



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday 23 June 2021

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 23 June 2021

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Announcements

COVID-19

The SPEAKER: I advise members and staff that the Presiding Officers are waiting on health advice regarding a number of members who have been at exposure sites and who have undertaken COVID-19 tests. Members may consider wearing masks in the Chamber. That is a matter for them; there is no compulsion. At this stage the level of risk is uncertain. During question time today the Legislative Assembly will return to the reduced Chamber seating plan. I ask members to act in accordance with that plan and keep 1.5 metres apart, as we have done in the past. A maximum of three members may sit on each front bench.

Bills

FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND DISABILITY SERVICES MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Returned

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

MOTOR ACCIDENTS AND WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 9 June 2021.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (09:49): I contribute to debate on the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. First, I acknowledge that recently I was appointed shadow Minister for Industrial Relations and shadow Minister for Work Health and Safety under our leader, Mr Chris Minns. I acknowledge that my portfolio will include workers compensation. When I first became a shadow Minister I held the Industrial Relations portfolio and I remember very vividly what the Government did to both destroy and erode the workers compensation system and apply the 2.5 per cent wages cap, as well as breaking down the Industrial Relations Commission. I will have a lot to say in the coming months, particularly about how the Government has eroded conditions and wages. There have been major issues, particularly with the way the Government has handled many work health and safety issues.

I acknowledge Unions NSW, the legal and medical professionals, and those people who have been injured at work or in a motor accident. They are the people we are talking about in the Chamber today. I acknowledge and thank Minister Dominello and his office, his adviser James Camilleri and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] for providing us with information that we have requested. I acknowledge my colleague the shadow Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, and his office; Elyse Harding; the many people who work in both workers compensation and motor accidents; and the people who provide support to injured workers. They do a phenomenal job. The bill makes a series of amendments. As I said, I am the new industrial relations, workers compensation and work health and safety shadow Minister. My colleague and shadow Minister for Customer Service, the member for Swansea, will talk about compulsory third party insurance [CTP] amendments in the bill. At this point the Opposition will not oppose the bill; however—

Mr Geoff Provest: That's good.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Hang on a minute.

Mr Geoff Provest: There's a catch.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Let me tell you why; you will be interested. The Government wants to make it harder to get workers compensation for people in the member's community of Tweed who work in abattoirs, mining or areas where you can catch a disease. I foreshadow that the Opposition will move an amendment to the bill. I hope, and I have been advised, that the Minister will support it, which is good. Opposition members do not

want to place additional qualifications on people who are poisoned by anthrax, by lead or through many of the diseases that are outlined by SafeWork NSW. That is the condition the Opposition places on support for the bill. There are some very important amendments in the bill and I indicate my support for a number of them. Several of my Labor colleagues have called for support, particularly for volunteer bush firefighters, who have been doing a phenomenal job over many years. I acknowledge that the Government has listened and is providing additional support for our volunteer firefighters, which is great. It is great for both sides of politics.

I acknowledge that employers will pay management fees of death benefits paid to the NSW Trustee & Guardian for young children under the age of 18. We are divided and we disagree on many issues, but every single member in this place agrees with one thing: We want to make sure that people come home from work to their families and loved ones. As MPs, we hold very important positions in this place as legislators and we look beyond politics when a parent dies because of a work injury. We do not want anyone to not come home from work. But if the worst happens, we look to make things better for that family, hugging the children and making sure they are looked after for the rest of their lives. I acknowledge this very important amendment, which will ensure a lump sum that is paid to the NSW Trustee & Guardian is not swallowed up by fees.

My colleague and shadow Minister for Customer Service, the member for Swansea, who is in the Chamber, will talk about CTP. The deemed diseases provisions in schedule 2.1 to the bill propose to amend section 19 (1) of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and add new section 19 (1A). If that is passed, it will allow regulations under section 19 to prescribe the circumstances in which diseases are deemed diseases, as defined in the Minister's second reading speech in which he stated that the Government intends to use those new regulatory powers to define minimum periods of service in specified employment and minimum exposure requirements. The Minister said that will improve fairness regarding workers compensation entitlements. The Minister and I have had many disagreements over many years. I believe he understands this aspect and I acknowledge that the Government will support our amendment, but we cannot qualify a time for some of the diseases people could get when working in an abattoir or a mine.

You can get anthrax within a day by being in a particular workplace, so you cannot qualify that. The unions that represent thousands of people across the State have opposed that outright. I have indicated to the Government that there is absolutely no way the Opposition will support the amendment and that it should be withdrawn because it puts up additional hurdles for injured workers trying to access their compensation entitlements after they have contracted a deemed disease. The Opposition is about helping people who work in those very dangerous environments. Adding minimum periods of employment and minimum exposure requirements will maximise stress for injured workers and therefore minimise fairness. I will raise a number of other issues, but if the Government supports the Opposition's amendment, the Opposition will not oppose the bill. If the Government does not support the amendment, the Opposition cannot allow the bill to pass.

We have had discussions with the Government and I take Government members at face value, but I want to see it happen in this place. Any unnecessary and unfair hurdles for injured workers to access compensation they are entitled to should not be imposed. Justice should be very simple, particularly for injured workers. The amendments to section 19 of the Workers Compensation Act and the additional hurdles to compensation they add do not reflect that standard of justice in New South Wales. As I indicated, we have been working with the Government and I acknowledge the Government's cooperation. Again, I appreciate what the Government has said but I want to see it happen in this place.

As I indicated, the bill contains a provision to extend compensation entitlements to the children of deceased workers. If a worker loses their life on the job, their dependent children should not be punished for it. The law already reflects this principle. When a worker loses their life on the job, their dependent children are entitled to compensation—as they should be. However, as they are children, the compensation is managed by the NSW Trustee & Guardian. As the Minister mentioned in his second reading speech, the compensation paid to the children of deceased workers can be eroded by the fees charged by the NSW Trustee & Guardian to manage the compensation payments to the children.

The Government's move to protect compensation payments to the children of deceased workers from fee erosion is a sensible one—I acknowledge that the Government has listened. It means that when the children reach the age of 18 they do not get an eroded lump sum and that they can have some support. As I said, it is very difficult. I have met children whose parents have died from injuries at work, and life is not the same. We support this amendment and welcome any and all proposals for reform that will benefit the children of working families, particularly families of those who have been injured or died. I am happy to have the discussion with the Government and both Minister Dominello and Minister Anderson as we go forward.

The bill also proposes to reform the Workers Compensation Act to allow workers injured on the job in Australia to continue receiving compensation when they cease to live in Australia. This proposed reform reflects the multicultural character and essence of New South Wales and accepts the reality of an increasingly globalised

world. This is also a fair amendment, as workers who have been injured in Australia should not be punished if they choose to cease residing here. It also guarantees that these workers will be compensated if they are injured and further incentivises skilled workers from around the world to come to New South Wales to contribute their skills to our economy. The Opposition also notes that this bill will encourage injured workers seeking to live outside Australia to negotiate with their insurers without having to bring the dispute to the Personal Injury Commission. Encouraging negotiation and avoiding litigation is always positive if both parties negotiating are fully informed of their rights and entitlements. As I said, the Opposition supports this proposed reform—it is a positive one and a step in the right direction.

Schedule 2.2, Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987, seeks to align the compensation entitlements of both workers and volunteers. I understand that the Government, as indicated by Minister Dominello, was moved to act following the advocacy of former RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and current Commissioner Rob Rogers and a number of representations from the Labor Party. As every member in this House is aware, volunteer firefighters were instrumental in managing and containing the 2019-2020 Black Summer fires. It is only fair that these volunteers at the very least are entitled to the same compensation entitlements that employed firefighters are. I acknowledge members in this place who are volunteer firefighters in our community. I know from the statistics that there has been a twofold increase in the number of people who are prepared to become volunteer firefighters and provide that service to their local communities.

It shows our Australian community spirit and how much we love our community. We are always out there, helping our communities. This is not just noble. We have also heard many stories in the past couple of years about volunteer firefighters whose own homes have burnt down and whose families have been in desperate need. These same volunteer firefighters are helping and rescuing other people. We are absolutely indebted to each and every one of them. I know there are members of this place who also suffered. I acknowledge that for many of their families and other families in our community it has been really tough going from the floods to the bushfires and then to the pandemic. The situation is ongoing, but we are absolutely resilient. We know that we have each other, we support each other and we are a community where the greater good is more important. I acknowledge all the volunteer firefighters.

I asked the Minister's office for a schedule of additional entitlements as I wanted to understand what they are. We do not want to see volunteer firefighters die, but if that happens—and this was raised by the former commissioner and the current commissioner—there is a payment of reasonable funeral expenses of up to \$15,000 when there is an accepted claim for the death of a volunteer. In the event of an accepted claim for the death of a volunteer, the reasonable cost of transporting the body of the volunteer to an appropriate place for its preparation for burial or cremation is covered. In return-to-work assistance, compensation of up to \$1,000 is available to volunteers who accept the offer of employment with a new employer. The funds may be used to cover expenses related to returning to work with a new employer, including transport—for example, public transport—motor vehicle registration, child care, clothing, education or training, equipment, tools of trade or any similar service.

There is a provision for education and training assistance to allow eligible volunteers access to a cumulative total of up to \$8,000, which can be claimed for expenses related to education and training, including course fees and other related expenses. This entitlement will be available to volunteers with an assessed degree of permanent impairment of more than 20 per cent who have had at least 78 aggregate weeks of weekly payments paid or payable. It is important to get that detail. I also call on the Government, once the legislation commences, to review the possible need for additional funds. But that is something for the Government to consider. As I said, the Opposition will support the amendments—it is a small contribution for the families of those volunteers—which the Government can review down the track.

The bill also includes applying the same compensation amendments to dependent children. Just as for the dependent children of workers who lose their life on the job, the bill will protect compensation payments to the dependent children of volunteers from fee erosion, as I have mentioned already. The bill also includes financial support for volunteers returning to work, including vocational re-education, training and workplace aids. The final part of schedule 2 is the extension of provisional liability to include injured workers. Provisional liability is an interim acceptance of liability that allows an injured worker to have access to compensation payments while a final decision on liability is being made. The amendment to extend provisional liability to injured volunteers is sensible and equitable.

Schedule 3 amendments concern service providers and include amendments to the State Insurance and Care Governance Act, which will affect the function and operation of SIRA. The main object of these amendments is to give SIRA the powers to issue directions to service providers. I note that the expressed intention is to give SIRA the power to ensure that service providers are delivering services that are consistent with existing regulations. It appears that the Government hopes those powers will enable SIRA to ensure that those on CTP and

workers compensation schemes are not being overserviced or overcharged. My colleague the member for Swansea will also expand and elaborate on that point, in particular. On paper it may appear to be a sensible amendment, but in practice there is a number of issues. Both legal and medical practitioners and the unions have raised with us a problem that the Government has not addressed.

A commitment was made in the second reading speech that the issue will be addressed—that nothing will happen without the consultation and consideration of those stakeholders. Again, I take the Government at its word. I would like the Government to put that in the bill. We do not want to come back to this place to go through this process again. Governments of all persuasions put forward what seem to be reasonable and sensible amendments to legislation, but in practice there are unintended consequences. I spoke to the Minister's office about needing to see the statistics: We need to see why we are doing something and why we are making the change. Where is the evidence? We want to see the evidence as to why there is a problem that we need to fix. Are we making a bigger problem for ourselves because we want to fix some smaller gap or can we use the legal instruments we already have?

SIRA provides an invaluable service for those on CTP workers compensation schemes; it is expert at that. I mean no disrespect to anybody at SIRA or anybody else who works in such organisations, but perhaps SIRA is not the expert in providing medical care or legal advice. We have been raising that issue with the Government, and it must be further finessed with more detail and more consideration. There is a real concern that SIRA, without the expert authority to do so, will give directions to service providers that are delivering medical care. If SIRA is giving ill-advised directions to health and medical providers, it could have long-term negative effects. I understand the Government and others saying that there could be overservicing and some dodgy operators. We want to ensure that injured workers are getting proper case management, advice, care and support.

Every individual who is injured has a particular case; no two cases are the same. That is why we must be careful that we do not take a one-size-fits-all approach, and make sure that each injured worker is provided with efficient service and support to get back to work. In some cases they will not be able to go back to work, so we have to address how we can help support that worker. Using a heavy instrument such as this legislative process is probably not the right way to go if there are other ways we can fix the minority of dodgy service providers. As I said, the last thing we should do is go through a legislative process that we may have to address again—that is something I am worried about. Our party has said in good faith that it will not oppose the bill based on this amendment. On that point and in good faith we want to make sure that the Government is clear and specific about consulting with the key stakeholders—health, medical, legal and service providers—for those on CTP and workers compensation.

I will await the Minister's reply and that clear instruction shortly. As the Minister will appreciate, service providers will prefer not to arbitrate matters if they can avoid it. That is why the Government must engage with stakeholders to ensure they are safeguarded from any heavy-handed direction that will inevitably land in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal. We want to hear about that. Other amendments concerning the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission update references to approve medical specialists and medical assessors, as well as update legislation affected by the Judges' Pension Act 1953. The House has been informed that the purpose of those amendments is to improve the efficiency of the Personal Injury Commission. We support reforms that improve the efficiency of workers accessing their compensation entitlements. We will therefore assess the application of those amendments to ensure that they do indeed make the operation of the Personal Injury Commission more efficient.

My colleague the shadow Treasurer has introduced a number of private members' bills in the other place with respect to bonuses that have been paid to the icare board and the situation at icare that he has exposed. In the past few months representing the Hon. Daniel Mookhey in this place, I have had a lot to say about that matter and I will have a lot more to say. As I indicated in my previous contribution, icare should support workers and ensure employers and small businesses, which the Government knows are suffering, are not paying higher premiums because board directors are paid bonuses or because dodgy contracts are going to relatives, former chairs or former CEOs. I understand that there has been a clean-out of icare, but we have a major problem: A decade ago the Government indicated that it would change workers compensation. In fact, thousands of people are still waiting to get their entitlements; thousands of people have fallen off the scheme.

As I said a few months ago, people who were working perfectly in their workplace but who sustained an injury at their workplace have had their entire lives and their family's lives upended—whether they have broken up with their partners or suffered massive mental health issues—because of this Government's incompetent and inept process of dealing with people who need workers compensation. I will have a lot more to say about icare, but I urge the Government to pay attention to this, particularly the premiums, and to get those people their entitlements—working families across western Sydney and our regions, mums and dads who have children to look after and rent to pay. I urge the Government to take a laser-focused lens and help those people.

I will be asking questions, as the Hon. Daniel Mookhey has done, because the Labor Party wants to ensure that injured workers are protected, that they are provided with their fair entitlements, that there is a fair and equitable process, that workers do not have to wait, and that they are not sitting on a cliff contemplating committing suicide because they cannot handle living the way they are living due to bureaucracy and the atrocious actions of previous icare executives, who were like pigs with their snouts in the trough. We will continue to monitor the situation.

