue to advocate for urgent action on these issues to be included in those reforms.

Local residents are passionate about protecting wild and native animals. The bushfires in 2019-20 killed more than a billion native animals and have moved a number of species closer to extinction. Inner westies have been vocal in their condemnation of the Liberals' and The Nationals' record of land clearing and their politicisation of koalas. I specifically acknowledge students from Marrickville West Public School and Canterbury Girls High School, who have formed a group to protect koalas, putting forward ideas about how we can improve conservation efforts. They have run very successful fundraising drives to support koala hospitals and I commend them for their advocacy and work.

Local residents want to see an end to commercial whaling and they want to see the protection of shark species. They know that unless we act on habitat loss, feral species and climate change, we will continue to see in our country the highest decline of mammal species in the world and the catastrophic loss of insects, birds and marine life. In our own backyards, inner westies want to see greater investment in protecting our local rivers, our waterways and our bushcare sites. These small pockets of urban wilderness support countless local birds, insects, animals and wildlife and too often they are being lost again and again to overdevelopment.

Whether it is our native animals or the companion animals we love and cherish, we must treat them with dignity and respect. We must acknowledge the richness they bring to our lives, especially to those in our community who are older, more vulnerable or isolated, for whom companion animals are often a lifeline. In so many ways, animals give us so much more than we could ever give them—more love, more companionship and more joy. The least we can do is provide them with laws to keep them safe, a regulatory framework that treats them ethically, and a safe and healthy environment in which they can thrive.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (11:24):** I speak in support of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. This bill is a strong reflection of our Government's commitment to stamping out animal cruelty in New South Wales. I put on record my appreciation to the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, who has done an outstanding job in this space over a long time. I also give a shout-out to some of the community groups across the city but in particular those in my area—the Sydney Dogs and Cats Home in

Carlton, and the RSPCA, PAWS and the Cat Protection Society in the adjoining electorate of Kogarah. As I said, this bill is a strong reflection of our Government's commitment to stamping out animal cruelty across the State. The bill is instrumental in clarifying, strengthening and progressing legal safeguards in this area.

Court orders are an important tool under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. They allow courts to implement requirements on offenders to safeguard animal welfare outcomes and to minimise the risk of reoffending. The court orders currently available under the Act include disqualification orders, which are available if the court is satisfied that a convicted person is likely to reoffend if they were to be in charge of an animal. Disqualification orders prohibit convicted persons from purchasing, acquiring, taking possession or custody of, keeping, or being involved with the keeping or care of an animal. Other court orders include orders to dispose of an animal and orders to pay care and maintenance costs incurred in connection with the proceedings.

This bill—and I commend the Minister again—will introduce a new court order: an interim disqualification order. Reading the bill this morning I wondered why this was not done earlier; it seems to be just common sense. An interim disqualification order will allow a court to prohibit a person against whom proceedings have commenced from acquiring or having control over new animals for the duration of the proceedings, if the court is satisfied the person is likely to commit another offence should they acquire more animals. The current laws only allow for disqualification orders to be applied upon conviction. That means that a person could be charged with an offence and have their animals seized but would be able to purchase new animals until proceedings are finalised in the court. This could present an unacceptable risk to animal welfare. The new interim disqualification order will enable magistrates to respond to that potential risk. If a court chooses to issue an interim disqualification order, that will mean that people charged with animal welfare or related offences cannot purchase new animals while their court case is ongoing. Should the person be convicted of an offence, the court then may choose to apply an ongoing disqualification order.

In addition to introducing a new interim disqualification order, all court orders available under the Act will be made available to more serious animal cruelty and related offences under the Crimes Act 1900. The Crimes Act includes the two most serious animal welfare offences in New South Wales—reckless serious animal cruelty and intentional serious animal cruelty. These attract a maximum imprisonment term of up to three and five years, respectively. It also includes other offences related to animals, such as those in sections 79, 80 and 531. A loophole in the legislation has previously prevented courts from issuing orders, such as disqualification orders, for these offences under the Crimes Act. The bill will close this loophole—and I again thank the Minister. Courts will be able to access the court orders available under the Act for the animal cruelty and related offences under the Crimes Act. This will ensure that courts can issue disqualification orders and interim disqualification orders to offenders who are charged or convicted of these offences.

This bill will also streamline the process of seeking and issuing disqualification orders. The Minister and the Government have received feedback from enforcement agencies that there are opportunities to improve the way in which court orders are made, by ensuring that a single disqualification order can prevent a convicted person from purchasing or acquiring new animals, keeping or participating in the keeping of animals, being able to control or influence the keeping of animals, or having any other involvement with the keeping or care of animals—including animals owned by other people—for the period set out in the order. This ensures that the courts finally have the tools at their disposal to help minimise the risk of people convicted of an animal welfare or related offence from harming more animals in the future.

In addition to introducing the interim disqualification order and making all court orders available under the Crimes Act, the bill increases the penalty for noncompliance with a court order. As all members know, disobeying a court order is a serious offence that must not be taken lightly. The penalty should be high enough to deter a person from not complying with the requirements of that court order. The penalty for noncompliance with that court order will be doubled from its current value to attract a maximum financial penalty of \$5,500. A new maximum imprisonment term of six months will also be introduced. This new penalty reflects the seriousness of noncompliance with a court order and better reflects similar offences across other legislation in New South Wales. The increase sends a clear message that court orders are to be taken seriously and not ignored.

In 2018 the Government released a discussion paper and survey to consult on these changes. Sixty-six per cent of respondents felt that penalties for defying a court order should be increased and 48 per cent agreed that an imprisonment sentence should be available for noncompliance with a court order. When we consulted on the animal welfare reform in early 2020, we received similar comments on court orders. In addition to providing greater deterrence for noncompliance, introducing an imprisonment term will allow the courts to use alternative sentences, such as community correction orders, in circumstances where a person fails to comply with a particular court order. These changes improve the compliance and enforcement of animal welfare laws in New South Wales.

The introduction of an interim disqualification order and extension of court orders to the Crimes Act offences ensure that courts are able to put in place orders that protect the welfare of animals and minimise the risk of reoffending. That is very important. The increase in penalties for failing to comply with a court order reinstates the seriousness of these orders. I commend the Minister again. I believe those opposite support the legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:32):** I am pleased to speak in debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021, and I thank the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales for bringing it to this House. Previously New South Wales had the lowest penalties in Australia for cruelty to animals. There is widespread public support for increased penalties and widespread public outrage over cases of animal cruelty when perpetrators have received sentences that were perceived to be too light. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021 arrives well behind the Government's own deadlines in implementing its Animal Welfare Action Plan, of which one major task was to review penalties for animal cruelty. This was supposed to be completed in 2018. In June 2018 the discussion paper compared current penalties for offences in prevention of cruelty to animals [POCTA] legislation with those of other States and clearly identified New South Wales penalties as being far less.

Labor took a comprehensive 10-point animal welfare plan to the 2019 election. I thank all those who have been involved in the discussion and development of a comprehensive policy and vision investment in the future of our relationship with animals in this State. I look forward to moving to even better places in the future. In May 2019 Labor agreed to support the Animal Justice Party in establishing a Legislative Council inquiry into a review of the POCTA Act as it met one of our election commitments. The report of the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales was handed down in June 2020, and I am pleased that this bill is finally before the Parliament. It introduces very important changes to protect our animals. On that note, I thank the RSPCA for the work it does in caring for animals in New South Wales. I thank the people who work and volunteer on the Central Coast for the very important role they play in our community.

I acknowledge the work of the Wildlife Animal Rescue & Care Society, WIRES and all animal rescuers in our community, which have had an incredibly challenging couple of years caring for the creatures that need to be cared for. I also call out those people who rescue animals who have faced cruelty. I acknowledge one gentleman in my community, George, who has a lovely new dingo that was treated terribly. George has made a huge financial investment in this gorgeous dog and treating the infections it suffered. I also thank our law enforcement agencies, which will continue to work to prevent animal cruelty across New South Wales. I salute all our pet owners, who are absolute advocates for the prevention of animal cruelty. Our companion animals are so important, and were especially important for those of us who were isolated during COVID. Our seniors and older Australians celebrate their relationships with their companion animals and absolutely support any changes that we make in New South Wales to prevention of cruelty to animals laws.

The increase in animal cruelty penalties is very important. I commend the Hon. Emma Hurst in the other place for her leadership in replacing some of the most lax legislation that existed in Australia. I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Jenny Aitchison, for consulting with various stakeholders across the community. We will continue to consult with stakeholders as legislation and amendments go through the upper House. I commend the member for Albury for his role as a vet prior to coming into this place. I know that he has had the responsibility of caring for animals and, as a leader in his community, has definitely set a lot of precedents. His voice is very important in this place. The member also shares the voice of, and is someone who services, the farming community, whose absolute imperative is to care for animals.

Treating animals as commodities is not okay. As Australians, we are clearly moving forward in this space, with 80 per cent of us concerned with animal welfare and opposed to animal cruelty in this State. If you abuse animals in New South Wales, that is not okay. You will get caught and it will cost you. I thank the Minister for increasing penalties and making this more clear across our community. I look forward to future changes to support our relationship with companion animals in this State. I moved from Paris to Woy Woy. Paris has an incredibly different relationship with animals in public life, as does New York City. I think we have more steps to take in this space in Australia. This bill is a very important forward step in animal welfare reform, and I am proud to support it.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:37):** I appreciate the opportunity to address the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. It is a welcome step forward in dealing with the fact that New South Wales currently has some of the most lax animal cruelty legislation in Australia. Strengthening our animal cruelty legislation to bring our laws into line with community expectations is long overdue. No substantive legislative amendments have been made to maximum penalties or offences of animal cruelty since 1997. The existing penalty regime in New South Wales does little to deter animal cruelty and does not keep animals safe. Low penalties send a message that hitting, kicking, killing and other cruelty to animals is simply a minor offence. Even with the pitiful

penalties currently in place, those people who choose to be violent towards animals rarely receive the maximum penalties. Earlier this year the CEO of RSPCA NSW, Steve Coleman, said to the media:

In my nearly 30 years at RSPCA, I have never seen an individual or company receive a maximum fine—ever. I think "Jeez, when a pet actually dies at the hands of a human and they don't get the maximum penalty in court, what does it take for someone to get the maximum?"

This legislation is important, but it is also important that we send a message to the courts and to those people adjudicating on these matters that the Parliament and the Government take it seriously. Every member in this House believes the courts should be acting and implementing significant penalties when the crime calls for it.

The Greens have been campaigning to improve animal cruelty legislation for many years. This bill brings penalties somewhat closer to community expectations to better reflect the seriousness of abusing the sentient animals in our care. The bill is welcomed. I will not go over the increases to penalties—they have already been discussed at length—but we need to recognise that the legislation should be strengthened in other areas. I understand that the other place will be working with the Government and other members to try to progress that.

There is an enforcement problem. Efforts to increase penalties for animal cruelty are often effective only if there is a robust enforcement regime in place to investigate and prosecute crimes against animals. Without that, these changes will be moot. Two approved charitable organisations—the RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW—are responsible for compliance and enforcement. The recent inquiry into animal cruelty laws in New South Wales found that the reliance of these charitable organisations primarily on donations for the majority of their total funding has the potential to compromise their independence, or at least lead to actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

While we welcome efforts to increase penalties, it is important to note that currently, in practice, prosecution rates are applied in very few circumstances. For example, the RSPCA reported that in 2018-19, of 16,696 complaints, only 75 prosecutions were finalised. That is a fraction of a per cent and is obviously significantly below what the community would expect. Increased penalties must be coupled with a commitment from the Government to significantly increase funding to more adequately resource and staff the RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW inspectorates to enable them to effectively perform their compliance and enforcement roles, and conduct regular inspections without reliance on charitable donations.

Enforcement problems can also be due to lack of evidence. Sadly, this Government is actually trying to hinder the collection of evidence through laws known as ag-gag laws. This was the case, for example, at Wally's Piggery in 2014—one of the most abhorrent incidents of alleged animal cruelty in the history of this State. Workers at the piggery were exposed throwing and kicking young piglets. Many sick and injured animals were left to suffer and die. The conditions were filthy, and the buildings were dilapidated; the situation was dire. Perhaps most shocking of all, the owner was caught on camera smashing pigs over the head with a sledgehammer, slitting their throats and leaving them, conscious and writhing, to die a slow death.

Despite being aware of the alleged abuse and laying 53 charges of aggravated animal cruelty, amongst other things, the RSPCA dropped every single charge because the video evidence obtained by animal welfare activists was inadmissible. Ag-gag laws have made it even harder to expose incidents of animal cruelty in this State and therefore infinitely harder to apply the types of penalties contained in this bill. I spoke about that in my speech on the ag-gag bills and said that it increases cynicism and suspicion in the farming community when they have such a secretive operation that is very difficult to expose.

The Department of Primary Industries has a conflict of interest. I note that the administration of the Act sits with the Department of Primary Industries, whose stated goal is to increase productivity of animals, not to protect their welfare. This is a conflict of interest and risks the changes contained in this bill not being properly enforced. You cannot try to squeeze more and more productivity out of animals and at the same time say that you are responsible for their welfare. There is a conflict there. That is why we support the establishment of an independent statutory body, the Independent Office of Animal Protection, to oversight the animal welfare framework in New South Wales. This change would demonstrate the Government's seriousness about animal cruelty prevention as something that is important in its own right, not just important as a function of agribusiness.

I note that a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party gave a speech on this matter today saying that, while these penalties are significant, there needs to be more oversight, therefore that party should support the Independent Office of Animal Protection. Let us see people showing their real commitment to animal protection by supporting an independent office that can address these issues. It would be productive to see responsibility for animal cruelty taken out of the Agriculture portfolio. It is difficult for a Minister, who is responsible for improving the productivity of farms, including factory farms, to be responsible for preventing cruelty to animals.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** I love animals.



**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** The Minister says he loves animals. He got himself into a bit of trouble in 2019 when he said at the farmers conference that he was going to run down deer.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** They are a feral species.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** They are a feral species, but we are talking about the protection of animals. We should not be running down animals; we should not be taking that kind of approach, regardless of what species the animal is. I notice that the Minister is laughing. We want to be protecting animals of all sorts; we should not be running down animals if we do not like them. We have to ensure that we comply with the law and running down deer on the road would not be complying with the law. I think we can see why there is an issue that needs to be addressed and the need for an independent statutory body.

Other reforms are needed. The bill adopts only one of the 14 recommendations of the Legislative Council inquiry into animal cruelty laws in New South Wales. It is a welcome start, I acknowledge that, but we need to strengthen it and it is time to modernise the entire Act. It is time for the law in New South Wales to recognise the sentience of animals. This would reflect the shift in perception within the community from thinking of animals as private property to individual, thinking and feeling entities that deserve to be treated with respect and compassion, and to have quality of life. I note that the Australian Capital Territory passed the Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 to explicitly recognise that animals are sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them. That is a change that we would like to see in New South Wales for the respect and dignity of all animals.

The law carves out exceptions for some animals. In particular, I am concerned that much of the discussion has focused on cats and dogs, the animals we keep as our pets. It can be easy to address only those animals and forget that many of the animals we keep for food are just as intelligent, feeling and capable of suffering. This is reflected in the law in New South Wales that defines animals not by their capacity to suffer, but by their value or their use to humans. Animals that we keep as companions are fully protected if they are valued as a pet or companion animal, but as soon as you take those very same animals out of the domestic environment and place them in a research laboratory or breeding facility or farm they lose important protections under animal cruelty laws. We believe that this is anti-science and demonstrates callousness; it is cruel in itself. We need to update the law and the way we perceive all animals, as I have outlined. Hopefully the changes to the law will follow suit. I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill and hope that this can be the beginning of a sea change in the way we treat animals.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (11:46):** I support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. It is an important bill for many reasons. First and foremost, this bill ensures that all those who do wrong by animals are held to account. Let me be unequivocal: There is no place for animal cruelty in New South Wales—not now; not ever. The bill takes the important step of amending the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979—New South Wales' primary animal welfare statute—to increase penalties for the three offences that are most frequently prosecuted: failure to provide food, drink or shelter; cruelty; and aggravated cruelty.

The changes to penalties, which range from a tripling to an eightfold increase in maximum financial penalties currently available, will ensure that courts are equipped to hand down sentences that reflect the severity of the offences. The new penalties established by this bill better represent the expectations of the community, which has shown overwhelming support for higher penalties during consultation on animal welfare matters. By creating a stronger deterrent effect, this bill increases protections for animals across New South Wales and sends a clear message to those who mistreat animals: You will be caught and you will be held accountable for your actions. All too often we see fairly graphic footage of animal cruelty, but there are a lot of good organisations out there. The RSPCA does an enormous job in animal welfare, as do on-the-ground organisations such as WIRES. I particularly acknowledge Friends of the Pound in my area. For many years Ms Sonia Trichter has been managing that organisation, which has either relocated or rehomed many rescued cats and dogs.

It behoves me to mention that the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Adam Marshall, is a recipient of a rescue cat, the amazing Cyril, that often features on the Minister's Facebook page, the orange tabby cat. I have been the recipient of rescue dogs. Many in this place on both sides have been the recipients of rescue animals, yet we still see people unscrupulously not caring for animals. A lady was charged with housing 2,000 cats on a rural property. Of that 2,000 we managed to relocate 800, but a similar number had to be put down as a result of animal abuse. This legislation is important because now she could be banned from owning another cat. We have seen some horrific footage in recent times taken by animal activists. We have seen footage from the greyhound industry. I am not a massive fan of the greyhound industry, but I am interested to see how the new regulations in the Integrity Commission will be followed. We have seen horrific footage of horses in knackereries. No common-sense person likes to see this type of cruelty.

By introducing an interim disqualification order and extending other court orders to apply to the Crimes Act, this bill makes sure that courts have the right tools at their disposal to prevent people from doing the wrong thing or harming animals. Strong animal welfare laws help protect the social licence of our important agricultural industry. That is why I support the bill before the House, although it has been disappointing to see in the past few years the increased attacks directed at our farmers regarding ownership of animals, particularly stock animals. These are often erroneous claims that our farmers do not care about their animals and have no stake in protecting their welfare. The increased hatred towards farmers saw this Government act in 2019 to introduce the Right to Farm Act that protects farmers from what are essentially home invasions, stopping people trespassing onto private land under the pretence of protesting agriculture. It is often claimed that all farmers engage in cruelty. This is, frankly, untrue. Farmers are some of the strongest advocates for the humane treatment of animals in this State.

Farmers spend their lives around their animals. They work with them every day. They care for them every day and are heavily invested in their welfare. Farmers love their animals. To suggest anything else is misguided, at best. Not only that, but every farmer worth their salt also knows that bad animal welfare is bad for business. Animal welfare is at the forefront of their minds—it is animals that produce food and fibre that keeps New South Wales fed and clothed. After all, we know that a happy animal is a productive animal. Ensuring a high standard of animal welfare is crucial to farmers' ongoing success. It is crucial in maintaining consumer trust in the industry and it is crucial in keeping export markets open and businesses growing. Consumers are increasingly aware of animal welfare and voting with their wallets. They know how important animal welfare is in New South Wales and they will work tirelessly to protect it. That is why I am proud to support this bill.

There is a large amount of cruelty that will occur and a lot of the cruelty I have become aware of has occurred in the city—a long way away from any farm, a long way away from any regional area. We always see a large number of animals—unwanted presents—dumped after Christmas. Where I live at the moment, the side of the highway, adjacent to a large nature reserve has become a drop-off point for unwanted dogs. Unfortunately over the past few years those dogs have bred with some of the wild dingoes and there is a significant wild dog problem causing grief with many of our cattle and sheep farmers and chicken owners. Once again, this is irresponsible behaviour. In recent times, possibly a by-product of the pandemic, the cost of puppies has gone through the roof.

I am aware of people buying one particular breed, the French bulldog, a little dog and they think nothing of paying \$8,000 to \$10,000 per dog. This is a long way from a rescue dog, where I think the going rate is a couple of hundred dollars. With the increase in pricing of those animals, we have strong legislation against puppy farms. But that still requires the community to be vigilant to ensure that these practices of animal cruelty are reported to the appropriate authorities. The fact that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the RSPCA are at arm's length from government is a good thing. It is not beholden to the Government; it is free to operate on its own. A spade can be called a spade in many regards. That is why I support this legislation. I also commend both the Minister and Cyril the wonder cat for their ongoing advocacy for animal welfare.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (11:56):** I speak in debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I note that the Minister is in the Chamber. It is a short, concise bill to, in essence, significantly increase the penalties for animal cruelty offences and provide a legal framework for disqualification and other administrative orders. I state from the outset that animal cruelty is abhorrent and in no way should it be considered acceptable, tolerated or condoned. In saying that, the majority of animal owners—breeders, farmers—are decent, caring, law-abiding people, who care very much for their animals and/or livestock. As a community there is an expectation that our pets are properly cared for, that their welfare is of paramount importance and that people who do the wrong thing, who mistreat their animals, who do not provide adequate food, water and shelter are appropriately punished.

Presently there are substantive offences both within the Crimes Act and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. These offences carry fines and in some more serious cases, terms of imprisonment. The usual prosecuting authority in these cases is either the NSW Police Force or officers attached to the RSPCA. Offences are usually dealt with either by way of a penalty infringement notice or a ticket, and in more serious cases they are prosecuted through the Local Court. Over many years of police prosecuting duties I have appeared for the RSPCA in prosecutions of offenders for animal cruelty offences. I am aware that the RSPCA seeks and receives a direct moiety as part of any fine imposed by the court for any RSPCA-initiated prosecutions. Therein lies what I believe is one the primary unwritten objectives of this Act—to significantly increase funding for the RSPCA. Two other objectives of the Act are to significantly increase penalties and provide a legal framework for orders of disqualification.

I have spoken with Animal Care Australia, as well as many dog breeders across my electorate and the State. There is no issue: All agree those doing the wrong thing should be punished. But there has been, since the Minister announced the RSPCA task force to tackle puppy farms late last year—now called the Breeders

Compliance Unit—a great level of concern and anxiety amongst many breeders. All agree: Prosecute those doing the wrong thing—those engaged in intensive dog production, neglecting the animal welfare codes. But it seems, from speaking to these breeders, that the interpretation of this task force is targeting the low-hanging fruit, the hobby breeders or smaller scale operations.

Dog breeders today, farmers and livestock tomorrow, cat and bird breeders the day after. It is the start of a slippery slope that we are going down. I have received correspondence from and spoken with many breeders who have been subject to inspections. I share one of those emails I have received, with the names redacted for the confidentiality of those people. This was a complaint as a result of an inspection that occurred on their property in December 2020:

We live on a rural property. The home is gated with a locked gate and we have our phone number clearly visible for those requesting entry. On 8 December our home phone rang. We were outside in the morning. We heard the phone but we did not go inside to answer it and there was no message left. Two days later, on 10 December, we left home and went to our appointments in town. When we returned to our home, we found a sticker on our gate from an RSPCA NSW inspector. It asked to call him. The note stated that he had attended our premises on 8 December 2020. We phoned the number and were told that the officer would call us back.

The officer then called back and told them that he had received a complaint and that it had to be investigated. He also told them that he thought it was a vexatious complaint, but that nonetheless he still needed to investigate it. While he was there, an audit would be conducted of their operation and premises. The breeder continues:

An appointment was made for him to come out and see us. We did not believe of any complaint. On 18 December, eight days later, we had our first visit from this particular inspector. It was a traumatic experience going through the whole ordeal. We were given a copy of the Code of Practice for Breeding Dogs and Cats. Upon reading the standards in the code it became apparent that we had been misled as to the reasons why the RSPCA were coming to inspect us, predominantly in relation to pen sizes. We had felt all along that the yards and accommodation we provided for our dogs were generous and upon reading the standards, every pen was more than big enough for the dog it contained. The RSPCA inspector was firm in his demand that every dog required a full square metre of floor space. However, on reading the standard, that is not what is actually stated. We were told that we had to present records in a particular manner on his return and were instructed that we needed to place a map showing where all of our animals were housed in a place clearly visible to the public at the entrance to our property. We keep a locked gate and guests enter only by invitation. The safety, security and welfare of our animals is first and foremost and we will not put that at risk.

The RSPCA inspection on that day lasted 4½ hours, causing great levels of distress to the owners of the property. They go on to say:

We are hobbyists, animal enthusiasts and enjoy exhibiting purebred animals at shows, competing in dog sports and training and sharing time with our beloved pets. After the initial visit from the RSPCA inspector, he found no welfare or condition issues with our animals and directives were given that we were to maintain and keep all records.

There was also an issue in relation to the fence height of 1.8 metres. The member for Maitland spoke as the shadow Minister about the requirement that dogs are to be housed inside 1.8 metres high fencing, regardless of the breed. I think the example she used was that it even applies to Chihuahuas. The breeders who wrote to me live on a rural property. If their dogs are not kept in their pens then they cannot be allowed out into the house yard, which is about two acres, because the front yard has a stock-proof post-and-rail fence but it is not 1.8 metres high. The dogs either have to be kept penned up in their cages or, if they are let out, cannot be let out into the yard. The breeders could in fact be fined for having them out in the house yard because the front fence is less than 1.8 metres high.

This is just one of many stories that I have been told in the past month or so by people not only in my electorate but also across New South Wales. I suppose that has been exacerbated because of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party's affiliation with the greyhound industry, but I welcome all those complaints because they paint a picture in my mind of what is happening out there in the community. There is no doubt that there are some officers within the RSPCA who are overly officious and overzealous in interpreting legislation in a certain way. I listened quite closely from my office to the contribution by the member for Barwon to this debate. He also raised concerns about things he has been made aware of that have occurred in his electorate and I have heard similar stories. That is a concern we have.

I note the earlier contribution of the Minister for Local Government. She described—probably flippantly—RSPCA inspections as "raids". That to some extent is how breeders feel they are being treated—that they are being raided. It is mum-and-dad, small-scale breeders who are being treated in this way. We are not talking about puppy farms. [*Extension of time*]

With the resources of the State and the intelligence gathering of police, RSPCA and local councils, the Government should easily be able to target the so-called puppy farms and come down hard on them. That is no issue. But as I have just indicated, we know that mum-and-dad breeders, small-scale operators and hobbyists are, quite frankly, being targeted and issued fines for technical breaches. I will be interested in seeing how some marginal National Party MPs like the member for Dubbo and the member for Upper Hunter vote on this issue. Many farmers, breeders of dogs and owners of livestock, cats, horses and birds would share some real concerns and would no doubt have contacted those members.

I now turn briefly to the bill. Clause 5 sees a significant eightfold increase in penalties, from 50 penalty units to 400 penalty units. For those who do not know, each penalty unit is \$110, so that is a massive increase. The period of imprisonment has been extended from six months to 12 months. Penalties for corporations have also increased eightfold, from 250 penalty units to 2,000 penalty units. Clause 6, "Aggravated cruelty to animals", increases fines fivefold. The regulations governing penalty infringement notices will also be doubled. Earlier today we debated the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021, which I supported, and not even those amendments saw such a disproportionate increase in penalties.

I note the concerns raised in the recently published report of the statutory Legislation Review Committee. The committee expressed some concerns in relation to the proportionality of the increased fines. As I said, it is of concern to us that this is essentially funnelling income into the RSPCA. We have heard from the experiences that the member for Maitland, the member for Barwon and I have shared that some—not all, but some—RSPCA inspectors are being unnecessarily officious, unfair, unreasonable and overzealous in their enforcement, especially towards small-scale breeders. It is for those reasons, along with the lack of accountability and oversight of the RSPCA, that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and I cannot support the bill.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:08):** The New South Wales Government is committed to improving animal welfare in line with community expectations. It is our duty as a government to ensure that those who abuse the less powerful are held accountable. I support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I am also the proud owner of three rescue dogs, two of which I have spoken about in this place. One of them, Patchie, is with my parents. All three of my dogs are Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, which are beautiful, placid dogs. Though they are not blessed with intelligence, they are absolutely adorable dogs and I love them to bits. One of the other two dogs that Keith and I own is Lolly. We adopted her when she was two years old from a lovely young lady whose life circumstances had changed such that she could no longer provide for Lolly's needs. Our third dog, Tilley, causes us the most concern. Keith and I adopted her directly from a puppy factory on the Victorian side of the border with New South Wales. We have had Lolly and Tilley together for six years and we absolutely love them like children.

Tilley's case was very traumatic. When we adopted her she had never been on grass and she weighed more than 13 kilograms—her healthy weight should be about eight kilograms, so she was very overweight. Tilley had just given birth to her fourth litter in less than three years and she was in a really bad way. We found out quite quickly that she was almost lame with patella luxation, so we took her to the Animal Referral Hospital in Canberra, which did an amazing job. Tilley had surgery on both back legs and was then caged for six weeks while we rehabilitated her. Tilley has numerous other genetic disorders, which were likely passed on to the litters that she gave birth to during her time in that factory. She had never had any human contact to speak of, so the task of giving her a better life was a serious undertaking for Keith and I, but together we have done a pretty good job. And with Lolly's assistance—she is a more normal dog, if you like—Tilley is almost unrecognisable from the dog that we picked up on that fateful day.

It is not unsurprising, given my personal experience in this space, that I have some strong views on the treatment of animals. Of course, I am also passionate about celebrating the breeders and owners who do the right thing, and overwhelmingly that is the case, particularly across my electorate. In amongst a busy day's work in the electorate, I love nothing more than going to visit a number of those small, mum-and-dad operators who do a wonderful job of breeding animals—and my heart lies with dogs. I love to drop in to see where they are up to in the wonderful work that they are doing. I also love to visit a number of dog shows that are held in my electorate. Even those breeders recognise that others who are doing the wrong thing must be deterred from doing so and, in some cases, may no longer be part of the industry.

The bill makes critical changes to the animal welfare legislative framework. In 2018 the Government released the first-ever NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan, which included a commitment to modernise legislation that is almost 40 years old. The Government recognises that the legislative framework is outdated, complex and no longer meets community expectations. The action plan sets out a clear path to reforming the legislative framework. Developing a new, robust animal welfare framework is no small task, and we are taking the time to get it right. The New South Wales Government acknowledges that there is a large and diverse range of stakeholders with an interest in animal welfare—which is definitely the case in my electorate—and that is why it is ensuring that it thoroughly consults with the community at multiple points throughout the process. In the first half of 2020 the Government released the *NSW Animal Welfare Reform: Issues Paper*, which sought community feedback on issues within the current legislative framework.

The Government received feedback from over 1,100 stakeholders, which captured a wide range of community perspectives and stakeholder groups, and showed strong support for animal welfare reform, including for the increases to penalties and updates to court orders that are in the bill before the House. Feedback from the public touched on a wide range of other issues, including the need to simplify and streamline the framework. The

Government has taken that feedback and is using it to develop a suite of proposals that will form the basis for the new laws. The bill before the House will make immediate changes to address key gaps in the current animal welfare framework. In direct response to recent puppy factory activity during COVID-19, those changes are an interim yet crucial step ahead of larger legislative reform. The bill increases penalties for key animal welfare offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and strengthens provisions around court orders to better protect animals from cruelty. Those changes are critical to act as an immediate deterrent to potential offenders.

The bill represents an important step towards our commitment to modernising animal welfare laws in this State and bringing them into line with community expectations. The New South Wales Government remains committed to the broader reform of the animal welfare legislative framework. I am pleased to confirm that the Government is on track to deliver modern outcomes that are focused on animal welfare legislation in 2021. The Government will continue to consult with the community and with key stakeholders as the work progresses. I thank all of the small breeders who have stepped forward in recent weeks to raise their concerns with me. I have raised those concerns with Minister Adam Marshall. I thank him and his team for addressing our concerns and for the commitment to work together to ensure that we strike the right balance between the wonderful work that small breeders do and the need to ensure that, at the end of the day, animals are protected. The bill that is before the House is an important step in the process of reforming the State's animal welfare legislative framework. On that basis I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:17):** I contribute to debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I add to the contributions that have been made by my colleagues from The Greens in this place, the member for Ballina, Tamara Smith, and the member for Balmain, Jamie Parker. As both of my colleagues have outlined—as have many other members who are interested in the idea of ensuring that animal welfare is a front-and-centre priority for the Government and the community—for close to two decades The Greens have campaigned for animal welfare reform and animal protections. I acknowledge and pay credit to the tireless work of Lee Rhiannon, a former member of the upper House in this place, along with Ms Cate Faehrmann and Ms Mehreen Faruqi.

My Greens colleague in the other place Ms Abigail Boyd is now responsible for the animal welfare portfolio. I note that Ms Abigail Boyd was a member of the recent Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales. In effect the bill takes one of the recommendations from that inquiry and puts it into practice. I will go through the bill in more detail, but for those who are not across the select committee it is worth noting that the inquiry made 14 recommendations—and the bill contains one of those recommendations. I appreciate that it has been a stressful and intense time, and it has been lovely to hear Government members talk about their rescue animals and the other furry friends who are a part of the family. But I hope that those members are genuine about moving further towards the protection of animals from cruelty by acting very quickly and by pressuring Minister Adam Marshall, who I note is present in the Chamber, to enact the 13 other recommendations that were made by the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales.

The legislation before the House increases the maximum penalty for cruelty to animals by corporations from 250 penalty units to 2,000. For individuals, the increase is from 50 penalty units, imprisonment for six months, or both to 400 penalty units, imprisonment for one year, or both. It increases the maximum penalties for aggravated cruelty and for the failure to provide an animal with food, drink or shelter. It is important to recognise the context of the legislation. It has come to this place from recommendations in the final report of the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales. I note that the bill enacts recommendation 2, which states:

That the NSW Government, as part of its review of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, increase penalties for animal cruelty offences.

That is great, but there are a lot of other recommendations in the report that have not been progressed. Right now the Government and the Minister could be acting to consider a review of the current arrangements for body-worn devices for the purposes of investigations into animal cruelty offences, with a view to permitting such devices to be worn by officers of approved charitable organisations. A key recommendation from the inquiry—one that is absolutely essential—is that the New South Wales Government move responsibility for animal welfare matters out of the Department of Primary Industries. Members might question why that is necessary. It relates to recommendation 14, which states:

That the NSW Government establish an independent statutory body, the Independent Office of Animal Protection, to oversight the animal welfare framework. Further, that the NSW Government consult stakeholders on the appropriate functions of the new body.

When working on the inquiry and delivering the report, a key focus of my Greens colleague in the other place Ms Abigail Boyd was to add the following:

In addition, we are of the view that the Department of Primary Industries views the concept of 'animal welfare' within the context of agricultural industries as being synonymous with 'quality of stock'. The community, however, increasingly views animals as sentient beings, regardless of their use to humans. Given the Department of Primary Industries' role in supporting agricultural industries, the committee is concerned that the Department of Primary Industries risks maintaining a narrow and outdated view of animal welfare matters which is out of step with the broader community.

Members on all sides of the Chamber have talked about the need to reflect community sentiment and community views around the issue of prevention of cruelty to animals. We cannot do that when the Department of Primary Industries has a conflict of interest when it comes to the prevention of animal cruelty. Nothing is clearer than that. We can see the connection between those things. I have never quoted from *Sporting Shooter* in this place, but we have a situation where agriculture Minister Adam Marshall is reported in that publication as bragging about running over deer. I acknowledge that one of the Labor members in the other place took the Minister to task over that during estimates hearings. I understand the Minister was bragging publicly. Reports have quoted the Minister as saying:

I'm doing my best in my car to knock 'em down four at a time like I did the other night near Emmaville.

The Minister was bragging on social media about knocking over deer. I do not know what the community sentiment is but, as *Sporting Shooter* said, people are suggesting he could face jail or penalties. The Minister who has brought the bill before the Chamber has bragged about doing that. He claimed to step it back once he realised there might be serious problems. That is a clear conflict of interest that demonstrates the Minister responsible for primary industries and agriculture should not be responsible for animal welfare issues in this State. That is very, very clear.

As my colleague Mr Jamie Parker said, that is why The Greens support the establishment of an independent statutory body, the Independent Office of Animal Protection, to oversight the animal welfare framework in New South Wales. That change would demonstrate that the Government is serious about animal cruelty prevention being important in its own right and not just as a function of agribusiness. It is very important we recognise that because the priorities and profit motives that are driving the agriculture Minister and the Department of Primary Industries are not related to animal welfare. While I note that the Minister has brought forward this legislation dealing with the prevention of cruelty to animals, it takes only one action out of the 14 recommendations that are required. Other recommendations in the report include:

That the NSW Government, as part of the review of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, consider statutory time limits for the prosecution of animal cruelty related crimes ...

That the NSW Government amend the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* to require the approved charitable organisations to:

- table their annual reports in both Houses of the NSW Parliament
- comply with requests under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

The report also recommends that the Legislative Council portfolio committee responsible for primary industries be required to conduct a one-day public hearing each year, involving the approved charitable organisations, with the hearing to be conducted after the lodgement of the reports. There are certainly a number of recommendations in the report that have not been included in the bill. I acknowledge Ms Abigail Boyd and thank her in advance for the work she will do in moving amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021, to ensure that it reflects the recommendations of the animal cruelty committee. It is clear that the Minister has a conflict of interest. It is clear that the department has a conflict of interest. They cannot prioritise the needs of agribusiness in this State while at the same time pretending to ensure that cruelty to animals is prevented and animal welfare is prioritised.

I have been overwhelmed and inspired by the number of people who live in the electorate of Newtown and care about animal welfare issues. They have been in touch with our office about many issues, whether it be allowing pets in rental accommodation; reforms to our domestic violence laws to recognise the indication that violence towards animals can have about the risks of DV; sharks and shark netting; or the appalling behaviour of the Liberal-Nationals Government last year when it came to killing koalas and the ongoing devastation of some of our amazing native animals. I ask that all members in this place consider whether we are doing enough when it comes to animal welfare and animal cruelty issues. First and foremost, the best way to move forward is to make sure that a Minister who brags about knocking over deer on the road is not responsible for bringing prevention of animal cruelty legislation to this Parliament.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:27):** On behalf of the Government, I support the Prevention of Cruelty Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the hard work of Minister Marshall, who has been in the Chamber for the entire debate. I take the opportunity to acknowledge that the Opposition is not opposing the excellent amendment bill; it has been two for two today, which is very good. I acknowledge the outstanding contributions by the member for South Coast; the member for Albury; the member for Oatley, who was in the

Chamber a few minutes ago; the member for Tweed; and the member for Cootamundra, who outlined her experiences with her rescue dog Tilley. I also acknowledge those on the other side of the Chamber who made contributions supporting the amendments.

Owning or being responsible for the care of an animal is a significant responsibility. I highlight from the outset that in 2015, when I was elected to this place, the now Minister and I were appointed to serve on the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in NSW. The committee comprised a diverse range of members: a National Party chair; me, a Liberal Party member; outstanding upper House member Mick Veitch; and a representative of the Animal Justice Party. Pretty much every organisation was covered in that joint select committee. The three months that the committee received evidence, visited locations and took feedback was very interesting for us. I commend the Minister. He was the chair of that committee. The committee unanimously supported all recommendations, which is testament to how the then chair, now Minister, ran the committee.

Prior to the last election I was lucky enough to be the chair of the Parliament's Responsible Pet Ownership Reference Group. I acknowledge all members of that group and their invaluable feedback that helped support, form and frame government policy. They are an outstanding group of people who gave their time to attend the Parliament to work through the recommendations of government and to consider how they could be implemented effectively and efficiently to ensure the best outcomes for the protection of companion animals and other animals throughout New South Wales.

I acknowledge the great work being done by Dee and her team at the Central Coast Animal Care Facility, located in Erina in my electorate. I am incredibly proud to be the patron of the Central Coast Animal Care Facility, a position I hold with great respect and humility. I will never forget the day they came into my office and asked me to be the patron. I am honoured to represent them as the facility's patron. Only a week or two ago I spoke in this Chamber along similar lines to the member for Cootamundra when she spoke about her and her husband's experiences with Tilly. My wife and I are the self-confessed fostering failures of Fitz, a one-year-old dog, who was kept in a hoarding environment with over 200 dogs. Fitz had no human contact for the first eight months of his life. Supposedly he is a cross between a corgi and a Jack Russell terrier, but I think he is whippet and Jack Russell because of his very long legs. He is an absolutely gorgeous dog. Having had no human contact, he was terrified of everything. His story is similar to the member for Cootamundra's story about Tilly.

Over the past eight months my wife, Jill, and I have been working with Fitz to make him feel safe. Obviously he has a loving home. He follows Jill around like a shadow. The first time we were able to pat him was a massive breakthrough because of the trauma he experienced as a puppy as a result of the appalling environment in which he was kept. I hope the person responsible for that was suitably punished. Again I commend the Minister for bringing the bill to the Chamber because dogs like Fitz and Tilly, and thousands of dogs and cats, and also other animals right across New South Wales in agricultural industries, of which the Minister is all too aware, should be treated with the respect and care that they deserve. We know that cattle, sheep and livestock that are kept in a positive environment produce the best quality meat. That is a simple fact. Whether they be chickens or goats, all animals produce a better meat product when raised in a free, relaxed environment. The onus is on primary producers and pet owners such as me to make sure that their animals have the most caring environment.

