



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

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First Session**

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Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday, 24 March 2021**

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

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

*[Notices of motions given]*

## *Bills*

### **COVID-19 RECOVERY BILL 2021**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

#### **Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.**

*Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 23 March 2021*

**No. 1 GRN No. 3 [c2021-011A]**

Page 11, Schedule 1.24, proposed clause 27(5)(d), line 19. Insert "and affordability" after "availability".

**No. 2 GRN No. 4 [c2021-011A]**

Page 11, Schedule 1.24, proposed clause 27(5). Insert after line 20—(e) any special vulnerability of the impacted tenant.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (09:48):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

As some of my colleagues emphasised in debate yesterday, the risks of COVID-19 are still very real. That means many workers and businesses across New South Wales remain under enormous pressure. We know they are ready to do whatever they can to lift New South Wales out of this COVID-induced economic crisis. It would be a travesty if the reason they are held back is because of government red tape and regulations. This bill seeks to extend a number of sensible changes, such as allowing for supermarkets to operate around the clock, for people to operate businesses from their homes and for activities to take place electronically.

If the bill is not passed today, these measures will lapse. That would not be a good outcome for business or the community, who have come to rely on these increased flexibilities for critical goods and services. Going backwards is simply not an option. Just yesterday the Commonwealth failed to pass amendments to extend relaxations of corporate obligations, such as holding in-person shareholder meetings. As a result, businesses will find it harder to go about their day-to-day business. We do not want to go down this path in New South Wales. We are moving forward, not backwards.

I now move to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 amendments, which are a part of the bill. Tenancy was an important topic of debate yesterday and I appreciate all the constructive input from members of both Houses. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to transition out of the moratorium on evictions, which was introduced in April 2020. With the economic and rental market data indicating that the economy is recovering, it is now appropriate to transition out of this moratorium. Continuing the moratorium measures could prevent the rental market adjusting to new conditions. It would also allow tenants to accrue levels of debt that would exceed their capacity to repay and could make it harder for them to secure alternative accommodation that meets their needs.

I will now turn to the amendments to the bill that were passed in the other place. The original bill provided to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal broad discretion to consider a range of factors when deciding whether it is fair and reasonable in the circumstances for a landlord to issue a termination notice. The original bill, while not limiting what the tribunal could consider when making such a decision, also specified four matters that must be considered: the steps taken by the landlord and impacted tenant to negotiate a repayment plan; the payments made by the impacted tenant towards the arrears; the nature of any financial hardship experienced by the landlord or impacted tenant, including the general financial position of each party; and the availability of reasonable alternative accommodation for the impacted tenant.

These factors are considered to be key matters that will assist the tribunal to determine if an otherwise prohibited termination is fair and reasonable. The amendment passed in the Legislative Council last night, and supported by the Government, will allow for the additional inclusion of affordability of alternative



accommodation in the factors that the tribunal must consider. Including this provision will make it explicit that the tribunal must consider both the availability and affordability of alternative accommodation in making a decision while ensuring that the discretion of the tribunal is maintained.

As we continue to deal with and emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic our regulatory settings must be fit for purpose, responsive and flexible. The bill extends COVID-19 temporary measures to make that possible. It will also help businesses smoothly transition back to normal operations. The bill is a major step in our COVID-19 recovery regulatory reform agenda. But it is not the only one. We have also removed the lockout laws in Kings Cross and introduced reforms for a more streamlined and timely planning system and we are implementing automatic mutual recognition of occupational licences by 1 July 2021.

I thank all members of both Houses who have contributed to the debate and continue to support the COVID-19 recovery. Where we are today is a major achievement and is a credit to all who have done their bit. We want to continue on this path rather than going backwards. I thank honourable members for their support and for the constructive debate that has occurred in both places. I commend the Legislative Council amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson):** The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT (CERTIFICATES OF TITLE) BILL 2021**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 17 March 2021.**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (09:53):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021. NSW Labor will not oppose the bill, but it encourages continued consultation with key stakeholders to address their concerns. I acknowledge that some of their concerns have been addressed but I will talk to other areas of concern. I thank the Minister for Customer Service and his office, my staff, the Acting Registrar General Leanne Hughes and all the stakeholders, whom I will mention later in my contribution.

The bill amends the Real Property Act by removing the requirement for the registrar general to issue certificates of title for real property, the requirement for the registrar general to make recordings on certificates of title, the registrar general's powers to require the production of certificates of title, the requirements for land owners to produce and rely on certificates of title in conveyancing transactions, and provisions that restrict the use of electronic conveyancing. The bill also makes consequential amendments to other Acts and regulations. As I said, Labor will not oppose the bill.

The bill amends the Real Property Act 1900 and 26 other separate pieces of legislation. It will remove any reference to certificates of title and make all interactions with the Torrens Title Register electronically based. As I have indicated, a number of concerns have been raised. Key peak industry bodies made recommendations in 2018-19 following the release by the registrar general of the discussion paper entitled, *Certificates of title: the next evolution*, and more recently following the exposure draft of the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2020. While some of the recommendations have been adopted in this bill, there are still a number of concerns that have not been addressed. I am sure the Minister in his reply will give certain undertakings and I will trust his comments in that respect.

The bill marks another step for New South Wales along the path to digital conveyancing. Conveyancing is the legal process of transferring property from one party to another. In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] committed to creating a single national system to allow conveyancing transactions to occur electronically. Since then a number of reforms have taken place to roll out e-conveyancing across Australia and the government of the day has continued this process of reform, importantly, in a staged way. On 1 July 2019 New South Wales mandated that all property transactions in the State take place electronically, and that was supported by Labor.

As we have increasingly become reliant on online services, it is appropriate for State legislation to adapt to the ever-changing digital world. The biggest change this bill seeks to introduce is abolishing certificates of title. A certificate of title is the physical, paper copy of information recorded in the Torrens Title Register. It is also a legal document and the holder of a certificate holds legal power over the land that the title covers. However, for many residents of New South Wales the certificate of title is much more than a legal document, as it holds great sentimental value in their lives.

For them, it is tangible proof that the property they live in or have invested in is under their full ownership. They have a sense of pride in their title document and many pass it on to their children when they transfer ownership. That can be seen in all our communities. Multicultural communities, many of whom I represent, come from across the world to settle in our great State with the hope to one day live the Australian dream, that is, to own their own property and enjoy the quality of life this nation has to offer. It is a symbol of their hard work and dedication to their family. As the daughter of immigrants and as a representative of a highly multicultural electorate, I know that they feel a sense of pride in owning their property after 40 or 50 years of hard work.

It should be noted that the bill proposes to have an information notice issued in place of a certificate of title. The information notice will only hold information about the land and unlike the certificate of title cannot be used as a legal document in conveyancing. I acknowledge the certificate of title holds emotional value, but technological advancement marches on in 2021 and e-conveyancing is being more widely used than ever before. Accordingly, it makes sense that our legislation reflects the changes in the conveyancing landscape, particularly given that almost 96 per cent of conveyancing is now performed electronically. As the Minister stated in his second reading speech, States such as South Australia and Queensland, as well as the Australian Capital Territory, have already abolished all paper titles and have introduced electronic-based land title systems.

While moves toward mandatory e-conveyancing has merit, an unfortunate downside is that it has effectively created a private monopoly for conveyancing transactions in New South Wales. Currently PEXA is the dominant player in the e-conveyancing market. PEXA was originally set up about 10 years ago by a group of State governments and has since been privatised. PEXA manages many aspects of e-conveyancing, including providing control of the right to deal [CoRD] holder consent. CoRD is given to the party that has the authority to consent to a subsequent interest on the land, be it the proprietor or the mortgage lender. It should be noted that in the New South Wales property market most homes are mortgaged. In his second reading speech the Minister said:

Under general principles of land law, the person with control of the right to deal is either the registered owner or the registered mortgagee. As both the registered owner and any mortgagee have a secure, registered interest in land, there is no extra utility gained from a separate CoRD notification on title.

While that may be the view of the Government a number of peak industry bodies have continued to relay their concerns over the removal of CoRD holder consent. This can be seen in the submissions of a number of industry organisations and private individual submissions sent to the Office of the Registrar General as part of its 2018 discussion paper. Dentons, one of the largest law firms in the world, drafted a submission highlighting their concerns. They state:

... significant concern about dealings being permitted without the consent of the CoRD holder.

They believe there is "too much risk" involved when dealing with applications whereby the CoRD holder did not give consent to the lodging party. Such unauthorised dealings can take years to come to the attention of the CoRD holder and can cause delays, even if there were to be an express appeal solution. The Mortgage and Finance Association of Australia [MFAA] agrees with the concerns of Dentons when it comes to removing CoRD holder consent during dealings. In a letter to the Office of the Registrar General it states:

We have significant concern about dealings being permitted without the consent of the Control of the Right to Deal holder.

The exercise of mortgagee's powers may be delayed for a significant period while an application to remove an application to remove any unauthorised dealing is processed. Even if an express solution is mandated (e.g. produce evidence of consent within seven days), a process of appeal or dispute as to facts may cause significant delays.

The MFAA goes on to say that the CoRD consent is needed to ensure priorities and rights of the mortgagee such as removing easements and protecting covenants or it may affect the value of the land. While issues of CoRD consent are raised with the Registrar General, the Australian Banking Association believes the bill's removal of CoRD would help to "reduce the current administrative costs and delays associated with CoRDs". Sympli, an electronic settlements provider, echoed similar possible advantages of abolishing CoRD, focusing on streamlining processes and increasing efficiency. Efficiency is important in any process; however, so is the level of effectiveness. The Opposition does not support increasing efficiency if it means the effectiveness of protecting the rights of all parties involved in a right to deal transaction is diminished, especially when there is the possibility that an allegedly more efficient process is vulnerable to fraudulent activity.

This bill aims to fully digitise the conveyancing system, which will make New South Wales the first State to have a 100 per cent e-conveyancing system. That is immense trust placed on an online platform based on seven years of e-conveyancing in New South Wales. According to the Minister—and I take him at his word—there have been no fraud cases. The Minister did admit that there had been cases of fraud with the paper title that resulted in the Government paying out \$7 million. I urge the Minister to remember what has occurred with Service NSW during the past year. I have held the Government accountable for the devastating effect upon thousands of people

of having their information hacked. Hackers have been able to infiltrate departmental cybersecurity systems and successfully steal confidential and personal information.

It is a good system. We are moving to 100 per cent e-conveyancing. I have spoken to many conveyancers and legal practitioners in my electorate and everybody has said this the way of the future. The staged approach has been important. The concern of many of the conveyancers is fraud and securing the information. The Minister and his department will do all they can to secure the information. We have not yet seen fraud in e-conveyancing. I urge the Office of the Registrar General and the department to work with stakeholders and ensure that security is the number one objective. Policy should not be reactionary, daring criminals to hack important information. It is very serious.

There are millions of online activities, but in terms of e-conveyancing there are thousands of transactions occurring each week and it is vital that we have 100 per cent security. As the first jurisdiction in Australia to have 100 per cent e-conveyancing it must also have the strongest cybersecurity. I have stated many times that it must be bulletproof. The submission by Australia Post highlighted its belief that there is potential to "improve security services" in e-conveyancing. The area deals with high-value transactions. Australia Post suggests the use of digital identity services can be useful to verify multiple parties at multiple times during a transaction. In digital identity considerations for the NSW Office of the Registrar General, Australia Post states:

Strong, consistent electronic identity can streamline many of these processes, particularly when combined with the other documentation procedures involved in transactions –

Aside from the fraud threats online, the Australian Institute of Conveyancers NSW Division [AICNSW] believes retaining the CoRD consent provides fraud protection from dishonest subscribers and persons posing as a registered proprietor. In February 2019 AICNSW wrote:

However, a CoRD Holder Consent clearly provides for the stated consent from the registered proprietor, and that CoRD Holder Consent must be in accordance with the authority from the registered proprietor to the subscriber. Accordingly, CoRD consent assists to reduce the chance of fraud. Members must keep in mind that with such high-value transactions fraudsters are willing to try almost anything. We need to ensure that we strive to keep fraud at zero—zero tolerance, zero fraud, 1,000 per cent bulletproof. For many people buying a property, particularly in today's high property markets around New South Wales, it is a lifetime of savings for many young couples, families or retirees who place their properties as collateral for home loans for their children. I know that this is taken very seriously by the Minister and by the department, by the Registrar General, and ask whether the Minister can tell us about potentially a review or oversight, just so that we are 100 per cent sure, as we are going to have 100 per cent electronic conveyancing.

It is the most vulnerable in our community, such as the elderly, those from culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] backgrounds who have lower English proficiency and those who have no computer literacy, that will be the biggest targets for fraud. Moreover, a number of organisations have also mentioned the introduction of title watch, should CoRD be removed. Title watch is a service that provides notifications to advise of changes taking place on a particular title to involved parties, establishing a similar notification process that can be seen currently with CoRD holder consent, which will continue if CoRD is abolished. Landcom's submission states:

If it was decided to remove eCTs and CoRD holder Consents a free service to monitor activity against certificates of titles should be introduced ...

I think a free service of that kind should be considered. The submission continues:

The service should provide alerts when activity is detected via email/text message to a recorded subscriber.

Landcom's recommendation is also reflected in submissions by the conveyancers Dentons, the Mortgage & Finance Association of Australia and the Law Society of NSW. In a submission to the Registrar General on the exposure draft of this bill, the Law Society of NSW goes further to mention title watch, stating:

... a title watch scheme should be implemented prior to the commencement of the Draft Bill ... In our view, the trigger for the alert should include early activity on the title that may indicate a proposed transaction, such as a request being sent to NSW Land Registry Services for Lodgement Support Services in respect of a title.

This is why the Labor Party did not support the privatisation of the Land Titles Office. More and more now, everything is online—100 per cent online—and that is why we were absolutely against the privatisation of the Land Titles Office. This group is doing its job, but my concern is that they are going to charge if the Government goes down the path of the title watch proposal. This is where government privatises and does not have control of that part of the agency. I am urging that the registry services consider a free service. I know that the details will be resolved with the Government, but I put that on the record. The Law Society's submission continues:

We understand that development work for a title watch scheme is progressing ...

I acknowledge that and again thank the Office of the Registrar General and the Acting Registrar General for being available. I have also mentioned the Minister's office—Priya and James—and Bobby, Luke and Jess in my office.

Over the last five days we have been able to land on agreement and also take the time to speak to some of the stakeholders. I know that this will continue, to make sure that we get it right. The submission continues:

If the [title watch] scheme—  
or a similar scheme—

cannot be fully implemented and operational [in the next few months], we suggest that the commencement of the ... Bill should be deferred ...

I know that that is a big statement. I am happy to talk to the Minister and also the Office of the Registrar General about it, but this has been a key concern for stakeholders and members of the Labor Party. I know that these concerns have been taken seriously and I am very grateful for that. We will get to a landing, and I hope that the Minister has some further things to say. As I mentioned, the Acting Registrar General was also available during the last few days and has informed me that the Office of the Registrar General is looking into these suggestions. The Acting Registrar General has also relayed to me that mortgagee consent will be required with all transactions that have required consent in the past. I acknowledge this and hope there is continued consultation with stakeholders, particularly with those that are concerned. However, given the apprehension that many stakeholders have with, among other things, the CoRD, it is imperative that the Government engage with stakeholders and hold an intense education campaign to alleviate their concerns.

I will now talk about some of the concerns that the Law Society has regarding this bill. In keeping with its mission, the Law Society drafted a policy submission to the Office of the Registrar General. The society included many recommendations for amendments. The thrust of these was to improve the clarity of the bill. I acknowledge that the bill before us has included some of those recommendations, but not all. With any bill that passes through this House, we have a duty to leave no stone unturned in ensuring that it is as clear, equitable and practicable as possible. I will briefly examine some of the recommendations that were not included in the bill. Schedule 1.1 [4] details a new definition to be included in section 3 (1) (a) of the Real Property Act [RPA]. The amendment will include the definition of "uplift", which is:

The removal of a dealing or other document that has been lodged for registration or recording from its priority position so that it can be corrected or amended without withdrawing the dealing or document.

There are concerns as to how restrictive the definition is, particularly the use of the word "dealing", which itself is defined in section 3 (1) (a) of the RPA as excluding grants, priority notices and caveats. The Law Society has recommended that the definition of "uplift" should expressly include caveats and priority notices. Doing so will improve the clarity of the bill for anyone wishing to interpret this definition. Schedule 1.1 [20] covers the introduction of information notices. Information notices will be introduced in section 33 of the Real Property Act, should this bill pass. In short, the section gives the Registrar General the power to issue a person who lodges a dealing an information notice upon registration. However, clarity is sought as to whether this section is only related to dealings or if the bill intends information notices to include non-dealings such as caveats and priority notices. Whatever the case may be, the Law Society recommends that clarity is provided on these questions.

Schedule 1.1 [21] covers the replacement of section 36 (6) of the Real Property Act. Section 36 is concerned with the lodgement and registration of documents on the Torrens land register. Paragraph (6) covers the status of dealings and non-dealings, such as caveats and priority notices, while they have been removed from the register in order to make any material corrections, alterations, or additions. The amendment in this bill seeks to reduce the size of this subsection. Although the wording has been described as succinct, for clarity and educative purposes the Law Society has recommended that a new subsection is included in section 36. The Law Society has also called for a new subsection to give clarity regarding any material corrections that may be needed for dealings, caveats or priority notices. Clarity should also be given to the status of dealings, caveats and priority notices while they have been uplifted for material corrections to take place. The purpose of this new subsection is, according to the Law Society, to reflect long-established practices.

We have a duty in this House to make sure that bills that come before us are as clear and practicable as possible. I know that the Government has considered what the Law Society and the conveyancers have stated. The conveyancers have sent me quite a long brief, and one that I passed on to the Minister's office, and they have had had conversations as well. I am very pleased about that. Again, this is more about the detail of CoRD and also about fraud. Hopefully the Minister in his reply will address those concerns. I understand that implementation will not be easy. It has taken nearly a decade to get to this point. We are here, but we need to make sure that we get this right. I acknowledge that the Registrar General indicated that an effective education campaign is imperative. I expect the Office of the Registrar General will do its very best, particularly for a lot of our suburban solicitors and conveyancers who do a very important job and are constantly inundated. It is important that they have practical and simple information and that they can access it through something like a coordinating unit for the first months. The Government may need to provide additional resources to provide that access.

It was not long ago that the people of New South Wales became the victims of an unjust increase in lodgement fees. I am of course referring to the unnecessary 1,000 per cent hike by the privatised NSW Land Registry Services in 2018. The fee hike saw a potential lodgement fee rise from \$141.60 to \$2,832. The reason for the fee hike was a reinterpretation of the rules by NSW Land Registry Services. That reinterpretation was not corrected until the intervention of the Registrar General. I acknowledge the intervention and thank the Registrar General. However, the intervention could easily have been prevented if the Government had engaged NSW Land Registry Services in an education campaign—and, as I have indicated, the Government should not have privatised the Land Titles Office.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Stay relevant to the bill.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** It is very important to the bill.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Be relevant to the bill.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am being very relevant to the bill. I made a statement a few months ago on the issue of e-conveyancing and interoperability. The Minister has made a number of statements about competition. I support his views on the competition aspect. IPART put forward a number of models. I do not accept a duopoly in this instance. I know at this stage there is simply Property Exchange Australia Limited [PEXA] but there is potential for another player in this market. I am happy to continue to discuss the issue and I have written to other States about it. Competition is very important in anything we provide to the people of New South Wales. I thank all the stakeholders who have contributed; they have been mentioned by the Government as well. I urge the Minister to address some of the concerns raised by the Opposition and stakeholders, including by giving an indication in terms of the education campaign.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (10:22):** I speak in support of the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021. It is rare for members of this House to be fortunate enough to participate in a debate about such a significant moment in the development of what is our centuries-old property law. The abolition of certificates of title is certainly a significant moment. I may take a little time to explain its significance and perhaps allay some of the concerns that the member for Canterbury raised in her speech. The original system of title to land under the common law was what was referred to as the Old System title to land. That system required an owner to establish what was called a good root of title back to the original Crown grant. It would often involve many different transactions—transfers, discharges of the mortgage and other dealings with regard to that land—in order to establish a clear ownership to the land.

That very system was not only quite complex but it was also particularly susceptible to fraud and forgery of the many instruments that constituted the good root of title. The Torrens system was developed in the 1800s by a South Australian—it bears his name—to counter what was a significant incidence of land fraud in the colony of South Australia and other Australian colonies at the time. The Torrens system of title was developed to give the market greater confidence to invest in land and real estate within the colonies that would ultimately form the Commonwealth of Australia. The late Dr Robert Stein wrote his PhD at Dalhousie University on the Torrens system and published a book, which I think I have on one of my bookshelves somewhere. I was very fortunate to be taught by him at the University of Sydney in real property. He mentored me and many other lawyers who resided at St Andrews College, where he was deputy principal and senior tutor.

A fundamental pillar to understanding Torrens Title is the High Court decision in *Breskvar v Wall*, which resolved some of the uncertainties that the Privy Council had created in its decision of *Frazer v Walker*. Sir Garfield Barwick famously but succinctly explained that the Torrens system was "not a system of registration of title"—which the Old System was—"but a system of title by registration." As part of the physical evidence that could be given, which lawyers sometimes call the indicia of title, the Registrar General would issue what was sometimes called a duplicate certificate of title, which was a paper version of what was recorded as the landowner's title. The originals were kept in beautiful old folios and were held in the Registrar General's office in Macquarie Street.

A settlement of a real estate transaction was somewhat of a rite of passage for young lawyers—I did my first settlement as a summer clerk at Allen Allen & Hemsley back in 1985. At the settlement, the certificate of title would be produced after a final search had been made with the Land Titles Office to get information about any recently registered dealings on the title, such as a caveat. The certificate of title would be presented at the settlement, at which there would often be four different representatives: the outgoing mortgagee or lender's representative, who would usually hold the certificate of title as security for their loan; the vendor's solicitor or their representative; the purchaser's solicitor or their representative; and the incoming mortgagee's representative, who would usually receive the certificate of title from the outgoing mortgagee.

Usually the new owner's representative would but see the piece of paper fly back into the hands of the bank, which was the new lender, and the certificate of title would be dealt with in that way. My first settlement was representing Kerry Packer and Consolidated Press on the discharge of a mortgage that he held for a \$2 million loan to Sir Frank Renouf. That was discharged with a \$2 million bank cheque, which in 1985, I can tell you, was a lot of money to have in my hot little hand to take back to the office and put straight into the firm's trust account.

If a person was fortunate enough to discharge or pay out their loan to a bank, they would actually receive their certificate of title that showed they had complete ownership of the property. They would usually then have to keep that certificate of title advisedly, if they were careful, in the deed room of their solicitor. If they were less prudent, perhaps they would keep it in their deed box or squirrel it away somewhere at home, which was much less safe. Indeed, I remember my parents first got the certificate of title to their land in the 1970s after they discharged their mortgage. Importantly, this bill creates legislative framework that no longer requires certificates of title and the cumbersome and much more expensive system of settling real estate transactions that I just described.

I note that Dr Stokes, who did his PhD in planning law rather than the Torrens system, is in the Chamber. One downside of doing away with paper titles is the loss of history. My house was built in 1898. We got a whole lot of historical documents, as was frequently the case when old system title had been converted to Torrens title, when we purchased our home. In fact—Dr Stokes will be interested to know—we have the auction notice, which shows the proposed North Shore railway line in the 1890s. That evidenced the auction of land for the first time and the subdivision of all those beautiful orchards that used to be in Gordon and on the North Shore in general because of the wonderful acidic soil that is so good for growing citrus trees.

The only downside of this bill is the loss of this rich documentary history that one gets with old system title that is converted to Torrens title. With that brief introduction to the context of this bill, I will now go a little more to its history. In 2014 when the Government first adopted electronic conveyancing, it made a commitment to progress towards a seamless digital solution for land title dealings. In doing so, it made conveyancing in New South Wales easier, faster, more secure and, I would say, cheaper. In 2017 the Government recognised that, through the innovation of electronic conveyancing, paper certificates of title had become redundant and were now the major roadblock to a wholly electronic system for lodging land title dealings. [*Extension of time*]

That is why in October 2018 all paper certificates of title held by authorised deposit-taking institutions were cancelled and replaced with electronic titles. This represented about two million out of the four million titles in New South Wales. That bulk conversion enabled the lodgement of consent electronically by the person with the Control of the Right to Deal, or CoRD, and removed the need to produce a paper title for some land transactions. However, paper certificates of title still remained in use for all other titles. That meant most businesses were still required to adopt two separate processes for giving effect to land transactions. The Government recognised that further work was needed to fully remove this roadblock to achieve a truly digital system. The bill will succeed in removing that roadblock. It will allow the Government to announce a date for abolishing paper titles and, in doing so, to bring the New South Wales land titles system up to speed with the efficiencies and innovations that modern electronic conveyancing now offers.

I point out that some of the troglodytes who are of my vintage in the legal profession are not entirely enamoured of having to change their 20- or 30-year ways under the former system of conveyancing, but the importance of this bill is that it is truly a great example of the modernisation that our Government is bringing to the laws and processes of New South Wales. It is a great example of the way in which this Government is using digital technology for the good of driving greater efficiency and access to information and knowledge about matters of importance to government. I turn my focus to the main objectives and key changes introduced by the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021. Currently, in addition to the Real Property Act, a total of 27 other pieces of legislation make express reference to certificates of title. This bill will amend all of those pieces of legislation. As an old process stemming back some 150 years, certificates of title have become ingrained in our various conveyancing processes.

There are legal requirements relating to issuing and production of certificates of title in legislation and CoRD notations on the register, and the industry and customers have become accustomed to their use and existence. Because of this, we cannot simply ignore them in our move to an electronic solution. We need legislative amendment to cancel certificates of title. The bill removes the requirement for registered proprietors or mortgagees to produce certificates of title and does away with the requirement for the Registrar General to issue certificates of title in the first place. All references to certificates of title will also be removed from New South Wales legislation. The objective of this change is to deliver on a commitment to strong customer service by removing unnecessary costs, complexities and administrative burdens for property owners and the conveyancing industry in New South Wales. Every year customers pay fees for the safe storage of certificates of

title or incur replacement costs for lost certificates. Each year industry is forced to manage two separate lodgement systems, which generates additional complexities for businesses and increases the cost of dealing.

By abolishing certificates of title, the Government is committing to an electronic solution and delivering for customers the fully realised benefits of a better, faster and more secure alternative to paper conveyancing. With the cancellation of certificates of title, customers will no longer need to pay for the safe storage of their titles. Their interests are instead secured by the land titling system, titled by registration and not registration of title. With the cancellation of certificates of title, businesses can streamline their processes to accommodate electronic lodgement only, which will decrease their costs to do and stay in business.

These legislative changes extend to banks that hold a registered mortgage and that, as of 2018, have been permitted to provide electronic consents to the land registry in place of producing a physical certificate of title as evidence of their CoRD. The land title system is the bedrock of the New South Wales property market. The Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021 will ensure that the land title system will not only be modernised but governed by up-to-date laws with the flexibility and balance needed to operate effectively. For the reasons that I have given, I support the bill.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (10:38):** I speak in support of the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021. I compliment the member for Ku-ring-gai on his dissertation on the history of certificates of title. Hearing about his professional experience and the interesting transactions in which he was involved in, I will also speak a little of my experience in that regard. But I make the point that this bill is about a first-class service to the citizens of New South Wales. It increases the efficiency of some of the key transactions that take place across our democracy and community. The member for Canterbury seemed to think that there is an inconsistency between innovation and security or that there are more risks when there is an innovation. She kept coming back to that point during her speech. I assert that, in fact, there is no inconsistency between introducing an efficiency or a new customer service and the security of the transactions that are governed by that new approach.

Over the past seven years we have seen a significant amount of innovation in technology underlying electronic conveyancing. Indeed, we have seen significant innovations and all manner of technology introduced in the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life. One only needs to think about the way in which we communicate with one another now. We used to write letters to each other, things used to be written on manuscripts and there used to be only one copy of important documents like the *Bible*, which would have to be replicated by hand. Then we moved to photocopying and to being able to communicate electronically.

At every point along that evolutionary cycle towards innovation and efficiency of communication there were security risks. There is no doubt about that. Important documents of which in history there would have been only one copy—handwritten in ink probably using a feather pen—were then able to be replicated. With every evolution of the speed-up in technology, the speed-up of customer service and information in our community and the building of knowledge, there have been associated risks. But the community has become increasingly comfortable and familiar with those risks because of the benefits that this evolution brings to a democratic society such as our own in this nation and in New South Wales.

What would we do without electronic banking these days? There are security risks that come with that, but it has facilitated a great deal of commerce, visibility and transparency and the ability for us to help one another. It can mean an early and quick transfer of funds between ourselves and to people who need our help through money or support, or being able to help our family with transactions from our computers rather than having to run down to the bank as we go about our day-to-day lives. Let us look at COVID. We see how the QR codes have benefited the health of our community. Introducing them required a matter of trust, iteration and, of course, a focus on security. But they have enhanced the health and economic wellbeing of our community as we get through this pandemic.

In relation to security, I draw attention to a lot of work that has been done in our Government around cybersecurity policy. We have a \$240 million investment in cybersecurity across our Government. We know that the Minister who introduced this bill in the House has had a leading role in that regard. We have a cybersecurity policy in government that covers how government relates to cybersecurity risk. That is always a matter of discussion because there are sometimes those who seek to jeopardise the security of our electronic transactions. Any policy has to evolve. That is why there is a significant one-quarter of a billion dollar investment in cybersecurity. At the end of January the Minister announced receipt of a final report from the NSW Standards Harmonisation Taskforce. Those findings will help to strengthen the whole-of-State cyber capacities.

It was a collaboration that brought together some significant parties in cyberspace, including an organisation called AustCyber and Standards Australia. Their work in pulling together this report will accelerate the adoption of industry standards around cybersecurity. So there are innovations, and there is the responsibility

of government to accompany them with security. Through our work around cybersecurity, with that very strong investment of a quarter of a billion dollars, with policies and with the continuing work with industry and standard-leading bodies like Standards Australia and AustCyber—a leading industry body—we will continue to work to improve those systems, our policies and our investment, which must extend into the future.

So against that backdrop to my comments, which are more directly related to the bill, I make the point that efficiency and innovation are not inconsistent with—and, in fact, can lead to—greater security in the way we deal with one another through any number of transactions across our community. We know that other States have made changes in this area. They have abolished their certificates of title. We also needed to do that, and we did so. There is the concept of property rights, which I think may relate to some of the concerns raised by the member for Canterbury. My learned colleague the member of Ku-ring-gai also spent some time speaking to that issue. The certificates of title system is 150 years old. The concept of property rights, I must add, is central to our democracy. Without that security of property rights and being able to trade or deal securely in property rights, some of the central tenets of democracy as we know it in Australia and other parts of the world would be undermined.

Indeed, it is a system that some other countries around the world have not been able to introduce. We look at other countries that struggle with their governance. One thing they need to do before they can become a much more secure place that people want to live in, transact with and engage in commercially is introduce the concept of sanctity of property rights. Many countries have not been successful in doing that. It is a central tenet of a democratic country, nation and state and is at the heart of this innovation. We can do both. Like my learned colleague who spoke earlier, I remember not even as a baby solicitor but as a law student carrying certificates of title [CT]—carrying them in big bags that you would not dare let out of your sight because they contained important documents like CTs—around the city to help out with settlements.

But 20 or 30 years later we are saying that we do not have to carry those certificates across our community and perhaps risk losing that big bag with the CT. We can do it electronically and be just as confident about transacting business securely across our community. It makes sense to move to this next level of innovation. I wanted to recount what we have done in New South Wales leading to this point. It has been a lot of work. In 2014 the Government adopted electronic conveyancing and now, in just a short seven years, we have had almost 100 per cent take-up of electronic transactions—96 per cent; we are almost at the 100 per cent mark. It is not surprising; our community readily adopts technology. Across the world, we have the greatest uptake of mobile phones and engagement with apps. We are early adopters. We have a propensity in this State to be a leader in adopting new technologies.

Against that backdrop and because of our willingness to do such things, because we are addressing cyber risk, because we need to innovate, and because efficiency and service are not at odds with security and security of title—which is what we are talking about in this bill—we are taking this next step to close off paper lodgement channels. The bill removes the obligations on the Registrar General and property owners that relate to certificates of title. It also provides the Government with an opportunity to deliver, as I said, on strong customer service. It removes a lot of administrative burden, which is what this Government is all about. I seek an extension. [*Extension of time*]

I will focus on a couple of things that may not be attention seeking in this bill. We talk about certificates of title but there are more technical parts of the bill, which I think the member for Ku-ring-gai touched upon. There is also a proposal in the bill to abolish the need for a control of right to deal, or CoRD, notification. Again, that is about reducing red tape and unnecessary requirements on our banks. A party has the control of a right to deal when they have the authority to consent to the registration of instruments that previously required the production of the certificate of title. The CoRD holder is commonly a bank that often is registered on the title as the first mortgagee or a second mortgagee. A CoRD holder consent is an electronic notification lodged through the Electronic Lodgement Network Operator by a CoRD holder to provide consent to the registration of a registry instrument.

Where a CoRD holder is already a party to the transaction—for example, a bank discharging a mortgage or a registered proprietor selling their property—it requires the separate lodgement of a CoRD holder consent. We are making that unnecessary because the transacting party has effectively provided their consent by registering the instrument. The bill recognises that all banks are lodging their mortgages through an electronic conveyancing channel and the requirement for, and that administrative burden of, an additional consent to a transaction really is no longer justifiable. That proposal is supported by the Australian Banking Association, which has a strong leadership and representation of all the large banks and smaller banking institutions across our economy.

The Government's commitment to customer service goes further with the introduction of an information notice. This demonstrates that while the Government says that certificates of title, or CTs, are redundant and it is acting on that redundancy in the bill, it is also alive to the fact that information contained in CTs can have additional uses. An information notice will be issued to property owners and it will contain the same information



that would have appeared on a CT. This will ensure that customers and property owners who rely on that information for purposes beyond evidencing ownership are not disadvantaged. The proposed reforms in the bill involved an extensive consultation process, which the member for Canterbury have alluded to, and are the product of consultation over the past two years, particularly with the Office of the Registrar General.

In December 2018 the Office of the Registrar General issued a discussion paper entitled *Certificates of title: the next evolution*. Three models were canvassed in that discussion paper to deal with the two million paper certificates of title that do not have a registered mortgage, also known as unencumbered titles. Model one was rejected. It proposed retaining the status quo for paper CTs. This is not what other States have done, and the Office of the Registrar General discounted that option. Model two proposed converting all remaining paper certificates of title into electronic certificates, which would have required the retention of consents for both registered mortgagees and registered proprietors with unencumbered titles, so model two was ultimately not pursued by the Office of the Registrar General.

Model three is the chosen model that has been adopted in the bill, with the support of the Office of the Registrar General. It proposes to streamline the conveyancing process by removing CTs with consent, alongside adapting the consent regime. The elimination of paper in many of the dealings across our economy is an obvious improvement. As stated, model three aligns with models and systems used by counterpart States. South Australia and Queensland have already implemented model three. The adoption of the same model in New South Wales further promotes national consistency.

A position paper published in December 2019 confirmed the consent and support of the Office of the Registrar General for model three. The Government worked closely with stakeholders in reaching that conclusion, which included the Law Society of NSW, the Australian Institute of Conveyancers and NSW Land Registry Services. The feedback received from those stakeholders as well as other interested members of the community who are directly interested in the subject matter of the bill contributed to the development of the bill that is before the House today. I conclude my remarks by saying that this is a significant moment. The member for Ku-ring-gai was right to spend some time talking to the House about how moving from paper CTs to an electronic system is such an evolution. It is a welcome one and it will bring security, consistency, efficiency and, most of all, a better service to the residents of New South Wales.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (10:53):** I speak in support of the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021. The member for Canterbury is going to be doing her best job to try to make me laugh all the way through this speech. A key consideration behind the Government's decision to adopt electronic conveyancing in 2014 was the potential for greater security, risk mitigation and cybersecurity innovation. The potential for a system that would reduce the capacity for human error and minimise the risks of fraud led to the eventual decision to revolutionise the way property conveyancing is undertaken in New South Wales. To date, most property transactions can be performed through electronic conveyancing. It has always been the intention of the Government to progress towards a seamless digital solution, given the security, efficiency and ease of use offered by the electronic alternative.

It is no surprise that New South Wales is moving towards this system. We have the most techno-savvy Minister for Customer Service, who is taking the New South Wales Government into 2021. We are seeing some great innovations driven by the Minister, like Dine & Discover, which I know the member for Canterbury is a big fan of. Come down to the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly and use your vouchers down there. Dine & Discover is a great innovation, as is Service NSW. It is the only reason New South Wales has been able to take on the COVID pandemic. We are the number one State in the world that has been able to deal with the pandemic with our contact tracing, and it all comes down to the one-stop-shop that is Service NSW. We are making New South Wales great again. However, the Government has identified some paper processes are a risk and can shift—

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** You get plenty of privacy breaches electronically.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH:** While the Opposition is having a lot of fun here, we will get back to the subject task. The reliance on related paper certificates of title has remained ingrained in our property conveyancing processes and cannot be removed without amending the legislation. While certificates of title themselves do offer some security benefits in the paper conveyancing world, many documented instances of property-related fraud ultimately involved an illegally obtained certificate of title. Since electronic conveyancing was adopted in 2014, the Government has paid out over \$7 million in paper conveyancing-related fraud cases. In contrast, the Government has not paid out on one single case of fraud related to electronic conveyancing during that same time. That speaks volumes—and well done again to the wonderful Minister for Customer Service.

Although there is evidence to suggest there will be less reliance on the Torrens Assurance Fund with the introduction of electronic conveyancing, that is not to say that the availability of the fund will be removed or weakened. The Torrens Title Register will continue to be the main source of truth in evidencing title or interests,

and it will continue to be backed by the Torrens Assurance Fund. The fund will continue to be available for anyone who has suffered loss as a result of fraud or error in registration. This guarantee of title provides certainty and security of ownership and ensures confidence in both the New South Wales land title system and the New South Wales economy. It will remain in law and continue to be maintained.

Each year customers spend money on storing certificates of title or replacing them upon being lost. Currently it costs a customer about \$150 to obtain a certificate of title to replace one that has been lost or destroyed. We saw that happen quite often back in 2019 when the bushfires came through my electorate and through the South Coast. Homes were destroyed and many people lost all their paperwork, and the bill will help amend that issue. With many houses currently being inundated with floodwaters across the State, to have an electronic system in place for people who store important documents in their home would be wonderful.

Businesses and industry have spent money on the securing the safety of certificates of titles in their possession, with costs being passed down to customers. With a safer and more efficient electronic alternative available, those costs will no longer be justifiable and instead can be totally removed. Accordingly, the bill will succeed in removing the requirement for registered proprietors or mortgagees to produce certificates of title, and the requirement on the Registrar General to issue certificates of title in the first place. Extensive stakeholder consultation has been crucial to the development of the bill. Since December 2018, the Office of the Registrar General has sought feedback from the public by way of a discussion paper, a position paper and a draft consultation bill. The Office of the Registrar General has considered the stakeholder feedback received and has shaped the bill to address those concerns.

The Office of the Registrar General has made it clear throughout the consultation process that the changes outlined in this bill will provide for the greatest efficiency within a secure and reliable electronic environment, which will retain strong requirements for verification of identity, right to deal and the proper retention of evidence. The bill will permit the Government to announce a date for the abolition of paper certificates of title. As flagged earlier, most transactions can be performed electronically using a secure electronic system that has been developed and is in operation at a national level. The electronic conveyancing system provides a number of benefits, one of which is security. In electronic conveyancing legal obligations are placed on subscribers or participants, which are usually banks, law firms or licensed conveyancers. People and businesses wanting to participate in the electronic system must pass certain eligibility criteria before they are given access to deal with land transactions in an electronic lodgement network.

Some of the obligations placed on participants are to ensure that the client or mortgagor's identity is verified and that the client or mortgagor has the right to deal with the land in question. The requirement to ensure that the person has the right to deal with the land that is the subject of a conveyancing transaction goes beyond ensuring that the person has access to a paper certificate of title. When a participant does the wrong thing or is determined not to be fit to participate in an electronic lodgement network, the Registrar General has the power to suspend or terminate the participant's access. Those obligations placed on participants in the electronic conveyancing system, as well as the extensive powers of the Registrar General to remove access to the system where appropriate, provide significant security enhancements that did not exist previously with the paper process.