If we care about small business and about employers, we will not see this jack-up of premiums. We must ensure that we are lean and efficient but that we are also providing the very best of care to injured workers. As I said, I foreshadow that Labor will move an amendment to the bill. A number of my colleagues will speak in this debate before the bill goes to the upper House, but between now and then we want some clear guidelines and clarity on the issues we have raised. I call on the Government to make its position very clear during the second reading debate. I conclude my contribution on that basis.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (10:21): I thank the Minister for Customer Service for bringing this very important legislation to the House. I note that a number of members will be contributing to the debate and, like the shadow Minister, I acknowledge the work of the Minister's staff and the department in bringing forward these important amendments. The Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 seeks to clarify the rights and entitlements and improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of workers compensation and compulsory third party [CTP] insurance schemes. It will ensure that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] continues to achieve key public policy outcomes in service delivery to injured people, affordability and the effective management and sustainability of workers compensation and CTP insurance schemes.

As we have heard, the bill introduces a number of amendments to the motor accidents and workers compensation legislation as well as to the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 and the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. The proposed amendments in the legislation cover five broad themes: improving customer experience, scheme efficiency, fairness and equity; improving access to compensation entitlements for injured workers, volunteers and people injured in motor vehicle accidents and their dependants; expanding existing regulation-making powers, including provisions related to deemed diseases and point to point vehicles; establishing new powers to enable better regulation of providers of treatment and other services in the workers compensation and CTP schemes; and supporting the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission.

I am pleased to support the bill and will now speak to some of the key amendments. The bill represents a modern regulatory approach by the Government to continually improve the outcomes for people injured at work or in motor vehicle accidents. The bill introduces amendments to the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 that will lead to a fairer calculation of benefits for people who have been injured. It does this by allowing consideration of the person's earning circumstances both pre- and post-accident, and clarifying entitlements for people residing outside Australia. Further flexibility is also being afforded to insurers, specifically interstate insurers, to manage claims themselves by having an agreement in place with a New South Wales licensed insurer, or to have the Nominal Defendant do so on their behalf. These flexibilities make the CTP scheme more efficient and adaptive without putting additional risk on injured people.

Importantly, the bill clarifies that the Nominal Defendant will bear the costs of statutory benefits where the at-fault driver is not covered by their interstate policy. In the wake of the Supreme Court decision in *AAI Limited v Singh* there was some confusion in the industry as to the benefits payable to drivers injured in no-fault motor accidents. The Government continues to deliver on its commitment to look after injured people, with the bill reaffirming that benefits are payable to such drivers past 26 weeks. One of the big areas for amendment of the CTP scheme proposed by the bill concerns the point to point transport industry. The bill provides certainty and clarity for insurers and the industry in terms of premium determination, collection and payment, and addresses the current legislative gaps. The bill requires taxi and booking service providers to supply data to SIRA or insurers so that premiums can be calculated more accurately. The bill also enables SIRA to require taxi and booking service providers to pay premiums.

The bill makes equally important amendments to the workers compensation scheme. The bill supports the children of deceased workers by protecting their lump sum death benefit. Additional compensation will be payable to cover the cost of investing and managing the funds held by the NSW Trustee & Guardian. This protects the child's lump sum and reduces the risk of the principal being eroded by fees and charges. By amending the definition of "medical and related treatment" so that regulations may prescribe what is included or not included in the definition, the bill gives greater flexibility to respond and adapt to the emerging medical science concerning medical treatment that is optimal for injured workers.

The 2019 bushfire season saw countless brave volunteers from our NSW Rural Fire Service risk their lives to help the community, and of course we thank them for that. I, along with many other members in this House,

have taken the opportunity over the past months—in fact, years—to commend the work of our volunteer Rural Fire Service. I do not think their bravery and their willingness to put themselves in danger for all of us to save lives and property has been lost on any members in this House. Particularly on the mid North Coast, we saw the incredible devastation that the bushfires caused not only to our natural environment but also to property and, unfortunately, to life.

A historic anomaly exists whereby volunteers' entitlements have not been aligned to those provided for paid workers under the workers compensation scheme. Better aligning those entitlements is a really important area of legislative reform so that we can support the people who are supporting the State—our volunteers, and particularly our Rural Fire Service volunteers. The bill better aligns the entitlements of those volunteers by providing access to return-to-work assistance, training, workplace aids and modifications, and reasonable funeral expenses where a person dies while volunteering. The value to an injured person and their family is clear from past experience of New South Wales workers who have had access to each of those benefits for many years.

Another important set of amendments concerns service providers of both schemes. SIRA is aware of a number of outlier health providers who repeatedly engage in poor practices and behaviours that are inconsistent with the objectives of the legislation in both schemes. These practices do not contribute to improved outcomes for people injured in workplaces and on our roads. At present SIRA has limited powers to effectively regulate these outlier providers and ensure that the services they provide are consistent with the objectives of the legislation in the workers compensation and the CTP schemes. The bill gives additional regulatory powers to the regulator to provide directions to limit or prevent service providers from the schemes in accordance with the requirements set out in the supporting regulations.

It will be an offence for a provider to not comply with directions and a condition on insurers' licences to not engage excluded services. The bill upholds procedural fairness, where a service provider is limited or prevented from providing services in the schemes, through a right to a review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. To ensure service providers are transparent over expenditure funded by the schemes and accountable for the services provided, the bill provides SIRA with additional powers to obtain data from service providers. SIRA must ensure that expenditure in the schemes is achieving appropriate outcomes. Access to data direct from providers will enable SIRA to ensure that the schemes are delivering cost-effective health outcomes comparable to other health sectors.

I note the extensive stakeholder engagement by the department, staff and Ministers, which was also acknowledged by the shadow Minister. I further note that they have consulted with representatives of workers compensation and CTP insurers, including the Insurance Council of Australia, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Australian Medical Association and other relevant medical colleges, the Personal Injury Commission and the independent review committee, the point to point industry and, importantly, the Rural Fire Service and other relevant volunteer agencies, along with other peak government agencies. In conclusion, these amendments are essential and represent important improvements across motor accident and workers compensation schemes in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (10:31): I speak on behalf of the Labor Opposition to the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. In summary, the bill has five separate categories of amendments. They concern the motor accident legislation; workers compensation legislation; service providers: firefighter and emergency rescue workers; the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015, which gives SIRA new powers to regulate providers; and amendments supporting the establishment of a Personal Injury Commission. From the outset, I state that Labor believes those impacted in a motor vehicle accident need a system to support them without unnecessary layers of complexity and a workers compensation system that can be relied on so people can get back to work.

As the member for Canterbury said, this Government gets a big, fat "F" for that. It is shocking to think that a worker no longer has a system provided by the State Government that underlies their safety in returning to work. Indeed, it affects their capacity to be back in the workforce and to support their family in a dignified way, as they should—as the member for Canterbury so eloquently put it. Labor will never rest on its laurels. We will continue to fight for the rights of workers in their workplace, particularly when it comes to workers who suffer an injury through no fault of their own. I will now flag a number of concerns we have with the bill and make clear Labor's intention to amend it.

Stakeholders and workers have raised significant concerns about lines four to 16 on page 10, schedule 2.1 to the bill. This relates to changes to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 No. 70 to amend the definition of "medical or related treatment" eligible for compensation to be prescribed by regulation to ensure flexibility. The trade union movement, and the workers of this State whom they represent, are concerned about the potential for this to add further qualifications for when a worker can claim compensation if they contract a disease at work.

Under the current legislation certain diseases are already listed as work related and it does not require the worker to prove the disease was contracted at work. Labor believes the proposed changes to this section are unnecessary and we simply cannot support the legislation unless amendments are made. We propose omitting all words on lines four to 16 on page 10, schedule 2.1, in accordance with the amendment provided by the shadow Minister to this House. I make that very clear—we will not support this legislation unless that amendment is agreed to by the Government.

Secondly, there are significant concerns about the proposed expansion of powers for the State insurance regulator. Stakeholders have flagged with me anxiety over the enhanced powers of SIRA to instruct service providers to provide or decline specific services. I will pose some questions to the Minister and ask that he answer them in his response. SIRA already has overarching powers. From the outset, the Minister has said that this legislation makes minor and inconsequential amendments. I beg to differ here. This is a significant shift. It is not a minor change and it is not an inconsequential amendment. These are new powers; they are significant powers. How broad reaching are these powers? How far do they go? It appears to me that they effectively restrain trade or practice of unsuspected service providers. I want some clarity around that. Why would we be restraining trade practice in such a very important area of concern? For what purpose would we need to have these overarching powers? As I have said, how broad are they? Who are these service providers?

In the legislation it says the definition will be through regulation. We legislate in this House. We would like to see the definition whilst we are debating the bill, not through regulation. That is unnecessary and we should not tolerate that. Are we talking about lawyers, are we talking about doctors, are we talking about health service providers—who are we actually talking about here? It is not in the definition yet we are asked to sign up to a piece of legislation that does not tell the people of New South Wales who they are actually talking about. Are we trying to hide something? I would like the Minister to explain. I ask the Minister to clearly state in his response exactly what he is referring to in this instance. Stakeholders are concerned this would allow SIRA to direct a lawyer or medico-legal doctor to act in a particular way for a claimant. This has the potential to place an unsatisfactory fetter on a practitioner's right to contract with clients and provide full and independent legal advice. The issue is further complicated by the uncertain definition of service provider, as I have just outlined.

We are also seeking clarification on how SIRA's new powers will operate in practice and what impact they will have on a service provider's independence. That is critical. Will service providers still be independent? I need that question answered as well. Further, stakeholders have raised concerns about changes to section 4 (3) of the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 No. 10. This will omit the existing section, which establishes the meaning of pre-accident weekly earnings to include the average of the gross earnings of the earner from the period of change of circumstances such as starting a new job until the day before the accident. The new section removes the mention of the day before the accident and refers instead to the earnings an earner could be reasonably expected to receive during the 12 months after the change.

This could really disadvantage workers and impact the amount of money that they get in compensation. It is unfair, unjust and unnecessary. Concerns have been expressed to me that this could now incorporate an earning period after the accident has taken place. Nobody sees this as being fair. I urge the Minister to commit to ensuring this change does not leave any worker worse off in calculating pre-accident weekly earnings. This is critical and I seek his assurance that the Government is not trying to rip off workers. In addition, I ask the Minister to reconsider the insertion of new subsection (7) in section 3.15. It states:

If a person fails to comply with a requirement under this section within 7 days, or another period prescribed by the regulations, after the requirement is ...

The Minister can have his staff tell him what the rest of the clause says. But we have reduced the requirement for complying documentation to "within seven days". Mr Temporary Speaker, you know as well as I do—and every person in this House knows—it is hard to even get a doctor's appointment in seven days. It would be good if practical life experience and people's lived experience was reflected in our legislation. Certainly in the electorate of Swansea you are lucky to get an appointment within 14 days, quite frankly. I ask the Minister to consider extending that period to at least 14 days so we give people the opportunity to see a doctor so that they can be compliant and get the appropriate certification they need in accordance with the legislation. The legislation has also caused anxiety among our taxi operators and drivers and it is important to note their concerns about the impact the legislation will have on their insurance premiums compared with class 1 rideshare vehicles. Currently taxis are considered a class 7 vehicle, as we are all aware, but from January both hire cars and rideshare cars will be assigned as class 1. I seek an extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

Taxidrivers have raised concerns that the legislation will place the responsibility on the taxidriver for ensuring the operator has paid the vehicle premium. This could see taxidrivers taken off the road due to operators failing to pay the premium. Drivers have been vocal about the need for the responsibility to remain with the operator. They are also concerned about the change in calculating premiums. The bill proposes that risk factors

be introduced to determine the premiums. Drivers want to ensure this delivers a safety benefit rather than a commercial benefit to larger service providers. Independent taxi organisations, particularly in regional areas, do not own a fleet. It is often just a one-taxi company. They are disadvantaged by this change. They want to make sure it does not happen and that the Minister and the department hear them.

The NSW Taxi Council has also raised with me the issue that service providers will have to put in place more systems. Their costs are very significant already and they believe the cost of collecting the premium needs to be remitted. They will be seeking some assistance from the Minister and the Government in relation to the fact that this is essentially more red tape for taxi providers. We would like to see some attention given to that issue. I also know that there will be guidelines associated with this legislation in terms of the point to point industry. I ask that the Minister clarify to the House that the NSW Taxi Council and other point to point providers will be consulted extensively when devising those guidelines. The last thing we need, particularly in regional areas, is our taxi industry going down the drain because of too much red tape. We need to make sure that operators remain an incredibly important part of our communities.

In the community that I represent public transport—the buses—is shocking due to changes made by the Government. It is no surprise that I bring that up in this place; I bring it up at every opportunity because it is a disgrace. Consequently, taxis are very valuable and provide an important service. We thank them for that service and certainly do not want to make life any harder for them. Further, I ask the Minister to ensure that the bill is not simply legislation through regulation. We see that far too often from the Government. It is our job to bring legislation to the table in this House where we can see it and debate it; it is a transparent process. That is what we want. That is what the people of New South Wales want. Again, I ask that we do not legislate through regulation and we guarantee full and transparent consultation with stakeholders when designing the guidelines.

I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Canterbury, and congratulate her on her good work and on bringing an incredibly sensible amendment to this place. I conclude by reiterating that Labor will not and cannot support the bill unless the amendment that the shadow Minister has put on the table is supported by the Government.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (10:45): The purpose of the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 is to clarify rights and entitlements to improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of workers compensation and compulsory third party [CTP] insurance schemes. The changes proposed by the bill will continue the Government's reform agenda to improve the green slip scheme, including fixing unintended anomalies to enhance support for injured people. I think it would be fair to say that members on both sides of the House are committed to their duty to the good people of New South Wales, and particularly to support those less fortunate than ourselves. Nothing is as horrific as a car accident or an injury at work, both to witness and to live with for the rest of one's life.

The bill facilitates a fairer calculation of benefits for people who have been injured in motor accidents by allowing a consideration of a person's positive earnings changes up to 12 months prior to the accident and a person's actual post-accident earnings. It provides flexibility by giving interstate insurers the opportunity to manage a CTP claim by either entering into an agreement with a New South Wales licensed insurer to pay the benefits or opting for the Nominal Defendant to manage the claim on their behalf. Importantly, the Nominal Defendant will bear the cost of paying the statutory benefits where the interstate insurer's policy does not cover the at-fault driver.

My electorate borders Queensland so information and clarification like that is quite important. Every day 30 per cent of the people who are employed full-time in the electorate of Tweed travel over the border. It is about the same in terms of Queenslanders crossing the border. As we all know, my good friend the effervescent Premier of Queensland, Annastacia Palaszczuk, announced earlier that as of 1.00 a.m. tomorrow anyone in this room and in Greater Sydney is no longer welcome in the Sunshine State, and that arrangement will continue. So it looks like the good people are stuck with the member for Tweed for some time. My thoughts are with all those people who are affected by COVID.

The bill reaffirms the Supreme Court decision in *AAI Limited v Singh* by clarifying that drivers injured in no-fault motor accidents are entitled to benefits past 26 weeks where the injury is not minor. The bill also protects the integrity of the New South Wales Government's intellectual property by giving the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] stronger powers to regulate the use of the term "green slip". The bill also makes a number of improvements in the point to point space. To enable accurate calculation of premiums the bill compels taxi and booking service providers to supply data to SIRA or insurers as required. The bill also enables SIRA to require service providers to pay premiums. This ensures that the drivers are not unfairly pursued for premiums that have not been passed from the service providers to the insurers.