This Government recognises the importance of that commitment. As I have outlined, legislation is in place that sets out our expectations of animal owners. The bill before the House makes changes that modernise key parts of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979, or POCTAA, as we refer to it, which is almost 40 years old. The bill ensures that penalties under POCTAA are proportionate to the seriousness of the offence committed and in line with community expectations. The Minister and I, as part of the joint select committee, heard excuse after excuse as to why animals were being mistreated. Very quickly we recognised poor behaviour versus good behaviour of breeders who are doing the right thing. I congratulate the industry because its members were the first to step up and report recalcitrant behaviour of people who were doing the wrong thing. They know that poor behaviour does not help their industry. I congratulate all good breeders, whose great work was highlighted by the member for Cootamundra earlier.

The penalty increases will act immediately as a strong deterrent to potential offenders. The bill will improve animal welfare outcomes by increasing the maximum financial penalties and terms of imprisonment for the most common offences under POCTAA. We have heard from the public and from enforcement agencies that current penalties are simply not strong enough. Penalties should hold the offender accountable, reflect the severity of the offence and deter offenders from re-offending. The bill will ensure POCTAA delivers the outcomes that our community expects. The bill significantly increases the maximum financial penalties for key animal cruelty offences. The new penalties will be some of the highest in the nation for those offences. The bill allows a court to issue fines of up to \$110,000 to a person who is convicted of an aggravated animal cruelty offence under section 6 of POCTAA. The court may also sentence the offender to a maximum of two years' imprisonment. The proposed

maximum financial penalty is five times higher than the existing penalty for individuals. I commend the Minister for increasing the penalties to that level.

The bill allows a court to impose a financial penalty of up to \$44,000 and an imprisonment term of up to 12 months on those convicted of animal cruelty under section 5 of POCTAA. That is double the current maximum imprisonment term. The monetary penalty is eight times higher than the current amount. Those convicted of an offence for failing to provide food, drink or shelter under section 8 of POCTAA may be fined up to \$16,500 or sentenced to an imprisonment term of up to six months. That financial penalty is three times higher than the current maximum. Under the bill corporations can be fined up to \$550,000 for aggravated cruelty, up to \$220,000 for cruelty and up to \$82,500 for failing to provide food, drink or shelter. Those penalties will be some of the highest animal cruelty penalties for corporations in Australia.

As I have outlined, the Government also intends to increase penalty infringement notices for the offences of cruelty and the failure to provide food, drink or shelter. That ensures that penalty infringement notices are proportionate with the new statutory penalties. The Government intends to increase penalty infringement notices for individuals from \$500 to \$1,000 for cruelty and from \$200 to \$500 for failing to provide food, drink or shelter. Penalty infringement notices for corporations will be set at five times the amount for individuals, making them \$5,000 and \$2,500 respectively. I seek a brief extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

The penalty increases have been demanded by the community and POCTAA enforcement agencies. The Government has heard loud and clear from POCTAA enforcement agencies that current penalties do not reflect the severity of animal cruelty offences. The Government received over 2,000 responses to a 2018 survey on animal cruelty penalties. Some 67 per cent of respondents supported an increase in financial penalties and 80 per cent supported increases to terms of imprisonment. Some 76 per cent believed penalty infringement notices were not high enough. In the first half of 2020 the Government consulted on animal welfare reform. The comments received regarding penalties were consistent with those initial results. Today the Government is responding to the community's expectations about animal welfare in this State. Those who do the wrong thing will be held to account and punished appropriately. It is our duty as a government and as a community to ensure that those who abuse the less powerful are held accountable.

The bill is a step in the right direction in improving animal welfare across New South Wales. As I said, the issues about penalties were raised by our POCTAA enforcement agencies, and this Government is acting to address them. I commend the Minister for taking action. Let the bill be a signal to the community that this Government is absolutely serious about welfare outcomes and is willing to be tough on those who neglect their animal welfare responsibilities. I acknowledge the great work done by the Minister and Alex Hall in drafting the bill. I live in a region that has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the State. That sort of behaviour is not tolerated by our community in any way. I am a proud patron of the Central Coast Animal Care Facility, which has a no-kill policy; they rescue animals from shelters that have a kill policy. This is a great initiative and I am proud to be its patron. I am also proud to be part of the Government delivering this amendment to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. I again commend the Minister, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (12:39):** In reply: I thank all members in this place for their contributions to the debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the fact that the Opposition will be supporting the bill and I thank it for that. In particular, I firstly thank my colleague the Minister for Local Government and member for South Coast, as well as the members representing the electorates of Maitland, Sydney, Ballina, Albury, Barwon, Summer Hill, Oatley, Gosford, Balmain, Orange, Tweed, Cootamundra, Terrigal and Newtown for their thoughtful contributions to debate on the bill. The Government is committed to safeguarding animal welfare for all animals across New South Wales.

The bill amends the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 to finally bring our animal welfare legislation—importantly, the penalties—in line with community sentiment. The bill puts in place a penalty regime that New South Wales needs to effectively punish those who engage in one of the lowest acts imaginable—that is, cruelty to defenceless animals. It increases the maximum monetary and imprisonment penalties for key animal cruelty offences in this State. In addition to increasing penalties, the bill expands the range of tools available to New South Wales courts to deal with animal welfare cases. Some of those tools are desperately needed. The bill also includes a new interim disqualification order, which will help reduce the risk of further animal welfare offences occurring during the course of court proceedings. The bill will make court orders under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act available for more serious animal welfare offences and other animal welfare-related offences under the Crimes Act 1900.

Today the Government is responding to community expectations about the seriousness of animal cruelty offences by bringing them more in line with those of other States and Territories in Australia. Penalties for animal welfare offences in this State have not been increased in more than 15 years, which is a travesty. The penalty for



aggravated cruelty was set at its current amount back in 2003. Penalties for cruelty and failure to provide food, drink and shelter to animals have not increased since 1998. We have heard time and again that the penalties no longer meet the expectations of the community, and we have heard the horror stories of inadequate penalties being handed down by the courts for serious offences. The current penalty in New South Wales for failing to provide food, drink or shelter is a maximum of \$5,500 and/or six months' imprisonment, which is lower than those for comparable offences in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, which set theirs at \$15,800 and \$16,000 respectively.

The bill will increase the maximum financial penalty for failing to provide food, drink or shelter to \$16,500 for an individual and \$82,500 for corporations. For the offence of cruelty the current penalty of \$5,500 and/or a maximum of six months' imprisonment for an individual is lower than for the same offence in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. When I say "lower" I do not mean by a couple of dollars; I mean thousands and thousands of dollars lower than in comparable jurisdictions. In Victoria, cruelty attracts a maximum penalty of \$41,305 and a maximum of 12 months' imprisonment; in Tasmania, the equivalent maximum penalty is \$17,200 and/or 12 months' imprisonment; in South Australia it is \$20,000 and/or two years' imprisonment; up in the Northern Territory cruelty is punishable by a maximum of \$31,600 and/or two years' imprisonment; and, finally, in the Australian Capital Territory it is a maximum of \$32,000 and/or two years' imprisonment. After reading out those statistics I again remind the House that the maximum in New South Wales is only \$5,500 for each individual act of cruelty.

The bill proposes to increase that figure to a maximum penalty of \$44,000 and/or up to 12 months' imprisonment for cruelty—a higher financial penalty for comparable offences in other jurisdictions. With regard to the matter raised by the member for Orange—and I acknowledge his contribution—that one of the aims of the bill is to somehow siphon more money into the RSPCA's coffers, I am happy to advise the member that the RSPCA does not receive any financial benefit from any of the penalty infringement notices it issues. In terms of courts and prosecutions, the RSPCA only receives financial penalties awarded by and at the discretion of the courts. Further, if the court exercises that discretion, it cannot be more than 50 per cent, which must relate only to the fines themselves, not the cost of the prosecution. It is therefore not correct to characterise any aim of the bill to increase the amount of money that the RSPCA receives in its budget; it is separately funded.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 25/57**

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

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:45):** As Chair: I address the House on behalf of the Legislation Review Committee regarding the twenty-fifth digest for this Parliament, tabled on 16 February. The committee examined the two bills introduced in the last sitting week of 2020 commencing 17 November. It also considered ten statutory instruments. I draw members' attention to some of the issues raised by the committee. On 17 November the Government released its cognate budget bills: the Appropriation Bill 2020, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020 and the Payroll Tax Amendment 2020. Those bills appropriated various sums of money required during the 2020-21 financial year and, as such, did not engage any of the issues set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987. The second bill introduced during the final sitting week of 2020, the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive and Controlling Behaviour) Bill 2020, was a private member's bill introduced in the Legislative Council.

The object of that bill was to amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to create an offence of engaging in abusive behaviour of another person within a domestic relationship. In reviewing the bill the committee noted that it contained a new abusive behaviour offence that acted retrospectively. Under the bill, this new offence extends to a course of behaviour that began before the commencement of the bill, provided the behaviour occurred on at least one occasion after its commencement. The committee will usually comment on retrospectivity as it runs counter to the rule of law principle that a person is entitled to know the law that applies to him or her at any given time. The committee acknowledged that the objective of the bill is to recognise the repeated nature of abusive conduct in domestic relationships and the cumulative effect that has on its victims. However, as the provision seeks to act retrospectively, and attaches a criminal penalty, the committee referred the bill to the Parliament for its consideration.

I turn now to a statutory instrument considered by the committee, the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Saving) Amendment Regulation 2020. The object of the regulation is to amend schedule 5 to the Electricity Supply Act 1995 to change the existing energy savings scheme targets for the years 2022 to 2025 and

set targets for the years 2026 to 2050. This amendment is made possible by a Henry VIII clause in the Act. A Henry VIII clause enables the Act to be amended by subordinate legislation. Specifically, clauses 7 and 8A of schedule 4A to the Act provide for the Minister to recommend that a regulation be made to change the energy savings scheme target for a specified year or years if the Minister is satisfied that the change is appropriate for one of a range of reasons.

The committee generally comments on Henry VIII clauses because they delegate legislative power to the Executive and reduce parliamentary scrutiny of changes to legislation. Unlike primary legislation, subordinate legislation is not required to be passed by Parliament and the Parliament does not control when it commences. This means that while either House of Parliament can pass a resolution disallowing a statutory rule under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987, the statutory rule may have already been in operation for some time before disallowance occurs. The committee referred this matter to Parliament for further consideration.

The Surveillance Devices Amendment (Body-Worn Recording Devices) Regulation 2020 amends the Surveillance Devices Regulation 2014 to exempt ambulance officers from sections 7 and 8 of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 for 12 months. Those sections prohibit the installation and use of listening devices and optical surveillance devices. This exemption was previously introduced by another amendment regulation in October 2019, enabling NSW Ambulance to trial the use of body-worn cameras [BWCs] for 12 months as part of a "focused evaluation into the effects of BWCs on occupational violence experienced by Paramedics". The trial involves 60 cameras worn by several hundred ambulance officers across three sites in New South Wales. NSW Ambulance states on its website that the trial will assist in the implementation of recommendations made in previous reports aimed at improving personal security for ambulance officers and identifying factors and behaviours that place them at risk.

The amendment regulation now extends the trial period during which ambulance officers will be exempt from certain requirements of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 for a further 12 months so that the trial will last a total of two years. This exemption, and its extension by the amendment regulation, has the potential to impact individuals' right to privacy, as it permits ambulance officers to record people without their consent in certain circumstances; for example, if the ambulance officer believes there is a significant risk of harm to themselves or another person. Relevantly, ambulance officers are likely to interact with vulnerable members of the public—for example, those who are sick or injured. Further, it is unclear from the regulation how recordings captured by body-worn surveillance devices will be stored, or for how long, or how they can be used. However, the committee acknowledged that the exemption is associated with a trial, and as such only some ambulance officers in New South Wales wear the surveillance devices.

There are also safeguards accompanying the exemption, including that the exemption does not apply unless the ambulance officer informs a person that they might be recorded, or somebody may be at a significant risk of harm, or the recording is accidental. In addition, the committee recognised the public interest in deterring violence and antisocial behaviour towards ambulance officers. In the circumstances, the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on the twenty-fifth digest for this Parliament. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:51):** It gives me great pleasure to speak to the twenty-fifth digest of this Parliament, which records the work of the Legislation Review Committee undertaken on 16 February. The committee considered five bills, four of which were cognate budget bills, as well as the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Coercive and Controlling Behaviour) Bill 2020, which was a private member's bill. We commented on only one of those bills and that was the crimes bill, which is up for debate this week. I encourage members to look at the comments the committee made on that particular bill. We also examined, I think, 40 regulations in total, but we commented on only 10 of those. Regulation is often referred to as red tape—I am not sure why. There seems to be an awful lot of regulation flowing around at the moment and maybe we should call it blue tape.

I refer members to our comments on those regulations. One of the things the committee often comments on is the existence of Henry VIII clauses. Henry VIII clauses, as explained to me by the knowledgeable committee staff—I would not be aware of this without their guidance and assistance—refer to the tendency for that good King to prefer to legislate without referring anything to whatever form of Parliament he had going at the time. It is regulation made by the Executive without reference to any form of parliamentary consultation or decision by a legislative body.

In relation to the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Saving) Regulation 2020, the committee noted that it falls foul of our concerns about the use of Henry VIII clauses. The committee noted that the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Saving) Regulation 2020 amends the Electricity Supply Act 1995, which was made possible by a Henry VIII clause in that Act. That is an inappropriate delegation of legislative power. Primary legislation should not be changed by subordinate legislation because it reduces parliamentary scrutiny of those

changes. Both sides of the House have fallen into the introduction of Henry VIII clauses as a way to run the Executive, and the committee will always be concerned to bring it to the attention of the House.

The committee further noted that, unlike primary legislation, subordinate legislation is not required to be passed by Parliament and that the Parliament does not control when it commences. That means that while either House of Parliament can pass a resolution disallowing a statutory rule under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987, the statutory rule may already have been in operation for some time before disallowance occurs and, as a consequence, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for further consideration. That concludes my comments on this digest. I commend the digest to the attention of members of the House.

**Report noted.**

**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 26/57**

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

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:55):** As Chair: I address the House on behalf of the Legislation Review Committee regarding the twenty-sixth digest for this Parliament, tabled on 16 February. This digest considers the three bills that were introduced in the first sitting week of 2021 for the Legislative Assembly beginning 9 February 2021. The committee made comments on two of those bills. As statutory instruments reviewed by the committee over the break were addressed in the twenty-fifth digest, also tabled on 16 February, the current digest does not contain reports on statutory instruments. I will now draw the Parliament's attention to some of the issues raised by the committee on these bills.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2021 amends the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 [POCTAA] to increase maximum penalties for the most common animal cruelty offences. The bill also increases the range of orders a court may make under the POCTAA. In its examination of the bill, the committee noted that the bill significantly increases the maximum penalties for certain offences in the POCTAA. For the offence of animal cruelty under section 5, the maximum imprisonment term for individuals has been doubled and the maximum fines are eight times higher than the current amounts for both individuals and corporations. For the offence of aggravated cruelty under section 6, the maximum fines for individuals and corporations are five times higher than current amounts. For the offence of failing to provide an animal with food, drink or shelter under section 8, the maximum fines are three times higher.

The committee notes that in November 2020 a similar bill was introduced in Parliament providing for significant increases in penalties for offences under the POCTAA. In the committee's Legislation Review Digest No. 24, the committee reviewed the provisions of that bill. While acknowledging the bill's intention to toughen the penalties for animal abuse offences, the committee referred the increase in penalties to Parliament for its consideration on whether they are reasonable and proportionate. The committee echoes its position in regard to the significant increase in penalties contained in this bill. The committee notes the bill's intent of providing penalties to serve as a deterrent for animal abuse and to reflect community expectations and standards. However, the increases are significant and it is appropriate to refer the provisions to Parliament for it to consider whether they are reasonable and proportionate.

Turning to the second bill introduced, the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill 2021 introduces a combined alcohol and drug driving offence under the Road Transport Act 2013. It follows the launch of the Government's Road Safety Plan 2021, which featured targeted initiatives to address key areas of trauma and types of crashes occurring on New South Wales roads, including those involving drink and drug driving. The committee observed that the bill introduces new strict liability offences for drug- and drink-driving offences under section 111A, which carry maximum penalties ranging from 30 to 100 penalty units, or \$3,300 to \$11,000, and/or 18 months' to two years' imprisonment, depending on the concentration of alcohol and whether it is a person's first offence.

The committee notes that strict liability offences do not require a mental element such as intent or recklessness to be proven for a person to be convicted. The committee generally comments on strict liability offences as they depart from the common law principle that mens rea, or the mental element, is a relevant factor in establishing liability for an offence. This is of particular concern where significant penalties are attached, including the possibility of imprisonment. The committee noted that strict liability offences are not uncommon in regulatory settings, particularly relating to road safety, to encourage compliance, and acknowledges the public safety and deterrence objectives of the bill. However, given the significant penalties that are attached to the new strict liability offences, including imprisonment, the committee referred the matter to the Parliament for its consideration.

The committee also noted that proposed section 111A provides for a defence to a second or subsequent combined alcohol and drug-driving offence where the defendant can prove, to the court's satisfaction, that the

alcohol in their breath or blood was not caused by consuming an alcoholic beverage or another substance used for the purpose of consuming alcohol. Similarly, new clauses 32A and 32B in schedule 3 provide that breath, blood, oral fluid and urine tests taken within a specified period of an event occurring are presumed to show the concentration of alcohol or presence of an illicit drug at the time of that event unless the defendant proves otherwise.

The committee commented that those provisions may impact on the defendant's right to be presumed innocent, which is associated with the concept that the prosecution has the burden of proving a charge beyond reasonable doubt. The standard of proof for this defence—"to the court's satisfaction"—may also provide uncertainty. The committee considered that the reversed onus of proof for the section 111A defence is in line with the approach to drink-driving offences elsewhere in the Act, such as defences to novice drink driving in section 110 (9). Similarly, new clauses 32A and 32B resemble existing clauses in schedule 3 relating to proceedings for separate pre-existing drug- and drink-driving offences—sections 110, 111 and 112 of the Act. However, given the significant penalties for the proposed drug- and drink-driving offences that may impact procedural fairness by reversing the onus of proof on the defendant, the committee referred those provisions to the Parliament for its consideration of whether it is reasonable in the circumstances. That concludes my remarks on *Legislation Review Digest No. 26/57* for this Parliament. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:00):** It gives me great delight to speak on *Legislation Review Digest No. 26/57* of this Parliament, which records further work undertaken by the committee on 16 February, during which we examined three bills. We commented on two of those. We did not comment on the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Recklessly Destroying Government Records) Bill 2021, which is a private member's bill. We commented on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill and the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill. I note that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill is currently before the House. I draw members' attention to the comments made in the digest about the bill. The committee commented on the significant increase in penalties provided for under that bill. The object of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving Offence) Bill is to introduce a combined alcohol and drug-driving offence under the Road Transport Act 2013 and provide penalties for the offence. The bill makes other minor and consequential amendments. The committee has made a number of observations about the bill, which I draw to the attention of the House.

I will be interested to see whether the Minister refers to them in his reply speech. I remember it was a recommendation from the last Parliament, when we undertook an inquiry into the operation of the Legislation Review Committee, that it would be appropriate for Ministers with carriage of bills to refer to the comments made by the committee and at least address those in the House or in some other manner. The committee noted that the road transport bill contains strict liability offences, a reverse onus of proof, mandatory penalties and commences by proclamation. In relation to the strict liability offences, we noted that there are significant penalties under the bill, including maximum penalties of 30 to 100 penalty units—that is quite a sum of money—and/or 18 months' to two years' imprisonment, which is pretty steep. I note that a number of members commented on that and hopefully the Minister will as well. Once again, I commend the digest to the House. I thank my fellow committee members and the staff who support us.

**Report noted.**

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

*Members*

#### REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I inform the House that, in the absence of the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education:

- (1) The Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade will answer questions today in relation to Skills and Tertiary Education.
- (2) The Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation will answer questions today in relation to Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans.

*Question Time*

#### WESTERN SYDNEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:18):** My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier has walked away from Parramatta Light Rail stage two and cancelled the M4 Hill Road exit, and the Metro West will not be

delivered until 2033. Why has the Premier broken her promise to deliver infrastructure for residents at Newington and Wentworth Point?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Auburn to order for the first time. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. I call the Treasurer to order for the first time. I remind members of my warning yesterday: I do not want interjections between questions and answers. It is disrespectful.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:19):** I normally get the Dorothy Dixers from my side of the House, but I am very pleased to answer one from the Leader of the Opposition. A hallmark of the Liberals-Nationals Government's success is its infrastructure pipeline. We are delivering on projects that for decades had been forgotten throughout the State. That is creating jobs and supporting us during a very difficult time with the pandemic. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned public transport. Were it not for the Liberal-Nationals, the north-west rail line would never have been built, the Inner West Light Rail would never have been built, the Parramatta Light Rail would never have been built and the bike paths we are putting in would never have been built. When we talk about roads, it took the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals to finish the upgrade to the Pacific Highway, which is a fantastic initiative in regional New South Wales, in addition to the M8, the M1 and NorthConnex. All those road projects would not have been built were it not for the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In addition to our transport projects and road projects—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about the Hill Road exit, which is not being built; it was specifically about stage two of the light rail, which is not being built; and it was specifically about the Metro West, which is now not being committed to until 2033. Those three infrastructure projects are broken promises to the people of Auburn.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is aware of the question and is being generally relevant.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I pick up on the last point of order relating to the Metro West. I remember when Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister he gave Nathan Rees or Kristina Keneally \$80 million to do the planning work for Metro West. The Labor Party had to hand the money back because it did not do the work.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. This is not an opportunity for the Treasurer and the member for Maroubra to have a side debate while the Premier is speaking. It happened yesterday and it is starting again today. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. I call the Minister for Transport and Roads to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I believe the Leader of the Opposition was in the Cabinet at the time when they were handed money from the Federal Government to build the Metro West. They were so hopeless that they had to hand back the \$80 million for planning.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I want to pick up where the member for Auburn left off: The question was specifically about Newington and Wentworth Point and the three projects that the Premier promised. She has now broken that promise.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is being relevant.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Leader of the Opposition has just misled the House. She had the Metro West in her question and she has suddenly just left it off. She is only referring to the other two.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question involves the Hill Road exit and Parramatta Light Rail stage two. Let us hear about those.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** One of the few occasions in the Parliament's history where the Leader of the Opposition changes her question mid-question time because she does not like the question she asked. The bottom line is that they failed to deliver infrastructure. The bottom line is that they have had three months to think of questions and they ask us questions about what we are building in New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Little wonder that people are talking about the efficiency—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** What is the member's point of order? I do not want a speech; I want to know what the point of order is.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The people of Auburn deserve an answer on Hill Road and stage two of the light rail.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied that the Premier is being generally relevant. The Premier will continue.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It took the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals to build WestConnex, helping all of the communities of members opposite in western Sydney. Those opposite do not know how to build projects.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I finish by thanking the Leader of the Opposition for that great Dorothy Dixier.

#### PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR THE HUNTER AND COST OF LIVING

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (14:24):** My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier has failed to appoint a Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter for two years and has now appointed a junior member of the Legislative Council from outside of the region. Why is the Premier's only local member of Parliament, the member for Upper Hunter, Michael Johnsen, not suitable for the role?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will wait until there is silence. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:25):** This is a record: I have had my second Dorothy Dixier from the Opposition today. Michael Johnsen, the outstanding member for the Upper Hunter, is already a Parliamentary Secretary.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There are too many interjections.

**Mr John Barilaro:** Resources and agriculture, two sectors important for the Hunter.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As the Deputy Premier has very kindly reminded me, the member for Upper Hunter is the Parliamentary Secretary for resources and agriculture, two very important sectors in the Hunter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There are too many interjections.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** And here we were thinking it was only the Leader of the Opposition that was asleep at the wheel; it is the whole damn lot of them.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Shred some more documents.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Why don't you come down and ask me questions? Instead, you ask me about Dorothy Dixers. Come down and ask me a question.

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

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order: Specifically the question was about the member for Upper Hunter not being made Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** To conclude my Dorothy Dixier from the Opposition, I say to those opposite: Rather than worry about the jobs that our people have, worry about your own.

#### HEALTH FUNDING

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:27):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is creating jobs through its record health spending?

**The SPEAKER:** Have members learnt nothing? The pause after the question is asked and before the answer begins is not an opportunity for members to interject.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:28):** I thank the member for Tweed for his question. We know he is 100 per cent for the Tweed—always has been, always will be. Recently it was pleasing to join with the health Minister and the member for Tweed to oversee construction progress on the Tweed Valley

Hospital. That hospital alone will not only bring world-class health services to that growing community but also deliver up to 650 construction jobs, which is important for that community during this phase. Our record health infrastructure spending is investing in communities for the future and ensuring that we keep those supply chains going in direct and indirect jobs. That is a classic example of why we are embarking upon a record infrastructure spend in our hospital network. It is also important to note that whilst we are investing in the record infrastructure spend, which I will speak about again in my response, I note that NSW Health employs over 140,000 people.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: The Premier is blatantly reading from a document. The Premier should table the document and sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will continue. The member will resume her seat. It is not a valid point of order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am not quite sure what that was. As I was saying, very proudly, NSW Health employs more than 140,000 people. Today the health Minister and I were able to congratulate three representatives from the New South Wales quarantine system—a nurse manager, an environmental services manager and a member of the New South Wales—

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Gaya, Lachlan and Brad.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Indeed, Brad was the nurse manager, and also a member of the NSW Police Force, which the police Minister would appreciate, who are all contributing to the 6,000-odd workforce protecting us in quarantine during the pandemic. I thank all of our workers in health and across the board who are keeping us safe. We appreciate how deeply they put their own safety on the line in order to protect all of us. I also acknowledge that we are recruiting in excess of 8,300 frontline health staff over four years, including 5,000 nurses and midwives.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** They do not like to hear good news, especially when it comes to workers.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I was saying, not only are we employing thousands more in the front line, in day-to-day service delivery, but thousands more are also being given jobs or employed through our hospital infrastructure, plus the supply chains that are created from that, which is very positive development. Yesterday I spoke about a new program in which year 11 and 12 students are able to obtain certification or qualification before they finish school. That qualification goes towards their ATAR and HSC. Importantly, many of those courses offered have a health impact. Subject matters or certificate courses such as allied health assistants, accounting, business operations, digital supply chain operations, health administration and care in ageing will qualify year 11 and 12 students to work within the New South Wales health system or the non-government health system, if that is what they choose to do.

Those are all positive ways in which our health system is not only delivering those services that people rely on but also creating jobs for the future, which is very positive for the citizens of this great State. I also alert the House that in addition to the Tweed hospital, very pleasingly the Campbelltown Hospital development—I am not sure where the member for Campbelltown is today, he was very jumpy yesterday—is creating 700 direct jobs. The Liverpool Hospital development—I am not sure where the member for Liverpool is—is creating 900 direct jobs. I cannot hear myself, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. When the Chamber was extended to the upper gallery, I made a specific request for members sitting upstairs to keep the noise down. We can hear what members in those seats are saying. In particular, the member for Coogee and the member for Rockdale are consistently chatting. I ask them to be quiet.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I was saying, the Campbelltown Hospital redevelopment is creating 700 direct jobs. The Liverpool Hospital redevelopment is creating 900 direct jobs. The Dubbo Base Hospital redevelopment is creating 500 direct jobs. *[Extension of time]*

In relation to Gosford Hospital, pleasingly, I was advised that at least 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobs have been created for that community. The Wyong Public Hospital development is similarly creating hundreds of jobs. I welcome the Parliamentary Secretary for the Upper Hunter to the Chamber. First and foremost, what is important for us is keeping the community safe. But it is also about creating and supporting jobs into the future, which our health system alone is doing in bucketloads. I commend all of our existing workers and all of

the workers who are joining the system because of the opportunities that our Government is providing. We deeply appreciate all of their efforts and that is why the Liberal Party and The Nationals are the parties for the workers.

#### REGIONAL AND RURAL NEW SOUTH WALES

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:36):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the future of big business in regional New South Wales?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:36):** I thank the member for Upper Hunter, the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, who knows that his reach goes beyond just the Upper Hunter to the entire Hunter region.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We know that businesses and industries in Newcastle and Williamstown are very important to the success of all of the Upper Hunter region.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I acknowledge the great work that he is doing as Parliamentary Secretary. He has been in that position for a very long time, advocating for that region since the election. Over the past couple of weeks I have come into this Chamber to speak about the leadership of the New South Wales Government driving jobs in regional New South Wales. Members have heard me talk about how we have decentralised a lot of our public sector jobs into regional and rural New South Wales, either whole agencies like TAFE Digital or the Department of Regional NSW. We have also talked about our regionally preferred model for when there are vacancies. We have talked about investment in infrastructure to attract events and business to places like Parkes, with the special activation precinct. Today, of course, our announcement was that we want big business to follow us into regional and rural New South Wales.

There is momentum at the moment off the back of COVID. One can work remotely and from the regions, and why would you not? Why would a CEO or a CFO in Sydney looking at their balance sheets after a COVID year, looking at their expensive rent, not consider regional and rural New South Wales? Today the New South Wales Government, through the Department of Regional NSW, has announced a concierge service to assist businesses that are looking to relocate into regional and rural New South Wales. In one way, we will hold their hand. We will cut through the maze of government by assisting them where there is support, identifying opportunities and talking to them about our blueprint and our 20-year vision for where we see growth in regional New South Wales.

The investment and the focus of the Government is changing the landscape, from renewable energy zones and the fantastic gas project up at Narrabri to special activation precincts in the north, south, west and east of the State. There are opportunities for big business in regional and rural New South Wales. Employees have worked from home and have not come into the CBD for approximately 12 months. Why not look at remote working and allow employees to have a flexible work position? More importantly, why should businesses not pack up their factories and move to the bush? We have a location for them. For those hundreds of thousands of people who are watching question time on the internet, especially those from Sydney, now is the time to go and get a cup of coffee because they will not like what I am about to say. Why would they want to continue to live in Sydney, where they pay a million bucks for an apartment but spend more time on a bus getting to work? Why do businesspeople want to continue to live here in Sydney and fight the congestion each day, missing the local train because the train driver has not looked at the timetable? Why would they want to stay here in Sydney?

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

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. This is an unfair attack on the transport Minister and the Premier, and the work that they have been doing.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough from the member for Cessnock.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** As I said, those who love Sydney should look away right now. The best thing about Sydney for most of us is when we see it in our rear-view mirrors. Now is the time for big business, its employees and their families to come to live in rural New South Wales. But it does not matter if Government is asking this. We have already seen a mass exodus from Sydney to the bush, not just from a tourism perspective but also from those who are looking to call regional and rural New South Wales home. Why would they not? They can swap the beach of Bondi for the beautiful beaches of the North Coast. They can go to regional cities like Orange, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Queanbeyan, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie. They are not just cities but cosmopolitan cities. It is not a bush change or a sea change; it is a city change. Come to the best in regional and rural New South Wales, where the jobs of tomorrow are being made today. [*Extension of time*]



The infrastructure spending to make a safer and stronger regional New South Wales will make a difference. In this year's budget alone, \$650 million is going into new schools or upgrades in education. Over \$950 million is going to building or upgrading hospitals in regional and rural New South Wales. Over \$8 billion is being invested in roads and transport right across regional New South Wales. We are building dams for water security. We are supporting communities and investing in the jobs of the future, like the renewable energy zones. We are investing in manufacturing and energy. We are investing in everything that makes regional and rural New South Wales great. Why not join us on the journey? Do not miss this opportunity. There is momentum; there is a movement happening. A renaissance is happening in regional and rural New South Wales.

I encourage the Labor Party to move its headquarters from Sussex Street and come to the bush, where Country Labor can be great again. We know that will not happen. They are in debt and are about to file for bankruptcy, but the opportunities in the bush are real. My encouragement to CEOs, CFOs, board directors and shareholders is to get on the bandwagon for the bush. We are seeing a movement and a change. The landscape is changing. The jobs of the future are being created. Who could have imagined that the first prototype flying car would be manufactured and tested in a little place like Narromine? Not here in Sydney, not out west, not at the aerotropolis, but in Narromine. That is what we have to offer. We are not just wind farms and tumbleweeds, as the Labor Party thinks. We are cosmopolitan cities that are on the move and growing, and we welcome businesses to the bush.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I hear from the member for Blue Mountains, I ask the member for Fairfield and the member for Canterbury to socially distance themselves.

#### ORAN PARK FIRE STATION

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (14:43):** My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier promised an Oran Park fire station six years ago, but there is no budget allocation, plan or progress. Despite population growth and ever-increasing fire risk, why has the Premier failed to deliver the fire station she promised?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the second time. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the third time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:44):** I state at the outset that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to delivering on all of the commitments that it has made.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** If I did not mishear, the question was in relation to fire trucks. Was it?

**Ms Trish Doyle:** It was about the Oran Park fire station.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Right. I am not sure if it was last Friday or the one before, but Minister Elliott, myself, Commissioner Baxter and Commissioner Rogers were actually down in the shire witnessing the rollout of 200 brand new fire trucks across the State.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** We are 45 seconds into the answer. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Trish Doyle:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. The shire is not near Oran Park.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is being relevant. The member for Blue Mountains will be seated.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** For the benefit of the member for Blue Mountains, those trucks travel the breadth and width of New South Wales—they go everywhere.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I state at the outset that in relation to infrastructure for emergency services, whether it is equipment or personnel for resourcing, the New South Wales Government is investing record amounts.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** One thing we learned from the catastrophic bushfires last year and the year before was that, had we not been—

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I will take the point of order from the member for Keira, but I want to hear what it is straightaway.

**Mr Ryan Park:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. The Premier is now two minutes into her answer. The Speaker always says "generally relevant". The question was specifically about Oran Park.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough. The member for Keira will be seated. The Premier may continue. The Premier is being generally relevant.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I appreciate why they want to interrupt good news. As I was saying, several lessons came from the catastrophic bushfires of last year and the year before. One of those was that, had we not been as well resourced, we would not have been able to fight those fires. Could we always upgrade, maintain and build new stations and new equipment? Of course we could. Recently I was very pleased to be in Tamworth with the Deputy Premier to hand over two new fire trucks to that community.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. As the Leader of the House for the Opposition said, we discussed this morning that the question needs to be specific because that is what the Speaker has directed us to do.

**The SPEAKER:** And the Premier has just used the words "Oran Park" and was referring to Oran Park.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** She has not actually mentioned the words "Oran Park".

**The SPEAKER:** She has, actually.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** She is talking about Tamworth.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will be seated.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** This was a promise that has never been delivered.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier may continue. The Premier is being relevant.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I said, at the suggestion of great local members and the Minister, I have been involved in the handover of wonderful brand-new equipment to local fire brigades, whether it is to Fire and Rescue NSW or to the RFS.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear the point of order if it is not about relevance. I will not rule on that again.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 59. The Speaker should direct the member—

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Premier.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** —the Premier and the member to desist from her speech, which is irrelevant. We are talking about house fires and a Fire and Rescue fire station, not bushfires and brigades. A big block of land was promised six years ago. Where is it?

**The SPEAKER:** I will not put the member for Blue Mountains on a call to order because she has been novel in making her point of order, but I do not uphold the point of order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I assume the member for Blue Mountains is fighting for something in south-west Sydney, unless there is another Oran Park.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** She is the shadow Minister!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am sorry, I did not know that she was the shadow Minister.

**Mr Ryan Park:** You don't know where Oran Park is either!

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I say to the good people of Oran Park, because they know this: We are upgrading or building 22 brand-new schools in that community and providing 500 brand-new bus services—

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

**BUILD-TO-RENT HOUSING**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's build-to-rent scheme and how that has created jobs?

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

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (14:49):** We can talk about surfing later, but at least let me say something mildly relevant before we get there. Firstly, I thank the member for Oatley for his question and for his advocacy for better housing options for his community. I recognise that he has done a great job in advocating for the tremendous Gannons Park. He recognises that building and planning a great city is as much about parks as it is about homes. The question was specifically about homes. Housing policy and the need to provide homes for a growing city has always been a vexed issue in public policy and has interested members from all parts of the House. Many of those debates have focused on housing type—on whether we build more apartments, more detached homes or something in the middle.

That is an important debate, but the other debate that is equally important relates to how security of tenancy is provided. It is not just about the type of housing but also about the tenure of ownership of that house. That is why build to rent is an incredible initiative that can provide great options for tenants and also for the provision of more jobs for the construction industry. I congratulate the Treasurer, who I acknowledge the Speaker has put on a call to order already, on his great work in removing some of the land tax impediments for investment in build-to-rent housing. Also, in the planning system we have collaboratively removed some of the barriers that militate against provision of build-to-rent housing. For tenants it provides greater security of tenancy over a longer period and it also provides—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. The member has continued to talk throughout all of those responses. The member will be quiet.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** It has real importance for people in the member for Canterbury's electorate as well because what we are seeking to do is to provide more choice—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will leave the Chamber overnight, right now.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Drats! More housing in Palm Beach.

**The SPEAKER:** I warn the member for Canterbury to watch herself or she will be named.

*[The member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 14:52 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Mr ROB STOKES:** Watch yourselves; you'll all be next. Build to rent provides not only greater certainty of tenure for residents but also greater choice in terms of all sorts of things that could be offered by the management of those facilities, including childcare, opportunities to work from home or even local transport options. Schemes like those have been working in the UK for about a decade. In our sector it is now worth more than \$18 billion in that jurisdiction. We know that in New South Wales build to rent has the capacity to produce about 19,000 jobs over the next few years. I acknowledge that members opposite do not seem to be interested in housing.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** I have been watching very attentively.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** Thank you very much. The member for Swansea is interested in housing. I note the interjection earlier that was made in relation to surfing, which is related to housing and which is a matter that is dear to my heart. I note the conditions—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** This will be a long bow.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** No, it is relevant, because the conditions opposite are changing and the debate is shifting; it is moving more onshore and the conditions are emerging for something of a political pro-am over there—yes, it's coming! I may be goofy in the water but the Leader of the Opposition is goofy on land. She may be backed by the member for Swansea, the Gidget of Gwendolyn—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

I do not know where the member for Kogarah is—the Kelly Slater of Kogarah. In surfing parlance, he is a natural; he enjoys an aggressive right-hander wave. Hanging five or 10 out the back is the Bra Boy himself—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Want to see my tats? I'll show you my tats if you show us your abs.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** He has declared it himself. The member for Maroubra is a human post pack; tattooed on his chest are the digits 2035. While the caucus members engage themselves in their kombi of collectivism on their surfing world tour towards the inevitable wipe-out, members on this side of the House will focus on great initiatives like build to rent.

#### HENRY LAWSON DRIVE UPGRADE

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (14:55):** My question is directed to the Premier, who promised the Henry Lawson Drive upgrade three years ago. It is stuck in planning and despite promising \$100 million the Premier has spent less than \$4 million. Why is western Sydney still waiting for the road upgrade the Premier promised?

**Mr Michael Daley:** So that she can force them onto the toll roads. It's obvious.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** You're killing the artists, Mr Speaker.

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

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** One more, mate.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:56):** The Labor Party has been overly generous to me today with the questions it is asking. When it comes to roads and infrastructure of any description in western Sydney or south-western Sydney—in fact, across the entire breadth and width of New South Wales—the Liberals and Nationals are delivering.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** One thing those opposite have not worked out is how to actually build a project.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** What about the fire station?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Blue Mountains to order for the third time. This is her last warning.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** You announced it three years ago. How long does it take?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Bankstown to order for the second time. I will keep calling members to order if they continue to interject.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Who was that? Was that the member for Lakemba?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Yes.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I was saying, whether it is in transport, roads, health or education, the Government is delivering across the board \$107 billion—

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Bankstown to order for the third time. I will keep calling members to order if they continue to interject.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** To put things into context, the national Government—which is also investing record amounts in infrastructure, by national government standards—is delivering \$100 billion over a decade. The New South Wales Government is delivering \$107 billion over four years.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume her seat. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. I specifically asked about Henry Lawson Drive. All the residents in East Hills are wondering what is happening. Three years ago there was a big hoo-ha announcement about \$100 million—

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the member's point of order and I have heard enough. The Premier is being generally relevant, but I ask her to refer specifically to Henry Lawson Drive at some stage.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I thank the health Minister, who is not just an outstanding health Minister but is also great at research. He just showed me a document which talks about the consultation on that particular stretch of road. In February last year Transport for NSW sought feedback on it from the community. The findings of that consultation, along with community feedback, have been published on the website for the next round. We are getting on with the planning process. The proposed upgrade will be funded under the New South Wales Government's \$366 million urban road upgrade and congestion program. The funding is in addition to the New South Wales Government's \$100 million commitment to the three-stage Henry Lawson Drive upgrade. There are another two pages of the brochure—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** A brochure? That's it—a brochure?

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** You spent \$4 million. Where is the \$100 million?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Bankstown will remain silent. The member for Swansea will remain silent.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Could you table your iPhone, please?

**The SPEAKER:** This is the very last warning for the member for Blue Mountains.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It also outlines key changes very appropriately, which is always a good opportunity. Often the community comes back to us and tells us what they would like to see. Key changes include changing the left-turn only lane—

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Wendy wants to know, as well.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Bankstown is out overnight for continuing to interject. Out you go.