However, there remains a small handful of documents that are currently out of scope as further technical innovations need to be finalised before they will be ready for lodgement via the electronic lodgement network. Currently this results in transactions that occur through paper. As paper transactions are less secure, the bill will permit the lodging of those remaining documents through a digital system tied directly to the land registry provided that appropriately secure lodgement systems are available. Wonderful stuff, is it not? The Government is committed to the digital solution, which will continue to benefit from further industry innovations and developments in technology. For that reason the bill will also amend language throughout the Real Property Act 1900 to be tech neutral, allowing for an easier transition into better and more secure technological alternatives should they arise.

The Government considers the integrity and security of the Torrens Title Register to be of the utmost importance. The Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021 before the House today will provide the Government with the tools needed to address immediate security concerns and will provide the necessary flexibility to continue to ensure the land title system is adaptable to the challenges of the future. I again commend the excellent work by the Minister for Customer Service, who is revolutionising New South Wales.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** An excellent fellow.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH:** An excellent fellow he is. He is changing the way we do business and changing the way we operate. Because of Service NSW we have fought this pandemic better than any other State in the world.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (11:02):** In reply: I thank the member for Wollondilly and I accept that Service NSW has done amazing work. I thank the staff of Service NSW and the people on the front line, as well as all of team New South Wales. Every person in our State has done a remarkable job in the pandemic and we have all played our part, but I am really proud of the people at Service. I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021, particularly the members for Canterbury, Ku-ring-gai, Vaucluse and Wollondilly.

As previously stated, this bill delivers the final reform to bring the full benefits of e-conveyancing to consumers and to retire redundant paper processes such as the issue of a paper certificate of title. I now respond briefly to points made by members. As I noted in the second reading speech, there has been no fraud in e-conveyancing since it began in about 2013. The Torrens Assurance Fund established under the Real Property Act 1900 is there to compensate innocent owners who have been defrauded through no fault of their own. The fund has not paid out a single cent to date as a result of a fraud where the transaction was lodged using e-conveyancing. That is a significant testament to the strict operating requirements that are imposed on electronic lodgement network providers.

Those operating requirements have been developed nationally by the Australian Registrars' National Electronic Conveyancing Council [ARNECC]. Because the operating rules are national, e-conveyancing has the advantage of being under the oversight of all State registrars across Australia working together with the common goal of providing a single national electronic environment for the safe and secure completion of conveyancing transactions in our great country. Whilst it is understandable some may be concerned that the e-conveyancing network could be a target for a cybercrime attack or hack, the rules require electronic lodgement network operators to maintain indemnity insurance to compensate innocent parties if they suffer loss or damage due to an attack on the network itself. That is standard operating procedure across the cyber network these days.

Irrespective of whether a conveyance of land is completed in e-conveyancing or on paper, lawyers and conveyancers need to be vigilant against cyber attacks. The large sums involved in a typical property transaction make it attractive for criminals to target a lawyer or conveyancer and the clients they represent. I am pleased to hear that ARNECC has recently made it a requirement that participants in e-conveyancing are to undertake mandatory cybersecurity awareness training. As I said in a recent social media post, cybersecurity is like wearing a seatbelt as you get into your car. One just needs to have it these days.

There are other measures being taken to combat cyber fraud. Electronic network operators are using digital solutions to their advantage to defeat such scams and provide clients a safe and secure alternative to communicate bank account details to their lawyer or conveyancer. For example, the electronic lodgement network operator, PEXA, offers an application called PEXA Key for clients to use. That application removes the vulnerability associated with email. The key proposal in this bill is the removal of both paper certificates of title and their electronic equivalent, known as control of the right to deal [CoRD]. Only banks are eligible to hold CoRD. Back in 2013, when the Registrar General first started issuing CoRD, the banking industry supported it because it eliminated the storage costs of holding physical titles. It also reduced the likelihood of them losing a paper title and having to make an urgent application for its replacement.

Control of the right to deal was designed to replace paper certificates of title in an electronic environment. It was also designed to handle the dual process of providing consent to both a paper and electronic transaction. Over time, the Registrar General noted the concerns of many of the banks as to the utility of CoRD consents when all parties are transacting electronically. Despite a bank discharging its own mortgage, for example, it is still required to provide a CoRD consent. While the bill removes CoRD, it does not affect any requirement where the transaction requires the consent of the mortgagee. In fact, the bill adds a new section 46 (1A) to require that any transfer creating an easement or profit à prendre must be accompanied by the consent of the mortgagee in writing. The prescribed requirements of the Registrar General, known as the Registrar General's Guidelines, also require many transactions to replace CoRD consent with the written consent of the mortgagee.

The same logic also applies to paper certificates of title. In e-conveyancing, the rules require the landowner to verify their identity and that they have the right to deal with the land. They also need to sign a prescribed client authorisation form before their legal representative is legally able to transact. Producing the paper title in this scenario is unnecessary and duplicates the process of consent because of the checks that a subscriber must go through to effect the transaction. In a fully enclosed electronic environment where only trusted and insured parties can participate, the use of the paper certificate is completely unnecessary—much like CoRD.

I will run through some statistics for the benefit of members of the House. As of 1 March 2021, 98 per cent of land documents connected with the sale and purchase of premises were lodged electronically. All other documents not related to a sale and purchase of property are currently running at 90 per cent electronic lodgement. On average, 3,200 documents per day are lodged electronically. Industry had already embraced e-conveyancing

several years ago; however, there is still room for improvement. The Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Bill 2021 will remove the roadblocks so those improvements can be made.

At this point, I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Canterbury, representing the Opposition, for her positive engagement as we have brought this bill to the House. I recognise that there are diverse views in e-conveyancing, and I thank her for sharing the views of stakeholders who have reached out to her. As my office has discussed with the member, I am happy to affirm an undertaking to the House that the Office of the Registrar General will provide advice to the Government in relation to these suggestions for improvements in e-conveyancing raised by stakeholders. Again, like all digital reform, it is ongoing. It is never a set-and-forget environment. That is the beauty of digital: It is not static; it is dynamic. That gives us the ability to innovate at speed. I look forward to continuing these discussions as we progress with this vital and, indeed, historic reform.

I am really proud of this reform. It marks a significant milestone for the people of our great State, particularly in relation to the e-property journey that we are on. In many ways, e-conveyancing is the first tranche of so many things that we are building out, whether it is e-property, e-construction, digital twins, strata hub—you bring all this together and we are literally leading the world in relation to a sector that contributes so much to our economy and so much to employment. In years to come, people will look back on our reforms in the e-property, e-construction and e-planning sectors and say it was literally a game changer. I know that is a term that is often used, but this really is a game changer for the people of our great State.

I am confident that the bill will deliver the digital land titles system that the people of New South Wales deserve. The bill allows us to make the jump to secure a digital future and retire the nostalgic paper process that has dominated conveyancing for over 150 years. The bill demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to improving the land title laws to benefit landowners and consumers in New South Wales. It also demonstrates this Government's desire to own the future and not to be a passenger of it. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **HEAVY VEHICLE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NATIONAL REGULATOR) BILL 2021**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Toole, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:13):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Heavy Vehicle Legislation Amendment (National Regulator) Bill 2021. The purpose of the bill is to give effect to the transfer of certain functions under the Heavy Vehicle National Law from Transport for NSW to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The principal objectives of the bill are to provide for the transfer of certain members of staff from Transport for NSW to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and to safeguard their employment conditions, as well as to enable the Minister to direct by written order that specified assets, rights or liabilities of Transport for NSW be transferred to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The bill will also enable Transport for NSW to obtain and use, in the exercise of its statutory functions, information held by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and to provide the regulator with certain information to enable it to undertake its functions in New South Wales.

The transfer of New South Wales' heavy vehicle regulatory functions to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator is the final significant step in a more than 10-year national reform journey. In 2009 the former Council of Australian Governments agreed to create national regulatory regimes for heavy vehicle safety and productivity, rail safety and domestic commercial vessel safety. The aim of these reforms was to improve safety and reduce costs and regulatory burden for Australian transport companies operating between States. The establishment of national regulatory regimes for rail safety and domestic commercial vessel safety is now complete. In 2019 the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator assumed direct responsibility for rail safety regulation in each jurisdiction under the Rail Safety National Law. New South Wales terminated its service-level agreement and transitioned its rail safety regulatory functions and staff to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator in

2017. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority assumed full responsibility for the regulation of domestic commercial vessels in all States and Territories in July 2018. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was established under the Heavy Vehicle National Law and is responsible for the regulation of heavy vehicles over 4½ tonnes, except in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Although the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator commenced operation in 2014, jurisdictions continue to undertake heavy vehicle regulatory services on behalf of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator under delegations and service-level agreements. These agreements allow the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to develop administrative arrangements and build systems to support a smoother transition to the new national regime. They also provide an opportunity for the regulator to mature before assuming direct responsibility of the national regulatory regime. The time has now come to phase out the service-level agreements with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to realise the safety and productivity benefits of having a national regulatory system for heavy vehicles. To this end, South Australia transitioned its heavy vehicle regulatory services to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in 2017, Tasmania in 2018, and the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria in 2019. Queensland is expected to transition after New South Wales.

Before agreeing to phase out its service level agreement, New South Wales sought the agreement of the former Transport and Infrastructure Council in November 2019 for an independent assurance review to be undertaken. The purpose of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's Services Transition Assurance Review was to assure Ministers that the operating model the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator implements meets agreed national outcomes—that is, primarily improved safety outcomes during and following transitions. New South Wales undertook a similar assurance review process before agreeing to transfer its rail safety regulatory services to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. A key recommendation of the assurance review was that the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator develop a strategic direction on its intended regulatory approach. The rationale for this recommendation was to provide Ministers with assurance that appropriate steps are in place to ensure heavy vehicle industry performance and public safety are maintained, and continuously improved, throughout the transition to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

In response to this recommendation, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator has developed a national regulatory model that describes its approach to risk-based regulation for heavy vehicles. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator has also developed a number of strategies detailing how it proposes to implement the national regulatory model consistent with the review recommendations. The review also identified the need for the national regulator to be responsive to State Ministers in maintaining road safety outcomes post-transition. Specifically, the review recommended the development of a national statement of expectations that details the expectation of Ministers for the operation and performance of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in achieving the objects of the Heavy Vehicle National Law.

The inaugural statement of expectations, endorsed by transport Ministers in November 2020, details specific outcomes and priorities for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to deliver nationally. These outcomes and priorities relate to improving safety for all transport users, embracing innovation and technology in transport and transport infrastructure, ensuring that the transport system supports productivity and liveable cities and regions, and maximising freight productivity. The statement of expectations includes high-level performance expectations about the way the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator performs its regulatory functions and performance monitoring and measurement will be undertaken. The statement of expectations also includes jurisdiction-specific requirements, performance expectations and other requirements.

The New South Wales specific requirements will be included in future statements of expectations before final transition to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. In preparation for transition, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator is proposing to adopt a like-for-like service delivery approach for the heavy vehicle regulatory program in New South Wales, except where the service can be enhanced through the adoption of national systems and/or procedures at the time of transition. It is important to emphasise that a like-for-like service delivery approach means that the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will continue to deliver heavy vehicle regulatory services utilising the same staff, in the same locations, using the same physical resources as occurs now. Importantly, regional and metropolitan employment will not be reduced as a result of the transition to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will continue to have access to the necessary New South Wales systems and data to maintain the same regional presence, although it will not own any assets, such as property and infrastructure. This data, together with the national compliance data, will ensure more effective compliance monitoring and regulatory outcomes, and support the development of a unified regulatory mode for the heavy vehicle sector. In order to deliver nationally consistent regulation for industry and customers, New South Wales has agreed to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator delivering the New South Wales heavy vehicle inspection scheme under a service level agreement with Transport for NSW.

While the requirement for heavy vehicles to be inspected is primarily for New South Wales registration purposes, these inspections are also a significant component of the overall heavy vehicle compliance monitoring strategy for vehicle standards, ensuring compliance under the Heavy Vehicle National Law in New South Wales. By assuming responsibility for the New South Wales heavy vehicle inspection scheme, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will have a more comprehensive view of the New South Wales fleet, which will better enable an integrated risk-based approach to operator and vehicle compliance. It will also mean that the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will have access to a considerable amount of data on heavy vehicle roadworthiness. This will further inform the development of the national regulatory model and supporting strategies to ensure more effective compliance and enforcement activities across jurisdictions.

The transfer of the heavy vehicle inspection service to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will also mean the regulator will acquire valuable mechanically qualified resources that will enhance its national regulatory capability. Importantly, it will mean that our heavy vehicle customers will continue to deal with one regulator for on-road and roadworthiness matters. It is also intended that the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will also deliver a number of other heavy vehicle related regulatory services on behalf of New South Wales. These services include compliance monitoring and enforcement of heavy vehicle registration and driver licence requirements, and compliance monitoring and enforcement of heavy vehicle access limits imposed under State laws.

To support heavy vehicle regulatory operations in New South Wales, Transport for NSW will continue to deliver a number of services on behalf of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator under a memorandum of understanding. These services relate to the approval and management of third-party service providers for vehicle modifications and the clearance of vehicle defect notices, and the partial transition of mapping of enforceable networks. It is expected that it will take approximately 18 months before the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Transport for NSW complete their transition readiness activities and for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to be in position to assume full responsibility for delivering Heavy Vehicle National Law and Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme functions in New South Wales. This means that the transition of functions and staff is most likely to occur in the middle of 2022. I advise the House that the transition will also only occur once both Minister Constance and I are satisfied that Transport for NSW and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator are in a position to implement a seamless transition.

Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Act 2013 to enable Transport for NSW to obtain and use, in the exercise of its statutory functions, information held by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, and to provide the regulator with certain information. New section 25 provides that Transport for NSW may, on its own initiative or at the request of the regulator, provide the regulator with assistance, advice or certain information, as is reasonably required by the regulator to exercise its functions under the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Act, the Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW) or another law. This information will include information given in confidence, in the possession or control of Transport for NSW as well as personal information kept in a register maintained by Transport for NSW under the road transport legislation, and other information prescribed by the regulations.

In addition, the regulator may disclose information to Transport for NSW, as is reasonably required by Transport for NSW to exercise its functions under the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Act, the Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW) or another law—for example, for the regulator to provide data and analysis on heavy vehicle compliance and movements to allow Transport for NSW to undertake its road manager and road network policy functions. Transport for NSW may use information disclosed under this provision for a purpose relating to the exercise of its functions, including its delegated functions. The bill further contains provisions to facilitate the giving of evidence of speed and vehicle dimensions obtained under the Road Transport Act in proceedings for a safety duties offence related to a failure to manage speed, or a dimension offence against the Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW). The bill also clarifies the roles in the giving of evidence by certificate by the regulator and Transport for NSW generally.

Maintaining safety outcomes in New South Wales will be critical post-transition, particularly as New South Wales has historically had a very comprehensive heavy vehicle compliance and enforcement approach that we do not want to see diminished. For this reason, new section 31 provides for the Minister to enter into the national statement of expectations that I described earlier. The statement of expectations will detail high-level performance expectations about the way the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator performs its regulatory functions, including jurisdiction-specific requirements, performance expectations and other requirements, and thus ensure that the regulator remains accountable for the future delivery of heavy vehicle regulatory services in New South Wales.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Transport Administration Act 1988 to address arrangements for the transfer of staff, assets, rights or liabilities from Transport for NSW to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. To facilitate transition and to ensure business continuity, new section 105A enables the Minister to direct, by written order, that specified assets, rights or liabilities of Transport for NSW be transferred to the regulator. To allow the

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to deliver a number of additional heavy vehicle related regulatory services on behalf of the New South Wales Government, such as the Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme, a new function for Transport for NSW will be inserted into clause 8H (1) (d) of schedule 1 to the Transport Administration Act. This new function will clarify that Transport for NSW may engage the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to carry out activities or functions under this or another Act on its behalf. This will mean that Transport for NSW will be able to delegate functions to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to ensure that it has the necessary powers to carry out the required regulatory services in New South Wales.

To facilitate the transition of staff from Transport for NSW to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and to ensure protections for staff terms and conditions of employment, including superannuation and extended or long service leave entitlements, a number of amendments are made to schedule 7 to the Transport Administration Act relating to savings, transitional and other provisions. These amendments provide that the Minister may, by written order, transfer the employment of a relevant employee to the employment of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The transfer of employment will result in the employee's employment with Transport for NSW ending and their employment with the regulator commencing. As a consequence of the arrangements in the bill, there will be a transfer of business for the purposes of the Fair Work Act 2009. Importantly, after transfer the terms and conditions of employment for award employees will be the State award, as it applied to them immediately before their transfer, although it will operate as a copied State award under the Fair Work Act 2009.

For contract employees, the terms and conditions will be determined by the Minister and specified in the order that transfers an employee's employment. For permanent and award employees, there will be an employment guarantee period of two years after the transfer date. For temporary award employees, the employment guarantee will be the remainder of the employee's current term of employment or the period of two years after the transfer date, whichever period ends first. The employment guarantee is similar to the guarantee given when New South Wales Land and Property Information staff, responsible for land titles and registry functions, were transferred in 2016. The continuity of service of transferred employees will also be recognised for all purposes, and any rights to accrued sick leave, family and community services leave, unpaid annual leave or extended or long service leave will be transferred. At the time of transfer, employees will be able to opt to be paid all or part of their accrued annual leave and, if they have completed more than seven years of service, their extended or long service leave.

Superannuation arrangements will continue, including membership of defined benefit schemes. The bill also replicates the current practice of not providing redundancies or other termination payments where a transferred employee's role in a new entity is comparable in terms of function and terms and conditions to their role prior to their transfer. This principle has been applied in the transition of New South Wales employees on many similar occasions previously, including in the case of New South Wales Land and Property Information and in the transition from the former Independent Transport Safety Regulator to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. A workforce strategy is being developed in consultation with staff and the Public Services Association to support the operation of these provisions. The aim of the workforce strategy is to provide a fair, equitable and transparent transition process and criteria for determining which roles, positions and employees from Transport for NSW should transfer to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

It will be a straightforward decision to transfer to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator those roles that perform 100 per cent of Heavy Vehicle National Law and the Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme. However, a portion of roles currently perform work for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Transport for NSW. These are referred to as blended roles. Only some of these roles and the employees in them will transfer to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. In deciding which of the blended roles will transfer and which roles will be retained by Transport for NSW, consideration will be given to the proportion of transferring or non-transferring work performed by each role. Business considerations will also be taken into account to ensure continuity of activities for Transport for NSW and the Heavy Vehicle National Regulator. Transport for NSW will consult with the Public Service Association and employees on the proposed staff placement process for the roles that will transfer and those that will be retained by Transport for NSW.

It is important to note that there will be a role for all employees. All affected roles will be retained by either Transport for NSW or the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. All retained roles will have the same or substantially the same accountabilities and responsibilities as they do now. Furthermore, all roles are anticipated to remain in the same location and employment in regional and rural communities will not be affected. Following the transition process, any proposed changes arising from normal business adjustments will be completed in consultation with employees in accordance with normal change management processes. In addition, I can advise that the chief executive of the regulator and the chairman of the regulator's board have offered to brief the Opposition and crossbench on the regulator's approaches to undertaking heavy vehicle regulatory services and workforce issues post-transition.

In addition to providing certainty to Transport for NSW employees, these measures will ensure that the knowledge and expertise employees have in delivering heavy vehicle regulatory services will be maintained. It will also allow the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to build on this expertise to achieve improved safety and productivity outcomes not only within New South Wales, but also nationally. Finally, schedule 3 to the bill makes consequential amendments to enable the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to perform its functions in New South Wales. Schedule 3.1 amends the definition of "law enforcement officer" in the Fines Act 1996 to include an employee or officer of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Similarly, clause 3.3 amends the definition of "prescribed officer" in the Roads Transport Act 2013 to include an employee or an officer of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Staff have been kept fully informed for some time about the transfer. They now know the way forward and are keen to gain certainty and move on with the process, which is expected to take 18 months. Transport for NSW and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will continue to consult with staff to ensure that their confidence and trust is upheld throughout this process.

In addition, the Public Service Association has been consulted regularly over a long period through biannual meetings with the union, Transport for NSW and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. It will continue to be consulted throughout the transition process. The Public Service Association has also been engaged more recently on the details of the transfer arrangements and workforce strategy, and is generally supportive. Transport for NSW will continue to engage with the Public Service Association as it works through the development and implementation of the final workforce strategy to resolve any outstanding matters. Members of the heavy vehicle industry have been consulted throughout the transition process, including the NSW Road Freight Industry Council and Road Freight NSW, and are broadly supportive of the transition.

I am pleased to inform the House that the transition of the Heavy Vehicle National Law functions together with the New South Wales Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme functions will complete the important reforms to establish national regulatory regimes for heavy vehicle safety and productivity, rail safety and domestic commercial vessel safety. Now is the opportunity for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to join other national regulators in achieving the improved safety and productivity gains envisaged by these reforms. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **MUTUAL RECOGNITION (NEW SOUTH WALES) AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 17 March 2021.**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (11:39):** I lead for the Opposition in this Chamber in debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. I do so under the leadership of the shadow Treasurer, the Hon. Walt Secord, in the other place, who has carriage of the bill for the Opposition given that it was introduced by the Treasurer. The bill deals with a range of additional matters relating to mutual recognition of occupations and goods to the Parliament of the Commonwealth. It follows a push by the National Cabinet of Australian Governments for a system that allows tradespeople to work in multiple States and Territories.

On 11 December 2020 all State Premiers signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Occupational Registration, which commits signatories to implementing a national automatic mutual recognition scheme by 1 July 2021. It involves the Commonwealth introducing an amendment to the Mutual Recognition Act 1992, with States and Territories to pass supporting legislation. The bill is intended to ensure that New South Wales tradespeople are able to work anywhere in the country without having to pay additional registration or renewal fees. It will have the most impact for border towns and regions such as Albury and the Tweed. I note that the member for Albury is in the Chamber.

The Opposition understands that the bill will be subject to a bill committee process in the Legislative Council. There are a range of issues that my colleagues—in particular the member for Granville and the member for Swansea—have been well across in relation to licensing, mutual recognition and making sure that, to be blunt, the very high standards that exist within the New South Wales licensing and legislative framework are not diluted in any way. That is something that the workers' representatives from the trade union movement—both Unions NSW and the individual unions—have a view on and have concerns about. This will be part of a bill committee process in the Legislative Council, and I think it should be because there are some issues that need to be explored.

We need to make sure that we maintain a very strong licensing and standards regime in New South Wales. I do not think any members should be apologetic for that. It protects workers. It protects the community. It enhances the industry and business. I do not think we should be looking to dilute that. I place on the record my thanks to the Hon. Walt Secord for his involvement in this process. I also thank the member for Granville and the member for Swansea, two shadow Ministers who have had very active roles with various industry groups, trades



groups and union representatives around this space and this policy change. It is an important part of the Legislative Council process that the bill be examined more closely and be enabled to go through the bill committee process to see how we can address some of those concerns more broadly.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:42):** I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. As a member for an electorate that has a State border, this legislation has significance. It is certainly not the first attempt at improving what has been a bugbear for border communities for a great period of time. I can also speak as a professional veterinarian. When I first returned to the border in 2003, I had to have two separate registrations to do the same job on each side of the river. The legislation is well overdue. It is good to see the bill before the House. I welcome it, and I thank the Treasurer and his team for bringing the bill before the House. It is certainly timely.

It is not just for border communities; it is an important economic reform across the nation as New South Wales lays the foundations to drive an even stronger post-pandemic economy in the long term. Automatic mutual recognition is the sort of structural reform that will reduce red tape associated with occupational licensees moving interstate. It will help New South Wales access the skilled labour needed to assist with economic recovery following COVID-19. During the bushfires at the start of last year we found out how important it is to get skilled workers across borders to be able to respond to natural disasters. Having to have duplication of registration is just another roadblock there. During those fires, New South Wales faced acute shortages in the trades required for rebuilding. Sadly with the floods the challenges of rebuilding will also be there.

Automatic mutual recognition would enable skilled interstate workers to assist with rebuilding efforts more quickly. This means the downtime following a natural disaster will be reduced and households, community and businesses can get back to normal more quickly. As I touched on, automatic mutual recognition significantly benefits cross-border regions. I mentioned my own experiences, and a number of constituents have written to my office around the impact of mutual recognition. For example, a licence holder in a cross-border region like Albury would be able to perform the same work in Wodonga without seeking permission or paying two registration fees, one for New South Wales and one for Victoria. In that sense, a New South Wales registered plumber would save at least \$357 over three years in registration fees to work in a nearby border city such as Wodonga.

It also benefits businesses with interstate operations. For example, an architecture firm based in New South Wales and operating remotely could save around \$600 per worker through applying for automatic mutual recognition for their architects to work in Victoria and South Australia. Whilst that has been cited, I can also speak as a business owner in a veterinary practice to say that the duplication of registrations is an impost on both the employee and the business. With regard to the impact in Albury, when considering legislation designed to reduce red tape and stimulate employment and business activity, it helps to listen to the community about situations where recognition of qualifications can become an issue and an impediment to the smooth operation of a business or activity.

Living on the southern border, I can say that is a daily discussion for business operators and their staff. I have sought input from constituents on mutual recognition. Building trade licences are perhaps the most common source of problems on the border, where a construction business will have customers in New South Wales and Victoria. Businesses have ways of getting things done and managing staff to cover different locations and tasks, but that is not ideal. It presents a real administrative burden that brings no economic benefit to anyone. During our conversations around mutual recognition, other issues have been raised around the border and the fact that it becomes an interface and a barrier at times. An issue that has been raised with me in recent days is the need for different State Working With Children Check processes. For some, there is the cost of two fees to meet the one outcome. Those checks are a standard part of employment for many in our communities.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made a series of findings around Working With Children Checks and working towards a national approach. I welcome comments from Cross Border Commissioner James McTavish to say that they are working on it. New South Wales is in the lead on that matter in terms of harmonisation across States. Responsible service of alcohol qualifications continue to be an issue where an event on the border is staffed by people with qualifications that are from out of State. That kind of discrimination for qualifications can prevent a business, club, bar or council from simply staffing an event with good, suitable employees. The questions an employer must always be asking are, "What is the required qualification?" and, "Is it State based?"

I might add that it flows over to the community sector. Our sporting clubs play games on both sides of the border, with players and parents of players coming from New South Wales and Victoria. When the event involves service of alcohol, the club has to be careful that the parent who so helpfully volunteers to help in that social or fundraising activity has the qualification appropriate for the State where the game takes place. There is no benefit in having that administrative burden. A constituent wrote to me with these words:

Can something be done so farmers can work across borders easier, regarding vehicle and shooting licences and tractor registrations as at the moment if we have a NSW shooters licence we can't store guns at our Victorian property and we can't drive tractors or other farm machinery across borders either as you can't hold both a NSW and a Victorian licence or registration. It has to be one or the other. The same with a vehicle licence.

I appreciate that while elements of those inquiries perhaps go beyond the strict scope of the bill presently before us, they give us a taste or the flavour of where the unnecessary hurdles and cost burdens lie, not just for businesses, including farmers and primary producers, but also for border residents as part of the fabric of their daily life. Data from New South Wales agencies indicates that at least a 1.6 million occupational registrations are held in this State, including interstate licences recognised by New South Wales agencies and that 8.4 per cent of new occupational registrations were made under mutual recognition in 2018-19. Consumers and businesses will benefit from a more diverse labour supply and greater competition between local and interstate licence holders. The increased competition will drive down prices and provide better quality services. The Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme will deliver economic benefits to the nation, improve productivity and prosperity.

The Commonwealth has estimated benefits from Automatic Mutual Recognition of \$2.4 billion nationally over the next 10 years due to more productive allocation of labour and capital in the economy—a significant portion of which will flow to New South Wales. Given that the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act 1992 is already in place, the question may be asked: Why is an updated referral needed? Although the system in place recognises occupational licences from other jurisdictions, this new framework will provide a quicker and less expensive alternative. Under the current scheme workers still need to apply for recognition of their home licence and pay another fee to work in another State or Territory.

The existing mutual recognition also relies on schedules to specify equivalent occupational registrations between jurisdictions. Those schedules are complex, cumbersome and have not been updated fully since 2009. That has left them out of date compared to today's qualifications and licences. The bill amends the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Act 1992 to replace the existing amendment referral and establish a new one. The new amendment referral will enable the Commonwealth Parliament to make amendments to the Commonwealth Act relating to the mutual recognition of occupations and goods. The Commonwealth believes that the existing amendment referrals in New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania should not be relied upon to implement automatic mutual recognition. [*Extension of time*]

I welcome the opportunity to speak further. This will enable the Commonwealth Government to pass its proposed amendments to the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act 1992 to implement a new uniform Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme for occupation registrations across State and Territory borders. The Commonwealth, States and the Northern Territory have all come together and agreed to a new Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme for occupational registrations. In December 2020, the Premier and all First Ministers, except the Australian Capital Territory, signed an intergovernmental agreement which commits signatories to implementing a national Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme by 1 July 2021.

New South Wales is leading the way by being the first State to update referral powers to enable the Commonwealth to pass legislation to give effect to Automatic Mutual Recognition. Should future Commonwealth amendments not be supported by Parliament, the updated referral powers can be terminated by proclamation by the New South Wales Governor. The core principle of this new framework is that a person can automatically perform the same activities that they are licensed to perform in their home jurisdiction in a second jurisdiction—without seeking permission or paying additional registration fees.

Automatic Mutual Recognition will make it easier and less expensive for businesses and workers to operate across jurisdictions. People pay a registration fee only when they renew their licence in their home jurisdiction. If people move permanently to a new jurisdiction they would then register with their new home authority and pay a fee. It will reduce red tape associated with occupational licences moving interstate. There will be more freedom to find work where the jobs are available and it will mean more money in the pockets of workers.

The Treasurer spoke about the challenges and benefits of Federation for this nation. For most Australians, Federation is an abstract concept. It is not something we live. It is a dusty detail from the past, but that is not so on the border of New South Wales and Victoria. I am sure the member for Tweed would say that is also not so on the border that his electorate shares with Queensland, and never more so than during the COVID pandemic. Every border crossing permit, every application for an exemption from restrictions, every trip from Albury to a surgeon in Melbourne has been a reminder that Federation is not a mute witness to current events but remains an active participant in daily life.

My office staff have spent the last year answering questions from desperate and distressed Australians about how there can be a border closure that denies them access to schooling, normal childcare arrangements, jobs and interstate health care. That is not new. It is in essence the same conversation that parents have when they are confused about sending their child to TAFE in Victoria or New South Wales. It is the same problem that builders

and other cross-border businesses must work through to get the job done. The bill is an important step in taking on the bigger picture of how to free our State and national economies from the burden of lack of recognition of qualifications and administrative costs. I support the bill.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:55):** I wish to contribute to debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. The bill amends the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Act 1992 to refer certain additional matters relating to mutual recognition of occupations and goods to the Parliament of the Commonwealth for the purposes of the Constitution of the Commonwealth, section 51 (xxxvii) and for related purposes. This important process will break down regulatory barriers between States and it is especially important for border communities, as the member for Albury has stated. But it needs to be done very carefully to ensure that we implement only like-for-like recognition and not a lessening of standards for highly skilled and often dangerous work.

To work in some occupations individuals need to be registered and/or hold a licence in the State or Territory where they wish to work. The States and Territories have responsibility for deciding which occupations require a registration or licence and any relevant conditions. The mutual recognition of occupations allows a person who holds a registration or licence in one State or Territory to receive another registration or licence in a different State or Territory for an equivalent occupation after they have notified the local registration authority. An application for the mutual recognition of any registration or licence needs to be made to the relevant registration authority in the State or Territory where a registration or licence is being sought. As the mutual recognition of a registration or licence is not automatic, individuals must apply for recognition of their existing registration or licence and pay any applicable fees.

The new scheme will enable automatic mutual recognition, which intends to make it easier and less expensive for businesses and workers to operate across jurisdictions. That means an individual will pay a registration fee only when they renew their licence in their home jurisdiction. If they move permanently to a new jurisdiction, they would register with their new home authority and pay a fee. In theory, this seems to be a great idea but when we get into the understanding of what constitutes a licence, the requirements can vary significantly across jurisdictions. For example, some States recognise plumbers only for plumbing work and others recognise plumbers as a plumber and gas fitter. The type of gas differs and somebody will work with liquefied petroleum gas [LPG] or natural gas.

Unions are concerned with some aspects of what is proposed in the bill. Safety for workers and consumers must be paramount. Plumbers, electricians, builders and other tradies face a wide range of workplace hazards such as exposure to hazardous substances and flammable products, exposure to biohazards, working in awkward positions, lifting heavy objects, exposure to electricity, working in confined spaces and working at heights just to name a few. For work health and safety reasons it is crucial to ensure that only like-for-like licences should be recognised. Mutual recognition should be based on checks and balances—not a race to the bottom where licences from the weakest jurisdiction become the starting point for licensing across Australia. I will now describe concerns with the bill from the perspective of electricians, plumbers and builders. The Electrical Trades Union has identified specific issues for electricians and has gone so far as to suggest that electricians:

... must be exempted from the proposed AMR provisions due to the significant risks to consumers, the public and the work health and safety of electrical workers.

Significant differences between jurisdictions exist regarding electricity regulations, licencing and conduct rules. The fact is that electrical regulators in all jurisdictions already recognise interstate electrical licences of equivalent types under existing mutual recognition provisions with embedded processes to mitigate the associated risks. The AMR Bill will have the effect of bypassing these control measures.

It is vitally important that electrical workers know and understand the conduct rules relevant to their occupation that apply in each jurisdiction before they commence electrical work in a particular state or territory. There are many differences in how electrical work must be conducted across Australia along with variations in equipment types, installation requirements, voltages and work practices that have been developed over many years to accommodate the inherent risks that are frequently unique to a state, territory or industry.

...

It is our fear that, under the guise of 'cutting red tape' an unacceptable electrical safety risks will arise for workers and consumers in the electrical industry along with risks to public safety. As you would be well aware, it is an industry where short cuts cannot be afforded without potential dire consequences.

Those concerns are well founded. During the budget estimates hearings we saw NSW Fair Trading was unable to answer some questions about who needs to be licensed. One would hope that the regulator could answer fundamental questions of that nature. Regarding electrical safety, we saw how poorly the Government managed its own projects. Complaints were made and delays to the completion of the NorthConnex project eventuated, yet it appears the agency was not focused on dealing with electrical safety matters in a timely fashion. We know a problem exists with unlicensed electricians operating across New South Wales, so the Government must ensure automatic mutual regulation applies to like-for-like licences for individual tradies rather than at the enterprise

level. The head of the NSW Utilities & Electrotechnology Industry Training Advisory Body has said that labour hire companies use unlicensed people because it is difficult to find enough qualified electricians and that the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented foreign skilled workers being brought to Australia to overcome skills shortages. Tony Palladino said:

Forty per cent of all house fires are electrical. We have to ask the question is somebody going to die before we do something.

Plumbers have similar concerns to electricians regarding the significant risks to consumers, the public and the work health and safety of workers. In its submission to the Federal Deregulation Taskforce on the Federal bill, the New South Wales branch of the Plumbing Trades Employees Union stated it:

**... supports the intent of the proposed legislation and agrees with the intent behind the Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) principles outlined in the Exposure Draft legislation.** Generally speaking, we support initiatives which improve worker mobility, improve worker opportunity and enable economic growth.

It continued:

**Where there is like for like comparability** between both the scope of registered work and the composition of competencies which comprise the prerequisites for registration, our view is that a system for a more streamline recognition of registrations is both **sensible and achievable** (albeit with relatively minor administrative/regulator support and collaboration). It is important to note that **registration in this context is at the worker level**, not the contractor (license) level.

It further stated:

**... plumbing registration does not mean exactly the same thing in each jurisdiction**, like a driver's license does for example. Recognition cannot be "automatic" as the same way as driver's licenses can. Responsible jurisdictional regulators will appropriately want to be informed about the new entrants and be confident that in recognising their skills and qualifications. This will require a process step or steps to be developed and agreed.

Again those concerns are well founded. Electricians and plumbers are not the only tradespeople with legitimate concerns. Builders are also concerned. The Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union in its submission to the Federal taskforce stated:

4. The CFMEU is not opposed to the mutual recognition of registered occupations where they are directly equivalent, but notes that this is not the case with all of the registered occupations that our members are engaged in, particularly in the building and construction industry.
5. The CFMEU believes that the top down approach of introducing an AMR scheme without first achieving industry and jurisdictional consensus on the requirements for registered occupations (particularly in regard to training, industry experience and competence) is not in the best interest of workers, the consumers of their services and the general public.
6. For the majority of building and construction occupations the current system of mutual recognition, based on Ministerial Declarations, is working well. Introducing AMR will only create confusion and uncertainty. ...

It continued:

43. A significant concern with AMR is that it will lead to jurisdiction shopping for registration or licensing, and a race to the bottom ...
44. The impacts of such jurisdiction shopping can be potentially severe if it allows for less skilled and experienced workers to attempt work they are not really qualified to perform. This would likely lead to defects on building projects, costly delays in rectifying work, and increased claims on home warranty insurance ...
45. Although the proposed scheme allows States to require a person with automatic deemed registration to comply with one or more public protection requirements (including insurance) it will be little comfort to consumers and the users of buildings if the work performed does not meet the required standard and they subsequently incur costly delays pursuing insurance claims.

Again, those are well-founded concerns. I ask the Minister three questions about the implementation of the bill: How will he ensure that there is a demonstrable like-for-like comparability between relevant registrations in different States and Territories? How will he ensure that automatic mutual recognition is applied only to those working under the supervision of a responsible, licensed practitioner? What assurance can he provide that automatic mutual recognition will not lead to jurisdiction shopping for registration or licensing and a race to the bottom? Those questions must be considered at the Committee stage. They raise important considerations with respect to the adoption of an important process for border communities. I will listen with interest to the Minister's answers. I trust that he will agree with me that convenience should not come at the cost of safety for consumers and workers.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:05):** It is with great pride that I make a contribution to debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. I have been in this place since 2007 and during that time a major bugbear and concern in my electorate of Tweed is tradesmen working across the great divide—the "great wall of China" as some people refer to it—between Queensland and New South Wales. Each day approximately 30,000 workers cross that border. It is similar from Queensland's point of view. A large number of Queensland workers also cross the border. I have seen a number of attempts to resolve the confusion about

licensing fees between States. In early 2007 I remember the Federal Government tried to bring in national earthmoving legislation, where earthmovers were licensed to cross the great country of Australia. Unfortunately, the exemptions that different jurisdictions put forward meant that the exemptions were more extensive than the licence itself. One might say it fell in a hole at the end of the day and was buried.

It is good to see the issue raised again. I pay credit to the NSW Cross Border Commissioner, Mr James McTavish, who has been doing an excellent job. In recent times I experienced just on 200 days of the Queensland border being closed to New South Wales, with 18 different border passes. That caused a great deal of confusion for cross-border workers. It also caused a great deal of angst between trades. Deliveries were held up and many issues arose from that. So the bill is timely. I have waited 12 years for this day. I hope it comes to fruition and that the States get on board. In recent times the cooperation between Annastacia Palaszczuk and Gladys Berejiklian has not been exactly cordial. I have great faith in our Premier. Unfortunately, a lot of politics is played in Queensland with elections and so on and there seems to be a lack of coordination.

My constituents are the poor unfortunate buggers who live on and work across the border. I hope Annastacia is tuned into this Parliament and is listening. Hopefully she will fully participate in this proposal. Automatic mutual recognition will reduce red tape associated with occupational licensees moving interstate. It will help New South Wales access the skilled labour needed to assist with economic recovery following COVID-19. As we all know, natural disasters can occur across borders and often our tradespeople are called to go into Queensland. Similarly, northern New South Wales relies on tradespeople from Queensland to help fix the damage. The bushfire rebuild demonstrated an acute shortage of trades.