I turn to the workers compensation scheme amendments. The bill benefits children of deceased workers. This is a particularly interesting measure. A number of years ago in the Tweed we unfortunately had two of our young workers pass away in an incident involving scaffolding and a crane. I know one of the families personally and know the great deal of stress, concern and sorrow at the loss of such a young life. Additional compensation will be payable to cover the cost of managing and investing in the child's lump sum death benefit by the NSW Trustee & Guardian. This reduces the risk of the principal lump sum death benefit being eroded by fees. The bill simplifies the definition of "medical or related treatment" for workers and allows the regulations to prescribe medical or related treatments. Section 59 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 currently provides a definitive list of medical or related treatments. The new regulation-making power creates much-needed flexibility and enables SIRA to respond to emerging evidence as to what treatment supports optimal outcomes for the injured worker in the scheme.

Another notable group of amendments concerns volunteers. The response to the 2019 bushfire season would not have been possible without brave and heroic Rural Fire Service volunteers working 186,000 shifts. I, like many, pay tribute to the volunteers. The majority of us have the RFS in our electorates, and on an ongoing basis they are regularly called upon to put life and limb at risk. I also pay tribute to the families who support those volunteers—the spouses, husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, children et cetera. They make an enormous contribution by allowing their offspring or their partners to volunteer their time. Those volunteers, however, have not been equally compensated for injuries compared with those in paid work. The bill extends coverage to volunteers in New South Wales to support them and ensure potential volunteers are reassured that they will be protected. Volunteers who are injured will have greater access to return-to-work assistance, training, workplace aids and modifications as well as reasonable funeral expenses where a volunteer dies as a result of their volunteering activities.

I now turn to the amendments concerning service providers in both schemes. The bill gives SIRA the power to issue directions to service providers who are not providing services consistent with the regulations. The regulations also allow SIRA to limit or prevent service providers from providing services in the scheme. The bill also makes it an offence for a provider to not comply with a direction and makes it a condition of an insurer's licence that it must not engage, approve or pay a service provider for an excluded service. The bill provides SIRA with additional powers to obtain data from service providers. The workers compensation and CTP legislation currently provide the power for SIRA to compel the provision of data from insurers but not directly from other providers such as healthcare providers. The bill will minimise any additional burden on insurers to collect and report under the new data requirements.

The bill also supports the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020, which commenced on 1 March 2021, by making consequential minor amendments. The bill delivers timely improvements across the motor accident and workers compensation schemes in New South Wales and represents the Government's commitment to modern best practice and continually improving legislation. Some of the proposed reforms cover five broad themes: improving customer experience, scheme efficiency, fairness and equity; improving access to compensation entitlements for injured workers and volunteers as well as people injured in motor vehicle accidents and their dependants; expanding existing regulation-making powers, including provisions related to deemed diseases and point-to-point vehicles; and establishing new powers to enable better regulation of providers of treatment and other services in the workers compensation and CTP schemes. I seek a small extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

Ms Felicity Wilson: I want to hear more.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I thank the member for North Shore and I appreciate the support from my colleagues in the Chamber.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: And the Opposition.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: And the Opposition too—how could I forget? The bill will also support the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission. On the point I made before about deemed diseases, asbestosis is a terrible disease. The Tweed is one of the headquarters for the victims of that and I meet with them on a regular basis. Silicosis is another terrible disease about which we are becoming more and more knowledgeable, affecting the made stone and stone-cutting industries. I have been told by others that it will be the new asbestosis of its time. It is a terrible thing, particularly with young workers and young apprentices being exposed to a lifelong sentence obviously ending in death.

In developing the reforms the department consulted with representatives of workers compensation and CTP insurers including the Insurance Council of Australia, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Australian Medical Association and other relevant medical colleges, the Personal Injury Commission, the Independent Review Office, the point to point industry,

the RFS and other relevant volunteer agencies, along with other key government agencies. I compliment the Minister, but probably more importantly I compliment the ministerial staff and departmental staff who played a critical role in bringing precise and informed legislation to this House. Without further ado, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (10:57): I am pleased to support the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The bill makes a range of miscellaneous amendments to motor accidents legislation and workers compensation legislation. The bill will clarify rights and entitlements and improve regulation, administration and efficiency in the schemes to provide a more consistent customer experience for policyholders, injured people and other stakeholders of the compulsory third party [CTP] insurance scheme and the workers compensation scheme. As members of this House know, the introduction of the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 resulted in a significant reduction in green slip premiums for motorists and a less adversarial process for people injured in motor vehicle accidents. With any major legislative reform there is a duty on us to ensure it operates as intended.

We must continue to strengthen the CTP scheme and, if necessary, make further legislative improvements to ensure that the support for injured people is not eroded. The bill achieves this in several ways. The bill allows for better consideration of, first, a person's pre-accident weekly earnings to reflect any positive changes in their income 12 months prior to their injury; and, secondly, a person's actual earnings post-accident to ensure a fairer calculation of benefits for injured people. Injured people who reside outside Australia no longer need to apply to the Personal Injury Commission to get an earning capacity determination to access benefits when their earning capacity is beyond doubt. Rather than unnecessarily taking up the commission's time and delaying the person's access to benefits, the bill enables insurers to begin paying benefits immediately where the person's earning capacity is clear, more frequently than the currently prescribed quarterly basis where the injured person agrees.

The bill clarifies that all individuals injured in motor vehicle accidents who are not at fault are entitled to receive compensation after 26 weeks if they have suffered a non-minor injury. This amendment responds to comments made in a decision of the Supreme Court, *AAI Limited v Singh*, which recommended that no-fault motor accidents be clarified to avoid further disputation. Another important amendment concerns the accidents caused by interstate drivers. The bill provides flexibility by allowing interstate insurers to manage a compulsory CTP claim by entering into an agreement with a New South Wales insurer to pay the benefits where this is approved by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA]. Importantly, the bill also makes it clear that where the interstate insurer's policy does not cover the at-fault driver, the nominal defendant will bear the cost of paying the statutory benefits.

Members are aware that point to point transport is a rapidly changing industry, and CTP insurance needs to keep up to ensure that premiums are fairly determined, collected and paid. The existing motor accidents legislation does not require taxi and booking service providers to supply SIRA or insurers with the information necessary to fairly determine premiums. The bill now gives SIRA the power to require taxi and booking service providers to supply this information to ensure that premiums accurately reflect the risk, as well as to require taxi and booking service providers to pay premiums. The bill also imposes penalties on taxi and booking service providers who fail to provide information or pay premiums as required by SIRA, which is crucial to the enforcement of these changes. The bill also makes amendments to the workers compensation legislation. If a worker dies as a result of their work-related injury, a lump sum death benefit is payable. This is currently \$838,750.

Where the deceased had more than one dependant, this lump sum death benefit is apportioned between dependants including to the dependent children of the deceased. If the child is under 18 years of age, the money is normally held by the NSW Trustee & Guardian to be invested and managed on behalf of the child until they reach 18. The bill creates an additional compensation entitlement to cover the cost of managing those funds so that the child's lump sum is not eroded by fees and charges over time. This will make an enormous difference to a benefit awarded to the child of a deceased worker. For example, if the \$834,200 death benefit was placed in trust for a one-year-old child until they turned 18, without this amendment, that child's trust could incur fees of approximately \$150,000 or more over the 17 years. The Government anticipates this additional compensation entitlement will benefit around 60 to 70 children and young people each year.

The bill also makes it easier for injured workers who reside overseas to reach agreement with their insurers and access their compensation more efficiently. The bill allows for the worker and insurer to agree on the likely permanent nature of the worker's incapacity without having to go to the Personal Injury Commission, and to receive payments at the employer's usual times of payments rather than quarterly in arrears. Amendments to the definition of "medical and related treatment" will ensure flexibility, as the bill creates a regulation-making power to prescribe medical or related treatment. It is intended that the regulation will be updated to reflect medical and related treatment that is optimal and evidence-based. This will help support workers to receive quality medical

and related treatment under the scheme. The bill also seeks to better align the entitlements of our prescribed volunteers to those of workers injured in New South Wales workplaces.

The 2019-20 bushfire season saw countless brave Rural Fire Service volunteers risk their lives to help our community. This period also highlighted some of the differences between New South Wales workers and volunteers should the volunteer be injured or die as a result of their volunteering activities. The bill addresses that gap by ensuring those who donate their time and expertise are better supported if they are injured while volunteering. This support includes access to return-to-work assistance, vocational re-education and training, workplace aids and modifications, or reasonable funeral expenses where a volunteer dies as a result of their volunteering activities. The bill further supports volunteers by extending provisional acceptance of liability to them so that they can more quickly access medical treatment and payments if applicable.

Volunteers will also have the benefit of the additional compensation entitlement in the general scheme, to cover the cost of investing and managing the lump sum awarded to a child following the death of a parent or other person they were dependent upon where that lump sum is paid to the NSW Trustee & Guardian. The Government wants to be certain that people who are injured on roads and in workplaces in New South Wales receive quality care and support through their recovery. At present SIRA has limited powers to prevent and respond to behaviours and practices of health providers that are inconsistent with the objectives of the workers compensation and motor accidents schemes and legislation. While SIRA can address clinical practice and misconduct issues by referring them to a professional body or to the Health Care Complaints Commission, these agencies do not investigate or take into account the specific requirements and obligations of providers under the two schemes, such as SIRA rules aimed at reducing overcharging or overservicing.

The bill grants SIRA additional regulatory powers to ensure that treatments and other services provided to injured workers and road users are appropriate, timely, cost-effective and contribute directly to improving outcomes. This includes the power for SIRA to direct service providers to provide services in the schemes. The regulations will ensure that the type of direction given to a provider is relevant to the type of behaviour SIRA is trying to manage. It will be an offence for a service provider to not comply with SIRA's directions, and a condition on insurers' licences to not engage excluded services. The bill provides for a review of a direction given by SIRA to not provide specified services or relevant services to a service provider through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. [*Extension of time*]

The bill also provides SIRA with additional powers to obtain data from service providers to enable it to effectively exercise its functions in managing the performance, effectiveness and affordability of the workers compensation and CTP schemes. The ability for SIRA to direct providers to provide claims-related data will allow it to analyse whether the health services being provided under the schemes are of sufficient quality and value, and comparable to those provided in other health systems. The last area of the bill concerns the recently established Personal Injury Commission. The Personal Injury Commission Act 2020 commenced on 1 March 2021 and is a major step forward in New South Wales personal injury dispute resolution, giving those involved in workers compensation or motor accidents disputes one place to have their dispute resolved. The bill supports that success with minor clarifying amendments that ensure the Personal Injury Commission Act operates as intended. I thank the Minister and his staff for working on this important legislation and commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (11:08): I make a contribution to debate in support of the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which contains a number of housekeeping amendments that correct typographical errors and amend redundant references. It also includes a number of more substantive changes that are designed to ensure that policyholders and injured people across workers compensation and compulsory third party [CTP] schemes experience improved outcomes. Those changes also extend coverage to emergency services volunteers who are injured or killed in the course of volunteering. Starting with the motor accidents scheme, the enactment of the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 has better supported people injured on our roads and reduced the cost of green slips. However, we must continually evolve as the CTP scheme matures to make sure that the scheme meets the needs of policyholders and injured people.

The bill ensures that objective through a fairer calculation of benefits for people who have been injured. There are two aspects to that fairer calculation. The bill allows CTP insurers to take into consideration any positive changes in a person's circumstances up to 12 months prior to the accident to account for what the injured person would have been entitled to earn had the injury not happened. Similarly, the bill amends the calculation of weekly statutory benefits to include the consideration of a person's actual earnings post-accident to promote a fair and equitable assessment of a person's weekly entitlements. Currently injured persons residing outside Australia may face red tape in obtaining earning capacity determinations. Even when the injured person's earning capacity is beyond doubt, they need to apply to the Personal Injury Commission for a determination before they can receive their benefits. The bill addresses that inflexibility by enabling insurers to pay benefits immediately when a person's

earning capacity is clear cut. It also enables insurers to make payments to an injured person more frequently than on the quarterly basis, which is currently prescribed.

The bill clarifies provisions in the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 relating to statutory benefits for drivers in no-fault motor accidents, reinforcing Justice Fagan's recommendations in *AAI Limited v Singh*. The bill puts beyond doubt that all drivers who are not at fault in an accident can receive statutory benefits past 26 weeks if they have a non-minor injury. A number of clarifying amendments in the bill reinforce the original intent. The bill also addresses uncertainties around management of interstate claims where the at-fault driver is insured interstate by allowing an interstate insurer to enter into an agreement with a New South Wales licensed insurer to pay the statutory benefits on its behalf or to have the Nominal Defendant manage the claim. Where the Nominal Defendant manages the claim, the bill enables New South Wales CTP insurers to recover all reasonable costs from interstate insurers relating to the handling of the claim. However, the bill makes it clear that where the interstate insurer's policy does not cover the at-fault driver, the Nominal Defendant will bear the cost of paying the statutory benefits to that at-fault driver.

I turn to the amendments relating to point to point transport services. Currently, taxi and booking service providers are not required to provide information to the NSW State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA], meaning that if the information is refused, premiums cannot be calculated based on the time the car spends on the road or on other data that the insurer requires. The bill changes that by giving SIRA the power to compel information from taxi and booking service providers for the purpose of determining premiums. That is just another dimension in which the growth of the point to point transport industry has changed the regulatory landscape. Governments must keep up by making changes that enable fairness to be applied to all parties involved in the process. The bill ensures that premiums are now passed on where required by SIRA and introduces penalties of up to \$55,000 for a service provider that fails to comply.

I turn to the workers compensation scheme. Currently the lump sum death benefit that is payable when a worker dies as a result of a work injury is apportioned between family members, including to any children of the deceased. A child's portion of the lump sum death benefit is generally held in trust by the NSW Trustee & Guardian until the child reaches 18. The NSW Trustee & Guardian invests and manages the money on behalf of the child. The bill includes an entitlement to an additional compensation amount to cover investment and management fees so that any amount awarded to a dependent child is not at risk of being eroded by fees over time. That is a fairness provision to ensure that the child is not disadvantaged.

The Government anticipates that that will have a positive impact for approximately 60 to 70 children and young people each year. As with the CTP amendments, the bill enables injured workers who reside overseas to reach agreement with their insurers. The bill allows for agreement on the likely permanent nature of the worker's incapacity without applying to the Personal Injury Commission. It also enables injured people to receive payments at their employers' usual times of payment rather than quarterly in arrears. For those of us who are used to fortnightly or monthly payments going into the bank, that is a more convenient arrangement; it allows an insurer to pay an injured person in the manner to which they are accustomed. The bill amends the definition of "medical or related treatment". There will be greater flexibility through regulation-making powers to respond and adapt to changing evidence and practice relating to medical treatment for injured workers.

In 2019 three NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers lost their lives battling bushfires to keep their communities safe. That tragic event highlighted the differences in cover for workers compensation between paid workers and volunteers. The bill addresses that difference by ensuring that volunteers like the thousands who fought those bushfires in 2019-20 are supported and have access to entitlements more closely aligned to paid workers if they are injured while volunteering. That support includes return-to-work assistance, training, workplace aids and modifications, and reasonable funeral expenses where a volunteer dies as a result of their volunteering activities. The bill further supports volunteers by enabling insurers to provisionally accept liability, which means injured volunteers can access medical treatment and payments up front instead of waiting for a final liability decision.