*[The member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 14:59 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There have been key changes which have factored in the views of constituents of the member for Bankstown in relation to southbound travel, northbound travel and where those changes should be on the Government's plans, to make sure there is adequate consultation. The work also involves widening the road in particular areas to allow for parking. As indicated, there is extensive work going on. The Government will deliver that project, as it delivers all the other projects it has announced.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In relation to Henry Lawson Drive, I have a further update to the brochure—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** To the brochure!

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Community update—whatever. Detailed design will be happening next year and construction is due to start in early 2023, which accords with the Government's time frames. In relation to the Oran Park fire station that the member for Blue Mountains raised, the land has been purchased, with further updates regarding construction. In the meantime, I remind the member that Narellan is only seven kilometres away and Camden—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

There are two fire stations in proximity, in addition to the one the Government is building. Get with the program. *[Time expired.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Before I take a question from the member for Port Macquarie, it has been drawn to my attention that one of the staffers on the Opposition side of the Chamber took a photo. I ask for that photo to be destroyed. If it occurs again I will ban that staffer from the Chamber.

#### SOCIAL SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:01):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government's investment in social services is skilling workers and increasing employment opportunities?

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (15:02):** I thank my friend the member for Port Macquarie for her apt question about jobs and skills. I have noticed that members of the Opposition have been demonstrating some skills that I did not know they had—some

hidden talents—be it the member for Londonderry and her bachelor of betrayal, the member for Rockdale and his master's of misrepresentation, or the member for Kogarah and his PhD in propaganda.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister is less than 30 seconds into his answer. I warn the member for Cessnock that this had better be good.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** It is, Mr Speaker. My point of order relates to Standing Order 74. Clearly the Minister has given an indication that he is going to use language that is offensive, disorderly and quarrelsome. I ask you to intervene before quarrel erupts.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Cessnock for his point of order. I will not pre-empt what the Minister might say.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** For those more vocationally oriented there is the traineeship in trustworthiness, which I would recommend to them. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for an excellent question and for her outstanding hospitality when I was in her electorate recently. We got to see some of the wonderful work of social services on display in her electorate. I say to members who are interested in jobs and skills in the social services sector how impressed I was to see the Government's investments generating not only jobs but also opportunity pathways for people like Jamie, who we met. He is benefiting from our Together Home initiative, which is finding people on our streets who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. They are receiving supports to find stable and safe housing. It also wraps around them the services they need to sustain housing and supports and to find jobs.

We sat with Jamie in his new home and listened to his aspirations and goals. It was heartening not just to see the investments in social services that are generating jobs in things like the community housing sector, but also to listen to people who are benefiting from those programs that are changing lives. I was pleased to spend some time with the member for Coffs Harbour. We met Vicki, who is also a beneficiary of the Together Home initiative. I note that the community housing providers in that region, together with the supports that are being provided to find jobs and opportunities, are changing lives for the better. Since the program has been underway, we have seen hundreds of people housed because of the investments that we are making. I acknowledge the Premier's commitment to halving street sleeping by 2025, which is one of the Premier's Priorities.

When we look to jobs, opportunities and skills, I am proud to remind members that we are focusing on vulnerable young people acquiring those skills. Department of Communities and Justice scholarships are available. They provide a small amount of money for kids in years 10, 11 or 12, or in TAFE or transitioning to university, and who come from social housing or out-of-home care, to get a support that they need, like a laptop or a toolkit, as a bridge to getting the jobs and the skills that they require. It is a small amount of money that makes a real difference. I am proud of the fact that we are investing in programs and services for young people who need them.

Recently the Treasurer and I visited the Foyer Central development in the City of Sydney, which is being delivered in partnership with Uniting, Social Ventures Australia, the City of Sydney and St George Community Housing. The Treasurer has backed that program from the start. It provides 53 accommodation units to young people who need services close at hand to provide them with the supports they need. Those young people have left out-of-home care and have had real challenges in their lives. The development is close to supports, educational opportunities and jobs. I thank Clover Moore and the City of Sydney for their support. I also thank Deputy Mayor Jess Scully, who was there on the day we visited. I know the Treasurer was very impressed. Not only was he there for the opening, but he has also been there prior to the delivery of that program, supporting it right from the very start.

We are also investing in programs that unlock opportunities in partnership with the Commonwealth. We announced \$17 million in the budget to unlock the opportunities that exist in the NDIS. Right around Australia packages are under-utilised because the supports are not where they are required. We need more people in the workforce. We need to train those people to leverage opportunities, jobs and skills by working with providers to find those jobs, develop the skills, and provide clearer and easier pathways into the available jobs. That \$17 million investment, which will result in opportunities over the next two years, is exciting for people in that sector. It is a growth sector, particularly in regional areas.

I look forward to seeing the opportunities that come from that. It is also about social housing. The member for Port Macquarie and I opened some new social housing in her electorate. It was great to meet Margaret and to be invited into her home. We saw how proud she was of her home. Margaret is an older woman who had experienced homelessness. Now she has safety and security in a community that she loves. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her strong representation on those issues, along with many others that I was able to see

during my time in her electorate. I would like to talk more if the member for Port Macquarie would like to hear more. *[Extension of time]*

Investments in opportunity pathways are also generating jobs. I am sure all members would agree that we must do all we can not to raise the floor but to remove the roof and encourage people to achieve their full potential. Opportunity cannot wait. It is about providing people in social housing with jobs, opportunities and training pathways. We have seen hundreds of people not only receive training but also find jobs and employment opportunities because of the investments that we are making through the Opportunity Pathways program, which is all about asking vulnerable people, "How can we get you the support services and the opportunities you require? How can we recognise the vulnerabilities in your life but provide the supports that you need?" I might end where I started, and that is in relation to my friends in the Opposition. Recent commentary has been very unfair. Some people have been saying that the Leader of the Opposition should resign. I think they should all resign!

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order—

**Mr GARETH WARD:** In fact, if we had performance-based pay in this State, they would owe us money. That is how hopeless this loose confederation of warring tribes is, this disgrace to democracy. Not just you, but the lot of you!

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

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister is speaking on a very important issue.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, in the past couple of days you have made a point, quite rightly, about the gap between a question and its answer. I ask you whether—

**The SPEAKER:** What is the member's point of order? If the member wants to make a comment, he can talk to me later.

**Mr Michael Daley:** It is a question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member does not have the chance to ask questions now. He can speak to me later. If the member does not have a point of order, he will resume his seat.

#### **BUSHFIRE LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (15:10):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given the fact that some communities that have been badly affected by the Black Summer bushfires received no relief funding, what processes and criteria were used to allocate the bushfire economic recovery grants?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:10):** I thank the member for her question. I understand that last year, following a request from the Commonwealth Government, the Department of Regional NSW and Resilience NSW worked closely with the National Bushfire Recovery Agency to agree on an initial set of known priority shovel-ready projects that met the Commonwealth's criteria under the national bushfire Local Economic Recovery framework.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Blue Mountains will remain silent.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** That enabled crucial funding to flow quickly into towns that were suffering economically following the 2019-2020 bushfires. As members may already be aware, I am pleased to add that the \$250 million Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund is a staged program, the aim of which is to create new jobs, build resilience and increase preparedness for future bushfires.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am advised that the program is yet to be finalised, with applications for the open round having closed only in January.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The program guidelines make it clear that funding under the open round will be prioritised and committed to the areas most impacted by the fires and that the geographical spread of projects will be considered.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blue Mountains has been warned and given a final warning. You are out overnight.

*[The member for Blue Mountains left the Chamber at 15:11 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I assume that those organisations in the member's electorate that are seeking that funding have made those applications.

### **BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:11):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's action to support jobs in the building and construction industry?

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (15:12):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. I am glad to receive this question from a member who lives in and understands regional New South Wales, and who understands the importance of creating jobs in regional New South Wales. The building and construction industry employs over 360,000 people right across New South Wales, from workers on high-rise projects in Sydney all the way down to the apprentice on their first job building a home—whether in Coffs Harbour or Cootamundra.

When we talk about the building and construction industry, too often we pivot immediately to tier-one constructions like the Sydney Metro, WestConnex or NorthConnex. But when I talk about measuring growth in building and construction in regional New South Wales, I think about those high-vis tradies. Often on a Friday night I see them at the Longyard Hotel after a hard, tough day. They are the engine room. That is how we measure the way that we continue to drive regional growth and economic development. I note the member for Baulkham Hills has spent many an afternoon on the verandah of the Longyard Hotel, and that he is still contributing. They are the small business owners. They are the ones who have mortgaged their homes and put their hard-earned money on the line. Each and every day they are the champions who have kept this State moving.

As in every industry, COVID has played its part and hit the building and construction industry hard. When I saw how tough it was becoming for building and construction industry workers, I stepped in. I knocked on the door of my friend the Minister for Customer Service, "the DAC Man" Victor Dominello, and said, "My friend, we have to do something, we've got to step in. How do we drive regional growth and economic development and keep the jobs in the construction industry when everything else is crashing around it?" So we thought, "How do we do that?" Let us waive building and business licence fees. As it turns out, in the past 12 months since April we have waived 109,000 building and business licences. That is 71,000 licences in Fair Trading and 38,000 in SafeWork.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** What does that mean?

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** The member for Cessnock is asking what that means. Waiving those fees allows those people to keep up to \$45 million in their pockets. That is what it means. That money has gone back into the economy to be spent on hotels, pubs, clubs and restaurants, making sure that those dollars keep rolling through the hospitality industry.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Really?

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** I am hoping to explain that further for the member for Cessnock. Obviously, regional New South Wales is a big part of where that member comes from. We kept the lights on and burning brightly while the rest of Australia went into shutdown. We did it through the building and construction industry. Unlike the coalition of Labor, The Greens and the shooters party, which focuses on itself and on one job only, we are creating stronger and safer communities. But one member opposite has a keen interest—

**Mr John Barilaro:** It is not the member for Cessnock.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** It is not the member for Cessnock. I am trying to look around for her, but they have all been sent home. The one member opposite who has a keen interest in the building and construction industry is my good friend the member for Swansea. Over the past two years we have traded how to make building and construction better. She has challenged me and the Government has responded to make it better. The member for Swansea knows about tradies; she has them on speed dial. Those who retrofit and refit office space are standing by for Level 10 for when the member for Strathfield decides to leave. When the Leader of the Opposition leaves, the member for Swansea is ready to go with the refit.

**Mr John Barilaro:** A stronger, safer Labor.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** For the benefit of the member for Swansea, the Deputy Premier said, "a stronger, safer Labor". There you go, get those tradies warmed up and ready to go; start those drills! But I digress. We are ramping up our investments in the building and construction industry. *[Extension of time]*



In my own patch we have Project Remediate. We have launched a three-year landmark campaign to remove combustible cladding on high-rise residential buildings, creating 3,500 jobs. That is the definition of—

**Mr Victor Dominello:** A legacy.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** It is a legacy piece; it is the definition of creating a stronger and safer New South Wales. But it is not just about creating jobs in the building and construction industry; it is about restoring confidence. We talk to the Treasurer often, who is doing a fantastic job. He brought New South Wales through and kept the lights on. It is about creating confidence, which ultimately springs forward in the building and construction industry. We want the mums and dads and newlyweds who purchase an apartment in Sydney to know that that building is high quality and will last longer than the pyramids. That is where we are going. We know that the Liberal Party is a party for the workers; The Nationals is the party for regional workers. That is in contrast to the shooters party. When people move around they get a feeling that something is not quite right.

I did the numbers when I came back this year: Labor opposes everything in regional construction and in job creation, and the shooters party voted with Labor 73 per cent of the time. In addition, The Greens, who love to sit around, smell dandelions and do nothing all day, voted with the Opposition 66 per cent of the time. Labor may as well make the member for Murray the shadow Minister. I am sure the member for Swansea will make room for her. While we are focused on job creation, stimulus and driving the economy through regional growth, members opposite are interested in creating one job only: the Leader of the Opposition.

*Business of the House*

#### **BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 1802 to 1832 will lapse tomorrow.

*Bills*

#### **PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

##### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (15:20):** Picking up from where I left off before the luncheon interval, I reiterate the point I was making in response to the contribution from the member for Orange. For his benefit and the benefit of the House, I will be clear: The three enforcement agencies under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act—that is, the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League and the NSW Police Force—do not receive any revenue from penalty infringement notices issued under the Act; it all goes into consolidated revenue. In terms of prosecutions, the RSPCA or any other enforcement agency may be awarded funds by the courts at their discretion. But if a court decides to exercise that discretion, it can award no more than 50 per cent of the fine amount for the particular offence being prosecuted.

**Mr Philip Donato:** And they do.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** In response to that interjection, the bill does not change those provisions whatsoever. It is inappropriate to attach to the motive of the bill a desire to secure more funding through the court process for any of the enforcement agencies when there is no provision that alters in any respect any of the current provisions under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act—with respect to prosecutions or the courts' ability to exercise discretion to award monetary amounts to the prosecutorial authority. Nor does the bill change any of the provisions currently in the Act under section 30A for the care and maintenance of an animal, or under section 215 of the Criminal Procedure Act for professional costs of undertaking the prosecution. Those provisions remain unchanged by any aspect of the bill. I cannot be clearer when I say that the amendments made by the bill before the House do not impact the existing provisions in the Act. It is important to clarify that, not only to allay the concerns of the member for Orange but also for the benefit of the House and members in the other place.

In relation to the points raised by the member for Maitland, the shadow Minister, about the reform process that is currently underway for animal welfare laws in this State—that is, the reform and updating of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the Exhibited Animals Protection Act and the Animals Research Act, which are the three primary pieces of legislation that deal with animal welfare in New South Wales—I can assure her that the Government is committed to reforming all of them. As I said in my second reading speech and on multiple occasions since becoming Minister, the intention is to bring those three Acts—which have been in existence for a long period and amended multiple times—together in a modern, streamlined animal welfare Act for this State.

Rather than having three separate pieces of legislation that must be continually and individually reviewed, reformed and amended by this Parliament, we could consolidate them into one piece of legislation.

Quite deliberately, the Government is hastening slowly—if I can use that phrase in relation to this matter. The issues around animal welfare are complex and, as we have seen in this debate already, can be emotive. People can have very strong views that are in direct contrast to other people's views, and no view is more controversial than how we undertake effective and consistent enforcement of the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in the future. I refer particularly to the member for Orange and the member for Barwon, who raised concerns about how one of the enforcement agencies under POCTAA conducts enforcement activities. That is a key question that is at the heart of the reform of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the other two pieces of legislation.

How do we effectively and consistently enforce animal cruelty laws in this State in the future? Do we maintain the status quo? Do we move away from that completely and, as some members of the House have suggested in this debate, bring it in-house—that is, do we send it to a new government agency or perhaps an existing one or an independent one, do we have a combination of the status quo plus an agency like that, or do we do something completely different? That is exactly what is being explored at the moment through the consultation process and the issues paper that has already attracted over 1,100 submissions—which, in itself, demonstrates how important issues like this are to members of the community and how hotly debated the reforms will be when they come to this place.

I do not mind restating for the record my commitment as Minister to consult widely and thoroughly. If we need to take time to get it right, we will do so. It is an important issue and we should not rush the process for the sake of moving quickly and stuff it up—to use a colloquial term. That means engaging with members of this place who have views that are in direct contrast to others. The Parliament will have to meet that challenge in a non-political—and I say that with half a smirk because none of these issues are ever non-political—but genuine way in order to ensure the need to protect animals and their welfare is paramount.

I welcome submissions to that process from individual members of this House—from the Opposition and other political parties. I am happy to sit down and talk with anyone who wants to do that. But I do not make any apology for taking the time to get it right. The shadow Minister made the point that the Government has not hit the milestones that it announced prior to the last election. That is correct; we have not. But I made a deliberate decision, as the Minister who took over this portfolio post the election, to miss those milestones because I did not think we had done the consultation work needed to bring such a huge reform to this Parliament.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has been in place since 1979. What will come to this Parliament later this year will represent the first wholesale reform of animal welfare laws since 1979. There is a reason all my predecessors—and this is not to reflect poorly upon them—did not do it: It is complicated and the legislation that comes before Parliament, I do not mind saying, will be quite controversial. When the Government released the *NSW Animal Welfare Reform - Issues Paper* in February 2020 I ensured that consultation was left open for an extended period in order to maximise the opportunity for feedback. As I said, over 1,100 submissions have been received so far. Throughout the project the Government has been working closely with key stakeholders, such as the NSW Farmers Association, Dogs NSW, the Australian Veterinary Association, Animal Care Australia and the Veterinary Practitioners Board of New South Wales as well as the current enforcement agencies—the NSW Police Force, RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW.

The Government is currently working to analyse feedback from the public consultation and to develop some key proposals. The next stage will be for the Government to publish a proposals paper. We will look at all the submissions—that is happening now—and then publish a proposals paper to enable community stakeholders to provide feedback on the shape of the new animal welfare laws. That level of consultation on and consideration of the changes is necessary. As I said, everything remains on track to bring legislative changes to this Parliament in this calendar year. I turn now to a few other comments that members made during the debate.

The member for Maitland referred to new section 30B (2) of the bill. The interim disqualification order is an important balance to strike so that people who have not been found guilty of an offence are not punished unduly. The interim disqualification order does not allow animals to be seized by enforcement agencies, or require a person to sell or surrender their current animals. It only prevents a person from purchasing, acquiring or having influence over new animals that are not currently in their possession, care or influence while the proceedings in the courts are underway. As the member for Maitland also pointed out, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act already provides for enforcement agencies to seize animals in certain circumstances, and if necessary this could occur prior to or during proceedings.

When a person is convicted of an animal cruelty offence the court may disqualify or limit the convicted person from purchasing or having control or influence over animals for a period that the court deems necessary in

accordance with the bill. The bill before the House makes immediate changes to address key gaps in the current animal welfare framework. Those changes are an interim yet crucial step ahead of the larger legislative reform. The codes of practice and standards document that sits under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act will definitely be reviewed, as required, following the passage of any new legislation. I remain committed, as does the Government, to working closely with key stakeholders throughout this process. I mention that in response to concerns raised by all members—in this debate and by some who did not participate in it—about the interpretation of the current code of practice around breeding of companion animals, which has remained unchanged since 2009.

Members have brought to my attention that suddenly there has been an increased spate—if I may use that word—of compliance activity around the code and, from my reading of correspondence that has come to me directly or from members in this place, some rather inconsistent applications of the code's provisions. As I said, the code has remained unchanged since 2009 but very recently there has been some increased enforcement—and perhaps some inconsistent enforcement. I assure members that those matters are being addressed right now to ensure that there is absolute consistency across all three enforcement agencies and within the individual enforcement agencies, from inspector to inspector, so that there is no ambiguity, everyone knows what the rules are and the effort to enforce the code will be made appropriately, having regard to the severity of the alleged offences rather than focusing on what others may deem, in colloquial terms, to be low-hanging fruit or trivial matters.

Certainly the enforcement will be where the enforcement should be: at the most egregious and serious end. That is consistent with the announcement I made last year in relation to the extra resources allocated by the Government to form the Puppy Factory Taskforce. In relation to the comments by the member for Maitland about the enforcement agencies' activities, it is worth noting that in 2019-20, for example, just one of the enforcement agencies—RSPCA NSW—investigated more than 14,000 complaints and undertook almost 4,500 revisits to various locations, which equates to approximately 17 jobs per day. All the enforcement agencies undertake education initiatives, not just compliance all the time. Prosecution is not always the last step but it is certainly not always the first step in dealing with matters. Enforcement agencies do not resort initially to issuing penalty infringement notices or taking prosecution action. They often work with individuals and issue warnings or recommendations for corrective action. As I said, those enforcement agencies have a range of compliance tools at their disposal and they are readily used. Those are contained under section 24N of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. They are formal direction notices. For example, in the same period of 2019-20 the RSPCA used those direction notices rather than penalty infringement notices or prosecution actions on 389 individual occasions. It also issued 25 official cautions in accordance with the Fines Act 1996.

In response to the member for Ballina's point about funding for enforcement agencies, I highlight the significant investment the Government makes in funding those agencies. Not only is annual funding provided but, as the Minister for Local Government pointed out, the Government has provided additional funding on numerous occasions. In 2011 the Government provided \$7.5 million to the RSPCA NSW to refurbish its animal shelter at Yagoona. In 2015 the Government provided a further \$2 million to support the RSPCA in rebuilding an education centre and in 2016 provided another \$200,000 for a joint RSPCA and Animal Welfare League NSW puppy factories campaign. The Government provided \$12 million to renew and expand adoption facilities in 2019, committed up to \$500,000 for new inspectors to assist with drought-related livestock cases as part of the Emergency Drought Relief Package in 2019-20 and provided \$400,000 to support the establishment of a new Puppy Factory Taskforce, as I have mentioned.

I think it is the expectation of members of this House—it is certainly the Government's expectation—that all animals in New South Wales be treated well. Whether we are talking about companion animals or commercially bred animals—livestock typically—they all must meet the requirements under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. All animals can enjoy that standard minimum without needing to consider their relative position to a person concerned with their welfare. Someone in the inner city has a very different approach and understanding of the requirements of cattle versus dogs. That is why we do not create carve-outs or separate approaches for people who live in the city versus those in the bush and we do not provide special carve-outs for cats versus dogs, or giraffes versus elephants. All animals are treated the same. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the codes underneath it are agnostic about the type of animal or, indeed, what purpose that animal serves.

In respect to the member for Barwon's points about RSPCA Australia—and I note he quoted from its website in his contribution—it is worth highlighting for the benefit of the member, who probably already knows this, and the House that RSPCA Australia is not an enforcement agency under POCTAA; RSPCA NSW is. It is a different and distinct entity. If you talk to RSPCA NSW, it will be very quick to assure you of that. It is often at pains to differentiate itself from RSPCA Australia, its views and, indeed, some of the campaigns it runs. RSPCA NSW has its own corporate governance structure and its own constitution which, as I said, is very

different from that of RSPCA Australia. Nevertheless, the sentiment that the member for Barwon expressed is not lost on me and, again, is a key consideration as part of the overall animal welfare review.

The bill is the first step in bringing animal welfare legislation in this State into the twenty-first century. It is not the last but it is certainly an important first step. It will provide for a stronger animal welfare framework in advance of the broader animal welfare reforms coming later this year. Again I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I give special thanks to the member for Tweed for giving a shout-out to my cat at home, Cyril. Whilst Cyril is a sentient being, I do not credit him with being able to watch these proceedings or understand them but I am happy to thank the member on his behalf. I am sure he appreciates it. I thank Clem Harris and her team from the Department of Primary Industries, especially Danielle Cleal and Dan McGrath, who have worked very hard on the bill, and Alex Hall from my office, who also has been mentioned in dispatches and who does a great job. Again I thank members for their genuine approach in contributing to the bill. On that note I commend the bill to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that this bill be now read a second time. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative.

**Noes, 3**

Mr R. Butler

Ms H. Dalton

Mr P. Donato

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Budget*

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

**Debate resumed from 11 February 2021.**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:44):** As I was saying on the last occasion, the recent budget has been a great success for the Tweed following lengthy negotiations and lobbying. All members on both sides of the political fence push hard for projects in their electorates; we pester or badger the Ministers and we put forward our cases. But members also need the ability to put forward a logical case and to deal with senior bureaucrats throughout the system. It is pleasing to get a good hearing. It is also pleasing to listen to our local councils. My local Tweed Shire Council officers do a fabulous job putting forward projects and analysing community concerns—particularly General Manager Troy Green, David Oxenham, Stewart Brawley and Tracey Stinson. My councillors are good too and are a diverse group from our mayor, Chris Cherry, right through to Warren Polglase, James Owen, Pryce Allsop, Ron Cooper and James Owen. All of them assist in the process of identifying projects. The council officers are skilled in going through the process of applying for various grants and the end results have been rather successful.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I am sure cycling and walking tracks are a subject dear to your heart. I am sure the electorate of Oatley has been blessed with a large number and that you have been very proactive. I can see you out there in lycra and running shoes, early in the morning and late in the evening. My electorate was successful in receiving \$518,000 for the construction of a shared pathway to fill an important missing link between Kingscliff and Casuarina. We got another \$301,000 for the construction of a missing link in the footpath along Marine Parade at Kingscliff from Beach Street to Wommin Bay Road. We got another \$163,000 for the construction of a missing link in the footpath network on Dry Dock Road at Tweed Heads South. We also got \$41,000 for the construction of a footpath on Frances Street between Powell Street and the Tweed River, Tweed Heads. All are disability friendly and all of them are great attributes.

The Tweed has become renowned for outdoor activities such as cycling, swimming and even walking. Obviously, the climate is a big factor in that. We have also been successful in gaining funds for a large number of exercise machines that appeal to both young and old. They encourage people to get out into the great outdoors and experience what physical exercise is all about. In my electorate I have just on 27 per cent of people over the age of 65. I think my electorate, Myall Lakes and Port Macquarie are the top three electorates for elderly people, and all of them are making a great contribution. We have become places to retire, and even people from Fairfield

and Campbelltown move there. In fact, I think I have more previous Labor members living in my electorate than most, bless their cotton socks. I am sure there is even a large number of retirees from Ku-ring-gai who have moved north.

One of the major considerations for retirees or people moving to the area is health facilities. We heard the Premier talk today about the famous Tweed Valley Hospital, which is estimated to cost some \$674 million and has the potential to have up to 499 beds. That is a great plus. I praise our hardworking doctors and nurses at our current hospital, and I never miss an opportunity to acknowledge all of the workers in that hospital, from the food service workers to the cleaners and the security staff. I have become quite close with Adam Hall from the Health Services Union [HSU] and Peter Kelly, the local HSU organiser. They too do a tremendous job. Having experienced just on 200 days of bubbles and lockdowns and up to 18 different border passes, in recent times I have developed a rapport with my friend and colleague over the border the Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk. But where I disagree with Ms Palaszczuk is when she has come out on a number of occasions with her famous line, "Queensland hospitals are for Queenslanders." I have some news for her. She probably will not take this the right way, but last year alone we treated 7,000 Queenslanders in the Tweed Hospital.

**Mr Michael Johnsen:** Did you charge them?

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The member for Upper Hunter talks about charges. Being in a border community, if a Queensland comes to a New South Wales hospital, a bill is sent to Queensland Health and the same thing happens if a New South Wales person goes the other way. The whole process takes about 18 months, but there is a settling of accounts and the money is taken from wherever the person came from. That is fine. As I have said from day one, I praise the health Minister and his team from Health Infrastructure, including Rebecca Wark, Jackie, Linda, Richard and Mark. They have gone beyond the level of service normally required and have been really committed to talking to our local community. I think we have 75 public groups that meet to discuss various things. We even have a group meeting on the potential artwork for the new hospital, which is unique. We have also been dealing with the Tweed/Byron Aboriginal Land Council and our South Sea Islanders association about the rock walls that were established some 120 years ago. It has been working rather well.

Mike Lindley-Jones and Rob Davies, who are the co-chairs of the local medical council in the hospital and whom the health Minister knows well, have been quite forward. Nearly 10 years ago Dr Ian McPhee, who unfortunately is very ill at the moment, started a campaign for a new Tweed Valley Hospital that would have a drawing pattern down to Byron Bay, the great Murwillumbah hospital and as far as north as Palm Beach, which is about 15 kilometres into Queensland. I think that is quite appropriate.

Also in the budget we got \$4.7 million for a brand-new Tweed fire station. Technically, the Tweed is considered one of the fastest growing regional areas. We have potential plans for 20,000 new home sites over the next five to seven years, some of which are about to be approved. It is a considerable load, but it is good to see the Government recognising what is coming in the future. For example, we will have the new hospital and progress is being made for our schools. I note that later we will be having a public interest debate on schools. I am sure that the member for Londonderry is very pleased to know I will be participating in that. The skills initiative alone has received funding of about \$140 million. I commend the budget.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:54:5):** I am delighted to make a contribution to debate on the budget estimates and related papers for 2020-21. I will highlight some of the issues and budgetary concerns in my electorate of Campbelltown and will then, with the indulgence of the House, speak on budgetary matters concerning my shadow portfolios of Local Government, Western Sydney and Veterans. I begin by highlighting some of the issues around health. Before I do, I acknowledge how wonderful the staff at Campbelltown Hospital are and how they work together for the benefit of patients. We have seen that on display by our frontline workers as we navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. Those people have cared for our community and kept us safe. On behalf of the electorate of Campbelltown, I thank them for their efforts. When I speak about health workers, I include everyone from the cleaners to the caterers and the maintenance personnel as well as the nurses and physicians, all of the contractors and everyone involved in that wonderful team at Campbelltown Hospital.

I acknowledge the Health Services Union. Its leaders work passionately hard for the conditions and services at Campbelltown Hospital, particularly Mr Adam Hall, with whom I remain in constant consultation. I also acknowledge Gerard Hayes and his wonderful team at that good union. They do such a great job not only standing up for those workers but also standing up for patients by ensuring that workers get the support they need to provide patients with the care that they deserve and desire. I congratulate our community. Campbelltown Hospital is being upgraded and I welcome those upgrades. They are desperately needed, and I am proud to have fought alongside my local community to ensure that they proceeded. I give credit to our community for their advocacy and their continued campaign to ensure that those upgrades come to fruition.

I note that paid parking at the hospital is wrong. I do not believe it is appropriate for taxpayer money to be used to build a parking lot for the private sector to profit from. I hope the Government understands that many people who will be using that parking lot at the hospital may not be able to afford to pay. We are talking about cancer patients and their carers. Many of them have economic challenges. Any reasonable person could understand the trauma that they are experiencing during such illnesses and that they do not need any extra pressure. Many cancer patients cannot work and many of their carers cannot work because they need to care for their loved ones, and so they have minimal income. I urge the Government to review its attitude towards paid parking and consider the unfair pressure that it places on those people.

I said before that we have wonderful staff at Campbelltown Hospital, and we really do. But a health system cannot rely on the goodwill of health workers alone. They need to be adequately funded. Witnesses at the recent inquiry into health services in south-west Sydney spoke loudly and clearly about the under-resourcing at Campbelltown Hospital and across the south-west. We welcome the bricks and mortar, but let us be clear: Bricks and mortar do not cure people; people cure people. And that requires adequate ongoing investment. We know that the upgrades at Campbelltown Hospital are capital investment, but we need adequate ongoing funding to ensure that our workers get the support that they require to provide patients with the care that they need.

Mental health continues to be a serious issue around the Macarthur region and in Campbelltown. The consequences of a lack of ongoing funding for mental health has come to fruition, which has caused much suffering to patients with mental illnesses and their carers. Sadly, many of those patients are adolescents. Most of us in this place have children and know the challenges that they confront as they come into adolescence. Ensuring that there is adequate funding in place for those patients, staff and services is vital. I have lost count of how many representations have been made about adolescent mental health to my office. I hear not only of the agony that those living with mental illnesses are suffering but also of the trauma it causes for their loved ones and their parents, who are often their carers.

My electorate is one of the fastest-growing regions in the State, yet not one new school is planned for Campbelltown. The western Sydney belt will have a city the size of Adelaide thrust upon it. Much of it will be to the south of Campbelltown, but we have not heard about planned schools from this Government. We do not want the electorate's students to be left behind when it comes to their education and to ensuring that they have the capacity to achieve their full potential and pursue prosperity throughout their working lives. That will only happen with a good education, and a good education can only happen with adequate resources and infrastructure in place.

Roads continue to be an issue in Campbelltown and more broadly in Macarthur. We are still waiting on the funding for Appin Road, which is one of the most notorious roads in this State and has tragically claimed lives for many years. It has gone on for too long. The Government is aware of it and the community is all too aware. We need to upgrade the road while balancing the environmental sensitivities that surround it, particularly preserving our cherished koala colony to the south of Campbelltown where the upgrades are required and around Smith's Creek, where a colony continues to thrive. We do not want to lose them. We want to make sure that we find that balance between development, including road construction, and saving the koala colony.

The road between Menangle and Spring Farm must link through to provide a vital southern connection. We do not want a half-baked plan. We need a time line for the installation of that vital connection along with the funding to match that time line. Badgally Road is a bottleneck, just as we knew it was going to be as soon as we saw the opening through to Gregory Hills and up Eagle Vale Drive to the Raby Road junction. Ultimately we need replication of the Narellan Road interchange at Raby Road for the northern connection, as well as the Spring Farm Parkway and Menangle Road connection, which includes the extension of Liz Kernohan Drive in the electorate of my friend the member for Camden, to ensure that we have that connectivity. Those three pivotal connections will address the urban population growth and provide the roads that will be required in the future.

Turning to transport, I call on the Government once again to provide the people of Macarthur Heights with the bus services they require. This is not a big project. It is frustrating and disappointing because it involves a route change, not a whole new service, as buses are already in and around that area. A proactive approach involving consulting residents will ensure they get this vital bus service. I urge the transport Minister to review this matter, which I have brought to his attention on many occasions. It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to also refer to the ongoing matter of the proposed orbital to the south, with two roads cutting down through Appin. I believe there is a third option that would connect the orbital down through Picton Road.

I think that is a fair and sensible approach to consider, given the arterial nature of Picton Road and the disruption to the good people of Appin who, let us be frank, all too often feel ill-treated, overlooked and undervalued. I have made representations on behalf of the people of Appin before, and I will continue to do so, including trying to minimise disruption whilst achieving a major piece of infrastructure not only for Macarthur but also for the Sydney metropolitan area. If that was completed and done well, people could travel from the Hunter in the north to the beautiful Illawarra in the south without one traffic light and full connection. That is

something the Carr Government started and that the current Government did more work on, but much more needs to be done.

Earlier I touched on the Appin Road and planning. We need to have a planning model in place that balances environmental preservation and conservation with giving young western Sydney families the opportunity to achieve the once great Australian dream. We need to find that balance: We want new residents, but we want them to enjoy the lifestyle that we existing residents have enjoyed for so long. That will only happen with a good planning framework and appropriate consultation between the Government and local communities. I believe an engaging, open-door approach from the Government would be welcome. Many residents currently experience more of a dictatorial approach by government rather than a consultative and collaborative approach.

A justice precinct is pending for Campbelltown. Yes, we saw some planning money—I think it was \$1 million or so—but, let me frank, the planning has already been done. I would have preferred to see that \$1 million go towards building the justice precinct. Barney Glover and Andy Marks, who lead that fine university and wonderful institution, the Western Sydney University, have worked collaboratively with all other stakeholders to achieve what I think would be a sound development for Campbelltown that would also service the south-west at a time when our justice system carries a heavy load. It is only appropriate that it is in Campbelltown because all roads lead to Campbelltown. Mr Assistant Speaker, I note that you are amused by that. I am sure you would suggest I am biased, given that I am the member for Campbelltown—and you are perhaps somewhat correct. But the reality is this facility, this precinct, would provide for everyone who needs it—from the highlands, up to and as far as Liverpool, and out towards the developing areas of Leppington and, of course, our friends in Camden, who continue to have their court challenged.

We need stadium upgrades and we need to address unemployment. I must acknowledge the hardworking small businesses that have received inadequate support and have suffered deeply through the pandemic. Small business is the backbone of every one of our local economies and the largest employer body in this State. Depending on the area, it accounts for 80 per cent of employment. It is no different in Campbelltown, the Macarthur or the south-west. It also dictates that businesses must get the appropriate level of attention, focus and support from the Government. Yes, there has been some support, but I would suggest it has fallen well short of what is required and people have lost their jobs.

I turn briefly to my shadow portfolio area of Local Government. I am deeply concerned about the financial sustainability issues that we see in nearly every council in this State. We have 128 councils that have struggled through fire, flood, drought and now COVID-19. Local councils were not included in JobKeeper and have missed out on an adequate level of financial stimulus. Investment in local councils would have meant the delivery of infrastructure for local communities, and a legacy of which the Government could be proud. I believe that was a missed opportunity. It would have created and sustained local jobs. Many councils have projects that are scoped, planned, shovel ready and ready to activate with the appropriate funding. Many councils do a great job and are the cheapest in terms of funding projects in their local areas.

Any investment in a local community is an investment in jobs, job security and the local economy. We have seen councils around the State that are financially stricken. I draw the attention of the House to Cootamundra-Gundagai, whose representatives were here just the other day pleading with me. I note that they met with the Minister as well as the Deputy Premier, and I appreciate the Deputy Premier's efforts in doing what he can for that community. But we need the Premier and the Minister to pay attention to that community and make sure they address the serious issues it is confronting at this time and will continue to confront without government action.

I note that my friend the member for Fairfield is in the House. He is another proud western Sydney MP, a fighter for his community and a bastion of western Sydney. The aerotropolis must succeed. It is the engine that will create the jobs that nearly 1.3 million people will need through the western Sydney belt. We have seen lapses in terms of M12 investment. We have seen uncertainty between the Federal and State governments over the planning provisions for the aerotropolis and the establishment and construction of Western Sydney Airport. I am deeply disturbed by the media commentary that I continue to hear about that lack of collaboration. The best outcomes are achieved by working together. I urge the State and Federal governments and the relevant Ministers to sit down, work together and map out a plan so that Western Sydney Airport has every opportunity to reach its full potential and provide the jobs that the people of western Sydney desperately need.

The rubber is not far off the tarmac yet we do not have a planned fuel pipeline. We have a joint user hydrant installation planned for Western Sydney Airport, but the only way the fuel can get to that JUHI is by truck. That means more vehicles on western Sydney roads that are already congested, and failures if the correct planning and land acquisitions are not in place. As a former fuel truck driver, I know that firsthand. But we cannot forget the people of western Sydney when it comes to this budget. The Government has taken \$13 million from their pockets in stamp duty—\$9 billion in the past five years alone. By comparison, the Government has invested a mere

skerrick back into western Sydney. The Government talks big on western Sydney but delivers very little. You cannot blame the people of western Sydney for their frustration and disappointment when, a lot of the time, they only see the Premier and Ministers come out for a five-minute photo opportunity with no follow-up. We need a plan for jobs. We need to see a plan for urban development to ensure that those residents get the infrastructure—roads, rail, health, education—and all of the other social means and policies that they require to flourish and reach their full potential. [*Extension of time*]

I appreciate the Government members' enthusiasm about the extension of my time, which is certainly welcome, particularly from the member for Ku-ring-gai.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** We have been overwhelmed.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** He is awake—excellent.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Overwhelmed.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** You should be.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Inspiring oratory.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I do appreciate your support and attention.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Your mates are behind you.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Yes, I know. They are very good friends of mine and I do appreciate their support as well.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** I am one of many.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! Let us not talk about the member's friends.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** That is right, we cannot get into my friends because I have too many to mention at this time, but I do appreciate their friendship and support—none more displayed than by the member for Fairfield.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Let us not talk about ourselves; let us get back to western Sydney and the jobs that we need created so that we take people off our congested roads. Local jobs for local people is the simple message for the Government. Those jobs will come with adequate investment, but we do not see that investment at this time. We do not see the pipeline or plan for those jobs, whether in Fairfield, Cabramatta, Badgerys Creek, Leppington, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden—even down in the Wollondilly. While not considered part of western Sydney, Wollondilly certainly relies on the facilities and services of western Sydney. I note the Government's continued refusal to build a Service NSW centre in Campbelltown. That is just one example that affects the people of Wollondilly, and south-west Sydney broadly, because it funnels people into those services where they are required.

A subject very close to my heart is our veterans. Many veterans around our nation are affected in many and varied ways. That is clearly displayed in New South Wales. I am of the view that, if it was good enough for veterans to serve our great nation, it is just as good for our nation to serve them well in their time of need. Enormous amounts of money have come from the Federal Government, rallied through the States, for support of veterans, but, to be frank, we could be using it better because we continue to see suicide levels rise and we continue to see the issues that soldiers, sailors and air force personnel have as they transition from military life to civil society. Many of them struggle. We must provide support so that they can transition and have a good life out on the civvy street, as it is known.

I want to see the Government take a more active and engaging role with its Federal counterparts to ensure that provisions are in place for veterans to get the support they require. That will happen only if the Government takes the lead. I note the ongoing discussions around the royal commission into veterans, but I note the many investigations and inquiries that have gone on over many years, with subsequent recommendations, and refer to the Productivity Commissioner's report a couple of years ago. We have not seen the recommendations in that report implemented to be able to test and adjust where we go next. I am accepting of the royal commission, but what I will not accept is millions of dollars—if not hundreds of millions—of taxpayers' money spent on a royal commission, the findings of which are left on a dusty desk somewhere, while our veterans continue to flurry or fall. It is not easy for many of them in many different ways. There should be a more collaborative approach.