Automatic mutual recognition would enable skilled interstate workers to assist with rebuilding efforts more quickly. That means the downtime following a natural disaster will be reduced and households, communities and businesses can get back to normal quicker. Automatic mutual recognition will also benefit cross-border regions. I pay tribute to the fine member for Albury, Mr Justin Clancy, who is working very hard. I know how hard it is juggling two different jurisdictions and trying to make some sense and getting your local areas moving strongly.

That brings me to another issue. I am in regular contact with my Queensland colleague Ms Laura Gerber of the Liberal National Party of Queensland who is the member for Currumbin. Unfortunately, she has just informed me of a situation around mutual recognition. A large number of Queenslanders train at TAFE NSW. There is a great campus at Kingscliff. In fact, that campus has one of the highest number of apprentices I have ever seen in my life. One particular case that has come up is of a young fellow who lives 200 metres across the border in Queensland. He has been doing his apprenticeship with a local Queensland builder and going to Kingscliff TAFE for his classroom theory.

Bless my cotton socks, guess what has happened? The Queensland Training Information Service, which lists all of the authorised ways to become an apprentice, has just decided that the training offered by TAFE NSW is not to the standard that the Queensland Government would like. Therefore this young third-year apprentice has not been able to go to TAFE to get his practical training because it is not recognised in Queensland and he cannot get his builders licence when he finishes his apprenticeships. I am about to have meetings with TAFE NSW and the New South Wales Cross-Border Commissioner. That shows how silly some of the cross-border issues are. That young person is trying to get a trade.

We stand in this place—as I am sure members do in the Queensland Parliament—and talk about young people getting training and getting jobs. Bureaucracy has created this situation. There has been a mistake or an oversight that Queensland has dropped our TAFE off its list. Hopefully we do not retaliate and drop TAFE Queensland off our list. That is how silly it is, and that is why the bill is so important. Consumers and businesses will benefit from a more diverse labour supply and greater competition between local and interstate licence holders. The increased competition will drive down prices and provide better quality services. The automatic mutual recognition scheme will deliver economic benefits to the nation and improve productivity and prosperity. The Commonwealth has estimated that the benefits from automatic mutual recognition will be around \$2.4 billion nationally over the next 10 years due to a more productive allocation of labour and capital in the economy. A significant portion of that will flow to New South Wales.

The Commonwealth introduced its bill into the Federal House of Representatives on 18 March 2021. It was prepared in consultation with stakeholders and State and Territory governments. The Commonwealth bill will apply to all occupational registrations unless they are exempted from the scheme or subject to an existing national registration scheme, State model laws or State-based automatic recognition schemes. It will retain the benefits of the existing mutual recognition arrangements and standards of protection and public safety, while streamlining notification processes. The Commonwealth bill embeds safeguards to ensure the community, environment, animals and workers are protected. It provides that workers will have to meet requirements relating to insurance, fidelity funds, trust accounts or the like, as well as other requirements such as working with children checks. All of that is designed to protect the public, consumers and others.

Local laws will apply to interstate registration holders so local regulators can take the necessary enforcement action to maintain protections for businesses, employees and consumers. A registered person will need to comply with the local laws in the second State and is subject to any applicable disciplinary actions. Workers will not be eligible for the scheme if they are subject to disciplinary action or have conditions on their licence as a result of disciplinary, civil or criminal action. That is such basic stuff. I have been in Parliament for 12 or 13 years. When we think about it in a logical sense, anyone with a New South Wales driver licence can get in a car and drive to Queensland, Victoria or the ACT so easily without a problem. Yet with all of the other licences, we have got to get all of the States to agree and overlay it with Commonwealth legislation. That is why I am so excited about the bill. The intention is also to keep paperwork requirements to a minimum. [*Extension of time*]

Local regulatory authorities will be required to make relevant information about a registered person available to each other and prepare and publish guidance on the operation of the scheme. The Commonwealth bill provides States and Territories with the flexibility to exempt occupational registrations from the scheme in certain circumstances. Exemptions can be temporary for up to 12 months or longer term for up to five years. Exemptions, including reasons for longer-term exemptions, will be published on a public register. A temporary six-month exemption can be renewed for a further six months up to 30 June 2022 and can be declared for specific occupations. That will provide a transition period for some regulators. Longer-term exemptions are only available where automatic mutual recognition poses a significant risk to consumer protection, the environment, animal welfare, or the health of safety workers or the public. Longer-term exemptions will have a sunset clause of five years and can be renewed following a review. The New South Wales Government will establish a list of exempt occupational registrations ahead of 1 July 2021 in consultation with the relevant Ministers and stakeholders.

The core principle of this new framework is that a person can automatically perform the same activities that they are licenced to perform in their home jurisdiction also in a second jurisdiction, without seeking permission or paying additional registration fees. Automatic mutual recognition will make it easier and less expensive for businesses and workers to operate across jurisdictions. A person only pays a registration fee when they renew their licence in their home jurisdiction. I do have one word of caution. In the past regarding things of a similar nature, there was a very active debate going on between the States about where workers perform the majority of their work. Payroll tax is a significant argument in that instance. Does a worker pay 40 per cent in New South Wales and 60 per cent in Queensland? As we all know, tradies work varies from month to month and year to year. They may get a big job in Queensland; they may get a big job in New South Wales and that will change. If a person moves permanently to a new jurisdiction, then they would register with their new home authority and pay a fee then.

The automatic mutual recognition scheme will provide greater flexibility to take up job opportunities wherever they arise. In New South Wales automatic mutual recognition will enable industries to address longstanding skills shortages in licensed building occupations such as air conditioning mechanics, bricklayers and plumbers. Consumers and businesses will benefit from a more diverse labour supply and greater competition between local and interstate licence holders. Regional communities that have been hard-hit by border closures due to COVID-19 will particularly benefit from the scheme. People from New South Wales were barred from entering Queensland for just over 200 days and 18 different border passes were required. Reducing the financial and administrative burdens will deliver increased productivity and reduce costs in cross-border regions. This is a very important step, but we need to go further.

As I highlighted earlier, all of a sudden TAFE Queensland will not recognise TAFE NSW accreditations. That has only arisen in the last few weeks and I am sure I am going to hear far more on it. We need to be able to seek that recognition and work together. Even though the great Annastacia Palaszczuk may say that Queensland hospitals are for Queenslanders, we should all work for Australians. The hospitals in the Tweed are for all Australians, not just the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:19):** I speak in debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021 because it relates to a matter that means a great deal to me personally, and to many who work in trades across the Charlestown electorate. At the outset I recognise that we have some great tradies in my electorate. In fact, my brother, a marine mechanic, and his two sons, an apprentice plumber and apprentice carpenter, are some of them. My father was a fitter and turner and did his trade through what became TAFE. In the 120 years since Federation, Australia's States and Territories have grown closer together. Where once we were South Australians or Victorians, New South Welshmen or Queenslanders, we are now all Australian first. Unless, of course, it is State of Origin time—

**Mr Geoff Provest:** And you come from Queensland.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That is another story. With the exception of border closures as a result of pandemic-related public health measures, State borders have generally become porous. Before COVID that meant it was nothing for someone who lived in Albury, for instance, to go over the border to go to work in Wodonga, or someone living in Murwillumbah to be employed on the Gold Coast. Once COVID is a thing of the past, that will no doubt continue. That is a good thing because it allows the free movement of goods and workers around our country. Unfortunately, some workers, particularly those who work in the trades, find their movement barred by a lack of recognition of their qualifications once they cross State lines. The current mutual recognition regime is in need of update and simplification. Under the current system, workers must apply for recognition of their licence and pay a separate fee to work in another State or Territory.

The current system relies on complex and cumbersome schedules to specify equivalent occupational registrations across State boundaries. Having gone without significant overhaul since 2009, those schedules are often not up to date with current qualifications and licences. I note that in December last year the Commonwealth, States and Territories were signatories to an intergovernmental agreement that commits to implementing a national automatic mutual recognition scheme by 1 July 2021. A consultation paper for the Federal Government's automatic mutual recognition of occupational registrations legislation has been released, and the other signatories to the intergovernmental agreement are hard at work getting ready for the July deadline. I further note that there are a number of protections for consumers and workers built into the bill—workers will have to meet requirements relating to insurance and similar things, as well as requirements such as a Working With Children Check. Those provisions are designed to protect the public, consumers and others.

Local laws will apply to interstate registration holders so that local regulators can take the necessary enforcement action to maintain protections for businesses, employees and consumers, and registered persons will be subject to any applicable disciplinary actions should they violate local laws. I also note that workers will not be eligible for the scheme if they are subject to disciplinary action or if they have conditions on their licence as a result of disciplinary, civil or criminal action. The Government can rest assured that the Opposition will keep a close eye on the operation of those provisions to make sure there is nothing that treats workers unfairly. We will always stand up for workers. I am sure tradies around the State, including those in the Charlestown electorate, are looking forward to a just and equitable mutual recognition scheme. A more equitable mutual recognition scheme will mean a boost for border communities hit hard by drought, bushfire, COVID and now floods, and it will have flow-on effects for the rest of our State.

However, I have some concerns about the bill relating to ensuring that high standards and safety are maintained. Previous speakers on the Opposition side of the House, particularly the member for Granville, have raised some of those concerns. Already standards and safety in this State are under threat through the dismantling of TAFE. The Government's 10-year attack on TAFE has undermined our State's trades qualification system. We have excellent standards in our TAFE system but they are at risk. We must maintain and rebuild TAFE. By cutting TAFE funding to the bone and slashing staffing, the Government has shifted the trades qualification system into the hands of private providers who have all too often turned out to be shady fly-by-night operators out to make a quick buck. The new mutual recognition scheme will work only if other States can trust that the tradies they hire from New South Wales have the appropriate training and skills. Likewise, the people of New South Wales must also be assured that cross-border tradespeople are working to the same level of safety and performing their work at the same standard as New South Wales tradespeople.

To ensure that the projected economic benefits of the new regime come to fruition, the Government should immediately reinvest in TAFE. There is a way to go before the bill can bring the benefits it promises without compromising standards and safety. Tradespeople have a complex set of skills and currently recognition of those skills differs across the States. The legislation must not be like a driver's licence, which is automatically recognised across the States, but must deal with many complex issues within each trade so that the mutual recognition is truly like for like. The bill must not be seen as a red tape-cutting exercise, but must deal with significant differences across the borders relating to regulations, licensing and conduct rules so that consumers in New South Wales can engage the services of cross-border tradespeople with confidence, and so that New South Wales tradespeople can work in other States and deliver works to an acceptable standard without compromise. Those issues are not insurmountable but must be addressed. I expect those concerns will be dealt with in the other place. The intent of the bill is right but the detail needs more work. I do not oppose the bill.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:26):** On behalf of the Government I speak in support the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. From the outset I acknowledge the contributions made by members from both sides of the House, and note that the Opposition does not oppose the bill. That is a smart move indeed, given how well it has been constructed. I also note the excellent contributions from my colleagues the member for Albury and the member for Tweed. Those two members have intimate knowledge of the issues with cross-border relations with Victoria and Queensland, which have escalated during the COVID pandemic. I also put on record one of the comments made by the member for Charlestown regarding her concerns about

TAFE and fly-by-night operators. I remind members opposite that it was former Prime Minister Gillard who opened up TAFE to competitive funding for trades. I highlight that and put it on record. I am also relatively sure that currently TAFE in New South Wales receives around 80 per cent of the competitive funding.

That being said, TAFE is a fantastic institution and I am pleased that TAFE on the Central Coast is going from strength to strength. The enrolment numbers at Central Coast TAFE have gone up by about 4 per cent and, in addition to that, the number of staff has increased by 8 per cent. There has been an increase of about 20 different courses, which have been identified by industry and TAFE working together to ensure that we are delivering courses that provide significant outcomes and jobs for people when they leave TAFE. Recently I visited the Gosford TAFE campus and was pleased to see that some of the online education is being conducted by the excellent staff at TAFE. One of the online sessions I sat in on was on real estate licences. It was great to see the online participation of students who would not normally be able to attend TAFE because of geographic challenges. They were able to achieve their real estate certificate, where previously they would not have been physically able to get to a TAFE building to undergo that course.

We have seen that change with COVID-19. We have seen the adaptation to online course delivery by the Government and TAFE. The courses are running in real time, of course, with students participating from way out west. A lot of us take for granted that we can hop in a car or on a bus or jump on the train and get to a TAFE. These people could not physically get to a TAFE because of their geographic isolation, but that has not prevented them from being able to undertake a TAFE course. I congratulate the team at the Central Coast TAFE and, in particular, at the Gosford campus, which I visited. I highlight the great work they are doing. It is good to see the increases in participation and enrolment numbers, despite what has been said by many of those opposite.

By way of background to the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021, in December 2020 the Premier and the heads of government of all jurisdictions, except the Australian Capital Territory, signed an intergovernmental agreement committing jurisdictions to implementing a national automatic mutual recognition scheme for occupational registration by 1 July 2021. I acknowledge the great work done by the Premier in being part of that agreement and laying the groundwork for these reforms to come into place. We are an amazing nation. We are all Australians, and very proudly so. It is great to see barriers to cross-border relations being improved by the implementation of the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021.

Automatic mutual recognition [AMR] is such an important thing. It will permit workers to automatically perform the same activities covered by their occupational registration in their principal place of residence or principal place of work, which is their home State, in a second State without paying additional registration or renewal fees. That was outlined incredibly clearly by the member for Albury and the member for Tweed in their contributions to debate on this bill. AMR will make it easier and less expensive for occupational licence holders and businesses to perform the same activities across jurisdictions, which will increase economic activity, competition and innovation. I think the member for Charlestown said that her brother is a tradie.

We have literally thousands of tradies on the Central Coast who are doing a wonderful job. They are very busy, I must say; I suspect the tradies in Wollondilly are busy as well. They have a lot of work on at the moment, whether it be delivering safe and affordable housing projects or multimillion-dollar upgrades to the two hospitals on the Central Coast. There are also millions of dollars being spent on our schools from one end of the Central Coast to the other. Most recently the Government announced \$10 million worth of regional funding to upgrade schools. That work will be carried out on the Central Coast over the next 18 months. Schools will be encouraged to use local tradies and local businesses. Again, it is another great initiative.

As a regional member, it is great to see that money going to local businesses on the Central Coast to keep them working on local schools. We have all these fantastic tradies and other people who are actively working on the Central Coast and right around New South Wales. As the member for Tweed outlined, there will be times when they need to cross the border. I think he mentioned that 30,000-odd people cross the border between Queensland and his electorate almost on a daily basis. There is more of a need for trades and other occupations to cross borders between New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The importance of this bill cannot be understated because it opens up those doors and allows people to conduct their business interstate.

The AMR set out in the proposed Commonwealth bill will ensure appropriate protections and standards are maintained. A registered person will have to meet requirements relating to insurance, fidelity funds, trust accounts and things of that nature, as well as vulnerable persons and character tests that may be required. In addition, local regulators will be required to make information available, including any disciplinary action taken against interstate registered persons. Registered persons will need to comply with local laws in the second State and are subject to any applicable disciplinary actions if required. A registered person who is the subject of a disciplinary action and who also has conditions on their licence because of disciplinary, civil or criminal actions will not be eligible for the AMR, which is quite appropriate. States can exempt occupational registrations from



the AMR on the grounds of significant risk to consumer protection, the environment, animal welfare or the health and safety of workers or—just as importantly—the public.

The proposed changes represent the most significant reform to Australia's mutual recognition arrangements for occupational registrations since those arrangements were introduced back in 1992. The original Mutual Recognition Act 1992, which has applied in New South Wales and all other States and Territories since 1992, was designed to reduce regulatory impediments to a national market in goods and services. The Act recognised that once a person was assessed as good enough to practise in a trade or profession in one State or Territory then they should be able to perform the same work anywhere in Australia. From the outset mutual recognition reforms were supported by governments of all political persuasions.

Over 19 per cent of Australian workers require a registration or licence to perform their work. Some occupations, including some in the health sector, are registered nationally, but most trades and other professions—such as builders, plumbers and real estate agents—are registered on a State-by-State basis. Regulatory requirements and processes for most registered professions are managed and set differently in each of the eight States and Territories. Differences in regulation between jurisdictions for the same occupation make it harder for tradespeople and other professionals to move across borders for work. That was clearly outlined by the member for Albury and the member for Tweed in their contributions to the debate. [*Extension of time*]

I thank my colleagues for their indulgence. As I said, differences in regulation between jurisdictions for the same occupation make it harder for tradespeople and other professionals to move across borders for work, which raises the costs to employers of filling job vacancies, and reduces competition and choice for consumers. This bill will help provide consumers with a broader choice of options, which is good for consumers and also for tradies. It will ensure that people get the best tradie for the job and the best value for money. Many workers and businesses that operate across or close to State or Territory borders need to apply for and renew a licence in more than one jurisdiction. This in itself is very burdensome, especially for sole traders and those running small businesses. The costs of applying for and attaining multiple licences can be a significant barrier to geographic mobility. Avoiding this impost will decrease costs, time and effort and, in turn, increase productivity across the economy.

These arrangements can create particular challenges for those living and working in border communities and can inhibit rapid responses to natural disasters, when registered workers are needed urgently to restore critical infrastructure. That was seen during the bushfires last year and we are seeing it with the floods at the moment. Tradies will be required to safely fix plumbing and electrical issues and they should not be inhibited from responding to the community in a speedy manner. The Mutual Recognition Act has helped to reduce barriers to occupational mobility across borders for a range of occupations. Data from New South Wales agencies indicate that there are at least 1.16 million occupational registrations held in New South Wales, including interstate licences recognised by New South Wales agencies, and that 8.4 per cent of new occupational registrations in 2018-19 were made under mutual recognition.

The new AMR framework will provide a quicker and less expensive alternative compared with mutual recognition. Under the current mutual recognition scheme, workers will need to apply for recognition of their home licence and pay another fee to work in another State or Territory. The existing mutual recognition also relies on schedules to specify equivalent occupational registrations between jurisdictions. Those schedules are complex, cumbersome and have not been updated fully since 2009. This has left them out of date compared with today's qualifications and licences.

In its 2015 study into mutual recognition schemes, the national Productivity Commission found that the current mutual recognition arrangements generally work well, but automating those processes would save costs. The national Productivity Commission recommended governments give higher priority to expanding the use of automatic mutual recognition of occupational registrations to improve the efficiency of mutual recognition arrangements for individuals and businesses. The core principle of automatic mutual recognition is that a person can automatically perform the same activities that they are licensed to perform in their home jurisdiction in a second jurisdiction, without seeking permission or paying additional registration fees. That means they only pay a registration fee when they renew their licence in their home jurisdiction. If they move permanently to a new jurisdiction, they would register with their new home authority and then pay a fee.

The time and effort associated with an application under AMR should also be less than under mutual recognition, with notification requirements to be streamlined under the bill. AMR also applies widely, covering all occupational licences unless exempted by individual States and Territories from the scheme on the basis of significant risks to consumer protection, the environment, animal welfare or the health and safety of the public. The economic benefits of the automatic mutual recognition scheme are that they will improve labour mobility and allow more seamless provision of services across Australia—increasing output, investment, productivity and competition, and lowering costs for consumers, workers and businesses. This is a win-win for all those concerned.

I acknowledge the great work done by the Treasurer and his office. I note that Chris Ashton has been in the Chamber during the debate on the bill and I congratulate him. I also thank Eugenie Joseph—who is the cross-border tsar in the Treasurer's office—for her contribution in helping to create this excellent amendment. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (12:41):** Having sat here on Chamber duty for the last hour or so, I have listened to some of the contributions to debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. I commend the member for Albury and the member for Tweed because they have had to deal with this issue more than anyone. I listened to the member for Granville and the member for Charlestown talk about the Government bashing up our TAFE system. It is one of the best in the country and I am very proud of TAFE NSW. As a once-upon-a-time student of TAFE NSW and a tradie, I know what I am talking about when it comes to TAFE and trades.

This is an important piece of legislation because it means tradies will be recognised across borders. A few years ago when I was working for Minister Roberts I remember going up to Tweed. One of the issues we discussed was the fact that the cops had to drive into Queensland to get to a certain area in Tweed. So it is very important that we have mutual recognition. It has been disappointing through the COVID-19 pandemic to see how General Secretary Comrade Anastacia Palaszczuk of the social State of Queensland treated tourism businesses. She put them out of business because she would not let people from New South Wales travel to Queensland.

One of the greatest recognitions was the Australia Day advertisement that showed a little lamb chop come through a wall and people were saying, "What is on the other side? They are Queenslanders." It was disgraceful how businesses were treated in Queensland and that patients needing to get health care in hospitals were not allowed to cross borders. We are one country, one Australia. We should not be putting more restrictions and red tape on our borders. This great piece of legislation will fix that. The Premier and the first Ministers signed an intergovernmental agreement that commits signatories to implementing the national automatic mutual recognition scheme for occupational registrations by 1 July 2021. That scheme builds on and improves the longstanding mutual recognition arrangements established by the Commonwealth legislation. Those arrangements have been in place in States and Territories since 1992.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Committees*

#### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 28/57**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** 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 twentieth-eighth digest for this Parliament, tabled on 23 March 2021. In the digest, the committee examined the seven bills introduced in the last sitting week. The committee also commented on one statutory instrument. I draw the Parliament's attention to some of the issues raised. The Local Government Amendment Bill 2021 makes a number of amendments to the Local Government Act 1993, among other reasons to give effect to recommendations made by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] concerning the local government rating system.

Among other issues, the committee commented on section 530 of the bill, which allows the Minister to issue guidelines for determining ordinary rates for land in contiguous urban areas, and to issue directions to councils on factors that can be taken into account in determining a residential subcategory. The committee noted that, unlike regulations, such guidelines and directions are not required to be tabled in Parliament and are not subject to disallowance. That may mean that such instruments are subject to insufficient parliamentary scrutiny. Accordingly, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for consideration. In addition, the committee noted that certain provisions in schedule 1 to the bill will commence on proclamation. Although the committee generally prefers that legislation commence on a fixed date, the committee acknowledged that a flexible start date may assist with the administrative arrangements required to implement a new framework for special rates and levies across New South Wales councils. In those circumstances, and given that the majority of the bill's provisions commence on assent, the committee made no further comment.

The committee also reported that schedule 1.1 [3] to the bill created a non-reviewable decision as it creates a mechanism for special rate increases that are not reviewable by the IPART. The committee referred the matter to Parliament for its consideration. The COVID-19 Recovery Bill 2021 contains amendments to a range of Acts and regulations, aimed at temporarily remaking or extending the operation of measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the bill introduces new provisions into the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, which will come into force on the repeal of other provisions which dealt with the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords during a moratorium on evictions due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Under those new provisions, landlords will be prevented from evicting tenants who have unpaid rent outstanding from the moratorium period, unless a tenant has missed two payments under an agreed repayment plan. If there is no repayment plan, a landlord cannot evict a tenant unless they have engaged in good faith in a negotiation process. In both circumstances, a landlord is also prevented from terminating a lease unless it is "fair and reasonable in the circumstances". Similar to previous restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic on the rights of landlords to terminate leases for non-payment of rent, the committee noted that those provisions impact on the property rights of landlords and freedom of contract. However, given that those provisions will apply for a limited time and are an extraordinary measure seeking to address the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19, the committee made no further comment.

I turn now to a private member's bill examined by the committee. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (Publication of Ministerial Register of Interests) Bill 2021 was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. The bill amends the Independent Commission Against Corruption Regulation 2017 to provide that the Premier must cause the Ministerial Register of Interests to be published on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website and tabled in both Houses of Parliament. The committee noted that the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 provides that there is presumed to be an overriding public interest against the disclosure of the register. Publication of the register, as required by the bill, would involve disclosing confidential information that has been deemed by existing legislation to be against the public interest to disclose. While the committee acknowledged the intent of the bill to increase transparency of Ministers' interests, the committee referred the matter to Parliament to consider whether the provisions requiring publication of the register are appropriate.

I turn now to the statutory instrument dealt with in the digest, the Strata Schemes Management Amendment (COVID-19) Regulation (No 2) 2020. This regulation amends the Strata Schemes Management Regulation 2016 to make various arrangements for the management of owners corporations and strata schemes during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is made under the COVID-19 special regulation-making power in section 271A of the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015. Pursuant to subsection 271A (5) the regulation also extends the operation of section 271A until 13 May 2021. As the committee has previously noted, section 271A is a Henry VIII clause allowing the operation of the parent Act to be altered by subordinate legislation.

The committee prefers provisions that amend or affect the operation of an Act to be included in a bill rather than in a subordinate legislation to foster appropriate parliamentary oversight. However, given the ongoing risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic the limited time for which regulations made under section 271A can apply, being six months, and the possibility for those regulations to be disallowed, the committee acknowledged that this delegation of legislative power is reasonable in the circumstances. Accordingly, the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on the twenty-eighth digest for the Parliament. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:50):** It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to the debate on the twenty-eighth digest of this Parliament, which records the committee's deliberations on 23 March. I feel particularly honoured. I have a copy of the digest autographed by the Chair of the committee, which I will read from today in my contribution. The committee considered seven bills that are currently before Parliament and commented on all of them. We considered 18 regulations and commented on one of those. I draw the attention of members to the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill. The objects of the bill are to amend the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Act 1992 to terminate the existing amendment reference and replace the existing amendment reference with a new reference to enable the Commonwealth Parliament to make express amendments to the Commonwealth Act with regard to certain matters relating to the mutual recognition of trades, occupations and goods throughout the Commonwealth acting under the Commonwealth Constitution section 51 (xxxvii).

The committee gave an overview of the background of the bill, then went on to make reference to some of the sections of the bill that the committee felt contained inappropriate delegated legislative powers in that it contained provisions that allow termination of the reference by proclamation of the Governor. In making its observations the committee noted the bill makes amendments to enact uniform legislation applying throughout Australia to recognise regulatory standards adopted regarding goods and occupations. It went on to note that proposed subsection 5B (2) provides that the Governor may, at any time, by proclamation published on the New South Wales legislation website, fix a day on which the references made by section 4 (1) (a) of the Act and section 5A (1) of the bill, or both, would be terminated. The committee noted that it prefers legislation that may affect individual rights and liberties to be enacted on assent or on a fixed date, to provide certainty to affected persons.

The committee went on to note that the safeguards contained in the bill, providing that if an amendment reference terminates before the reference made by section 4 (1) (a) of the Act, it will not affect laws that were made under that reference before the termination, or the continued operation in the State and Commonwealth Act

immediately before that termination or as subsequently amended. In those circumstances the committee decided to make no further comment except to bring it to the attention of members of both Houses. I encourage members to have a good look at the digest. I again thank my fellow committee members for their attention to their duties. I mention in particular the strong support and the professionalism shown by the secretariat that supports us. I commend the digest to the House.

**Report noted.**

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

*Announcements*

**PARLIAMENTARY LIONS CLUB**

**The SPEAKER:** A number of members enjoyed a lunch as part of a Parliamentary Lions Club fundraiser today on the rooftop garden. I am pleased to announce on behalf of the president, the member for Gosford, that the winner of the Parliamentary Lions Club raffle is Carmen Vella, who is part of our fabulous library team. I understand from the new president, the member for Gosford, that a total of \$605 will be donated to Women's Health Centres NSW.

**THOUGHT LEADERSHIP LUNCH**

**The SPEAKER:** I attended the Thought Leadership lunch today, which is part of the Members' Professional Development program. I thank Tim Reardon, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Emma Hogan, the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service, for speaking at the Thought Leadership lunch.

*Visitors*

**VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the guests of the member for Lake Macquarie who are currently watching Question Time live in Meeting Room 1254. I welcome Charlton Christian College Principal Mark Ash and students Caelan Doel, Jessica Gale, Amy Spicer, Jordyn Hine, Taylyn Brummer and Lauren Potter.

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: COVID-19 SEATING RESTRICTIONS IN THE CHAMBER**

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Following a meeting of the parliamentary executive group held earlier this week at which it was agreed for the two-square metre rule to be applied to all other rooms of the Parliament, I seek leave to move a motion that the two-square metre rule also be applied to the Legislative Assembly Chamber in determining the number of members permitted to be in the Chamber. The Premier has recently announced that we will be dancing in nightclubs, which is fantastic—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We will be singing in churches—that is fantastic—and there will be a packed stadium at Wollongong to watch the Dragons beat Manly. But members cannot represent their communities in this place. It is time to bring the Parliament back.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira will resume his seat. It is not an opportunity to make a speech.

**Leave not granted.**

*Question Time*

**FLOODS AND WARRAGAMBA DAM WATER RELEASE**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:19):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In October the Minister argued that more water should be released from Warragamba Dam to reduce flood risk. Why did this not happen?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:19):** For reasons that will probably come out this afternoon, I am not going to engage in public debate about water today. I am horrified that the floods have become a political football and I will ask the Leader of the Opposition to put the question on notice.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. This is a very sensible and important question—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Ryan Park:** She has not finished.

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

**Ms Jodi McKay:** So the Minister is not going to answer a question about why water was not released, even though he advocated for it. Is that what is happening?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Minister has indicated that he has completed his response.

### **HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE FLOODING**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (14:21):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier provide an update to the House regarding the recent record flooding across the Hawkesbury region and areas of New South Wales?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21):** I thank the member for his question, and acknowledge his long history and association with residents in the north-west of Sydney. I envisage that many of the people going through difficulty are known to him and to many people in this House. I also acknowledge all members in this place who have communities that require our support at this difficult time. Minister Elliott alluded in part to, unfortunately, some breaking news that we have received about a fatality in the north-west of Sydney in floodwaters and, because it is early stages, I will allow the State Emergency Service [SES] to comment further about that at the appropriate time to make sure arrangements have been made in relation to next of kin. Of course, it goes without saying that we extend our heartfelt condolences to all the loved ones of that person, but I will allow the State Emergency Service to further outline those details.

Our community, our State, remains in a serious and precarious situation. Yesterday I advised this place that around 18,000 people had been evacuated from their homes. Today that figure has reached nearly 23,400 in terms of the number of people evacuated from their homes and, regrettably, there are tens of thousands of people who are now subject to evacuation warnings. Whilst all of us had a bit of a spring in our step this morning to see the sun shine and the Bureau of Meteorology has provided some more positive news about the weather forecast for the next week, rather than being subjected to what we thought would be the ongoing weather fronts, those fronts have moved on and, fortunately, for the next seven days we are unlikely to experience heavy rain. However, we are still concerned about the impact of weather conditions in south-east Queensland and how that can affect the Northern Rivers and north-west of New South Wales.

We know that whilst the sun is out conditions remain extremely dangerous. We understand and appreciate that rivers are still rising, catchments are still filling with water, and locals especially should remain vigilant and careful in that waterways that are usually familiar to them will be very different and unfamiliar given the flood conditions. We ask everybody to take that extra degree of caution. We ask everybody—especially those in vehicles and children attempting to use those additional waterways for recreation—to please be extra cautious. Just because it has stopped raining does not mean it is not still dangerous—quite the opposite. It is, some would suggest, even more dangerous now as the rivers continue to rise and the catchments continue to flow with water.

I take this opportunity, as I did this morning, to thank the SES, the volunteers and the workers, and all of the associated agencies that have stood alongside them. Today we welcome back Brigadier Garraway. Minister Elliott and I were pleased to see him. He provided enormous support during the bushfire effort and he was there today discussing with the RFS, the SES, the police, Fire and Rescue, and the Bureau of Meteorology what we can expect for the next few days. I again thank and acknowledge the role that the Deputy Premier will play in the clean-up and the recovery. Please know that we are already in the process of establishing through the SES what areas have been given the all clear, although the vast majority of the State is still subject to extreme crisis conditions, and that is the precarious position that our State is in.

But it also reminds us—as I am sure members of this place would appreciate—that our citizens have been asked to weather a lot in recent times. We acknowledge the big clean-up effort and recovery that will be required in the ensuing weeks and months. Our Government will do everything it can to make that process as easy as possible, notwithstanding the enormous pressure that individuals, families and communities will be under in the coming weeks. To give people assurance, we have established 13 active evacuation centres. As I mentioned yesterday, most people come in, register their situation and then move in with family and friends. We thank all those who have taken in their loved ones during this difficult time. We know that the impacts of the floods are immense. In certain areas we still are awaiting the all clear to assess damages to bridges, roads and other infrastructure that are vital to allowing people to get back to their homes. We cannot state enough our gratitude to

those who are putting their own lives on the line to support others. We also ask everybody to be extremely mindful of the situation our brave workers and volunteers are going through during this time. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cabramatta and the member for Rockdale will remain silent.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I again thank the member for Castle Hill for his question and contribution. I also acknowledge the efforts of his neighbour Minister Elliott, who is in charge of the emergency services operations. As was announced yesterday, the New South Wales Government has ensured that all the funding through the Commonwealth arrangements has been put in place. I also thank the environment Minister, who has waived the waste levy in flood-affected areas to help in removing the mess quickly and safely. We appreciate the waiving of that waste levy that the Minister has facilitated.

Again, I thank the Federal authorities for supporting us through the Australian Defence Force aviation assets and other potential support during the clean-up process. We know that that help is there when and if we need it. I again acknowledge the support we have received from the States of South Australia, Victoria and Queensland. The extent of what is occurring in New South Wales cannot be underestimated. I thank all the communities for their patience during this difficult, frustrating and confronting time. Many people will be going back to homes that are very different from the ones they left and we appreciate that will cause shock and trauma. Ensuing support will be provided to them.

Notwithstanding what our State is going through, the New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals are always focused on moving our State forward. So while, first and foremost, our thoughts, prayers, consideration and compassion are with all those who are displaced or may be displaced in the next few days, and support will be provided to them, we also acknowledge the work done by our wonderful health professionals and the community in tackling the COVID virus. While we know that so many parts of the State are going through very difficult times, we also must make sure that we continue to work together to keep New South Wales COVID free. We want people to come forward and be tested—fortunately over 12,000 people have done that—and to be vaccinated as well. I thank the people of New South Wales for their unwavering support during these difficult times.

#### WARRAGAMBA DAM

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (14:28):** Our deepest sympathies go out to the family and the loved ones of the gentleman who died. My question is directed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. As recently as last month the Minister was arguing for additional water to be released to allow five metres of air space behind the Warragamba Dam wall. Why did that not happen?

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

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (14:29):** At this very serious time for New South Wales, I also extend my sympathies to that family who have been severely impacted. This has been a terrible event. It is a one-in-100-year event occurring throughout regional New South Wales—in my electorate and the electorates of Myall Lakes, Port Macquarie, Clarence and Coffs Harbour—and a particularly devastating event for the Sydney Basin. As I explained yesterday, it is a bathtub, on a very high-risk flood plain.

We have experienced a one-in-50-year event. That does not mean this type of event happens once every 50 years. It means that there is a 5 per cent chance in any one year of an event like this happening. When we received advice last September from the Bureau of Meteorology that we were heading into a La Nina event and given that there had been a sudden rush of water into Warragamba Dam in February, it was appropriate to re-examine the studies and information provided to government over decades. The catchment is complicated. I note that 50 per cent of the water in the rivers has come from the basin; it is not water spilling from the dam. But it all has an impact. In 1995 the Labor Government cancelled raising the wall at Warragamba Dam.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time. The Minister will direct her comments through the Chair. The members in the Cooper Gallery will remain silent.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** In 1995 the Labor Government decided to not increase the wall size and to not change the operating licence and rules around Warragamba Dam. With the support of the western Sydney Minister, we have had discussions and are going through internal processes so that we do not make a rushed decision that may be flawed. It is very important to understand that if pre-releases of water are made at an inappropriate time, it can actually make the situation worse. Our information and modelling would suggest that it would have made the catchment even wetter and potentially would have had a worse impact.

As we go through our internal processes, we will look at all the information, the impact of the flows and where they have come from. We believe we have a responsibility to look at those operating procedures. We were advised in November that La Nina was weakening and we would return to normal rainfalls by April. Nevertheless,

we still took the opportunity to look at those procedures, particularly as we are considering raising the Warragamba Dam wall levels. It was an appropriate time to do that. Let us not be mistaken into thinking it would have solved these issues because reducing the full supply level by five metres and Sydney catchment's water supply by 20 per cent at the same time has considerable risks.

Even if a decision had been made to release the water, the probability is we would not have been able to reduce the water level in time anyway because the catchment has been so wet and there has been so much rain. That is the issue. Often we have events where the dam fills to 100 per cent and you cannot release in any event because it is a wet period. It is a challenging time for us all. Our agencies are working together in a very serious, methodical and appropriate way to make sure we take the right decisions for the safety of Sydney. Releasing that water was not going to solve this one-in-50-year event.

### FLOODS AND REGIONAL TRANSPORT AND ROADS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (14:34):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on the impact of the recent floods on the roads and transport network in regional New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (14:34):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. There is no doubt that we have survived the biggest dry but now our communities are facing the big wet. We are seeing floods in our communities that we have not seen for more than 50 years. The huge rains and subsequent flows have created significant issues across our regional transport and roads network. The impacts are being felt by communities right across the State—from Moree to Port Macquarie, all the way down to Mollismook. As it currently stands, and as this House will appreciate, it is an evolving situation. Every major north-south connection across the State, excluding the Pacific Highway, is currently disrupted by flooding.

In the west, as the member for Northern Tablelands will know, the Newell Highway between Narrabri and the border is flooded, as are sections through parts of the Central West. The Carnarvon Highway is also closed between Moree and the border. The New England Highway is closed at Wallangarra, just over the Queensland border. In the Far West, the Silver City is closed between Packsaddle and Tibooburra. The Cobb Highway is also closed between Ivanhoe and Wilcannia. Many more links are affected throughout the State, including key east-west rail connections and roads like the Oxley Highway, the Waterfall Way and the Bells Line of Road, as well as many local roads. That gives members some idea of the breadth of the impacts we are seeing right now.

We have also seen widespread impacts on our rail networks, with freight and passenger services also disrupted. Services on the Hunter Line, the North Coast Line and the Main West Line have all been impacted. It certainly poses some big challenges to freight, and we have moved quickly to ensure that essential goods keep moving into impacted communities. Today we fast-tracked plans to increase access across the network for higher-productivity vehicles that meet Performance Based Standard Level 2B. These are safer, modern trucks fitted with telematics that can carry up to 33 per cent more than a standard B-double, meaning we can get more supplies in faster. We have had transport crews out there since the rain hit. They have been dealing with road closures and are helping communities to evacuate.

We have also prioritised assessments of the damage to our road and rail networks, and will be ready to do emergency repair work as soon as it is safe for our crews to go back in. Anyone who has seen some of the images will know how damaging the floods have been to the State's road and rail networks. For example, on the Waterfall Way up on the North Coast there is a real threat of falling trees and landslides, with a tree falling on a council vehicle while a worker was, thankfully, out inspecting the road. It will be several days before we can assess the current status of these roads and provide a detailed update on next steps, including the duration of the repair work that is needed to reopen them. We are making every effort to speed up that process using every avenue that is open to us.

A good example is the Martin Bridge over the Manning River at Taree, where we have had scaffolding up to support works to repair and repaint the bridge. It has taken a battering through the flood and is currently closed. Members may have seen the video of it being struck by a shipping container that came down the river. While it has not been safe to bring teams onto the bridge, we have been able to get specialist workers to abseil over the side of the bridge trusses to take photos of the damage that has occurred. The images have been sent on to specialist engineers, who can do a preliminary assessment of the damage and determine what needs to be done so that we can do the next bit of work that is required. It is expected the bridge will be open to light traffic later this week.

It was only 12 months ago that our Transport teams were out there supporting communities through bushfires by helping escort people out, getting supplies in and then leading the repair efforts. Our crews were there in the midst of the communities, supporting our communities, and that is because they are part of our

communities—they live in these areas. I thank all those teams from Transport for NSW right across the State who have been working around the clock alongside our emergency services personnel to ensure the damage was not much worse. I thank Terry Power from our bridge team in the north region. [*Extension of time*]

Terry was part of an emergency operation on Monday night to address a serious threat to water supply and services in the Port Macquarie area. A large shipping container had been washed downstream in the flood and was stuck against a water supply just upstream of the bridge over Kings Creek on the Oxley Highway, east of Wauchope. The container lodged against the bridge on Monday afternoon and within hours Transport for NSW staff, together with bridge crews and Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, moved it out of harm's way. It took a couple of large cranes and the help of some local contractors, but they worked through the night and by 4.00 a.m. were able to lift the container away from the water main and back onto land, removing any danger to the water supply, the bridge and other services.