The bill also provides SIRA with additional regulatory powers to ensure that only those services for injured road users and workers that provide improved health and return-to-work outcomes and are consistent with the legislation, guidelines and fees orders are funded by the workers compensation and CTP schemes. Currently, SIRA refers concerns about a health provider's clinical practices and behaviour to their professional body or to the Health Care Complaints Commission. However, those bodies have no powers to investigate the provision of services inconsistent with the requirements of the workers compensation and CTP schemes, such as billing and payment rules. That is why the bill amends the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 to empower SIRA to issue directions to service providers to ensure that the services they provide are consistent with scheme and legislative objectives. That includes the power to issue a direction to limit or prevent service providers from providing some services in the schemes. Under the amendments, it will be an offence for a provider to not comply

with directions. It will also be a condition on an insurer's licence that it not engage, approve or pay an excluded service provider.

Finally, the bill makes two amendments consequential on the enactment of the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020, or the PIC Act. First, it confirms the application of the Judges' Pensions Act 1953 so that it applies to the President of the Personal Injury Commission in a similar manner to its application to the President of the Workers Compensation Commission of NSW. Secondly, it aligns the terminology used in the Civil Liability Act 2002 and the Sporting Injuries Insurance Act 1978 with the PIC Act. The net effect of the amendments is to update the legislation in a manner that ensures the protection provided to injured workers, travellers and now volunteers is as fair and extensive as can be managed in a system that looks after injured people and at the same time protects insurance companies and policyholders from mismanagement of the schemes. It is a definite improvement on a number of fronts. I commend Minister Dominello for bringing the bill to the House and for continuing to monitor the application of the schemes to ensure the best protection possible for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (11:18): It is a pleasure to support the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I echo the comments of the previous speaker, the member for Riverstone, who eloquently put on record his support for the bill. The bill makes amendments to provisions in the compulsory third party [CTP] insurance scheme and the workers compensation scheme. The bill aims to support the operation of the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 by clarifying its application in several ways, which brings us to the heart of why it is important to get the legislation right: The Government values the importance of people's safety and their ability to work, but it also recognises that at times accidents occur that can hinder an individual's safety and obstruct them from working. The bill strives to balance those realities and hardships by putting systems in place to improve customer experience, fairness and access to compensation entitlements.

First, the bill allows for better consideration of a person's pre-accident weekly earnings to reflect any positive changes in their income 12 months prior to their injury, and a person's actual earnings post-accident to ensure a fairer calculation of the benefits that an injured person will receive. As someone who has worked closely with individuals who have had accidents, particularly during my time in the NSW Police Force, I can attest to the financial hardship that those individuals face at various points in time through the schemes. The bill intends to reduce the financial stress that accident-prone individuals face by reflecting the income that those individuals were receiving in the 12 months prior to the accident and by ensuring that a fairer calculation of earnings and benefits are accessible post-accident.

Secondly, injured people who reside outside Australia no longer need to apply to the Personal Injury Commission to get an earning capacity determination to access benefits when their earning capacity is beyond doubt. That has been done to increase accessibility for individuals who have their accident outside Australia and are hence obstructed from working when they arrive in New South Wales. The bill directly supports the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission. Since being established by the New South Wales Government last year, the Personal Injury Commission has streamlined the dispute resolution process in both the compulsory third party insurance and the workers compensation schemes. The bill supports the continued success of the Personal Injury Commission by ensuring that its powers and scope are clear.

Thirdly, the bill responds to the Supreme Court's recommendations in *AAI Limited v Singh* by clarifying no-fault accident provisions and prescribing that drivers injured in no-fault accidents are entitled to claim benefits past the 26-week period. That strikes at the heart of the bill. Often individuals who are troubled by accidents, particularly no-fault accidents, experience hardship beyond financial difficulties. As members would agree, being involved in an accident can cause great disruption to families and livelihoods. By allowing individuals to claim entitlements past 26 weeks, the bill recognises the great disruption that accidents often cause to individuals and their loved ones.

Fourthly, the bill protects the integrity of the term "green slip" by allowing the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] to regulate the use of the term by businesses promoting green slip products and services. Currently, people shopping online to find an appropriate green slip can be misled by comparison websites that are difficult to distinguish from the official Green Slip Check website. The New South Wales Government recognises that that is an integral step towards maintaining the integrity of the green slip. By allowing SIRA to regulate the use of the term, it codifies the law in relation to green slips and better protects consumers from potentially being misled by a comparison website.

Lastly, the bill includes amendments to improve the operation of the CTP scheme for the point to point industry by addressing the current legislative gaps, including by ensuring that point to point vehicles pay appropriate premiums under the CTP scheme. In addition, the New South Wales Government is committed to the design and development of new, long-term CTP pricing arrangements for taxis and hire vehicles to better ensure that their premiums are fair in relation to others in the point to point industry. The bill provides certainty and

clarity for insurers and the industry in terms of premium determinations, collections and payments by enabling SIRA to direct taxi and booking service providers to pay premiums and obtain additional information required by SIRA or insurers to determine premiums. The bill also imposes penalties where taxi and booking service providers fail to pay premiums or provide information as required.

I turn to the workers compensation scheme. The bill supports the children of deceased workers who are under 18 years of age by providing an additional compensation entitlement to cover funds management. That additional compensation will cover the cost of the NSW Trustee & Guardian managing and investing those funds, ensuring that the principal amount of the lump sum death benefit awarded to the child of a deceased worker is not at risk of being eroded by fees as the years go by. The bill also creates flexibility by allowing the regulations to prescribe what constitutes medical and related treatment. Currently, section 59 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 provides a definitive list of medical and related services that may be compensated for under the Act. That will streamline the definition of "medical and related treatment", which will allow for better regulations surrounding what constitutes treatment. The amendment will also ensure the workers compensation scheme can respond quickly to advances in medical treatment and evolving practices.

The experience of the 2019 bushfire season and the resulting claims highlighted the need to more closely align benefits for volunteers with those of paid New South Wales workers. With nearly 40,000 claims lodged after the 2019 bushfires, the alignment is even more necessary. Extending that coverage is critical to support the heroes of our communities and to make sure they are not disadvantaged by their selfless acts. New South Wales is fortunate to have such a large number of volunteers who serve our community. The amendment ensures that those volunteers are not discouraged from continuing that great work. The bill provides for access to return-to-work assistance, training, workplace aids and modifications, and reasonable funeral expenses where a volunteer dies in the course of their volunteering activities. Those provisions extend the purpose of the bill beyond financial compensation by accounting for the other stresses that are caused by accidents and includes the retraining of individuals as they begin to return to work.

In addition, the bill recognises that individuals may need assistance with returning to the workplace. The bill also addresses concerns that some service providers are not providing the expected standard of treatment, care and support to those injured in the workplace and on our roads. The New South Wales Government recognises the need to regulate the services that are afforded to individuals who experience accidents in the workplace and on our roads by making sure that those services are efficient and fair. The bill provides SIRA with additional powers to make directions to limit or prevent service providers from providing services in the schemes in accordance with the regulations. SIRA does a great job of regulating motor accidents, CTP insurance and workers compensation insurance. By extending its powers, the New South Wales Government recognises the need to streamline insurance and compensation processes through a regulatory body.

The bill introduces a new offence for a provider who does not comply with the regulator's directions and a condition on insurers' licences to not engage excluded services. The bill also gives the regulator the power to request data from service providers to carry out its enhanced regulatory functions. That will ensure the services provided by the regulator are of the highest standard and are carried out in accordance with all available data. In doing so, the bill puts a provision in place to improve the customer experience and scheme efficiencies and also ensures equity across those schemes. Service providers should rest assured that they will be afforded procedural fairness. The bill provides for a right of review of SIRA's directions, which limit or prevent providers from providing services to injured people in both schemes, to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The bill also amends the Civil Liability Act 2002 and the Sporting Injuries Insurance Act 1978 to clarify the terminology in relation to medical assessors, and confirms the application of the Judges' Pensions Act 1953. I commend the bill to the House.

Business interrupted.

Announcements

COVID-19

The SPEAKER: This morning I announced that the Legislative Assembly would return to a restricted Chamber seating plan, with social distancing arrangements. I asked members to consider wearing masks and I thank those members who have accepted that invitation. I also announced that a number of members of the Legislative Assembly were asked to take a COVID-19 test. Those results have not yet come back, but I understand we will have them by the end of the day.

The Premier has just made various announcements. Consistent with those announcements and more recent developments, I bring to the attention of members and staff that an email has been sent by Mr Mark Webb, CEO of the Department of Parliamentary Services. Further to that email, I inform members that today question time

will be restricted to 20 people in the Chamber. There will be 10 members from each side in the Chamber. Further details will be worked out. While it is compulsory to wear masks from four o'clock today, I ask all members and staff to wear masks in this workplace straightaway. There is an exception for a member who is speaking in the Chamber at a normal voice level; we want democracy to continue to operate. I ask members to comply forthwith. I will be wearing a mask, except when I am speaking. It will be a bit difficult in question time; I might keep my mask off. I ask members to adapt their behaviour appropriately.

Bills

MOTOR ACCIDENTS AND WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Business resumed.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:30): I am delighted to support the Motor Accident and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The bill makes an array of amendments to the compulsory third party [CTP] and workers compensation insurance schemes. The bill ensures a more consistent customer experience for policyholders, injured people and other stakeholders by clarifying rights and entitlements, and improving regulation, administration and efficiency in the schemes. Since the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 was enacted, the cost of green slip premiums has reduced significantly and people injured in motor vehicle accidents have benefited from a less adversarial process. But "set and forget" is not the approach of this Government; it will continually improve the CTP scheme in New South Wales. The bill helps to achieve that in several ways.

The bill ensures that where people had positive earning changes in the year before a motor accident, the higher wage is fully taken into account when calculating pre-accident weekly earnings. The bill also allows for consideration of actual earnings post-accident for people injured in motor accidents, to ensure that a more equitable assessment of entitlements occurs. At present the Personal Injury Commission must make an earning capacity determination prior to payments commencing when the injured person resides overseas, even if the relevant impact on the person's earning capacity is beyond any doubt. The bill allows insurers to instead begin paying benefits straightaway in such cases and to make more frequent payments than the current quarterly basis, if an agreement is reached with an injured person. That not only advantages the injured person to get quicker access to essential support, which is obviously necessary, but also saves the time and resources of the commission.

The Supreme Court decision in *AAI Limited v Singh* [2019] NSWSC 1300 noted that the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 has deeming provisions relating to the statutory benefits for drivers in no-fault accidents that would benefit from legislative clarification. The bill addresses that recommendation and clarifies that all drivers who are not at fault and have a non-minor injury may receive statutory benefits past 26 weeks. This amendment is prudent and necessary to ensure that no driver is disadvantaged where they were not at fault for an accident, particularly in cases of no-fault motor accidents. In relation to improving the administration of the CTP scheme, the bill protects the use of the term "green slip" by giving stronger regulatory powers to the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] to regulate the use of the term. That will ensure that non-government agencies cannot misuse the mandatory personal injury insurance terminology to promote specific services or products and potentially confuse or mislead the New South Wales public in relation to the official Government Green Slip Price Check website.

Point to point transport is a market that has had major changes in operating models, and CTP insurance needs to evolve to ensure premiums are calculated fairly for drivers across that industry. Taxi and booking service providers are currently not obligated to supply information necessary to accurately determine premiums to reflect risk levels. The bill gives SIRA the power to require that information to be provided to SIRA and insurers. The bill also resolves a legislative mismatch whereby service providers that had agreed to pay premiums on behalf of their drivers were not obligated to do so; it does this by giving SIRA the power to direct service providers to pay premiums. With that change, drivers can have more confidence that their insurance premiums will be paid. Turning to the workers compensation scheme, the bill includes an important entitlement to an additional compensation amount to cover investment and management fees so that any amount awarded to a child and managed by the NSW Trustee & Guardian is not at risk of being eroded by fees over time, which has been one of the concerns. The Government anticipates that will have a positive impact for approximately 60 to 70 children and young people each year.

The bill makes it easier for injured people who cease to live in Australia to establish their ongoing eligibility for weekly payments. Workers and their insurers can agree on the likely permanent nature of their incapacity without having to bring a dispute in the Personal Injury Commission. The bill simplifies the definition of "medical

or related treatment" by allowing the regulations to prescribe such treatment. In this way, the workers compensation scheme can keep up with advances in treatment and maintain an evidence-based approach in defining "medical or related treatment" under the scheme. Volunteers risk their lives to protect the community; the bill ensures that those who donate their time and expertise are better supported if they are injured while volunteering. That support includes return-to-work assistance, training, workplace aids and modifications for work, or reasonable funeral expenses where a volunteer dies as a result of their volunteering activities. Provisional acceptance of liability is also expanded to volunteers in the bill so that they can more quickly access medical treatment and payments, if applicable.

The Government wants to be certain that the treatment, care and support delivered to people injured on roads and in workplaces in our State is of a high standard and results in improved health outcomes. SIRA has limited scope to regulate service providers whose behaviours and practices negatively impact the outcomes for injured people and the CTP and workers compensation schemes, such as overcharging and overservicing. While SIRA can refer providers to health regulatory agencies like the Health Care Complaints Commission for clinical practice or conduct concerns, those agencies do not investigate breaches of requirements specific to the workers compensation and CTP schemes. That is why the bill equips SIRA with additional regulatory powers to provide directions to service providers that are not providing services consistent with the regulations and, for more serious or repeated adverse behaviour, prevent them from providing some or any services in the schemes.

Not complying with directions will be an offence for providers and there will be a condition on insurers' licences that they must not engage excluded services. Where there are powers to restrict or exclude providers, procedural fairness necessarily goes hand in hand, and that is enshrined in the bill. I turn to some of the overarching things the bill seeks to do, which includes lots of the amendments I talked about in relation to motor accidents and workers compensation legislation as well as the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 and the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. It is about the bill clarifying rights and entitlements, and improving the regulation, administration and efficiency of the CTP insurance and workers compensation schemes.

The amendments cover five broad themes: first, improving customer experience, scheme efficiency, fairness and equity; secondly, improving access to compensation entitlements for injured workers, volunteers and people injured in motor vehicle accidents and their dependants; thirdly, expanding existing regulation-making powers, including provisions related to deemed diseases and point to point vehicles; fourthly, establishing new powers to enable better regulation of providers of treatment and other services across the workers compensation and CTP schemes; and, fifthly, supporting the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission.

There are a number of reasons these amendments are being talked about and are necessary now. The amendments are making proactive scheme improvements. A static scheme in an evolving market will quickly cease to be fit for purpose. That is what we want to avoid. Continuous improvement of the CTP and workers compensation schemes is necessary to ensure that the Government is responding to court decisions, stakeholder concerns and new data. It is about outcomes for injured people. Targeted efforts through minor amendments add up to make a difference to the lives of the millions of people who interact with CTP and workers compensation schemes, either as policyholders or injured people, by further improving the clarity, efficiency and affordability of these schemes. Last year these schemes collected \$6.6 billion in premiums and had 9.8 million policy holders, with 105,715 newly reported claims. [*Extension of time*]

The areas for amendment in the bill show a responsive approach to customers and other stakeholders of workers compensation and CTP schemes who have raised these as areas of uncertainty that need clarity from the Government through legislation. The amendments align with the Premier's priority for better customer service and the "Tell us once" ethos in government. The amendments ensure a more consistent customer experience for policyholders, injured people and other stakeholders of the workers compensation and CTP schemes. Just last year the New South Wales Government passed legislation to establish the Personal Injury Commission to streamline the dispute resolution process in both the CTP and workers compensation schemes, which commenced on 1 March 2021. To support its continued success, this bill includes minor legislative amendments to ensure that the powers and scope of the commission are clear and unambiguous. There was a lot of community consultation and relevant stakeholder consultation.