In conclusion, budget surpluses are important, budget balances are vital, but budget priorities are essential. In my view, the priority is investment in road, rail, jobs, health and education, not just in my beloved city and seat



of Campbelltown but across western Sydney, and right across New South Wales, a fair and equitable approach based on the needs of communities. It would be remiss of me at this time not to draw the attention of the House to the grants inquiry that highlighted some very disturbing matters as communities missed out. We know, and we heard in the inquiry, that a process was put in place to help communities that were forcibly merged together. That was installed by the then Premier Baird and Deputy Premier Grant. We now have a new Premier and a new Deputy Premier, who changed the guidelines so that the money could be used as investment in the political prosperity of the conservatives in the Liberal and The Nationals parties, not in the needs of communities. Clearly money was taken from Canterbury and the inner west. That money was required to help those communities during a very challenging time as they were merged. Ultimately, in line with the cost-shifting agenda of the Government to local government, that is having a serious financial and detrimental effect. I thank the House for its indulgence.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:21):** I speak in support of the take-note debate and our latest budget. What a great budget it is, and what a great budget for the Myall Lakes electorate, where a number of programs were introduced, and there was a continuation of works and funding of new work. Stage one of the Manning Base Hospital is complete—some money has come out of the budget to complete it—and there is \$1.5 million for stage two of the hospital redevelopment. It is great to see the acceleration of those works. Stage two is worth \$100 million and stage one was \$40 million. Stage one redeveloped the hospital.

I can remember at a pre-poll the former mayor of Taree yelling out that I was a liar when I talked about Manning Base Hospital stage one and about a new police station at Taree, so much so that the Electoral Commission person heading that polling booth asked if I wanted to make a complaint about the former mayor. I won the election, so there was no need for a complaint. The significance was that Manning Base Hospital was not going to be redeveloped, but The Nationals and Liberal Party Government re-prioritised a number of hospitals. Initially, with Manning Base Hospital, the money came out of Restart NSW. Six hospitals were to share \$50 million; I think that was flagged in the 2014-15 budget.

Stage one is built. It includes a new oncology unit and a new renal dialysis unit. It includes medical imaging and public car parking. It also includes a car park underneath the building that allows oncology and renal dialysis patients to park directly under those units, get into the lift and go straight up to where they have their treatment. The staff are happy and pleased with the way it went. The enhanced stage one also included a new area in the front entrance, better access to the car park, a transitional lounge for patients from the emergency area to wait before being admitted into the hospital and a direct link from emergency to the medical imaging department.

The pleasing thing is that in the last election and this budget, funding has been provided for the Manning Base Hospital stage two. Last year the clinical services plan was completed. I am advised by Hunter New England Health that the process of the Manning Base Hospital stage two is being managed by Health Infrastructure to procure an architect to undertake the master planning on the campus, which commenced late last year. The intention is to have the consultancy in place by the end of February 2021. The procurement will be packaged up with all other health projects as part of the stimulus spend, which should be in place by early March. The hospital was not going to be redeveloped but now stage one has been planned and delivered. The people in the area and the staff working there are extremely happy with it. Now stage two planning is underway. The architect appointed by Health Infrastructure to do the master planning for the commencement of the building should be announced shortly.

People sometimes say to me that the master redevelopment plan was done in 2013. That was the plan for what was to be done, but it was not the detailed design, the blueprints of what concrete would be used, where the utilities would go and all other things needed in a plan. A detailed plan is needed, the same as for a house, before building can begin. We are going through that process now. The other pleasing thing is that planning for the Forster Tuncurry hospital is in the budget. The budget papers state: "Progress planning for the Health Infrastructure commitments at Forster Tuncurry". That is the public hospital being planned at Forster Tuncurry. Also on the same entry in the budget papers are Grafton, Gunnedah and Moree. I have been advised by Health Infrastructure that approximately \$7.9 million has been allocated for planning for those hospitals. I have also been advised that the procurement of the consultant required to undertake the options analysis for land purchase and the like for the Forster Tuncurry public hospital is being managed by Health Infrastructure. That will go out for tender in February, with engagement by March 2021. That is great news again.

A lot of people were very concerned about it and were asking whether it was true and whether it would happen. It is stated in the budget papers; it is a commitment by the Government to deliver a public hospital at Forster Tuncurry. The latest advice last Friday, 12 February, was for the consultant to be engaged to advise as to the site. People keep asking where it is going to be. There is a lot of land, both Crown and private, for sale or available in the Forster Tuncurry area. Other facilities could also be purchased. I look forward to the engagement of the consultant and the recommendations to the Government on this subject.

I will move on to other highlights in the budget for Myall Lakes. There is over \$1 million in the budget for Aboriginal and capital works housing in Taree. The Aboriginal population in Forster Tuncurry is a growing population. It is great to see the Government assisting in that area. The Department of Education had some extra funds to complete the Old Bar Public School upgrade. That is a \$9 million building with a number of classrooms. It is a magnificent twenty-first century educational learning space and for the students of Old Bar Public School, a great place to be able to go. When you look at it, it is architecturally designed. The school is at the beach and there is a wavelike feature around the building. I look forward to calling into the school this year to see the finally completed project.

Also flagged in the budget is \$2.6 million in new supply of social and low-cost housing for those in need. Upgrades to a number of properties in the Taree and Forster area are also flagged. There is funding to kickstart the Northern Gateway, a \$15 million project promised at the election, which is already underway. The first part is delivering a roundabout, but ultimately there is \$15 million for a freight hub to keep the big trucks that come up the Pacific Highway from going through Taree. It will also be a hub for logistics and other things to wrap around that in the industrial space. Already one company, Pearsons Transport, has committed to that site. Pearsons Transport is one of the innovators in the trucking and transport industry. It proposes having three jumps instead of two jumps from Sydney to Brisbane. There are a number of reasons for that. Firstly, a driver who lives in Sydney will be able to pick up the goods at the depot in Sydney, take them to trailer, take that trailer off and leave it there, put a different trailer on and return to Sydney. So every night he sleeps at home in his own bed. It also means that the driver will never go over 14 hours of driving and having to have a rest, because he can do the Sydney to Taree return trip in no more than nine hours, ensuring safety.

The trucks also have digital cameras that can record the amount of fluttering of a person's eye and tell whether the driver is getting tired and warn the driver about tiredness. Pearsons Transport do such innovative things. The trailer is taken to Taree. A driver who lives in Taree will put that trailer on a truck and take it up to Grafton, drop it off there, take another trailer and bring that back to Taree. Therefore, he spends the night in Taree. He does not have to sleep on the side of the road. Similarly, a driver who lives in Grafton will take that trailer up to Brisbane and bring another trailer back. That is so much safer for the drivers, the produce and the other drivers on the Pacific Highway. We all know what a dangerous highway that has been in the past and still can be. Sadly, there was a death last night north of Taree. It can be dangerous, particularly for truck drivers, who can be fatigued. The idea with the freight hub is to break up the trips for truck drivers so that they do not have to drive for long hours or big distances and run the risk of fatigue. As I said, the first part of that is a roundabout and MidCoast Council is carrying out planning and commencing the earthworks for that roundabout.

Looking at the Northern Gateway, grants to MidCoast Council will improve parking and signage at the Cundletown boat ramp and improve access at Darawank Park on the Wallamba River. There are so many other transport projects for the Myall Lakes electorate. Also in the budget for Myall Lakes is over \$1.2 million for the Whitbread Industrial Estate electrical upgrades, which the businesses in that estate have been calling for. Powerlines across the road are too low for high vehicles and on a number of occasions the power overload has tripped, causing blackouts. That will be upgraded. Over \$400,000 will go to the Taree Airport to upgrade its lighting.

There is almost \$20 million under the Fixing Country Roads program for the Cedar Party Creek Bridge replacement, following a grant of \$250,000 for the planning. The community has been calling for that for some time now. The deck of the bridge was replaced back in Wendy Machin's day, but it still has the large timber poles underneath. They are an issue and have passed their use-by date. If there is a big flood at Cedar Party Creek the bridge could go under. The new bridge will have increased height and so the threat of flooding—and therefore of Wingham being cut off from the rest of New South Wales—will be removed.

MidCoast Council had initially intended to change the alignment of the Cedar Party Creek Bridge with this new replacement. That alignment would have gone through the Wingham swimming pool, necessitating finding a different site and building a new swimming pool for Wingham. MidCoast Council advised that it was not able to find another suitable site. So the councillors decided not to proceed with that realignment and to go instead with the existing bridge alignment. The existing swimming pool will therefore remain and a higher new bridge will replace the old bridge so that the threat of flooding is diminished.

A number of other projects are also funded in the budget, such as a PCYC program for youth about building resilience. That is so important. We know that in the past couple of years, with the pandemic and other issues, there has been a number of suicides and a dangerous increase in the number of young people complaining of depression. The PCYC received \$189,000 for a program to help youth. Another organisation, Delhuntie Youth and Wellness Centre, received funding to deliver a resilience and suicide prevention program. There is also funding of \$93,000 for the installation of lighting at the Jack Ireland Sporting Complex at Bulahdelah—not a lot

of money in the city but a significant sum in Bulahdelah. The soccer club could never afford to pay for that and it is funded in the budget.

The Manning River Rowing Club received \$350,000 for upgrades and infrastructure improvements. The Christmas before last the club lost its roof in a huge storm. There was a rowing regatta on the Manning River when a mini-tornado swept through. It peeled the roof off the club, turned over many of the rowing boats and snapped them in half. Some young people were on the river when the storm hit. Their boats were overturned and a few were injured. The rowing club had a choice. The insurance was going to cover about \$700,000 or \$800,000, which did not quite do the job, but it was also an old building—from memory, it was built in the 1950s or 1960s. It was tired, out of date and was just not functioning properly. The club applied for a grant and we were able to help with it. The newly refurbished rowing club is going up and looking absolutely fantastic. It will be something the club can be proud of and will attract many other rowing clubs from around New South Wales to its regatta. *[Extension of time]*

The North Coast Inclusive Aquatics Facility project at Coomba Park has become the hub of disability sailing in New South Wales. It was granted \$125,000 on top of the \$1.2 million that it received from the Regional Growth Fund to build and improve its facilities. For example, it had a jetty with a pontoon that was not quite far enough out for disabled sailors and needed to be changed. That has been done. Equal-access facilities have also been built—the kitchen and those sorts of things as well as sailing boats. On top of those moneys, we have just announced another \$53,000 to put in an all-weather surface car park and pathways so that patrons can get out of the car or van that brings them there and take a path to the facilities—to the ramp and to the boats—without having to go cross-country. That is significant.

Also included in the budget is a school community bus for \$75,000. That might not seem like much and you may ask why we are funding a school. It is to go to Mitchells Island Public School, which has about 20-odd students. But we know that there are many other students on Mitchells Island and Oxley Island. If we can get all those families to send their children to Mitchells Island Public School then student numbers will increase and the school will continue. It has over 100 years of history. The difficulty for many of the kids who live on the island, or further away on Oxley Island, is that they had no way of getting to the school, but there was a bus that would take children to Old Bar Public School on the mainland.

Together with the principal and the P&C, we decided to provide the school with a bus. That will give the children who are travelling all the way to Old Bar Public School the option to attend their local school and be educated there. The Mitchells Island Public School has a wonderful principal and very motivated teachers. Because of the smaller student numbers they can provide a more intense, boutique-style education that cannot be delivered in bigger schools. Having said that, Old Bar Public School is fantastic and I spoke earlier about the significant \$9 million investment there.

The budget has also provided \$251,000 in funding to resurface the Wingham go-kart track. I visited about a month ago for a carnival and go-karts were there from all over country New South Wales, including the Hunter Valley and other places. Everybody without exception spoke about what a fantastic facility it was. As I said about some of those other projects, that will attract people to the area. They will come to stay and they will spend money in the area, which is great for the local economy. The budget provided \$174,000 in funding to upgrade the Taree regional netball courts. Netball is a fantastic sport that is played by many people. It is very popular in regional areas, so it was great to be able to assist the Taree netball club to upgrade its courts. The club chose some interesting colours—the courts are now blue. It looks fantastic and the players are very pleased, considering that before the upgrade the courts were made from bitumen and they had big cracks in them, which were tripping hazards and caused other issues.

All of my daughters played netball there back in the bitumen days. One of the girls twisted and broke her leg on that old bitumen court, so I am very pleased that the club was able to receive funding. And not only there, but funding was also provided to Forster Netball Club to upgrade its facilities. I am very pleased to be able to assist those clubs. Clubs cannot raise the money themselves for those types of projects. They cannot sell enough lamingtons or sausage sandwiches to fund those projects. At the same time, councils cannot afford to fund those projects by themselves either. Through the Regional Growth Fund \$2 billion is now being invested in regional community infrastructure. That is a fantastic result for the regions.

If we look at funding for regional New South Wales from The Nationals in government, \$4.5 billion was provided in drought assistance and water security, \$4.2 billion has been invested in regional New South Wales through the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund, \$2 billion has been made available through the Regional Growth Fund, \$100 million has been allocated through the Regional Job Creation Fund and \$4.4 billion has been provided in bushfire recovery support, which is extremely important, and none more so than in my area. In the bushfires over 120 houses were lost, about 60 houses were seriously damaged, seven facilities were destroyed and a significant

number of other facilities were severely damaged. That has had an effect on the community. A lady died, though that did not occur in my electorate; that was in what we call the Manning Valley, which is just over the border.

The fires had a huge impact on people in the electorate of Myall Lakes, whether directly or indirectly. People's homes may have been lost or damaged, but they could have lost neighbours or friends, and that has had an impact on them. The people who had to evacuate their houses did not know what was going to happen. They had to huddle in community halls while the roads were blocked off. There was no electricity, lighting or telephone communication—and no electricity means no pump for a toilet. To be in that position and not know what was going to happen while the fires were raging all around them had a huge impact on people. I am very pleased to say that the Government has put a lot of money into bushfire recovery, including into the provision of mental health services.

The Government has been able to provide other great services through the budget. Ironwood, which is located in the electorate of Myall Lakes, also received funding in the budget. Ironwood refurbishes burnt timber. A lot of timber was burnt in the bushfires and ordinarily it cannot be used for anything, but Ironwood can recycle and re-use that timber. It was great to see funding provided to that timber mill. For every tree that Ironwood cuts, it plants a tree. A couple of years ago I was pleased to visit and plant trees in its plantation. The Manning Valley Race Club received \$1.2 million to demolish and replace the race day tie-up stalls. Like all of those projects, that money will go into the local economy. It will support local businesses and local tradies, and local people will use those services. Of course, for the Taree race club that funding means that it can enhance its races, which will enhance its ability to provide facilities to local trainers, jockeys and other people who are involved in the racing industry. The racing industry provides thousands of jobs to regional New South Wales, so it was great to support it.

Stimulus funding was also provided to showgrounds, including in Nabitac, Taree, Bulahdelah and Wingham. All of those showgrounds have received a share of funding over the past 12 months, which is so important. Again, some of those showgrounds are not council managed; rather, they have a trust. Those trusts cannot raise all of the money themselves. A lot of those facilities are old and need refurbishing or replacing. It is great to see that new cattle sheds are going up at Nabitac, Wingham and Taree. I commend the budget to the House.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:50):** I contribute to debate on the 2020-21 budget. I have said it before and I am forced to say it again: This year's budget has forgotten the residents of Fairfield. The budget is one of smoke and mirrors. The Berejiklian Government is doing what all classical illusionists do: obscuring or embellishing the truth with misleading information. That was not a budget of plenty or a budget that looked after the people of New South Wales—at least, not for all residents in New South Wales. I am sure the residents of Willoughby and Epping are extremely pleased by what the budget will provide for them. The Premier has consistently repeated the Government's commitment to New South Wales schools, hospitals, roads and railways. I put to the Premier and the Treasurer, both of whom are so proud of the budget: Where are all of Fairfield's promised infrastructure projects? Where are our promised road projects? Where is our funding for hospitals, schools, railway station upgrades and public transport? Wherever it is, it is not in that budget of smoke and mirrors.

The Government has put together a budget with the intention of disguising or drawing attention away from an embarrassing and unpleasant issue, just like the smoke-and-mirrors technique. The unpleasant issue is the neglect that Fairfield residents are feeling from the budget. The Government should be embarrassed for the neglect that my constituents have felt for many long years. As the member for Fairfield I saw my constituents struggle through the pandemic. I have been with them to try to support them and I have implored the Government for its help. All I have received is a cold shoulder from a government that does not care. The budget is proof that the State Government simply does not care about the residents of Fairfield. The long-term neglect looks like it will continue. On the day that the budget was handed down by the Treasurer, I immediately had something to say. In question time I got to my feet to take a point of order.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I remember it well.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** Thank you. I acknowledge the member for Kiama and Minister. During question time the Treasurer was spruiking the budget, saying that it was a result of the great work that had been done by the Government. But I was really disgusted. I felt heartfelt disgust and disappointment that once again the people of the electorate of Fairfield did not even feature on the Government's radar. In fact, I held up the budget paper that had been given to me in which \$0 had been allocated to Fairfield. There were three big zeros, or three big doughnuts, as I called them that day.

That is all the people of Fairfield received from the Premier and the Treasurer—three big zeroes. To rub salt into the wound, as I was leaving the Chamber the Treasurer's response to me was, "I'll tell you." I am sure he will—just like he has tolled the entire State of New South Wales. My colleagues will agree that residents of Fairfield, and in fact all of Sydney's south-west, are feeling the brunt of the Premier and Treasurer's toll mania.

They have an intoxicating obsession with tolling the hardworking residents of south-west Sydney. In fact, the Government's obsession with tolling every road in New South Wales has just about convinced me that it is detached from the realities of everyday life.

Who can pay the excessive tolls to get to and from work each day? That is the reality; that is what the Government is asking people to do. I know some of my constituents cannot pay those excessive tolls. They also cannot pay the 4 per cent toll increase they can expect every year, which is more than the rate of inflation. The Premier loves to talk about creating jobs, but what is the point of creating them when the Government is going to bleed the money from workers? Putting tolls on almost every single road out of south-west Sydney into the CBD has pretty much priced some of my constituents out of the city. That is disappointing, to say the least. The reality is that Fairfield residents are looking for alternative options for travel into the Sydney CBD because the tolls are crippling them.

The natural alternative to travelling by car is to take public transport. I am sure members in the Chamber will agree with that. But that is where it gets tricky under this Government because, for the residents of Fairfield, public transport is not a cheaper or more efficient way to get to the city. There are railway stations that mums, dads, elderly citizens, disabled citizens, students and workers are finding increasingly difficult to navigate. People with an impairment cannot get from one side of the platform to the other because we do not have lifts or easy access upgrades at Carramar, Villawood or Yennora. It is a simple fact. For 10 years the Government has continued the same story of neglect of the residents of the Fairfield electorate. It is not as if the Government is unaware of the deficit. Since my initiation into this place I have campaigned relentlessly for easy access upgrades to those railway stations, and I am yet to see any results.

Added to that, our trains are slower. It takes longer to get to the city from Fairfield now than it did at the turn of the millennium. During the Olympics a train would take you from Fairfield to the city quicker than it does today. So it looks like public transport is not the most appealing alternative. The toll roads are killing our residents when it comes to their wallets. I turn to one of the Premier's promises to put money into our health system and into hospitals in New South Wales. She must have forgotten to include Fairfield Hospital on that list; budget after budget, that hospital gets nothing. Even following an inquiry into healthcare services in south-west Sydney, nothing was put into the budget for Fairfield Hospital. The cost of living has gone up. My constituents have been struggling to pay their bills and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue. Electricity bills are now sky high and the paltry discounts that are offered to low-income earners in the Fairfield electorate do not even scratch the surface.

I touch on an issue that is particularly pertinent to the Fairfield electorate: the lack of social housing and the extended waiting lists for social housing in the area. In recent years there has been an influx of refugees arriving in Fairfield and we have welcomed them to our community with open arms. There is no doubt about that. Despite 7,000 refugees coming to the Fairfield area, the Government has given us no extra resources to assist them. The Intensive English Centre at Fairfield High School is bursting at the seams. It cannot cope with the number of students it has, but it does the best it can and I pay full credit to the staff there. One has to wonder what the Government is doing when it comes to health care, mental health and assisting the people we have taken in as a result of the Federal Government's humanitarian intake. Housing refugees who have legitimately urgent needs has pushed back other people who are on the waiting list for accommodation. The waiting list is ballooning at an exponential rate.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Bills*

### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2020**

#### **Messages**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the presentation of the bill to Her Excellency the Governor for assent and rejecting the assertion in the Legislative Assembly message dated 27 November 2020.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

### **SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I note that numerous members, including one Government member, have been called to order three times. That includes the member for Londonderry.

**Ms Prue Car:** Thank you for the reminder, Madam Deputy Speaker. I might be chief amongst them.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am looking after everybody. The member for Londonderry will be heard in silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Government has failed to build the schools that communities in New South Wales need.
- (2) Condemns the Government for delaying the new schools and school upgrades it promised across New South Wales whilst demountables fill playgrounds.
- (3) Calls on the Government to stop its delays and build the schools that it promised to communities across the State.

Someone once told me that a school is a building that has four walls with tomorrow inside. Unfortunately, too many families in suburbs right across the State cannot even get a building to start with. When did it become commonplace for working families to have to fight their own government in order to get the most basic of community assets—a local school? Under the Government, working families—who are up at the crack of dawn working 10 to 12 hours a day to pay their mortgages, bills and tolls, and provide for their families—are forced to fight to get a school for their children to go to.

School projects were promised by the Liberals and The Nationals. Whether at Green Square, Edmondson Park, Westmead or Rouse Hill, families in the suburbs of Sydney were promised schools and school upgrades that have not even started. It is the right of every child in New South Wales to attend their local public school. Under the Liberals, communities right across the State are still waiting for the promised schools that never come. Let us look at some of those broken promises. First, let us go to Murwillumbah. Before the election the Liberals and The Nationals promised school upgrade projects at both Murwillumbah East Public School and Murwillumbah High School. But after the election, the Liberals and The Nationals delayed the two upgrade projects with no reason and no community consultation. I wonder why!

Then a secret ministerial briefing marked "Sensitive"—you have always got to worry about those ones—was obtained through the Parliament. It revealed that the Liberals and The Nationals broke their promises—surprise, surprise. Instead, they had hatched a secret plan for the forced closure of four schools and their merger into one big mega school. That decision was kept secret all year, with zero community consultation. In October the Government announced that instead of the upgrades it promised at the election all the schools would be amalgamated into one giant K-12 mega school. Again, there was zero community consultation with the four Murwillumbah school communities. That means that Wollumbin High School, Murwillumbah Public School and Murwillumbah East Public School will be gone through forced closure. Murwillumbah High School is to be converted into an American-style mega school. The Liberals and The Nationals think they know better. When it comes to local schools, they think they know so much better than the mums and dads of our State. As a result of those broken promises, families are left with no say about their local communities.

Let us look at Gregory Hills Public School—we would look at it if it existed. Parents report being told as early as 2012 that there would be a primary school. In 2018, before the 2019 election, the Government promised a school again. Government advertising signage went up on the fencing around the vacant site, only to be pulled down months later. Now a group of working parents has been forced to start a campaign to pressure their Government to honour its commitment. Local Liberal member Peter Sidgreaves has not even met with the group of parents in his own electorate. How slack can he get? Because the school is not built, the neighbouring schools at Gledswood Hills are well over capacity. Only 12 months after opening, a brand-new school has 12 demountables filling its playground.

In Sydney's north-west in my electorate of Londonderry we have Marsden Park High School and Northbourne Public School. On the eve of the last election this Government promised a high school to families in Marsden Park. Two years later the site at Newpark Estate is still empty. Instead of growing young minds, the high school site only grows weeds in the dust. The Liberals have not provided this growing community with a time line or a budget. Families have been left completely in the dark. Northbourne Public School in Marsden Park has 800 students already. It is a demountable-only school. The students are all boxed in by demountables. It is one of the largest primary schools in the State, but every single student is in a demountable while they wait for the promised school that is supposed to be open already. There is still no sign of a high school. That is what Liberal mismanagement of education means for working families.

Members of the Liberal Government like to pat themselves on the back, but they ignore local communities. They have said to local communities, "We are not in your corner," but I will tell them who is in their corner. It is the Opposition. The Opposition has stood with parents in Gregory Hills, fighting for the primary school. The member for Lismore is fighting for the parents of Murwillumbah.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Macquarie Fields and his community are fighting for the promised schools at Edmondson Park; the member for Blacktown is fighting for schools in Riverstone; the member for Auburn is fighting for schools for her growing community; the member for Newcastle is fighting for the phantom Newcastle Education Precinct; and members representing the electorates of Wyong, Gosford and The Entrance are fighting for the classrooms that the Central Coast needs. Instead, we have a government that promises the world and then goes into witness protection. Under Gladys Berejiklian, school results are falling and playgrounds have become concrete jungles full of demountables. The Opposition will continue to fight for working families in our suburbs, on the coast and in regional Australia to ensure that they are not forgotten and ignored by our crooked, 10-year-old Liberal Government, which has simply stopped caring about the people it is supposed to represent.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:08):** The New South Wales Government is investing a record \$7 billion in school infrastructure over four years. When it was in government Labor could only dream about that number. In the past few years we have completed school projects in Armidale, Wagga, south-western Sydney, north-western Sydney, the Central Coast, Queanbeyan, inner Sydney, Maitland, the North Coast and in a host of other locations across the State.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** There has never been such an extensive building program in New South Wales public schools. Before the 2019 election we promised a big building program—200 schools over the four-year term. Guess what? We have delivered 110 projects in the two years since 2019.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** The member for Prospect can do the maths, I hope—110 projects in two years. I move:

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

"This House:

- (1) Notes the record \$7 billion investment the Government has made in building new and upgraded schools across New South Wales.
- (2) Congratulates the Government on delivering over 110 new and upgraded schools since January 2019."

As I said, the Government is investing \$7 billion in school infrastructure. One can only imagine what that number would have been reduced to if New South Wales had had the misfortune to have that lot opposite in government. Their blind ideological opposition to budget discipline and asset recycling means they would not have had the money to undertake even a fraction of the school building program that we are delivering.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** They would have no money! It is pretty simple: If a government cannot manage money, it cannot pay for new infrastructure. Luckily for those opposite, talk is cheap, because they can talk about building things and delivering projects, and they can talk about how they would spend the money they would not have because they oppose the policies that make the money available. They are happy to sound like they care about schools, but they are not prepared to do the hard yards to find the capital to make school infrastructure possible. The people of New South Wales do not want a party that is all talk and no action. That is why Labor will stay in opposition for a very long time.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** Its record in government was embarrassing. Its current policies are proof that it would be just as woeful if it ever got back into government. On the other hand, this Liberal-Nationals Government, led by Gladys Berejiklian and John Barilaro, has delivered 110 new and upgraded schools since January 2019. Some 110 have been delivered. They have been built, not simply talked about or promised. They are there. That is what the Liberals and The Nationals do. We have heard about some of the many school projects that are in the pipeline at various stages of planning, site acquisition, design and construction. All of them will be delivered, just like those 110 projects were.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Londonderry that she is on three calls to order.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** In the north-west, where I come from, we have delivered the following upgrades: Riverstone High School, 12 extra classrooms, and administration and canteen areas; Schofields Public School, 27 new classrooms, administration area, library and a covered outdoor learning area [COLA]; Riverbank Public School, 15 extra classrooms, administration area and a COLA; and Quakers Hill East Public School, 12 new classrooms, performance studio, digital hub and administration area. North Kellyville and Galungara public schools have been built. Northbourne Public School, which we have heard about, is currently a pop-up

school. Permanent facilities will be finished mid-year. Previously we heard about Jordan Springs Public School from the member for Londonderry. However, we do not hear about it now because it has been built—delivered as promised. On the way in the north-west are Samuel Gilbert Public School, John Palmer Public School, Glenwood High School and Rouse Farm near Tallawong. Marsden Park High School is in the planning pipeline.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** I make a quick comment for the benefit of the member for Blacktown about Rouse Farm, the school being delivered near Tallawong: There is no development application for demolition because it is not needed. Demolition of the old house is a complying development and that is underway. When the member gets to his feet next time, he should not make a fool of himself. In the Macarthur region we have delivered Oran Park High School, Oran Park Public School, Barramurra Public School, Yandelora School, Bardia Public School, Ajuga School, Campbell House School, Glenfield Park School, stage one of Gledswood Public School, the Hurlstone Agricultural High School upgrade and the Ingleburn High School project.

All those projects have been delivered in the two years since January 2019. We hear rhetoric from members on the other side of the House about how much they care about communities. These are real projects, delivered for the people of New South Wales by this side of the House that will do something about it. Yes, there is more work to do. Everyone knows there is only one side of the House that will ever do it. The Government has the runs on the board—110 school projects delivered in two years.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (17:13):** I welcome the motion moved by my colleague the member for Londonderry. She has kept the Liberal Government accountable for the schools that it is not delivering in the areas that need them most. While the Liberal Government has let overdevelopment run rampant in parts of my electorate—indeed, in most of south-west Sydney and western Sydney—and collected hundreds of millions of dollars in stamp duty, it has neglected and continued to ignore south-west and western Sydney families and the schools that their kids need and deserve. The Government can make as many re-announcements of an announcement of a previous announcement as it wants, but the facts never change. If we were to hand this Liberal Government a report card for delivering public schools to south-west Sydney, I guarantee it would get an F for fail. Perhaps the Liberal Government needs a refresher course in mathematics because something just does not add up. South-west Sydney is one of the fastest-growing regions as many thousands of people continue to call the area home. But this Liberal Government has consistently failed to deliver the infrastructure our community desperately needs.

Let us look at the history of Edmondson Park in my electorate, for example. Thousands of people have already moved into the area, but hundreds of kids are missing out on attending their local school because the number of classrooms that have been delivered is a big fat zero. Years ago the Liberal Government promised a school would be built. In fact, residents were sold the promise of a new school in Edmondson Park in the master plan before deciding to buy their home: Buy your home here and we will build you a school. But they were pretty pictures on glossy documents that meant nothing, which sums up this Government perfectly: always dressed up to look good but does nothing. It is not an unreasonable expectation that a family's children can attend a nearby public school, especially when that was promised to them. But for years local residents have heard crickets when it came to progress.

And let us not forget the enormous impact on families moving into the local area. Many local families tell me of their frustration and angst over the lack of a public school in Edmondson Park, with parents having to travel considerable distances to take their kids to school. Recently one constituent wrote to me stating he was \$7,000 out of pocket from transport costs getting his two kids to and from school. That is absurd and totally unfair on families in south-west Sydney. It is all because an empty block of land lies dormant in Edmondson Park and Gregory Hills waiting for a school to be built. The Liberal Government did not do its homework. For nearly two years it delayed the planning process that would have delivered a school for Edmondson Park. It sat on its hands while local families were left waiting and frustrated that their local public school was not being delivered as promised. Perhaps the Government should have turned up for class instead of being a chronic truant; maybe then it would have learnt how to keep its promises instead of making continual excuses.

It is hardly rocket science that the need for infrastructure grows as the population grows, especially when it was the Government that approved for tens of thousands of people to move into the area through its overdevelopment agenda. I always say that this Government wears the dunce's hat because it fails to deliver time and again. That is why it deserves to be put in detention. Perhaps the Premier and her education Minister need to write lines. Let me offer some examples, "I must do better"; "I must not offer false hope"; "I must stop the lip-service and actually build a school in Edmondson Park and Gregory Hills just as I promised." Even this morning the education Minister had the hide to call for greater accountability and meeting of targets. She said that



if a school failed to meet a target then it would be held accountable and support would be offered. Give me strength.

If only this Liberal Government applied the same rule to itself! It would not be offered support, it would be suspended! When it comes to educational accountability and an inability to meet targets, the Government does not need to look at the members of the teaching fraternity; it needs to look in the mirror. As our Programme for International Student Assessment results continue to decline and our public schools in the neediest areas continue to be delayed, the Government just finds someone else to blame. It is the Sergeant Schultz of education, "I see nothing; I know nothing." That is all it does. It never delivers the schools that our local community needs.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:19):** We will not be lectured to by members opposite when it comes to education in this State. If they want a fight at the next election on education we will be happy to have one.

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

**Mr MARK COURE:** In fact, under Labor 90 schools were closed and many classrooms cut, slashed and burned. Those guys opposite did not care about education when they were in government. I say this: If Labor ever gets back into government, no school is safe. There could be cuts in your electorate—

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

**Mr MARK COURE:** No school under Labor is safe.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Londonderry that she is on three calls to order. I call the member for Prospect to order for the third time.

**Mr MARK COURE:** We on this side of the House have invested \$7 billion in education over the next four years as part of the recent budget so that our children have the best resources, facilities and schools. Investing in schools means investing in communities.

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

**Mr MARK COURE:** The Government is rolling out its plan already with 200 new and upgraded schools across the State, including four in my electorate: Penshurst Public School, Hurstville Grove Infants School, Hurstville Public School and Penshurst West Public School. Compare that to when Labor was in government. What did it do in my local community? It closed Narwee High School. In fact, when Labor got rid of Premier Morris Iemma it closed his high school two weeks later—that is how much it liked the guy. Penshurst Public School is now officially open. It includes 47 brand-new classrooms, a brand-new library, a hall and a covered outdoor learning area. That is in addition to open play spaces, playing courts, seating, shade structures, running tracks and much more. There are new administration and staff facilities, along with new staff and student amenities. I again thank the education Minister in the other place, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, and Premier Gladys Berejiklian for opening that space a couple of weeks ago to mark the beginning of term 1.

Over at Penshurst West Public School the works are done, dusted and delivered for the students, who are absolutely loving it. Upgrades to Penshurst West Public School include new modern teaching spaces and facilities, seven new classrooms, a new student amenities building, a special programs room and enhanced open spaces. Hurstville Grove Infants School, which is just up the road from where I live, has now received a brand-new multipurpose facility that can be used as an additional learning space, a special needs area, before- and after-school care and much more. It also features kitchen facilities, air conditioning and a quiet room for additional use. Up the road, Hurstville Public School now boasts an upgraded inclusive learning space, which is the second—perhaps even third—upgrade since we came to office in 2010. That is fantastic news for our local community because those school services are vastly needed for our local community. The Government is investing heavily in schools not just in my electorate but across the State—from the south to the north, from the beaches to the bush.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is on three calls to order.

**Mr MARK COURE:** We are increasing our education spend to build and rebuild many of the schools that were neglected under Labor for so many years. We are investing in education for our children's future. That investment stretches across all stages of education, from early childhood to primary and secondary schools through to our TAFE network. We are getting on with the job of rebuilding schools across New South Wales. Labor closed 90 schools when it was in Government. There were cuts to education, closures of classrooms—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Kiama will come to order. The member for Oatley does not need his help.

**Mr MARK COURE:** On this side of the House we are getting on with the job of rebuilding the education system. When it comes to education, Labor cannot be trusted.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:24):** I thank the member for Londonderry for bringing the original motion to this Chamber and the member for Riverstone for moving a confused amendment to the motion. The amendment is quite disappointing because, unfortunately, it just reflects the member's nature and his representation of Riverstone. His sycophantic nature has him praising the Government at every opportunity.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Riverstone will come to order.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** It took him four minutes to even mention Riverstone in his contribution. He should take some lessons from the member for Oatley, who for almost five minutes spoke about all the upgrades in his electorate. The member for Riverstone could mention only two schools by name, without giving any details. It is so disappointing for the north-west sector, which the member for Riverstone said back in 2011 in this Chamber was the "fastest-growing population in New South Wales and desperately needs infrastructure". He went on further to say, and I totally agree with him, that if you do not deliver it you have to account to the electors the reasons for non-delivery. The member for Riverstone should be held to account because if we look at the north-west growth area and the lack of delivery, 120,000 people have moved into that area. That, in itself, means that the area needs to have resources, whether it is roads or hospitals. Under the member for Riverstone's watch everything has been cancelled or there have been marginal upgrades.

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

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** The member for Riverstone is happy if people in his electorate get crumbs off the table. The schools are not built for purpose. On day one they have already got demountable classrooms. The member for Riverstone spoke about Schofields Road, where the development application [DA] has been withdrawn. I am a little bit worried because when the member for Riverstone says that you do not need a DA, it is a compliant DA, to me that says they are using private certifiers. The Government will not even trust Blacktown council to do the certification.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Blacktown will resume his seat. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. The member for Blacktown has the call and will be heard in silence.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for taking control. The member for Kiama has been interjecting all day; he should be on three calls to order. Schofields Public School is just around the corner from Schofields Road in the Tallawong precinct, which I spoke about earlier. There are 770 students enrolled at the school, which is way over the cap of 532—some 45 per cent higher than the cap that was put on the school—and there are 20 demountable classrooms. Four minutes drive down the road is John Palmer Public School, which has 961 enrolments, although 416 is the cap—that is 131 per cent over the cap—and 21 demountable classrooms, all on the playgrounds. Glenwood High School has 1,405 enrolled students, although it has a cap of 1,060, and 19 demountable classrooms.

The Government is not building these schools fit for purpose; they are not able to take on the massive growth in the area. Across the three schools there are around 60 demountable classrooms, which are on the playgrounds. How are those schools going to have fitness for education and drive excellence in education when the students do not have the right atmosphere for learning? Even in my own area in Doonside, a whole area of Western Sydney Parklands got carved out for housing. There are 3,000 new residents in the new estate of Bungarribee, but not one single cent has been invested by this Government in Doonside Public School. The students are not even going to Doonside Public School now because it is so overcrowded. The school has not changed since I was a boy going to that school. Essentially, students are going to private schools. This Government seems to have a private school agenda by stealth: If it does not build the schools, private schools will build in the area and everyone will go to them.

The member for Riverstone spoke about the Government being able to control the budget and how it is delivering. In 2011 he said, "Every year under Labor the revenues exceeded expenses." We managed the budget and we built what was required at the time. The problem is: Is this Government going to deliver? There was a \$156 million backlog when Labor lost government, but it is now \$1 billion since this Government came to power, and still nothing has been done in our local area.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (17:30):** I am 100 per cent committed to the Tweed and our schools.

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

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** Unlike other members here, I served four years in opposition—2007 to 2011. I witnessed Labor closing schools and I also witnessed the last round of the public-private partnerships that Labor started. I saw the angst at the time with the Teachers Federation.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Kiama will come to order. I am trying to hear what the member for Tweed has to say.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** I shook my head. I am a product of a public school system. My father was a primary school principal and actually taught me on a number of occasions, so I am big supporter of the public school system. I find it sad to hear the member for Londonderry basically run down her public school system and talk about the lack of facilities and the lack of opportunities.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Tweed will be heard in silence.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** In my particular area, under Labor, during the four years I served in opposition, I saw virtually no upgrades. I saw a large number of demountable classrooms and I saw not much happening. That was representative of the North Coast overall at that time. Fast-forward from 2011 to where we are now: Renovations have begun at Tweed River High School, South Tweed Primary School, Kingscliff High School and Kingscliff Primary School—in the vicinity of \$120 million worth of upgrades. Some of those schools had not seen upgrades for many years under Labor, but now, more than planning is taking place; the partitions are up and the schools have been consulted widely, including the P&Cs. The principals think it is one of the best things they have ever seen in their teaching careers.

The great Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning visited Tweed River High School late last year. The Government has committed an extra \$20 million for a trade school at the school. Before that, we committed to and finished off a \$25 million upgrade to Pottsville Primary School. Our schools are doing very well; we are offering first-class education. Having lived through the Labor era I can tell the House that I have never seen anything like the number of upgrades and the amount of consultation within those schools. I strongly suggest that members on the other side of the House not listen to the local Federal member on Murwillumbah High School because I believe she is rather out of touch with the community's feeling.

At the last election the local Federal member campaigned on a hospital and was bagging me continually on the hospital. Guess what? We are building the hospital and I won the whole 19 polling booths and increased the margin. I have been told by the local media up at Murwillumbah that when the Opposition leader, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, came to town he was rather embarrassed in front of the media about the Murwillumbah High School issue. So I do not think we will see the Hon. Anthony Albanese come back with the local Federal Labor member anytime soon because it turned out to be a PR disaster. At the moment there is consultation going on with the P&Cs and the wider groups.

I know the member for Ballina had a school amalgamated in her area a while ago. From all reports it is going extraordinarily well and everyone is extraordinarily happy with it. I do not like the term "Americanise". Once again, the teachers and principals in Murwillumbah tell me they are very much in favour of what the Government is providing and going through. I am a politician; I am not a teacher. I listen to the teachers. I listen to my doctors in the hospital. That is where the reality is. If those professionals in the field of education, health and whatever are in favour of it, it behoves everyone in this place to deliver what they need, because that is our job. We deliver what they need. We do not dictate to them and tell them what they need. That would be a very grave mistake. I support the amendment moved by the great member for Riverstone.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:35):** I contribute on behalf of The Greens in support of the motion moved by the member for Londonderry in the public interest debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member will be heard in silence.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** We support the motion. I know that the member for Newtown and the member for Balmain agree with me when I say that growing public schools by stealth through demountable classrooms is mean, inefficient and completely undercuts the needs and aspirations of students and their families and teachers. We need to fund our schools properly. It is very disappointing to hear so many politicians talk about themselves. The question is: What is the issue, what are the problems and how do we fix them? I agree with the member for Tweed that community consultation is absolutely crucial. Sadly the void seems to show us that the conversations are not with teachers or with school students and their families.