At Kempsey, Transport for NSW has been working alongside the council, the SES, RFS, volunteers from Crescent Head Surf Life Saving Club and many other locals to get supplies in to stranded residents at Crescent Head. Pallets of food and medical supplies were craned onto the Pacific Highway overpass near Crescent Head and put on trucks. They were driven to oyster farms where the farmers reloaded the stock onto their punts and took them across the flooded road. Tractors were waiting there to take the supplies into Crescent Head. They are just some of the stories we are hearing from right across the State right now. People are pulling out all the stops to support their communities through these challenging times.

I point out that there are two important tasks that Transport will be involved with over the coming weeks. The first is the focus on the current emergency, working with councils to deal with the immediate threat around flood levels. The second will be to work with councils and communities to help them repair damage and get back on their feet again. I encourage any member in this House who has questions specifically about his or her electorate to come and speak to me, as the member for Maitland has done.

#### WARRAGAMBA DAM

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (14:42):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I understand that this is a difficult day for him but there are no other ministerial arrangements in place. Given the Minister's support for the release of water from Warragamba Dam in October last year, why did he last month refuse to support his colleague's proposal to lower water levels in the dam?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:42):** That is a very naive question from the member for Cessnock, who clearly has a misunderstanding of the timetable. Ten years ago I was elected to this place and I said I believed The Hills district needed to have as much flood mitigation as possible. That was a decade ago—try and stay with us, Clayton—and, of course, today's fatality has proved that we need to mitigate at every opportunity.

#### FLOODS AND SERVICE NSW

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (14:43):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service. Will the Minister update the House on how Service NSW has provided support for communities hit by storms and floods?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service) (14:43):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for his question and for his herculean efforts in providing support to his community. He was there in the midst of the bushfires this time last year, and he is there again during the floods. His community has been significantly impacted, being so close to the flood plain—in the middle of it, in many ways. I also thank the member for his advocacy this morning. I heard his contribution to the real property debate and his advocacy for Service NSW and how it helped him and his community in a time of crisis. The member understands firsthand how important it is to have these types of agencies that assist communities in times of need.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira and the member for Campbelltown will remain silent.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** We rightly first and foremost thank those frontline service delivery agencies. During the COVID pandemic crisis, it was our nurses and contact tracers who were the heroes, as Mr Hazzard and the Premier have said time and again. During floods it is the SES, those amazing people who do the frontline work and put their life and limb on the line every day. During fires it is the RFS and the like. But the second line of defence or the second line of response includes agencies such as Service NSW. They may not be in the fire or the flood or on the front line of vaccinations but they are right behind, assisting communities in the recovery phase and often dealing with the emotional trauma of our communities.

During the bushfires, I will never forget going to a Service NSW centre in the Bega electorate and seeing members of the community hugging each other. People would come into the service centres, tell the staff what



had taken place and all the horrors they had seen, and they would hug each other. There was a really strong sense of community and the service centre staff were listening and responding in an empathetic way. I am proud to say that Service NSW continues to do that during these floods. I urge anybody who requires any assistance at all to please contact the Service NSW 24/7 hotline on 13 77 88. They triage people and help them with their needs. Service NSW was designed to be the front door of government, particularly during tough challenges. So if people have any questions at all, call them or go see them. They have dedicated specialist support for the floods, as they did for the fires. They can help in relation to financial assistance, business support and any other assistance that members of the public might require.

To update the House, 33 service centres sustained flood damage to some degree during the recent floods. I confirm that as of close of business yesterday, all service centres are now completely operational. Members of the public should feel free to go to service centres and seek all the support that they need. Since Monday night the call centres have received over 590 inquiries regarding floods. As the Premier said, that will probably increase over the coming days, as in many ways the situation becomes even more difficult. People are starting to return home, yet the water is still there.

The mobile service buses—another initiative that we rolled out just before the past election—have been enormously powerful in their application, whether during the bushfires, as the Deputy Premier would recall, or in the coordination of the flood response. The mobile service buses have been located on the North Coast since Monday to assist approximately 100 customers in hard-to-reach areas. Based on Minister Toole's remarks, the service was front and centre during the bushfires as well. We have built up a lot of capacity and learnings as a result of these events. Service NSW is bringing all the agencies of government together so that the people of our State are the centre of the universe. [*Extension of time*]

As the Premier and Deputy Premier have said time and again, life and limb is our first priority in disasters. It has to be our first priority. But in disasters people also lose things that are deeply sentimental and irreplaceable, such as photos, rings and heirlooms. People also lose important items such as government documents—a driver licence, a birth certificate, a marriage certificate or a white card. That has been a real learning for me. When people start to recover from a bushfire or a flood, they will go to work. But if they work on a construction site, how do they get onto the site if they have lost their white card? Service NSW is there to help people get back on their feet as quickly as possible. It can help people to obtain their driver licence, perhaps a digital one. That is another reason we are moving down the digital path: to give people other options in emergencies like this. I thank the member for his question.

### WARRAGAMBA DAM

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:49):** I also pass on my condolences to all those involved in today's tragic event. My question is directed to the Premier. For months senior Ministers in the Government have debated lowering water levels in Warragamba Dam to reduce flood risk. Why was more water not released?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:50):** As the Leader of the Opposition would be aware, I have been making comments in relation to this matter since Monday. But I am more than pleased to reiterate my comments in the Chamber today. There is no doubt that given the catastrophic weather conditions we have seen in the past few days and the amount of rain that has fallen, the Warragamba Dam capacity would have had to have been reduced to around 25 per cent in order to have mitigated what is occurring now. In fact, it would have taken 230 days. We would have to have started about a year ago, when in fact we were still in the midst of a deep drought and coming off the back of the catastrophic bushfires.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members in the Chamber and in the gallery will remain silent.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It is now important to accept the facts, which are that those catastrophic weather fronts set in deeply over a number of days and resulted in floods across the State. We have literally tens of thousands of people either evacuated or on high alert of evacuation across virtually every region in the State: Northern Rivers, mid North Coast, North Coast, parts of the upper Hunter, the Hunter itself and Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Further south, there are warnings in relation to Illawarra and the South Coast and high winds inland around Goulburn and other communities. We know these are catastrophic events. The floodwaters are rising in one-in-100-year events all across the State, not just in one localised area.

I do not want to politicise the issues that have been raised in the House today but I went back with some interest to look at what some members opposite had said about whether or not the walls of Warragamba Dam should be raised. I will not highlight those comments today because I do not think it is appropriate, but a bit of consistency would be relevant in relation to this argument. What we are seeing before us in New South Wales is the unfolding of human tragedy—tens of thousands of people who will never have the same experience again in

their lives, seeing their possessions, their homes, their animals and their loved ones in a very distraught situation. Our first and foremost thoughts have to turn to how we can make life easier for them during this time.

The absolute tragedy and irony is that many of us in this place will be visiting communities that have been battered by the floods and were previously subject to the bushfires and the deep drought prior to that. I would not be mistaken in saying that the first and foremost preoccupation of every member in this place, no matter which party they belong to, would be the welfare of our citizens and communities. I want members to consider putting all of their efforts and energy into supporting our communities during this difficult time. Even before this catastrophic weather event, people were on edge. Drought, bushfire, COVID, livelihoods upended because of recent restrictions and everything else involving the pandemic had already put our communities on edge. For many, this will be the tipping point. None of us should underestimate what that experience will be like for thousands of people across the State and all of our focus needs to be on supporting communities.

I am prepared to have a debate any day of the week on public policy. We stand accountable. The decisions that governments have to make from time to time are never easy. But what is important to me, and I know is important to every person in this House, is supporting our communities during this difficult time. I want our communities to know that our Government is committed to supporting not just the crisis effort but also the clean-up effort and the recovery. I thank everybody who has been involved in the process so far and I encourage all members to focus on what is important to our communities because that is what they expect from us.

### FLOOD RELIEF ASSISTANCE

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (14:54):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation. Will the Minister update the House on the resources available for those beginning the recovery process in flood-impacted areas?

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (14:54):** I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. He is a member who is working tirelessly to keep his community up to date in this ongoing disaster and I know that his constituents at Schofields, Riverstone and Quakers Hill are grateful for the role he has played. Firstly, I express my immense gratitude and admiration for our frontline emergency services like the SES that are out there as we speak providing assistance to flood-ravaged communities. While there are many communities that are still at risk of flooding, in other areas people are now starting to return to their homes to assess the damage and begin the heartbreaking task of rebuilding their lives.

I simply cannot imagine the pain of those residents whose houses have been completely destroyed or who have lost their most treasured possessions, like their wedding photos or other irreplaceable mementos they have carried with them throughout their lives. Each and every Minister in the Liberal-Nationals Government is talking to their agencies about what measures can be taken to support the tens of thousands of residents impacted by this significant flood event. We will leave no stone unturned to provide any support that is needed. I have been in constant contact with my own agencies, including NSW Fair Trading and SafeWork NSW, to make sure that we are doing everything possible to support residents during the recovery stage. As a result of those discussions, we will waive the costs for the replacement of any lost or damaged licences or documents. Some of those licences include motor vehicle repairer licences, occupational licences and building licences. Further information on those waivers will be released in the next few weeks.

If the past 18 months has taught us anything it is that natural disasters can strike anyone at any time. The disruption these events cause to people's lives cannot be measured, but I would like to send a message to those whose lives have been torn apart: We are here to support you. Fair Trading is on stand-by to help tenants and landlords who may need advice on their rights and responsibilities if their rental property has been impacted by floods, including arranging for urgent repairs, cleaning or clearing away debris caused by a disaster and arranging for utilities to be restored if they were cut off due to damage to the property. Unfortunately in the wake of disasters there are always unscrupulous con men and scammers looking to cash in on victims who are looking for assistance. The unfortunate reality is that those crooks are out there and they will target flood victims in the coming days.

They will offer cheap, cash-only repairs to roofs and driveways to clear debris or remove damaged trees. The last thing a person or a family affected by flooding needs is an unlicensed tradie carrying out work unlawfully and potentially creating major issues. Only experienced professionals know how to navigate the many possible hazards caused by floods, so it is essential that all work is carried out safely and correctly by licensed tradies. The Government has made it easier to know if someone is qualified or not by developing an online licence check tool: [licencecheck.nsw.gov.au](http://licencecheck.nsw.gov.au). People need to be vigilant, verify the tradie's licence, ask for references and request a written quote for any work over \$1,000. Carefully read contracts before signing them and make sure you understand any terms and conditions.

If in any doubt, head online to [licencecheck.nsw.gov.au](http://licencecheck.nsw.gov.au) or call Service NSW—earlier we heard from the Minister for Customer Service about the great work it is doing—to check if a tradie is licensed in New South Wales before agreeing to any work being carried out. I have instructed Fair Trading to do whatever is necessary to raise awareness amongst those communities hardest hit, to ensure that those who are looking to get back on their feet are not taken for a ride by crooks looking to rip them off. Rest assured, we will throw the book at any fake tradies that we catch. Maximum penalties for those who are not licensed include imprisonment and fines of up to \$22,000 for an individual or \$110,000 for a corporation. [*Extension of time*]

Those measures are just the tip of the iceberg. Each and every resident should know that the New South Wales Government will spare no effort in supporting communities as they begin to rebuild. Again, I give my sincere thanks to the legends who make up our emergency services.

### OPERATION DASHA

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:00):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Considering Operation Dasha found that a lack of effective anti-corruption safeguards was a significant factor in corruption at the Canterbury City Council, will the Minister commit to fully and urgently implementing the ICAC's recommendations to strengthen anti-corruption protections in the planning system?

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** That's what we did in 2011 when we got in. We got rid of part 3A and all the rotten stuff Labor had.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** And that has worked well, hasn't it?

[*Members interjected.*]

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Wakehurst to order for the first time for starting that.

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (15:01):** I thank the member for Balmain for his question and for his interest in these matters. I start by reiterating what the Premier said yesterday: The Government welcomes the report and will consider the recommendations in due course. I note that of the 23 recommendations a number relate directly to the planning system, so I will make more commentary in relation to those recommendations from my reading so far. The first thing to point out is that the Government has already taken the step of introducing local planning panels to remove councillors from the role of sitting in judgement on individual development applications.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** No, they were trying to appoint them on the planning panels. Didn't you read the report?

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

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** It's not working.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I take the comment of the member for Auburn. Frankly, this was part of the issue that was being complained about.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Have a look at Carter Street.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** This was part of the issue that was being complained about from a probity perspective. I would think those sorts of transparency and probity improvements to the planning system would be the sorts of improvements that the members opposite would welcome.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I point members opposite and the member who asked the question to some of the improvements suggested by Nick Kaldas, who did some great work for the former planning Minister in pointing out areas in which the planning system could be improved in relation to probity, transparency and efficacy. He made 19 recommendations relevant to the matters canvassed in Operation Dasha. They related to an ethics unit to provide confidential advice to users of the planning system and lay out ethical practice in relation to development assessment matters, and to procedures for planning panels, including probity checks.

He also pointed to the need to introduce an ePlanning system for concurrences and referral so that there could be greater transparency in relation to how those matters are progressed and assessed. The New South Wales Government has already made great strides towards that: ePlanning is now installed in virtually all councils across New South Wales, with the remainder to go online by 1 July this year. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Customer Service for his great support in helping that important reform, which improves both the efficiency of

the planning system and—crucially, in light of Dasha—the transparency of the planning system. I also note that the matters canvassed in Dasha related directly to some concerns about the operation of clause 4.6 of the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order.

I will give a bit of history for the edification of members. When the strategic comprehensive planning system was set up and became operational in 1980, a sort of Garden of Eden moment was when State Environmental Planning Policy No. 1—the very first State environmental planning policy [SEPP]—allowed for development standards that had been imposed through strategic plans to be varied or overcome where, I think the precise wording was, an applicant can demonstrate that "the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances". That introduces some flexibility and—with flexibility—discretion. ICAC has consistently maintained that discretion in administrative decision-making opens the door to corrupt conduct. That is the problem.

It is vital to have a level of flexibility because we know from all of our communities that sometimes precise adherence to a development standard can actually achieve unintended consequences and thwart great development outcomes. There is a need for a measure of flexibility. I have already taken the step of abolishing SEPP No. 1, but clause 4.6 remains. That clause, again if used properly, can obviate the need for a planning proposal or a spot rezoning, which is a good thing to do. But obviously that discretion introduces with it the opportunity for corrupt conduct. We have been doing quite a bit of work in relation to clause 4.6. I had taken the view that it was inappropriate to advance that work until Dasha had concluded and made its finding, but I am pleased to advise that we—

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** I seek additional information so that the Minister can support ICAC's recommendations thoroughly.

**The SPEAKER:** An additional two minutes is granted.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Yes, eventually.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I take the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition. I think it is appropriate that we consider these recommendations soberly and carefully. The point is that these findings were handed down earlier this week. It is appropriate to reflect and properly consider them. I also say that we have been doing quite a bit of work in the background already. I am planning to introduce a discussion paper on clause 4.6 specifically and how we can improve its operation and see how it might better serve the needs of communities.

Frankly, if we are going to provide the opportunity for an applicant to seek to vary a development standard in exceptional circumstances, then genuinely from a community perspective surely the applicant should have to demonstrate how that variation will produce a better planning outcome for the broader community. That is what this objective will be all about. No doubt the Government will also respond to the totality of the findings, a number of which do not relate to the Planning portfolio. But we take very seriously the need to constantly refine the planning system to ensure that it continues to operate transparently and fairly and to ensure that flexibility, where it is provided for, is used appropriately and in the interests of the broader community.

#### FLOOD RELIEF ASSISTANCE

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (15:08):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on the work her agencies are doing to assist communities through the floods?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (15:08):** I thank the member for Clarence, whose community is doing it tough today. He has advised me that the beautiful township of Ulmarra on the mighty Clarence has just had a precautionary order issued, not an evacuation order. But as the member for Clarence pointed out, Ulmarra is one of the first ones that goes under. That valley and his communities are well used to the challenges of the Great Dividing Range. Rainfall in the Great Dividing Range coming down the rivers in a torrent—whether it is the Clarence, the Hastings or the Macleay—and the bushfires racing through over 12 months ago have wreaked havoc on so many communities through the Great Dividing Range.

It is a really tough time for our communities in this one-in-100 year event, but we will get through it because our communities are strong and resilient. The past two years have shown us how resilient we are. One key thing that has come out of these natural disasters is how communities can work together. We all pitch in and we lend a hand. I am proud to see the agencies in the portfolios that I have responsibility for working to help communities through these difficult times.

As we saw from the bushfires, and as is being played out again in these floods, one of the great lessons is that our showgrounds play a vital role in providing shelter to people and their animals. It is heartwarming to know that the \$106 million that we have spent across New South Wales to improve Crown land facilities such as

showgrounds is making people's experiences a little more bearable during this event. They are multi-use community facilities. Whether to host a show or to act as a safe haven at the moment, they are a natural part of our communities. That also applies to our high schools.

I acknowledge the work of Minister Mitchell from the other place. On Saturday I visited Macksville High School auditorium in my electorate to see our Red Cross workers. I messaged Minister Gareth Ward to let him know how amazing all his workers and the aged-care workers were. At 10 o'clock in the morning I was amazed to see 30 or so residents of the local aged-care facility, which has a substantial dementia wing, in a high school auditorium. It was a moment in time to see how the staff and the residents coped with having been dumped there at two o'clock in the morning. They were being supported and everybody was coping well.

I then went to Kempsey Showground and saw more Red Cross staff and Resilience NSW people. In fact, 90 residents have registered with the Kempsey Showground to get the support that they need during this time. The Salvation Army was also there. I messaged Minister Marshall to let him know that our Department of Primary Industries staff were doing a great job. We have been able to get feed and calf milk out to some properties because of the communication we are doing. Darren Jameson at the Kempsey police station, who was leading the work there with the local emergency services, and Shane Cribb at Port Macquarie were just a phone call away and able to provide support and deal with the situation. There are about 45 horses at Wauchope Showground; it is an incredible effort to be able to keep them high and dry until the waters go down.

Today the Mayor of Moree, my friend Katrina Humphries, was quoted as saying that we will have a lot of heartaches and there will be lots of tears, and then we will rejoice because this is actually the drought finishing and the mice are going to be gone. That is a good thing. Country towns have been in a constant cycle of undesirable weather. For our communities out west there has been some relief and there is some hope that things will get better. However, we know that once water levels drop, the clean-up is going to be the next big challenge that our communities will face. *[Extension of time]*

The department will be ready to support any local communities that require emergency water carting or emergency infrastructure once the water levels decrease. But it is not just Crown Lands that is providing support. WaterNSW has been responding quickly to the changing information. Since November it has released, in a controlled manner, 130 gigalitres from Warragamba Dam and has been working together with combat agencies to manage the dams during these incidents. Sydney Water has also been working overtime to manage water quality issues associated with flooding and ensure that residents still have a safe source of drinking water.

I thank all our agencies for the work that they are doing to keep our communities safe. We have heard great stories of bravery across the State. However, everyone must continue to listen to the advice of our SES and emergency services. Times are tough now, but the resilience of our communities shines through all our trials. Members can be assured that the Liberal-Nationals Government will stand by these strong and resilient communities irrespective of where they are in this great State.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Reports**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development entitled *Final report into support for drought affected communities in NSW*, report No. 2/57, dated March 2021. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PRECEDENCE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that on Thursday 25 March 2021, during the time provided for consideration of general business notices of motions or orders of the day (not being bills), precedence be given to general business notice of motion (general notice) No. 2074 [200th Anniversary of Greek Independence].

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

**Milton Ulladulla Bypass**

Petition asking the Government to reject the current proposed Milton Ulladulla Bypass and reconsider alternative options, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

*Bills***MUTUAL RECOGNITION (NEW SOUTH WALES) AMENDMENT BILL 2021****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:16):** I will briefly conclude my earlier remarks. It is great to have the Treasurer here in the Chamber. This is a great piece of legislation. Earlier I talked about the disgusting way that businesses were treated in Queensland and Victoria by their governments. We had tourism businesses that just went through the floor. But in New South Wales one of the great things we are using at the moment is Dine & Discover NSW. I was only telling the Minister earlier that I took my girls to the Empire Cinemas at Bowral on the weekend. We watched a movie about some lost dragon—it was wonderful. These vouchers are fantastic and we are seeing them stimulate businesses throughout the community, especially in the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly. I sum up by thanking the Minister and stating that I support this bill in its entirety.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (15:17):** In reply: I close the debate on the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Amendment Bill 2021. I start by thanking my colleagues who contributed to this debate, the members for the electorates of Keira, Albury, Granville, Tweed, Charlestown, Terrigal and Wollondilly. The bill will reduce barriers to labour mobility and support the State's economic recovery. It will help industries to more easily address longstanding skills shortages. It will help communities across the State, especially those on the borders, to access the skilled labour that they need. This is especially important for rebuilding after natural disasters such as the 2019 bushfires. The bill achieves these outcomes by reducing red tape, and making it easier and cheaper for workers and businesses to operate across jurisdictions.

I will make some specific comments to address the concerns that were raised over the course of the debate. In relation to the concerns of the members for the electorates of Keira and Granville that automatic mutual recognition [AMR] will dilute the high standards of New South Wales, the Commonwealth bill will ensure that standards and safety of workers and consumers in New South Wales are maintained. The bill provides that workers will have to meet requirements relating to insurance, fidelity funds, trust accounts or the like, as well as other requirements such as working with children checks.

Local laws will continue to apply to interstate registration holders so local regulators can take the necessary enforcement action to protect businesses, employees and consumers. A registered person will need to comply with the local laws in the second State and is subject to any applicable disciplinary actions. Workers will not be eligible for the scheme if they are subject to disciplinary action or have conditions on their licence as a result of disciplinary, civil or criminal action. Local regulators in different States and Territories will be required to share relevant information about a registered person, and prepare and publish guidelines on the operation of the scheme.

The Commonwealth bill also provides a mechanism for a Minister of a State to exempt occupational registrations from AMR for up to five years. This can occur where the Minister is satisfied that the exemption is required because of a significant risk in that State to consumer protection, the environment, animal welfare, or the health and safety of workers or the public. Depending on the nature of the risk, an exemption could apply to all interstate registered persons or apply only to workers from a specific jurisdiction. While the intention is to keep paperwork requirements to a minimum, States and Territories can also require registered workers from interstate to notify the local authority.

The member for Granville raised the Electrical Trades Union's request for electricians to be exempted from the AMR scheme due to differences in qualifications and laws across jurisdictions. There is already a scheme in place for the automatic mutual recognition of certain electrical trade licences on the east coast, involving New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. Under the east coast electrician scheme, electricians from Queensland, Victoria or the ACT are deemed to hold the equivalent New South Wales licence, as specified in regulations. This scheme is carved out of the proposed uniform AMR arrangements.

There are some electrical licences that are not covered by the east coast electrician scheme. The new uniform AMR arrangements would automatically extend to these licences in New South Wales. However, if there are concerns around including these electricians—or, indeed, any occupational registrations covered by the scheme—the Commonwealth bill provides the flexibility to exempt these registrations. This provision could be used to address any significant risks to workers, consumers and the public that might arise from the recognition of electricians from interstate.

The member for Granville also referred to concerns from electricians, plumbers, and other building and construction trades about differences in licence schemes and laws across States and Territories. For example, plumbing licences can cover different scopes of work. Some may include gasfitting works in addition to plumbing. Different laws may also apply in the second State. The Commonwealth bill provides that a person can only do the activities that they are authorised to do in their home State. If a plumber is not permitted to do gasfitting in their home state, they cannot perform gasfitting works in another State using AMR. The Commonwealth bill also allows local regulators to request notification from interstate registration holders of their intent to work in the second State. This gives local regulators the ability to keep an eye on who is working in their jurisdiction. The bill also requires local regulators to publish guidelines and information about the scope of work authorised through specific licences and the local laws that apply.

In regard to harmonisation of standards, the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Occupational Registration* commits signatories to pursuing longer-term reforms alongside the AMR scheme. This includes streamlining and harmonising standards for occupational registrations across States and Territories. The New South Wales Government will continue to be supportive of these efforts. I also address concerns about jurisdiction shopping under the AMR scheme. The bill will not permit jurisdiction shopping, as AMR is only available to interstate workers who hold a licence in their home State. The home State licence is defined as either the person's principal place of residence or principal place of work for an occupation. When that home State licence ends, AMR ends as well. If the registration holder moves permanently to a new jurisdiction or if their principal place of work changes, the worker will have to apply and pay for a new home State licence.

I understand that the Legislative Council intends to refer the bill to a committee, which would report back on 11 May—that is, obviously, if the members in the other place ever get back to sitting. I think things are actually working really well today. If the Parliament functioned a bit more like this all the time, there would be no Standing Order 52 requests and we would be getting on with the job. What the members of the other House are demonstrating today is that if they are incapable of appointing a President, then maybe they are incapable of being there at all. This may lead to a broader debate down the track. We are looking for savings across the board, and there might be some opportunities as a result—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order: That is outrageous! They have not just been not working today; they took a lunch break from 1.00 p.m. until 2.30 p.m.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Oh, did they?

**The SPEAKER:** Sorry, that is not—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** It has not been a completely wasted day.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Sorry, I withdraw!

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot uphold that point of order, but I do note it.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I know it has been a hard day for them.

**The SPEAKER:** I also note that I am not exercising my dictatorial powers at the moment.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Under current arrangements, I need the Legislative Council to resume sitting just to get this bill through. I support its intention to refer the bill to committee for report by 11 May. If there are issues, particularly with some of the unions, that members want to ventilate, I support that. But it is important that that occurs prior to the end of June, which should be prior to the passing of the Commonwealth legislation. I look forward to the committee's report and to any recommendations it makes for the exemption of specific licences from the scheme. Any necessary exemptions will be made by the New South Wales Government once the Commonwealth legislation that provides States with the exemptions power is in place.

Our economic recovery from the COVID pandemic and our long-term economic prosperity depend on the States and the Commonwealth working together with a renewed sense of urgency, cutting red tape and removing the handbrakes that are preventing people and businesses from reaching their full potential. The approach the bill provides should have been implemented decades ago. Australia is a federation. Ultimately, right across the board,

registrations and occupational licences in one State should be acknowledged in another. Above anything else, we are one country. The bill embodies a long-awaited reform and I commend it to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Private Members' Statements*

#### HEATHCOTE ELECTORATE ACHIEVEMENTS

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (15:25):** A decade ago at 8.45 p.m. this Friday I was elected to represent the people of Heathcote. It is hard to believe I have been a member in this place for 10 years. It seems like only yesterday. I reflect on the issues of 2011 that I have since fixed. Foremost was coal seam gas [CSG] mining in the water catchments in my electorate. The Cordeaux, Woronora, Avon and Cataract dams are located in my electorate. The previous Government placed exploration licences over the entire catchment, which concerned me greatly. On many occasions I said to then Premier Barry O'Farrell—and to anyone else who would listen—that if anything were to go wrong with CSG in water catchments there would be no fix. How could I look my grandchildren in the eye and tell them, "We don't have fresh water anymore because Grandpa didn't stop it"?

Finally in 2014, after considerable arguments and upset, it was announced that the petroleum exploration licences were cancelled. It was one of the most memorable days of my life. The 2011 promise of a combined ambulance and fire station was fulfilled. I am proud that the joint station built at Bundeena was the first of its type in Australia. The pedestrian bridge over the Princes Highway at Heathcote shopping centre was the result of another fight won. The bridge was built after several incidents and a young person's death.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Is this your valedictory?

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I will let you know. Subsequently, in 2018 a \$25 million overpass was delivered at the railway station. Many things have made the lives of Heathcote's citizens better—for example, the joint plan that I adopted with members representing the electorates of Keira and of Wollongong to reserve \$10,000 from our respective Community Building Partnership program funds, in addition to the surf lifesaving fund, to replace a major piece of vital infrastructure each year. We supplied two rescue response vehicles for Surf Life Saving, which were used in recent Port Kembla incidents in which fishermen perished after being swept off rocks at Hill 60. I thank the members for Keira and for Wollongong for their participation.

After an announcement in 2015 and the furnishing of funds in the 2017 budget, finally the Heathcote Road bridge over the Woronora River will be widened. Some \$53 million of planning moneys will go to widening the entirety of Heathcote Road to four lanes. Unfortunately, in the short to medium term the bridge will have only two widened lanes, but members should watch this space for announcements about the long-term solution. I am happy to be proven incorrect, but I believe that, come Friday, I will hold the record for the longest serving Temporary Speaker in this Parliament's history—and probably in the history of any Parliament in the world. The honour of that role was bestowed on me in my first week in this place.

I have served on the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission and was involved in the implementation of the new format. I have also served on the Public Accounts Committee and the Legislation Review Committee. After the 2019 election I was installed as Deputy Whip. I would like to thank my family, and particularly my wife, Gayle, for supporting my career. Who would have thought the boy from Loftus would grow up to represent his community in the New South Wales Parliament, the oldest Parliament in Australia? I acknowledge my Heathcote team: Anne England, Bella Beattie and Abbey England. I thank them for all the support they have given me. I look forward to representing Heathcote for many more years.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I too congratulate the outstanding member for Heathcote on his 10 years of service.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:30):** I did not realise the member for Heathcote had served for 10 years. I acknowledge the great work of the member, as outlined in his private member's statement. The outstanding effort the member puts into his duties in this House is not missed by members on both sides of the Chamber. I congratulate the member on his 10 years of service to the Parliament.



**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:30):** The Opposition acknowledges the 10 years of service by the member for Heathcote to the Parliament. I hope he writes many more speeches with the pen that the member for Blue Mountains just presented to him.

#### **WENTWORTH FALLS BODINGTON HILL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:31):** I speak on behalf of numerous concerned constituents who have contacted my office about crazy development applications in the Blue Mountains. My community is angry at the short-sightedness of this Government's management of the State significant development planning process—specifically, the fact that it allows developers to completely bypass the local environmental plan [LEP] that exists to protect our unique ecosystems and preserve the character of our communities. My electorate of Blue Mountains stretches across a narrow ridge that runs through the middle of pristine, World Heritage listed national park. As a community in such a unique natural environment, we consider our environmental heritage to be of great importance, not only culturally but also economically.

The Blue Mountains' local economy is heavily reliant on tourism that can only exist due to the unique character of our towns and villages, and the unique blend of those settlements into our natural environment. It is a travesty that one of the most reckless proposals that I have seen submitted to the planning process in my time as a member not only breaches the conditions of our LEP but also claims to do so in aid of our tourism sector. I refer to the plans for a large hotel and zoo complex at Bodington Hill in Wentworth Falls, known as "the crocodarium zombie DA". The concept plans include five hotel buildings, a car park, a theatre, a vet, a gift shop and several other facilities set among a sprawling wildlife centre. Not only does the plan pose significant environmental risks but also it sets a precedent for irreversible destruction.

An integral part of the Blue Mountains local environmental plan is the concept of "land between towns", which exists to ensure that each of our towns and villages maintains its unique bushland setting and to prevent dangerous levels of overdevelopment. If approved, the development would set a precedent for land clearing and construction in protected areas of bushland that run the length of the Great Western Highway. Several local business owners have expressed their grave concerns about the level of overdevelopment in the mountains. They worry that pushing too far to squeeze in too many buildings will damage the character of our communities. Operators of existing wildlife ventures are also concerned that the proposal will direct tourists away from the excellent existing opportunities that visitors have to see wildlife in their native habitats.

After a year of devastating bushfires, floods and a global pandemic, our local tourism operators need all the support they can get to drive customers their way. They should not be further disadvantaged for the benefit of some anonymous, rich developer. Local firefighting experts and local transport engineers believe aspects of the development to be next to insane—an example being the lack of access and egress off the Great Western Highway for traffic travelling at 80 kilometres per hour. The proposal contravenes numerous environmental protection measures within our LEP. In the Blue Mountains hotels, major recreation facilities, extensive fencing and car parks are prohibited in E2 Environmental Conservation zones. Yet the land proposed for development mostly lies within a designated E2 zone.

Building on a designated slope constraint protection area also presents significant risks for the nearby hanging swamps. Based on the developer's plans, significant excavation work is required, which would disrupt the flow of surface water and groundwater essential for the longevity of those swamps. Blue Mountains Swamps are already listed as habitat of threatened species under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This also has impacts on our local waterways, as swamps act as a purifying filter for ground and surface water before the water is released into nearby creeks. Hurting this swampland will in turn jeopardise our creek network and could cause lasting damage across a much wider area than just the land being considered for development.

The site of the proposed development is also in the middle of a wildlife corridor and sits immediately opposite the exit of a wildlife tunnel that passes under the highway. The developer proposes surrounding the property with fencing, which would block the southern exit of the wildlife tunnel and render it useless. This would undo years of hard work on behalf of Roads and Maritime Services, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the local council to reduce wildlife deaths as well as hazards to motorists. Approving the proposed development would set a dangerous precedent not only for the Blue Mountains community but also the whole State: If enough money is thrown at a project, then environmental conservation and protection no longer matter.

This Government must review its flawed planning processes, which have taken accountability for those projects out of the hands of local communities, and it must do everything in its power to reject this dangerous experiment in conservational vandalism. I especially thank the Blue Mountains Conservation Society for its relentless and meticulous attention to research on the matter. Together we will continue to oppose this development application.

### NSW WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:36):** I join my many colleagues in the House in sharing my great pleasure at having attended the NSW Women of the Year Awards in Sydney earlier this month. Mark Twain famously posed the question: Where would we be without women? Twain answered his own question with, "Scarce, sir. Very scarce." While entirely true, this does not entirely capture the value of women, particularly those women in leadership roles, and what they bring to our families, our lives, our communities, our economies, our collective wealth and our knowledge. I acknowledge those women who are here in this Chamber with me today—the member for Swansea and the member for Blue Mountains—who both fit that very image.

Indeed, it was an honour to sit among so many inspirational, hardworking and high-achieving women from throughout New South Wales, and to see them properly honoured and acknowledged for their work. Among the award recipients on the day was Saretta Fielding from my electorate. Saretta is an Aboriginal woman from the Wonnarua Nation, whom I have known for many years. She is an outstanding nationally acclaimed artist, who has not only celebrated the natural beauty of Lake Macquarie in her work but also the traditional culture of her people. As we well know, no woman is any one thing. Saretta is also a strong and dedicated advocate for our local Aboriginal community and was a pioneering board member of Yarnteen, which is an organisation committed to creating and building Aboriginal businesses. She is an extraordinary woman, and I am very pleased to say that she is one of thousands in the Lake Macquarie electorate who inspire, teach, build, achieve, encourage, create and lead our local community.

It would be impossible for me to acknowledge every one of those women in this one opportunity, but in the spirit of International Women's Day, which we marked a fortnight ago, I must mention a few others. Among them is Ann-Maria Martin. As a survivor of domestic violence, she began the Survivor's R Us charity at Cardiff, which supports the fight against domestic violence, homelessness and unemployment. This vital service provides men, women and children alike with counselling services, a food warehouse and an op shop. Alongside a large band of volunteers, she is returning hope to many in our local community. Christine Mastello runs a similar operation called Southlake's Incorporated in the Morisset area. On the smell of an oily rag, donations and a team of volunteers, Christine similarly provides a food bank, support clubs for school kids, a community hairdressing project and a homesharing scheme among other things.

Audrey Koosman might be 73 years old, but she has been a dedicated wildlife volunteer in the Lake Macquarie area for 56 years and continues in that role. From providing round-the-clock care to orphaned animals to conserving wildlife habitat to overseeing the creation of a wildlife education centre, Audrey is there. We also have other women such as Suzanne Pritchard and Robyn Charlton, who lead the way on local environmental issues. We have business innovators such as Samantha Cross who founded Plastic Police, a business that collects soft plastics and recycles them into everyday products such as bench seats, decking and bollards and, most importantly, educates the community and politicians about the need to act.

We have local legends such as Gwen Deaves, who has been part of the Wyee Rural Fire Service for more than 60 years. Gwen attracted international notoriety in the 1960s when she and a few of her female neighbours began what is thought to have been the first ever ladies firefighting brigade. They did so when they realised they could get to a fire emergency far quicker than their husbands, who worked in the local mines. Their story attracted attention from a UK film crew, which made a short film about them. I hasten to add that the film was called *The fire-eating Amazons of the Antipodes*. Gwen still serves the local RFS in any capacity she can. While Gwen's story is hard to top, countless other women in our community are in senior business and leadership roles, often while juggling motherhood and families. We have some incredible women running and playing with local sporting clubs, running community groups, and teaching in schools and classrooms. Needless to say, overwhelmingly, many more local women than men do the hard yards in voluntary roles. The community would be lost without those vital, skilled and essential roles.

The other day, I was somewhat buoyed to see Australian Bureau of Statistics figures which showed that 49 per cent of senior leadership positions in the Federal public service are now filled by women. This figure compares to 37 per cent just 10 years ago. I do, however, believe we have a long way to go in eliminating that divide in the broader sphere, but I acknowledge the significant inroads made towards ending that disparity. I am equally pleased to acknowledge International Women's Day and thank those women who are achieving extraordinary things in our State and in local communities such as Lake Macquarie. Long may they be given every opportunity, long may we celebrate their contributions, and long may they continue to inspire a new generation of women to be everything they are capable of being and more.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:41):** I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for his outstanding private member's statement [PMS], and I support his comments on the women mentioned in his PMS. I take the opportunity to recognise the NSW Premier's Woman of the Year and she, of course, is NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant. It was a fantastic decision to appoint Dr Chant to that great honour. Dr Chant is

excellent in her field. We all certainly remember seeing her each day at every press conference giving out vital information to us and providing support to the great people of New South Wales through what was some of our darkest times in this State. She inspires through her leadership and dedication. What a tremendous award that was.

#### VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE GRANTS

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (15:42):** As a local MP, I work hard to achieve the best outcomes for my local community, a community I am honoured every day to represent. Although we are only a few months into the new year, a year we all hope is full of better health and prosperity, there are already a number of achievements in my local electorate I recognise in this House today. Schools are at the heart of our community. Our children are our future and their parents, grandparents and carers, together with the wonderful teachers in our local schools, do their very best to make that future a bright one. Recently schools in my local community received funding from the New South Wales Government: \$660,000 in total was received under the Metro Renewal Program, while Rose Bay Secondary College received \$600,000 for a new COLA—a covered outdoor learning area—upgraded walkways and new shade structures, and Bellevue Hill Public School received \$60,000 for a new playground upgrade. They are welcome additions to those schools.

The New South Wales Government is also supporting our local preschools. Late in 2020, about \$120,000 was received between nine schools under the Quality Learning Environments grants. The beneficiaries included Dover Heights Community Preschool, Emanuel Woollahra Preschool, Kesser Torah College Education and Care Centre, Uniting Early Learning North Bondi and Uniting Iluka Early Learning Bondi Beach. In an electorate like mine, which is one of the smallest geographical electorates in the State, support for our young children through the local community is particularly important.

We value our open green space and recreational space for our children, which is why I am pleased to say that earlier this month \$120,000 of a New South Wales Government grant was announced to upgrade Plumb Reserve in Woollahra, together with Woollahra council, which is close to one of my local Catholic schools. This upgrade will really allow this space to be accessible by all children of all ages and all abilities. We also like protecting our valuable heritage sites—after all, the area I represent has a deep, rich significance for not only our colonial history but also our Indigenous history. Last year I announced the welcome news that Rushcutters Bay Park and Yarranabbe Park, Darling Point, and the Hermitage Foreshore Reserve and National Parks and Wildlife Service area in Vaucluse would be listed on the State Heritage Register. I had been working on those projects for some time so I was gratified to be able to make that announcement to support my community.

At the end of last year the budget allocated just under \$1 million for the maintenance and upgrade of Vaucluse House, which the suburb and my electorate were named after. It is the ancestral home of William Charles Wentworth, a giant in the early days of our colony, whose portrait features in this Chamber. He was a giant because he set up the University of Sydney and founded *The Australian* newspaper. He had strong opinions but was a person who believed in the future of a democracy in New South Wales. Earlier this month I announced \$1 million to go to another important heritage item in my electorate, the South Head Signal Station in Vaucluse, which was built in the 1840s. It was an important communications point for ships entering and leaving what was then Port Jackson.