The Department of Customer Service and SIRA consulted with key stakeholders of both schemes for each area of amendment, including representatives of workers compensation and CTP insurers, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Australian Medical Association and other relevant medical colleges and health practitioner regulatory bodies, NSW Treasury, the Insurance Council of Australia, icare, the Personal Injury Commission, the Independent Review Office, the point to point industry—which is an important part of this—the Rural Fire Service and other relevant volunteer agencies and other key government agencies. Submissions and feedback contributed to the Government's final position provided for in the bill.

I look at some of the point to point arrangements as well. The Government is committed to achieving longer-term premium-setting arrangements for the point to point industry that foster lower premiums, reward safer driving and accurately reflect the risks associated with the different vehicles operating in the point to point transport market, resulting in fairer premiums. Any new CTP arrangements for the industry must provide flexibility to respond to future changes in the sector. The reforms to the CTP scheme in 2017 established new arrangements for determining premiums for taxis and hire vehicles. Under these arrangements, premiums for taxis and comparable hire vehicles are based partly on the distance travelled by the vehicle, but also allow for separate methods of premium calculation and payment to reflect how the vehicles are used.

The distance-based CTP arrangements for taxis and hire vehicles were introduced as a short-term measure to address the perceived disparity between the rules and prices associated with different vehicles operating in the point to point transport market. The arrangements were intended to operate for the first three years of the new CTP scheme, up until 1 December 2020, to provide sufficient time for SIRA and insurers to identify and collect claims experience data on hire vehicles and other emerging point to point transport providers. That data is essential to informing appropriate longer-term CTP pricing arrangements for the point to point industry. The strong view of stakeholders was that further consultation on the new arrangements was required and time needed to implement any changes.

The Government also appreciates that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the point to point industry. It was important to give the industry time to transition to a COVID-19 safe economy before making any process or system changes necessary to support the new CTP premium-setting arrangements. Accordingly, the Government extended the consultation and implementation timetable for these new longer-term premium-setting arrangements for the point to point industry. Any guidelines will be established in consultation with industry and only where they are required to implement the new premium-setting arrangements. SIRA will also ensure that any guidelines established do not unnecessarily increase the administrative burden for both insurers and service providers, in particular small service providers.

The bill ensures procedural fairness by providing a right for service providers to seek a review of directions in accordance with the regulations and prescribing a right to apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal when a direction restricts or prevents the provider from delivering services in the workers compensation and CTP schemes. The bill also provides the power for SIRA to request data from service providers to enable it to monitor the quality of services. The bill represents a wide range of improvements across motor accidents and workers compensation schemes in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:45): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The bill introduces a number of amendments to the motor accidents and workers compensation legislation, as well as the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 and the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. These amendments seek to clarify rights and entitlements, and improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of the compulsory third party [CTP] insurance and workers compensation schemes. The amendments cover five broad themes: firstly, improving customer experience, scheme efficiency, fairness and equity; secondly, improving access to compensation entitlements for injured workers, volunteers and people injured in motor vehicle accidents and their dependants; thirdly, expanding existing regulation-making powers, including provisions related to deemed diseases and point to point vehicles; fourthly, establishing new powers to enable better regulation for providers of treatment and other services in the workers compensation and CTP insurance schemes; and, fifthly, supporting the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission.

As the member for Dubbo pointed out, I want to speak specifically in terms of schedule 1 and compulsory third party insurance, looking at why these amendments are necessary now. These amendments are making proactive scheme improvements. It is important to recognise that a static scheme in an evolving market will quickly cease to be fit for purpose. We should look to continuous improvement of the CTP and workers compensation schemes as necessary to ensure that the Government is responding to court decisions, to stakeholder concerns, to new data, and to outcomes of injured people. Targeted efforts through minor amendments add up to make a difference to the lives of the millions of people who interact with CTP and workers compensation schemes either as policyholders or injured people, by further improving the clarity, efficiency and affordability of these schemes. Last year these schemes collected \$6.6 billion in premiums and had 9.8 million policy holders, with 105,715 newly reported claims.

The areas for amendment in the bill show a responsive approach to customers and other stakeholders of workers compensation and CTP schemes, who have raised these as areas of uncertainty that need clarity from the Government through legislation. This is what the bill sets out to do. The amendments align with the Premier's priority for better customer service and the "Tell us once" ethos in government. The amendments ensure a more consistent customer experience for policyholders, injured people and other stakeholders of the workers

compensation and CTP schemes. Just last year the New South Wales Government passed legislation to establish the Personal Injury Commission to streamline the dispute resolution process in both the CTP and workers compensation schemes, commencing on 1 March 2021.

To support its continued success, the bill includes minor legislative amendments to ensure that the powers and scope of the commission are clear and unambiguous. Such legislation requires consultation. The Department of Customer Service and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority have consulted with key stakeholders on both schemes for each area of amendments, including representatives from workers compensation and CTP insurers, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Australian Medical Association and other relevant medical colleges and health practitioner regulatory bodies, NSW Treasury, the Insurance Council of Australia, icare, the Personal Injury Commission, the Independent Review Office, the point to point industry, the Rural Fire Service and other relevant volunteer agencies and key government agencies.

Submissions and feedback from those stakeholders contributed to the final government position provided for in the bill. The importance of amending this legislation with regard to CTP is to ensure that the Government can continue to maintain affordable green slip insurance premiums. A major reform was the introduction of the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017, which established a new CTP scheme on 1 December 2017. Since then, motorists have seen a significant reduction in the cost of green slip premiums of more than \$145 on average. Targeted CTP scheme improvements are necessary to ensure that the CTP scheme continues to operate efficiently. The amendments made by the bill directly address stakeholder concerns. Over the past 3½ years since the scheme's commencement, customers and other stakeholders of the CTP scheme have raised some areas of uncertainty and sought clarification from the Government through legislation.

Having spoken about the "why" of this legislation, I turn now to the amendments, specifically with regard to CTP. The objects of the amendments are to ensure that point to point vehicles pay appropriate premiums under the CTP scheme; to improve and clarify access to compensation entitlements for people injured in motor vehicle accidents, including in no-fault accidents; to enable better regulation of providers of treatment and other services; to improve processes for statutory benefits claims against interstate insurers; to generally improve efficiency in the administration of the CTP scheme; and to correct drafting errors and anomalies in the CTP legislation. Most of those amendments will have no material impact on premiums, although we note that a minor premium increase of around 80c to \$1.50 per policy is expected to result from the amendment to clarify that drivers injured in a no-fault motor accident are entitled to statutory benefits past 26 months.

The amendments in the bill work towards achieving the best outcomes for injured people. In particular, amendments confirming entitlements for drivers injured in no-fault motor accidents will provide greater benefits to injured people than were traditionally available in their New South Wales CTP scheme. Key benefits of the CTP amendments in the bill are: statutory benefits payments for people injured in motor vehicle accidents will continue to be fairly assessed and calculated; all people injured in motor accidents who are not at fault are entitled to receive statutory benefits after 26 weeks subject to the minor injury threshold; flexibility and certainty in the management of interstate claims; and the integrity of the New South Wales Government's intellectual property will be protected. The bill will ensure that statutory benefits payments continue to be fairly assessed and calculated by allowing CTP insurers to take into consideration any positive changes in a person's circumstances up to 12 months prior to the accident.

The bill amends the definition of pre-accident weekly earnings to include consideration of any increased earnings that the injured person would have been entitled to earn had the injury not happened. The bill promotes a fair and equitable assessment of the person's entitlements. It amends the calculation of weekly statutory benefits payable to consider a person's actual earnings post-accident. Where a person returns to work after the injury and their actual earnings are greater than the earning capacity, the actual earnings will be taken into account when determining their entitlements. Finally, the bill clarifies entitlements for people residing outside Australia. Currently, to access benefits an injured person living overseas must lodge an application with the Personal Injury Commission to get an earning capacity determination, even if the relevant impact on the person's earning capacity is beyond doubt. In those clear-cut cases an insurer can now start paying benefits immediately and make payments more frequently than on a quarterly basis, as is currently prescribed. [*Extension of time*]

Having spoken about schedule 1, I turn to some of the amendments dealing with workers compensation. In particular, I speak briefly about the volunteer amendments. The bill seeks to provide greater consistency and alignment between the way workers compensation legislation protects bush fire fighter and rescue association volunteers and New South Wales paid workers undertaking the same activities. That is particularly important to me after the Albury electorate was involved in the new year's fires of 2020 and we saw the importance of our RFS workers and emergency services volunteers, who risk their lives every day to serve their community. The bill addresses some of the discrepancies between paid workers and volunteers, which were brought into focus

during that 2019-2020 bushfire season. For example, the bill provides for access to funeral and associated costs, return-to-work assistance and prompt payment of medical and weekly payments to eligible volunteers.

The amendments allow for the payment of funeral expenses for volunteers where compensation is payable for the death of that volunteer; allow for the payment of reasonable costs for the transportation of the body of a volunteer; allow for compensation for the costs of work assistance and educational training provided to assist a worker to return to work with a new employer for volunteers who were engaged in paid employment at the time of their volunteer-related injury; enable insurers to commence weekly payments and pay medical expenses based on provisional acceptance of liability, pending a final liability decision; and, finally, allow for compensation for the cost of investing and managing a child's lump sum, where that lump sum is paid to the NSW Trustee & Guardian, to be available to volunteers.

In conclusion, whilst the legislation deals with the breadth of areas of CTP, motor accidents and workers compensation, the contribution towards our RFS and emergency volunteers is a deeply important part of this legislation for my community in the Albury electorate. As I said during my introduction, a static scheme in an evolving market quickly ceases to be fit for purpose. Continuous improvement is important and this legislation sets out to do that. I thank the Minister for introducing the bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:58): On behalf of the Government, I speak in support of the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I thank the member for Canterbury, who has been in the Chamber for the duration of the debate. I note the contributions from members of the Opposition. I also note the contributions from the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Tweed, the member for Miranda, the member for Riverstone, the member for Seven Hills, the member for Dubbo and, most recently, the member for Albury, who has just left the Chamber. As other members have outlined, the purpose of the bill is to clarify the rights and entitlements of workers, and to improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of the workers compensation and compulsory third party [CTP] insurance schemes in New South Wales.

The bill will ensure that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] continues to achieve those key public policy outcomes that are so important in the service delivery to injured people: affordability, and the effective management and sustainability of workers compensation and the CTP insurance schemes in New South Wales. In addition, the bill introduces a number of amendments to the motor accidents and workers compensation legislation as well as to the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015, which will also include the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. The amendments seek to clarify entitlements, and improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of the compulsory third party insurance and workers compensation schemes in this great State.

Every time I speak about legislation brought forward by the Minister I am always impressed by the amount of stakeholder engagement by the Minister and his team. They have engaged with key stakeholders, including the CTP and workers compensation insurance peak legal and medical professional bodies. I will touch on that later. These amendments represent proactive and incremental scheme improvements for injured workers and, just as importantly, for their families. The amendments provide clarity and fairness in workers compensation entitlements while improving the flexibility of the scheme to adapt to changing operating environments. The key features of the amendments to the 1987 Act are important. The amendments update the legislative structure so that the existing deemed diseases list can specify minimum periods of service in specified employment and minimum exposure requirements, if applicable, before a disease is deemed to be work related. This will allow a scientific and data-driven approach to any future amendments to the deemed diseases list.

In addition, the funds management amendment establishes an additional compensation entitlement for the benefit of the dependent children of deceased workers. This additional compensation entitlement will meet the fees charged by the NSW Trustee & Guardian to manage the lump sum death benefit on behalf of a dependent child. The member for Albury outlined this most recently. Importantly, amendments relating to injured workers who cease to live in Australia make it easier for those workers to establish their ongoing entitlement to weekly payments. The amendments also provide that those workers residing outside the Commonwealth can receive their compensation payments at the employer's usual frequency of payment of wages rather than quarterly in arrears, as currently happens. That is a massive improvement. Another key feature of the amendments is that the ability to update the definition of "medical and related treatment" is being streamlined by allowing the regulations to prescribe what constitutes such treatment. In this way the scheme can keep up with the advances in treatment and evolving practices.

In addition, the amendment to introduce funds management for the dependent children of deceased workers is expected to have a very modest financial impact. It is estimated that between 50 and 60 children will reap the benefit of these amendments each year. The NSW Trustee & Guardian is a statutory agency in the New South Wales Government. It is independent and impartial and, importantly, it operates on a not-for-profit basis. The other amendments do not have any financial implications. Injured workers will be better off because of these

amendments, which will support injured workers and their families through new compensation entitlements by providing much-improved flexibility to access benefits and, as I said, through the introduction of a scientific, data-driven approach to deeming diseases, which is very appropriate.

The primary focus is to ensure that the child's money is there for the child when they turn 18. The protection of the child's interests is absolutely paramount. The new entitlement to funds management applies to funds managed by the NSW Trustee & Guardian on behalf of the children of deceased workers. As I said earlier, the NSW Trustee is an independent, impartial statutory agency in the New South Wales Government tasked with supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community. I congratulate the NSW Trustee on doing an excellent job. The NSW Trustee has performed the role of managing children's workers compensation trusts for many, many decades—this is not new. The NSW Trustee is dependable, experienced and, above all, a safe pair of hands. Indeed, as at 30 June 2020 the NSW Trustee was managing nearly 8,500 trusts, including 417 workers compensation trusts payable to people under 18. As I said, it is important that we protect those funds for those young people.

The funds management provisions will commence on a date to be proclaimed. The amendments provide for the regulations to prescribe the kinds of fees that will be covered for investing or otherwise managing the sum for the dependent child's benefit. In addition, the amount of funds management will be determined by the Personal Injury Commission at the time it orders the child's part of the lump sum death benefit to be paid to the NSW Trustee. The regulations will provide further detail of the kinds of fees relating to investing or otherwise managing the lump sum that are covered. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority will consult interested stakeholders on the details of any regulations. The bill amends section 19 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 to allow the regulations to prescribe the employment and the period in which a worker is employed in that employment, where applicable, for the purpose of deeming the disease to be contracted in the course of employment.

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority will consult interested stakeholders on any proposed changes to the deemed diseases list, as appropriate. In addition, the amendments relating to injured workers who cease to live in Australia will apply to workers already living overseas before the commencement of the new provisions if they have already established an entitlement to weekly payments. In practice, this means that a worker living overseas who has already established that their incapacity as a result of their injury is likely to be of a permanent nature and who has an ongoing entitlement to weekly compensation will be entitled to be paid at their employer's usual time of payment—often fortnightly or monthly—rather than quarterly in arrears. Paying overseas workers quarterly in arrears is a longstanding practice carried over from the 1926 Workers Compensation Act, when sending payments or remittances overseas was a time-consuming and costly exercise.