We have seen chronic underinvestment in school infrastructure over many decades. It is fair to say that New South Wales public schools are overflowing as a result of that under-resourcing. It is not me who is saying that: The Audit Office of New South Wales has reported on chronic underinvestment in New South Wales government school infrastructure and how that has affected existing assets. Basically we are seeing a situation where schools have to fundraise for basic infrastructure. Schools apply to me for Community Building Partnership grants every year for things like bubblers. Mullumbimby High School had to apply to refill a water bubbler for students. I said to them, "Are you serious? You cannot get that from the Department of Education?" I know that is happening across the State. P&Cs are having to fundraise for really basic things.

Until 2017, the department did not have a high-level, long-term school assets strategic plan. It was really based on demountable classrooms, which could sometimes be there for decades. As a way of growing schools, it reflects bean counters and a fiscally conservative way of looking at schools. Current statistics tell us that permanent classrooms in 37 per cent of government schools are fully utilised and 250 schools are operating beyond their permanent classroom capacity. This is a crisis. It is not good enough to say, "We're doing this," and, "There is this school," and point to these examples. We are talking about a whole system. The whole model of growing New South Wales public schools is based on fiscal conservatism. You have a situation where you have bean counters and architects deciding the pedagogy in schools. We have seen that with the trend of open plan schools and classrooms.

The Deputy President of the New South Wales Teachers Federation recently said, "We cannot have architects determining pedagogy." I would argue that we cannot have bean counters determining the quality of our schools, the bricks and mortar and where our students are learning. I acknowledge the work of the department under former education Minister Adrian Piccoli in overseeing the development of the School Assets Strategic Plan. But unfortunately the Audit Office is also telling us that that is not and has not been funded adequately by the Minister and the department is not getting the money it needs to deliver that. A lot of elements of the School Assets Strategic Plan are very controversial. As we heard today, closing down smaller schools and amalgamating them into super schools as a trend and a way of alleviating the crisis in school infrastructure is only going to work if communities are onside. We are definitely not seeing that in the Murwillumbah area. I disagree with the member for Tweed: The community is not saying that.

I can say that the experiment with the Ballina Coast High School had extensive community consultation, but it has been a hard road. Because what you lose are those little ecosystems, those small school villages and the culture. Then when you amalgamate into a super school, it is a very different vibe. Whether you call it Americanised or not, it is a very different place. It is time we put education, students and teachers in the school communities at the helm of decisions about school infrastructure, the maintenance of bricks-and-mortar classrooms and the planning for new schools. As long as you have accountants, architects and bean counters in charge, you are saying that best practice means nothing. You are saying that a first-class education in public schools is not achievable or desirable and basically that you are going to be constrained by fiscal matters forever. You do a disservice to the amazing education that students and teachers co-create when you approach schools in this way. It is a matter of priority. COVID has shown us that and it has shown us that you can prioritise public education. I urge the Government to do better.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:40):** In reply: We have seen today that the arrogance and cockiness of the Government really knows no bounds. This is actually very serious. If you were to go and speak to parents at Gregory Hills, Marsden Park, Edmondson Park and Randwick, where all the schools are overcrowded, and at Medowie, where they do not have a high school—

**Ms Anna Watson:** At West Dapto.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Government has not invested in public education at all at West Dapto, which is growing. If the genuine reaction of the Government, after speaking to those parents, is to come into this State's Parliament and pat itself on its back, then its level of arrogance knows no bounds. The amendment from the member for Riverstone is one of the most tone-deaf things I have seen in this place. The Government's reaction to not building schools in growing areas is to say that, actually, it is doing an incredible job. That is just incredibly tone-deaf.

The member for Riverstone should get his facts straight about many of those schools, even those in his own electorate, which—the member for Blacktown is right—is one of the fastest growing areas in the whole State of New South Wales. I share that North West Growth Sector with the member for Riverstone. He talks about Schofields Public School. He did not mention that the mismanagement in that area has meant that the school was only built for 600 students when it had more than 700 students before it was even finished. The school now has 20 demountables on the playground—a school that was built for 600, which now has 1,000 students.

He mentioned Jordan Springs Public School in my electorate, which is not even eight or nine months old, where the Government has not funded stage two. Some 230 kindergarten students have begun, classes are being taught in the library and demountables are already on the play spaces at that brand-new school—a school that we only got because the community fought for it. This Government has absolutely no credibility when it comes to building schools, particularly in the fastest growing areas of the State. Families know it and they need a better explanation. The families of Marsden Park, Gregory Hills, Schofields and around the Tallawong precinct really need and shamefully are not getting an explanation from Gladys Berejiklian, who refuses to go to these areas and explain to these parents why they are being sold pups, why they are mortgaged to the hilt to build their dream family homes and why they cannot get schools out of this Government.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....45  
Noes .....39  
Majority.....6

**AYES**

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

Griffin, J  
Gulaptis, C  
Hancock, S  
Hazzard, B  
Henskens, A  
Johnsen, M  
Kean, M  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
O'Dea, J  
Pavey, M  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G

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

**NOES**

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

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

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

**PAIRS**

Lee, G

Minns, C

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....45  
Noes .....38  
Majority.....7

**AYES**

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Barilaro, J  
Bromhead, S  
Clancy, J

Griffin, J  
Gulaptis, C  
Hancock, S  
Hazzard, B  
Henskens, A

Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G

## AYES

Conolly, K  
Constance, A  
Cooke, S (teller)  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Evans, L  
Gibbons, M

Johnsen, M  
Kean, M  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
O'Dea, J  
Pavey, M  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G

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

## NOES

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

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

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

## PAIRS

Lee, G

Minns, C

**Motion as amended agreed to.***Private Members' Statements***ROCK FISHING SAFETY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (18:03):** Yet more deaths and surf lifesavers risk their lives to save others. I call on Wollongong City Council to adopt the wearing of life jackets for rock fishermen at Hill 60 at Port Kembla. After tragic news came through last Friday night that three more fishermen were swept off the rocks at Hill 60, Port Kembla, two out of the three did not survive. Surf lifesavers, police and bystanders all leapt in to assist. Seven people in all risked their lives. Last week I spoke about the pressure being put on Surf Life Saving across the board by people either flouting the rules, not swimming between the flags, swimming fully clothed or entering the surf where the water is flat and of course entering a rip.

Wollongong City Council has refused to adopt the regulation to mandate the wearing of life jackets as a trial at Hill 60, Port Kembla. Wollongong Lord Mayor Gordon Bradbury completely rejected the idea of mandating life jackets at Hill 60. I support the member for Wollongong in calling for the adoption of a life jacket mandate in Wollongong and especially at Hill 60, Port Kembla. I give a special shout-out to Anthony Turner of the Surf Life Saving Illawarra response team for the bravery not only of his participation in the rescue but of his exhausting CPR action on one of the men—unfortunately to no avail. I again call on the Lord Mayor of Wollongong City Council to end his opposition to mandating life jackets, especially at Hill 60, Port Kembla, and get with his community in supporting the mandating of life jackets to save lives in his community and others. I encourage all residents to contact their Lord Mayor and let him know how they feel about this matter.

**THE MATRAVILLE PROJECT**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (18:05):** On 4 August last year I was asked to attend the office of the housing Minister to get a briefing on the Matraville Project. I did not know what the Matraville Project was and when I got the shortest of briefings I was gobsmacked and appalled. I told the people who were in the room that day, including officers from the Land and Housing Corporation, what I thought of their plan. It involves the

bulldozing of the Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Housing Estate, which is a completely government-owned site and consists of 308 public housing dwellings. The beauty of it is that it is the newest public housing estate in my electorate, having been built in the seventies, which is an indictment of the level of new public housing that has been built. Some estates in my electorate were built in the early fifties.

The 308 dwellings are all low-rise, one or two storeys. What does that mean? They all have backyards. That is great for retirees who live there and want to have a little yarn, but it is even better for families. The beauty of it is that it is one of the rare estates in my electorate that has houses with backyards for families. The proposal involves the complete demolition of those 308 dwellings and the erection of 1,277 new private dwellings. We will go from 308 fully public housing dwellings to 1,685 mixed dwellings and see an increase of only 100 public housing dwellings—up to 408. The clincher for the community is that it will grow from one or two storeys up to eight storeys, which is completely inappropriate. Stage two goes further. We will only get another 100 additional public housing dwellings and a total of 1,532 total private dwellings, so from 308 existing dwellings to 2,040 dwellings across eight storeys.

I have a philosophical problem with that because the *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*, a 2016 document that the Government follows when it is renewing public housing, says that the renewal is to occur by selling and refitting existing stock. The Government talks about its pipeline of infrastructure but for the Government, infrastructure does not include public housing. A tunnel costing \$14 billion to the northern beaches is being built at the moment, a big \$14 billion gift to Liberal electorates, but ask for any new money for social and affordable housing and the answer is no. None is coming from Treasury. If councils want public housing built then they have to sell an estate, knock it down, flog it off to a developer, let them build it to the sky and fill it full of inappropriate dwellings—in height, density, bulk, scale and a whole raft of amenity issues—and then they might get a minor uplift.

I have a philosophical problem with the so-called "future directions", but I have to say that one of the things that I most object to is that this is one of the newest estates. It is in pretty good nick when compared to others, particularly the Coral Sea Housing Estate. Some houses there are virtually uninhabitable, with rising damp and rotting timbers. No money is being put into the restoration or replacement of those dwellings. The Minister has settled on an easy and quick fix: She can just flog off a site to developers, let them knock themselves out creating a totally inappropriate mix at a totally inappropriate height and denude the families there of backyards. In the Randwick City Council local government area, 89 per cent of public housing dwellings are home units. Only 7 per cent are townhouses and 4 per cent are terraces, so let us knock down townhouses and terraces and put up some more home units at a site that is completely inappropriate. This is a bad development and I have told the Minister that on a number of occasions. Randwick City Council has grave concerns with it and I fear for the residents who live there, who will end up God knows where. This is a bad outcome for the community.

### MALPAS DAM UPGRADE

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:10):** Looking today at the rolling green hills of the Black Mountain area between Armidale and Guyra in the Northern Tablelands it is really hard to fathom, particularly for visitors, that just 12 months ago the region was in the grip of the worst drought anyone had ever experienced. Armidale, a city of 25,000 people just a short distance south of the Black Mountain area, was literally months away from running out of water completely—a scenario never experienced by the local community and business leaders, and indeed never anticipated. Armidale's water supply is Malpas Dam, located north-east of the village of Black Mountain, and at that time it was depleting rapidly. It was at the lowest level it had been since it was built in 1968. To the north of Black Mountain, the two dams supplying water to the community of Guyra—some 2,500 people—had been dry since mid-2019.

Pre-empting that eventuality, the State Government quite smartly—at the urging of the local community, the council and myself as local member on behalf of the community—invested \$12.8 million on a 19.6-kilometre emergency water pipeline connecting Malpas Dam to Guyra and essentially supplementing the supply. It was commissioned in October 2019 to make sure the Guyra community did not run out of water. But it was obvious then—with continued population growth, business expansion in Guyra and Armidale, and the predicted frequency of drought conditions and increasing unpredictability in the weather—that current water infrastructure and supplies would not deliver water security for Armidale or for the region. Without that, we cannot grow with certainty and attract people to relocate and businesses to expand.

Malpas Dam was completed in 1968, when Armidale's population was around 18,000. Fast-forward 60 years to today and the storage capacity of 13,000 megalitres—13 gegalitres—has not changed, but the population that relies on the dam is well over 30,000 people, nearly doubling the drawdown. Malpas was built with population growth in mind, the designs accommodating a future expansion to 26 gegalitres of water. That drought-proofing figure can be achieved if we lift the dam wall by a mere five metres. We do not have to build a new dam. If we lift it by 6.5 metres, as some of the early scoping studies have shown that we can do, then we

can gain an extra 16 or 17 gigalitres. The State Government has provided some funds to Armidale Regional Council and is working with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to establish the Malpas Dam upgrade plan road map. It outlines six key steps between last year and 2024 to achieve this augmentation or expansion of the dam.

The project is now at a critical juncture and we cannot afford to take our foot off the accelerator. That project is too important to sit idle, it is too important to delay and the time to act is now. At the moment a yield study is being conducted by the council and by the water division within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Recently I met with Mayor Ian Tiley and General Manager James Roncon from Armidale Regional Council to impress upon them the critical importance of the project to the community. If we have learned anything from the drought, it is that we must take action to ensure the security of water supply for the Armidale and Guyra communities. The future economic and social viability of those communities relies upon us learning from that drought and securing water for the future.

We cannot afford to wait another four or five years; we must act now while momentum is with us. I impressed upon the mayor and general manager the importance of that point and I eagerly await the finalised plans from the council. The council estimates that the project could cost between \$90 million and \$95 million. I do not care what the price is because the cost of doing nothing is far too great. We must act, we must lift the dam wall and we must ensure water certainty and security for our communities now and well into the future. I have invited the water Minister, Melinda Pavey, to join me in Armidale very soon to meet with the council, to see the preliminary designs, plans and costings and to impress upon the council the need to act fast, act now and get that dam wall built.

#### **LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (18:15):** I acknowledge the local residents who were recognised at this year's Liverpool City Council Australia Day Awards. Ten awards were presented on the day to individuals and small businesses that are making a difference in the local community. This year's ceremony was held virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was live streamed via Facebook and YouTube. I commend Liverpool City Council for hosting the event in a COVID-safe way whilst still making it special for the recipients. I congratulate Mr Harry Hunt, OAM, on receiving the Senior Citizen Award. Harry is a long-serving member of the Liverpool community and a continuous and generous supporter of local fundraising events, including the Ingham Institute, the Liverpool SES and Liverpool Hospital. Harry has served the community through his involvement in the Liverpool Rotary Club and the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce—where I served with him for a year—where he was the president for more than 13 years. Harry has also worked on several council committees in an effort to promote the local area as a tourist destination. Mr Hunt is a dedicated member of the local community and he is very deserving of that award.

I acknowledge Mr Paul Sillato for receiving the Fraser Environment Award. Although Paul and I do not always see eye to eye, I recognise his love of environmental conservation and the hard work that he puts into preserving the local environment. In fact, Paul has been a volunteer at the Clinches Pond Environment Group for 17 years. The group works to promote bush regeneration activities. I also recognise Mobility Masters Australia for receiving the Small Business Award. That local business, which is located in Chipping Norton, installs vehicle aids for members of the community who live with a disability. Mobility Masters goes above and beyond to help and support people and to provide them with a service that is tailored for the unique needs of each and every client. Many families and caregivers in the electorate of Holsworthy are grateful to Mobility Masters and its efforts in helping people who live with disabilities to find freedom and independence. That award is very well deserved.

I acknowledge Professor Jeremy Wilson, AO, for receiving the Health Award. He has been at Liverpool Hospital for more than 15 years and is serving currently as the Director of Medicine. Professor Wilson also heads the clinical school that is attached to Liverpool Hospital. He supports medical students, junior and senior conjoints and academics with their medical education. He was also a key figure in supporting the redevelopment and growth of Liverpool Hospital, where there has been an investment of \$790 million. I can vouch for Professor Wilson; he has definitely put in a lot of hard work for the local community in the medical field and he is an absolutely deserving recipient. Finally, I acknowledge Mr Jonathon Mayorga for receiving the Young Citizen of the Year award. He is Squadron Sergeant of the Australian Air League Moorebank Squadron—that is the highest rank that a cadet can achieve, and his leadership skills have elevated him to that position. I have met Jonathon many times because he has been a part of the Moorebank Squadron for seven years. He also leads an intern leadership development program that allows members from lower socio-economic backgrounds to gain access to free musical tuition, which is absolutely fantastic. Jonathon is already showing great community spirit and leadership qualities for such a young man.

Once again I extend my congratulations to all the recipients of the Liverpool City Council Australia Day Awards. To receive an award is an honour and a huge achievement. Although I could not attend in person,



I watched the live stream. Those locals are continuing to raise the bar in health, environmental conservation, small business and the broader community—and it absolutely shows. Those awards represent individuals and businesses that make our local community a better place to live, work and play. I thank them for their continued service. Again I commend Liverpool City Council for hosting the event virtually so that the recipients could still enjoy the ceremony, so that their families could take pride in such an achievement and so that people could take part in the Australia Day celebrations while remaining COVID-safe. I thank Liverpool City Council for making the day special.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:20):** I commend the member for Holsworthy for her fantastic private member's statement that recognised those local community members, particularly the volunteers. The Temporary Speaker may know that volunteers underpin our community. The Minister responsible for volunteering, Gareth Ward, has mentioned a number of times that over 2.1 million people in New South Wales volunteer their time in a variety of areas, as the member for Holsworthy has indicated. I also plug the website [makeadifference.volunteering.nsw.gov.au](http://makeadifference.volunteering.nsw.gov.au). I encourage anyone to go to that website and find volunteering opportunities that are available for people to help in their communities, as did those people who were acknowledged by the member for Holsworthy.

### LIVERPOOL HOSPITAL WAITING LIST

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (18:21):** I report to the House the increasing list of distressed citizens from the electorate that I represent who are waiting unacceptable lengths of time for medical treatment at Liverpool Hospital. I have known 72-year-old Abbes Tlais of Busby for a couple of decades. When I spoke to him two weeks ago he told me that his eyesight has been deteriorating and that he is going blind. The sight in his left eye is particularly limited. The solution to his condition is simple: He needs an operation to have the cataracts on his eyes removed. Mr Tlais put his name down to have the removal performed at Liverpool Hospital, and when I spoke to him he had been waiting for 13 months. Meanwhile his eyesight is deteriorating and there is no indication that an operation date will be allocated.

Mr Tlais is now becoming increasingly desperate. When he made inquiries of a specialist, he was told that an operation could be performed in a private hospital in about six weeks, but he would have to pay \$4,000 for surgery on his left eye. He is not sure that he can afford it because he does not have that amount of savings. However, he does own the home in which he lives, so he might be able to borrow against that—a 72-year-old man may have to borrow against his own home because of public hospital waiting lists. That is an example of an older citizen's quality of life significantly diminishing because of public hospital waiting lists.

Christina Kokkinis is 87 years of age and a resident of Liverpool. She requires surgery on both eyes to remove cataracts. I am advised that she has been on the public hospital waiting list for two years. Christina cannot afford to have the operation done privately; it is simply beyond her resources to find \$8,000 for both eyes. It is a particular kind of cruelty to leave an 87-year-old woman without adequate eyesight for two years. There is a double level of unfairness and disadvantage in it. The medical wait times for cataract extraction are longer in New South Wales than in the rest of the country. The national average is 98 days, while the figure for New South Wales is 236 days. However, Mr Tlais and Mrs Kokkinis have had to wait even longer than that. You wait longer in New South Wales than elsewhere in Australia for cataract removals, and you wait longer in Liverpool than in other parts of New South Wales.

It is understandable that people consider borrowing money to have those operations performed even when they cannot afford it. The pressure to fund procedures and operations privately by borrowing money is thus becoming greatest in areas where people are least able to afford it. More people have come to me with similar issues than those two examples that I have mentioned. It is not only the removal of cataracts that has serious waiting list delays. Nathan McGarry is a 21-year-old man who lives in Heckenberg. He needs to have his wisdom teeth removed in hospital whilst he is under anaesthetic, and there is some urgency to that because of infection in the teeth. Nathan is in a great deal of pain with an abscess that has developed and he cannot eat or drink properly. His GP has prescribed him antibiotics on a number of occasions to control the infection, but has become reluctant to provide a further prescription for medication. Nathan needs urgent operative dental intervention. He has been told that there is a 24-month wait for the treatment at Liverpool Hospital and that the wait at Westmead is even longer. As of yesterday he was told that he needs tooth removal immediately; he has at least 18 months to wait.

On a Friday in November Mr Tony Felgate was admitted to Liverpool Hospital, suffering from a suspected stroke. He had been rushed there by ambulance and had a scan done on arrival. He was told that they wanted to do an MRI scan. They tried to fit him in but could not because other patients needed the scan; he had to wait until Monday because Liverpool Hospital did not have the resources to perform an MRI on weekends. It had the machine but not the staff. As Tony's wife explained to me, it is a disgrace that a suspected stroke patient had to wait a full weekend for an MRI scan. All those incidents relate to lack of adequate resourcing of health facilities

in Liverpool. It is not about more buildings; more bricks are welcome, but they will not solve the problem of inadequately funded services.

Health care should not be based on postcode, but regrettably that is becoming the stark reality. These are the practical consequences of ongoing inadequate recurrent funding for Liverpool Hospital. Last year I pointed out the Liverpool Hospital medical staff council and the research conducted by the Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service, WESTIR. The base funding allocated in the activity-based funding model for Liverpool Hospital was not adequate when it commenced. Subsequent enhancements to the level of operational funding are enhancements to that inadequate base. Rather than dealing with growth or improvements, the enhancements are for things that should have been but were not in the base funding.

For that reason, new buildings—bricks and mortar—miss the real problem of inadequate funding at Liverpool Hospital. For example, the hospital could have wonderful buildings with shiny machines in them, but if the operational funding does not allow them to be used outside of business hours or on weekends, then they are not delivering the services that are needed in Liverpool. Given that the Government has refused to commit to the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into south-west Sydney health, I am pessimistic that the situation will be improved anytime soon. The residents of south-west Sydney should not be treated as mugs by the Government. They should not be treated as second-class citizens.

### BATHURST ELECTORATE PROJECTS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:26):** I note the Government's continuing investment into many projects in different local government areas in the Bathurst electorate. We have not seen such investment in a long time. The projects have been on the agenda for many organisations and many groups. The Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering the projects that are needed in our communities. I will talk about one that I was involved in a couple of weeks ago. On 6 February, a Saturday evening, we went out to the Cullen Bullen Raceway, where we saw a great night of racing. It is an example of a speedway racetrack that is looked after by a number of hardworking volunteers within the community.

The raceway does not have a large volunteer base, but it has a base of committed workers like Ray and Sue Healey, who are at that track countless times during the week to ensure that race event days run successfully. They do an amazing job. Over the past couple of years the Government has been able to invest in that facility. It has invested in the grandstand, where there have been improvements in the seating. It has invested in the concrete wall that goes around the speedway track, which has been replaced in sections, ensuring that the speedway gets its licence to race on the track each time there is a race meet. The Government has also been able to invest in the surface of the track.

On Saturday night there was an announcement of the largest investment the raceway has ever seen: The New South Wales Government is providing \$596,000 to the Cullen Bullen Recreation Reserve. The volunteers had never seen a cheque like that in their lifetimes. It means they will be able to make substantial improvements to the track. They will be able to put a concrete wall and security fencing all the way around the speedway, and improve and replace the lights that go around the track. They will be able to extend the track, which is important because extending the track now will create the opportunity to bring future meetings and other divisions into the Cullen Bullen area.

I congratulate everybody involved. The investment will ensure that the small village of Cullen Bullen is on the map when it comes to speedway events throughout the year. It will become one of the premier racing events in New South Wales. That is important because it services not only the locals who enjoy racing but also those across New South Wales and from other States who enjoy racing and come to enjoy the events. I thank the Minister for the investment that is happening there. I also thank the volunteers. The project will drive not only local employment but also the local economy.

I will talk about another project at the other end of my electorate. We have been to Cullen Bullen; let us head to Blayney. Through the \$500 million Fixing Country Bridges Program the New South Wales Government will replace three bridges in Blayney, as part of an election commitment. Just under \$750,000 will go to Blayney Shire Council to fix the Grubbendun Creek Bridge, the Limestone Creek Bridge and the Gally Swamp Bridge. That is important because they are timber bridges that get impacted when there are fires and floods. They will be replaced with concrete structures. The residents at Lyndhurst were absolutely thrilled by the announcement because they have not had that connectivity, which has prevented them from getting to schools, shops and even emergency services. They have been cut off from town. I note that the Minister has been prevented from getting to fires. The investment will make a big difference in those communities.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (18:31):** I reply on behalf of the Government. I highlight that upgrading bridges across regional New South Wales

continues to be a priority for not just the Government but also police and emergency services, who unfortunately have to respond to accidents that occur because of those historically built bridges. That is always a concern. I have visited the Bathurst electorate and seen some of the bridges there. During the bushfires I noted how badly some of them were damaged. The Government will ensure that they are replaced with a long-term investment. It is important for the safety of motorists across the State that the bridges have a longer life span.

### **MARINE RESCUE LAKE MACQUARIE**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:32):** Recent emergencies on Lake Macquarie have highlighted the urgent need for the New South Wales Government's scheduled dredging work at Swansea Channel, which is more than five months overdue. Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie responded to two very serious emergencies last week alone. Both incidents demonstrate the critical role Marine Rescue plays in keeping the community safe while enjoying the beautiful waters of Lake Macquarie. On Sunday a man was knocked off a yacht at Wangi Point in 25-knot winds. A Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie crew was on the scene to search for the man within five minutes. They found the man and commenced CPR but sadly he could not be revived.

Earlier this week Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie was called to action near Moon Island, off Swansea Heads, after receiving a mayday call from a small fishing boat that sank when it was swamped by a wave. The two fishermen on board were very lucky to be rescued by a member of the public, and their vessel was retrieved by Marine Rescue. Both of these incidents—one fatal and another that easily could have been—are examples of priority incidents for Marine Rescue. Serious accidents, medical emergencies and sinking vessels are the types of incidents that Marine Rescue should be responding to. Those types of rescues save lives and are an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars and of the thousands of hours generously contributed by Marine Rescue volunteers. However, they are not the only incidents Marine Rescue is called to attend. In fact, as Mr Temporary Speaker Piper knows, a substantial portion of the assists that Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie undertakes help yachts stuck in sand due to the Government's failure to dredge the Swansea Channel accurately.

Since the start of the year Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie has been called to just over 110 assists. At least 13 of those have been yachts grounded in the channel—that is more than one in 10 assists for a totally avoidable problem that the Government promised to fix but has not fixed. Last week Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie Commander Malcolm Druce attended the Moon Island and Wangi Point incidents. He said, "Marine Rescue must be ready and able to respond to emergencies, not tied up towing stranded vessels off the sand." The New South Wales Government was supposed to commence dredging work in September 2020. Initially it was delayed due to the tragic death of the contractor.

However, Transport for NSW said the dredging would recommence later in September. Later we were told the dredging would be finished by Australia Day. Yet, here we are in mid-February, the dredge has sat idle in Swan Bay for months and the dredging work has not been done, leaving Marine Rescue to pick up the pieces. The Government's failure to come good on its promise to dredge the channel is not only tying up precious Marine Rescue resources; it is also costing the region economically. COVID-19 has led to a surge in travel to regional areas, but our community is missing out on the economic benefits because holiday-makers know the channel is not navigable.

This week one yacht owner, Michele Goodyer, told me the reputational damage to the lake is already done. The word is out that the channel is not navigable. As a result, many people are avoiding the channel. Trudi Butler, the Secretary of Lake Macquarie Yacht Club Cruising Division, shared further details. She said that about 20 vessels from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club from Pittwater were planning a multiday visit, but they cannot get in. In May a large contingent from the Shag Islet Cruising Yacht Club is due to spend a week in town, but will not be able to come in if the dredging has not been finalised. That will be the case for many others, as the cruising season kicks off this month and vessels sail up and down the east coast of Australia.

Lake Macquarie is the largest saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere. It is more than twice the size of Sydney Harbour. It is an extremely popular destination for vessels of all kinds, yet many cannot access it because they cannot get in. If they do get in, they may not be able to get out. All blame for that disgrace lies at the feet of the New South Wales Government, which has failed to provide a permanent dredging solution for the Swansea Channel. I urge the Government to include dredging for the Swansea Channel in this year's budget, so that everyone in New South Wales can experience beautiful Lake Macquarie.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I acknowledge Marine Rescue and the work it has done in recent times. The accident that the member for Swansea referred to was tragic. I thank the member for her support for our local Marine Rescue.

## STAMP DUTY

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (18:38):** I offer part two of my analysis of the Treasurer's never-ending tax on the family home, politically spun as stamp duty reform that promises to deliver every economic benefit under the sun except for the truth. The never-ending annual tax on the family home can, and almost certainly will, result in higher property prices and make it even harder for young aspiring home owners to enter the market. The best way to deal with a snake oil salesman is to expose their scam to scientific analysis. Most people probably would rent and try to save some money to buy a property. Let us analyse how that plays out for renters who are trying to save money for their first home in East Hills.

We will call our aspiring home owner "Scotty". Scotty works in marketing and is renting while trying to save a deposit to buy a home. Under the never-ending land tax on the family home proposal, investors are liable to pay \$1,500 annually plus 1 per cent on the unimproved land value. For investors, the ideal land-to-value ratio sits somewhere between 50 per cent and 70 per cent. That is, if a property is worth a million bucks, the land on its own is worth somewhere between \$500,000 and \$700,000. A fair measure is about 60 per cent. SQM Research property data shows rent for a three-bedroom house in East Hills is about \$567 per week. The average house price in East Hills is about \$1.036 million, but I will round it down to \$1 million for analytical purposes.

An investor has the option of paying \$40,000 up-front in stamp duty costs on a \$1 million house in East Hills, which I understand is not tax deductible. Alternatively, they can choose the Treasurer's snake oil—the never-ending annual land tax on the family home option. For an investment property in East Hills, that equates to \$1,500 plus 1 per cent of the unimproved land value of \$600,000, or \$6,000 per year, equating to \$7,500 in total. The annual \$7,500 tax bill is an ongoing operating expense that would be tax deductible on the investor's annual income as stated in the consultation paper. The investor—in this case Scotty's landlord—chooses the Treasurer's snake-oil option.

The landlord will avoid the up-front capital cost, will get a deduction on their annual income and, of course, will pass on the \$7,500 annual land tax bill through higher rent, which equates to \$144 a week—a triple benefit for the investor who would always ride on the horse called "Financial Self-interest". Here it gets tricky for Scotty from marketing, who is struggling to save for his deposit. He will now bear the brunt of the Treasurer's never-ending annual tax on the family home.

As I said, rent for the three-bedroom house in East Hills is \$567, but I will round that down to \$550. To recoup his land tax bill, the landlord raises Scotty's rent by \$144 per week. Scotty now has to pay \$694 per week in rent—a staggering 26 per cent increase. I will be conservative and say that Scotty's landlord is benevolent and decides to pass on only 75 per cent of the land tax bill to his struggling renter. Scotty's rent goes up by 20 per cent or \$108 a week. To be even more conservative, I will say that Scotty's landlord is super generous in only passing on half of the land tax bill, which is \$72. Scotty's rent has just gone up by 13 per cent to \$622 per week. However conservative the analysis, the weekly rent in East Hills and everywhere else is going only one way, and that is up. There goes Scotty's deposit for a new home!

The increase in rent will reduce an aspiring home owner's ability to save, making it even harder for them to enter the property market. If the Treasurer is so confident that property prices and rents will not increase under his never-ending annual tax on the family home, I challenge him to put it in writing and stake his job on it. The Treasurer is right when he says that his snake-oil annual land tax on the family home is the Netflix of property tax because people can be assured that every year an increasing land tax bill will be streaming into their letterbox along with higher rents. But unlike with Netflix, they will not be able to unsubscribe.

This is the Goulburn SuperMax of bad taxes: Once a person is in, there is no room to move and no way to escape. They are locked in to pay a tax on their family home forever. As we all know, this Treasurer always talks the big reform game, but he could not even deliver the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. He will end up surpassing a former Liberal Treasurer and will be known as being neither the tip nor the iceberg when it comes to political conviction. Members should stay tuned: My evidence-based analysis on this never-ending tax on the family is to be continued.

## KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE SCHOOL AWARDS

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (18:43):** Each year I look forward to celebrating the achievements of our young people at our local schools' end-of-year presentation days and award nights. The COVID-19 pandemic required our schools and students to adapt overnight to restrictions and to shift from the classroom to online learning. In November it was a cause for celebration when it was announced that parents and carers were permitted onto school grounds in a COVID-safe way to take part in their child's end-of-year presentation days. Although some of our local schools opted to have their ceremonies without parents and community members present, in December I was able to attend 15 presentation days across Ku-ring-gai. It was

fantastic to be present for the recognition of our local students from Beaumont Road, Gordon West, Killara, Pymble, Warrawee, Waitara, Wahroonga, and West Pymble public schools, as well as St Leo's Catholic College, Barker College, Knox Grammar School, Pymble Ladies' College and Ravenswood School for Girls.

I was honoured to present a number of awards to students who had distinguished themselves in academic, sport, performing arts and citizenship pursuits. I also had the privilege of witnessing some outstanding musical performances, both live and pre-recorded. From the musical items at Barker College, singing and dancing at Killara Public School, a brilliant violinist at Waitara Public School and school orchestras at many schools, all performances were magnificent. Not only were the students delighted to be back on the stage again, but we were all reminded of the joy of live music. Following the award proceedings the students at Beaumont Road, Killara Public, Knox Grammar Prep and Warrawee Public officially inducted their year 6 2021 school leaders. I congratulate all students who received a leadership position. I am sure that they will return the trust that their school community has placed in them.

I was amazed by the diligence and flexibility that the schools showed in managing the pandemic. It was a year we did not expect. I thank the many proud parents and families who attended either in person or zoomed in from home, work and even around the world to take part in the events. For our schools to be able to hold these end-of-year presentation days was a reminder that we have managed a level of normality that few communities around the world have achieved. It was an uplifting three weeks attending these assemblies, and I encourage all students to continue to learn and develop their individual talents. Whether they received an award or not, if they did your best that is all anyone can ask. I thank each school for their annual invitations and I congratulate all award recipients.

Like many of us in this place, we were not able to visit our schools regularly last year, so I look forward to visiting our local schools in the months ahead. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the year 12 cohort of 2020, who displayed a tremendous sense of unity, resilience and perseverance last year. Ku-ring-gai has the highest enrolment in New South Wales of students who sit the HSC. Despite the hurdles of 2020, to see our students come out with the results they worked so hard for was incredible. They performed on par with what we would expect in a normal year.

At the end of last year I had the great privilege of hosting a lunch at Parliament House for the Ku-ring-gai year 12 school captains of 2020. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing their views on the pandemic. As always they had plenty of interesting questions and ideas for me to consider. It was a very enjoyable day and I was impressed by the young leaders, who are without doubt ready for their next challenge. Congratulations are also in order for the seven Ku-ring-gai students who received a State first in course achievement in the 2020 HSC: Declan Zammit from Barker College, Allison Lee and Serena Catherine Pek from Hornsby Girls High School, Jason Zhihao Lin from Knox Grammar School, Sung-Jun Ki from Normanhurst Boys High School, as well as Sascha Duggan and Akina Li from Pymble Ladies' College. I wish the class of 2020 all the best for what is to come this year, whether they go on to study at university or TAFE, commence work or take a gap year.

Ku-ring-gai is home to some of the best comprehensive and selective public, independent and Roman Catholic schools in our country. It does not matter which school you go to, the goal is the same: A good education is one that prepares our young people to meet life's challenges. I thank our teachers, staff, volunteers, parents, carers, family members and friends who are the custodians of our youth and who went above and beyond in a challenging school year. To the students and teachers who courageously travelled through the trials and tribulations of 2020, it was truly a cheerful end to the year and I wish them all the best for 2021 and beyond.

#### EMILY CROCKFORD

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:48):** Today I pay tribute to Emily Crockford, who I have named the Hornsby Local Woman of the Year. Emily, who is living with Down syndrome, is taking the art world by storm and living her dream of being a professional artist. She has shown me, and everyone in Hornsby, that if you dream big, anything really is possible. Over the past 12 months Emily has been selected as an Archibald finalist, taken out a top national art prize and had her murals chosen for projects right around the city. I believe this is just the start as her star continues to rise. I first met Emily when she attended Studio ARTES in my electorate of Hornsby. Emily has a natural talent and it was not long before she was snapped up to be one of the founding members of Studio A, which provides artists with an intellectual disability the opportunities, support and professional development needed to become successful artists.

In 2020 she did what many people only dream of: Her artwork was selected for the finals of the Archibald awards. Her portrait was a tribute to her late father, who passed away in January last year. The painting was a selfie that included all her special memories of her dad. The large painting featured botanical flowers—a favourite of her dad. You could also see the model planes that he loved to build. Emily painted the portrait in his old workshop, which is now her art studio. I was so impressed when I saw this hanging in the NSW Art

Gallery. I congratulate Emily on making her first Archibald awards. There are many artists who never make it this far. It is truly a remarkable achievement.

Late last year she was also the recipient of the Australian Council National Arts and Disability Award for an Emerging Artist. She was awarded this prestigious award for her ability to transcend barriers and for her outstanding contribution to the Australian artistic landscape. The award, which came with \$20,000 prize money, is national recognition of Emily's talent and her work to date. If you travel around the city of Sydney you will see Emily's work all over the city. *Midnight Zoo* and *Sydney Opera House at Night*, painted in 2017, were chosen for the City of Sydney's creative hoardings program, which provides opportunities for artists to showcase their work on a large scale. Her work, with its bright colours and bold design, certainly stands out. I encourage all members to keep a lookout when they are walking around the city.

Emily is not afraid of a large canvas and was commissioned to paint a 39-metre mural at Westpac's Concord offices. This was filmed as part of an ABC documentary series on Studio A. I was also part of this series with artist Daniel Kim, who painted my portrait that hangs in my Hornsby electorate office. I also have a portrait painted by Emily in 2016, which I suspect is continuing to increase in value with her career. There is also the fact that there is a lot more hair on the subject's head that is no longer present. Emily, along with other artists, created *Bird Life Jungle Disco* in 2019 at the University of Technology, Sydney. Her murals are also on hoardings for Lendlease at Barangaroo and she recently unveiled her work *Oysters Eating Rainbows* for the new WestConnex M5 motorway.

Her paintings can also be seen in the S. H. Ervin Gallery in Sydney, and she exhibited in Suburbia in 2018 and the year before in the Good Neighbours exhibition. Emily has been an artist-in-residence at Cicada Press, the UNSW Art and Design, and Koskela as well as collaborating with brands like Corban & Blair, and One Another. At just 35 years old she already has an impressive resume. With her determination, leadership and passion for her art I know she will have an amazing career ahead of her. She has also shown us that no matter what your dreams you should work hard, aim high and never give up. She is an inspiration. I am proud to have been able to give her this award in recognition of her achievements. Congratulations to Emily, the Hornsby Woman of the Year.

#### MARSDEN PARK HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (18:52):** This evening I speak about an issue that is of great concern to the growing electorate that I represent in the north-west of Sydney. I speak of the promised high school at Marsden Park, an area in western Sydney that is experiencing an enormous amount of growth. Prior to the last election, on the eve of the 2019 election, the communities of Marsden Park were promised a new high school, but the site in Newpark Estate is still sitting empty. Parents are becoming increasingly frustrated about that. The high school site has been provided completely free of charge to the Government. All it has to do is build the school. Despite this, the Liberal Government in New South Wales has provided no time line to the community, or budgeted anything for this much-needed high school.

The families in my community are rightly asking: Why is it that the Government thinks it is okay to promise a school before the election and not deliver it? It is one of the fastest-growing areas of Sydney, particularly for first home buyers and young families. Let us look at the growth in north-west Sydney: Elara estate and Newpark estate in Marsden Park; the Clydesdale estate in Marsden Park; Akuna Vista in the newly named Nirimba Fields; and thousands and thousands of more homes in Riverstone, Schofields, Rouse Hill and Box Hill. This area of Sydney—north-west Sydney—has been atrociously planned by this New South Wales Liberal Government and the Northbourne Public School in Elara is a case in point.

The community had to fight to get Northbourne Public School. All the while, Marsden Park Public School on the other side of Richmond Road grew more than five times its original size with almost the whole school in demountables. Northbourne Public School was supposed to be built by 2020. The Government then delayed it until mid-2021 and needed a pop-up demountable school for the start of 2021, supposedly for up to 480 students. But then the enrolments hit 800, so the New South Wales Government thought it would be wise to tell parents they would have to bus half the school across Richmond Road every day to learn in other demountables at Marsden Park Public School. Imagine being a parent and hearing that.

We fought against that too, and now at least all the students are able to learn together without the chaotic bussing between the schools. Now we have 800 students in a demountable school waiting for a permanent school to be built around them and an empty block of dust instead of a high school. The costly mess caused by a lack of planning is a hallmark of this Government's decade in office. Those opposite have not learnt and the same problems plague suburbs right across Sydney. Whether it is Jordan Springs, Mulgoa Rise in Glenmore Park, Box Hill, Schofields, Gregory Hills, Oran Park, Edmondson Park or any number of other suburbs, the Liberals leave working families in growing areas without basic infrastructure.

In Marsden Park working families are simply asking for basic services; it is infrastructure that should have been planned from the very start. The Government cannot say it does not know how many families will move into an area. It approves the planning and collects the stamp duty; it knows how many people are moving into new communities. It is past time the delays to Marsden Park High School were ended and the Government's promise to our community was honoured. The petition I started with the community to Premier Gladys Berejiklian, asking her to honour her promise and stop delaying the high school in Marsden Park, is reaching the community and gaining lots of support. It got over 850 signatures in one week.

Under the Liberals, it is sadly becoming commonplace in new suburbs for residents to have to fight their own government to get the most basic facilities and infrastructure for their families. They are actually not asking for much; they are just asking for what they were promised. I urge all those families fed up with the empty promises from this Liberal Government to sign the petition on my Facebook page and help get this high school built now. Those families deserve basic infrastructure from this Government.