Our local environment is always a top priority. In Vaucluse we love our open green and blue spaces. A few weeks ago I joined local residents at Bondi Beach for my annual Clean Up Australia Day exercise. It was great to again contribute to making sure the world-famous beach is a little bit cleaner due to our efforts. At the last State election a significant \$80 million was pledged to my electorate to close the last remaining ocean outfalls at Vaucluse and Diamond Bay. Some \$11 million was committed in the last budget so that work can be completed to finally stop sewage pouring into the open ocean at those points. I am so pleased to be able to help deliver that. The final matter I mention is how we are keeping local residents moving by upgrading local roads and improving public transport options. We have 59 additional ferry services to Rose Bay and 12 to Watsons Bay, which make such a difference to people getting about and doing what they want to do. I am so proud of what I have been able to do together with my community over the short period since the beginning of the year.

#### CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGION UNEMPLOYMENT

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:47):** I address the current unemployment rate in the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Central Coast regions and the impact it is having on the local community. It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy statewide, but the Swansea community has been hit hard. The latest January 2021 report on regional labour force trends demonstrates this. The report shows that unemployment in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie is sitting at 8 per cent, while the State average is 6.2 per cent. Youth unemployment has reached a staggering 19 per cent, roughly 6 per cent higher than the State average of 13.1 per cent. At the same time, the participation rate has dropped to 63.2 per cent—below

the State average once again. The annual employment growth rate of negative 10.2 per cent is extremely concerning, and places the region among the worst performing in the State.

It is worth noting just how hard the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have hit the region. In the 12 months from January 2020 to January 2021, unemployment doubled from 4 per cent to 8 per cent. The youth unemployment rate has jumped from 10 per cent to 19 per cent, and the participation rate has dropped from 68 per cent to 63 per cent. The Central Coast has fared slightly better than Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, with the unemployment rate sitting at 6 per cent and youth unemployment at 10 per cent. While it is reassuring to see unemployment on the Central Coast remaining steady over the past 12 months, it is important to note that the participation rate of 59 per cent on the Central Coast is 5 per cent below the State average. It is clear from the declining participation rate in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie regions, along with the Central Coast, that workers have become disillusioned with the state of the labour market. With the JobKeeper scheme set to end just four days from now on 28 March 2021, many local businesses will face financial challenges and potentially more job losses.

In February this year modelling from Federal Treasury predicted up to 100,000 jobs could be lost across Australia when the JobKeeper subsidy ends. The end of the JobKeeper program, combined with the conclusion of the Federal Government's coronavirus supplement for JobSeeker recipients, will only increase the cost-of-living pressures on many families. All of us in this place, but particularly members of the Government, have a responsibility to ensure that people are not left behind, especially in times of crisis such as the past 12 months. While the Government has put in place funding to support community programs to help those people being left behind, it is simply not enough.

I have spoken with several food banks in my electorate that have reported an increase in demand for their services over the past year. In the Lake Macquarie region food banks reported an increase in those accessing their services for the first time in their lives. The same food banks have expressed concerns that demand will increase once the JobKeeper program and coronavirus supplements end this month. Food banks located on the Central Coast have reported a similar spike in demand, with one informing me they serviced 987 clients in the past eight months alone.

The pressures on many families and individuals extend beyond just putting food on the table to providing a roof over their heads. My electorate office has received a number of inquiries from constituents who have found themselves locked out of the rental market. They report applying for multiple properties and being rejected time and again. That is a result of the intense demand for private rentals in the region, which has led to potential tenants offering to pay above the listed weekly rental amount or offering to pay several months' rent in advance. This obviously disadvantages those potential tenants who simply cannot compete with applicants offering above market rates. I urge the Berejiklian Government to invest in job creation in regions like the Swansea electorate. We cannot continue to fail our youth and allow youth unemployment to sit at 19 per cent. They are locked out of not only the labour market but also the housing market. If we fail to act, far too many people will be forced to live below the poverty line, not because of their own fault but because the Government has failed them.

#### NSW WOMEN'S WEEK

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:52):** For NSW Women's Week we recently celebrated the diverse contributions of women from all walks of life. NSW Women's Week featured a program of activities that ranged from promoting gender equality to increasing women's participation in sport. It also occurred during a time of heightened attention and focus across the community on the way in which we engage with, relate to and treat women with respect and equality. Throughout NSW Women's Week we were given the opportunity to acknowledge a local woman of the year. The North Shore Woman of the Year for 2021 is Colleen Godsell. Colleen was nominated for her decades of service to Scouts Australia and the North Shore community. I congratulate her on receiving this award for exemplifying community service and leadership. Locally in my electorate, as with every part of the State and country, we have many outstanding women from community organisations and sporting clubs.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit the UTS North Sydney District Cricket Club, which was successful in securing funding through the Government's NSW ICC T20 World Cup 2020 Cricket Legacy Fund to expand its women's cricket program. Club president Rob Lavery, head coach Michelle Goszko and the girls' teams recently welcomed me to a training session at Bon Andrews Oval at North Sydney Oval, St Leonards Park. Michelle Goszko is a former Australian cricketer who has been heavily involved in the New South Wales pathways program for junior girls and manages the women's cricket program at UTS North Sydney District Cricket Club.

The club has been working hard to develop women's cricket, and I have been an active supporter since its inaugural female cricket team received New South Wales Government funding to kick off its first season. We

were excited to see the third grade team reach the grand finals, but not so excited to see that they were not successful. Investment and support through nurturing from people like Michelle will enable this club's development of its teams over time to make sure it is a club for more women to get involved in. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering positive change for women's sport, including through the Her Sport Her Way grant program, which is a key part of the Women in Sport Strategy and is providing more than \$2.5 million over four years to State sporting organisations. Its objectives include increasing the number of women and girls playing sport, improving the retention of adolescent girls, increasing the number of women in leadership positions on and off the field, and improving gender-inclusive sporting cultures and environments.

During NSW Women's Week I attended the 2021 NSW Woman of the Year Awards as well as many community events. On International Women's Day I attended a breakfast hosted by Mosman Council, which I attend most years. This year's guest speaker was Professor Marylouise McLaws, whom many members will have heard from in the past year. She is a professor of epidemiology, the deputy president of the University of New South Wales Academic Board and the water health leader of the UNSW Global Water Institute. At the breakfast Professor McLaws shared her experiences and led an interesting discussion about COVID-19. I spoke to female student leaders from a number of schools including Beauty Point Public School and Middle Harbour Public School. I also spoke to students from Redlands about the Chanel Contos campaign to understand the way that consent has been experienced by and taught to high school students. The conversation with female and male leaders of the school was very interesting.

I have already spoken in this place about the intense recent focus on the safety and autonomy of women in our community. In my local area Mosman House and Mary's House support and provide a safe and secure place for women who are at immediate risk of domestic and family violence or sexual assault. I attended an International Women's Day luncheon hosted by Mary's House with guest speakers Mater Hospital CEO Heidi Bayliss and Mary's House board chair Liz Mackinlay. The Daisy Centre is a Mary's House initiative that provides non-residential domestic violence services. Based in Neutral Bay, the centre encourages women to disclose their experiences and seek support.

NSW Women's Week is a time to reflect on women in politics. We recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first woman to be elected to a Parliament in Australia when Edith Cowan was elected to the Parliament of Western Australia in 1921. In 1925 Millicent Preston-Stanley became the second woman to be elected to a Parliament in Australia when she became a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. The New South Wales Government is currently led by Gladys Berejiklian, who has always been a champion for women. I acknowledge her for her hard work and dedication to this great State. I also acknowledge and thank my fellow female parliamentary colleagues from all sides of politics for the work they do, including the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Helen Minnican, who recently opened up about her role in the Parliament as part of NSW Women's Week.

### **MOOREBANK INTERMODAL TERMINAL PROJECT**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:57):** I share the concerns of many members of the Holsworthy community about the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal Project. On Monday I was notified that Qube Holdings Ltd had submitted an environmental impact statement [EIS] for a project to realign Moorebank Avenue around its intermodal site. This would provide its workers only with access, forcing other road users to make four new turns to navigate around the site. There are also serious concerns over what the project would mean for the residents of Wattle Grove. If it is approved, they would have a major freight terminal and a busy roadway just 400 metres from the back of their properties. This is not good enough. More thought, compassion and consultation needs to go into working with residents to find a solution for them and the intermodal project.

Construction should not impact the lives of residents more than it is already expected to. If the company had to redirect the road then I wish it had listened to me and built it on the western side of the site. This would have allowed them to be a good neighbour and hand back the land along the river for public use such as a park or nature reserve to connect over the river with the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and Casula Parklands. These measures would have brought benefits to the community from the construction of the intermodal by handing back the Georges River foreshore to the community.

The impact of sound from the intermodal on Wattle Grove residents is one of the largest issues that I foresee. Qube Holdings' road traffic noise industry criteria in its EIS states that the realignment of Moorebank Avenue will increase road traffic noise levels for residential areas to the east because it is the development of a new road so that "no additional mitigation measures are required". It should erect sound barriers along the eastern edge of the new roadway to mitigate any noise pollution. Every impacted residence should also be fitted with double glazing. The community is angry with the way that modification after modification has been proposed, with construction often taking place over the Christmas and New Year period. It is beginning to feel

like a battle of attrition. Qube Holdings should take on these options voluntarily to show that at least it is trying to listen to the views of the residents, which will form part of my submission against the proposal to the Independent Planning Commission.

Weight restrictions for roads such as Anzac Road and Nuwarra Road should be imposed to ensure the safety of the community. This would provide clarity for local residents that they will not see an influx of trucks going through the community every day. I will ensure that the Minister for Transport and Roads and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces are aware of my concerns and suggestions. Importantly, the cost of the intermodal project should be borne by Qube Holdings or the Federal Government and not by the New South Wales Government, which did not propose the current location for the intermodal. I urge all Holsworthy electorate residents to ensure that their voices are heard during the application process by submitting their objections to the proposal by Tuesday 13 April.

This intermodal project at Moorebank has been earmarked by successive Federal Governments since the creation of Wattle Grove around 30 years ago. In 2012 in his role as the Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese stated that his Government was committed to facilitating the delivery of the Moorebank intermodal project and that it would take a Labor government to make it happen. Why was Mr Albanese so happy for this project to go ahead? Was it because it would take trucks off the road around his own electorate and push them into south-west Sydney?

Unfortunately, too little has been heard on this matter from the Federal member for Hughes. While he has made speeches on the issue in Federal Parliament, unlike many Holsworthy electorate residents I do not believe that he has consistently written submissions against the project proposals. Mr Kelly now sits on the crossbench and wants to hold the Federal Government to account. However, why has he not used his new position to demand that better measures for the intermodal project be put in place to protect locals? Is it because he is too focused on spreading theories about COVID vaccines and climate change instead of standing up and fighting for his constituents? He should have done more to stop the project or at least reduce its impact over the past 10 or so years. This fight is not over. I will stand by my community to the end.

#### STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:02):** During times of natural disaster we see the true character of the Australian spirit. NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Rural Fire Service and St John Ambulance volunteers are there for our communities when they are most in need. I inform the House of the outstanding work of the NSW SES units at Blacktown, Auburn and Fairfield to combat the devastating recent floods. Australia, like no other country on earth, relies on the dedication of volunteers during natural disasters. They are a credit to their communities. Over the past 14 months our country has been tested on all fronts, firstly in the summer of 2019-20 by the worst bushfires in our history, then by a global pandemic the likes of which had not been seen for over 100 years and finally by the recent major flooding across the eastern States. The Insurance Council of Australia has declared the floods an insurance catastrophe after more than 12,000 claims were made in the first few days of the disaster. More will come as the floodwaters recede.

SES volunteers across the Prospect electorate have provided valuable assistance to locals, residents in greater western Sydney, and those affected around the Hawkesbury River and the Nepean River. The work of the Blacktown, Auburn and Fairfield SES units is driven by an unfaltering dedication to support the community in times of need. Throughout their time responding to the initial flood damage, the units were involved in flood rescue, sandbagging, evacuations, tree removal and providing essential information to the community, as well as responding to direct calls for assistance. The units also provided logistical support to the operations of the NSW Police Force and NSW Fire and Rescue. They have been, and continue to be, instrumental in Western Sydney's response to these floods. The units were deployed to multiple areas to provide assistance including across local government areas in Prospect as well as the surrounding regions. Units were deployed to the regions along the Nepean and the Hawkesbury rivers as they burst their banks, forcing the surrounding areas to be evacuated. The units are still responding to calls to the SES hotline, which have already numbered in the hundreds for our three local units.

On Monday 22 March 2021, as the waters continued to rise, a flood warning was issued for Widemere Detention Basin that had the potential to impact parts of Greystanes and Wetherill Park in the Prospect electorate. Our SES volunteers provided warnings to locals to prepare for a potential evacuation to ensure people's safety. In addition, the Blacktown unit headquarters have been accessible 24 hours a day to accommodate crews from across Sydney who need some respite and recovery before continuing their important work. The three SES units will be continuing their work for weeks to come as the yet untold damage from the rising waters continues.

Worth noting are the efforts of the units at the following locations: Berkshire Park, Shanes Park, Schofields, Pitt Town, the Hawkesbury region, as well as Windsor, where the team was directly involved in flood rescue. At

Shanes Park the Blacktown unit carried out boat extractions of trapped persons whose homes had become surrounded by floodwaters. Their actions directly saved lives. The bravery and community spirit of our SES volunteers is heart warming and needs to be congratulated. Our State's response to the current flood crisis will test many of us, but the indomitable Australian spirit will continue to shine throughout these challenging days. Volunteers such as those of the NSW SES Blacktown, Fairfield and Auburn units, through their countless hours of dedicated work, keep us and our communities safe. I thank them for their service and continued efforts in responding to the current New South Wales flood crisis.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:06):** I recognise the statement by the member for Prospect. I supported all of his comments as I listened closely to them. He is very supportive of volunteers right across our community. Being a member of the Rural Fire Service, of course he dedicated his own time and sacrificed his family time to help fight the fires last year. He made some excellent remarks about the tenacity, the dedication and the bravery of our volunteers. I recognise those comments, as do all members in the House. I congratulate the member on his statement recognising the SES.

### DECENTRALISATION

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (16:07):** The COVID-19 vaccine has arrived but for many remote working is here to stay, with the global pandemic having an enormous impact on how many businesses operate. I sometimes question why European countries can have beautiful cities and much greater population densities than Australia without constructing high-rise apartment towers. The short answer is something I spoke about in my inaugural address. It is decentralisation.

For a long time it has been government policy to encourage people to move out of our capital cities to regional areas, where housing is more affordable and the lifestyle easier. Historically, decentralisation has failed in our country for two main reasons. Firstly, people who make government policies live in the cities and have viewed decentralisation policy as one of propping up declining regional areas and country towns. But the benefits of decentralisation include making our cities better, less congested, city housing cheaper and our urban areas more livable. Secondly, decentralisation has failed because of the absence of jobs in the regions. Without the right job opportunities in regional areas, people find it difficult to imagine moving outside of Sydney, or any major city.

But the COVID-19 pandemic, and the remote working arrangements it encouraged, has genuinely been a game changer for decentralisation. It has meant the unnecessary weekly hours of commuting have become free personal time and it has allowed more time for exercise and other areas of personal development. Families have spent more time together, increasing communication and interaction exponentially. They have come to realise the benefits of regional living. Together with the national broadband network, a new capacity to work regionally has evolved. Our society underwent many changes as a consequence of World War II, and I believe that we must grab the opportunities this pandemic has given us. If a CEO of an Australian Stock Exchange listed company can work from their home office in Killara, what is stopping them and their staff from working in Cooma, Cootamundra, Albury or Bega?

We must use both a stick and a carrot to transition large enterprises to decentralisation. Setting targets is a policy lever used in many areas of public policy, and we should have targets for the location of employees who work in large enterprises—such as decentralising 5 per cent of an enterprise's workforce in the next three years, 10 per cent in the two years following and so on. I put on record that there will always need to be exceptions, particularly for smaller enterprises that do not have the same flexibility to decentralise. There could be two consequences for large enterprises that do not comply with my proposed decentralisation targets. There could be a tax penalty based on a percentage of turnover if they do not meet the required number of workers in regional areas, and there could be a business opportunity penalty.

The New South Wales Government is investing over \$100 billion in the next four years on infrastructure. Additionally, the Government procures a great number of other goods and services. Therefore, larger enterprises with a high turnover that do not decentralise parts of their workforces should be ineligible to either work on government-funded projects or receive government expenditure on goods or services. As we are currently in the worst economic difficulties since the Great Depression, a policy that promotes a better lifestyle and supports our State's economy, in my view, is essential. Any policy that assures a reduction of stress in modern life can also be expected to offer other beneficial outcomes, such as improvements in mental health and public health, and stronger communities.

I grew up in Newcastle, a stone's throw away from the beach, and it was a great lifestyle. But I have lived in Sydney for most of my adult life because of the greater educational and career opportunities. Now the beautiful area of the upper North Shore is being adversely impacted by overdevelopment, with our local Ku-ring-gai Council wanting developments to go only higher. Housing prices are at a record high across Greater Sydney, with many buyers facing the near impossible task of finding homes they can afford. The pandemic has already forced

us to take the first step towards decentralisation. As we continue to administer the vaccine and the end of the pandemic nears, we must not allow the move to decentralisation to stall. Only yesterday the Deputy Premier reminded us that the Hon. Ian Armstrong, AM, OBE, was the driving force behind the decentralisation of the Department of Primary Industries to Orange. We can have both an education and a career with decentralisation, working virtually anywhere, making our cities more livable and our regions even stronger.

### CABBAGE TREE HARBOUR EROSION

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:12):** I bring to the attention of the House the plight of Norah Head Marine Rescue unit and Norah Head Boating and Recovery Club that share the same premises at Cabbage Tree Harbour, which has been hit by massive erosion. Unfortunately, this is not a new problem. This morning I sent an email both to the emergency services Minister and the lands Minister to ask for their urgent assistance to help those two organisations. In 2007, during the storm when the *Pasha Bulker* ran aground, Cabbage Tree Harbour was hit particularly hard. I was the local member, and the State Government at the time gave funds to shore up the cliff in front of the houses at the harbour. Then in 2012 there were particularly heavy seas, which started erosion in front of the boathouse where the marine rescue unit is located.

At that time they asked for assistance but, unfortunately, they had to battle on by themselves to try to get the problem addressed. In 2016 the erosion became so bad that the Nora Head Marine Rescue unit had to move its boat out of the building and apply for funds to build a boatshed away from the front of the clubhouse. At the time both the Lands Department and the Central Coast Council sat down with the boat club's members and discussed what they could do about it. I intervened and asked for assistance to support the boat club and marine rescue unit.

Unfortunately, now in 2021 they still have not received any assistance. This morning I was informed that they could not even enter the premises because it is now dangerous: The building's structural integrity is at risk. The marine rescue unit is the only sea-access unit between Terrigal and Lake Macquarie. The unit covers a huge area and plays a very important role in rescue operations. The local surf club is just around the corner. We often get people in distress, both swimmers and sailors, and the marine rescue unit does an incredible job. The marine rescue unit is also the touchpoint for fishermen to radio in and ensure they will be looked after as they head out to sea. Almost 10 years have gone by and during that time there have been lots of meetings and lots of discussion, but absolutely no assistance, which is simply not on. In 2016 the local paper published this report:

A spokeswoman from the Primary Industries - Lands Department said the department was aware of the issue.

"Coastal erosion and landslip at this location have been an ongoing issue for a number of years," she said.

"The tenure holder has been taking a lead in endeavouring to resolve the matters to date."

Unfortunately the marine rescue unit has received no help from anyone. They sought legal advice based on what they thought was causing the erosion, but that was rejected. They have repeatedly asked for intervention. Surely now, when the whole building is in danger of falling into the ocean, both the Government department that owns the land, Crown Lands, and the council will step up, accept their responsibility and do the right thing. The marine rescue unit comprises volunteers. They do not have the money to spend on shoring up a clubhouse on land that they do not own. I await a response from both Ministers. Hopefully, because the area is disaster-declared, funding may be available for providing assistance. But we simply cannot stand by and continue to do nothing while this great facility, these great volunteers and this great service become displaced simply because bureaucrats at all levels cannot get their act together and put in place a restorative program to save the clubhouse. Come on, let's get it done. Let's back the volunteers. Let's do what needs to happen.

### RAINWATER HARVESTING

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:18):** Last week I spoke about the storms in the Corindi area and the devastating damage that they caused to the residents of the area. This week, much of the State was similarly affected by a large rainband that stretched the entire length of the New South Wales coastline. While the Coffs Harbour electorate was spared the worst of the flooding, our communities in the Orara Valley sustained further damage by rising floodwaters and continual heavy rain. Our community also lived through the knowledge that an increase in the rainfall intensity could result in catastrophic flooding at any time of day or night.

To our south, other communities were not so fortunate 19 evacuation orders were issued with 15 evacuation centres still open today in places like South Grafton, Kempsey and Port Macquarie, and Richmond and Castle Hill in Sydney. This morning 162 schools remain closed, and 11,274 requests for assistance were made to emergency services, which performed 950 flood rescues. We are deeply grateful for those who work in the emergency services, and especially those who volunteer their time in our volunteer rescue organisations like the SES. These hardworking men and women risk their lives daily to save the lives of others.



Some of the rainfall numbers of the past few weeks have been absolutely mind-boggling. I saw a rain gauge with over 1,200 millilitres of rain recorded for the month to date in March. I also acknowledge that this week marks two years since my election to this place. The past two years have certainly thrown up many challenges for all of us in New South Wales. One of the challenges of being in Government is that we need to look at an issue and not just see the problems, but also see the solutions. The Nationals especially is a party that by virtue of the electorates that we represent is a party based on pragmatic principles. Other parties have the luxury of blindly following an ideology, but I believe it is better for all of us if we work towards good solutions rather than just playing politics with the problems.

Currently the New South Wales Government is conducting a review into coastal harvestable water rights. It is the view of many sensible people that we should be looking to trap more of the water in these extreme rainfall events to use in drier times. Water rights and licensing are extremely complex. Harvestable rights are a class of water right different from those in a water access licence. They cannot be traded and will always be attached to the property itself. For that reason they are seen to be a fairer water use system. The current harvestable right on coastal drainage catchments allows landholders to harvest approximately 10 per cent of the rainfall on their own properties. I will emphasise here that 10 per cent is the current intent, but in reality on most properties the retained water will fall well short of that number. For example, a property the size of Hyde Park, which is about 40 acres, is allowed to build a harvestable rights dam a touch over two megalitres. For comparison, this is less than a standard Olympic swimming pool, which is 2.5 megalitres. For a local Coffs Harbour context, Hyde Park is three times the size of Brelford Park—or 32 football fields—and its harvestable right is less than the water in one Olympic swimming pool.

But when we look at the rainfall that actually falls on an area that size, we can see how absurdly small that limit is. In an average year Coffs Harbour receives about 1,600 millilitres of rainfall. In the 24 days so far in March, a Hyde Park size property would have received nearly 70 megalitres of rainfall and at least 68 megalitres would now be out to sea. In an average year, using the Hyde Park example again, nearly 275 megalitres of rainfall will fall on 40 acres, but the farmer is allowed to build a dam to capture only two megalitres. That is 0.75 per cent, not 10 per cent. And of course it would not be a conversation about water unless we add one more complication, and that is that a harvestable rights dam is allowed to fill and empty multiple times during the year with the total amount supposed to be equivalent to 10 per cent of the rainfall in a given year.

But the current allowable dams would need to completely fill and empty over 13 times per year to meet this requirement. That is not physically possible under any model of use or rainfall. The policy needs reform to fulfil the current goals of 10 per cent harvestable rights, let alone any proposed increases. There are also some concerns about increasing harvestable rights. Freshwater flows are important for healthy fish populations and of course any policy must consider the impacts of any changes on the important ecological role that coastal estuaries play in fishery life cycles. But those risks are mitigated by a few factors. Firstly, harvestable rights cannot be traded or moved and are geographically linked to farmland. In most coastal estuaries, farmland will be a very small percentage of the total catchment. It should have very little impact. The other main consideration is that in a changing climate, we may have wetter wet periods and drier dry periods. Does it not make sense to capture more water in wet periods to use them in the droughts?

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:23):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. A review of harvestable rights has been a long time coming. I thank the Minister for Water, Property and Housing for bringing the matter forward. There has never been a better time to review harvestable rights, in particular in coastal areas where there is high rainfall and where in fact we are seeing flooding at the moment. Catching some of the water during flood events certainly makes sense. It would help to alleviate the flooding to some extent, would make no difference to the environment, certainly would help farmers during periods of drought and take the strain off creeks when farmers have to pump water from them to sustain crops and stock.

#### **BANKSTOWN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:24):** I extend my deep gratitude to the NSW State Emergency Service Bankstown Unit for its tireless and brave sacrifices over the course of last week. On Sunday I visited the Bankstown SES headquarters to be debriefed on the situation by Bankstown Unit Commander David Niven and his team. On Saturday a mini tornado had ripped through Chester Hill and the neighbouring suburbs of Sefton and Villawood. In combination with the heavy rain and wind throughout the week, the tornado flooded entire streets, took the tiles off dozens of roofs and caused electricity outages for hundreds of people. The tornado was so strong that Chester Hill High School has been required to remain non-operational since Monday due to the extent of the debris and damage to the school. There were 526 properties in the affected area, of which 116 needed specific attention—110 were damaged and required tarping to prevent leakages and further damage, families were

evacuated from four homes, and two properties needed evacuation services to be provided. All of these services were provided by the Bankstown SES.

Many streets—notably Virgil Avenue, Tempest Road, Weemala Street, Brown Street and St Pauls Place—were flooded. Over the weekend Bankstown SES responded to over 300 requests for assistance, of which 180 came from the affected area in Chester Hill. All of those requests for repairs or assistance were answered over the weekend and before Monday morning, which is a remarkable feat, and I congratulate those volunteers at Bankstown SES. At the beginning of the storm the Bankstown SES implemented a number of critical operations. It organised a collection point for members of the community to receive sandbags to help keep flooding at bay and it provided constant and specific updates across a variety of channels to make sure that every resident knew exactly what was happening, what areas were to be avoided and what behaviours were safe or unsafe.

Over the same weekend there was a minor flood event, reaching nearly two metres in Georges River. This affected approximately 200 homes surrounding the river. The SES sent boats down the river to conduct doorknocks on these properties to check on the affected residents. I am entirely confident that the amazing work done by the SES has saved lives that otherwise could have been lost. For that, and for their many other services, I cannot express enough my respect for and gratitude to the brave people involved at the SES. While we slowly move into the clean-up and repair phase of this disaster, the SES still remains at the fore, helping residents affected by the storms to access information to claim their disaster recovery assistance funding. SES volunteers are also out in the damaged areas, helping to clear up damage and debris and restore normalcy to those affected.

I extend my deepest thanks to all those involved with the Bankstown SES operations over the last week. I thank David Niven, the Bankstown SES unit commander, and his four deputies, Graham Thomkinson, Tegan Askwith, Tony Harb and David Drake. I also thank those who helped coordinate operations and logistics through the operations team and the Incident Management Team, Michelle Niven, Carole Bassam, Adrian Chapman, Michelle Beatty, Patricia Johnson, Leanne Nolan, Monique Scott and Andrew Platt. I thank as well the organisations that provided support and essential equipment to the operations: the Fire and Rescue Service, the Rural Fire Service, NSW Health, the NSW Police Force and Liverpool and Fairfield SES units.

I thank the amazing local volunteers who braved the terrible and dangerous conditions in order to provide assistance to those in need. Over 60 local volunteers came together over the weekend to lend their support. I also thank everyone in the community who helped in any way with the storm damage over the weekend, whether that was checking on their neighbours, offering someone a safe home or sharing information from the SES, particularly on social media. Every act of kindness helps. I am devastated to see the continued effects of these storms. Chester Hill is my hometown and I am particularly devastated to see the impact the mini tornado had on residents in my electorate. However, events like these are also a reminder that in times of great crisis the people of Bankstown will selflessly come together and make enormous sacrifices in order to keep each other safe. I have always known that the community I am fortunate enough to represent is filled with kind-hearted people who care and I take this opportunity to thank those local SES volunteers who came out and assisted our community during this crisis.

### **BANKSIA MENTAL HEALTH UNIT**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (16:29):** I update the New South Wales Parliament on the campaign to build a better Banksia Mental Health Unit in Tamworth. I always acknowledge and gratefully appreciate the support of the Tamworth Mental Health Carers Support Group and the community, with whom we are joined as one in this campaign. In December last year I announced that the proposed site location for the new Banksia Mental Health Unit, which will include a total of 33 beds, will be on the current site of the Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital.

On 17 March I was pleased to announce a generous donation from Joblink Plus to Hunter New England Health towards the Banksia Mental Health Unit. This \$1.5 million donation will be used to further develop the project's design to establish a new pod within the proposed new Banksia unit so that it can cater for children, adolescents and vulnerable people. The new pod will provide a purpose-built, short-stay area specifically designed for children, adolescents and vulnerable people. The area will be able to be separated from the rest of the unit and will contain an ensuite and a small lounge and dining area which can also flex into an activity table. The new pod will also feature a small outdoor courtyard specifically for these rooms, separated from the facility's main courtyard. The therapeutic environment of the new pod will be tailored to the needs of children, adolescents and vulnerable people. Importantly, the area will be prioritised for young and vulnerable people and it will be designed to be flexible so that the unit has the option to use the beds for others, if required. The short-stay accommodation for children, adolescents and vulnerable people will allow time for assessment, urgent management and safety planning. Longer term treatment will continue to be provided by the specialist Nexus Unit at John Hunter Hospital.

I am pleased to announce also that the formal validation of the master planning for the new Banksia Mental Health Unit was recently completed. This formally confirms the selected site on the hospital campus, which is

adjacent to and provides direct access to the Tamworth Hospital emergency department. The redevelopment project team recently held a focus group with key staff and consumers who have an existing connection to the services to develop the strategy and framework for co-design. People with lived experience of mental illness are front and centre in co-designing the new, integrated Banksia unit. The project team has used the feedback gathered from the focus group to develop a co-design strategy that ensures that the views of stakeholders are well represented and that consultation is undertaken in a safe and culturally appropriate way.

There will be other opportunities for staff, clinicians and the community to have input into shaping the redevelopment as the project progresses. I encourage interested parties to contact Hunter New England Health to stay connected with this wonderful project of building a better Banksia Mental Health Unit for Tamworth. Again I thank Joblink Plus for its very generous donation of \$1.5 million for this purpose-built unit, which will cater for children, adolescents and vulnerable people.

## **AIRTRUNK SYD2**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (16:33):** Mr Speaker, friends in the House and the people of New South Wales, today I am pleased to inform you that on 22 March I attended the opening of SYD2, an exciting new data centre in my electorate of Lane Cove. This new facility is owned and operated by one of Australia's most exciting tech startups. AirTrunk was founded in 2014 and ever since it has been at the forefront of innovation, specialising in hyperscale data centres to facilitate cloud capacity for some of the world's largest corporations. I am honoured that it has chosen Lane Cove as the location for its newest project.

The sheer scale of this project is breathtaking. AirTrunk SYD2 is only second to AirTrunk's already existing SYD1 in size and power. It will be one of the largest single-campus data centres in the Asia-Pacific region, along with sister facilities in western Sydney and Melbourne, taking AirTrunk's total capacity in Australia to over 370 megawatts. The opening of the SYD2 campus follows the company's dual data centre launch in Hong Kong and Singapore in December 2020 and adds to its expanding Asia-Pacific hyperscale data centre platform. I am happy to say that the plan was approved and put to construction in record time, with the construction of the major infrastructure of SYD2 taking only some 30 weeks. Economically speaking, SYD2 will contribute enormously to New South Wales as well as the local area. AirTrunk will invest over \$4 billion into Sydney's north alone.

It has been responsible for the creation of 300 construction jobs in the area and seeks to employ 100 staff now that its facility is operational. That comes as a welcome opportunity in the wake of the State's natural disasters and COVID-19 pandemic, which has threatened so many jobs and has had a devastating impact on the economy. Nevertheless, with so many new exciting projects across the State just like this one, our economy will continue to regrow and recover. AirTrunk and its customers alone are expected to inject \$9.5 billion into the New South Wales economy across its two data centres in Lane Cove and in western Sydney.

The success of startups such as AirTrunk also contributes greatly to the future of our State's economy. It not only indicates the expansion of the information technology sector and the thousands of STEM-related jobs it creates, but also facilitates the growth of our digital workforce, providing the storage capacity needed for platforms such as Zoom and Office365, which have been essential to the workforce over the past year, to operate. AirTrunk has also invested back into the local community, providing critical funds to Lane Cove West Public School in conjunction with the school's P&C to upgrade and create new STEM facilities for students and helping prepare students for an ever-increasing STEM presence in the job market. Again I thank AirTrunk for choosing Lane Cove as the location for its brand-new data centre and I pass on my congratulations to Robin Khuda, Michael Juniper, Damien Spillane, Dana Adams and the rest of the executive board of AirTrunk on such an auspicious occasion.

## **PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (16:36):** I am proud to represent a growing regional area of New South Wales with so much to offer. Port Stephens has an incredible agriculture industry, from cattle to oysters and even sea urchin. It is a top tourist destination with its beautiful port, thriving marine and national parks, and stunning beaches. It has a booming manufacturing and advanced manufacturing sector, with world-renowned businesses like Whiteley Corporation, Ampcontrol, Varley Group, Tomago Aluminium and Weathertex just to name a few. Port Stephens is diverse and popular, which is why an increasing number of young families are moving to the area as well as senior Australians looking for a sea change or a tree change.

But the unfortunate reality in Port Stephens, like so many communities outside of Sydney, is that it has not kept pace with the community's growing healthcare needs. Families in Port Stephens, like families up and down the coast and inland especially, struggle to access the basic healthcare services they need. But the underlying problem is not just a failure to keep pace with population growth, because time and time again the Government is

actively overseeing a rural and regional health system that is going backwards. It is getting worse. That is why Labor pushed so hard for the inquiry into rural and regional health care. The Berejiklian Government did not want to see that inquiry established but Labor persisted and eventually the upper House agreed and it was established. That inquiry is necessary.

In Port Stephens we have seen patients turned away from the emergency department because there was no doctor at the hospital. We have seen local nurses and hospital workers, who are some of the most hardworking and caring healthcare workers you will ever come across, stretched to their limits. That is not fair on them. It is not fair on our community and it is certainly not safe. Right across the State, rural and regional communities are facing the same problems: hospitals without doctors, towns without GPs, entire regions without specialists and no practical access to vital healthcare services. For years, Royal Far West has been banging on the door of this Government and telling it that one-third of all children who live in rural and remote New South Wales cannot access the healthcare services they need. That is one in three children.

We are not talking about prevention measures here; we are talking about kids who have specialist referrals and yet there are no specialists. We are talking about kids who need treatment for medical conditions, yet they are forced to go without. We are talking about vital healthcare services that are just missing across huge swathes of the State. The situation in rural and regional New South Wales under this Government is getting worse. Doctors will tell you that is the case and so will nurses, local councils, aged care facilities—the list goes on. One only needs to look at the 700 submissions made to the rural and regional health care inquiry. Every one of those submissions calls for urgent help.

In Port Stephens senior residents are forced to spend hours travelling multiple times a week to receive dialysis because there is no local service on the peninsula. The next closest service is fully booked and the Government will not increase its capacity. People are unable to access specialists of any kind. Residents and visitors are turning up to the local hospital and even though there is a doctor on call offsite, the patients are told to come back during business hours the next day. When I raise those issues with the Minister, he always assures me that there is a doctor on call 24/7. But what is the point of taxpayers paying for that kind of arrangement if patients are still being turned away? It is unsustainable, it is unfair and it is dangerous. Another issue I have raised with the health Minister is the dwindling number of GPs in Port Stephens. Like many regional communities, our local doctors are getting older and medical practices are struggling to attract new doctors. In some ways we are lucky because we still have some GPs in the town, but we are heading in a dangerous direction.

Recently the Commonwealth Government removed an "area of need" classification that previously existed in Port Stephens. I have spoken to the health Minister about the impact of that decision. Fewer junior doctors will be able to call Port Stephens home. We cannot attract younger doctors, and if we do attract them, we cannot keep them because of that new designation. It is an absurd decision and one that must be reversed. Once again the whole health system is under stress with more people having to go to the doctors because they cannot see GPs who are entirely overstretched and overworked. Practice managers of the GP clinics have come to me worried about the pressures on the doctors. They are worried about the difficulties that they are having and about their services meeting the health needs of our community. People are coming to me about the weeks it is taking for them to even see a GP. On behalf of Port Stephens and its families, I say to the Government: Bricks and mortar do not save lives; doctors, nurses and healthcare workers do. Stop focusing on cutting ribbons and start resourcing our healthcare system in the bush.

### **WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE YOUTH CRIME**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (16:41):** Young people are the future of our communities, which must be safe and supported. Unfortunately, senior police, constituents and the media have raised concerns about youth crime in the communities of my electorate. According to figures from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 33 per cent of malicious property offences in Wagga Wagga were committed by young people aged between 10 and 17, as were 34 per cent of motor vehicle thefts and 33 per cent of malicious property damage. A constituent has written to me describing disturbances and disruptions including trespassing, riding motorcycles at all hours and attempted break-ins caused by young offenders. It is a complex issue, but an important part of our response must involve the school system. The Department of Education has developed a new student behaviour strategy for public schools, which according to the Minister is to "address increasingly complex student behaviour while ensuring every student can access education and fulfil their potential."

I understand the strategy will focus on early intervention, increased support and professional learning to assist teachers. There will be a new statewide team of behaviour specialists and it will be easier to access additional allied health and professional behaviour support services. One issue in the strategy that is worrying people is the suspensions. Currently, suspensions can be for as long as 20 days and in some circumstances there can be little contact between the school and the student during that time. Students may well return to school further behind in their learning without their underlying issues being addressed. That seems to me to be a recipe for further

disruptive behaviour and does not support students achieving their full potential. Those who receive the longest suspensions are often the most disadvantaged. I question whether that keeps our communities safe. I believe it is appropriate that that issue is addressed.

However, parents and teachers have raised real concerns. They are worried about staff and student safety, training, the time frame for introducing the new policy and whether already stretched public schools would be further burdened. In essence, people are worried that removing the option of suspension or reducing its extent will impact on the learning of other students and the workload of our already overworked teachers. The Minister has said that the department will continue to collaborate with principals on evidence-based options for how suspensions are issued and managed. The Student Behaviour Strategy will be phased in, with consultation continuing on a suite of new policies and procedures due to be released in term 3 of 2021.

While the Minister was visiting Wagga Wagga to officially open the new Estella Public School, I convened a roundtable for the Minister to discuss the new Student Behaviour Strategy with parents and members of the community. Parents from high school P&C organisations attended, along with members of the Wiradjuri community, police, PCYC, Wagga Wagga City Council, Anglicare, Southern Sports Academy, Mission Australia and the Wagga Wagga social housing employment initiative. The parents who attended emphasised their concern about how in-school suspensions would work, the extra workload for teachers and school staff, and access to adequate funding and resources. They are proud of their schools and support their teachers.

I also thank teachers for the work they do in the schools throughout my electorate. They believe the issues that we are talking about with our young people are whole-of-community issues that should not be left to schools to sort out on their own. The Minister must address those concerns. At the same time there was support for action in this area from the community organisations that attended. They are keen to see better support for students who are at risk of falling through the cracks and becoming disconnected from their schools because of lengthy suspensions. They believe alternatives can be offered.

What emerged from our discussions is that the Department of Education and the Department of Communities and Justice must work together in this area. The Department of Education should not try to do this on its own. Consultation must not be tokenistic. We must use the community resources we already have to create new ways of keeping students and staff safe, while meeting the real needs of those who are suspended. I have raised the issues we face with both Minister Mitchell and Minister Ward. I encourage them to now work together and with our communities on the new Student Behaviour Strategy. Our government departments must work together with our communities. I am sure that those who met at the roundtable would be prepared to serve on a local group for Wagga Wagga to assist those departments—and I will assist in organising that. I urge the Government to take this opportunity to keep our communities safe and support our young people.