With modern banking practices, the little yellow envelopes containing people's pay no longer exist. I remember when I started work those little yellow envelopes used to come around on the trolley every week and we were happy to see them. But of course it is very different these days, and it is probably a very good thing that our pay is now delivered digitally. That modernisation practice will be greatly appreciated by people receiving those payments. The bill omits the current definition in section 59 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and replaces it with a definition that makes provision for the regulations to prescribe what treatment, care, assistance or service constitutes medical or related treatment. As medical treatment that supports better outcomes for injured workers evolves, this allows SIRA to respond and adapt to these changes in a timely way through regulation-making powers. [*Extension of time*]

The Government undertakes to make the regulations only after appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders. This Minister's engagement with stakeholders is absolutely outstanding, and he should be commended for it. These amendments were under consideration and development before the Hon. Justice McDougall published his independent review into icare and the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 on 30 April this year. These amendments are crucial, irrespective of the report's recommendation. For example, they create a structure to support any future changes to the deemed diseases list and they provide an additional entitlement for the children of deceased workers. Anything we can do to protect children's interests is absolutely paramount. That is why it is important to implement these amendments sooner rather than later.

The bill seeks to provide greater consistency and alignment between the way the workers compensation legislation protects bush fire fighter and rescue association volunteers, and New South Wales paid workers undertaking the same activities. Again, I reflect on the speech of the member for Albury. On the Central Coast we have some outstanding volunteers. We actually have the highest ratio of volunteers per capita of anywhere in the nation. I am very proud of that figure. The Central Coast is truly a region of volunteers. These are people who are heading into danger when other people are heading the other way. They put their lives on the line and walk away from their families to protect others. It is so important that the legislation protects them at any time because they are the ones potentially putting their lives at risk to keep our community safe.

I note that Minister Dominello has just walked into the Chamber. I was discussing the excellent amount of consultation that the Minister and his team have done on this legislation. I was also highlighting the great work of our volunteers and the protection that this provides us. We are very lucky indeed to have so many dedicated and passionate volunteers on the Central Coast. We have the highest ratio of volunteers in the nation on the Central Coast. Many of those are volunteer firefighters. Many of them have given extraordinary amounts of time to the Rural Fire Service. Recently I attended a presentation and we had people who have given 40, 50 and even 65 years of continued service to the Rural Fire Service. Making sure that we provide them with the protection they need while they are committing to keeping us and our community safe is a wonderful thing.

The bill will address some of the discrepancies between paid workers and volunteers, brought into focus during the 2019 bushfire season, which affected so many areas around New South Wales. The bill provides for access to funeral and associated costs, return-to-work assistance and prompt payment of medical and weekly payments to eligible volunteers, which is absolutely appropriate. Nobody in this place would begrudge our volunteers. I note that the member for the South Coast is in the Chamber, and the commitment from the volunteers in her region during the fires was very similar to that of volunteers on the Central Coast. These people deserve not just our praise but also our protection.

I acknowledge the great work done on this legislation by the Minister's team: Petrina Casey, Darren Parker, Parthena Elias, Christian Fanker, Bronwyn Martin, Michelle Cannane, Pauline Kavanagh, Jo Webber, Chris Kane, Maria Fomicheva, Clarence Brown and Amanda Rawlinson. It is those wonderful people behind the scenes who help with the consultation with all stakeholders that this Minister is absolutely renowned for. Again, this is very good legislation and a very good amendment. It gives me great pleasure to stand here and speak on behalf of the Government to these amendments in the bill. It is great to see this legislation moving forward. We have heard the contributions from both sides of the House on this legislation.

I have pleasure in supporting the bill. I think anything that protects our volunteers and our most vulnerable, and provides those extra mechanisms of safety for them is an excellent idea. It is great legislation. It is always good to see legislation being amended appropriately and well. We have Acts that were written back in the 1920s that are no longer relevant to modern society. We have a very digital, technology-based system in New South Wales that works exceptionally well, whether it be Service NSW or the Dine & Discover app—you name it. The digital technology rollout in this State is something that everyone can envy. I commend the Minister and his staff, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital) (12:13): In reply: I am pleased to speak in reply to the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I thank the following members for their contribution to the debate: members representing the electorates of Canterbury, Port Macquarie, Swansea, Tweed, Miranda, Riverstone, Seven Hills, Dubbo and Albury and the outstanding member for Terrigal. The personal injury system in New South Wales is almost 100 years old. The first laws establishing this State's mandatory injury insurance schemes were enacted in the 1920s and have been much modified since. The intent at that time was to prevent injured people from having to sue for damages to cover their healthcare costs, and prevent policyholders such as businesses, owners and drivers from being sued and going bankrupt.

In the years since, massive societal changes have also changed the nature of risks. What was once common, such as no harnesses for high work, is now mandatory. But the risks have also changed—for example, COVID-19, silicosis from engineered stone and psychological injury. The nature of work is also changing, from individuals working from home and in effect relocating their place of employment to their residence from the traditional workplace, to the rise of the gig economy, delivering on-demand services by independent contractors across a wide variety of sectors. These social, healthcare and economic developments mean that we must continually take stock of our personal injury schemes to ensure they are delivering the best possible outcomes for the people of our great State.

The New South Wales Government has undertaken various reforms to the personal injury sector to ensure that it is delivering the best outcomes for the community. These reforms have taken a number of forms since 2015. These include splitting the insurance and regulatory functions of WorkCover NSW into three new organisations—the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA], icare and SafeWork NSW—implementing a newer and fairer comprehensive third party scheme in 2017, the transformation of the Workers Compensation Independent Review Office into the Independent Review Office in 2019, and the creation of the Personal Injury Commission, which held its first sitting earlier this year. These changes were driven by our desire to provide better outcomes for injured people—delivering a system that is independent, fair, transparent and accessible.

As members have heard, this bill will introduce several more amendments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the workers compensation and CTP schemes in New South Wales. As well as amendments to the workers compensation and motor accidents legislation, the bill makes amendments to the State Insurance and Care

Governance Act 2015 and Personal Injury Commission Act 2020, and other consequential amendments. These amendments will bring about much-needed clarity to the rights and entitlements of injured motorists and workers. At the same time, the bill will improve the regulation, administration and efficiency of the compulsory third party insurance and workers compensation schemes. These amendments have the customer as the sole focus and will ensure a more consistent customer experience for policyholders, injured people and other stakeholders of these schemes, including volunteer workers in New South Wales.

In 2019 over 110,000 claims were made across the schemes, with most new claims made under the workers compensation scheme. Of the claims made, 17,000 cases were disputed. In 2019 around 7,000 applications for dispute resolution were lodged in the Workers Compensation Commission. Around 10,000 comprehensive third party applications for resolution were lodged. Making a compensation claim is already stressful enough and now the Personal Injury Commission puts the claimant at the centre of the dispute resolution process. The Government's focus is on reducing any process trauma for injured people navigating disputes in the workers compensation and motor accident schemes. These amendments further streamline access to the benefits and entitlements in the original workers compensation and CTP schemes ensuring minimal impact to insurance premiums and offering certainty with business continuity.

I respond to the points raised by members during debate on the bill. Members have raised reservations about the proposed amendment relating to deemed diseases. The intention of this amendment was to create the necessary legislative structure to, if and when needed, modernise the list of deemed diseases. This would allow SIRA to engage with relevant health and medical experts and consult interested stakeholders on any proposed changes to the deemed diseases list. Importantly, it will allow SIRA to incorporate scientific evidence about the causal relationship between certain diseases and occupational exposure to inform future changes to the deemed diseases list. I recognise the representations made by the member for Canterbury to my office and comments made by members in this debate and accept that now may not be the time to update the list. The Government will therefore agree to the shadow Minister's amendment in the interests of securing the bipartisan passage of this important legislation.

I also acknowledge members' comments in relation to the amendment providing new powers to SIRA to issue directions to service providers. This includes requiring a service provider to provide services in a specific way to ensure the best contribution to improved outcomes for injured road users and workers. The proposed powers will allow SIRA to explicitly address outlier service providers that, through poor behaviours, adversely impact the health and return-to-work outcomes of injured people and the quality, safety, effectiveness, transparency and sustainability of both schemes. It is envisaged that the regulations will cover issues such as noncompliance with SIRA fees orders, potential overservicing and lack of communication with insurers to facilitate return to work in health. As raised by members, I recognise the need for clarity as to what these powers look like and who specifically is considered a "service provider".

Accordingly, I give an undertaking to the House that these powers will not be enacted until after SIRA engages in necessary consultation with relevant stakeholders and such powers are co-designed. Further, a framework will be developed to guide the exercise of these new functions. In response to comments made by the member for Swansea, these powers will not affect the independence of such providers nor restrain their practice. However, if as a last resort a provider is excluded from delivering services within the personal injury schemes that SIRA regulates, this has no impact on their ability to deliver services in the broader health system. Health care in the personal injury schemes regulated by SIRA is a very small proportion of health care delivered in New South Wales.

I acknowledge the engagement of the Australian Medical Association in supporting this amendment in addressing rogue practitioners. Over 13,000 general practitioners in New South Wales and over 14,000 allied health practitioners provide services in the New South Wales workers compensation and CTP schemes, which give injured people a wide choice of service providers. The vast majority of service providers comply with the legislation and provide appropriate, timely, cost-effective care and treatment, which contributes to improved health and return-to-work outcomes for injured people. It is important we maintain this high standard of professional care, and this provision allows us to do that. I will speak further to this proposed amendment later in my address to the House.

Lastly, I address comments made about pre-average weekly earnings in CTP. The current definition of pre-accident weekly earnings in the Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017 does not account for what the person was entitled to earn. Nor does it allow a decision-maker to factor in what the person would have been entitled to had the injury not happened when calculating their statutory benefits. This creates a particular risk for injured people who may have had a change in circumstances shortly prior to the accident. For example, if a person was about to start a new role with a higher salary, on the current drafting these circumstances cannot be considered in calculating their weekly compensation entitlements. In other words, if a person gets a promotion a week before

the accident then they only get the benefit of those increased earnings for one out of the 52 weeks. The intent is for the person to be able to get the benefit of a change of circumstances and project that for 12 months. Critically, the amendment requires you to look forward from the day the earnings change would have happened but for the motor accident and consider what is reasonable based on the facts at that time.

The Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 will bring several benefits. It will ensure that, for people injured in motor vehicle accidents, their statutory benefits payments continue to be fairly assessed and calculated. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority remains responsible for the regulatory functions in relation to workers compensation insurance, motor accidents compulsory third party insurance and home building compensation. In 2017 SIRA delivered the Government's reforms to CTP insurance. The reforms have enabled a fairer and more affordable system, reduced complexity and delays in claim management, and increased the number of injured people entitled to benefits

Green slip prices are cheaper than they have ever been. Before the reform, the average CTP premium reached a high of \$635 and would have continued to grow. Now the average CTP premium is \$486, saving New South Wales drivers an average of \$149 each year. To ensure that the reforms to the CTP insurance continue to provide benefits to customers, the Government recognises that amendments to the CTP legislation are also necessary to respond to recent court decisions. The Hon. Justice Fagan identified concerns with no-fault accident provisions in the Supreme Court decision of *AAI Limited v Singh*. His Honour stated:

Amendment will be necessary if a spate of litigation generated by the obscurities of these provisions is to be avoided.

The bill addresses those obscurities and provides clarity and fairness for all people injured in motor accidents who are not at fault. The bill also improves the operation of the CTP scheme in relation to point to point vehicles by addressing the current legislative gaps. It provides SIRA with the ability to make guidelines that are flexible and fair. This will enable SIRA to tailor CTP premiums to the wide range of businesses working in the point to point industry, including making sure that there is no detrimental cost impost on smaller service providers. The bill also introduces important amendments in the workers compensation space. For example, it aligns the entitlements of volunteer firefighters and emergency rescue workers who are injured while performing their volunteering activities with those provided for paid workers under the workers compensation scheme. This includes providing access to reasonable funeral expenses, return-to-work assistance, and prompt access to medical and related treatment and weekly payments.

The proposed amendments also improve the process of weekly payments to claimants who reside overseas, including making it easier for injured workers to establish their ongoing eligibility for weekly payments and to be paid their weekly entitlements. This will deliver benefits to scheme stakeholders in terms of assisting optimal health and improving scheme efficiency and social outcomes. Crucially, the bill provides SIRA with the power to regulate the provision of services to injured persons under both the CTP and the workers compensation schemes. Currently, SIRA can refer concerns about providers' professional practices to their professional bodies or the Health Care Complaints Commission for investigation. However, it cannot refer matters of concern relating to invoicing, overservicing and overcharging as they do not fall within the Health Care Complaints Commission's jurisdiction.

The bill introduces the power for SIRA to issue directions to service providers to take a specified action or to deliver relevant services in a particular way to comply with scheme-specific requirements. The bill allows the regulations to specify the relevant services and the relevant service providers against which directions may be issued as well as the manner and form of those directions. This will allow SIRA to address outlier service providers in both schemes that breach SIRA requirements such as invoicing above maximum SIRA gazetted fees, overservicing or overcharging. The bill also provides a right to review through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal for service providers that are directed not to provide a specific or relevant service. Following the passage of the bill, SIRA will undertake extensive consultation with peak medical, health and other professional bodies and relevant stakeholders to inform the definition of "relevant service provider" or "relevant services" to be outlined in the regulations.

This crucial amendment ensures that SIRA can ensure the safety, transparency, affordability and sustainability of these schemes by ensuring that providers are delivering services in a manner consistent with the schemes' legislation and objectives. Finally, the bill makes consequential amendments to various legislation following the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission to ensure that these reforms operate as intended. Currently, the State's two largest injury insurance schemes—workers compensation and CTP—exist under vastly different legislative frameworks. Even when people suffer a similar injury or illness, they may not be receiving equitable entitlements and support. Ultimately, this detracts from the core objectives of these schemes to provide care and rehabilitation to help injured people recover. Looking ahead, this remains a key challenge for the Government. New South Wales has an opportunity to improve the collective system-of-scheme design to provide better outcomes for anyone who gets an injury, regardless of how or where they get it. It has an opportunity to

ensure greater harmonisation of schemes so that people with comparable injuries receive the same levels of care and support. This harmonisation journey is about creating a fairer and more equitable system for anyone who is injured in New South Wales.

The recent formation of the Personal Injury Commission is already showing the benefits of greater alignment between the workers compensation and CTP dispute resolution systems. By having one joined-up dispute resolution system, New South Wales is delivering a better customer experience and ensuring that disputes are dealt with justly, quickly, cost-effectively and with as little formality as possible. As members would know, with the passage of the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020 we fulfilled the commitment to establish a consolidated Personal Injury Tribunal that delivered an independent, one-stop dispute resolution shop for injured road users and workers making compensation claims. The Personal Injury Commission Act transferred the functions of the Workers Compensation Commission and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority's dispute resolution service, claims assessment and resolution service and medical assessment service to the Personal Injury Commission. The driving motivation behind those changes was to provide a better customer experience and ensure that disputes are dealt with justly, quickly, cost-effectively and with as little formality as possible.

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority has recently published the results of the first Australian study to measure customer experience, health and social outcomes across workers compensation and compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance. This is the first study of its kind undertaken in Australia and is already delivering key insights. The study has highlighted the key factors that influence a person's recovery from injury and their experience within the comprehensive third party or workers compensation schemes. Overall, certain groups of people tend to report poorer experience and outcomes regardless of injury severity or scheme. They include people who are in the schemes for longer, have symptoms of probable serious mental illness or are experiencing moderate to severe pain. People who have been in the compensation system for longer periods were more likely to report poorer customer experience, a lesser sense of justice in the compensation process and lower trust in the scheme to get them better. They had poorer outcomes.