#### **MYALL LAKES PUBLIC SAFETY NETWORK SITES**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (18:57):** I inform the House that emergency services organisations [ESOs] across Myall Lakes will experience enhanced operational capabilities, network availability and improved resilience thanks to the completion of 10 public safety network [PSN] sites in the region. The completed sites include Cabbage Tree Mountain, Mount Chapman, Coolongolook, Forster, Gangat, Mount Marie in Tapin Tops National Park, Taree, Napiac, Nerong State Forest and Smiths Lake. A new solar site located at Mount Marie was the first of several planned solar sites within the public safety network across New South Wales.

It is a great result for the Myall Lakes community that the Government has not only completed building those new PSN sites but also delivered the first solar site. It is a critical improvement for our first responders, who will now operate on a more reliable and efficient network during disasters, when every second counts. The installation of those public safety network sites is another way the New South Wales Government is supporting our region to ensure that we are more resilient and better equipped to face future natural disasters. The solar site will use state-of-the-art infrastructure to support our emergency services teams, with mission-critical communications capacity when they need it most.

An integrated communications network for emergency services, the PSN is under expansion across the State through the Critical Communications Enhancement Program. The Minister for Customer Service said the completion of the sites provides a tremendous boost for local ESOs and their teams in their efforts to save lives and protect communities. An expanded network with improved functionality and interoperability is critical for our first responders. Equipping ESOs with the best available critical communications network enables their teams to keep our communities safe. The New South Wales Government is investing more than \$600 million in critical communications infrastructure to expand the PSN's footprint across New South Wales, representing the biggest investment in the network in two decades. Next to Australia's 000 emergency hotline, the PSN is the most critical communications network in New South Wales.

To put that into context, on one day during the fires last summer in the week that a national emergency was declared there were over 50 fires in my electorate all at once. Any one of them would normally be a section 44 and any one of them could have been spotting and creating other fires. During that time the Pacific Highway was shut and many other arterial roads, regional roads and local roads were closed. Houses and facilities were burning. Rural Fire Service units from all over New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory were on the ground helping. We had firefighting aeroplanes and helicopters, spotting aeroplanes and army helicopters. We had Fire and Rescue, locally and from metropolitan areas. Roads were closed and we had police on those roads and SES and MidCoast Council workers on the road barriers.

When day turned to night, flames were spreading from one side of the road to the other side and fire crews had to drive through them; they needed to communicate with each other. In hindsight, one would think they should have been able to do so but they could not. The police could not talk to Fire and Rescue, Fire and Rescue could not talk to the Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service could not talk to the helicopters—not at a brigade level; they could at communications. When an aeroplane or helicopter needs to be told that they are dropping in the wrong place, when the police need to be told in advance to open a road for a truck coming through, and when there are things that need communications, logistics and strategies for fighting fires, talking to each other is needed and we could not do that. Through this policy and program, all those bodies will now be able to communicate in real time and not have to go through someone else to get a message to each other. I congratulate the Government on the program.

**IAN LONGBOTTOM****Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (19:02):**

I take this opportunity to introduce a man who has had an immeasurable impact on the Lane Cove community. On behalf of my community, it gives me great pleasure to nominate Ian Longbottom for the NSW Government Community Service Award—an award that should do justice to his unwavering commitment and dedication to my local community. Born in 1946, Ian gained accounting qualifications from Sydney's Technical College at Ultimo. He has held a diverse number of professional roles, which culminated in senior executive positions within the cosmetic industry and later presented him with the opportunity to work in a variety of roles in Tokyo and California. However, in 1984, after 12 years of expatriate life, Ian returned to Sydney with his family and accepted the esteemed position of managing director at Hardy Brothers.

In addition to his senior executive roles within the professional world, Ian has dedicated 21 years of his time and effort to a variety of roles in the service of the public, demonstrating to the local community within his respective roles as a councillor and mayor his qualities of patience, respect and intelligence. During that time, he advocated strongly for the development and growth of the community as a whole, especially the development of the Lane Cove Aquatic Centre. Ian joined the board of the Lane Cove Community Aid service, known today as Sydney Community Services, and has held a variety of executive positions over his tenure.

This organisation has become the backbone of the local community by providing care and support to our most vulnerable population group. Ian remains on the board of Sydney Community Services. This highlights his strong community values, which are expressed through his involvement with institutions that make positive ethical impacts on our lives. In 1993 Ian founded *The Village Observer*, a monthly magazine that circulates to every home in the municipality of Lane Cove. Ian was the owner, editor and publisher. This profound commitment to the electorate of Lane Cove highlights his dedication to remaining active within the community in a positive way. In June 2012 Ian was appointed as chair of the NSW Property Services Advisory Council, where his effective leadership and high regard in the community led to his reappointment annually until 2015. Ian's dedication and value to the community has been emphasised through the volunteer roles he has undertaken, where his passion for improving the community is evident.

As a member of the Lane Cove Youth Centre board, Ian has shown his commitment to help provide much-needed support for the community's next generation. He was also the director of the Rotary Club of Lane Cove, a club that is dedicated to integrity, philanthropy and leadership within the community. This shows Ian's passion for his community and the high regard with which the community holds him. On behalf of the residents of the electorate of Lane Cove, I thank Ian for his valued service in public life—long may it continue. The strong ethical and community values he has displayed throughout his life have made him the perfect candidate for this award. It is my pleasure to nominate Ian for the 2020 NSW Government Community Service Award. God bless Ian and his family always.

**INNER WEST REHABILITATION SERVICES**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:06):** I speak on an issue that many local residents in my electorate have a close and personal connection to: treatment and support for those who use illicit drugs. The inner west is home to leading addiction and rehabilitation services, including Odyssey House, MetroRehab in Petersham, United Gardens Clinic and IOH in Ashfield. I acknowledge the hardworking staff, who provide critical support and care for people struggling with addiction. Their work saves lives, and it goes a long way to reduce the stigma and disadvantage that many drug users face.

In the lead-up to the State budget, my office received many emails from local residents calling on the Treasurer to provide recurrent funding for alcohol and drug treatment services in Dubbo. The emails were coordinated by Fair Treatment, a campaign formed by the Uniting Church that has the backing of over 60 partner organisations. The campaign calls for increased access to treatment services, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales, and the introduction of compassionate, health-based responses to drug dependency. The lack of access to these critical services was highlighted in the powerful documentary *Half a Million Steps*, which is the distance a person in regional New South Wales may have to travel to access the drug treatment they need.

The documentary shows the resilience, passion and tenacity of those in our community who are struggling with drug dependency. It is also a powerful reminder to members to treat drug users with respect and dignity, listen to the evidence and recognise illicit drug use for what it is: a complex health issue that demands a compassionate and pragmatic response. I was pleased that in the recent State budget the Government committed \$7.5 million to a detoxification and rehabilitation centre in Dubbo. I also note that the budget purports to provide \$304 million for alcohol and drug treatment services across New South Wales.



Despite this new funding, the Government was very late to the party with regard to this issue. It lagged behind the Commonwealth, which had already committed \$3 million to build a 15-bed rehabilitation centre and an eight-bed detoxification unit, and it announced the funding well after Dubbo Regional Council had committed the land for the much-needed facility. Dubbo deputy mayor and local barrister Stephen Lawrence said on the matter:

Let there be no misapprehension here. This announcement is a consequence of the vigorous and effective community advocacy led by the Dubbo Regional Council. The reality is New South Wales is suffering from an acute shortage of drug treatment services and as welcome as the Dubbo announcement was, much more is needed. These needs should be met by proper public policy and government planning. That this has become a function of local councils in regional NSW is truly an indictment on the National Party. They have proven to be so out of touch that councils in their heartland seats are having to campaign for the provision of basic health services.

It is clear that there is a rump within the Coalition that is determined to put ideology before evidence when it comes to drug policy. Late last year I was pleased to read that the Attorney General and other Ministers were advocating in Cabinet for a more sensible approach to the issue, including issuing warnings and fines for the possession of small amounts of drugs. This kind of reform would go a long way to ending the failed war on drugs and diverting people away from the criminal justice system.

However, I was disappointed—if not surprised—to hear the same old voices defending the status quo. Opponents of the reform do not understand that illicit drug policy is another example of the community being far ahead of their elected representatives. Many local residents have contacted me to express their support for the reform, especially as the Australian Capital Territory is now leading the way on this issue by proposing legislation to effectively decriminalise illicit drug use and States like Oregon in the US have moved in the same direction. I call on the Government to respond to the recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' with legislation that is rooted in evidence and compassion and not revert to the same old ideology that costs lives. If we are to respond effectively to the challenge of illicit drugs, we must embrace bold reform. We must also support programs that are proven to work, whether they be rehabilitation centres in the bush or the Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Kings Cross.

Finally, I express my disappointment about recent media comments from the Kings Cross Liquor Accord, which called for the relocation of the injecting centre due to the negative impact drug users have had on the area. This attack was misinformed and baseless. It fails to meet basic community standards and ignores the critical role the centre has played in supporting the Kings Cross community and saving lives for the past 20 years. I call on the accord to apologise, listen to medical and other experts in the field, and consider how desperately some communities are fighting for drug and alcohol services.

#### **AUSTRALIA DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (19:11):** On Sunday 31 January 2021 I had the great pleasure of attending the opening ceremony for the establishment of the Australia Development and Research Centre of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This special celebration was hosted by the N.S.W. Indo-China Chinese Association at the Tien Hau Temple in Canley Vale to highlight Hunan province in China. The exhibition included culturally significant songs, dances, men's and women's clothing, art, calligraphy and so much more. It was a remarkable way to showcase the wide array of culture and heritage that originates from the province. The centre aims to ensure that future generations have not only an understanding of but also an affinity for the costumes, cultures and heritage of their forefathers and the numerous ethnic groups that make up the multicultural Australia that we all know and love.

All members will agree that the preservation of cultural heritage is paramount. However, it is equally important to ensure that we educate and impart knowledge to future generations to guarantee that culture, heritage and traditions are never lost. More than 40 years ago the N.S.W. Indo-China Chinese Association established its base of operations at Haymarket in Sydney. It then decided to move to Canley Vale, where it has been ever since. The association has a longstanding history as a hardworking organisation that diligently supports and focuses on the needs of the local community. As the member for Cabramatta, I am incredibly proud of the achievements of the N.S.W. Indo-China Chinese Association. I am thankful for the continued service and support it provides to families throughout my electorate.

The establishment of the Australia Development and Research Centre of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is a wonderful achievement that will greatly benefit the community for many generations to come. The association has always supported and emphasised the need for social inclusion, awareness and support for one another, and it does its upmost to help its local community, irrespective of their culture or heritage. The establishment of this new centre only doubles-down and reinforces its promotion of social and cultural inclusion for all. On behalf of the Cabramatta electorate, I commend and congratulate the NSW Indo-China Chinese Association President

Mr Henry Wu, Chairman Mr To Ha Huynh, OAM, members of the board and everyone who contributed to this fantastic program on their ongoing hard work, dedication and generosity.

### REGIONAL MOBILE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (19:14):** Last week my colleague the member for Barwon brought forth a public interest debate on the issue of regional mobile and digital technology. The Government chose to amend the motion to skew the facts. It erased from the motion that mobile and digital connectivity in regional, rural and remote New South Wales was grossly inadequate. Surprisingly, the Government also erased from the motion that without adequate mobile and digital technology businesses suffer and our children's educational opportunities would be limited. If members of the Government had visited the community of Tilpa, like I did last year, and spoken to the community about their children's educational challenges due to poor communication, then they would know that my colleague's motion was entirely appropriate.

If members of the Government had been with me at Peak Hill when the mobile network crashed and businesses could not trade because EFTPOS would not work, they would have an understanding of why my colleague brought the motion to the House. Mobile network blackouts are not uncommon, so let us spare a thought for people living out there who are trying to buy groceries and pay bills. How are businesses supposed to trade and keep their doors open? Reliable communications are taken for granted in the city, but in the bush it is just another example of the city-country divide. The Government amended the motion by patting itself on the back, stating that the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government has made record investments—referring to the \$50 million Connecting Country Communities Fund and the \$400 million Regional Digital Connectivity program.

Based on the mobile blackspots I pass through on a daily basis in my electorate of Orange, the Government's self-adulation is far too premature. The truth of the Government's actual investments in its Connecting Country Communities Fund and the Regional Digital Connectivity program emerged in the ensuing public interest debate. Just a few months ago I received the Deputy Premier's reply to a question I asked about the delivery of his Government's Regional Digital Connectivity program. We were advised that in the past two years the Government had invested only \$39 million of the promised \$400 million—less than 10 per cent. That is nothing to pat oneself on the back for; a kick in the pants would be more appropriate. The Government is quick to promise and slow to deliver. This meagre delivery has yielded just 15 new communication towers across the Orange, Murray and Barwon electorates, an area that covers half the State. That is not anywhere near enough to eliminate mobile blackspots in those electorates, as promised by the Government.

As recently as today we heard the Deputy Premier speak in question time about remote working and working from home. He said that the Government wants to attract big business to the regions. I agree, but to do that we need the framework to support businesses. That means improving digital connectivity and eliminating mobile blackspots. In fact, I only need to drive a few kilometres from the edge of the City of Orange to lose mobile reception, and that is on a major regional highway. The liveability, productivity and safety of a community is reliant on available and reliable communications. Communication and transport infrastructure are key elements to fostering the growth of rural and regional New South Wales, and are arguably the most important. Connectivity and accessibility to the world beyond is essential to provide confidence for business establishment in the regions. Blackspot free communication is needed to unlock the cultural, social and economic potential of country New South Wales.

It is well documented that unreliable or unavailable digital telecommunications is a barrier to the establishment of business in regional New South Wales. It is also a barrier to levelling the business playing field and supporting business innovation. Businesses cannot operate through the bush telegraph. We are living in the twenty-first century, and for regional New South Wales to be a part of that it needs twenty-first century communication. The Dish at Parkes was communicating with astronauts back in 1969, but more than 50 years later Peak Hill, just a few kilometres up the road, can drop off the communications grid. The solution is simple: Rural and regional New South Wales need communication infrastructure with technology to meet the demands of our citizens, wherever they live and work.

When the pandemic hit, we encouraged people to work from home. For many people in cities and large towns this was a simple transition, as they have access to reliable digital and telecommunications. That is just not the case for many people in the country. Catastrophic disasters in recent years have reinforced the need for mobile communications to provide early warning, but the prevalence of blackspots across my electorate of Orange and beyond is of serious concern, especially in the event of bushfires. We know that social isolation is a factor in poor mental health. An increasing number of people have been isolated as a result of COVID-19. For those with reliable communications it has been tough enough; those without have struggled, some enough to have been pushed over the edge. I applaud the Government's support for mental health initiatives, such as the Virtual Psychologist. That is great for those who have mobile or internet access, but for those who do not, it is useless. Rural and regional New South Wales need communications infrastructure on the ground, not in a press release.

## EUTHANASIA

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:20):** I discuss a major issue of concern to the residents of the Prospect electorate. Euthanasia in New South Wales was raised late last year in the media by the member for Sydney. We know that he is canvassing across both sides of the aisle and has spoken about his bill as a priority for 2021. Those backroom discussions must be brought to light to allow all elected representatives and the New South Wales public the opportunity to properly scrutinise and debate this critical issue. I firmly believe it needs to be dealt with swiftly and respectfully in 2021 by all political parties in this House. Over a number of years I have spoken to many leaders across New South Wales to canvass their opinions on this issue, both within our faith communities as well as members of the medical profession. I have heard stories about the traumatic time for people as they care for loved ones approaching the end of their lives. I have also continually heard the view, which I share, that human life in all of its forms is a gift.

From my conversations, the overwhelming belief is that it is our responsibility, as caring members of a compassionate society, to guide our nearest and dearest gently into the next life with love and care. I have also spoken with many frontline health workers and heard their concerns about euthanasia. It would take away a sacred bond between our doctors, nurses and patients. It attacks the very fabric of what we strive to achieve with our healthcare system: to do no harm and to help the weak, sick and vulnerable. It should be noted that the Australian Medical Association has frequently spoken against euthanasia in debates around the country, and it continues to do so, including about the enduring importance of the oath to do no harm. I am firmly against any law that would allow a medical professional or any other person to prematurely end the life of a patient. This Parliament must understand and be mindful of the consequences of any reforms; of what we would be asking of our healthcare professionals and their families when there are viable alternatives to euthanasia.

Across the Prospect electorate there are 15 aged-care homes that serve our community, but there are no dedicated palliative care wards at Westmead, Blacktown or Fairfield hospitals. Let me be clear: No-one wants to see their loved ones suffering or in pain. I am not suggesting that we let members of our community needlessly suffer without appropriate pain management. Sitting with a loved one during their final stages of life is an agonising journey for families. From personal experience during the final stages of my father's battle with cancer, I know the suffering this can cause. But I firmly believe that the answer lies in further funding for health, and aged and palliative care, as well as education across the sector to better support those who work with patients as they approach the end of life. That would ensure that we protect our sick and elderly, rather than look for other options that fail to preserve the sanctity and preciousness of human life. We must consider the position we would place ourselves in if we allowed assisted suicide to become common practice in New South Wales.

No matter what type of safeguards we attempt to introduce, there would always be the risk that vulnerable patients or the elderly would be taken advantage of and treated poorly. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety found that a staggering 39.1 per cent of elderly Australians living in residential aged-care facilities experienced elder abuse. This is a blight on, and an embarrassment to, all of us. It would be utter madness to pass a law to legalise assisted dying when we know what terrible abuse can and does occur to our elderly. There needs to be trust in our healthcare system—trust that all involved will care for Australians in need, at all stages of life. Euthanasia would remove that trust between the healthcare system, family members and our community. All sides of politics must not be misguided into letting euthanasia be permitted in New South Wales. I respectfully call on the member for Sydney to be transparent and not to do backroom deals. I call on him to declare his intentions about this bill. This Parliament must defend the sanctity of human life. We must not fall into the trap of permitting State-sanctioned suicide. I thank the House.

## HAWKESBURY DISTRICT NATIONAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:25):** I addressed the Hawkesbury District National Service Association's recent memorial service at Ham Common, Richmond, to honour and remember our former national servicemen. I reflected on a veteran very close to me—John Harold Preston, my father-in-law, who on 15 March 1944, at the age of just 18, enlisted as a Leading Aircraftman with the Royal Australian Air Force, service number 162070. Harry, as he was affectionately known, had high expectations to train as a pilot, but after rigorous testing it was identified that he was colourblind, so that personal development opportunity was quickly squashed. Basic training was in Wagga Wagga at that time and then, eventually, he boarded a ship from Sydney to Borneo and found himself in the Borneo campaign, a 4½-month operation from May to August 1945, that was the last major allied battle in the South West Pacific Area during World War II.

Forces from Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Netherlands fought against Japan. The plans for the Allied attacks were collectively known as Operation Oboe and the aim was to destroy Imperial Japanese forces in, and to re-occupy, the Dutch East Indies, the Kingdom of Sarawak, Brunei, Labuan, British North Borneo and the southern Philippines. Borneo in particular was considered at the time a strategic location for its natural resources, especially oil. There were six stages to Operation Oboe; stage two was the Battle

of Balikpapan. The amphibious landings took place on 1 July 1945 a few miles north of Balikpapan, on the island of Borneo. The landing had been preceded by heavy bombing and shelling by Australian and United States air and naval forces, and that is where Harry Preston came in.

It was Harry's job as a Leading Aircraftman with the 6th Air Construction Squadron to drive a D9 bulldozer up and down the makeshift landing strips for the Allied fighter planes to land, refuel and then head back into the sky to fight the enemy. Each time Harry would try to smooth out the runway with his bulldozer, the Japanese would fly over and bomb the strip many, many times over. As Harry saw the enemy approaching he would take cover under the bulldozer—he figured that he had a far better chance of survival by sheltering under the tracks of heavy equipment than making a run for it into open space. The bombing gave Harry tinnitus but he never, ever made a fuss about it.

The Japanese were eventually outnumbered and outgunned in the battle, but, like the other confrontations of the Pacific War, many of them fought to the death. Major operations had ceased by 21 July. Australian casualties were significantly lighter than they had suffered in previous campaigns. The battle began only a few weeks before the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which effectively ended the war. Japan surrendered while the Australians were combing the jungle for stragglers. Following the surrender the brigades were committed to occupation duties until around February 1946. On 12 March 1946, Harry Preston was discharged. His Certificate of Service and Discharge notes that his character on discharge was "very good".

He headed back to Bonnyrigg, with no fanfare and no red carpet. Harry just got on with the business of living and locked away the vividness of the battlelines in his memory. He was just happy to be in his homeland. He met a beautiful girl named June, who reluctantly went on a date with Harry. I recall Harry telling me that he was smitten from the first time he met her. They were married for 67 years, had two children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Harry made lifelong friends in Borneo; one of them was Bill Hoad. For 40 years June and Harry would travel to and from Western Australia, where Bill lived, to talk about their experiences in their life's journey.

Every Anzac Day, Harry attended the dawn service with around 10 close family members. Since Harry's passing, his son Peter proudly wears his father's medals and, in time, my son James will honour his grandfather by wearing Harry's medals on special commemorative occasions. I am reminded of the solemnness of memorial services like the one I attended on Sunday and of the deep appreciation I have for our veterans, who showed courage, mateship, sacrifice and endurance. I thank Harry Preston and all who have served our nation throughout its history for their contribution to this country's freedom. They make us proud and we are forever grateful. Lest we forget.

### CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:29):** Tonight in the New South Wales Parliament I call on the Minister for Local Government to grant a full inquiry into the Central Coast Council and to grant the people of the Central Coast a referendum to de-amalgamate, and I call on the New South Wales State Government to fund the cost to coasties of the failed amalgamation. I encourage coasties to join the 13,000 people who have already signed the New South Wales Parliament petition calling for a judicial inquiry into the financial crisis facing the Central Coast Council. The people of the Central Coast want to know the true details of what has happened, and not just since this failed amalgamation. We want to know that the failed systems, the legacy issues of both the Wyong and Gosford councils, are clearly unravelled and that staff failings are well and truly cleaned out. We want to know that accounting truths and the complex pots of money are separated and accounted for, and that clear and transparent systems are put in place so we can move ahead with certainty that these tumultuous years are behind us.

As ratepayers and as voters for our democratically elected council, we want certainty, not more future failings. We wish for the best outcome for this very important level of government as it is our local council that provides our day-to-day services—our roads, our rubbish and our rates. It is the level of government that we see and feel every day, and it provides the very important services that we enjoy in our local communities across the coast. Tonight I put on record that the Central Coast community is absolutely devastated. We are very upset by the consequences of the forced amalgamation of two councils by the New South Wales Liberal Government that considered both Wyong and Gosford councils not "fit for the future" before they were pushed together. It is very obvious that our community does not want the burden of a rate rise and it is also obvious that many other communities of a number of councils across New South Wales that have been forcibly amalgamated do not want the burden of a rate rise either.

The failure of the Government amalgamation policy becomes more obvious as we see that the 10 worst-performing councils in New South Wales are those that were forced to amalgamate, with Central Coast Council currently ranked eighth. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has been inundated by council

rate rise variation requests from amalgamated councils. I encourage coasties to have their last bit of input before that option closes as well. I thank all those who have contacted my office with concerns about council. I am concerned by Facebook and social media that do not provide true information, and I call out the fake news and the witch-hunts that are not going to create solutions for years of council and administration legacy failings that need to be undone for us all to move forward together.

I thank the administrator for his work. I encourage everyone to read the truth in the administrator's 30-day and three-month reports and to dig deeper into the facts of the finances of the Central Coast Council. I also add that in the New South Wales Parliament no-one puts up their hand to represent their community to see the results of what has happened here, especially when councillors were sold the vision of expansionary possibilities and economies of scale by the Liberal Government. The councillors were not told that staff numbers at both councils had been deliberately reduced to decrease costs before amalgamation. They were not informed about the cost of harmonising the HR programs across Gosford and Wyong councils. They were not provided with adequate access to transparent and true accounting information by staff that they were spending restricted funds, and they were not given appropriate guidance by the three chief financial officers who were in the job during their term. Surely this is a sign that things have been wrong for a long time.

As ratepayers, we have trusted the Audit Office of New South Wales to audit local government finances across the State—supposedly to improve governance and accountability. As ratepayers, we have also paid three external auditors to oversee our council finances. The Central Coast Council inherited from the former administrator a single bank account, an overpriced IT contract worth \$50 million, our current waste and water contracts, and \$317 million worth of debt from the combined Wyong and Gosford councils. That was before it stepped into council. Its budget was hit with a \$39 million decrease in income delivered by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and it did not expect the toxic culture of grandstanding and the time-wasting accusations from certain councillors who regularly wasted our council meeting time.

Nobody put up their hand to be a publicly elected official to go through the hell that our councillors have worn as a result of this amalgamation. I call on the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, who has just stepped into the Chamber, to lift his game and work very closely with the Minister for Local Government so that the Central Coast community can move forward together with trust and certainty.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:35):** It feels a bit like groundhog day every time I come into the Chamber to respond to members from the Central Coast. The administrator has made it perfectly clear in layman's terms—

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** I have asked everyone to read the administrator's account.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I listened to the member for Gosford in silence.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The member for Gosford will come to order.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** In his 30-day report the administrator made it perfectly clear in layman's terms that the cause of this situation is that there was a failure of oversight by the elected officials and senior management of the Central Coast Council. It could not be any clearer than that. Let us be clear that the first administrator was alerted to the issue with Central Coast Council after the level of debt that it had racked up was concealed from the public and the State Government multiple times with confidential meetings. Let us be clear: A Labor mayor and Labor council moved into confidential meetings and withheld this information from the public and the Minister until they could not pay the wages of staff, which was absolutely appalling.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** I remind the member for Gosford that the Parliamentary Secretary listened quietly to her contribution and that she should listen quietly to his.

#### **OXLEY ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (19:36):** I am delighted to be the member for Oxley and to have attended some wonderful Australia Day services throughout the four valleys and council areas in my electorate. The Kempsey 2021 awards ceremony was held at the iconic Slim Dusty Centre and it was the backdrop to congratulate Citizens of the Year Stafford and Dianne Everson, a husband-and-wife dynamic team that contribute to our valley in the most profound way, employing people and giving incredible amounts of money to local charities and groups in a very understated way. They have been residents of the valley for more than 40 years and have been largely unrecognised for their charitable support because they are those types of people. They do not like to show off.

They started Eversons Food Processors from scratch and now employ hundreds of people across the shires. Their 8.30 a.m. breakfast for their workers is famous throughout the valley and shows their genuine commitment to their staff. Everyone acknowledges that is a tough industry to work in. Throughout the bushfires they arranged

food drops to the Upper Macleay, donated to and supported the local SES groups and ensured that their 200 staff were kept employed even during the worst of the drought. My favourite moment was the photo of Stafford and his wife, the Mayor of Kempsey, our ambassador to the Macleay Valley and our local Aboriginal Elder on the stage. They all went to high school together and were very much at the heart of the presentations in Kempsey.

The Young Citizen of the Year was the gorgeous Keely Lawrence. On top of working full-time and studying veterinary technology, Keely has found time to champion young people, the agriculture industry and the mighty Macleay. As the reigning Miss Showgirl Kempsey, she has raised \$17,000 for Dolly's Dream charity and was named Chief Beef Steward for the 2021 Kempsey Show. During the bushfires Keely was front and centre as a volunteer in the evacuation centre and went on to volunteer with BlazeAid, repairing fences on properties throughout the shire. She is an active member of the Kempsey Cancerian Committee and has initiated an annual fundraiser for bowel cancer awareness. In 2020, not deterred by COVID, Keely took the fundraising online and raised almost \$3,000.

The Community Group of the Year was the Kempsey Crescent Head Surf Life Saving Club. This 100-year-old club is owned and run by its members. It gives thousands of hours of service to protecting our community. It has a fairly good reputation in the boats. The organisation has a rich history, including many heroic rescues, and has almost 200 members at present and a very exciting nippers program. When a surf life saving club's nippers program is strong, so is the club, because that is where the new members and parents come from. The Lifetime Achievement Award went to a very dear friend of mine, Kevin Farrawell. Kevin has been a tireless worker for our community over 50 years. A member of the Rotary Club of Kempsey West since 1970, you will see him at every barbeque being an incredible member of the community. The Slim Dusty Centre would not be if not for the work of Kevin, his best mate Brian Irvine and others.

Through Rotary, his countless community projects include the mid North Coast trade fair, high school science and technology fairs, local park beautification and international exchange programs. He was a founding member of the Kempsey Men's Shed and a founding board member of the Cedar Place Aged Care Facility, the Slim Dusty Heritage Centre and the Slim Dusty Foundation. Kevin started Farrawell Glass & Aluminium in 1973 with his wife—I give Phyllis a big clap here. They are a great husband-and-wife team, like Stafford and Dianne Everson. They built the company into one of the largest employers in Kempsey while ensuring that manufacturing was always done in the town. Kevin started Farrawell Powdercoaters in 2000 and is now developing Kempsey's only new industrial estate in almost 40 years, further expanding local opportunities.

Many a house renovation on the mid North Coast outside Kempsey and throughout the entire region has Farrawell powder-coated aluminium sliding doors. It is a great company and Kevin is a great community champion. Lastly in relation to the Kempsey awards—I will come back to the other parts of my shires and the people there—is the incredible Alice Strutt. She was honoured with an Australian Fire Service Medal for her dedication to the RFS. She works in the communications section and always has the most beautiful smile on her face. She has laboured away, done the work and is one of the few women who has been acknowledged through receipt of the fire service medal. I adore her. She is an incredible woman. I am just so privileged to represent those people.

#### **ERARING POWER STATION ENERGY STORAGE BATTERY**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (19:41):** A little over a month ago, Origin Energy announced plans to build an energy storage battery at Eraring Power Station in my electorate. This battery will be able to store 700 megawatts of power from any source and, most importantly, from any renewable source. The announcement came just eight weeks after this House backed the Government's Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020, which the Minister for Energy and Environment described as a road map for private sector investment in the future of power generation in New South Wales. During that debate, we agreed on a commitment to include Lake Macquarie and the broader Hunter region in a list of recognised renewable energy zones, which aim to drive that private sector investment and deliver long-term reliability to the State's power supply. Origin Energy's 700-megawatt battery is an example of that investment and a reflection that the road map is already delivering good dividends.

As I have mentioned in the House a number of times, Eraring Power Station is the largest coal-fired power station in Australia—indeed, in the Southern Hemisphere—and provides about 25 per cent of the State's baseload electricity. It is due to close in 2032. It is therefore absolutely essential that something takes its place, so I am very pleased that Origin has moved in the direction it has. If it were built today, the Eraring battery would be the biggest of its type in Australia—although CEP Energy has since announced plans to construct a 1,200-megawatt battery not far from my electorate at Kurri Kurri in the Cessnock electorate. In simple terms, Origin's battery will have the capacity to store 700 megawatts of power and send that power into the grid when needed. That energy could come from solar, wind or any other renewable source and be used when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing.

More importantly, it will drive down the emissions we get from coal-fired power and put reliability and balance into our energy supply. These projects and others are a direct result of our decision to back the Government's energy road map for the coming decades as coal-generated power is phased out due to rapidly improving technology and market adoption of renewable energy. We know there are still some in the community who think the future remains coal and that the shift to renewable energy supplies is just part of the debate around climate change, but that is wrong. The market itself is shifting away from coal, overseas markets are shifting rapidly towards renewables and our coal-fired power stations are moving very quickly towards the end of their working lives.

I have spoken about this a number of times and I do not want to detail the issue again now, but it is important that we understand that this transition is happening now and we cannot be left behind. Coal will certainly be part of the mix for some time yet, but our coal companies and energy producers are themselves shifting towards renewables and we must be a part of that transition or be left—quite literally—in the dark. Miners who are in those jobs now are very likely however, other than for market forces, to see out their career in coal, if that is what they choose. I mentioned the CEP Energy project at Kurri Kurri earlier. It and Origin's battery project are just two of many which have been announced by private energy producers since the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 was passed here in November. Since that time, producers have announced battery and hydro plans that would expand storage by 2,400 megawatts. That is close to the equivalent of building a new Eraring power station.

We know that coal has massive impacts on our environment and that the shift away from it is happening whether we like it or not. I would go as far as to say that the likes of Eraring and coal-fired power have served this State very well for many decades, but I cannot say that without also saying that they will leave us with a number of legacy issues which we will be dealing with for many years to come. The most obvious of those is coal ash. We currently have about 200 million tonnes of coal ash stored in unlined ash dams throughout the State and the pile is growing by 3.8 million tonnes per year. I am pleased to say that better efforts are being made to recycle and reduce the amount of coal ash being stockpiled. In fact, that issue will be highlighted at a Coal Ash Forum being held in the Macquarie Room next month, coordinated by the Newcastle-based Hunter Community Environment Centre.

I have said much on this issue before and will continue to do so, but for now I highlight the positive steps that are being taken as we adjust to a new world of power generation. I certainly congratulate the Government and the Minister for Energy and Environment on these early results, and indeed Origin Energy for the important role it is playing. We have a long way to go, but I am sure we are on the right path with such policies from New South Wales and other States right around the country that are backing renewables.

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:47):** It is just two weeks since I attended an event with Tourism Accommodation Australia in Sydney where people spoke eloquently of the desperate need that is being experienced by many accommodation providers not just in our regional areas but also in the CBD of Sydney and in places like Parramatta in western Sydney. In my electorate of Maitland, we have seen tourism businesses really struggle over the past year. With the drought and the bushfires last summer before COVID and then with COVID happening after them, it has been a very challenging time for the industry. So I was a little surprised when I saw the announcement by the Government earlier this week of a \$3.5 million package of grants for tourism operators. I just felt that it was such a missed opportunity.

I have raised this with the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney directly, but I will put on record that more needs to be done for accommodation providers, tour operators and all those working in tourism. There is a massive day coming for everyone in the tourism industry in this State, and that is 31 March when JobKeeper runs out. Operators are waiting for those cuts to come and they are terrified of the bludgeoning their business will take and the money they will haemorrhage as a result. I have been trying to engage with the Government since last year. I held a coach tour roundtable in the middle of the year and people like Rob Sinclair from Here to There Coaches have spoken to me about this issue.

Last week the shadow Minister for Finance and Small Business and the shadow Treasurer asked the Government to look at things like getting rid of fees and charges for tour vehicle operators. It can cost \$10,000 a year to register a tourism vehicle. If you have had just one or two jobs in the past 12 months, the prospect of opting in and back out is untenable. Other jurisdictions have allowed tourism operators to take photos of the odometers on their vehicles when they want to deregister them. That has not been available to operators in New South Wales. I know of coaches all over New South Wales that are sitting there unregistered. Their operators will not even be able to get them back on the road if they manage to be lucky enough to get a job.

The tourism accommodation sector is devastated in the city and it is going to be a huge issue. Think about the number of visitors that came into Sydney from international destinations on a normal day before COVID. That

inbound traffic has just gone. All of the events, conferences, meetings and weddings that were being held in our Sydney, western Sydney and south-western Sydney hotels and motels are just gone. Once JobKeeper runs out, how will those businesses be able to pay workers? They will just lose their jobs. I am urging the Government to do more. Every other jurisdiction in Australia has had something like the Government's Dine & Discover voucher in place for far longer. Victoria had the Victorian Tourism Recovery Package, a \$200 voucher for those who spend \$400 on accommodation, attractions or tours. The Northern Territory had up to \$400 for accommodation and kilometre rebates. Tasmania had up to \$150 for accommodation and experiences. Western Australia had \$100 for tours or experiences. South Australia had up to \$100 for accommodation. The Australian Capital Territory had the Choose Canberra Project. Even South Australia had \$50 for experiences for locals.

We have four \$25 vouchers. People in Maitland do not want to come to Sydney to get \$25 off at a restaurant. That is not an incentive to travel to the city. My son is currently in Adelaide. He has had a lifelong ambition to be a coach driver. He turned 21 on 21 December, he got his public passenger licence and he asked for tourism jobs. Do you know where could get a bus driver's job? At the moment, he is driving from Adelaide to Coober Pedy. That is what is there for him. He has been offered a job at Longreach in Queensland; he has been offered jobs in the Northern Territory at Uluru. Where are the coach touring jobs and the tourism jobs in New South Wales? The Government has got to get off its backside and provide support to our tourism industry before it is too late.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **HOPE WALK 2021**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:52):** I update the House on my recent attendance at the 2021 Hope Walk on Saturday 13 February 2021 at McQuade Park, Windsor. The annual walk is about raising awareness of suicide and the impact it has on families. It was initiated by Diane Russell five years ago in honour of her son Jason, who died from suicide in 2015. Diane was also a victim of domestic violence and had to raise her children as a single parent. Diane has established the Hope4U Foundation, which offers support 24/7 to families and individuals suffering from grief and/or domestic violence. The assistance includes providing support and hope for those grieving from a suicide. I commend Diane for the very important work that she does and I thank all those who have supported her initiatives throughout the year.

#### **TRIBUTE TO AUNTY THELMA MATTHEWS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:53):** I pay tribute to Aunty Thelma Matthews, a proud Kamilaroi woman and member of the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, who recently passed away. I extend my deepest sympathies to Aunty Thelma's children, Elizabeth, Bruce, David and Shane, their extended families and all who knew her. Aunty Thelma was immensely proud of her First Nations culture and heritage and held it extremely close to her heart. She was an incredibly resilient and courageous woman who showered everyone that she met with love, caring and affection. Throughout Aunty Thelma's long and outstanding nursing career, she worked in hospitals in Manilla, Rankin Park, Belmont and Allandale before she transitioned into retirement. During that time she worked tirelessly to build community programs and events at Allandale Hospital and Jacaranda Grove Hostel. On behalf of the thousands of people in our community who will miss Aunty Thelma dearly and remember fondly her infectious smile and incredibly strong will, I pay our respects. Vale Aunty Thelmy.

#### **DAVID WRIGLEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:54):** David Wrigley was the well-deserving recipient of this year's Australia Day award for service to sport in the Dubbo region. Having dedicated over 30 years to the Dubbo Harness Racing Club, David exemplifies what this award represents. For decades David has worked tirelessly behind the scenes, receiving little recognition—making this award all the more deserving. In this time, David has served two terms as president and a stint as vice-president, totalling 17 years of service. But this is just the tip of the iceberg: David has organised race-day events, trials and more, and stepped in to fill various roles when needed, including helping to raise over \$250,000 for the club. David has been looking for opportunities to improve the club's canteen and kitchen area, and it was fantastic to be able to present the club with just over \$46,000 from the Community Building Partnership fund to completely renovate its facility. David's contribution to the Dubbo club has been invaluable, and I am sure it will continue for many years to come. Well done, David.

#### **RAAF BASE WILLIAMTOWN AND FIGHTER WORLD**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:55):** My community of Port Stephens is the very proud home of RAAF Base Williamtown and the many service men and women who work there. So this week I was delighted to represent the people of Port Stephens in a COVID-safe celebration of RAAF Base Williamtown's eightieth birthday and Fighter World's thirtieth birthday. For 80 years, the RAAF base has played a critical role in the defence of our nation. Its history is important and spectacular, which is why 30 years ago Fighter World



was established to share the stories of and showcase the fighter aircraft that defence personnel have built, fixed and flown on the base for 80 years. I thank and congratulate our birthday host, Group Captain Anthony Stainton, who was recently appointed the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer in charge of RAAF Base Williamtown. I recognise the Deputy Air Commander of Australia, Air Commodore Ben Sleeman, who spoke fondly of his time at Williamtown, as well as Air Vice Marshal (Retired) John Quaife, AM, President of Fighter World. I particularly recognise all defence men and women, together with their families, who have served at RAAF Base Williamtown at any time over the past 80 years.

#### **LAWRENCE HARGRAVE DRIVE**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (19:56):** On Wednesday 3 February the member for Keira and I hosted a roundtable discussion at the Wollongong City Council building to discuss traffic on Lawrence Hargrave Drive. This has been an ongoing issue for many residents living along the escarpment. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer and no easy fix. I am working with Roads to establish a public consultation process later this year. The department will show us the options we have. I thank those who attended and who support the upcoming public consultation, and thank the community for their time and efforts.

#### **AUSTRALIAN CHINESE BUDDHIST SOCIETY**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (19:57):** On Saturday 13 February I had the great pleasure of attending a very special Lunar New Year celebration for the Year of the Ox hosted by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society at the Mingyue Lay temple in Bonnyrigg. I was joined at the celebration by local residents, community leaders and many of my parliamentary colleagues, who celebrated and welcomed the new year in style. Although this year's celebrations were a little different from previous years because of COVID precautions, the performances by the lion dance team and police band were truly remarkable and thoroughly enjoyable. I commend and congratulate the representatives from the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society who made all this possible, especially the president, Mr Vincent Kong, OAM; the chairman, Mr James Chan, OAM; the vice-chairman, Mr Sen Huynh; and of course the Most Venerable Ming Shang and the Venerable Shi Ban Ruo. I wish them a happy Lunar New Year. Kung hey fat choy.