### VETERANS FILM FESTIVAL

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:46):** This afternoon I speak about the important work of the Veterans Film Festival. The Veterans Film Festival is an international festival that celebrates films made by veteran filmmakers, films that contain veteran content and films that show the impacts of conflict. The festival promotes diversity and unique perspectives with a program promoting all forms of veteran art and music, including special events, exhibitions and workshops for filmmakers, veterans and their families. The Veterans Film Festival offers a meeting ground and artistic platform for veterans working as creatives, filmmakers and artists of all ages, cultures and abilities to network as creative practitioners and showcase their work, and to engage with industry, media and a variety of audiences.

The Veterans Film Festival has been running for a number of years and all films submitted to the official competition are eligible to compete for the coveted Red Poppy awards—inspired by the poem *In Flanders Fields*. Some recent award highlights include: In 2018, four Australian premieres featured; *TransMilitary* won the award for best feature film; and over half of the films selected to screen in the 2018 had a female filmmaker in a leading role—either as producer, director, writer, cinematographer, editor or lead actor. In 2017, *Darkest Hour*, starring Gary Oldman, won the award for best feature film and nearly 60 per cent of films selected to screen in 2017 had a female filmmaker in a leading role—either as producer, director, writer, cinematographer, editor or lead actor. In 2016, female filmmakers won nearly 70 per cent of all the awards at the Veterans Film Festival.

Veterans Film Festival Incorporated is a not-for-profit arts organisation that brings people together to discover the latest harvest of films and peer into the minds of the next generation of creative talent in the veteran community. It has an amazing and diverse team. I acknowledge the board and the team behind the Veterans Film Festival, including president Warwick Young, OAM; vice president Glen Ferrarotto; treasurer Theo Papas; Tom Papas, who was the founder; Brigadier Alison Creagh, CSC; Chris Huet; Mairi Anderson; David Jenkins and Stephen Liddell.

Last year, like many events and festivals, the Veterans Film Festival went online. This year, however, we have the opportunity to bring it to New South Wales. I am pleased to advise the House that efforts to bring the festival to New South Wales are supported by the veterans Minister and the arts Minister. I am hopeful that in the coming weeks, fittingly in the lead-up to Anzac Day, we will be able to secure a venue and welcome the Veterans Film Festival to Sydney in 2021. I place on the record my sincere thanks to the organising committee of the Veterans Film Festival and, in particular, my good friend Colonel Warwick Young and the entire board's efforts in making the Veterans Film Festival such an important and successful event.

At first glance, many may consider a film festival and veterans to be two very separate things, but many papers and research have demonstrated the importance of creative endeavours, art therapy, music and other such elements in the journey on the road to recovery for many veterans who have experienced post-traumatic stress. Above and beyond that, the Veterans Film Festival is a fantastic opportunity for veterans and the broader community to enjoy wonderful events, exhibitions and films of veterans and their families. I commend the Veterans Film Festival to the House and excitedly look on as we hope to secure a venue to bring the Veterans Film Festival to New South Wales in 2021.

### LAND TAX

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (16:50):** Today I put before the House part 4 of the humble working-class economist's analysis of the Liberal Treasurer's snake oil, never-ending annual land tax on the family home. This tax con, masquerading as economic reform, is at best misleading and at worst a snake oil scam. Through some magical pudding recipe, this Liberal Treasurer has said on multiple occasions—even recently, as quoted in the property section of today's *Australian Financial Review*—that replacing stamp duty and sending home owners a never-ending annual tax bill will improve home ownership. It has nothing to do with income, employment, economic conditions, interest rates, access to credit or the two main ingredients—demand and supply. It all has to do with this Liberal Treasurer sending people an annual tax bill to their letterbox and, voila, more people own homes. Give me strength, Mr Acting Speaker!

Jessica Irvine from *The Sydney Morning Herald* talks about those factors in her February opinion piece. What she does not say is that sending an annual tax bill to people's letterbox increases home ownership rates. She does not make this argument because there is no truth in it—pure, plain and simple. Matthew Cridland from the *Australian Financial Review* in his 18 March article calls out this never-ending annual land tax on the family home as "comparable to a death duty", which accrues interest on the deferred debt. He rightly alludes to the scenario where the annual land tax can increase any year on the whim of this Liberal Government or where land valuations increase. This Liberal Treasurer does not deny an increase in a home owner's annual land tax bill.

I want to explore increasing annual tax bills because it is important for all members and the general public to understand that this scheme is nothing short of a greedy cash grab. The annual land tax bill is essentially a multiplication of two variables—the rate of taxation times the value of your unimproved land value. If this Liberal Government raises the flat rate or the percentage taxation rate then we will get a higher annual land tax bill. Alternatively, if your land value goes up but the taxation rate remains the same, your annual land tax bill goes up. If both the value of your land goes up and the taxation rate goes up to plug the Government's billion-dollar infrastructure budget blowouts, then we are totally stuffed! None of those scenarios seems particularly positive for any home owner given the annual tax bill is in addition to their council rates, electricity, water and gas bills—on top of general living expenses and, of course, tolls.

I have undertaken some forecasting analysis to estimate the annual land tax bill a home owner could be up for under this reform scheme. CoreLogic property data over the past 25 years estimates that the annual percentage increase in the median property price is about 7.6 per cent or about 6.8 per cent nationally. For a home owner out my way in Leppington who has just bought their dream home and land package for a conservative price of \$800,000 with an unimproved land value of \$500,000, the total annual land bill looks like this: At a 7.8 per cent annual increase, after one year the value of their land increases to \$539,000 and their annual tax bill goes up by \$117 to \$2,117; after five years the land is worth an estimated \$675,000 with an annual land tax bill of \$2,526 or an additional \$526 since they bought the house; and so on until the property is transacted. If the property is held for 20 years, the total land tax bill is \$77,141, which is more than double the initial estimated \$31,000 in stamp duty, excluding the deducted concessions provided to first home buyers.

The above scenario assumes that this Liberal Government does not increase the taxation rate higher than 0.3 per cent and/or increase the flat rate above \$500, which would make the annual tax bill just unaffordable. So while people are working double shifts to pay off the mortgage and making endless trips to Bunnings to improve their most valuable asset, this Liberal Treasurer is demanding that they pay him more taxes every year whilst he does nothing. It is just not right, nor is it fair. Even at a lower increase rate of 6.8 per cent, the estimated aggregated land tax bill over 20 years is \$70,167. With a still more conservative 5 per cent annual increase, the aggregated land tax bill is \$50,306. We can slice and splice it however we like, but the result is still the same: Home owners

are worse off. This tax reform is nothing but a con and a greedy cash grab. The politics and practicalities of the strategy and position are very simple: The strategy is to market the land tax as an innocuous reform that brings all things to all people, but the actual position is just a greedy cash grab that makes home owners worse off. The humble working-class economist series exposing this land tax con will be continued.

### VANISHING WHITE MATTER DISEASE

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (16:56):** The member for Macquarie Fields is a difficult act to follow. I am looking forward to the next episode.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** You have to subscribe.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** You have to subscribe, he says! For the third year in a row, the Great Illawarra Walk—now in its fourteenth year—is donating all money raised in this year's event to support research into vanishing white matter disease at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute at the University of Wollongong. It is Australia's first research into vanishing white matter disease, and it is taking place in Wollongong, the heart of the Illawarra. As background to this great event, almost 10 years ago local girls Chloe Saxby—whom I will talk about in a moment—and Holly Burns were diagnosed with an extremely rare degenerative brain disease. Unfortunately, Chloe lost her battle at the end of last year. Vanishing white matter disease is a progressive disorder that mainly affects the brain and spinal cord. There is no cure or treatment.

It was inspiring to be part of the Great Illawarra Walk. I have been part of it for some time now. I say from the outset that my wife is the Chief Operating Officer at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, or IHMRI, as it is known. The institute is leading the battle across the globe to find a cure for vanishing white matter disease. This year 647 walkers, both local and otherwise, participated in the event. Some walked the entire distance—around 40 kilometres—from Shellharbour all the way up to the Headlands hotel at Austinmer. In doing so, they raised around \$120,000 for research into the disease that tragically took Chloe's life in November last year. I know that Chloe was watching over all of us. I know, having given her mum and dad a big hug at the end of the event and with her sister Mads and her entire family there, that she would have been looking down with a big smile, very happy that the Illawarra once again showed that it really cares for its own.

It was also good to see Holly Burns and her family there. Holly is a young girl from Mollymook who also suffers from vanishing white matter disease. I particularly thank the Saxbys for their ongoing effort and support to raise money for research into this terrible disease, particularly in light of losing Chloe at the end of last year. I thank the Lovatt family and Martin Merritt from One Agency Property Division at Corrimal and Warilla. I thank Wave FM, the Illawarra Dutch Club, Bendigo Bank Oak Flats and, of course, everybody who came out to support this terrific event. It was in some ways a sad time, but also a happy moment that the legacy of Chloe Saxby will live long in the hearts and minds of the people I am fortunate to represent. Our communities will continue to support the fantastic work that our world-class researchers are doing at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute. I thank all of the community members who got involved in a very inspirational and special event.

**Business interrupted.**

### *Public Interest Debate*

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:00):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the existence of sexual violence and harassment in workplaces including our parliaments is unacceptable.
- (2) Affirms our support for people who have experienced sexual violence and harassment.
- (3) Commits to act to end sexual violence and harassment in this Parliament and the community.

As many members will know, on Monday of last week thousands of women, survivors and others—many of whom were joined by members of this Parliament who are in the Chamber right now—marched and chanted outside this very building. It is clear that the women of New South Wales and Australia, and women and survivors around the world have spoken. They are not just marching for justice; they are demanding justice. They have had enough of words. They have had enough of platitudes. They have had enough of nice little managed media messages and slogans. They have certainly had enough of dealing with these matters behind closed doors and in hushed tones, and being told that they should not speak out about the issue. They have had enough of laws that do not work for them. They have had enough of the fact that the dominant patriarchy that has written the laws of this State and this country for too long has produced the perpetrators of sexual violence and harassment of women in society. In bringing on this public interest debate today, we acknowledge the strength and courage of every

woman and every survivor who has come forward and spoken out. We say: We believe you. We say: Let her speak.

That is the fundamental starting point for justice in dealing with this issue, because it is not for us to investigate the legitimacy of someone who comes forward to tell their story. It is for us to say: We believe you and we will support you on your journey to get justice. There are justice processes, of course. There are laws in place. But it is not for us to make that call. First and foremost, it is for us to say: We believe you and we will support you. We cannot exist and participate equally in this place, in our democracy or in our society with the threat and the reality of sexual violence hanging over our heads. It prevents us from doing what we want to do. We must acknowledge that toxic masculinity is a problem everywhere—not just on the left or right of politics, and not just in the Federal Parliament or the New South Wales Parliament. It is not just in one or another political party, or in one or another type of workplace. It infects the whole of our society, and that is why we must speak up. That is why people are speaking up and calling for action. If we are going to challenge this problem, we must recognise that we have to do it together.

It is for that reason that I bring this motion to the House today, on behalf of The Greens. It is why I acknowledge that a motion in the other place calling on the presiding officers and the Government to act has moved us towards ensuring that we have clear guidelines for what needs to be done in this place. I acknowledge the Speaker's delegation to the Deputy Speaker in this Chamber to take carriage of a parliamentary working group with cross-party support and ensuring broad staff and union representation so that we do not exist in a workplace where harassment and assault occur while we are trying to create laws to prevent harassment and assault from occurring. That is absolutely crucial.

And before anyone points to the story that is happening in the Federal Parliament, I will let you know that this is a dossier of the incidents of harassment and assault reported by people working in this Parliament. These are not all of the incidents because we know many do not get reported, but these are the ones that have been put on the record. I ask everyone in this Chamber now: Do you feel confident that we have done all that we can to give justice to the people whose matters have been exposed in the papers and public reports, and who worked in this Parliament when those incidents of assault and harassment took place? Do you feel confident that we have changed the processes, policies and practices in this place to make sure that none of those things will ever happen again?

Well, I can say that I do not. I do not feel confident. It makes me sick that we have not taken it seriously and it has been necessary to get to this point for us to take it so seriously. But now we are taking it seriously. We have no choice but to take it seriously because things are going to get worse as people speak up and speak out about the traumas and the challenges, and the way that their complaints of assault, rape and harassment have been handled by a system that offers them no justice, a system that offers them no peace. All we can do at this point is recognise that we have more power in this place than we ever realised. Collectively, if we want to change this for evermore, those of us who sit in this Chamber right now can change it. We can literally change the laws to fix this. We can absolutely commit right now to changing the culture in this place to do that.

I bring this motion on behalf of The Greens today to say that we have no choice but to do that. Maybe people have tried it before. Maybe we have all tried it before. Maybe we stuffed up and did not do it properly. What we know is that we have an obligation right now. There is a moment and there is only one thing left for us to do, and that is for us all to work together. We must act collectively so that sexual violence and sexual assault do not continue to occur in this workplace or in any workplace in the country.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (17:07):** I thank the member for Newtown for bringing this motion to the House. The marches we saw earlier this month from women in Sydney and right around our nation were a united call for change. The March4Justice demanded that we "put an end to the issues of sexism, misogyny, dangerous workplace cultures and lack of equality in politics and the community at large". I was profoundly shocked by the allegations of sexual assault in Federal Parliament and what seemed like a failure to prevent it, but also a failure to respond to it. It failed on both counts. "Was it Parliament that was the issue?" I asked myself. Did it just magnify what was a wider community issue? I do not think it really matters. I think we all have a role to play.

Is the solution quotas for women in Parliament? Yes, I think that may be part of the solution for some parties, but I do not think it is the whole solution; not at all. The fact that more women feel unsafe and are the victims of sexual violence means there is something much more deep-seated in our community. This involves a much deeper discussion than I could possibly have time for this afternoon, so I will leave that for another time. But let me be clear: The New South Wales Government has a zero tolerance policy for bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. That is why, as the member for Newtown heard, the Premier asked Pru Goward—former Sex Discrimination Commissioner and a former Minister in this Parliament—to review the processes used for complaints about bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct for New South Wales ministerial staff.



Although the Government cannot dictate the processes the Speaker or the President put in place, the review will also include consultation with the Presiding Officers and the Department of Parliamentary Services in relation to those issues. We have also heard that both Houses are currently considering proposals to establish a compliance officer, who will have the ability to hear complaints from members, or about members, in relation to bullying and harassment that fall short of criminal misconduct. They are some of steps that the New South Wales Government and the Parliament are taking. But as a Government we have a broader and higher responsibility. It is to lead with the right policies, the right funding and the right implementation to guard against sexual assault beyond our workplace. I count a number of initiatives that are in that area. I acknowledge they are not perfect—they are works in progress. The NSW Sexual Assault Strategy was launched in June 2018. It is being updated and improvements will be made to it. It sought to set out a coordinated approach to sexual assault in New South Wales and had a number of priority action areas.

The issue of consent is critical, and it has become a particular focus of the current community discussion and all the campaigns, actions and marches we have seen across our nation. The plain speaking community education campaign #makenodoubt raised awareness of the importance of seeking consent when it was launched by the Government in December 2018. The first phase of that campaign featured videos of a diverse range of people speaking very candidly about what is sexual consent. Gratifyingly, the campaign received nearly half a million views and has been adopted by New South Wales universities and TAFE campuses for their orientation weeks. A second phase of #makenodoubt began in November 2019, using outdoor advertising to reinforce the message in simple, positive and real language that sexual consent is all about clear communication. The New South Wales Government is currently planning a third phase of the #makenodoubt campaign, which will provide very strong messages to our young people—the vulnerable people aged between 16 and 24 years whom we are hearing from now.

The Government is now working on a new strategy around sexual assault with members of the New South Wales Domestic Family Violence Sexual Assault Council. I want to ensure that the member for Newtown understands the Government hears and acknowledges her concerns. We hear and acknowledge the loud and growing urgent cause for both cultural change and law reform, both in our workplaces and across the nation. This is about a focus on work that must continue. With the help of members in this Parliament we will be able to make dramatic changes and advances. Finally, I acknowledge my colleague the Attorney General who is in the Chamber, who will make some further remarks in this regard.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:12):** I speak in support of the motion brought to the House. The Greens have brought this motion because members in this place have not only the privilege but also the responsibility to represent their communities. I acknowledge the work of my colleagues the member for Newtown; Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC; Ms Cate Faehrmann, MLC; and our male allies the member for Balmain and Mr David Shoebridge, MLC. In particular, I want to say how proud I am of the member for Newtown because I believe that how we grow in this world is by stretching ourselves. She certainly is not shrinking, as a woman of colour, from raising these issues despite the attacks and backlash. I am very proud of her and I want that on the record.

We are not immune in my party from these cultural norms and we are not immune from sexual violence and harassment. We have worked very hard in the past two years to address it. I believe we were early adopters of a systems approach and the need to support people who are harmed. What this really comes down to is the tragedy and horror of seeing the people who are harmed and who are blamed, who are told if they just behave differently, somehow things would be okay. We do not need the Prime Minister or any Minister in any parliament to talk about protecting alleged perpetrators. The first port of call of our leaders is to listen to those who have been harmed.

It reminds me of how we address Aboriginal people when they raise the harms of intergenerational trauma. We say to them, "If only you would do something different, we might be able to listen to you." Our privilege is in the way. It is how we are when people of colour raise the concerns of systemic racism, oppression and discrimination. We say, "No, you need to behave differently." Privilege acts, privilege protects. We have seen that play out in the last month.

We do not care if Minister Porter is going to sue someone for defamation. We care about the woman who took her own life because she felt so disempowered and was so harmed. Why did Ministers "war room" and cover up the rape of Brittany Higgins? Why are acts of sexual violence occurring in a workplace that is meant to be the absolute pinnacle of democracy, fairness and respect for human beings? The *Four Corners* report this week said it all. There is a culture in this place. There is a culture in Canberra, where cleaners found a woman naked and semiconscious and did not think that it was unusual. We desperately need to change that culture and system.

I take a moment to talk about the work of Brene Brown, who looks very much at the norms that we have established for men and women. Last year the Boston College conducted a terribly disturbing study. It looked at what women need to do to conform to female norms and what men need to do to conform to male norms. The

answers were truly disturbing. Western cisgendered women answered that they needed to be nice, thin and modest and they should use all their resources for their appearance. Men answered that they should always show emotional control, work should be a priority and that they should pursue status and violence. Houston, we have a problem! Those are cultural norms.

I think of my daughter and I am sure all members think of their children or family members. When children are under the age of 10 or younger, they are just themselves. But our society starts to tell girls to be quiet, to be thin and to behave. It tells boys not to cry, not to be themselves and not to explore their full emotional potential. To me, that is the absolute heart of the issue. It is incumbent on all of us to do everything we can to change those cultures. But first and foremost, we need to check our privilege every hour of every day in our communities. We set the standard. I could say so much about system changes, but this is the start of a conversation and I am very proud of the work that we are doing. I commend the Opposition and all members of this House for addressing this matter in the way that they are.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (17:17):** On 15 March I attended the Women's March4Justice in Sydney. It was a momentous gathering where I saw anger, frustration and renewed calls for change. This moment, built on the stories of thousands of brave women across our country, was unmistakably powerful. As a Minister in this place whose portfolio includes addressing violence against women, I know we have to hear and really listen to the complex reasons why women are so deeply aggrieved. I acknowledge the extraordinary, courageous and determined women who have stepped up and spoken out. Women like Rosie Batty, Grace Tame, Chanel Contos and Brittany Higgins have been wonderful in their calls for change.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence are too prevalent in our community. For too long, women have borne the responsibility of responding. We are all horrified at the stories that have emerged, but it is right that those stories have come to light and that the burden of keeping silent is no longer being borne by victim-survivors. The Australian Human Rights Commission reported in 2018 that 39 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the past five years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely to have experienced that harassment than non-Indigenous people. The figures were 53 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

It is pervasive and an unavoidable fact that perpetrators are mostly men and victim-survivors are mostly women. It is insidious and pernicious and it is carried out behind closed doors. It is almost never witnessed by third parties, which leaves the victim-survivor isolated and often with no confidence to report. Repercussions loom large for them. They often know the perpetrator. Reporting brings with it public scrutiny and unwarranted consequences, including fear of losing a job and living with the shame of victimhood. It occurs at all levels in every workplace across the country, including parliaments. Everyone is entitled to work in a safe environment. There is no place in the New South Wales Parliament or in any other workplace for bullying, harassment or lack of safety.

That is why the two leaders of the two Houses have referred proposals for a parliamentary compliance officer to the respective Privileges Committees. We have to make sure that this Parliament is a safe workplace. We have to make sure that if a member creates an unsafe environment or bullies or harasses someone, then the victim-survivor has a pathway to report if they so choose. Australians are suffering the financial, social, emotional, physical and psychological harm associated with sexual harassment. Deloitte Access Economics undertook research for the Australian Human Rights Commission and estimated that it costs the Australian economy \$3.8 billion every year, noting that this is a conservative estimate.

The police have now announced Operation Vest to encourage victims of sexual violence to report. This follows the outpouring of personal violence stories posted online via Chanel Contos' petition. I have read many of those stories. They make for shocking, sobering reading. I encourage all members to read them and really hear what they are saying. It is horrifying to think about the prospect of our daughters and sisters as victims. But it is incumbent upon all of us in our roles as leaders of sons and brothers to avoid the perpetration of those hideous crimes. We talk about the tragedy of a woman being raped, but we need to talk about the perpetrator who raped her. Language matters. It is our collective responsibility—particularly the men in this place—to call this out and uphold everyone's human dignity.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Hear, hear!

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** Sexual assault is a notoriously underreported crime and there are many reasons why, but we have to make it easier for victims to report and support them when they decide to take action. This is an urgent debate. I commend and thank the member for Newtown for moving this critically important motion. All of us have to renew our efforts to inspire and nurture thoughtful and informed dialogue to make sure we stamp out sexual violence and sexual harassment.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:22):** As we all know, there is a long overdue public conversation underway about violence against women in public spaces and the abuse of power and the mistreatment of women in the workplace by men. Much of the public focus has been on Parliament House in Canberra, but we know that there are violent and coercive men in all workplaces and throughout our communities. The same is obviously true of this Parliament. As the shadow Minister for Women, I am regularly contacted by people who wish to share their stories with me. As much as possible, I listen, provide advice and encourage people to make formal reports to the police and engage with support services. Today I pay tribute to survivors like Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame, who have all put themselves forward at great risk and stood up against men who coerce, harass or assault women in the workplace, in the home or, indeed, in public spaces. They have put themselves at considerable risk in doing so and I commend them for their bravery. As a starting point, we must all believe those women and believe all women when they make those reports.

Another group of women who are exposed to violence, coercion and harassment regularly are sex workers. Sex work is real work and we must reduce the stigma around it. Sex workers are over-represented amongst women who are assaulted, harassed, coerced, and indeed raped. They are also the least able to report these assaults, because they may not know the identity of the perpetrator and they often do not trust the police to handle their complaint. Obviously, there are many hundreds of years of history underpinning that apprehension.

Eighteen months ago I was contacted by a sex worker who had recently been assaulted in my electorate. She had agreed to meet a client who was travelling home from Sydney at a point along his journey north. She had been clear with her client from the outset about what she was willing to do with him and what she was unwilling to do. She had responded to the client via a website called Locanto. He had posted a wanted ad seeking a "BBBJ with CIM" and was offering \$200. It was an arrangement for oral sex only. Like many sex workers there was an aspect of emotion to her work with this client. She had to message back and forth with him and hear about his important job and his significant workload. She also discussed with him aspects about her family life and a shared interest in local artworks at regional galleries. In the end, the location for their meeting changed and they met at a secluded lookout in Yellow Rock in the Blue Mountains.

She tells me that she made herself clear that she was not willing to have penetrative sex with him. However, towards the end the man moved around behind her and assaulted her in a way she had not consented to. In her emails to me she said that once the assault began she just wanted it to finish. But on that she is emphatic: It was an assault and it was against her explicit instructions. She did not consent. It was rape. This assault has had terrible consequences for the woman's mental health and wellbeing. When she first made this report to me she said she did not trust the processes available to her to make a formal report to police. However, in the time since and with the encouragement of the Sex Workers Outreach Project, I understand that she has made such a report and that inquiries are underway. She remains hurt and angry that this powerful man felt entitled to assault her. She remains fearful that this powerful man may seek reprisals against her for reporting this rape.

She is worried about the impact of a court case or investigation on her daughter. She is fearful, hurt and angry that this powerful man felt entitled to assault her and that he might get away with it because the justice system is so stacked against victims of assault and it is even more stacked against sex workers, who are in such vulnerable positions. This fear, hurt and anger is not something any woman should be made to feel, but it is all the worse that this man who raped her is a Government member of this Chamber. His power and his privileged position as a civic leader make that fear, anger and hurt all the worse. The abuse of power and privilege to harass, coerce and assault women in the home, the street and the workplace must stop. Perpetrators must be held accountable. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (17:27):** I make a contribution to the public interest debate and stand against the abhorrent behaviour that we have seen and heard about recently. Before entering Parliament I spent a lifetime working in boys' schools. I thank the member for Newtown for bringing this serious issue forward for debate. It is an important issue and one that members of all political persuasions must address. Over the past few weeks we have seen and heard the most horrific examples of harassment and sexual violence. It is horrendous and it is a disgusting set of actions. It is a call to action that we must heed.

Late last week in this place there was reference to an investigation into the reporting of harassment and assault cases. I agree that any such action and investigation should involve a range of people. I am pleased to hear that things have changed. We must make sure that the Parliament of New South Wales is a beacon for what safety should be. Everybody should feel safe coming to work and safe to report any issues. Assault is not limited to one part of society by one group of perpetrators in one place or one demographic of men. Sexism, misogyny, harassment, violence and assault have to stop. We have talked a lot about this over the past few weeks, but it is not new news. This is something that has been going on for a long time. The imperative right now and what is new is that there is a renewed vigour to make sure that we do something about it.

The solution is found in a collective response. It is based on experiences and understanding. Women who disclose experiences of sexual violence and harassment must know that we support them. That is a common theme of all the speakers. More than just moral support, it is an obligation of ours, particularly in this place, to ensure that there is a system that they can rely on, a system that physically supports them and understands how difficult it is for them to step forward and share this information. They must have confidence in a system that will not victim blame them, will not shame them and will not dismiss them. Women have to have confidence in a system that will protect them and help them with any requirement that they may need in moving forward and rebuilding their life. We need a whole-of-society approach.

The Parliament must be seen as a beacon and an example of what we expect of others. As such, it starts with us in this place, in this moment. This is not something that we can leave for future leaders to deal with. This is something that we are expected to deal with right now and we must deal with it properly. The answer is not found in one group or one person, but rather in all of us. There is an imperative to act. Let's bring together representatives of the Parliaments, of women's groups, men's groups, educators, the police, judicial officers, family and community services, mental and sexual health experts, as well as young people, to work out not only what the problem is, because we know what the problem is but also what the solution is. We can keep talking about the problem, but until we create the solution all we are doing is saying that we have dealt with it for a little bit and we will leave it until next time. We cannot afford to leave it until next time. We cannot afford for women to be feeling this way and to cover up a broken society with band-aids. That is not what we are here for. We are here to fix things and that is what people expect of us.

It will be a complex and difficult journey. We have to navigate social and judicial issues. But nothing is easy. We came here to do the hard work, so let's do the hard work. If there is a lasting change it is built on solid foundations. That is what we should see as the challenge ahead of us and we should rise to that challenge. While it is well intentioned that people talk about protecting women, it has to be more than that. We have to address the root cause. Rather than just focusing on the issue and saying, "Let's protect women", a key feature is to build the systems to ensure that men do not behave in such an abhorrent way, that men understand they are the perpetrators of this behaviour. If we can deal with that, then the protection of women becomes much easier. Women should never feel unsafe wherever they go, and no man should ever walk out the door not knowing what the rules and the expectations are of him.

It starts with respect. We teach it explicitly. We have to teach the fact that this is unacceptable behaviour, that this is something that is explicit and that this behaviour has a link to somebody's life, it has a link to expectations we have as a society, it has a link to judicial laws, but most importantly this has a consequence for people. This sort of behaviour breaks people. We teach it explicitly and do not use words that are airy-fairy, but say, "If you do this, this is what happens. You are not allowed to do this." It does not just start with schools but with all of us. Women must be given a voice not just to report this specific issue, but a voice that is heard and acted upon.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:32):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate and those members present in the Chamber. I acknowledge the members for Vaucluse and Ballina, the Attorney General and member for Cronulla, the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Lakemba. I also acknowledge the member for Balmain, Jamie Parker, who brought this Greens public interest debate here today and has given both me and Ms Tamara Smith the opportunity to speak. I acknowledge that work is being done in the New South Wales Parliament to address this issue and that this motion and the motion passed in the upper House indicate that hopefully—and maybe I am too optimistic about this—we can work collaboratively and constructively while still existing as political adversaries doing our job. I hope we can continue to do that, not just for the next two days but for the next two years. Just yesterday we are two years into this term and we have two years to go. Clearly there is work that we could do collectively in this place and in two years' time we could all go to an election feeling very proud that we were part of delivering.

I have a special message—and it is clear from the contribution made by the member for Blue Mountains—to all the perpetrators of sexual assault, sexual violence and sexual harassment in this place and in our society. It is that I have not been afraid to speak up on these issues in the past. I will not be afraid to speak up on these issues again, and I will use my privilege in this place to do that if necessary. It is clear that other members are willing to do that. We will continue to do that and call it out until you stop harassing, raping and assaulting women and people. It is as simple as that.

To the survivors, to the people who have spoken out and to the people who have not had the chance to speak out, I say that we see you, we hear you and we will act with you to achieve this change. That is our commitment. I say to everybody in this Chamber, while we might find that this is really difficult territory to navigate, that it feels hard, messy, complex, traumatic, difficult and confronting, none of those feelings comes even close to the horror of being sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or raped. So let us sit with that

awkwardness, let us navigate our way through it and let us deliver real and lasting change for survivors of sexual violence and sexual assault in this State.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (17:36):** Just 15 kilometres from this building, a hive of activity is happening. Preparations are underway for the long-awaited Sydney Royal Easter Show. Returning after a hiatus last year due to the pandemic, this year's show is highly anticipated by the many competitors who have been waiting for their chance to prove their skills and celebrate. From my electorate, two young women are in the running for The Land Sydney Showgirl Competition. This competition helps bring high-achieving young women together from across regional and rural New South Wales. It is an opportunity for them to network with one another and with industry leaders, to develop their public speaking skills and to promote their communities. I congratulate Beatrice Patterson, representing zone 6 and the Cowra Show, and Jessica Neale, representing zone 7 and the Cootamundra Show. It has been a long wait for these remarkable young women to get their chance to be part of this prestigious competition. I wish them both the very best and am confident that they will be fantastic ambassadors for their communities. I look forward to their fresh ideas for our fantastic country shows and their efforts in encouraging other young people to be part of our community show societies.

They are not the electorate's only representatives at this celebration of the State's rural and regional roots. The Bandy and Johnson families are making more than a thousand-kilometre round trip from Barellan to Sydney, to give show goers a glimpse of times past. The two families are bringing 11 draught horses and a wool wagon carrying 36 wool bales. A staple of the Barellan Good Old Days Festival for the past 12 years, this is the first time the Bandy and Johnson families will be showing their working Clydesdale's skills at the Sydney Royal. I am a huge fan of what they do in Barellan and how they generously give their time through the Tribute to the Teams Drive for Motor Neurone Disease. I urge everyone to go and take a look at these passionate people who are keeping a living memory of our agricultural past through their work and horsemanship. That is what the Sydney Royal Easter Show is all about—creating understanding between city and country, grower and consumer, the present and the past.

With the pandemic last year, many shows, including the Sydney Royal, were forced into a hiatus. But we are slowly starting to see them return, like last month in Gundagai where the 130th Gundagai Show was able to be celebrated. The show was bursting with local arts and crafts, talented equestrians and first-class livestock. It was a great success. While the shutdown of our shows last year was a tremendous loss for our communities, I congratulate the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government on stepping in to assist our showgrounds. The Government's showground stimulus not only filled the void left by an inability to hold events and fundraise for many showgrounds but also invested in large infrastructure upgrades, safety and improvement works.

In my electorate more than \$3.87 million has been awarded to local showgrounds in the past 12 months from this program to fund projects, from new toilets, kitchens, seating areas, maintenance and roads to new fencing, camping spaces and cooling. In Weethalle the showground's kitchen is being refurbished, together with the installation of outdoor seating and power to the recreation ground. In Barellan the showground will have new toilets and amenities, saving showground users the cost of bringing in portaloos and showers. The Morongla Showground will now have a permanent bore water supply, meaning events can be held year round. They are just a few of the many small communities who will be able to enjoy their showgrounds for generations to come.

For now, we look to the big one—bringing people from all communities and walks of life around the State to Sydney to come together and celebrate. To all those showing stock, preparing for equestrian events, sharpening their auctioneering skills or their axes for woodchopping, spruiking for sideshow amusements, impaling the ever-increasing range of foods on sticks, honing their public speaking skills or simply saving their pennies for a show bag, best of luck to you all. What a relief it is that the show can finally go on.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:41):** I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Cootamundra and also the huge support she has given to her community during this pandemic. I also acknowledge the \$3.87 million that the member said had been delivered to showgrounds across her electorate. I know that Gosford Showground also received money from the same showground stimulus package. While the showgrounds were closed to the public during those conditions—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Did they get \$3.87 million?

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** —it is important that this money was delivered to those regional showgrounds. Again, the \$3.87 million has gone to upgrading toilets—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** That's a rort.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I just mentioned that Gosford Showground has received funding for an upgrade.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Yes, but they didn't get \$3.87 million.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson):** The member for Auburn will come to order.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** Would the member for Auburn like to listen? Here is something new for you. You might just want to listen and learn something, for once. During this difficult time, it is great to see the amazing work that has been done in the electorate of the member for Cootamundra, with \$3.87 million in funding going towards important upgrades at those regional showgrounds.

### COVID-19 AND AUSTRALIAN CHINESE COMMUNITY

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:42):** COVID-19 has made life very hard for us all but more so for some communities. In my electorate of Auburn 18 per cent of the population trace their ancestry to China. This community was hit hard and early by COVID. Many local residents were already in self-isolation well before any restrictions were put in place within Australia. Being aware of the outbreak early made them additionally cautious to reduce risk in the community and by the Lunar New Year on 25 January 2020 they had already cancelled celebrations. Months before any consideration was given to lockdown and restrictions by the Federal Government and while the Prime Minister was talking about going to the footy, they were ensuring every precaution was taken.

When we were hit by storms early in 2020 and large swathes of Wentworth Point were without electricity for days, they still stayed in isolation. The quick reaction of those local residents of Chinese ancestry was significant and in the best interests of our nation. Since that time in early 2020, however, the care and consideration that they showed has not been reciprocated by their fellow Australians. I have become particularly concerned about ongoing reports of abuse, both physical and verbal, against local residents of the Chinese heritage. Many members of the community have raised with me their concerns at the abuse that they have received while out in public spaces, particularly on public transport. The abuse is centred on the early identification of COVID-19 in China and often results in a refusal to sit next to them, verbal abuse about the likelihood of COVID-19 and sometimes physical assault.

The most concerning report I have heard was that of a father out having dinner in Haymarket with his young children. He became the target of a stream of offensive abuse from a young woman alleging he was a carrier of the virus. The woman then picked up her skateboard and hit this poor man over the head in front of his children. Like many women of the Muslim faith, people are singled out for their appearance. I have raised my concern with the New South Wales police commissioner that there is an alarming increase in abusive behaviour towards people of Chinese ancestry. Many of the victims I have spoken to did not report the incident either to me or to the local police at the time of the offence. That is another concerning trend for many local residents. It has become clear from my discussions that their reluctance to approach either their local MP or the police comes from the negative reporting by the Australian media of the Chinese Government and of those who may have an association with it.

Local residents of Chinese heritage, particularly from some local community groups, have expressed concerns that a complaint by an MP on their behalf will become problematic as they may be criticised in the media for supporting residents of Chinese ancestry. The greatest risk in any society is that part of the community becomes alienated and vulnerable. A true liberal democracy is all-embracing and no section of that community should believe they do not have access to their elected representative or the fraternity of their community. It is incumbent on all governments—Federal, State and local—to do more to reduce risk in our community and ensure the safety of all during these extraordinary times. Just two years ago in Christchurch we saw how the ideology of hate and division can escalate in the most horrendous way. If we learnt any lesson, it is that we must do more to act on racism and hatred whenever it raises its head. Not to do so is a failure of the Parliament and of society.

### TRIBUTE TO KEVIN PARISH

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:46):** On Friday 5 March I had the privilege of joining family, friends and admirers from across our community to celebrate the life and mourn the passing of great civil servant Kevin Parish. Kevin worked for NGL and later for Telstra, rising to become a telecommunications technician supervisor in charge of a large swathe of technology to keep our community connected. Many memories were shared, including his obsession with trains, his love of his Kombi and his devotion to his family—especially his late wife, Mary. Kevin worked as a telecommunications technician from the late 1950s until he retired in 1992. He was very highly respected by his colleagues and oversaw significant changes in telecommunications during

his lifetime. Kevin's passion as a collector of historical memorabilia and items that represent the passage of change in telecommunications could be catalogued as part of a museum of change.

Kevin's passion for transport and the changes in the history of the trains on the east coast of Australia, and his associated collections, could also be compiled as a second museum. Kevin's commitment to social justice was another great mission that he pursued with the whole of his heart and soul. In particular, Kevin's membership of St Vincent de Paul was remarkable, starting in 1953 and totalling 57 years of dedicated service. St Vincent de Paul's motto is "good works" and no-one would doubt Kevin was a very decent man, always working for the betterment of his community. Kevin was loved, respected and held in high esteem by all members of St Vincent de Paul and the wider community for his generous support and visionary input. One very important role he held was that of a twinning officer for Gosford Conference, partnering with another parish in a developing nation and providing it with additional resources and support for programs to lift people out of need and poverty.

Kevin maintained regular communications with the parishes he supported and always ensured they had enough to fulfil their mission in lifting their communities. A St Vincent de Paul representative at the funeral called Kevin "a giant of a man with the gift of compassion" and I could not agree more. In his many years as chairman of the Central Coast Commuters Association, Kevin was a squeaky wheel, pestering many transport Ministers over successive Labor and Liberal governments. He was described as someone who was incredibly bipartisan, despite his membership of the Australian Labor Party, and many members admired the respectful and impeccable way he chaired the committee. I shared the news of his departure with the current Minister for Transport and Roads. Kevin continued to advocate for the best parking outcome for our community until the very last days of his life, always being mindful of the importance of proximity to the station and of the challenges faced by people with impaired mobility who choose and have the right to use public transport.

Kevin was also a dedicated servant of the Australian Labor Party, becoming a member in 1972. He rose to represent Labor as president of the Gosford branch and as a member of the Gosford State Electorate Council for a number of decades. A Labor predecessor in this House, former member for Gosford and member for Peats Marie Andrews, spoke beautifully of Kevin's commitment to our cause. I acknowledge that his service was also attended by my colleague and friend David Mehan, the member for The Entrance—who is in the Chamber this evening—and by a large number of Labor members wishing to see off a good friend and a mentor. For many, Kevin embodied the values and mission of the Labor Party to fight for good public services for all and to work diligently and humbly for our community. Kevin is survived by his six kids, 17 grandkids and the many people he was able to help across New South Wales and the Central Coast. He was an absolute giant of a man with a giant heart, a generosity of spirit and an absolute dedication to service. Vale, Kevin Parish.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

### **TAMWORTH EVENING COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (17:50):** I recognise and congratulate the women of the Tamworth Evening Country Women's Association [CWA] on the success of their Women's Week event, "Her Path—Women Paving the Way", in partnership with the UNE SMART Region Incubator [UNE SRI]. The Tamworth Evening CWA and UNE SRI hosted a variety of speakers from across the region to discuss the challenges women face in working in male-dominated fields. I met with Tamworth Evening CWA president Sue-Ellen Hogan and UNE's Alison Treloar prior to the event to discuss the importance of bringing the conversation to the bush.