Another notable finding was the difference in the customer experience and outcomes in the workers compensation scheme versus the CTP scheme. The experience a person has and the recovery outcome they get varies depending on which scheme they fall under. The New South Wales Government is committed to an ongoing reform agenda in this sector. We are not content to rest on our laurels and we will continue to pursue change to better our injury insurance systems. We have achieved much in the past few years but have far more to deliver. Our customers, some of the most vulnerable people in New South Wales, deserve our best. I thank members for their support for the bill and commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Ms Sophie Cotsis.

Consideration in Detail

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh): By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedules 1 to 4 be agreed to.

Ms SOPHIE COTISIS (Canterbury) (12:32): I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2021-075:

No 1 Presumptions relating to certain employment

Page 10, Schedule 2.1[1] and [2], lines 4–16. Omit all words on those lines.

In light of what we have heard in the past half-hour from Minister Hazzard I hope that everyone stays safe, masks up, follows the rules and directions of the health department, and follows what Dr Chant and the Minister for Health and Medical Research are saying. I hope that all our community stays safe. I acknowledge what Minister Dominello has stated and I am grateful that he has listened to our concerns. As I indicated in my contribution to the second reading debate and also to the Minister's office, we oppose the Government plans to add more hurdles for workers suffering disease injuries. We oppose this because it will make it more difficult for workers to seek compensation for being poisoned or contracting a serious disease in their line of work.

The proposed amendments to section 19 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987 could usher in new regulations that will require minimum periods of employment and minimum levels of exposure before a worker is deemed to have a workplace disease injury. It is absolutely outrageous that workers could be forced to jump through more hoops before being compensated for workplace disease injuries. As I stated, we will oppose any attempt by this Government and future governments to add unfair hurdles for injured workers seeking their rightful compensation entitlements for workplace injuries. We call on the Government to drop this unnecessary change to

the law—I acknowledge that the Minister has stated that it will—which would remove a critical safety net for many workers who are exposed to work-related disease injuries such as lead and mercury poisoning, dust diseases, radiation poisoning and infections transmitted by animals.

I also ask the Minister to clarify something if he can. If not, I can talk to him and his office. I assume safework.nsw.gov.au and the Workers Compensation Regulation 2016 both align. They are both about occupational diseases, so I want to make sure that they do align. Particularly for people who are concerned about this area of law, I want to be absolutely clear about the diseases taken to be work related in schedule 1. We are talking about poisoning by lead, poisoning by mercury or its amalgams, anthrax infection, phosphorus poisoning, poisoning by benzene, poisoning by halogen derivatives of hydrocarbons, pathological manifestations of a kind that are due to or contributed to by radium and other radioactive substances, brucellosis and Q fever. Those diseases are listed in the Workers Compensation Regulation 2016. We all agree they are very serious and that is why this amendment is absolutely important. We do not see them in the proposal that the Government has put forward.

I accept that the Minister will support our amendments. I acknowledge that the Minister stated in his reply speech that SIRA will engage with health and medical experts and that no framework will be considered unless all the stakeholders are consulted. I acknowledge that and thank the Minister for listening, and I acknowledge what he stated about the SIRA study. I understand that the Minister's portfolio is what the Government calls Customer Service, and workers compensation is part of that, but I put on record that language is very important. When people are injured and are going through a process, the Minister is 100 per cent right when he stated that there is process trauma. But while the Government uses the word "customer" for someone who is injured and going through this process, it is not like McDonald's where people get a Big Mac and fries and have a customer experience. This is about people's lives, and I think language is important.

I am just putting this forward and it is up to the Minister; he is in government. But if I were the Minister then out of respect and dignity I would not refer to injured workers as "customers". They are people who are going through a very difficult time. They are injured, whether it is through disease injuries, physical injury or mental injury. They are not customers. They are injured; they are patients. They are going through very difficult times personally. I know all 93 of us in this place know of injured workers and their families and friends. Injured workers come to our offices each and every day. Our staff have to deal with them. They are members of unions. They are going through a very difficult time. As somebody who was a union representative for many years in the hospitality sector, I saw a lot of injured workers. Our systems have changed and governments of both persuasions have addressed the trauma and what people have gone through, but I think language is really important. We have to respect what these people are going through. To that end, I put forward the amendment.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital) (12:39): There are three points. I thank the member for Canterbury for raising the first point with us. We are currently looking to ensure that the deemed diseases list is consistent as it is represented across various government websites. We are happy to provide further updates offline on that. The second issue is the intended amendment improves the legislative structure so that updating the existing deemed diseases list can be more flexible and responsive to the ever-changing expert advice in this area. It is envisaged that the regulations would be able to specify minimum periods of service in specified employment and minimum exposure requirements, if applicable, based on expert health and medical advice before a disease is deemed to be work related. This will allow a scientific and data-driven approach to any future amendments to the deemed diseases list.

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority will engage with relevant health medical experts and consult interested stakeholders on the proposed changes to the deemed diseases list. However, I recognise the representations by the member for Canterbury and, in the interests of securing the bipartisan passage of the bill, will not be proceeding with this amendment. In relation to the third topic of language, I understand where the member for Canterbury is coming from because I had the same challenges when I was first appointed to this portfolio and thought about the change of language to "customer service". There was a debate around the language at the time—whether it was "citizen" service or "public" service. But ultimately, when people across our great State require services, not everyone is a citizen. For example, refugees are not citizens but they require good, top-quality service. Tourists are not citizens et cetera.

So the reason we adopted the language "customer" is because, in business parlance at least, the customer is treated with the greatest amount of respect possible; if you do not look after your customer, you do not have a business. We adopted that language to denote that we put the person—the customer—first and we try to evolve and revolve our services around that person. In terms of the language around injured people, the member for Canterbury is right: They are injured people. But equally they are called "plaintiffs" or "applicants". Again, that is not particularly nice language in the context that it sets up a litigious battle. I ask the member for Canterbury to understand that in the reading of this it needs to be contextualised to say that we are putting the injured person at

the centre of everything we do. That is why we are using this contextually from a customer lens—that is, treating customers as the centre of our universe rather than them being a function of ours.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedules 1 to 4 as amended be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2, and schedules 1 to 4 as amended agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS) BILL 2021

First Reading

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

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): I set down the second reading of the bill as an order of the day for a later hour.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2021

First Reading

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

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): I set down the second reading of the bill as an order of the day for a later hour.

Committees

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER GENERAL

Membership

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council advising that the Hon. Daniel Mookhey has been discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer General and the Hon. Adam Searle has been appointed as a member of that committee.

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Membership

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council advising that, under section 67 (1) (a) of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993, the Hon. Walt Secord has been discharged from the Joint Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Hon. Greg Donnelly has been appointed as a member of that committee.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:46): It gives me great pleasure to speak on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 32/57*, which records the deliberations made by the Legislation Review Committee on 22 June. The committee considered six bills, including the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021, a private member's bill from the member for Liverpool that will be up for debate on a Thursday in the not too distant future. I direct members' attention to that. The committee also considered the Families, Communities and Disability Services Miscellaneous Amendment Bill 2021, the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Local Government Elections) Bill 2021, the Motor Accidents and Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, and the Rock Fishing Safety Amendment Bill 2021. The committee commented on all those, except for the rock fishing bill.

The committee also considered 17 regulations, with the increasing tendency to govern by regulation that is occurring in this State. The committee commented on eight of those regulations. Members might be interested to refer to a couple of those—they are topical. The Public Health Amendment (COVID-19 Mandatory Face Coverings) Regulation now provides for penalty notices, on-the-spot fines, to be issued if you are not wearing a face mask as required. I refer members to at least have a look through that and to bring themselves up to date. The Public Health Amendment (COVID-19 Spitting and Coughing) Regulation also now mandates on-the-spot-fines. Members might also like to refer to that.

The Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Offensive Advertising) Regulation is interesting. It empowers Ad Standards, which is an industry self-regulatory body whose determinations are made by a community panel that makes decisions by applying the Australian Association of National Advertisers Code of Ethics to determine whether advertising on a motor transport vehicle is offensive. If the panel determines it is offensive, the panel can cancel the registration of that vehicle after giving notice. The process is not subject to legislation otherwise passed through this House. It is a regulation that has been made to give effect to this non-government industry body to make a determination and cancel the registration without reference to governments.

I direct members' attention to the fact that is an interesting example of the way regulation or subordinate legislation is being used in this State to govern the State. Whether that is a good thing or not, it is interesting and members should be aware of it. The committee has gone through some personnel changes. I welcome the new Chair, the member for Upper Hunter, Mr David Layzell. I look forward to working with him. I thank the departing members, including the former Chair, Ms Felicity Wilson, the member for North Shore. I thank the staff who support the committee; they do a fantastic job. I also thank the committee members for their attention to their duties.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:49): As Chair: I contribute to debate on the Legislation Review Committee's thirty-second digest of this Parliament, tabled on 22 June 2021. In that digest the committee examined the six bills introduced in the sitting week beginning 8 June 2021. The committee also commented on eight statutory instruments. I draw the Parliament's attention to some of the issues raised. The Families, Communities and Disability Services Miscellaneous Amendment Bill 2021 amends a number of Acts under the Families, Communities and Disability Services portfolio. The committee identified that the bill amends the Adoption Act 2000 to clarify the types of information that a person is entitled to access. That information may include details regarding birth history, social and medical history and reasons for adoption. It may be seen to infringe on the privacy of the person to whom it relates.

However, the committee also noted that the information does not contain identifying details and that the amendments remove only the requirement for a separate application to access the type of information that a person may already be entitled to. In that regard, the committee made no further comment. The committee also examined private members' bills originating in both Houses, including the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021, which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. That bill seeks to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the ground of a specific religious belief or affiliation by way of a public act to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the grounds of their religious belief or affiliation.

The bill defines a "public act" to include any form of communication to the public; any conduct observable by the public; and the distribution or dissemination of any matter to the public with knowledge that it promotes or expresses hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the grounds of their religious belief or affiliation. Examples may include speaking, writing, printing, broadcasting, actions, gestures and the wearing of clothing, signs, flags or emblems. The committee noted that this broad definition of "public act" may limit the subject matter of those types of communications and infringe on a person's right to free speech. However, freedom of speech is not an absolute right and may be limited by law where it is in the public interest to do so.

The committee also noted that the bill does not make it unlawful for a person to provide a fair report of a public act, or where the communication is subject to a defence of absolute privilege, or a public act is done in reasonably good faith for academic, artistic, scientific or research purposes or for other purposes in the public interest, including discussion or debate about and expositions of any act or matter, it is not unlawful. Given the intent of the bill to protect individuals from religious vilification and the various exceptions for fair reporting and good faith that are similar to existing anti-vilification provisions in the Act, the committee made no further comment. I turn to a statutory instrument examined in this week's digest. The committee examined the Road Transport (General) Amendment (Penalty Notice Offences) Regulation 2021, which adds two offences to the list of penalty notice offences. The first offence is towing an unregistered trailer, which carries a penalty of \$194 or a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units—\$2,200—for failure to comply with the initial notice. The second offence

is failing to provide identity information when requested by written notice in relation to a parking offence or a camera-recorded offence, which carries a penalty of \$697 or a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units—\$2,200—for failure to comply with the initial notice.

Penalty notices allow a person to pay the amount specified for an offence within a certain amount of time should they not wish to have the matter determined by the court. The fine payable under a penalty notice is usually less than the maximum penalty that would otherwise apply. The committee noted that this removes a person's automatic right to have a matter heard by a court with the opportunity to put forward their side of the case and may therefore impact on a person's right to a fair trial. However, the regulation does not remove an individual's right to elect to have the matter heard and decided by a court, should they wish to. Penalty notices may also reduce the time and costs associated with the administration of justice. Given those factors, the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on the thirty-second digest of this Parliament. I commend the digest to the House.

Report noted.

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

Announcements

COVID-19 ARRANGEMENTS

The SPEAKER: Following the Premier's statement this morning about the tightening of restrictions that will be applied compulsorily from 4.00 p.m. today, I promptly asked all members to wear masks and I foreshadowed that seating arrangements for question time would be restricted. The Legislative Assembly will return to the one person per four square metre rule. More broadly, mask wearing will be required in all workplaces—that has already been implemented in Parliament House. I thank all members for adhering to that request. The Chamber seating plan has been adjusted to limit the number of members in the Chamber to 20, excluding me. No-one may occupy the Speaker's, Cooper or northern galleries. The seating locations in the Chamber have been marked. I thank members for complying with that guidance.

Social distancing and hygiene practices are to be observed. I will continue to appropriately regulate conduct during proceedings, including that members wear masks in the Chamber with the exception of the member with the call. I advise members that masks are available at the table and also through the support staff in the Chamber. I thank members who are outside the Chamber for making that transition easy. I also thank staff.

Members

MEMBER FOR THE ENTRANCE

The SPEAKER: Today is the birthday of the member for The Entrance. I am sure he will be watching on with interest as we wish him a very happy birthday.

Business of the House

CHAMBER SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That consequent on recent advice, and unless otherwise ordered, this House make provision for a maximum of 20 members in addition to the Speaker to sit on the floor of the House in designated positions.

Motion agreed to.

Members

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejikian: I inform the House that on 22 June 2021 the Premier made the following appointments to the position of Parliamentary Secretary:

- (1) Stephanie Anne Cooke, MP, ceased to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier and was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health.
- (2) Geoffrey Keith Provest, MP, ceased to be Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Major Events and was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Tourism and Hospitality.
- (3) Stephen Bruce Bromhead, MP, ceased to be Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Transport and was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Housing.
- (4) Christopher Gulaptis, MP, ceased to be Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Roads and Infrastructure and was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry.

- (5) The Hon. Samuel Faraway, MLC, was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier and for Water Infrastructure.

Question Time

COVID-19

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:20): I direct my question to the health Minister. Will the Minister update the House as to the latest information in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. By now a fair portion of our community would know that NSW Health has advised the Government of concerns in relation to the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. Only about one week ago a particular driver proved positive for the Delta variant. Today we have in excess of 30 cases of the Delta variant. A central location for the transmission of the virus has been in and around the eastern suburbs, particularly at the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping centre. Last Saturday our Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, and I expressed concerns that the virus appeared to be far more transmissible than the original variant of the COVID-19 virus.

I had the opportunity to view the CCTV camera vision of the initial case, the limousine driver, who was somewhere between 10 centimetres and 60 centimetres distant from another person for a few seconds. That other person effectively walked through the airspace, though they were only in the vicinity of each other for seconds, and then also became positive for COVID-19. The cases have continued since that time and have caused a rising level of concern. Since 8.00 p.m. yesterday, as was announced at the 11.00 a.m. press conference with me, the Premier and our Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, we confirmed 13 further cases. The New South Wales Government has always taken the view that it would make a proportionate response to the dangers of the virus and the variants. We have made announcements in regard to what we believe are necessary measures.

I strongly urge the community to look closely at what we have said and at what is on the NSW Health website. We are concerned as a number of the 13 cases have no known link at the present time. We are also concerned because a party occurred in the West Hoxton area on Saturday at which there were approximately 30 people and almost one-third of those people have already tested positive for the Delta variant, which indicates its transmissibility. As of 4.00 p.m. today, which is only a short time from now, the Government will move to limit the number of guests allowed in homes to five, and that will include children. Masks will be compulsory in all indoor, non-residential settings including workplaces and organised outdoor events. I stress that the mask issue is extremely important. This is the first time that we have reached the stage of saying that masks should be worn in workplaces, but we are strongly of that view on the basis of the health advice from Dr Chant.