#### **MOLLY HALLIBURTON**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:58):** It gives me great pride to recognise the community of Junee's involvement to help support four-year-old Molly Halliburton. Molly Halliburton was recently diagnosed with leukaemia. The Halliburton family then was quickly moved to Sydney, where Molly has undergone chemotherapy. The community of Junee quickly rallied together to support the Halliburton family. The Junee bakery sold yellow-iced cupcakes to raise funds, and a fete to raise further funds for Molly is set down for March. The community of Junee is a great representation of the amazing communities within the Cootamundra electorate. I am constantly seeing the efforts of small communities coming together to support one another. That is one of the many reasons I love being their local member. I wish little Molly a full recovery and hope she can return home with her family soon.

#### **COOGEE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (19:59):** On Friday the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club held its annual sponsors' evening at the newly renovated clubhouse to recognise the continued support for the club by its generous sponsors. Sponsors are vital to the ongoing resourcing of our surf clubs, enabling them to put the best lifesaving gear on the beach and have up-to-date equipment for training and competition. Every dollar put forward by sponsors ensures that our surf life saving clubs can focus on their core role in our community: saving lives, promoting healthy lifestyles and being important community hubs. Very special thanks go to the Randwick Labor Club, the Coogee Bay Hotel and the Clovelly Community Bank for their long-term support of the Coogee surf club. A warm and special welcome goes to the club's newest sponsor, Chargrill Charlie's. I welcome them to the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club family.

#### **ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:00):** Today I discuss a very interesting initiative at my former primary school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School at Oatley, which commenced last year. The school recently opened a beehive—which, I might add, has bees that are harmless to humans, as they cannot sting. Last year I had the pleasure of touring the facilities at the school with the magnificent principal, Kylie Brakel. How it all works is simply outstanding. Bees are great for pollinating local plants, which ensures that the school garden is very vibrant and full of life. It is also a great way to introduce students to the world of gardening and agriculture. I am so impressed that I am seriously considering getting a beehive for myself at home. The project was a great way to round out a fantastic year at the school, and I thank Kylie and the entire staff at St Joseph's primary school for

their commitment to their students. I wish all the teaching staff and students all the very best for the school year ahead.

#### **PACIFIC LINK**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:01):** I give huge and mighty thanks to the fabulous team at Pacific Link for the amazing work they continue to do for some of our most vulnerable community members. I acknowledge how their workload has increased over the past year. The need for housing assistance is growing at such a rapid rate within my electorate, and Pacific Link continues to provide assistance to those in need and is always searching for ways to help and provide that assistance. The team at Pacific Link currently manage over 700 properties in the Gosford electorate and are keen to expand so as to provide more affordable and secure housing to those in need. As housing affordability continues to fall and rental prices soar, the work that Pacific Link does for our community is becoming more and more important. CEO Ian Lynch and his team of social justice minded staff are always looking for ways to assist their current tenants and provide housing solutions for future ones. Pacific Link's staff regularly go above and beyond to reach out and provide security and peace of mind. I sincerely thank them for all they do for us.

#### **MARK ANSLOW**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:02):** I acknowledge Executive Secretary Mark Anslow from the Mid North Coast Police District for his 28 years of service in the NSW Police Force. Mark Anslow joined the NSW Police Force on 15 January 1979 as a trainee police officer at the Sydney academy. On 3 April 1979 Mark was promoted to a general duties police officer in metro Sydney, where he remained for a period of 12 years. On 26 November 1997 Mark selected a role as a general support officer for the Mid North Coast Police District, assigned to the commander's office in a pertinent position that assisted the ergonomics of the administration while supporting the vital responsibilities that our police officers undertake each day in our community. In April 2008 Mark's classification was amended to the title of Administration Support Officer. Over the years, Mark has received a number of accolades for his outstanding service in the NSW Police Force, including the 10-, 15- and 20-year NSW police medallion lapel and the 15- and 25-year Commissioner of Police's long service award. Mark has also received the Commissioner of Police's Olympic and sesquicentenary citations. I truly appreciate Mark's contribution to my office and to the community at large.

#### **NORAH HEAD LIGHTHOUSE RESERVE**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (20:03):** Norah Head Lighthouse Reserve has received two Central Coast Brides Choice Awards, winning the best of the best award as well as the best do-it-yourself wedding venue. On 9 February the awards were presented, recognising the wedding businesses operating across the Central Coast. Tracy Stubbings, manager of the Crown lands, believes Norah Head is a popular location because of the working lighthouse and the beautiful photogenic location for weddings and other events. Norah Head Lighthouse Reserve usually books in 30 weddings a year, and so far this year 17 wedding receptions have been booked. Wedding companies love the location for their photos, ceremony, reception and accommodation. The funds raised from weddings are returned to the operation of the Crown lands reserve. Recently Norah Head Lighthouse Reserve received \$94,500 from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund for a new access pathway, weed control and bush generation. Norah Head is a beautiful location. I congratulate the board and the volunteers who have put their effort and time into maintaining the land, making it look stunning and the perfect location to hold events.

#### **MR MOHAN SEKHON SINGH**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (20:04):** Recently I witnessed an attempt by Mr Mohan Sekhon Singh to set a *Guinness Book of Records* world record for peeling and chopping onions. While there are records held for chopping onions for one minute or for three minutes, Mr Sekhon skipped these easy levels and went straight for the more serious record of peeling and chopping onions within an hour. The previous record was 30 kilograms. Full of confidence, Mr Sekhon came prepared with 50 kilograms of onions and every intention of not just beating the record but smashing it. Mr Sekhon has become so proficient at peeling and chopping onions because he has been doing this on a voluntary basis within his Sikh community for many years. It is a distinctive feature of a Sikh gurdwara, or temple, that any person who visits can have a free meal there at any time, with the food prepared and provided on a roster by the faithful every day of every week. Over the years, Mr Sekhon has done countless turns on that roster. At the end of an hour of rapid peeling and furious chopping, the onions were weighed. Mr Sekhon had peeled and chopped a staggering 47.155 kilograms of onions. I congratulate Mohan Sekhon Singh on his achievement, and more importantly on his many years of service to the Sikh gurdwara and to the wider community.

**PHILIP "PJ" GREEN**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:05):** I recognise Phillip "PJ" Green, a 2021 school captain at Carenne Public School in Bathurst, who is one of just 13 students selected from across New South Wales to help in the formation of the recently announced Education Minister's Student Council. The impacts of the past year have made it clear that it is important for the Government to hear directly from students, which prompted the formation of the council to give students more influence on education and school policy. PJ, who travels on assisted school transport from Portland to Bathurst each day, has been selected to join the steering committee tasked with designing the council, including the formation and governance, and how it will engage students from all backgrounds right across the State. This is an exciting time for education in New South Wales and I am glad that students like PJ will be front and centre as we build a world-class education system. PJ is now a representative of more than 800,000 public school students in New South Wales. It is a great achievement, and I know PJ will ensure that the voices of students are heard at the highest levels.

**GRAHAM DARK**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:06):** I acknowledge Graham Dark for his extensive service to the community of Maitland and congratulate him on receiving a NSW Community Service Award in recognition of this sustained dedication. Graham is a prodigious fundraiser, serving as chair of Maitland's Relay for Life. He has battled cancer for the past 30 years, and served as a patient advocate with the Cancer Council NSW. Graham has served as an office-bearer with many organisations, including Maitland Senior Citizens, Maitland Regional Museum and Maitland Historical Society. He served for four years as a Maitland City Councillor; is a past winner of the Maitland Medal, which honours the city's Volunteer of the Year; and is a past Maitland Citizen of the Year. Graham has held a number of official positions throughout his years with APEX and Rutherford-Telarah Probus and is a founding member of West Maitland Centennial Lions. What a list—and he is not done yet! I visited Graham and his wife, Lyn, the other day. He is still in recovery from yet another round with cancer, but he was sorting stamps for his long-term stamp collecting project that raises funds for leukaemia research. Good on you, Graham.

**ALEC EDWARDS**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (20:07):** At 8.19 p.m. 18 years ago today, Alec John Edwards came into the world. At a whopping 10 pounds and 10 ounces, and thankfully after only a four-hour labour, Alec would be the third and last son—at that size—born to Kim and Paul Edwards. According to Kim, her waters broke due to an air pressure change in a summer storm, bringing the very overdue Alec into the world. The nurses said upon his arrival that he looked like a three-month old baby, as he was so huge in comparison to the other newborns on the ward. Alec is embarking on a degree in political science this year—a chip of his aunty's block. Just make sure you pick the right team when you have finished that degree, Alec. Have a very happy eighteenth birthday tonight. Sorry I could not be there to help you celebrate but I am sure you will have great fun with your cousins instead—and I hope your brothers do not eat all your cake!

**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (20:08):** Friday 12 February marked Lunar New Year, the first day of the new lunar calendar and one of the biggest celebrations of the year for Chinese and other South-East Asian communities. Twenty twenty-one is the year of the Metal Ox, reflecting the 60-year cycle of the 10 heavenly stems and 12 earthly branches, and symbolises hard work, diligence, reliability and stability. As an ox myself, I can attest to those qualities. Lunar New Year is one of the most significant events in our State's calendar and, while celebrations will look a little different this year, there are still events all across Sydney running until 28 February. I strongly encourage all members of our community to participate where they can in a COVID-safe manner. I wish everyone in our community a wonderful Year of the Ox, and I hope they have a safe and prosperous 2021.

**ELYSSIA GASPAROTTO**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:09):** On Australia Day, 12 outstanding Central Coast residents received recognition for their positive contributions to community life as part of the annual Australia Day awards. Today I particularly congratulate Elyssia Gasparotto from my electorate of Terrigal, who was awarded Youth of the Year. Elyssia is a former Australian sporting representative, was an Australian youth representative to the United Nations, including Humanitarian Affairs Peace Ambassador, and has dedicated many hours as a professional beach and pool lifeguard. In 2020 Elyssia was invited to speak as part of a webinar series on youth leadership and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and has recently completed a double degree in Aboriginal Professional Practice and Law. This is a significant contribution and great recognition for her and

for our wider community. Elyssia is a fantastic role model for equality and diversity on the Central Coast, and I congratulate her on being recognised as the Central Coast Youth of the Year.

#### **KATRINA HUMPHRIES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (20:10):** I recognise Councillor Katrina Humphries, mayor of the mighty Moree Plains Shire Council. Since her election to local government in 2008, Katrina has been a giant of the community at the forefront of many battles in good times and bad. Katrina announced recently that she will be retiring from local government at the September elections this year to spend more time with her husband, Greg, and hopefully sell her famous fish and chip shop, Fishabout Cafe in Moree—which has the best fresh seafood you can get in inland New South Wales. I acknowledge on behalf of the community her tremendous achievements, her tremendous leadership, her courage, and her ability as an inimitable leader to call a spade an absolute shovel—and to do it on a very regular basis. Congratulations, Katrina. You, above others, have earned a very happy and long retirement, and thank you for your service to the Moree Plains Shire Council.

#### **JANNALI EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C ASSOCIATION**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (20:11):** I congratulate the Jannali East Public School P&C Association, which is the successful recipient of \$30,000 under the New South Wales Government's 2020 Community Building Partnership program. Jannali East Public School is a tight-knit but growing community with a wonderful learning environment where students are encouraged to strive towards their personal best. I am delighted that this funding will upgrade the school playground with new equipment and landscaping to enhance existing facilities, and provide students with additional play and outdoor learning areas. This will be the second stage of a large playground project for this amazing school. Of course, none of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of school principal Katherine Horner and the P&C committee, including president Rebecca Kelly, vice-presidents Sara Briggs and Lyndell De Ridder, secretary Kelly Carter and treasurer Shamus Toomey. I thank the Jannali East Public School community for bringing this important project to my attention and look forward to seeing its benefits.

#### **CENTRAL COAST POTTERS SOCIETY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:11):** I thank the diverse groups of potters from across the Central Coast who joined us at the pottery think tank at the Central Coast Potters Society. Our gathering was a celebration of the incredible talent and decades of experience of the ceramics experts who call the Central Coast home. After a year of social isolation, we were bursting with enthusiasm to see how the pottery scene is thriving across the Central Coast. Central Coast Potters Society members are so amazing, organised and talented that the society has over 300 people on the waitlist. The Tuggerah Lakes potters are providing incredible opportunities for people to learn and to utilise their skills in Long Jetty. At the Ettalong Beach Arts and Crafts Centre pottery is going strong, and has been popular for years. It was great to be joined by Jennifer and Guy from Centred Ceramics, who are taking pottery to a new level in West Street, Umina, and we are thrilled that esteemed Sydney potter Christine McClean now calls the Central Coast home. Bring it on! We are going to magnify the pottery talents of the fabulous Central Coast.

#### **PAT SMITH**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (20:13):** I recognise Pat Smith's 20-year service to the Camden RSL Youth Club. Pat became involved with the youth club when she brought her grandchildren to classes. Pat became a volunteer and soon became involved in various positions over the duration of her service. For the past 10 years Pat has held the role of joint treasurer and secretary. This will be Pat's final year at the club, where she will begin to hand the reins over to other dedicated members of the organisation, who I am sure will follow her devotion to keeping this remarkable space for youth in our community. I hope that Pat can enjoy watching her grandchildren and great-grandchildren utilise the Camden RSL Youth Club for many years to come.

#### **WARRIOR CENTRE MARTIAL ARTS**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (20:13):** A new martial arts school has recently opened in Wyong, helping children with special needs to build confidence and learn self-defence. It is the only martial arts school and physical fitness gym on the Central Coast dedicated to working with children with a disability and who have been a victim of bullying. Tony Carter's Warrior Centre officially kicked off on 25 January 2021 and is open to all ages and abilities. Tony has been legally blind since birth and at a young age he was bullied severely, which led him to start training in martial arts for self-defence. Life turned around for Tony at age 15, winning his first New South Wales title, and from there he spent over a decade competing at the State and national level, making his way to Rome to compete. Tony's lessons are delivered in the form of games, teaching the basics of self-defence without aggression and instead focusing the children on how to defend themselves with concentration on

controlling the situation, avoiding confrontation and, in the worst-case scenario, restraining an aggressor and calling for help, because violence is never the solution.

#### **GRACE BRENNAN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:14):** It is with great pleasure that I recognise one of the finalists for the NSW Regional Women of the Year Awards, Grace Brennan, who is the brains behind the hugely successful #BuyFromTheBush campaign. #BuyFromTheBush was launched from Grace's kitchen table in the midst of drought. Her aim was to connect city buyers with rural businesses, and what a massive success that idea has become. I have been delighted, along with many others, to promote and support the campaign, which has generated a \$5 million revenue uplift, improved the quality of life for 90 per cent of rural business owners and attracted more than 250,000 followers on Instagram. It is pretty easy to see why Grace has been nominated for this very special award. The impact that her #BuyFromTheBush campaign has had on our regions and business owners as they were battling prolonged drought is incredible, so huge congratulations to Grace for this nomination. Grace, you have done our region extremely proud. Good luck on 10 March as the winners are announced.

#### **STEPHEN GRIMMER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (20:15):** Congratulations to RAAF Squadron Leader Stephen Grimmer on his receipt of a NSW Government Community Service Award, bestowed for his tremendous service to the people of Maitland. Not only has Steve led the East Maitland RSL Sub-branch for three years and served as vice-president for two, but during his tenure the sub-branch pursued and obtained significant grant funding to improve facilities for its members, the auxiliary and the community at large. Knowing the risks that COVID-19 presented to the many older and often lonely veterans in the sub-branch, Steve mobilised members to perform welfare-check calls and home visits, and encouraged the reinstatement of coffee mornings, which has been really successful, since health orders permitted. Steve, with his wife Fiona, was active in the organisation of the Maitland Saints AFL Club, particularly in umpiring. He was a champion of the Saints. Sadly for us, Steve departed Maitland recently to take up a post in Washington for three years. Steve's NSW Government Community Service Award is in recognition of his service to our city. I thank him very much for his contribution and look forward to seeing him back in Maitland very soon.

#### **BARE CREEK BIKE PARK**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (20:16):** I recognise the local volunteers who took action after the world-class Bare Creek Bike Park in Belrose was attacked by vandals on the weekend. The \$2 million facility was built by the State Government on the site of the former Belrose tip and handed over to Northern Beaches Council in December. The New South Wales Government contributed a further \$1.5 million to council for ongoing maintenance of the bike park. Dangerously high winds and rain closed the bike park to the public over the weekend but a selfish and destructive group decided they needed to ride irrespective of the closure. They broke into the facility and then tore up the wet and muddy trails on their bikes. The vandals also tore out steel bollards and chains used to close off Bare Creek Bike Park's multiple trails and dramatic jumps. Volunteers from Trail Care have worked since Monday to repair the damage to the trails and replace the bollards so the park can reopen. I commend those dedicated volunteers for their hard work and commitment to looking after this free and much-valued community asset.

#### **COOGEE CROQUET CLUB**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (20:17):** One of the many great privileges of being the member for Coogee is the opportunity to be the patron of the amazing Coogee Croquet Club. It was fantastic to visit the club again on Saturday 13 February for its annual prize-giving. I was also lucky enough to play a round alongside Danny Said, the Mayor of Randwick City Council, and the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite, the Federal member for Kingsford Smith. Although my team was well outclassed, I did manage to get two hoops. This wonderful local club does a fantastic job of promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for people of all ages. It is also an important community hub, even welcoming a new member during the prize-giving. The greens are in immaculate condition and the club executive are extremely welcoming, and I would encourage all those looking to add an outdoor activity to their week to investigate playing croquet in Coogee. A very special thank you to the club's executive, who work tirelessly to ensure this great community sporting club is the amazing institution that it is.

#### **GRENFELL MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:18):** I recognise the wonderful work of the Grenfell Meals on Wheels team. The team was presented with a community achievement award on Australia Day. The staff and volunteers were represented by Denise Makin, the manager of Cowra-Grenfell Meals on Wheels, when the presentation was made by Mayor Mark Liebich. Meals on Wheels is an integral part of our community. I thank the staff and the volunteers for delivering wonderful meals while taking the time to have a kind word, a laugh, a

joke and a smile, while monitoring the health and wellbeing of their valued clients and providing peace of mind for family members. My congratulations to the Grenfell Meals on Wheels team on a well-deserved award and a job well done. I look forward to coming out with you in the field very soon.

#### **MERV LANE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:19):** On Australia Day a dozen outstanding Central Coast residents received recognition for their positive contribution to community life as part of the annual Australia Day awards. Merv Lane, a resident in my electorate, was honoured as a joint winner of the Volunteer of the Year award. This follows many years of service to the Central Coast community. Merv dedicated 40 years of his life as an officer of the NSW Police Force and in 2010, upon retirement, became a member of the Terrigal 50+ Leisure and Learning Centre. Merv rapidly rose through the ranks, quickly becoming vice-president, and currently serves as president of the organisation. Merv and his wife, Mary, go above and beyond for members, managing 40 other volunteers and maintaining and upgrading the leisure and learning centre. Merv is a good mate of mine and I am delighted that he has been recognised as a joint winner of the Volunteer of the Year award. I want to thank him again for his service to the people of New South Wales with his 40 years on the police force.

#### **TUGGERAH AND TOUKLEY LIBRARIES STORYTIME SESSIONS**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (20:20):** I am pleased to hear that Tuggerah and Toukley libraries are bringing back Storytime sessions for youngsters on Tuesday and Thursdays at 10.45 a.m. Libraries are a place for children to grow and develop not only their reading skills but also strong bonds and relationships through a range of different activities. The library supports the process of children learning to read and to borrow books which may be of interest to them. All age groups are welcome to use the resources offering modern technology that for some reason they are unable to get at home. Storytime involves not only the children but others in the community whilst interacting with the librarian. If families are unable to attend the Storytime sessions, the libraries will be running online Storytime, Sing and Stomp. Library activities are slowly getting back to full operations, which is great news for the community.

#### **MR ERIC EASTERBROOK**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (20:21):** I recognise and congratulate Mr Eric Easterbrook, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] this Australia Day. Eric was awarded the OAM for his service to the community, and particularly war widows and their families, through the Legacy organisation. A long-term member of Legacy, Eric has also been a volunteer at the Edinglassie retirement village in Emu Plains for over 35 years and is also a foundation member of the Emu Plains Lions Club. On behalf of the Penrith community, I thank Eric for his generosity of time, for his commitment to the numerous organisations and people he has supported over many years, and particularly for his leadership through the local Legacy organisation. I remember a particular time as a young member of Parliament talking at the local Legacy about the loss of an old friend who died in a helicopter accident in Indonesia. I am sure Eric will remember that very well. He has been an outstanding champion for veterans' families across the Penrith community and his recognition is richly deserved.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

#### **BANKSTOWN DISTRICT AMATEUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I was recently delighted to be invited by the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association (BDAFA) to become their Patron, a role that I was honoured to accept. The Bankstown District Amateur Football Association is an integral and active sporting organisation within my electorate of Bankstown, and is responsible for managing over 20 football clubs, 6200 grassroots players and 1000 volunteers within the Bankstown community for over 70 years, providing many young children and adults with an opportunity to engage with football. As the popularity of football continues to grow in Bankstown, BDAFA have done an excellent job in promoting the sport and ensuring more women and men of all ages are able to actively participate and maintain a healthy lifestyle. I congratulate the recent appointment of their new Chairman and Deputy Chairperson, Mr Dimitri Hursalas and Mr Laurie Warner, and I acknowledge Directors James Bowmaker, Andrew Skaltsounis, Marianna Konidaris, Administrator Veronica Payne, Competition Coordinator Glen Irish and General Manager Leanne Millar for all of their work and contributions with the Association.

#### **RECREATION SPORTS AND AQUATICS CLUB**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**It was my pleasure to attend Recreation Sports and Aquatics Club's (RSAC's) Annual General Meeting on Thursday 26 November. RSAC has continued to provide vital recreational, sporting and social opportunities for people with a disability during the COVID-19 pandemic,

through online tools. I commend the Club for its versatility and continued operation in difficult conditions. I commend RSAC Honorary Member Ms Kayee Griffin, who retired from her role as Co-Patron of the Club after providing many years of invaluable support and guidance, which have been fundamental to the Organisation's continued success. At the AGM, former RSAC President Mr Bob Beer received well-deserved Life Membership of the Club in recognition of his long and valued service to the organisation. RSAC recently received a Community Building Partnership 2020 grant of \$7,500 to provide for staging for theatrical and dance training and performances, which I was pleased to support. I acknowledge RSAC President Mr Paul Pearson, Vice-President Ms Vanessa Fone, Secretary Ms Deborah Locke, Treasurer Mr Marcelo Vigilante, and Executive Officer Ms Jenny Bombardieri, and thank the entire RSAC team for their commitment to providing inclusive recreational services for people with a disability.

#### **NEWTOWN NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL – 2020 WAKAKIRRI AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—I draw the attention of this parliament to Newtown North Public School who have won the Wakakirri Screen Challenge National Story of the Year Award and the Best Biographical Story Award. The Wakakirri Story-Dance Association host the Wakakirri Challenge annually which is Australia's largest performing arts festival for schools. In 2020, Covid-19 impacted the challenge and schools were unable to perform live so the festival had to take place online. Newtown North's story-dance was titled 'Greta' and the story highlighted the story of environmental activist Greta Thunberg and her Aspergers 'super power'. The film included quotes from Greta Thunberg's speeches set over the dancing and performances of a number of students recreating the story of the global School Strike 4 Climate movement. Congratulations to all of the students, teachers and parents involved in bringing the incredible performance together.

#### **CRONULLA MEN'S PROBUS CLUB**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I congratulate members of the Cronulla Men's Probus Club, including President Tony Dowe and Secretary David Fletcher, who recently celebrated their chapter's 40th anniversary. Theirs is the second oldest Probus club and the only men's Probus club in the Sutherland Shire. The group enjoys a variety of adventure activities and lives by the unofficial motto, "never too old". Probus provides terrific opportunities for retirees to remain healthy, active and socially connected in their communities. There are around 125,000 members in Australia and New Zealand.

#### **CRONULLA ROTARY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—For more than 70 years, the Rotarians of Cronulla have generously devoted their time to making our community an even better to live. Following a year of disruption, Cronulla Rotary has once again kicked into full gear. Examples of recent or current projects include the Armenian Refugee Project; Clean up the Beaches; Adopt a Town (which supports victims of the bushfires); mock job interviews with local high school students; painting the Project Youth group home at Sutherland; and the ANSTO and KU ANSTO Preschool Christmas gift collection. I thank all members of the Rotary Club of Cronulla for their tireless work, and acknowledge the club's office holders: Kim Ruth, Irene Parker, Mark Ellis, Ray and Maria Moran, Lyn Bates, Michael Dyson and Carol Denison.

#### **ARTEXPRESS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The annual ARTEXPRESS exhibition shows off the creative and outstanding artworks created by select Visual Arts students for their practical HSC component. Callaghan College Jesmond Senior Campus' Haylee Mills along with Lambton High's Alexa Stuart and Ravelle Eaton, and Glendale High School's Cooper Polley's art works will be shown at the ARTEXPRESS' principal venue, The Art Gallery of Australia. Lambton High's Sophie Berghout, Glendale High School's Eligh Meredith, St Philip's Christian College Waratah's Indiana Ryan and Helena Walkom, and Callaghan College Jesmond Senior Campus' Niamh Currey will have their art works shown at the ARTEXPRESS exhibition at Maitland Regional Art Gallery. Alexa's collection of works 'At Your Door', Ravelle's printmaking 'Forsaken Land', Sophie's painting 'In Advance of the Reckoning', Haylee's painting 'Aboriginal Bush Medicine', Niamh's painting 'Home is Noamie/Noamie Is Home', Eligh's Graphic Design 'Down to Earth', Cooper's photomedia 'The Quieter You Are, The More You Can Hear', Indiana's photomedia 'Maridyula. Yango', and Helena's painting 'Homeland', all show extreme talent and passion. Well done Ravelle, Alexa, Sophie, Haylee, Niamh, Eligh, Cooper, Indiana and Helena.

#### **FRIENDS WITH DIGNITY BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—When the local community gets an idea in their head, I am always willing to help out however I can. In January, local parents contacted me to see if my office could be a drop off point for a 'back to school drive'. This involved getting the word out, asking parents who could afford it to buy

some extra back to school items to be donated to those who are not in a position to buy all that is necessary. I spoke with Friends with Dignity who were more than happy for my office to be a drop off point. Friends with Dignity is a volunteer based not-for-profit registered charity that provides practical programs to assist survivors of domestic violence in collaboration with refuge and crisis centres. The word went out and the community delivered in spades. In just 8 days 213 filled backpacks, pairs of school shoes, uniforms and donations were dropped off to my office, filling my conference room to overflowing. Thank you to Catherine and her daughter Mia, who made a number of trips to the office to collect all of the bags to be distributed amongst the community.

### CHALLENGE WALK

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—It's fair to say that many of us have had enough of being couped up inside because of COVID-19. We are taking every and any excuse we can to get out in the sunshine and make the most of the great outdoors. There are many great events that occur in Campbelltown every year that encourage us to get out of the house – from the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Walkathon, to Christmas carols at Campbelltown Sports Stadium. One of those other events in the Campbelltown City Challenge Walk. The walk brings everyone from the community – regardless of background or age – together. It really is one of the highlights on our local calendar every year. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the event unfortunately had to be cancelled. However, in 2021, it's back. I commend Campbelltown Council for its hard work in making sure the Challenge Walk was not cancelled again this year. The event will be held on March 14 at the Australian Botanical Garden Mount Annan. I would encourage everyone in Campbelltown to lace up their joggers and participate in the 2021 Campbelltown City Challenge Walk.

### GUY BLINMAN

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—It's fair to say the world is a much better place for having people like Guy Blinman in it. The Campbelltown resident had helped many people with his carpentry handy work. But 12 years ago, he decided to go one step further. He decided to enter Parklea Correctional Centre – voluntarily – to help teach inmates about woodwork. While some people may have looked at it as a daunting task, Guy viewed it as an opportunity to help equip inmates with skills that would help them transition back into the community once they were released. Through their work, the inmates have also helped fix, build and create works that benefit the community. They have made furniture for a local public school, fitted out PCYCs and donated wooden toys to hospitals. As Guy said in the Macarthur Advertiser recently, he has also benefited from helping the inmates. "About eight months ago I was in a pub and got a tap on the shoulder," he told the Advertiser. "It was a former inmate and he said he was working for a builder and had got his life back on track". Thanks Guy, for your dedication, passion and hard work.

### RED MASS, PARRAMATTA

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Recently my family and I attended the Red Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta. The Red Mass is an important tradition in the Catholic Church that has been celebrated since the 12th century. The Red Mass brings together the members of the legal profession and judiciary annually to reflect and pray ahead of the opening of the Legal year. This year was the 90th year that the Mass had been held at the Sydney Archdiocese and it was a privilege for my family to complete the Offertory. I have been a part of the Red Mass for many years and it's always good to connect with colleagues - past and present. I'd like to acknowledge the Saint Thomas More Society for organising the successful event. I'd also like to thank Bishop Vincent Long for celebrating the Mass. Saint Thomas More set the standard for the conduct of the Legal profession as they seek truth, justice and defence of the innocent. He is an inspiration for many around the world and I know my colleagues in the Parliament of New South Wales, as well as in the legal profession take solace from his example.

### RED MASS, ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Recently I had the privilege of attending the Red Mass at St Mary's Cathedral. The Red Mass is an important tradition in the Catholic Church that has been celebrated since the 12th century. The Red Mass brings together the members of the legal profession and judiciary annually to reflect and pray ahead of the opening of the Legal year. This year was the 90th year that the Mass had been held at the Sydney Archdiocese and it was a privilege to be able to read the Universal Prayers. I have been a part of the Red Mass for many years and it's always good to connect with colleagues - past and present. I'd like to acknowledge the Saint Thomas More Society for organising the occasion. I'd also like to thank Bishop Richard Umbers for celebrating the Mass. Saint Thomas More set the standard for the conduct of the Legal profession as they seek truth, justice and defence of the innocent. He is an inspiration for many around the world and I know my colleagues in the Parliament of NSW, as well as in the legal profession take solace from his example.



**BROTHER'S BAKERY, FAIRFIELD**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I had the pleasure of meeting up with Rami from Brother's Bakery situated in the heart of Fairfield. There's just something wonderful about the smell of freshly baked bread and Rami and his staff make sure Fairfield residents are well-provided for in terms of their everyday bakery needs. Baking bread for the community is extremely hard work with long hours but Rami and his staff take this in their stride and turn out fresh loaves every day for all of us to enjoy. I commend Brother's Bakery for their efforts in sustaining their business during the COVID-19 pandemic and I wish them all the best for future success.

**C.A.S.A CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I recently had the great pleasure of attending the Community Action Services (CASA) Inc. End of Year Celebration. I commend CASA for all the hard work they do in our community, providing assistance for everyone who needs it, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or circumstances. At this event, I was keen to speak about the Cool@School program established to teach our schoolchildren healthy eating patterns and the importance of exercise in their daily lives. Childhood obesity is a growing concern in the wider community and programs such as these assist in combating this condition, encouraging children and parents to adopt behaviours which will contribute to their overall well-being. I wish to take this opportunity to thank CASA for the work they do for the community in Fairfield and I look forward to continuing our working relationship into the future.

**TWIN CREEKS GOLF CLUB**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Congratulations to the Twin Creeks Golf and Country Club for their fantastic win against Penrith Golf Club in the Division II Metropolitan Major Pennant Finals. Twin Creeks was able to take an early lead against Penrith and remained on top throughout! I would like to make special mention of those who led the wins for the team: Matt DeVries, Tyrone Emtage (captain), Justin McMilan and Jeremy White. Congratulations on bringing your team to victory, especially during the challenging year we had in 2020. Well done and congratulations to all the rest of the team as well for your efforts: Chris McMilan, Wayne Loveridge, John Glasheen (vice-captain), James Tolomeo, Paul Borg, Jordan Bratusa and manager Glenn Johnston. I wish the entire club another successful year and look forward to hearing of your great achievements. Well done!

**BLAKE HODGES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to acknowledge 14-year-old Erskine Park resident, Blake Hodges who participated in a 72-hole golf marathon with other golfers across the country on December 14th 2020 to raise funds for Cancer Council. Blake holds the second position on the national leader-board in fundraising for the Longest Day Challenge with an incredible \$5,000 raised for Cancer Council! His love for golf began at just four years old and has grown into a means to make a difference. Sadly, Blake lost his grandmother to Cancer and his grandfather is currently suffering from prostate and skin cancer. This has become his motivation to raise awareness and make a difference by raising funds that will assist with Cancer research. Blake will participate in the 72-hole marathon along with team mates who have created the team name 'Sunsmart' as a reminder of how dangerous the sun can be and how critical it is to protect and look after our skin. Well done Blake and the whole 'Sunsmart' team for your efforts in this marathon for a great cause!

**DR BRIAN KEARNEY OF THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT WESTMEAD**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I want to congratulate and thank the tremendous work of Dr Brian Kearney at The Children's Hospital at Westmead in the Seven Hills Electorate. Dr Kearney is 85 years of age and has just retired from practising at the Hospital. Dr Kearney began his career at the Hospital which was then known as the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in 1962. Dr Kearney has also worked as a paediatrician at Westmead Hospital and Parramatta Community Health Centre, where he provided treatment and diagnosis for children with physical and intellectual disabilities and behavioural issues. Dr Kearney also worked as a paediatrician in the Civilian Medical Team in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Dr Kearney was raised in Parramatta and has spent a lifetime treating patients from across our the Seven Hills Electorate and New South Wales with dedication and care. I wish Dr Kearney all the best for his well-deserved retirement after 59 years as a medical professional.

**SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE 50 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—Recently I was able to award eleven Seven Hills Electorate constituents with their 50 year of service certificate for their work as Justices of the Peace.

I recognise:

- Mr Graeme Banks OAM JP of Northmead;
- Mr Robert Calvert JP of Constitution Hill;
- Mr Garnet Cox JP of Kings Langley;
- Mr Robert Fuller JP of Constitution Hill;
- Mr Phillip Haberle JP of Old Toongabbie;
- Ms Remah King JP of Constitution Hill;
- Mr Allen McInnes JP of Winston Hills;
- Mr Wallace Neville JP of Kings Langley;
- Mr Warren Price JP of Winston Hills;
- Mr Neil Spranger JP of Winston Hills; and
- Mr David Williams JP of Winston Hills.

Well done to all of these dedicated locals who have continued to serve their community as Justices of the Peace into their retirement. I thank the Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Speakman SC MP, for this recognition of these Seven Hills Electorate constituents.

#### **GARRY REARDON**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations and the thanks from the community of Grafton to Captain Garry Reardon of Fire and Rescue's 306 Grafton Brigade who recently marked 30 years of service. Garry first joined the NSW Fire Brigade in 1983 and served for eight years before he resigned and took up other pursuits, however after six years out of the Brigade, in 1997, he made the decision to re-join. Throughout his 30 year career, Garry has seen many changes, not only in the name of the service, but in procedures and equipment. The Rappville fires of 2019 stand out in Garry's career as something he had never seen or experienced and he hopes that he never witnesses this kind of destruction and devastation ever again. I wish Garry continued success in his career and thank him for his dedicated service to assisting those members of our community who he sees at a difficult time in their life.

#### **'THE LITTLE LADY' – BOBIN PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Bobin Public School who in the face of helping their students and the wider community cope with the trauma of the fires which burnt their school and much of their community to the ground turned to the creative arts. As a result of this Student Maia Oates wrote a heart-warming story called 'The Little Lady' covering resilience in the face of grief and loss. Touched by the story the teachers then asked all of the students to work together to illustrate 'The Little Lady' into a picture book. Thanks to the hard work of all the students and teachers the book has now been published and copies are available for purchase via the schools website. I commend Bobin Public School for producing this wonderful and touching story book in the wake of the bushfires. All the staff and students at Bobin should be proud of the part they played in producing this book.

#### **REAL ESTATE AGENCIES BLOOD DONOR CHALLENGE**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I congratulate LJ Hooker Taree on taking out the 2020 Mid Coast Real Estate Blood Challenge. The annual competition is a great initiative which this year saved 75 lives through blood donations made between October and December. I would also like to commend the other competitors Elders Real Estate Taree, Lauders Real Estate, LJ Hooker Harrington, Ray White Manning Valley and First National Real Estate Shultz Taree for participating. It is great to see the friendly competition giving our real estate agents added encouragement to roll up their sleeves and be some of the 600 blood donors that are needed in Taree each month.

#### **ST KEVIN'S SCHOOL CAPTAINS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—My congratulations to the new captains of St Kevin's Primary School in Cardiff, Emme Porter and Cristiano Multari. Though the school has had First Nations students in leadership roles before, this is the first time that two First Nation young people have occupied the top spots at the same time. Emme and Cristiano told the Newcastle Herald that they were looking forward to being role models for their fellow students, and were interested in teaching their fellow students more about what it means to be Indigenous. The two also happen to be cousins! Emme is a Gamilaraay and Yuwalarraay girl, and her totem is the

emu. Cristiano is Gamilaroi boy, and his totem is the sand goana. Both live and learn on Awabakal land, and visit family in Moree. I wish Emme and Cristiano all the best in their new leadership roles.

#### **WELL-I-AM PROGRAM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of meeting with Laura Collison from Well Education. Her brain-child, the 'Well-I-AM program kicked off at The Place: Charlestown Community Centre on Saturday 6 February, was born out of her own wish that she had this available to her as a young woman. Laura is a former primary school teacher and is a local trailblazer in the area of emotional and physical wellbeing of young women, and the program intake consists of 15 at-risk young women between the ages of 13-16 and runs over 8 weeks. Well-I-AM is an early intervention program facilitated by Well Education that empowers young women with confidence, resilience, and positive self-worth. There are five core areas of wellbeing that are taught, including emotional awareness and understanding, confidence, resilience, self-worth, nutrition and physical activity. It was my pleasure to help support the program, and I am sure it will deliver the support and training necessary to help build lifelong positive habits for the young women who get involved. My thanks to Laura and the staff at the Place for organising and running this important program.

#### **THOMAS PRESTON - 50 YEARS AS JUSTICE OF THE PEACE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise the efforts of Mr Thomas Preston from Young on being recognised for his 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace. Mr Preston was awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation for his dedication to his role as a Justice of the Peace. A Justice the Peace is an individual whom has the authority from the Governor of New South Wales to witness a person making a statutory declaration or affidavit as well as certify copies of original documents. Mr Preston has served as a Justice of the Peace since 1970 and has always shown willingness towards his role. Mr Preston deals with other members of the community with utmost discipline and respect. I would like to congratulate and thank Mr Thomas Preston for his continued service.

#### **HILLTOPS YOUTH GROUP**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Speaker, It gives me great pleasure to announce the newly formed inaugural Hilltops Youth Group. The Hilltops Youth Group formed by the Youth Engagement and Inclusion Officer Georgia Thomaidis of the Hilltops Council consists of 16 members from across the Hilltops Region. The members of the group are Samantha Emms, Khawlah Albaf, Juan Paulo Maribo, Isha Corkery, Lucy Lamb, Jakeb Friend, Emily Lamb, Imogen Noakes, Tristen Pye, Kyle Pye, Jannat Bakri, Chloe Wade, Thomas Duffy, Isabella Piper, Annhmaie Eastlake-Ward and Chloe-Anne Balmain. I wish to congratulate these members on stepping forward to be advocates for the other youth individuals within the Hilltops Region. The members of the Hilltops Youth Group have an amazing opportunity to have their voices heard and their interests and needs attended to. It allows for the members to create and be involved in activities and initiatives with other youth individuals from the Hilltops Region. I am looking forward to working with these young individuals to achieve their goals and objectives.

#### **MEMORIES IN THE MALL**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise Memories in the Mall, an event held on Friday 12 February in the Macquarie St Mall at Liverpool. The event marked the anniversary of the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples, particularly to the Stolen Generations. This was of course delivered by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008. The event was organised by Liverpool Council. It featured, among others, Uncle Tony Scholes, Chairperson of the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council. The event was supported by the Council's Aboriginal Consultative Committee which is made up of members of the Aboriginal community and non-Aboriginal community members as well as Council officers. There were an impressive group of dancers and there were artefacts on display. This was an important event. It recognised what was a very significant milestone in the ongoing and not yet completed process of reconciliation. It is a delight that such a COVID safe event could be held.

#### **SERBIAN COMMUNITY**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the Serbian Community in this State and their significant presence in the Liverpool region. For the last nine years the Serbian Orthodox Youth Association (SOYA) and the Serbian Festival Sydney have organised a very large and significant Serbian cultural event at Darling Harbour extending over a full weekend. The Pandemic made that impractical for 2021, but instead a Serbian Statehood Day Banquet was organised on February 14 in association with the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand and the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia. I should acknowledge the attendance at the event of SOYA representatives including John Jeremic and Michael Mijatovic, as well as His Grace the Very Reverend Bishop Siluan and Ivana Isidorovic from the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia. The Statehood dinner celebrated

the struggle for independence of Serbia in the nineteenth century, seeking freedom from imperial control. The Serbian community have made a substantial and positive contribution to south west Sydney.