The CWA represents the largest voice for regional women in New South Wales and the women of the Tamworth Evening branch of the CWA and the UNE SMART Region Incubator deserve significant community recognition for bringing to light an issue of great importance to the women of regional and rural New South Wales. I was thrilled to hear that the event sold out quickly and many in our region were getting the inspiration and support they need to chase their dreams. I thank Sue-Ellen Hogan, Alison Treloar, the women of the Tamworth Evening CWA and the women of UNE SMART Region Incubator for their contribution to the Tamworth community.

### **PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE FLOODING**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:51):** Like so many communities across the State, Port Stephens has been battered by storms and inundated by incessant rain—up to 700 millimetres in some areas in just five days. People have had water flooding their properties, roads have collapsed, some schools have closed and the airport closed until it thankfully reopened today. On behalf of our community, I express my immense gratitude to all the emergency services personnel for their extraordinary efforts during this difficult time. I especially thank our SES volunteers at the local crews at Port Stephens SES and Tomaree SES—who had all hands on deck—together with Stroud SES, which supported the communities of Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest.

I also thank RFS volunteers, personnel from Fire and Rescue NSW and police, together with workers from Port Stephens Council and MidCoast Council. During these wet days many people have had little sleep as they watched waters rise. But there are two particularly sleepless souls whom I wish to recognise: SES unit commanders David Douglass and Maureen Philpott. I thank everyone who helped keep our community safe.

### **MANLY SAILABILITY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:52):** This evening I acknowledge the twenty-fifth anniversary of Manly Sailability. Its motto is "Freedom on the water, regardless of ability". Its principal aim is to facilitate sailing for people with disabilities on what is acknowledged to be one of the most spectacular waterways in the world. They sail from Manly Yacht Club, East Esplanade, Manly. They use the expanses of Manly Cove and North Harbour, which are part of the magnificent Sydney Harbour. A huge thanks to the outstanding volunteers who over 25 years have brought joy, confidence, skills and dignity to so many via the Sailability program and have enjoyed many a day out on the water. I give special thanks to Eli Demeny, who has worked so hard for Manly Sailability over many years.

### **FLOODS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:53):** I thank Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Rural Fire Service for assisting during the floods by providing sandbags and attending to requests for assistance from the community. Wyong and Gosford units of the SES have received over 1,000 requests for assistance during the floods. Of those, 1,000 requests were for 40 flood rescues, 932 were for leaking roofs and sandbagging requests, and the remaining 28 requests were priority or immediate response requests such as voluntary evacuations. Two Central Coast sporting teams, Central Coast Bombers AFL club and Terrigal Rugby Union Club, also helped out Wyong SES with sandbag filling. After a hectic few days, the Wyong unit has really helped the community through planning and education. I thank the volunteers involved, who have given their time to support the community through this major flooding.

### **BLACKTOWN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:54):** Over the past week the whole community has been keenly aware of the risk posed by major flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, both from the river itself and from the many creeks which are tributaries. In the electorate of Riverstone the community has been supported and protected for decades by the Blacktown SES unit, a group of volunteers who give their time to prepare themselves for operations in emergency situations and who venture out at the most dangerous of times to look after others. Managing road closures, securing storm-damaged houses, filling sandbags, food resupply and the rescue of people and animals from dangerous situations are all among the tasks performed by these generous individuals. Like SES units across the State, the Blacktown unit volunteers are ready and willing to travel to other areas where help is needed. I acknowledge that over the past week, volunteers from other units across Sydney came out to the west, using Blacktown as a base for operations in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Thank you to all these volunteers who do so much for other people.

### **BLAXLAND HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:55):** Earlier this week I was invited to attend the opening of Blaxland High School's new, state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre. It was a joy to see this amazing new space unveiled. Blaxland High School has a proud history of its commitment to the arts and the provision of a dynamic learning environment, encouraging students to thrive in their creative expression. The centre is testament to the combined efforts of the local community and Blaxland High School's staff and students. I would like to make special mention of Peter Langfield, Head Teacher, Creative and Performing Arts; Robyn Totenhofer and the P&C; Emma Le Marquand, Principal of Blaxland High; as well as Kate Smith from the Blue Mountains Musical Society. Each has made a valuable contribution to bringing this space to fruition. The dance performance I saw was professional and captivating. Congratulations to such skilled dancers and the dance teacher. And finally thank you to the student sound and lighting crew whom I had the great pleasure of chatting to. You may work behind the scenes in humble roles but remember that it is because of you the show can—quite literally—go on.

### **SWANSEA WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:56):** Last week I congratulated Lyn Axford, who has been named Swansea Local Woman of the Year. Lyn has volunteered for more than three decades with several local organisations, including as the President of the Chain Valley Bay Progress Association. Lyn started the Chain Valley Bay Progress Association to help her community recover from the devastating impacts of major mine subsidence in the late 1980s. Since then she has played a leading role in securing a range of facilities, including a community hall, play equipment and basketball court, with an emphasis on ensuring access for people with a disability. Lyn is an asset to the community and a very deserving candidate for the award. I congratulate



Lyn as well as all the other local women of the year from across New South Wales for being recognised for their important contributions.

#### **HURSTVILLE CROQUET CLUB**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:57):** I acknowledge Gordon Geraghty and the team at the Hurstville Croquet Club who are celebrating their eighty-fifth anniversary this year. The organisation started in 1936 and since their humble beginnings they have gone on to become one of our strongest and most loved sporting organisations in the St George area. Thanks to a government grant of over \$10,500 the Hurstville Croquet Club was able to purchase a brand new lawnmower to provide a cutting edge for players. This new equipment has brought the playing surface up to elite competition standard, much to the delight of players and spectators alike. By having a higher quality surface, the performance of players is enhanced as it facilitates faster and smoother gameplay. This is so important in the game of croquet and the players are loving it. I thank Gordon Geraghty as well as the players and members of the Hurstville Croquet Club for continuing to keep our community active and connected over the past 85 years. Well done.

#### **AUBURN ELECTORATE EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:58):** I thank the members and volunteers of the Auburn SES and Granville Combined Division of St John Ambulance for their continuing work supporting people across our community and the State suffering as a result of the storms and flooding in New South Wales. As well as responding to many local issues across the weekend, including a mini tornado which ravaged Chester Hill and Chester Hill High School, members from the Auburn SES unit have supported other units in the Hawkesbury area assisting with evacuations and flood rescues. The Granville Combined Division of St John Ambulance has also sent two members, Taylor-Renee Coker and Yianni Mavroidis, to Kempsey to assist with local operations in that community for the next week as part of a team of eight. On behalf of the residents of the Auburn electorate I thank the Auburn SES and Granville Combined Division of St John Ambulance for their work supporting communities in need during the floods across New South Wales.

#### **COMO JANNALI JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:59):** I acknowledge the Como Jannali Junior Rugby League Football Club, which is an outstanding sporting community. Established in 1947, the Crocs pride themselves on their club values of community, family, mateship and loyalty. In the past year alone the club has seen an increase of 20 new female players aged 12-13 due to its fantastic initiatives. Last weekend the Crocs held their second Bush Camp at Yarramundi YMCA for its under 12-14 female players. Despite the challenging weather the girls participated in team-building, anti-bullying and resilience activities led by Paul Langmack and Sarah Togatuki of NSW Rugby League, and Huw Ellis of the National Rugby League. Of course none of this is possible without the outstanding individuals whose support helped provide this camp free of charge to over 60 young female players. I commend club president, Hayden Garn; parent helpers, Shane Hedley, Trent Youtlen, Linz and Josh Benton, Jo Davidson and Michelle Hanley; along with Matt Debreczini of Ray White Sutherland and wellbeing officer Kellie Stubbs of Mates 4 MENTAL Health. I commend the Como Jannali Junior Rugby League Football Club on its fantastic work in our local community.

#### **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:00):** The Australia Day Awards across the electorate this year went to a number of extremely deserving, dedicated individuals, but today I draw attention to David Pattinson, who was named Dubbo Senior Citizen of the Year. The citation for David's award reads, "It is not an exaggeration to say that David Pattinson is one of the most generous and giving people in the Dubbo community." It is a good call and I am delighted to be able to shine a little light on David today. David's altruistic approach was inherited from his father, and he spent much of his life in service to the Rural Fire Service and the Uniting Church in particular. He has also volunteered as a driving instructor with Uniting Burnside. He is a member of the Palmer Street Singers and an assistant, always, at the Dubbo Eisteddfod. David is an extremely worthy recipient of this award. David, thank you for all the service you provide right across the community. All of the Dubbo community is all the better for it.

#### **HOUSING**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:01):** I extend an enormous thank you to the collaborative work of the Elderslee Foundation and Central Coast Older Women's Collective on Homelessness for once again highlighting the growing need for safe and secure housing for older women in our community. Women aged 55 and over are the fastest-growing cohort facing homelessness and/or housing stress. These women are in their twilight years, having raised families, contributed to the economy in various roles and they now face the struggle to maintain a roof over their heads. Many women are fleeing homes and relationships due to domestic violence, and simply

have nowhere to seek shelter and security. The cost of housing on the Central Coast is skyrocketing. Rents are up by, on average, 40 per cent and availability is sitting at less than 1 per cent. Creating Collaborative Housing Solutions sessions hosted by the Elderslee Foundation provided a magnificent opportunity to hear from stakeholders seeking solutions outside the box to provide definitive opportunities for older women. The system is in crisis. I applaud all involved in creating and designing new frameworks to address this emergency. Let's do this together.

#### **PENRITH WOMEN'S WALK AND TALK**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (18:02):** Following on from the outstanding success of the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk, Angela Lambros and Jessica Flakelar were inspired to launch the Penrith Women's Walk and Talk. With support and guidance from the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk, the inaugural Penrith Women's Walk and Talk took place in late 2020 and is gaining plenty of momentum across the Penrith community. Angela and Jess are passionate about creating an environment where women can come together to support and inspire each other. One of the great things about this walk and talk is it gives the opportunity for women across the Penrith community to come and share their experiences, talk about their personal and mental health challenges and find ways through them with the support of other women. It takes on board the opportunity to walk around the Nepean River and also support a number of our local businesses. I thank both of these women for stepping up to create this amazing opportunity and break down the stigmas associated with mental health across the community.

#### **KILLARNEY VALE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:03):** I acknowledge the members of the Killarney Vale Australia Football Club, known as the Central Coast Bombers, for their assistance to the Central Coast community during the recent flooding event. Over four days, the Bombers turned 28 tonnes of sand in to filled sandbags. Those sandbags provided much needed protection against floodwater damage to many properties in our community. I take this opportunity to thank all of the players, coaches, board members and the club president for stepping up and assisting the community in this time of need. Their fantastic effort allowed members of the Wyong SES to undertake other tasks during the heavy rain and flooding. On behalf of The Entrance electorate, I thank you.

#### **MAVIS GLORIA BAGGOTT**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:04):** A very special celebration is in order for a remarkable Coffs Coast woman who is about to mark a mighty milestone. Mavis Gloria Baggott will rightly be the centre of attention when she turns 100 on Wednesday 7 April. I wish her a very happy celebration with her family and friends. Mavis has enjoyed a long association with Sawtell Golf Club, being a member there for over 40 years. On 14 November 2012, when Mavis was 92, she achieved her first ever hole in one on the seventh hole—a par three—using a three wood to drive the ball 117 metres. Astonishingly Mavis had only just returned to golf after recovering from a broken arm. It is believed Mavis may be the oldest female in Australia to have accomplished such an extraordinary feat. I wish Mavis many happy returns.

#### **PAMELA PRICE**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:05):** I congratulate local resident Pamela Price from the Doyalson squadron of the New South Wales Australian Air League for receiving the Central Coast Volunteer of the Year Award at the Australia Day Awards. Pam is the founding member of the Doyalson squadron, which was established 33 years ago to provide equal opportunities and experiences for females through the Australian Air League on the Central Coast. I have known Pam for a long time and I have seen her dedication through the Doyalson squadron. She has gone above and beyond by organising camps, excursions, flying experiences and educational activities, which have all been extremely valuable to cadets—not to mention her tenpin bowling skills. Last year was a challenging year but Pam ensured that the connection and education did not stop for everyone involved in the squadron. Meetings were still organised with sessions over Zoom so that the cadets could keep in contact with each other. Pam is an absolute legend.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY YARNACHISTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:06):** I acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the North Sydney Yarnachists for their yarn-storming project *The Refuse of Coral Reef*, currently displayed in Brett Whiteley Place, North Sydney. The North Sydney Yarnachists are local members of the Stanton Library's branch of the international charity Wrap With Love. The exhibit is the fifth major installation for the North Sydney local area and took three months to complete. The aim of the project is to increase awareness of the destruction of our Great Barrier Reef through rising sea temperatures, coral bleaching and contamination by plastics.

The project addresses two key aspects of the dying reef. Firstly, the shapes of the individual coral pieces are formed by inserting plastic products, to inform viewers about how microplastics are killing fish and coral through ingestion. Secondly, the project has been strategically placed where it will be affected by direct sunlight, wind drafts and car emissions. I thank all the ladies I met who did the installation: Dr Debra Phillips, Leona Greeves, Alpina Mehta, Mimi Suzuki, Linda Brooke, Suree Pritchard, Penny Lye, Jenny McDonald and the rest of the team. I enjoyed meeting with them and having them advocate alongside me to address single-use plastics.

### MARCH 4 JUSTICE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:07):** Thank you so much to all the women and men who joined the March 4 Justice on the Central Coast alongside our sisters across Australia. It was a challenging time for women and the energy that we shared at the gathering reflected the frustrations of women across Australia. We expressed profound concerns about the gaps in leadership for protecting women in Parliament and in the justice system. It was beautiful to hear so many stories—including that of a 76-year-old lady who was raped when she was 15, who was protesting for the first time to ensure that women's voices are heard—and feel the energy for change rising from those who have been working for so long in organisations supporting women across our community. The women who joined us believe that together we are working towards a greater equity and a fairer voice that will protect women against sexual violence, allow women to be heard and allow our concerns to be addressed into the future. Enough is enough.

### FLOODS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:08):** With the floods devastating New South Wales communities, the thoughts of the Albury community are with all of those impacted. I acknowledge all emergency service volunteers and workers and all agencies, including the NSW Police Force and Service NSW. In particular I acknowledge and thank members of the border community who are giving of their time to help those impacted by floods. I thank service volunteers. In particular I would like to give a shout-out to Brendan Farrell and the Burrumbuttock Hay Runners, who are taking much-needed stock feed up to Taree in relief. I thank them for their work and hope they travel safe. I wish them all the best.

### UNGARIE COMMUNITY NIGHT

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:09):** I recognise the community of Ungarie, along with Bland Shire Council, for their initiative in hosting a community night on 25 March. The guest speaker for the evening will be John Harper, the host from *Mate Helping Mate*, which is a podcast dealing with mental health and mateship in rural Australia where the host interviews farmers from around the country to discuss issues they are facing in remote and rural Australia. People in regional New South Wales have faced difficulties with droughts, bushfires, COVID-19, floods and now a mice plague that seems to be taking on epic proportions. The resilience of rural people amazes me and I am proud to represent them in the best way I can as their local member. Mental health is such an important issue and I commend Bland Shire Council and Ungarie locals for tackling the issue head on.

### STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:09):** I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of NSW SES volunteers across the Central Coast and the State. The recent flood event affecting the New South Wales east coast has seen floodwater impact many homes, businesses and community infrastructure. The NSW SES volunteers have been working tirelessly in our communities by providing assistance with storm preparation and responding to requests for help. Our local SES has received over 1,000 requests for assistance across the Central Coast since the beginning of the event. I acknowledge Wyong SES unit controller Matt Le Clercq, Gosford SES unit controller Rolf Garda and their respective teams for their hard work. The community is well served by their efforts. On behalf of The Entrance electorate, I thank them.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:10):** I am pleased to report that the number of people sleeping rough on the Central Coast has been reduced by 53 per cent in the last 12 months. There were a total of 58 people recorded as sleeping rough in February 2020, compared to just 27 people in February 2021. This year's street count result is a testament to the strong partnership between the New South Wales Government and local housing and homelessness organisations like Uniting, Pacific Link Housing and Coast Shelter. Tonight on the floor of Parliament I pay tribute to those non-government organisations, which do such a fantastic job in working together with the Government to get rough sleepers off the streets and into secure housing with wraparound support. In addition to supporting rough sleepers to gain secure housing, it is important to prevent people from becoming homeless by helping them maintain tenancies in the private rental market. I look forward to continuing to work

with Uniting, Pacific Link Housing and Coast Shelter to continue this important work for people sleeping rough on the Central Coast.

#### **KYLIE HILDER**

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:11):** I congratulate Kylie Hilder, who has been appointed the New South Wales Women's State of Origin coach in a groundbreaking move, just months after finishing her decorated career. She will have a more than able assistant in former NSW Blues captain and ex-Manly mentor Geoff Toovey. Kylie Hilder will become the first female Origin coach in the professional era after a glittering career that included an Origin win in 2019 and back-to-back premierships with Country Rugby League, Newcastle and Central Coast Roosters in the Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership. Congratulations to Kylie Hilder and congratulations to NSW Rugby League on such a worthwhile appointment.

#### **MARCH 4 JUSTICE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:12):** On Monday 15 March I joined many thousands of women and men to march through the streets of Sydney in the March 4 Justice. Too many women are not safe in their homes, workplaces, schools or even walking home at night, and the prevailing message from the march was that women have had enough. I acknowledge everybody who shared their stories on that day and bore witness to the incredible traumas that women have suffered across our society. I particularly thank the women and men who joined us from places across Sydney and New South Wales in solidarity. Within this place I thank the many colleagues who joined us, including the Attorney General and the Minister for Energy and Environment, who walked with me. I acknowledge the health Minister for ensuring that we could have a COVID-safe regulation change to ensure that the march could proceed. Women's voices are too often silenced. Too often women feel ashamed to come forward or feel that the weight of justice is not available to them. This is just the beginning of a journey that we are on and I say once again that I put my voice behind them in the March 4 Justice.

#### **KAYLENE CONWAY**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (18:13):** Congratulations to Kaylene Conway from Blue Haven for receiving the Business Connecting Communities Award at the Australia Day Awards. Kaylene's not-for-profit website CC365 promotes local events and businesses across the Central Coast, providing support and advice to business owners and event operators to ensure they maximise their potential now more than ever with the increase in online activities. In 2020 when events were postponed and cancelled due to the pandemic, Kaylene changed her focus to assisting families at home with fun and interactive online avenues. Kaylene also created a list to promote local businesses at no cost, to encourage residents to support local where possible.

#### **CONNECTED AU**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:14):** We often see innovation and invention emerge out of times of hardship, and this certainly rings true for Connected AU, which has been helping vulnerable people stay connected during times of isolation. The inspiration behind Connected AU came to founder Mea Campbell in the initial stages of COVID-19 as she reflected on the loneliness and isolation of lockdown, and the need to provide a platform to connect and engage with people. Since it was founded, Connected AU has gone from strength to strength, with its flagship program, The Letterbox Project, attracting national media attention. The Letterbox Project caters for people who do not have access to or capacity to use technology. The virtual hobby groups cater to those who are able to get online but want to find a safe and inclusive community. They have a particular focus on supporting senior Australians, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, and those who live alone. The future of Connected AU looks bright. Congratulations to Mea and the Connected AU team. It is great to see such a positive initiative going well.

#### **MERCY AND GRACE MINISTRIES**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:15):** Tonight in the New South Wales Parliament I sincerely thank Anne-Marie and Brett, and all the people from the Mercy and Grace Ministries who are working so hard in the background to support our community in times of a developing financial and housing crisis. At Christmas the team delivered five support packages to families across our community. They are now up to 125 packages and are spreading their wings of generosity gently across families who need support. Brett and Anne-Marie realise that times are incredibly tough for people in our community and know that for some people it is hard to reach out and ask for help. In addition to the food and goodies in hampers, I also acknowledge that their kindness and emotional support they are providing is also very important. I thank Anne-Marie and Brett for their incredible generosity, energy, initiative and the prayer of support that they are providing for so many individuals and families in need.

**SYLVIA AND AYSAN FETIN**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:16):** I acknowledge the wonderful Sylvia and Aysan Fetin, who recently celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 18 March 2021. Having grown up in England, Mr and Mrs Fetin were teenage sweethearts before migrating to Australia in 1971 with their three children. They have called the Sutherland Shire home ever since. With a desire to get back out in the community, Mr Fetin, like so many of us, struggled with COVID restrictions. That was until Mrs Fetin came across the Miranda Community Garden, operated by the Gympie Miranda Uniting Church. The Miranda Community Garden is currently home to over 30 members who come together to share in their common love of gardening whilst sharing tips and ideas as they grow fresh, sustainable produce. Over the past year, Mr and Mrs Fetin have volunteered one day a week and have grown close to the other gardeners with whom they have developed friendships and a mutual connection with nature. I extend my warmest congratulations to Mr and Mrs Fetin on their wedding anniversary. May their marriage continue to flourish like the garden they so lovingly tend.

**TRIBUTE TO JUDITH NANCE ROBERTSON**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:17):** I acknowledge the life of Judith Nance Robertson, who was born in 1939 and passed away on 29 January 2021. I met Judith and her husband, Robert, when they attended my electoral office before Christmas. They had been evicted from the rental property that they had called their home for the past 11 years. They were having tremendous difficulty finding a new rental property on the Central Coast, where housing stress is a fact of life for many people and affordable rental accommodation is not as common as it once was. I have no doubt that the tremendous stress of that period, the eviction and contesting that eviction before the tribunal contributed to Judith's passing. I record what her family said about her, "You were the best wife, mum, nan and grandma that we could ask for. To us you were our rock and world. You always took the time to listen, help us with any problems we had and your smile will never be forgotten." Vale, Judith Nance Robertson.

**AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE SOCIETY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:18):** I recently had the honour of attending the Australian Wildlife Society's annual president's luncheon with the Minister for Energy and Environment, Matt Kean, and my good friend the member for Rockdale, Steve Kamper. This event acknowledged the retirement of former president Suzanne Medway after 30 years within the organisation. This is an outstanding achievement. I am incredibly proud of everything that Suzanne has achieved over the past 30 years. I also extend my congratulations to associate professor Julie Old, who has been announced as the incoming president for 2021. Julie is a wildlife biologist who is passionate about preserving our native wildlife and conserving our natural environment. I have no doubt that Julie will do an incredible job. I have complete confidence that she will continue the presidential legacy that Suzanne has led over the past 12 years. I wish all members of the 2021 executive the very best for a fantastic year ahead. I look forward to continuing to work alongside the outstanding organisation of the Australian Wildlife Society.

**CATHARINE RETTER**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:19):** I sincerely congratulate Catharine Retter on her passion and commitment to delivering the magnificent *COAST* magazine every quarter, showcasing the absolute beauty and celebrating the achievements of the Central Coast. This super-stylish magazine is dotted in hard copy over locations across the Coast, New South Wales and beyond, and is now online around the whole world, enticing people to come to enjoy the magnificent beaches, waterways, bush, food, and gorgeous villages and towns of the Central Coast. Catharine's balanced selection of articles and magnificent photographs always highlight the beauty of where we live. We praise her writing and editorial skills, showcasing and celebrating our local secret hideaways, coastal villages, coastie personalities, real estate highlights, quirky news and joy in our community. *COAST* magazine's stylish matte finish and careful selection of magnificent photographs make us all proud to be coasties. We love the online version, and are thrilled and proud every time a new print version showcases our gorgeous region. I offer my thanks and congratulations to Catharine.

**JOHN AND CAROL FORD**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:20):** Today I make special mention of Mr John and Mrs Carol Ford who are retiring from the Local Health Advisory Committee [LHAC] for Harden-Murrumburrah. John and Carol were active members from 2012 to 2017, with John holding the position of chair from 2019. John and Carol are strong advocates for people in regional New South Wales having the same facilities and opportunities of those in metropolitan areas. Being part of the LHAC allowed John and Carol to listen to the needs of their community and communicate these needs back to the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. John and Carol attended many forums where committee members from all over the Murrumbidgee Local Health District gathered to share ideas

and knowledge on their experiences in regional communities. Thank you to John and Carol for their contribution to the Local Heath Advisory Committee. Harden-Murrumburrah were lucky to have them as representatives for the community.

#### **CLAIRE BRAUND**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:21):** I had the pleasure earlier this month to recognise a wonder woman for the Terrigal electorate. Claire Braund has been recognised as the 2021 local Woman of the Year at the NSW Women of the Year Awards. Claire is a businesswoman, social entrepreneur and community leader who passionately advocates for more women in leadership positions. Claire co-founded Women on Boards in Australia in 2006, which is an organisation that supports women being appointed to a range of leadership positions. In addition, many hours of Claire's time are dedicated to volunteer causes. She is the Vice-President of the Central Coast Conservatorium of Music. Claire is also a highly respected speaker on gender balance and related business issues. Claire is a formidable force to be reckoned with and I cannot think of anyone more deserving to be the Terrigal electorate Woman of the Year for 2021. Congratulations to Claire.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:22):** I also congratulate Claire Braund, who is known to me. She has been working for more than a decade to build up Women on Boards, which has seen benefits extend beyond the Central Coast. I salute her efforts. She is indeed a worthy recipient of the Central Coast Woman of the Year Award.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Felicity Wilson):** The House joins in congratulating Claire Braund on her award and recognising her contribution, particularly through Women on Boards.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

#### **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP FASHION SHOW AND ACHIEVEMENTS AWARDS DINNER**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**This year, on 10 March, the Sydney Community Connect Incorporated, in collaboration with Dusty Pink and La Royale held their inaugural International Women's Day Women in Leadership Fashion Show and Achievements Awards Dinner to celebrate the plight and contributions of Australian women. The night included a cultural fashion parade which showcased garments from local businesses including Belladonna's Boutique in Yagoona. I wish to acknowledge the recipients of Sydney Community Connect Incorporated's Achievement Awards, Diana Assoum Badaui, Nadia Faour, Rim Daghmash, Anhar Kareem, Eman Kalaoun, Doumoua Howcher Diab, Sylva Mezher, Dina Kheir and Kishama Meridian, who were recognised for their immense contributions to our local community over the past year. I congratulate the Sydney Community Connect Incorporated Director Mrs Joumana Menzajli El Jamal and Public Relations Officer and Dusty Pink Ms Souhair Afiouny, as well as the rest of the Sydney Community Connect Incorporated Working Women Committee on a successful event. I hope all the women in my electorate of Bankstown had a happy International Women's Day!

#### **CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—**I am delighted to congratulate the Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS) on their successful 40th Anniversary Celebration Ceremony on 7 March 2021, where the society's many achievements were acknowledged and celebrated. CASS was founded in 1981 and has grown impressively since. Today, the organisation provides an extensive range of services to those in the community. With over 400 staff members and 200 volunteers in Sydney and Wollongong, CASS have assisted over 3,500 families to benefit from the aged care, disability, child care, and cultural services provided by the organisation. In the Bankstown Electorate, CASS play a pivotal role in supporting members of our community to gain access to these crucial services, and organising events that highlight and celebrate the Chinese culture. I would like to congratulate CASS Chairperson Dr Bo Zhou, Foundation Chairperson Mr Henry Nan Hung Pam OAM, Emeritus Chairperson Dr Leng Tan, Deputy Chairperson and Secretary Mr Anthony Pang, Executive Support Officer, Mr Jimmy Song and the rest of the CASS Executive on a successful event. I am proud to have supported CASS in their endeavours, and wish them another successful and prosperous year in 2021.

#### **MEALS ON WHEELS SWANSEA**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—**I congratulate Meals on Wheels Swansea for its nomination as a finalists for the Lake Mac Community Group of the Year at the 2021 Lake Mac Awards. The nomination is well deserved recognition for all the fantastic work the volunteers of Meals on Wheels Swansea do for the community. The group is volunteer run and both prepares and delivers meals to local residents. Volunteers also do welfare checks on clients, which has been extremely important over the past 12 months. I have had the chance to join the volunteers in delivering meals to the community and seen how appreciated they are by those community members they assist. While Meals on Wheels Swansea did not take out the Lake Mac Community Group of the Year award,

the nomination demonstrates how important they are to our community. I would like to thank all of the volunteers for their dedication and hard work.

#### **LAKE MAC AWARDS 2021**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—I congratulate all the winners of the 2021 Lake Mac Awards which recognise community members and organisations for their tireless work and dedication to the Lake Macquarie community. This year disability services advocate Jonathon Power was named the 2021 Lake Mac Ambassador for his work with people with a disability and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. 11-year-old Jasmine Seidel was named Lake Mac Young Citizen of 2021 for her working in raising funds for the John Hunter Children's Hospital oncology ward, HeartKids and Multiple Sclerosis Limited. The Lake Mac Volunteer of the Year award went to Christine Speer for her 40 years of service to the NSW SES. Congratulations to Mr Power, Ms Seidel and Ms Speer along with all the other winners of the 2021 Lake Mac Awards. I would like to acknowledge all the winners and nominees for their fantastic work within our community.

#### **CAREVAN WAGGA**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—In just 12 months, Wagga Wagga's Carevan service has cooked more than 14,000 meals for vulnerable people. As a volunteer myself, I was privileged to open Carevan's new warehouse in Wagga Wagga, where volunteers will have access to several pantries, a freezer room, meeting rooms, and a large kitchen. Carevan's dedicated team of volunteers is led by Lynne Graham, who three years ago established a community kitchen out of the Wagga Wagga Baptist Church. Ms Graham realised many people in outlying suburbs could not use this community kitchen. From this grew Carevan Wagga, which provides meals to people in Wagga Wagga's suburbs close to where they live. An army of volunteers has come on board and helped keep the service running. With Covid-19 the outreach service could not happen; so meals have been prepared and distributed by local charities. Many local businesses and individuals have helped with donations of food, equipment as well as time and services in the building of the warehouse. Carevan founder John Brabant told those at the opening it made him proud to see Carevan's legacy grow from its humble origins. I share Mr Brabant's pride in the work of Carevan Wagga.

#### **DORRICE AND DARRYL LAMOTTE**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Dorrice and Darryl Lamotte opened their first eatery, the Huat Tatt Cafe, in a Wagga Wagga bowling alley in 1975. This was just the start of a 46-year career that saw the popular Wagga Wagga couple bring their expertise to a variety of cafes, restaurants and catering gigs around the city. The husband-and-wife team combined Darryl's front-of-house expertise with Dorrice's culinary skills to win over generations of restaurant-goers. Thousands of diners have been able to enjoy not only the wonderful food, but a great atmosphere, at one of the Lamottes' establishments. The couple admit it was hard work, but say they have treasured their time in the restaurant industry. Most recently, the Wagga Wagga Country Club has been host to Darryl and Dorrie's culinary skills, but later this year they will be embarking on new adventures as grey nomads. But Wagga Wagga residents can be assured that the Lamottes' culinary legacy will be continued by their daughters, who have been learning the intricacies of hospitality since they were children. I congratulate Darryl and Dorrice on their career and wish them all the best as they begin the next exciting phase of their lives.

#### **HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY SISTER GERMAINE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I would like to send out my best wishes to Sister Germaine Innes, who celebrated her 100th birthday last month. She was born to parents Brice and Florence in February 1921 in the suburb of Telarah, and schooled at St John's and St Mary's in Maitland. Attracted to the older Nuns' devotion to prayer, Sister Germaine took her vows in 1943 and has dedicated almost 80 years of her life to faithful service as a Dominican Nun. The Dominican order, which has more than 800 years of history, has taken Sister Germaine to covenants across Australia, and to the Dominican House of Studies in Rome, where she performed domestic duties and ran kitchens. The milestone birthday included congratulatory messages from the Queen and from the Prime Minister. Now residing at the St Joseph's retirement community in Sandgate, the centenarian has always held Maitland close to her heart. I would like to thank Sister Germaine for her many years of service, and wish her good health, happiness, and peace of mind in the future.

#### **MULTIPLEX FUNDING CARRIE'S PLACE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—In the last year in Maitland, there were 432 reported incidents of domestic violence in Maitland. In addition to this, reported sexual assaults were up over 13% in the last five years, with more than a hundred women reporting an assault in the 2020 year. Indecent assaults and other sexual offences increased to 128 in that year. Domestic, Family and Sexual violence is an increasing problem in our community, and whilst it is good that we are seeing more reporting, we need the resources to ensure that victims and survivors are kept safe and able to rebuild their lives. Multiplex, the construction company building the new Maitland

Hospital have chosen to fill the gap in Government funding by choosing Carrie's Place Domestic Violence and Homelessness Services as their local charity of choice. Carrie's place has been a vital community asset in Maitland since 1979, providing homelessness services, domestic violence support. Court advocacy, legal clinics and vital resources to those in need. I thank all at Carrie's place and Multiplex for their hard work and dedication to helping the most vulnerable in our community get back on their feet.

#### **JOSH ARENS WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—After losing his brother Sam to cancer in 2019, the 11 year old Josh Arens decided to cut his very long blond hair to raise much-needed funds for the World's Greatest Shave. Josh is an impressive young man and is determined to make a difference in the world. Having just turned 12, Josh has begun playing touch football in his family's team in the Monday night mixed competition in the Wallsend Touch Association. To raise funds for the cause, Josh set up a lolly guessing stand at Wallsend Touch Association Lewis Street Clubhouse every week with the full support of admin officer Kellie Johnston. Added to this Josh has incredible support from his school, the local community and via his own Facebook page. On March 12, Josh said goodbye to his long golden locks in front of a crowd of family, friends, players and community members at Upper Reserve as his head was shaved. Josh managed to raise a grand total of \$38,822.93. Congratulations Josh on raising such an incredible amount of money. Well done to his mum Christine and dad Barry for allowing Josh to be such an inspiration to others around him.

#### **RON "JACKO" JACKSON**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Only 0.01% of the Australian population will live to see the age of 100. Life expectancy for Australians over the last century has grown from 60 to now almost 83. One local has recently exceeded that expectation and has become the latest member of the 100 club. Ron Jackson, Jacko to his friends, celebrated the milestone with a game of lawn bowls at his club, the Hamilton North Bowling Club. Ron's secret to longevity is exercise. He still exercises every day and is a lover of baseball, cricket, tennis, golf and of course lawn bowls. Ron was in the Australian military from August 1941 to March 1946, serving in World War II in the Middle East and Papua New Guinea. He left school at age 14 and began work on the land in Griffith. He went on to work in Narromine from 1953 and stayed there until he retired in 1981. When asked about what it felt like to reach 100, Ron said it didn't feel any different to when he turned 80. Congratulations on reaching 100 Ron. May your great sense of humour continue and may all your bowls be Jack High.

#### **ATHLETES FOOT PENRITH**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)**—I thank and acknowledge The Athletes Foot Penrith and, in particular store owners Mark Garroway and Samantha Scales on donating over 380 pairs of shoes to WestCare Penrith. This footwear will now be distributed across WestCares 'Kids Blitz Penrith' project, the Nepean Domestic Violence Network, School wellbeing workers and hospital social workers. It is fantastic to note that businesses like The Athletes Foot recognise the important work being undertaken by WestCare and take up the opportunity to donate when possible. Thank you again The Athletes Foot Penrith, your generosity is inspiring.

#### **CENTENARY OF DEATH OF PERCY BROOKFIELD**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise that 22 March 2021 was the centenary of the murder of Percival Stanley Brookfield. He was also known as Jack or Brookie. He was a member of this House as a member for Sturt commencing in 1917. He was a Member of this Chamber at the time of his death. He was elected as a Member of the ALP until July 1919 and was subsequently a member of the Industrial Socialist Labor Party and then the Socialist Labor Party. His centre of support was Broken Hill. He died in South Australia on 22 March 1921. This followed his attempt to disarm a man called Koorman Tomagoft who had fired many bullets at a railway stop at Riverton. The best evidence suggests Tomagoft was suffering from an acute mental illness, although there are hints of a political motive, although the best evidence suggests not. One book about Brookfield is entitled 'Labor's Titan'. Another is called 'The Best Hated Man in Australia'. His funeral featured a large crowd, with many red flags and many renditions of The Workers Flag. He was a militant trade unionist and militant socialist. He should be remembered.

#### **SUE WHITFORD**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—I was pleased to attend the NSW Woman of the Year breakfast earlier this month, where Ulladulla's Sue Whitford was presented with the South Coast Women of the Year Award. Sue has been involved in many sports in the Milton-Ulladulla community, including gymnastics and surf lifesaving, and I was proud to congratulate her at the event with her husband Kevin. It is about time Sue was recognised and thanked for all her decades of selfless volunteer work with various sports



but particularly Surf Life Saving, and I was happy to nominate her along with Steve Jones. Thank you Sue, for everything you do to support our local community, and congratulations again on this fantastic award.

#### **SHOW TEAM SUCCESS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I offer a special congratulations to the Show team students of St Gregory's College, who competed in the 2021 Rydal Show Corriedale Schools Judging Day. The event had over 80 students from 6 different schools, and it was a very successful day for the college coming home with Champion Ewe, Reserve Champion Ewe, Supreme Corriedale and Best Overall Exhibitor. I would also like to acknowledge the fantastic results in the junior handlers competition receiving 1st was Thomas Anderson, 2nd Ryan Sagers and 3rd was Elliot Power. I offer my congratulations again to these young men and I wish you all the best success at you next shows and future endeavours.

#### **CAMDEN BAKERS DELIGHT**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I recognise Camden Bakers Delight for supplying morning tea to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students of Camden High School in their Yarning Circle on Friday 19th February. Early that morning the students listened to the Dharawal Dreaming Storey Wiritjiribin the first Lyrebird. It is a great way for the young generations to understand why the dreamtime stories are told. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander describe their beliefs are answered through Dreamtime stories. I thank and appreciate Camden Bakers Delight for supporting the Traditional culture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of Camden High School.

#### **LACHLAN EDWARDS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—The periods of isolation and lockdown forced on us by COVID-19 have only served to emphasise the important role that the arts, particularly music, play in our lives. I would like to acknowledge Charlestown Electorate resident and recording artist Lachlan Edwards, who is aiming to join the proud Hunter musical tradition which includes such legends as Silverchair and The Screaming Jets. Lachlan is an indie-folk singer-songwriter, and is one of our region's best up-and-coming talents. His song 'Little Things' received radio play in 2018 and appeared on Triple J's 'Unearthed' charts. Triple J presenter Nkechi Aniele said that Lachlan's voice "makes you forget to breathe when you listen". Last November, he performed at Kahibah Sports Club as part of the Great Southern Nights initiative to reinvigorate live music in NSW, and has been playing shows continuously this year. I hope that he, and other performers in the Hunter region, have more opportunity to play live shows this year. I wish Lachlan all the best, and I can't wait to see what comes next from this talented artist.

#### **CAROLYN HORE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Carolyn Hore will be celebrating 59 years working at the Newcastle Permanent this year, and the fixture of the Perm's Kotara Branch is affectionately known by her coworkers and customers as "Nanna Carolyn". Starting work at the Perm in December 1962, Carolyn has witnessed extraordinary changes to the way we do our banking—decimal currency, plastic notes, gold coins, plastic cards, computers, the ATM, the first credit cards, account numbers, the internet, BPAY, phone banking, BSBs, electronic transactions and EFTPOS. Carolyn told the Newcastle Weekly, "When I first started, there were no computers, decimal currency was newly-introduced and ATMs hadn't been invented yet. We used to have to hand count money and hand write about 200 cheques a day." She credits her longevity in the role to willingness to adapt and embrace changes, to continually learn and to teach customers. The last year has seen Carolyn and her Perm colleagues help customers adapt to the realities of COVID-19. She told the Weekly, "When COVID-19 hit, we were so busy as we worked to help set up customers to use digital banking and cards for their banking and online purchasing." Congratulations to Carolyn on her long and successful career.

#### **COOTAMUNDRA GARAGE SALE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—With the impending closure of the Target store in Cootamundra, enthusiastic members of the community have formed a steering group to raise funds for the development of a Co-op. Recently the group organised a Coota Co-op Garage Sale and were overwhelmed with the community support. The \$7,500 which was raised will reimburse the group's members for start-up costs with the remainder going towards producing a prospectus and developing a business plan. After completing registration of the Co-op, a board of directors will be appointed and members and investors will be able to sign up. I acknowledge the steering group which has recognised the need to offer Cootamundra an inexpensive shopping experience after losing their Target store and kicked off this Co-op initiative.