#### **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I acknowledge the wonderful work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in opening a homeless support service in Ballina. The drop-in centre is known as Mary's Place in honour of Aileen Mary Delaney, who made a generous bequest to Vinnies before she passed away in 2018. Ballina Shire has significant levels of disadvantage in terms of income, education and employment opportunities and has one of the highest homelessness rates in regional New South Wales, with more than 500 people either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Mary's Place is the first – and only – such service in this fast growing and generally affluent coastal town, but the third of its kind opened by Vinnies in the wider region. The service provides light refreshments, showering facilities, an outdoor space for socialising, computer access, medical and nursing care, Centrelink engagement service, legal and housing support and psychological and counselling services. Recognition should also go to the Ballina Shire Council, local service clubs and businesses and the community, who all helped establish this valuable social resource. The St Vincent de Paul Society has a long history of supporting vulnerable community members and Mary's Place is set to continue its high level of service.

#### **CASTLE HILL ART SOCIETY**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—For over 50 years the Castle Hill Art Society has been a cultural centre of the Hills community. With such a beautiful natural environment right on our doorstep, it is no wonder that some of the most talented landscape artists in the State live in the Hills. With regular exhibitions, classes, workshops, demonstrations and markets, as well as the Annual Orange Blossom Art Awards, the Society certainly keeps up a busy social schedule, and is another example of the tight-knit community that exists within the Hills. It was recently my pleasure to announce \$30,000 worth of funding for the upgrade of the Society's buildings, including storage cupboards, air conditioning and a water proof roof above the courtyard. This was a part of the \$300,000 provided to my electorate in the 2020 round of the Community Building Partnership Grants. I would like to thank all involved with the society for their work in securing this funding, including Jill Bluzmanis, Luce Lopez, Julie Bhatia, Betina Martin, Birgitta Horst, Cylene Whiteley, Gayl Finocchiaro and Chak Tsang.

#### **LOCAL SENIORS' STORIES CONTRIBUTORS**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise David Linfoot and Ann Flegg, both members of the Castle Hill Electorate, who contributed to the 6th Edition of Seniors' Stories. A collection of short stories written by New South Wales Senior's Stories is a beautifully presented book offering a unique insight into the psyche of our elderly constituents, with stories about modern struggles juxtaposed with reminiscent tales of simpler times, with life lessons and personal discernments accompanying them throughout. David Linfoot's story, Learning From a Spider is a musing on the importance of never giving up, detailing how that very attitude helped him throughout his life, from learning to walk to learning how to use the computer, recommending this "Never Say Die" attitude to everyone. Ann Flegg's story, Metamorphoses, was a rather humorous true story, recounting the circumstances accompanying her mother winning the State Lottery, and the mischievous actions of their dog "Ming" in ruining the cake that was to accompany the celebration (still edible with some careful knife-work from Nan), ultimately ending with the pertinent "In those days life was different". My congratulations go to both David and Ann, and I would encourage them both to keep up their writing.

#### **ROBYN HANNAN**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—On Australia Day 2021, Shoalhaven City Council awarded local South Coast resident Robyn Hannan with the Outstanding Contribution to the Environment Award, and I want to congratulate Robyn for this achievement. Robyn is well known for her ongoing work with the Callala Community Garden. Not only has she worked as a member of the team, she has successfully secured government grants which have been used to expand the gardens. I know that the community is grateful for her leadership and effort, and I join them in thanking Robyn for everything she does to support and grow the community gardens.

#### **AURORA IHALAINEN - SNAKE PROTECTOR**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Aurora Ihalainen is a Lismore local and Southern Cross University law student who has long been passionate about snakes. She caught her first snake at the age of seven. It was on a road and she jumped out and rescued it. It was a big python and it bit her - but that didn't put her off. In the fourteen years since then, she has caught many snakes and lizards. Aurora has completed a comprehensive course through the Australian School of Herpetology which has certified her to handle venomous snakes, so she is now able to rescue any snake in our North Coast Communities. She has also joined the Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers. They are a wonderful local organisation with many compassionate and knowledgeable people. Snake rescue

generally involves catching, - with hands or with a snake hook and then bagging the animal. In most cases, they will be relocated to the bush within a few kilometres of where they were found. Where they are injured, Aurora takes them for vet treatment. Aurora's hopes are to reduce the fear and stigma that still exists around these extraordinary creatures through her work to promote awareness and understanding.

#### **THERESA MITCHELL - AGAPE OUTREACH**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Theresa Mitchell, founder of an important social welfare service in Northern New South Wales, Agape Outreach Incorporated, is a woman with compassion and a passion to help vulnerable people in her community. Last year, Theresa was named AusMumpreneur runner-up in the prestigious Community Choice Awards for her outstanding service to those struggling with homelessness. The awards are presented by The Women's Business School and were created to inspire and celebrate Australian entrepreneurs. Theresa told The Tweed Valley Weekly that she had been trying to get noticed in these awards for five years, mainly to raise Agape's national profile. "I was blown away by the courage, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of the award winners and I know that they will provide great inspiration for other women considering starting their own business," Theresa said at the time. Agape Outreach is informed by Christian ideals. Agape Outreach is inspired by love and good action. Theresa's mission is to help people on the streets by providing meals, food hampers, helping people to set up homes, life skill training and housing services. I thank Theresa and her supporters for really making a difference to our homeless and vulnerable people.

#### **GORDON EAST PROBUS CLUB 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Probus Clubs, an international meeting place for retired and semi-retired business and professional men and women, had its inception in the United Kingdom in 1966 and soon spread to many other countries, including Australia by 1976. Less than twenty years later, in December 1995 the Probus Club of Gordon East was formed in my electorate of Davidson. The club, which recently celebrated its twenty fifth anniversary provides a large range of social activities for its members, including golfing and cycling, theatre and restaurant outings, music groups, book clubs, cooking clubs and bushwalking outings. To mark their twenty fifth anniversary, in December the club held their first live event since the start of the Covid pandemic, a luncheon with over sixty members attending. Throughout 2020, the group remained active through online meetings. I commend Gordon East Probus Club, under the leadership of President Gerry Vella, for their enthusiasm in providing the social structure to keep the many senior members of our local community so passionately active in their retirement years.

#### **THE REVEREND ROBERT JAMES HAPPER**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Last weekend I was honoured to attend the Commencement of Ministry celebration service for the Reverend Robert James Happer as Rector of the Parish Church of St John the Evangelist in Gordon. Rev Happer is permanently replacing the Rev Keith Dalby, who now serves as the Bishop of Murray in South Australia. Rev Ernest Chau admirably served in the interim as Acting Rector. Official guests attending the service included the Hon Justice Robertson Wright SC (Justice of the Supreme Court), the Hon Paul Fletcher and Alister Henskens SC, with the Rt Rev Christopher Edwards (Bishop of North Sydney) officiating. I congratulate Reverend Happer on his appointment and note that many members of his congregation live in the electorate of Davidson. Reverend Happer will be a vital member of the local community during a difficult time for many people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR 2021 – THE YEAR OF THE OX**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—The Lunar New Year, is celebrated by more than a million Australians, mostly from the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities, coming together to celebrate their cultures and traditions. Based on the principle of Chinese Zodiac, each year is associated with one of twelve animals, and now 2021 is the Year of the Ox. In Chinese culture, the ox is a valued animal with positive characteristics, such as diligence, persistence and honesty. I hope this year through the symbol of ox, everyone can stay strong and persistent through the pandemic and so we continue getting through it together. On 14 February the Opposition Leader Jodi McKay MP and I were both honoured to attend and celebrate the Chinese New Year at Fo Guang Shan Nan Tien Buddhist Temple Parramatta. During the celebration, we were delighted to present lucky charms to Buddhist believers and volunteers most of whom live in Western Sydney. A special thanks to the Venerable JueWu for her tremendous effort to strengthen the community. I would also like to thank Mr Andy Chin, President of Buddha's Light International Association, and his executive team for their warm hospitality.

#### **44TH ANNIVERSARY OF GRANVILLE TRAIN DISASTER**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—18 January 2021 marked the 44th anniversary of Australia's worst rail disaster, an event that is forever seared into the memory of Granville residents and families of the victims and survivors. On 18 January 1977 at 8:10 am, a crowded commuter train derailed when it ran into the

Bold Street Road bridge supports and subsequently collapsed onto the third and fourth carriages. 84 people died, and another 213 were injured. The names of the victims are memorialised at a commemorative wall near the station. I want to thank Barry Gobbe OAM, MJA, ANZFSS, the first ambulance officer on the scene and Chairperson of the Granville Train Disaster Association, for his bravery and continued dedication to commemorating the disaster. I also thank Gary Raymond APM, OAM, and Tina Morgan BSN, and all other Association members for honouring the memory of victims and survivors. 18 January 1997 is a day which should never be forgotten, and this Parliament should work to ensure we never see a similar disaster like it ever again. I pay my respects to those now gone and the families left to carry on.

### BRIDGE HOUSING

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I acknowledge the fantastic organisation of Bridge Housing and I know that it is one that everyone here in this House appreciates. Bridge Housing provides a number of social housing residences and affordable properties for residents throughout New South Wales. The volunteers at Bridge Housing are simply incredible and they donate their time to a range of charities including Ronald McDonald House, Habitat for Humanity and the annual Sydney Running Festival. The time that these volunteers contribute to our community is outstanding and their staff always go above and beyond to help out those in need. I would like to thank Mark Turner, Carolyn Scobie, Gary Milligan, Stephen Bull and the entire team for everything they have contributed. As I said, everyone here in Parliament appreciates their continued hard work and they are always a pleasure to deal with. I do encourage anyone in need to contact their office because they do work wonders and their professionalism is second to none. I wish you all the best for the year ahead. Well done team.

### DIANE WILSON

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, the St George area is home to some of the best teachers and school staff in New South Wales. Today, I am honoured to welcome Diane Wilson as the new Principal of Georges River College Peakhurst who is a fine addition to our wonderful school community. Diane is the former Deputy Principal at Sydney Technology High School and she impressed the selection panel through her experience, leadership and invaluable contribution to public education. Before being Deputy Principal at the school for nine years, Diane was the Head Teacher of mathematics at Beverly Hills Girls High School. I wish to thank acting Principal, Kim Osborne, who has done an outstanding job at keeping everything running smoothly and this was particularly impressive during the COVID-19 pandemic. I also want to acknowledge former Principal, Terry Vallis, who has done so much for the school community over a number of years. I am confident that Diane will do a fantastic job as the new Principal and I wish Kim all the best in her future endeavours.

### THE GREAT CLUB

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—A global pandemic is not the ideal time to launch a live music venue, but nothing stood in the way of superstars Alison Avon and Brook Olson, who have launched The Great Club. Alison and Brook have revamped the iconic Greek-Macedonian club into a 300 person live music venue, adding another exciting venue to Marrickville's renowned nightlife. Built in 1955, the venue first served as a Greek gentlemen's club. Alison and Brooke made sure the new venue's name paid homage to the Greek and Macedonian communities and have preserved many of the Club's historic artefacts. The venue will feature Greek music and cuisine, as well as provide a stage for emerging inner west artists. I was thrilled to attend the Club's soft launch in December and look forward to the stage lighting up next month with inner west bands. Hopefully, The Great Club will be joined by even more exciting new venues, with Inner West Council advocating for the NSW Department of Planning to scrap the requirement to submit a DA approval to host live music. It's clear that if you're looking for a great night out, there's no better place than Marrickville, and The Great Club.

### YVETTE ANDREWS

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—I warmly congratulate Yvette Andrews from the Inner West Magpies AFL Club, who has been announced as a NAB AFLW Community Cup Ambassador for 2021. The award acknowledges people who have made a great contribution to women in footy. To say that Yvette has simply contributed to women's football is an understatement – she has helped pioneer it. Although she is a member of the Sydney Women's AFL team of the decade, has played over 100 games and is a Life Member of AFL Sydney, her achievements also stretch well off the field. After sitting on the inaugural AFLW National Women's Advisory Committee in 2002 and the Giants Women's Advisory Committee, she became the namesake for one of the AFL Sydney Best and Fairest Awards: the Andrews-Burgmann Medal. Her contribution to women in football is a testament to her tireless and often thankless hard work and passion. I am sure I speak on behalf of not only the Inner West Magpies, but also for the whole Inner West community, when I say that I am so thankful and proud to have Yvette leading the way for footy clubs everywhere.

**SARETTA FIELDING**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the outstanding talent of nationally acclaimed and multi award-winning artist Saretta Fielding from Toronto. Saretta is an Aboriginal woman from the Wonnarua Nation and her work deserves the highest praise. Saretta's works celebrate not only the natural beauty of Lake Macquarie and the wider Hunter Region, but also the traditional culture of her people. They are created in a style which reflects the many traditional sand engravings found throughout Wonnarua country, adding a unique dimension to her works. Saretta has received widespread critical acclaim and just some of her achievements include gaining global recognition in 2014 when her designs were featured on Ray Ban glasses, winning the major prize in the Our Communities exhibition here at NSW Parliament House, and being named the 2018 Sydney Royal Easter Show Wearable Art Winner, as well as being named a joint winner of the 2020 Lake Macquarie Arts Leader Award. In addition to her passion for her art and culture, Saretta is a dedicated advocate for the Aboriginal community and was a pioneering board member of Yarnteen which aims to build Aboriginal involvement in business. I congratulate Saretta on her accomplishments.

**JUDY JONES, MICHAEL AND LAUREN MILLER, MATT LEAHY, DR JULIE KIBBY AND MATT LUMBY**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—In times of crisis, it's the actions of ordinary people who often make the difference between life and death. I'd like to acknowledge the heroic efforts of the residents of Yoorala Road at Yarrawonga Park, and their guests, who undoubtedly saved the life of Lake Macquarie resident Richard Burbury after he was bitten by a shark while swimming in Lake Macquarie. Of note are the actions of Judy Jones who ran 300 metres down a reserve to help. Judy, along with Michael and Lauren Miller and Matt Leahy, contacted emergency services and assisted ambulance officers. While waiting for emergency services, Judy retrieved a medical kit from home and provided first aid to Mr Burbury. I'd also like to acknowledge Mr Burbury's wife Dr Julie Kibby who was swimming with him at the time and also provided life-saving treatment. Other Yoorala Road residents and their guests including Matt Lumby of the Towradgi Surf Life Saving Club also aided Mr Burbury by using a belt as a tourniquet. Their actions undoubtedly saved a life and I applaud them for those efforts.

**TIARN GARLAND RECEIVES A NATIONAL ART AWARD**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai)**—I congratulate Tiarn Garland from Ravenswood School for Girls who received the Bic Australia Art Award for her entry 'Watchful Eyes'. As part of the 2020 Young Australian Art Awards, Tiarn was one of 30,000 students who entered. Tiarn specialises in using pencil and the detail she is able to capture in her work is incredible. This isn't the first time Tiarn has been recognised. The Year 11 student won the International Fund for Animal Welfare's 2020 global youth art contest. Nearly 200 entries from 20 countries were received and she was announced the winner at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. I had the pleasure of meeting Tiarn and her father Mike. We spoke about her art, her schooling, what she enjoys to do in her spare time and her future plans. Congratulations again to Tiarn, this is an extraordinary achievement not only for you but the Ravenswood school community.

**THE 78ERS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, and in the lead up to the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras 2021, I want to acknowledge amazing legacy of the 78ers. This year marks the 43rd anniversary of those who gathered in 1978 at Taylor Square Darlinghurst, in defiance of discrimination, abuse and unfair laws. The 78ers paved the way for Sydney's iconic Mardi Gras festival as we know it today. That 1978 gathering started as a peaceful and unifying event reclaiming public space for people who had been kept silent and hidden. Despite issuing a permit for the march, police met protesters with brutality and arrested a staggering 57 people. Those arrested then suffered the public humiliation of having their names and addresses published in the Sydney Morning Herald, leading to job losses, exclusion from family and social ostracism. Despite this, the 78ers continued to spearhead ongoing political and legal advocacy. I thank the 78ers for trailblazing what we now consider as normal legal and social rights. We must continue to be inspired by their action and keep up the campaign for equality.

**ADRIAN BOSS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to put on record the more than two decades of support and advocacy that Adrian Boss has carried for the eastern suburbs cycling community. Adrian has for many years been a key advocate representing BIKEast, working with local MPs, councils and transport agencies to improve safety and access for bike riders, giving up many volunteer hours to work on feedback to plans and strategies, and pressure agencies to fix problems that risk safety and access. In particular, he's been a strategic campaigner for a joined-up cycling network so that bike riders have safe and

connected route from the eastern suburbs into the city. More recently Adrian established the local chapter of Cycling Without Age, a non-profit charity that by volunteer cyclists giving people unable to ride themselves free rides on trishaw e-bikes. This inspiring project allows elderly less mobile people feel the wind in their hair and experience the joy of riding. I thank Adrian for his long term contribution to the community and to helping improve safety and access for bike riders so they can enjoy this great mode of transport.

#### **KATERINA MCGILCHRIST**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the inspiring story of Katerina McGilchrist who reached out to me in December to organise collecting masks for people less fortunate. The 11 year old who attends Berowra Public School, was shocked when she saw the cost of masks and sanitizer while shopping with her Dad. She decided to do something about it and start collecting for the charity We All Care. In just a week she organised collection points, put up posters and got local businesses to help out. She wrote to the local Bunnings who offered to donate masks and there are collection points at Wise Monkey Café and CoHo Café in Berowra. She has also been giving up her school holidays to make masks with the sewing machine she received for her birthday. We All Care have already distributed 2,100 masks in one week across New South Wales to those less fortunate to ensure they are continue to be COVID Safe. Katerina wrote to me to thank me for my help, but I want to thank her, for her amazing determination and for putting others before herself.

#### **JACK LYNCH**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—The future is in good hands if young people such as Bathurst's Jack Lynch is any indication. Last year Jack completed the Higher School Certificate with an ATAR of 96.85 and is now studying law at Sydney University. In 2020 Jack was the Head Prefect at St Stanislaus' College. Jack was also a member of the Bathurst Regional Youth Council in 2019 and served as Mayor in 2020. In this high profile role he led and contributed to the planning and running of various events around the local community. He also represented St Stanislaus' College in 2019 as the St. Vincent de Paul Conference President. Jack's list of sporting achievements are also impressive including representative level swimming, athletics and rugby. In 2019 he was New South Wales U17 400m Champion, a member of the 2019 New South Wales team for the Australian All Schools Championships, and 2020 Australian Junior Championships. Jack's involvement in various events such as the Bathurst Edgell's Jog and Bathurst Half Marathon; NAIDOC Week celebrations and the Bathurst 1000 Street Fair shows his commitment to the wider community. This was recognised by the Lions Club of Bathurst who named Jack their 2020 Youth of the Year.

#### **DAVID MILLS**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—If ever there was a quiet achiever, it is David Mills. For the past 15 years, David has been the driving force behind the sub branch of the Bathurst RSL and is certainly a man committed to caring for others. As well, for more than a decade Davis has been involved with the Salvation Army, working the field of community and welfare. But his dedication and service to the local community does not stop there. It's just the start. David has been a member of Rotary for more than 20 years and has chalked up more than 25 years' service with the Rural Fire Service, acting as a member, captain, senior deputy captain and deputy captain. He has also served as a board member of the Scots-All Saints' School Bathurst and as a member of the Yetholme Progress Association. However, possibly David's most passionate role has been as the leader of the Bathurst RSL sub branch. And with Anzac Day 2021 just around the corner, David is garnering the support of the local community to honour the services of all veterans with their own private commemorations by standing with a lit candle at their letterbox.

#### **SENIOR CONSTABLE HOWARD JONES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Senior Constable Howard Jones for 41 years of dedicated service with the NSW Police Force. His service took him from the Metropolitan Police Area to Tingha, to various other country police stations and then back to Tingha where Senior Constable Jones had met and married his wife during his first assignment. As an energetic role model he made appositive difference to many lives. Howard claims that the highlight of his career was in teaching at the Academy in Goulburn. He took great satisfaction in preparing the students in weaponry, ensuring their safety on the streets. I congratulate Senior Constable Jones on maintaining four decades of commitment and dedication demanded of a NSW police officer. I commend Howard for maintaining his integrity enthusiasm and devotion to duty which endeared him to the communities he served.

#### **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT DENILQUIN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate the following four volunteer drivers, Barry Macauley, Barb Finn, Daryl Whateley and Neville Lester, who have each served the



Deniliquin community for a decade through the Intereach program. The Intereach Community Drivers program transports community members and groups to appointments, activities and events. The dedication of all four drivers over the past ten years is to be commended. Two of the drivers, Barb Finn and Daryl Whateley retire from the Community Driving program, but will continue to volunteer within the community both at the Deniliquin Hospital and the Deniliquin Lion's Club. I thank Barry Macauley, Barb Finn, Daryl Whateley and Neville Lester for their many years of service.

#### **ANTHEA HASTINGS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise the fortitude of Anthea Hastings as a relative newcomer to the Northern Tablelands from the Sydney area. Anthea has settled in one of our smaller villages and is proving that country life, while different from the city, has many advantages for a person to succeed. With vast experience in the hospitality industry, Anthea is running very successful children's cooking workshops in the Moree Plains Shire. Her eager students are finding that food is fun and learning to enjoy healthy foods they hadn't previously experienced. I congratulate Anthea's enterprise for creating a viable business from the opportunities that are available in the country. I commend Anthea for trusting in regional Australia that a move to the country would be a valuable decision.

#### **REBECCA HALCOMB**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I would like to congratulate Elizabeth Macarthur High School student Rebecca Halcomb for her success in receiving the 2021 PetSure Scholarship to attend a five day vet camp 'Future Vet Kids'. At this camp she had the opportunity to gain further insight and skills into a future career in veterinary science. Rebecca is an active member of the community having been awarded the 2020 Young Citizen of the Year at the Camden Council Australia Day Awards for her involvement with the Elizabeth Macarthur High School Agriculture Show Team. In addition Rebecca has competed in the Camden Show Rural Ambassador Competition. I am sure Rebecca will continue to pursue her agricultural dream within in the Camden Community and I wish her every success with this.

#### **TIM BROOK**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Champion racing driver Tim Brook has taken on a new challenge as he steps up this season to compete in the high powered 2021 Trans Am Series. Having won national titles in Formula Vee and Toyota 86 competitions, Tim will go head to head with some of the best racers in the national motorsport scene. Tim who will pilot the #38 Wall Racing Ford Mustang has the backing of local businesses Tradiepad and Cosmo Cranes. After a strong start in Race One of the series in Tasmania, Tim will compete in the remaining four rounds of the Shannons Motorsport Australia Championships. I wish Tim, a Camden local, every success in the Series and in his future motorsport endeavours.

#### **PLAY4JAKE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I applaud the community of Port Macquarie for generously backing a brave young man in his fight to tackle osteosarcoma- a type of cancer that attacks the cells of bones. Just over a year ago the family of 15-year-old Jake Spurdle were sadly advised of his cancer prognosis, following an indication of pain in his right calf and lower back and hip. Shortly after the news of Jake's health, the community kicked into action, coordinating a fundraising campaign alongside mum Nicola Nappier-Reynolds titled Play4 Jake. More than \$50,000 has already been raised through a number of events including a charity golf day, a dinner at Rydges Port Macquarie and a wheelchair rugby game with Australian champion Ryley Batt OAM, Rabbitohs legends and local sporting champions. The community generosity continued with a further \$20,000 collected from an online raffle to assist with Jake's medical expenses. All in all 640 tickets were sold across three events with South Sydney captain and halfback Adam Reynolds surprising the teenager with a special appearance. A special thank you to Bron Watson who coordinated the fundraiser and the community broadly for stepping up to donate to this worthy cause and support this young man and his family.

#### **HELLO SAILOR FUNDRAISER FOR LIFELINE MID COAST**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise the generous efforts of Dan Hunter, Hollie Ford and Lee Wood of Hello Sailor in Port Macquarie for raising valuable funds for mental health support in our community. The new hospitality business Hello Sailor has only recently opened its doors in Port Macquarie and is already making an impact supporting our most vulnerable. Hello Sailor is a modern bar and restaurant, situated on the waterfront of the beautiful Hastings River. The idea was conceived by two mates, discovering potential in a used boat shed on the Marina and from there Hello Sailor was launched in November 2020. Recognising a need to employ more crisis support workers in the Hastings, Licensee Lee Wood and his crew coordinated a fundraiser for Lifeline Mid Coast by broadcasting Triple J's Hottest 100 countdown on January 23. Crisis support team member Alexis Williams applauded the team's efforts, appreciating the money raised would

assist in sponsoring a local telephone crisis supporter. Better still, Hello Sailor matched each donation, dollar for dollar, enabling Lifeline to employ a further telephone operator. Lifeline answers 16,000 callers in crisis each year and services a population of 190,000 from Nambucca Heads to Bulahdelah.

#### **SCOTT O'BRIEN**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, I congratulate Mr Scott O'Brien for being awarded his 10 year Long Service & Good Conduct Medal from Fire and Rescue New South Wales. Mr O'Brien serves the local community working out of the Doyalson Fire and Rescue Station. The Central Coast community knows well the importance of local fire fighters like Scott, having suffered significant bushfire damage during the 2020/2021 bushfire season. It is firefighters like Scott who help keep regional communities like Swansea safe and I know I speak for all members of this House in expressing our thanks to all firefighters across this state who risk their lives to keep our communities safe. You truly are heroes. I want to thank Mr O'Brien for his ten years of service to our local community and congratulate him on being awarded the Long Service & Good Conduct Medal. Well-deserved recognition.

#### **PHILIP HEATON**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Speaker, late last year I informed the house of the great work of Budgewoi Beach Dunecare, well I am pleased to say its founder Mr Philip Heaton has since been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). Mr Heaton was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to coastal landcare conservation. Since founding Budgewoi Beach Dunecare in 1995, Mr Heaton and the group have restored several kilometres of sand dunes habitat. Alongside his work with Budgewoi Beach Dunecare, Mr Heaton has also served as a member of the LandCare Australia's Central Coast Environment Council from 1996 until 2002. Phil was as a member of the Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Committee, along with being a contributor to the New South Wales Department of Land and Water Coastal Dune Management Manual. I congratulate Mr Heaton on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal. It is well deserved and a fantastic acknowledgement of his important work in protecting our local environment.

#### **MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY INCUBATOR**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)**—On 3 February 2021, I visited Macquarie University to catch up with Vice-Chancellor & President, Professor Bruce Downton MD and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research Innovation, Professor Dan Johnson. I was keen to see the campus Incubator which is home to 30 start-ups. Supported by New South Wales Treasury's Boosting Business Innovation program, it's a place for entrepreneurs, students and staff to develop and scale their ideas into products and services. I met in-house start-up founders including YourLink AU, Dr Egg Adventures and Proxima Capital who have benefited from the Incubator's collaborative model. Synthetic biology can generate products that have numerous applications in industries from manufacturing to agriculture, healthcare, defence and energy. I also visited the Synthetic Biology Biofoundry and spoke to young women scientists working on developing synthetic yeast, as the world's first complex synthetic organism. With their strong capabilities in synthetic biology the university has led a successful bid to host the \$50 million ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology and is a founding member of the Global Biofoundry Alliance, a network of the world's 26 biofoundries. I thank the University for supporting New South Wales plan to turn more ideas into jobs, products and services and new industries.

#### **JOHN YATES**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Australian Football administrator John Yates will always be remembered as a "colossus of the game" he loved so much. Mr Yates, who lived for much of his life in the Yerong Creek community before moving to nearby Wagga Wagga, has died at the age of 86. The AFL giant was a part of the game at every level. He began playing at Yerong Creek in the 1950s and went on to eventually become chief commissioner of New South Wales AFL in the 1990s. A passionate Sydney Swans fan, Mr Yates was a director of the club from 1993 to 2004 and had been granted life membership. Mr Yates, who was also a successful Poll Dorset sheep breeder, firmly believed that AFL in New South Wales should be controlled from New South Wales and not from Victoria. The much-loved father and grandfather is being remembered as a dedicated, generous and hard-working man. As AFL Riverina chairman Michael Irons told The Daily Advertiser newspaper, Mr Yates was "a fantastic and passionate ambassador for Australian football in New South Wales and gave a long term commitment to serving the game and local leagues and clubs". I extend my condolences to Mr Yates' wife Judy, son Tony and their whole family.

#### **CLEM HARTSON, HEFFRON WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron)**—It is with great pride that I announce Clementine Hartson, of Kensington, as the 2021 Heffron Woman of the Year. Clem is the founder of "Project Kindness", a case-specific charity organisation based in Sydney's eastern suburbs, which aims to help Sydneysiders "be kind" to one another,

whether they be homeless, helpless, or hopeless. In partnership with Mary Immaculate Church Waverley & the Member for Coogee, Clem and Project Kindness have set up the "Kindness Cupboard", to help those in need meet their basic needs - tinned food, pasta, baby food, cereals, toothbrushes, and even new blankets and pillows. It's discrete and totally anonymous for both donors and recipients. The motto is "Take what you need; Leave what you can" and is part of the growing network of community pantries springing up across the country in the wake of Covid-19. Project Kindness offers a range of services, including packages for those sleeping rough, presents and Christmas goodies for social housing tenants, financial support for families fleeing domestic violence, and care packages including a toothbrush and a teddy bear for children who are entering the child protection system. Congratulations Clem on your selfless dedication to kindness.

#### **JAIDA CONWAY, FIRST PLACE IN ABORIGINAL STUDIES HSC COURSE**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron)**—This House congratulates Jaida Conway, a proud Kamilaroi woman and Alexandria Park Community School Captain, on achieving first place in the state in Aboriginal Studies for the 2020 HSC. Jaida's achievement is one proudly shared by the school and the south Sydney community, where 5 years ago, Aboriginal Studies was not even offered as a Stage 6 subject in the school. In Alex Park's 2020 HSC results, the number of Band 6s achieved in Aboriginal Studies more than doubled the state average. Jaida attributes her success to the Alexandria Park Community and its teachers, although her exceptional work ethic and hunger for success must also surely share the credit. Jaida's Aboriginal Studies teachers agree she was a passionate and exceptional student. It is an enormous achievement for an Aboriginal woman to come first in the state in Aboriginal Studies – not just for Jaida but the entire Alex Park school community, which is thriving in its brand new, state of the art campus. Congratulations to Jaida, her teachers, Principal Di Fetherston, and Deputy Principal Christy Godby on this outstanding achievement.

#### **STRATHFIELD ROTARY**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield)**—I bring to the attention of the House the fiftieth anniversary of the Strathfield Rotary, an organisation that works tirelessly to serve the Strathfield community. Rotary International's founding principles of service, integrity and goodwill have guided Strathfield Rotary for half a century. Strathfield Rotary supports 16 local schools and organises a range of local events, from Carols in the Park to the Pride of Workmanship Awards, and runs countless fundraisers supporting local issues, including raising \$50,000 for the Catherine Sullivan Centre and \$10,000 for Chalmers Road School. Strathfield Rotary also supports international issues throughout Asia and Africa. Strathfield Rotary has recently been recognised for their work by being awarded Rotary Club of the Year 2020 in the Rotary International 9675 District. I draw special attention to the incredible efforts of the 2021 executive: President Usha Garg, Alexey Prokopenko, Thaya Ponniah, Peter Smith, Janice Barrett and Allan Teale, as well as past Presidents Arie Pappas and Rick Vosila. I recognise all past and present members who over these fifty years have contributed to the success of Strathfield Rotary. I congratulate Strathfield Rotary on its remarkable achievements and fifty years of valuable service to the community.

#### **GAI WATERHOUSE AWARDED AUSTRALIA DAY HONOUR**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Congratulations to local Mosman resident Mrs Gai Waterhouse, also known as the First Lady of Australian racing, who was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the thoroughbred horse racing industry, particularly as a leading trainer, and as a role model for young women. Gai is a trailblazer for women in the racing industry and an admired ambassador for racing. After taking out her trainer's licence in 1992, Gai has trained almost 5,000 winners and 144 Group 1 winners including a record 7 golden slippers, 7 Doncaster Miles, 7 Epsom Handicaps, 8 The Metropolitans, Melbourne Cup, Caulfield Cup, and 4 Queen Elizabeth Stakes. Gai who is the daughter of legendary trainer Tommy Smith, joined her father in the Australian Racing Hall of Fame in 2007 and the Sporting Australia Hall of Fame in 2018. Congratulations to Gai on being recognised in the Australia Day 2021 Honours.

#### **DOGS ON DOORSTEPS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—During the lockdown in early 2020, many people were stuck wondering what to do. Local Mosman resident and photographer Suzanne Stevenson, who saw all her photography jobs cancelled overnight turned to a new subject to snap – dogs. The idea came to Suzanne at the end of March last year when she started seeing Mosman's beloved pet dogs taking up pole position at their front doors, always on the lookout. By the end of lockdown Suzanne had photographed over eighty dogs over three months in the streets around her Mosman home. After being encouraged by locals to turn the series of photographs into a book, Suzanne turned to Ready Fund Go owned by Mosman local Jill Storey and raised enough to publish and print 'Dogs on Doorsteps', plus donate \$5000 to the not-for-profit charity, Paws Pet Therapy. I would like to congratulate Suzanne on creating this amazing initiative to provide some joy to local residents who were also in lockdown, and of course to the puppies and dogs who were the best looking models.

### NEW APPOINTEES TO LANDCARE NSW HONOUR ROLL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—As a founding member of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Landcare group and Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Sonia Williams, Keith Hyde, Stuart Mosely and Chris Scott on their appointment to the Landcare New South Wales Honour Roll as Honorary Life Members. Sonia, who hails from the New England region, was recognised for her enormous role in the development of Landcare New South Wales in her area. Keith's accolade was prompted by his extensive policy and advocacy work, and his contributions as a New South Wales representative on the National Landcare Network Members' Council. Stuart served as a state representative on the NLN and has featured prominently in the development of Landcare in Western New South Wales, and Chris is a founder of Landcare New South Wales whose involvement has spanned 20 years and included a stint as Chairman of the New South Wales Landcare Committee. Sonia, Keith, Stuart and Chris - I endorse Landcare New South Wales Chair Steph Cameron's observation that the organisation could not have survived the past 10 years without you. Not only has Landcare New South Wales survived in that time; it has thrived. Congratulations, and thank you for all you have contributed, and achieved.

### ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I pay tribute to the dedicated team at the Animal Welfare League and thank them for their kind invitation to inspect their headquarters at Kemps Creek, which I did late last year. Animal Welfare League NSW is an animal welfare organisation that has been caring for surrendered, neglected and abandoned animals for over 60 years. CEO Mark Slater and his team showed me through their incredible facility, and showed me their best practice methods of ensuring successful rehoming of animals who need new families. Previously I have toured their mobile facility, which was also carefully appointed to assist animals in rural areas. It was clear from the conversations I had with the staff and volunteers, as well as the animals I saw, that this is a place filled with love and care for all animals. My heart broke when I saw the fear in one little dog's eyes as she saw humans approaching her, and I was so pleased to see the support she received from her carer. I wish all of the animals in the care of AWL and other animal welfare agencies all the best and thank AWL for the important work they do.

### HUGO'S 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Margaret and Victor Hugo of Bowral who have recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. The couple married in Scotland on 22 December 1960. Victor wore his full Royal Air Force uniform for the wedding. In 1977 they sailed to a new life in Australia with their two children: Jackie and Victor. Over the years Margaret and Victor have seen their family expand with daughter-in-law Jeanne, grandchildren Renee and Logan, and a son-in-law, Richard. People often ask the secret to a long and happy marriage. I understand that the Hugo's belief are long periods of absence. This occurred regularly while Victor was away flying with the RAF and, as they both put it, "helped the heart grow fonder". I can understand the sentiment well as a Member of Parliament who regularly spends periods away from my own wife and family. Victor and Margaret are an inspiring example to our community, to a lifetime of commitment, and to the love they share.

### LENT

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—As we come to the end of summer and are well advanced into the New Year, many people may be looking at the neglected resolutions they made and wondering if it's too late to start again. For Christian communities we are beginning the penitential season of Lent, which we observe in preparation for Easter. Lent is 40 days in which we are called to bring to mind our need for God's mercy and is characterised by prayer, self-denial, and works of charity. Far from just adding religious conviction to some waylaid New Year's resolutions, Lent is a time of opportunity for us to look closely and honestly at our lives and to rekindle our relationship with God. I will be giving up alcohol for Lent this year, and I send my encouragement to the Christian communities in Wollondilly in their Lenten efforts.

### ST GEORGE AND SUTHERLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISABILITY

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge St George and Sutherland Community College disAbility (SGSCC disAbility) for its dedication and service to our local community. With over 35 years of experience, SGSCC disAbility is a community based provider of supports for people with a disability and delivers positive customer experience accompanied by friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. I am pleased to announce that St George and Sutherland Community College disAbility has received a \$12,715 grant from the Premier, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP, for the provision of upright stoves to enable the teaching of nutrition and cooking skills. This funding will allow SGSCC disAbility to embody their values of respect and empowerment as they continue to support their members to gain control in the choices they make to achieve their hopes and

dreams. Of course none of this is possible without the devoted team who work together to ensure the delivery of top quality service. I recognise Patricia Carroll, Angela Rose, Paula Kendall, Debbie Campbell and the entire team at SGSCC disAbility. I thank the team at SGSCC disAbility for bringing the importance of this project to my attention.

#### **SUTHERLAND HOSPITAL INTERN DOCTORS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise the 18 intern doctors who are launching a new phase in their careers at Sutherland Hospital. Since 1958, the team at Sutherland Hospital have provided expert care to our community with sensitivity and selfless dedication, and I'm delighted that these new doctors will be available to assist local residents during their time of need. The new starters are among more than 1,000 intern doctors undertaking a two year program across New South Wales this year, the largest intake of any state or territory in Australia. The interns will rotate between metropolitan, regional and rural hospitals to ensure the diversity of their experience as well as join different units. Of these 18 interns, I am pleased that three brilliant minds are from the Miranda Electorate. I congratulate Rachel Herman of Sutherland, Danica Xie of Como and Elizabeth Monk of Miranda who have entered this next phase of their career. The journey these incredible women have embarked on requires academic rigour, hours of dedication with exceptional brilliance, and most importantly a passion for helping others. I congratulate these medical graduates who have completed their degree and extend my best wishes for their training program.

#### **PROFESSOR GRAHAM GOODWIN AO**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Professor Graham Goodwin, who was named as an Officer of the Order Australia in the 2021 Australia Day Honours. Professor Goodwin was acknowledged for his service to tertiary education, electrical engineering and scientific academies, over a 30 year teaching career and continued research projects. His research has spanned from renewable energy technologies to Type 1 diabetes management, while his contributions have been recognised all around the world with Honorary Doctorates in Sweden and Israel, awards from Australia and the USA, and Distinguished Professor Commendations in China and Chile. With no sign of slowing down, I've no doubt that Professor Goodwin will be leading world-renown research for many years to come.

#### **BRETT MORGAN OAM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Brett Morgan, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Australia Day Honours for his contribution to dance and the performing arts. Mr Morgan's contribution has spanned performing, teaching, consultant and leadership positions in roles with the Australian Ballet, the Sydney Dance Company and several studios across New South Wales and Victoria. He is now the owner of the National College of Dance in Lambton, where he works with pre-professional dancers to foster individuality and passion in his charges. Newcastle is incredibly lucky to have Mr Morgan as part of its dance community, and I've no doubt there will be many more successes to come.

#### **MAGGIE EISENHAUER JUNIOR LIFE SAVER OF THE YEAR**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the fantastic work of Maggie Eisenhauer, one of the joint winners of the 2020-2021 Sydney Surf Life Saving, Young Surf Life Saver of the Year. Maggie is a volunteer surf life saver at Bronte Surf Life Saving Club and out of thousands of school age surf life savers from across Sydney and an impressive field of twelve finalists, Maggie was selected, alongside Noah Teitle from South Maroubra, as one of the joint winners of this prestigious award. Maggie is also a year 9 student at my alma mater, St Vincent's College and is a fantastic role model for the school and further proof that Vinnies Girls and indeed girls everywhere, can do everything. I would like to take this opportunity to wish Maggie all the best as she goes on to the Surf Life Saving New South Wales Junior Life Saver of the Year Development Camp, representing the Sydney Branch, ultimately vying for the title of Surf Life Saving New South Wales Junior Life Saver of the Year. Congratulations again Maggie and good luck with the next phase of the competition!

#### **CENTENARY OF EILEEN O'CONNOR**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—Recently I had the pleasure of joining the Sisters of Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor for a thanksgiving mass to celebrate the centenary of the death of Eileen O'Connor. The service, held at the beautiful St Brigid's Church in Coogee was a fitting celebration of the amazing life and work of Eileen O'Connor, a co-founder of the Sisters of Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor. During childhood, Eileen suffered a severe spinal trauma that left her confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Yet it was through her own hardship that the idea of founding a nursing order for the poor came to mind. After moving to Coogee in 1911, the pair co-founded the Sisters of Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor, with the aim of serving the sick and poor as well as the destitute in their homes and on the streets. One hundred years since her death, Eileen's legacy lives on through the

Sister's work today and I thank the Sisters and the congregation at St Brigid's for their ongoing historical work and this fitting service.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 20:22 until  
Thursday 18 February 2021 at 09:30.**