### RAAF CENTENARY SHOWCASE

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Temora Aviation Museum and airport recently hosted the RAAF Centenary Showcase with more than 6,000 people attending over the weekend. The weather was perfect for a wonderful event which saw about 50 aircraft representing the RAAF's 100 year history flying over the skies above Temora. After months of practice and coordination, spectators were delighted to watch Spitfires, a Hudson Bomber, a Catalina, the new F-35 stealth fighter bomber, the Roulettes and many more aircraft in action. Thank you to Temora Aviation Museum CEO, Mr Murray Kear, your passionate team and volunteers for organising such a successful event which not only showcased our RAAF but also the heritage town of Temora.

### EQUIPPED FISHING BAIT & TACKLE, CANLEY VALE

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend the efforts of Mr Tan Le, owner of Equipped Fishing Bait & Tackle in Canley Vale who was able to sustain and improve his business throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Tan established his business in Canley Vale twenty five years ago and the business continues to thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic saw many people take up fishing for sport and exercise, and Equipped Fishing Bait & Tackle catered to their every request. The store stocks an extensive range of fishing tackle, rods, reels, lures as well as fresh bait, with customers fortunate enough to have access to quality brands such as Shimano. Tan has always had a passion for fishing and it was his love of the sport which led him to set up his business. I commend Tan on his efforts in building his business and wish him every success in the future.

### MONACO AQUARIUMS, CANLEY VALE

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Mr Song Houa (Joe) Ea of Monaco Aquariums. Joe and his four brothers established Monaco Aquariums twenty two years ago and have been catering to the needs of local residents ever since, providing them with everything for aquariums from plants, turtles and a beautiful array of fish. As well as this store in Canley Vale, Joe and his brothers also have another store in Hurlstone Park and a warehouse in Yennora which supplies stock to Wollongong, Newcastle and Sydney. The story of Joe and his family is one of survival. Refugees from Cambodia, Joe and his family fled poverty and began their arduous journey to Australia from Cambodia to Vietnam, then Thailand, only to be sent back to Cambodia, setting off for Thailand again and finally Australia. I applaud Joe and his family on their efforts in building up Monaco Aquariums and sustaining the business through the COVID-19 pandemic. Theirs is a true migrant success story which has spanned twenty two years.

### NAGLE COLLEGE, BLACKTOWN

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday the 8th of March 2021, I had the privilege of meeting students and staff at Nagle College, Blacktown. It is a fantastic school, ably lead by Principal, Ms Delma Horan. The school strives to provide an opportunity for young women to celebrate and grow their Catholic faith while making them strong, independent individuals that benefit our community. The Religious Education curriculum allows students to gain a deeper understanding of our Catholic values and traditions, recognising God in their lives and the lives of others. The school has a strong First Nations program and is striving to increase the number of local Indigenous students by working with elders within our community. It was great to meet Ms Horan and the Year 12 Leadership team who shared with me their vision for the College and showed me the beautiful school grounds. I was incredibly impressed with the pride the students had for their school. Nagle College is a vibrant place, with a high level of energy amongst the student cohort. I congratulate Delma Horan and her staff at Nagle College, for the wonderful work in providing excellent educational opportunities for our children.

### PEMULWUY COMMUNITY GROUP

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I would like to publically acknowledge and thank the Pemulwuy Community Group (PMG) for their efforts to engage and excite the children of our Electorate in Prospect, with their 2021 Easter celebrations, which will be held at Dirrabari Reserve. With severely subdued Easter celebrations in 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PMG have rebounded with energy by creating a Kids Easter Egg Hunt and Easter Hat Parade, to be celebrated on Sunday 28 March. Toddlers, all the way to kids the age of 12, will be able to engage in some traditional Easter fun – bringing our families together. Local events like this are vital to continuing to grow the wonderfully diverse community we have in our Electorate of Prospect and creates memories for the whole family. Thank you to Pemulwuy Community Group President, Max Alves and the rest of the team for preserving with this fantastic community event, which will bring smiles as well as chocolate, to many young faces after a challenging 12 months.

### KELLYVILLE PRESCHOOL

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the Kellyville Preschool Early Learning Centre, one of many local preschools within my electorate. Local preschools allow a

wonderful opportunity to let our young students prepare themselves for school, and start their education with the head start of being able to know how to learn, and how to behave in the classroom. They also allow new parents to find a social group of fellow parents at a similar point in their child rearing journey. Parents put a lot of trust in these preschools to keep their kids safe when they are at the premises. As such it was recently my pleasure to announce \$15,566 worth of funding for security upgrades for Kellyville Preschool, including perimeter fencing, entry and exit gates, safety bollards, security cameras and new signage. 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 preschool for their work in securing this funding, including Rhonda Holland, Adriana Cester, Robyn Ryan, Rebecca O'Neill, Tracey Griggs, Daniela Cimino, Hazel Mason, Maria Leonard, Ina Wylie, Cheryl Capizzi and Theresa Dodd.

#### **NORTH KELLYVILLE P&C**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the North Kellyville Public School P&C association within my electorate of Castle Hill. P&C associations do great work within the local school community, allowing students the opportunity to utilise the very best in sports facilities, halls and technological equipment, often as the result of annual fundraising drives. They also operate on the smaller scale, operating canteens and uniform shops as well as running fetes, stalls and bake sales. In recent years the North Kellyville P&C have delivered new playground equipment, trophies, trestle tables, shade sails and playground markings and artworks. It was recently my pleasure to announce \$25,000 worth of funding for school hall upgrades including purchasing stage curtains, lighting and audio equipment in order to turn the school hall into a great performance space. 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 P&C for their work in securing this funding, including Gloria Hill, Nayana Prasad, Tracy Rundell, Kristy Woodfield and Marichelle Usi.

#### **SES VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I commend the SES volunteers who during this one in one hundred year flooding event have been the back bone of the Myall Lakes. Taree City SES unit alone received more than 450 calls for assistance in a 24 hour period. As people lost their homes and businesses and towns became isolated it was our SES members that were there to bring people to safety. I also want to thank the Lower North Coast Surf Life Savers and Fire and Rescue units, RFS brigades and other community members who stepped up to assist the SES as they were inundated with calls for help. All of these volunteers worked tirelessly to keep our community safe during this crisis and I cannot thank them enough for being the lifeline many needed as our towns were ravaged by flood water. The recovery from this disaster will be a long and difficult road but the amazing community spirit I've already witnessed during this time gives me faith that our community will rise to the challenge and emerge from this crisis stronger.

#### **QUOTA CLUB**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise the Forster Tuncurry Quota club who raised more than \$1000 for the Art and Soul Therapy Group at their annual International Women's day brunch. Members of Quota worked tirelessly to arrange the charitable event and should be proud of their efforts which are now helping support another great community program. The Wingham based group 'Art and Soul' offers art therapy to police officers, military personnel and other front line workers who suffer from PTSD or other work related stress. The program was started in 2018 and is run voluntarily by local artist Ron Hindmarsh and medically retired NSW Police officer Jillian Oliver.

#### **MAXINE HAYDEN RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—I wish to recognise the Deputy Captain of Bundeena Rural Fire Brigade Maxine Hayden as she received a NSW Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation for volunteering in the 2019-2020 bushfires. I was honoured to attend the ceremony when she received this prestigious award. Maxine a long-time Bundeena resident has volunteered at the Bundeena Rural Fire Brigade for 12 years. Maxine's idea to join the brigade was first sparked following the devastating bushfires in the Royal National Park in 1994 which destroyed 98 percent of virgin bushland. After being nominated by the community she was also recently named a 'Local Champion', recognising her many years volunteering at the Bundeena Rural Fire Brigade and the important role she plays as Deputy Captain of the Brigade. I thank Maxine for the active role she plays in the community, she is an extremely selfless individual and I commend her on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **COOKS RIVER WURRIDJAL FESTIVAL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Over the month of March, the Cooks River Alliance has been bringing together inner westies and local environmental groups to help clean up the Cooks River and our local parks across the inner west. The festival marks the start of the season when thousands of mullet known as 'wurrigal' in the

local indigenous language would enter the Cooks River. The Wurriddjal Festival hosts over 40 events over March with support from Cooks River Alliance, Bayside Council, Canterbury Bankstown Council, Inner West Council, and Strathfield Council. As part of the month-long festival, a series of community events will be hosted to help promote caring for country and the importance of protecting and regenerating the health of the Cooks River. Bushcare and river clean-up events are being hosted by Inner West Environment Group and the Mudcrabs. As part of the festival, the stories of the First Nations Australians are being told at Wurriddjal Djalang poetry in the park and at the Aboriginal Cultural Mullet Tour was held at Cooks River, Kyeemagh. Thank you to Cooks River Alliance, volunteers, and local councils for your tireless efforts to protect and preserve our local environment for the next generation.

#### **JAMES (JIM) LEGGATT**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Jim Leggatt was a much-loved member of the Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association, and a much-feared competitor on the court. Jim made his first debut at the Sydney Badge Competition at the age of 18 in 1958, representing Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association. He went on to play for the next 62 years, never missing competition in all that time. Throughout his long tennis career, Jim played for both Marrickville District Lawn and Hardcourt tennis clubs, Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association, and The Hills Tennis Association, winning countless titles, badges and cups. Age never stopped Jim from playing the sport he loved. As a member of the NSW Senior Team, he won the Australian Senior Championships in Canberra and competed at numerous state and country championships over the last 20 years. For Jim, The Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association was a second home. He served as the Director of the Board for the past 12 years, alongside his wife, Noelene, as Treasurer. Jim will be sorely missed and I send my deepest condolences to his beloved family and to all the members of the inner west tennis community. Vale Jim.

#### **BIKE RIDE FOR BRAIN CANCER**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Despite the difficult weather over the weekend the participants of the Bike Ride for Brain Cancer were still able to safely complete part of their ride from Sydney to the Hunter Valley. The event was founded in 2018 in memory of former Barker student Lucie Leonard, who lost a seven year battle with brain cancer. Lucie's mother Robyn became a passionate advocate for brain cancer research and was instrumental in the establishment of Brain Cancer BioBanking Australia. There are many involved but I would like to mention Ross Bowles, Di Bowles, Barker Principal Philip Health and members of the Barker riding team, Evan Snow, Scott Hosford, Phil Barden, Matt Hill and Timothy Milkins who continue to support this event. The ride commences in Hornsby finishing 2 days later in the Hunter Valley. The 2021 teams are extremely close to reaching their goal of \$300,000 which is amazing. All the funds raised will go towards developing a virtual care coordination platform project, which aims to connect every brain cancer patient with the support they need. Congratulations to all involved and for their efforts to help this important cause.

#### **SYDNEY DOGS AND CATS HOME**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, last year I had the opportunity to visit the Sydney Dogs and Cats home to thank Melissa Penn and Deborah Monk with awards as part of the 2020 St George Community Awards. These annual awards honour some of the many hardworking individuals from across the state who go above and beyond every day to make our community even better. Melissa is Board Vice President and she has been working hard to get their new facility at Kurnell up and running. She has also been praised by the organisation for her personal and professional assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic to support staff, the animals and their families. Deborah is a critical part of the team and she has been caring for pets most of her life both as a groomer and as a care assistant. She is a fantastic volunteer and has an inherent love for animals that can never be taken away. I wish Melissa, Deborah and the entire team all the best in their future endeavours and for the great year ahead.

#### **AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I acknowledge the Autism Community Network who provide care and assistance to more than 1700 families across Sydney and regional NSW. I have always been a huge supporter of the organisation and in recent years I have been able to honour their hard work through the St George Community Awards. The organisation provides support groups, social programs and online support to members and their families to connect people with autism and ensure that they have the best access to education and essential services. In particular, I would like to commend President Terry Lynch, General Manager Steve Drakoulis, Vice President Bianca Blackett, Treasurer Rodney Forrester and Secretary Dylan Reynolds for all of their hard work over a number of years. I truly believe that their work is so important and I hope that their organisation continues to deliver for our community well into the future. Their army of volunteers are always willing and ready to help and that is something I have always admired. I wish you all the best for the year ahead.

### **SOUTH HEAD SIGNAL STATION UPGRADE**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)**—In the Vaucluse Electorate we have some of Australia's most significant historical sites including the State Heritage Listed South Head Signal Station in Vaucluse. On Thursday 4 March 2021, I welcomed Minister Rob Stokes to the historic Signal Station which will receive a \$1 million facelift as part of the NSW Government's Crown Land stimulus program. We toured the station and could see way out to the Pacific Ocean from the watchtower which will be restored as part of the program along with the two cottages that sit beneath the tower. It's fitting that this important part of our local and nation's history will be preserved into the future. The Signal Station was built in the 1840s to flag to ships, the location of the new settlement from Botany Bay. It was also an important communications point for ships entering and leaving Port Jackson. I want to thank local residents Mike Rigg and Woollahra History & Heritage Society President Peter Poland OAM for joining me with the Minister to make this important announcement to upgrade the historic Signal Station.

### **VERITY NUNAN AND BRUNS BREKKIE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I recognise the initiative of Verity Nunan in developing and coordinating a program to feed the homeless of Brunswick Heads. Through the Bruns Brekkie program, volunteers collect excess food from local cafes, bakeries and shops and distribute it to those in need two mornings each week. The group meets a need that goes beyond food, including providing a human connection with those in the wider community who are otherwise isolated. Bruns Brekkie workers have seen individuals turn their lives around, but remain acutely aware of how easily someone can slip from having a home and a job to sleeping in a car. An architect and artist, Verity is concerned about the ever widening gap between those who can afford a home to live in and those who cannot. Her mission is to build an awareness through Art and public spaces so that the broader community can collectively make positive changes for vulnerable people in our community. In a society gravely impacted by a housing crisis and increasing marginalisation, Verity's efforts are an invaluable reminder to ask the questions that are in desperate need of an answer.

### **JANICE MAPLE/KINDRED WOMEN TOGETHER**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I congratulate Janice Maple on the occasion of the second anniversary of her organisation, Kindred Women Together. The organisation was formed to create opportunities for women to try new things, build confidence and connect more broadly with other people in the local community. Janice sought to help women connect with each other and make new friends in and around the village of Bangalow. Since its instigation, Janice has seen many women access the group, find new connections and take part in a range of new activities. Kindred Women Together organises events such as walking groups, a book club, art, tai chi classes and surfing lessons. The surfing lessons saw women confronting their fears while challenging outdated, stereotyped beliefs around women and age, in a bid to get out and live life the way women want to. I also recognise Linda Antonsson and Lauren Julian who have both been active participants in the Kindred Women Together programs and have supported Janice with her initiative from the start. I applaud Janice for promoting and supporting meaningful connections and support networks for women in our community.

### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE SES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the Sutherland Shire SES especially over the last week of flood, rain and storms. The Sutherland Shire SES is one of the largest SES groups in the state and responds to approximately 1,400 requests for assistance each year. In 2019 alone, the Shire SES contributed nearly 70,000 volunteer hours, equivalent to a cost benefit around \$5,215,000 to the local community. The Shire SES has deployed multiple teams over the last few days to support the response in flooded areas near the Hawkesbury-Nepean Rivers. These volunteers include police officers, paramedics, aviation fire and rescue officers, transport officers and tradies. They bring a wealth of experience from their full-time roles. The Shire SES has responded to over 140 requests for assistance in the Shire over the last few days. The SES provides a dedicated emergency response capability and is regularly called upon as a lead agency or as a support to other emergency response services. I thank Shire SES Local Controller John Gonzalez and his team for their invaluable service to the community.

### **LORRAINE ROBERTSON**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—I would like to recognise and congratulate Lorraine Robertson of Berrigan as recipient of the 2020 Murrumbidgee Primary Healthcare Award for Outstanding Contribution to Leadership in Primary Healthcare. Ms Robertson is commended for her tireless efforts to keep the town's only medical centre operational while the practice's regular doctor was unable to make his visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout 2020, Ms Robertson has been heavily involved in coordinating telehealth

appointments, liaising with doctors and ensuring that all patients receive the right care. Ms Robertson also provided outpatient care to residents throughout the course of 2020. Ms Robertson is to be congratulated for her dedication to healthcare within her community and for all her hard work during trying times.

#### **VACCINATION OF THE NATION - SCOTT SHEPPARD**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Scott Sheppard, from Berowra, for his efforts to encourage everyone to get the COVID Vaccination. Scott is the Director of Music Mates Australia and has adapted the lyrics of the theme song from the Bicentennial of Australia in 1988. Changing the chorus from 'Celebration of the Nation' to 'Vaccination of the Nation', he has attracted some high profile support. The catchy song has been played by Ben Fordham on his 2GB breakfast show where he received many calls of support. As we know COVID has hit the music and entertainment industry particularly hard and Scott is hoping the song will help encourage everyone to get the vaccination so they can get back to entertaining. Music Mates, provides music lessons for students all across Australia, ensuring a love of music is passed down to the next generation. Thank you Scott for finding a unique way to encourage our community to get vaccinated!

#### **EMMA MAIDEN**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)**—I recognise Emma Maiden and from Uniting NSW/ACT for the forum held in Parliament today on Possession and Use of Drugs: Options for Changing the Law was launched. Drug use and misuse is something that impacts every electorate, including mine, right across NSW and I commend Uniting NSW/ACT on the work they are doing to lead a conversation both throughout the community and across the political divide. I am proud that Labor has committed to a Drug Summit. I hope this is an initiative that is also supported by the Government. Drug reform is not easy, we all won't agree and I know people in my own community have a range of different views on what the next phase of reform looks like. One of the urgent areas for change is around access to treatment facilities particularly in rural and regional communities, an issue that no doubt will be raised as part of the current inquiry into Rural and Regional Health that Labor has established.

#### **KINGSWAY CARE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)**—I thank the team at Kingsway Care, who support some of the most vulnerable people in the Sutherland Shire and its surrounding areas. In particular, their efforts are focussed on providing services to women, young people, survivors of domestic violence and people affected by or at risk of homelessness. Kingsway Care's accommodation services, Platform Nine and Jacaranda Cottage, provide temporary and crisis accommodation to hundreds of men, women and children each year. Along with St Vincent de Paul, Kingsway Care offers the only after-hours emergency accommodation service in the region for victims of domestic and family violence. The organisation is making a real impact, boasting the highest rate of success in NSW for rehousing people into independent living. Through its Southern Cross Kids project, Kingsway Care has also made a big difference for children affected by trauma. The program, supported by around 60 volunteers, gives these children a place to flourish as they make friends and connect with caring adults in a safe environment. I thank the staff and volunteers at Kingsway Care for their selfless commitment to helping those who need help the most.

#### **PAKISTAN ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was privileged to attend the International Women's Day Celebration organised by the Pakistan Association of Australia on 8 March 2021. As the first ever woman to represent the Granville electorate, events such as these really resonate with me. This is because International Women's Day reminds us women are contributing drivers of our society and celebrates the achievements which have been reached. Thank you to the Association for their invitation to attend as the Guest of Honour and thank you to the organising committee for coordinating a marvellous and successful celebration of IWD. I acknowledge many people who attended, including, renowned actress Ms Uzma Gillani, Chairperson Dr Aiyla Khan, Dr Yasmin Khan from Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust, board members and many other women from across Sydney. Many awards recognised distinguished service including Mentor Woman of the year, Business Woman of the Year and Young Woman of the Year. My congratulations to the Pakistan Association of Australia for a successful event.

#### **AFRICAN WOMEN UNITY**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to join the African Women Unity Association on the 13th March at Auburn Centre for Community in celebration of International Women's Day. I thank Ms Pascasie Muderwa, Chairperson and the other members of the committee for inviting me as guest of honour to the event. The Association is a wonderful group that brings together women from diverse Africa backgrounds living in Sydney. It was a pleasure to meet these women and get to know about their stories and experiences in both Africa and Australia. It is a supportive and empowering community to be a part of, one that promotes peace, inclusivity

and kinship. Congratulations, once again for a successful event. I look forward to the Association's theme for this year's and share their enthusiasm for 'Women's Empowerment for Positive Change.' I also send my best wishes for their bright years ahead and hope to see the Association continue to grow and flourish within our community.

#### **INNER CITY LEGAL CENTRE 40 YEARS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to congratulate the Inner City Legal Centre on their 40th anniversary. The Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC) was opened in 1980 by local solicitors who saw the need for a legal centre in the area that could help people with limited resources get access to justice. Now, 40 years on, ICLC is still providing free legal services to people in the Sydney inner city, inner eastern suburbs, the lower north shore and northern beaches area. As well as their generalist local service, ICLC delivers a state-wide specialist service for members of the LGBTIQ community as well as providing assistance and representation for sex workers across NSW. Their award winning Safe Relationships program continues to be a key part of their service. Responding to COVID pandemic safety concerns, ICLC refocused from a grand celebration to instead hold an 'Uninvited Ball' to commemorate 40 years of service as well as raising funds to continue to provide their vital services. I am proud to support and celebrate this important service and encourage members of the Sydney electorate to do the same.

#### **HAYMARKET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate, I again wish to put on record the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce's work supporting local businesses and community, and in particular the efforts of Simon Chan. This year I again attended the Haymarket Chamber's Chinese New Year event, celebrating the Year of the Metal Ox. The event was also attended by numerous representatives including Premier Gladys Berejiklian, federal Member for Sydney Tanya Plibersek and Lord Mayor Clover Moore, confirming the chamber's strong and effective links with all three levels of government. Through the past year of disruption and restrictions, the Haymarket Chamber has continued helping businesses manage through massive changes, which has followed light rail construction and Chinatown revitalisation projects. Businesses had to adjust and Lunar New Year celebrations had to change. This year's new year celebration saw the retirement of long term chamber president Simon Chan. I thank him for his leadership and collaborative approach that has helped give this business precinct a strong voice and the constructive engagement that has resulted in positive outcomes. I thank the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce for their ongoing support for small businesses and engagement.

#### **ILLAWONG ALFORDS POINT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge an important community group from the Miranda Electorate, the Illawong Alfords Point Progress Association. The Illawong Alfords Point Progress Association provides a forum for local residents who care deeply about their local community and its advancement. The Association meets quarterly at the Illawong Community Centre. The Illawong Alfords Point Progress Association welcomed three new office bearers to the committee at the Annual General Meeting on 3 March 2021. I commend Ms Mariya Gojan who was elected President of the Association and will proudly serve her term alongside the newly elected Treasurer, Graham Priestly and Secretary, Joanne Sarakula. I commend all members of the Illawong Alfords Point Progress Association for their continued advocacy in Illawong and Alfords Point, and look forward to continuing to work with them.

#### **KAREELA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Kareela Public School whose Autism Spectrum Australia's Satellite Program has received \$13,740 from the NSW Government's 2020 Community Building Partnership Program. Since 1979, Kareela Public School has supported the opportunities offered to all students through promoting excellence and lifelong learning. Under the leadership of Principal Nicole Arnold, this amazing school community ensures a safe and happy learning environment where all students can reach their highest potential. I'm delighted that through this grant, Autism Spectrum Australia's Satellite Program classroom at Kareela Public School will receive additional cabinetry to allow for storage of sensory equipment and learning resources, whilst also creating space and a safer environment for students. Of course, none of this is possible without the support of the Parents and Citizens Association including President Caterina Zannino, Vice Presidents Maria Popova and Theresa Franco, Treasurer David Daniels and Secretary Ainslie McLean. I thank these dedicated volunteers for their ongoing contribution to the school community. I extend my best wishes to the Kareela Public School community and look forward to the completed project benefitting our local students.

#### **CLAIRE SHIN**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Congratulations to Twin Creeks Golf Club division player, Claire Shin for her success in the NSW Junior Golf Championships. Claire took out the top spot in the 15 Girls Division and finished in 5th position in the overall championships with a 3-round score of +6. Claire had an outstanding

year of gold in 2020! In December, she won the NSW Champion of Champions trophy at Kew finishing 2nd overall and 2nd in 15 Girls. She managed to finish ahead of all other previous winners from 2020 to claim the Champion of Champions title. At the Brett Ogle Junior Masters she finished 1st in the 15 Girls and 2nd overall in November of last year. More recently, in the 2021 NSW Amateur Championships, Claire tied in 2nd place in the women's division and would also finish runner-up in the Leo Wray Bowl. Claire has shown incredible dedication to growing in her golf skills and this is evident through her continual success at competition across the state. Well done Claire! I wish you all the best for another successful year of golf!

#### **AGNES BORG**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I wish to acknowledge an incredible woman in my local community. Agnes Borg from St Clair celebrated her 102nd birthday in November last year by inviting the local community to take part in a walk to wish her a happy birthday. The walk took place through the friendly neighbourhood streets of St Clair and went for around an hour. The walk was organised by Agnes' daughter, Mariza, who has taken this opportunity to make her birthday a very special one. An exciting addition to the day was the children of local primary school, Blackwell Public School, all lined the fence to wave and wish Agnes a happy birthday as she went past. Agnes is the last surviving sibling of eighteen children and enjoys the simple things in life, like being outdoors. She very much enjoys artificial flowers and has a growing collection in her bedroom. Agnes, I wish you another happy and healthy year in 2021 and I would also like to thank the local community for coming out in support of the fabulous, Agnes.

#### **LIVERPOOL ART SOCIETY**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—I acknowledge the Liverpool Art Society that has been established for over 20 years. Art is a great way to express our creative selves and I know that many members of my community enjoy being part of this society so that they can further their art skills. I would particularly like to thank the Liverpool Art Society committee members for all of the work they have done to provide artistic opportunities to our region – the society's President, Mr John Tregoning, Vice President, Di Hallinana and Secretaries, Tania Saeed, Jenny Phillips and Linda Ferlazzo. The society has created a friendly, helpful atmosphere where the more experienced artists welcome and guide beginners and new comers. It's a great way to get into art and meet new people. Art groups and events hosted by the society are held in various locations across the Holsworthy electorate including Chipping Norton Lakes Boatshed, Chipping Norton Community Centre and the Casula Powerhouse Art Centres. Thank you.

#### **LIVERPOOL SCOUT GROUP**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—I recognise Liverpool Scout Group, for the participation in this year's Clean Up Australia Day. This is the 18th year in a row that the group has participated in the event! It is incredible that this has become a yearly tradition. The Scout Leaders teach the members the importance and responsibility of keeping our local community clean. The group cleaned up around Liverpool and Bankstown. In the Holsworthy electorate, the group cleaned up areas around the suburb of Lurnea - more specifically, Munro Park and Lions Park. I am very pleased to see that Liverpool Scout Group are teaching the significance of Clean Up Australia Day and thank them for all of their effort in cleaning up the local community on the day. Once again, congratulations to Liverpool Scout Group for participating in their 18th Clean Up Australia Day!

#### **BLACK DOG RIDE**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—The rain may have kept numbers down, but there was no dampening the spirits of those participating in Wagga Wagga's annual Black Dog Ride. On the third Sunday of March each year, a Black Dog Ride "one dayer" is held in every Australian state and territory in an effort to ensure mental health and suicide prevention is spoken about, right across the country. The weekend weather forced many events to be cancelled, but in Wagga 70 riders got out on the roads to promote this important issue. I commend Nerolie and Graham "Bear" Falconer, who organised this year's Wagga Wagga event. The Falconers have ridden the Black Dog Ride for suicide prevention every year since 2016. But this was the first time they had encountered such extreme weather conditions. It was perhaps fitting that the skies were so closed in, dark and oppressive because for many people, this could be symbolic of depression. Depression and suicide continue to have a huge impact on our community, which is why events like the Black Dog Ride, and the work of the Black Dog Institute, are vital. Thank you to all who took part including South Wagga Lions club who provided breakfast.

#### **VINCE CASTLE**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to Vince Castle who recently was recognised for his dedication to the Carina organisation in Grafton, by having their new building named the Castle Centre in his honour. Vince is a wonderful gentleman who has always had his local community forefront in his mind. He has been the Chairman of Carina for many years as well as long standing Chairman of the



Clarence Canegrowers in addition to being on numerous environmental and agricultural committees for most of his working life. As Chairman of Caringa Vince attended more than 300 meetings during the past 15 years or so. Caringa is a leader in the delivery of disability support services who firmly believe their mission is to support and empower people with disability and Vince has worked hard to ensure that this mission forms the backbone of the organisation. Congratulations to Vince on this wonderful recognition and I wish him well in the future.

#### **MARGARET HADDIN**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise Margaret Haddin, 2020 Hidden Treasure nominee for the Orange electorate. In 1979 Margaret moved to Parkes with her husband and established a business, and raising four children. Margaret worked tirelessly in their business and on their farm at Cookamidgera. Since moving to Parkes, Margaret has involved herself in the local community and has selflessly contributed her time to Landcare, both locally and regionally. Margaret performed the roles of treasurer and chairperson for Central West Lachlan Landcare, and as treasurer on a district level with the Cookamidgera Landcare group, through which she was instrumental in making improvements to the local hall. Margaret joined the committee for Parkes Meals on Wheels, performing the role of treasurer and significantly benefiting the committee with her time and skills. Margaret has been an active member of the Parkes community for more than 30 years, volunteering her time and knowledge to assist local not-for-profit groups. Margaret continues to devote much of her time to Landcare and Meals on Wheels. Margaret is a valued member of her community and is a true treasure of the communities of the broader Parkes district. Margaret, thank you from an appreciative community for all that you do.

#### **LISA GREISL**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Being diagnosed with cancer is something everyone fears, but remains a sad reality for one out of every two Australians. I'd like to acknowledge the excellent work being done by Lisa Greissl from Macquarie Hills, the founder of non-profit charity Big Hug Box. The devastating toll cancer can take is something Lisa knows well after being diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer on her spine in 2015. Lisa created Big Hug Box in 2018. The now-national program delivers specialty gift boxes to people undergoing treatment. The Big Hug Boxes contain thoughtful, practical and luxurious items such as organic bamboo pillow cases which can help people suffering with scalp sensitivity from hair loss, to anti-nausea tea and moisturising cream for people with sensitive skin. Lisa has also created Buddy Boxes for children and young people which contain things like interactive games and cosy bed socks. This year the organisation along with Cure Cancer Australia aims to deliver 1000 Buddy Boxes to young people attending Camp Quality. All money raised from the boxes goes to Cure Cancer Australia to help researchers find a cure. I congratulate Lisa and her team.

#### **MELODY JONES**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to congratulate Melody Jones from Coal Point on winning the 2021 Lake Mac Artist and Creator Award. Melody is an exceptionally talented artist. She creates large scale drawings which focus on the human figure, using a range of research methods including life drawing, Photoshop and photography while pastels, watercolour and charcoal are enforced to produce dynamic multi-layered works. Apart from being visually striking her pieces also challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Her artistic career has spanned an impressive 40 years, in parallel with an art teaching career where she enthusiastically and passionately shared her knowledge and talent with the next generation of budding artists. Melody now devotes herself to creating authentic contemporary artwork. She has exhibited her work at galleries across Australia, including the prestigious Jacaranda Drawing Prize, the Kennedy Prize, the Adelaide Perry Drawing Prize and was a Doug Moran semi-finalist in 2019. I congratulate Melody on her impressive career and exceptional talent.

#### **MARTY ROEBUCK**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Marty Roebuck is a quiet achiever. However, few people could boast having had a career as varied and successful as his. The former St Stanislaus' College student was a gifted rugby union player and played the game at a time when it was very much an amateur sport. Marty studied physiotherapy in Sydney and while in the city played rugby for the love of the sport. However, he turned out to be a pretty good player and made it to the pinnacle of the rugby, becoming a Test regular with the Wallabies from his debut in 1991. The same year he was a member of the triumphant World Cup winning Australian team as well as being a member of the NSW Waratahs outfit that went through the competition undefeated. Such is Marty's desire to challenge himself that he decided to change careers and in 2015 graduated from the Notre Dame University in Sydney as a medical doctor. He is currently continuing his medical profession as a general practitioner, a real indication of his desire to help others and make a difference in the lives of so many people. Marty Roebuck – a true inspiration for all.

**MARK RENSHAW**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—The word legend is used all too often these days, but one person who deserves that title is Bathurst's very own Mark Renshaw. After a stellar cycling career spanning the globe, Mark retired from the sport in 2019 and has now returned to his hometown to live, raise a family and start his own business, Renshaw's Pedal Project. Mark Renshaw certainly made a mark on the world stage and as a triple World Junior Champion, Commonwealth Games and Olympic representative, set the platform for a professional career that would last from 2004-2019. Most notably, Renshaw earned a reputation as the world's best lead out rider for his sprinting ability to take team-mate Mark Cavendish to the finish line in the Tour de France. However, what really is impressive is the fact that Mark Renshaw is now back in Bathurst giving back to the sport he loves. For the past two years he has been the official ambassador for the Bathurst Cycling Classic, an event which has been dubbed "The Cycling Miracle of NSW". If ever there was a famous Bathurst export, Mark Renshaw would be right up there at the top of the list.

**ALLAN WALLACE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—On behalf of North Haven's Allan Wallace I offer advice and information about an old aged method of growing hybrid orchids in efforts to retain this intricate process for future generations. Mr Wallace is a passionate breeder of orchids for more than 35 years and is the original member of the Camden Haven Orchid Society, since the organisation formed in September 1990. Mr Wallace shares his personal gardening secrets in the successful art of growing hybrid orchids which he sadly recognising is fast becoming a dying practice. A champion breeder of orchids, Mr Wallace describes the lengthy, fragile process of producing hybrid flowers from seeds where life starts from being raised on agar jelly, in sterile flasks. At commencement, pollen is extracted from local orchids and crossed to another robust parent plant. The method should also be reversed for two chances to grow a hybrid. Then the magic begins over a five month germination period from a seed pod, with laboratory testing, seeds extracted and grown in an agar for nine months. The process takes approximately five years from cross-pollination. As a proud green thumb, I thank Mr Wallace for his marvellous insight into the art of growing hybrid orchids.

**BALD & BEAUTIFUL 2021**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise the young, fundraising champions in my electorate who participated in the Bald and the Beautiful 2021 campaign to raise money for the Tour de Cure from Newcastle to Coffs Harbour, held on March 28 to April 1. 2019 junior cyclist James Cockshutt and about 38 of his school mates from Port Macquarie have shaved their heads in a mammoth fundraising initiative to support the 2021 Tour de Cure for cancer research while donating bucket loads of hair to Sustainable Salons to create wigs for cancer patients. Already our dynamic youngsters have raised more than \$17,000 towards the fundraiser with Mum, Melinda Cockshutt applauding her son and his friend's extraordinary efforts which aims to give hope and a little bit of dignity to those undergoing treatment for cancer in our community. Known as a stalwart for the Tour de Cure, Melinda Cockshutt, and fellow participants; Lyn Stewart, Greg Laws, Trish and Glenn Parry along with Bennett Powell will take on the gruelling 930-kilometre route to raise awareness and funds for cancer research. I congratulate James and his school mates for wanting to make a difference in the lives of those diagnosed with cancer.

**CLINICAL SCHOOL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Construction is complete and the fit-out is well underway at the Central Coast's purpose-built Clinical School. I am proud this is a partnership between the NSW Government, Australian Government and the University of Newcastle. Over the life of the \$72.5 million project more than 590 workers have been involved. The first students will be welcomed to this fantastic facility in July. The building is designed with collaborative spaces to foster the cross-fertilisation of ideas between students, clinicians, researchers and academics. As Chief Executive of Central Coast Local Health District Andrew Montague said, having an education institution and working hospital co-located is a game changer. I also want to acknowledge the team at the University of Newcastle, led by Vice-Chancellor Alex Zelinsky. The University's partnership in this project is absolutely vital and I was delighted to meet so many enthusiastic University staff last Friday when I visited the site. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of Professor Nick Goodwin, who is a constituent of mine and as director of the Central Coast Research Institute is very excited for the facility to be up and running very shortly.

**PAT PURCELL STEPS DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF MOSMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge Pat Purcell who has recently stepped down as President of the Mosman Chamber of Commerce. I thank Pat for her long standing service in this role and as a member of the Chamber. Pat has run retail businesses in Mosman for almost three decades and has been a key

advocate for the Mosman business community. The Mosman Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organisation that promotes and supports the interests of the Mosman business community. The Chamber plays a key role in advocating on behalf of these local businesses and connecting members together. Pat was instrumental in leading the 'Think Mosman First' initiative to help local businesses get back on their feet after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. I congratulate Tamara Keniry and Ilona Vass who have taken up their new roles as President and Vice President. Both women have experience in starting up new businesses. Tamara founded PureFree to create reusable but also beautifully designed products such as glass water bottles and coffee cups. Ilona founded a global training and advisory company called Dancing with the Dragons.

#### **REDEVELOPMENT OF NORTH SYDNEY OLYMPIC POOL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Work has now kicked off for the crucial reconstruction of North Sydney Olympic Pool. The NSW Government is contributing \$5 million to the revamp of this iconic pool through the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund. This Fund focuses on enabling communities to participate in sport at all levels and the pool upgrade will improve and expand the range of recreational activities. While this is a significant upgrade, the pool's heritage features such as the Art Deco arches will be preserved. North Sydney Olympic Pool is treasured by locals and visitors alike. The pool's historic and iconic position by Sydney Harbour is a major drawcard for tourism. I thank the Hon. Geoff Lee MP, Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans, for his support for this important asset for people across NSW and beyond. Our Government has contributed this funding to ensure a modern fitness and leisure centre can be enjoyed by many generations to come while respecting this iconic and historic destination.

#### **JUDI UNGER**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise Judi Unger, 2020 Hidden Treasures nominee. Judi chose teaching as a career, attaining tertiary qualifications through Macquarie University, eventually retiring as the Deputy Principal of Parkes High School, after nourishing many children's developing minds. Judi's professional teaching legacy was a personally created innovative teaching resource and education programs, which have been adopted across NSW. The Aboriginal Mathematics resource Kit K-6 and Peak Hill Sight Word Program are two of Judi's innovations. In 1980 Judi and her husband, Ray, converted their farm near Peak Hill, into a certified organic/biodynamic broad acre enterprise. They now host annual workshops to share their farming knowledge and experience. Judi is involved in NSW Women in Agriculture, Orana Women in Agriculture and Rural Women's Network. The farming practices employed by Judi and her husband exemplify stewardship and care of the land, and management practices which include restoration of native vegetation and pasture have made their country increasingly resilient and more capable of enduring prolonged weather events. Judi is a valued member of the Peak Hill community and is a true treasure of the communities of the broader Parkes district. Judi, thank you from an appreciative community for all that you do.

#### **FATHER EUGENE STOCKTON**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains)**—Last week in my electorate an important new book was launched called Sacred Ways and Places in the Blue Mountains. The book is the brainchild of Fr Eugene Stockton and published by the Blue Mountain Education Trust, an organisation he founded in 2008 to promote local Blue Mountains research and writing. I want to pay tribute to Fr Eugene, as well as his co-editor William Emilsen and designer Allan Walsh, for bringing together contributions from 18 Blue Mountains locals into this beautiful book. The book is the latest in a long history of remarkable service and scholarship by Fr Eugene. He has been a seminary lecturer, served in parish, university and Aboriginal ministries and authored or contributed to more than 15 books. As an archaeologist he has engaged in excavations in the Middle East and Australia, including discovering Aboriginal artefacts in the Blue Mountains thought to be up to 50,000 years old. In 2018 Fr Eugene celebrated his 60th year of Ordination as a priest. Now, aged 87, he is showing no signs of slowing down. I want to commend Fr Eugene for his commitment to telling stories of the Blue Mountains, particularly of its Aboriginal heritage.

#### **CAPTAIN BETH RAINES**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains)**—I had the great honour and privilege of joining in the NSW Local Woman of the Year Awards 2021, with a highlight of the event being the acknowledgment of the courage and resilience of Blue Mountains woman, Beth Raines. Beth, you're a champion. The work you do for and with our community is incredible and the way in which you are able to guide those in fear through a crisis, as a First Responder, is a true reflection of the selfless, inspiring leader that you are. In the Black Summer Gospers Mountain fire, Beth Raines - Rural Fire Service Captain of the Mount Wilson/ Mount Irvine Brigade - lost her own home whilst out fighting to save the lives and homes of others. I cannot imagine the horror of this experience, nor the sadness of losing not just a house, but a home steeped in family history. Beth, from our community to you, we thank you for the dedication you show to us all. You do us so proud, not only for what you achieve through the important work that you do, but as a humble, compassionate, remarkable human being.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:23 until  
Thursday 25 March 2021 at 09:30.**