We have been drinking standing up for some time, but drinking while standing at indoor venues will not be allowed. Singing by audiences at indoor shows or by congregants at indoor places of worship will not be allowed. Dancing will not be allowed at indoor hospitality venues or nightclubs. However, dancing is allowed at weddings for the bridal party only, up to 20 people. Dance and gym classes are now limited to 20 people per class and, for the first time, masks must be worn. If you cannot wear a mask in a class the advice is: Do not go to the class. The one person per four square metres rule will be reintroduced for all indoor and outdoor settings, including weddings and funerals. Outdoor seated events will be limited to 50 per cent seated capacity. The previous public transport limits represented by the green dots will be reintroduced. If you live or work in the City of Sydney, Waverley, Randwick, Canada Bay, Inner West, Bayside or Woollahra local government areas, you must not travel outside metropolitan Sydney for non-essential travel. [*Extension of time*]

These restrictions are designed to reduce community transmission. No doubt there will be the possibility of some people trying to find their way around whatever restrictions we put in place. But, as I said earlier, it is time for all of us to step up and look after each other—no game playing. For example, if you are sitting at an outdoor sporting facility, you should be wearing a mask. Yes, you can play games; you can sit there with a glass of water for an extended period. But if you do that, you are letting yourself, your family and your community down. This is a very serious situation. We are effectively in a wartime situation with a virus that appears to know no bounds of decency whatsoever. It is prepared to come after us at the slightest opportunity. My strong advice to the community is: Do everything you can to keep yourself, your family and your community safe. Limit your movement around the Sydney area. Limit your movement completely if you live in those seven local government areas. Do not go outside the Sydney area. Do not travel to the regions. We must keep our regions safe. Anybody who does not comply with these requests and orders is putting the entire community at risk at the most dangerous of times.

COVID-19

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (14:27): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier also update the House on the current COVID-19 situation?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:27): I begin by thanking you, Mr Speaker, and all members of this place for putting in place the workplace measures that we announced a short time ago. I thank the member for Vaucluse for her question and acknowledge that her community has been particularly impacted by the recent outbreak. I also note that a number of colleagues in this place have been directly impacted through their communities. I thank the nearly 45,000 people who were tested in the last 24 hours. We absolutely need that testing rate to continue. I urge everybody to follow the health advice in relation to testing; high rates of testing are key to our weaponry in relation to fighting this outbreak. It is fair to say that my level of concern is extremely high, as is the level of concern of the health Minister and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kerry Chant. We have not experienced this level of transmissibility in this variant previously and it has no doubt impacted our rapid response to this virus.

I also make very clear that the New South Wales Government will have absolutely no hesitation in going further than it has today if it is required to do so. I really want the public to be prepared and to know that this is an evolving situation. The New South Wales Government will not hesitate to go further and harder if it has to. It is an evolving situation and I am urging everybody to please follow the health advice. Please do what you have been asked to do, but also take extra precautions when you are around vulnerable people and do not be complacent in any setting. It is easy to observe when people are coming into contact with one another, especially when they know each other. We are seeing the invasion of personal space. We are seeing people act in a complacent way and not maintain social distancing. What is most concerning for us with this strain that we have not witnessed before is the fact that the virus is being transferred between individuals when there has been no evidence of physical contact. Sharing airspace, aerosols or droplets is sufficient to transfer the virus from one person to another.

That is something we have not seen before and something that is difficult to respond to. We are desperately asking people, even when they are wearing a mask and even when they have hand hygiene, to make sure that they maintain social distancing when they are outside their household, even if it is someone very familiar to them and even if it is a colleague. Do not be complacent in workplaces, even within your own offices; make sure mask wearing is in place. Please be sensible about your movement. Non-essential movements or travel should not occur. The Government supports people getting to work and attending urgent and necessary destinations, especially with respect to the care of loved ones and in end-of-life situations, but it also asks everybody to be sensible. Do not undertake activity or movement unless you absolutely have to. The NSW Health and New South Wales Government websites have definitions of what constitutes metropolitan Sydney for the purposes of the restrictions. If you live or work in the seven local government areas [LGAs] that have been announced already, we do not want any of you travelling beyond metropolitan Sydney.

That will be mandated and made compulsory through a health order this afternoon. Obviously for people who are going home from work or going to an essential activity, exemptions apply. But with the advent of school holidays and the transmissibility of this virus, we are asking everybody who lives, works or has been active in the seven LGAs that have been mentioned earlier in the week and reiterated this morning to please not travel. Do not go beyond metropolitan Sydney, which has been defined on the map in the health orders, unless you absolutely have to do. That is to prevent transmissibility and to prevent any seeding events in our regional communities. We appreciate the time of year that it is, but we also appreciate people's ability to adjust to these settings. I cannot thank our community enough for the way it has responded, but we know that even when the vast majority of our population does the right thing, it only takes one or two people to slip up—intentionally or unintentionally—for the virus to get out of control. What we are doing at this stage is preventing any further super-seeding events. Dr Chant echoed that this morning, as did the health Minister. [*Extension of time*]

I cannot thank enough those people who have already been diagnosed as positive for providing literally hours of interview process with our health officials, so that health experts can understand what this strain of the virus is doing. I also thank school communities, childcare centres and institutions and establishments that have been impacted for the positive way in which they have responded to the health advice. I reiterate for the benefit of the House that the contact tracing on this occasion has been the best that I have seen since the pandemic began. Literally within 24 hours our contact tracers have been able to lock down and get in touch with all those people who are deemed to be close contacts. We thank them, but I reiterate that if you have been deemed to be a close contact and you have been tested—even if you have been tested negative—you have to stay in isolation for 14 days.

A breach of that can jeopardise the health of your loved ones and the general wellbeing of the broader community. Please make sure you follow the health advice. Please make sure that if you are asked to isolate, you

do so. Please also note that in some instances NSW Health has updated its advice from "casual contact" to "close contact", which requires that 14-day isolation. I stress again that our level of concern, and my personal level of concern, is extremely high. The measures we have taken today are necessary. However, if we need to go harder, tougher and further, we will not have any hesitation to do so, because there is nothing more important than protecting the safety of our citizens. Equally, it is important to make sure, where we can, that our economy maintains its activity and that we do not prevent businesses and jobs from continuing, where it is safe to do so.

STATE BUDGET AND COST OF LIVING

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:34): My question is directed to the Premier. Here is a list of things increasing faster than wages in this budget: tolls, at 8.1 per cent; fines, at 7.3 per cent; payroll tax, at 5.5 per cent; and land tax, at 5.2 per cent. How much more expensive will Sydney become when taxes, tolls, fines and fees are more than double the rate of wages?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:34): As was highlighted in the budget yesterday and as has been highlighted previously, we are pleased that the New South Wales Government, in the last financial year and the current financial year, was able to return \$6 billion worth of savings to the people of New South Wales. Our cost-of-living measures across the board mean that some households are saving thousands of dollars. I urge everybody who has not already done so to contact Service NSW online, or physically where it is safe to do so in a COVID-safe way, to work out what measures work for their households, their families and their circumstances. Only the week before last, we were able to welcome two households, each of whom was able to save \$2,500 and \$3,000 respectively in one financial year alone.

In addition to the \$6 billion in concessions that we are returning back to the community, the New South Wales Government is reducing the tax burden on our citizens. Since we have been in government, we have reduced the tax burden by more than \$9 billion. Where there is an opportunity for us to reduce the cost of living for our families, we are doing that. I will mention some examples. We have \$332 million for our Energy Social program, which ensures energy rebates and emergency vouchers for those who need them most. We have \$246 million to extend the regional seniors travel card for an additional two years. The card provides \$250 each year for fuel, for taxis or NSW TrainLink. It is an important measure supporting our regional communities, who do not have access to mass transit options as those in our larger cities like Sydney do. In larger cities like Sydney, the cap of \$50 per week on Opal cards ensures the affordability of our transport network.

The budget that the Treasurer announced yesterday included \$150 million for the Start Strong preschool program, which provides approximately two days of free preschool per week for all eligible children. It ensures that those families who are experiencing cost-of-living pressures are not prevented from sending their children to preschool for those vital hours to make sure that their children do not fall behind and are not behind when they start kindergarten. I was very pleased to learn of the Treasurer's financial literacy program, which encourages positive money habits and provides information in relation to the cost of living.

Again, I encourage every single household made up of an individual, a family or a couple—no matter what the configuration—to go through Service NSW because the savings are there to be had. If you add up the billions that our residents have saved, I think everybody would argue that, whenever we have an opportunity to relieve the pressure points on our communities, we are doing so. The Dine & Discover vouchers in particular have proven to be very effective, not only in the way in which they have been reducing the cost of living for our households but also because they are providing an immense stimulus for our small businesses across the State. I am pleased that the Treasurer and the Minister for Customer Service have been able to extend the Dine & Discover program for another month, to 31 July. We encourage people to take up those opportunities in a COVID-safe way.

Another key initiative to demonstrate that we look at the whole of government for our cost-of-living measures and not just one section of government is Learn to Swim. Given the lifestyle we enjoy in New South Wales and across Australia, learning to swim is important. We do not want any child to miss out, so we have contributed in excess of \$43 million over the next two years through a voucher system to make sure that all parents have the option to take their children to learn to swim. We encourage them to do so. The Active Kids vouchers continue, and I understand over three million vouchers have been redeemed. Our Creative Kids vouchers also continue.

We have further reductions on the cost of public transport, including the weekly cap and the cap on weekends when families are using public transport for pleasure or for necessity. Drivers are eligible for free or discounted vehicle registration, depending on what they pay for tolls every week. The savings are there to be had. They are endless. I encourage all members to make sure that their constituents have information about how they can relieve their cost-of-living pressures, sometimes amounting to the thousands of dollars.

STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:39): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the budget is delivering record funding into regional New South Wales?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:40): I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. Yesterday was an incredible budget for regional and rural New South Wales, including electorates like Dubbo. The main showcase announcement for Dubbo is the Drug Court there, which the Treasurer and I had the opportunity to announce before the budget. In excess of \$30 million is going to support that community. We know the scourge of ice and other drugs in regional and rural communities. We know through other drug courts that there are positive outcomes for the community by giving people a second chance and an opportunity to find their way back. The member for Dubbo has advocated for a long time to me, the Treasurer, the Premier and the Attorney General. It was great to have the Attorney General in Dubbo last week to see the announcement welcomed by so many.

The budget announced yesterday has so many pieces and moving parts. Many of the infrastructure announcements just blow people away. When you think about \$108 billion worth of infrastructure over the next four years across the State, it is clear that even in regional and rural New South Wales we are at the front and centre. In yesterday's budget \$9 billion was allocated for regional transport and roads. That means we have the ability to fix and seal country roads, bridges and highways. It gives us the ability to look after our families and connect communities. It is not just about bitumen and bricks and mortar and building roads; it is about making sure that, when the school bus leaves with the most precious cargo each and every day, it gets to come home safely because the roads and surrounding infrastructure are sufficient. Many people in metropolitan areas take roads for granted, but in the regions we know how much time we spend on our roads because of the tyranny of distance and geography. So yesterday's budget was significant.

In the budget we are also supporting our seniors with \$246 million to extend the seniors travel card by two years. At the election we made the commitment for two years' funding. We have completed the first two years, and it has been a great success. Some 337,000 seniors accessed the card last year, and there are already in excess of 300,000 this year. Yesterday the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads announced an extension for two years and also a broadening to allow carers of those with disabilities to be included as of 1 January, when the new cards start to roll out. It is our way of finding a unique solution for a unique issue in regional and rural New South Wales, where we do not have all the same opportunities to take public transport. It means that many of our seniors are able to see their families a few extra times a year or attend their medical appointments or explore the regions. It is a unique way of supporting seniors in regional and rural New South Wales to travel and to have some level of assistance.

The budget for schools is significant once again, with \$1 billion this year for new schools and upgrades to schools across regional and rural New South Wales. This Government over the past 10 years has invested significantly in education. We will see that continue over the next four years, especially in this year's budget. We are delivering all the upgrades and new schools we committed to across the regions. There are also some surprises. We know the issues we have at Wee Waa, and we had the ability to announce quickly repurposed funds to rebuild the school there. I congratulate the education Minister. This is a great outcome for our kids in regional and rural New South Wales, who should have no lesser opportunity when it comes to education.

Every child should have the opportunity to start their education in their community, make lifelong friends, and continue and finish their education in their community. That includes what we are doing in TAFE and what we are doing with country universities centres across the regions. When it comes to health and hospitals, there is another \$900 million this year just for regional and rural health. Again, that is building on our foundations and continuing the investment in upgrading existing hospitals, such as the Manning Base Hospital, and the continuation of new hospitals, such as Tweed, which is a significant investment from the New South Wales Government to support that community and regional communities.

I once again acknowledge the health Minister for focusing the new spend in rural and regional New South Wales. I am proud to say that in the 2021-22 Department of Regional NSW budget we hit a massive \$2.8 billion, which includes some of those fantastic programs we have seen in the past, including the Stronger Country Communities Fund, to build infrastructure and amenities at a local level and distribute them across the State through local government electorates. [*Extension of time*]

The \$75 million for resources is again a hallmark policy of this Liberal-Nationals Government. Since 2012 we have delivered in excess of \$400 million back to communities impacted by mining to support them as we share the benefits of growing the economy, especially from a trades perspective because a lot of our mining ends up in the trades space. When we go through the regional budget, the mouse plague has been significant. Yesterday we

were able to cement \$150 million over two years for the rebate program to support our primary producers. As the Minister responsible, disaster recovery is in my budget. It is not something I like to have in my budget. Again, there is \$590 million for a storm and flood recovery package in partnership with the Federal Government to support communities that were recently impacted by the storm and flood damage.

When it comes to our mining communities we are dealing with historic and legacy mines that have been abandoned and have issues of contamination with chemicals. We have set aside \$100 million so that we can make sure we not only fix those particular historic high-risk issues by remediating those sites but also return those abandoned sites, in many cases, back to the community as open spaces. Of course, we will continue to look at opportunities to support mining. There is \$50 million for a new mobile coverage pilot. Again, we are trying to find new ways to leverage our investment against the private sector to deliver better mobile coverage and digital connectivity in regional and rural New South Wales. We are also really proud of the special activation precincts, which will support new industries and jobs in regional and rural New South Wales. Members have heard me talk about this before, but places like Parkes, Williamstown, Moree, Narrabri and right to the Snowy Mountains and Wagga Wagga are examples of where we are providing industries by paying for the infrastructure to build new industries into the future. They are just some of the key elements of yesterday's budget. Yesterday was a budget for the bush.

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (14:47): My question is directed to the Premier. Last year the Premier said that New South Wales "is not good at building trains". Does the Premier still believe that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:47): My comments at the time were very accurate. In fact, when the Labor Party was in government it had trains manufactured in overseas jurisdictions like China and other places around the world. It is easy for members opposite to purport to espouse local manufacturing when they feel like it but when they were in government they were quite happy to have trains built overseas. The New South Wales Government is incredibly proud of the fact that our infrastructure pipeline, including trains, maintenance, track laying and systems, has ensured that thousands and thousands of jobs have been created in our State. When we came to government a new train line had not been built in New South Wales for a very long time. We have ensured extra jobs through assembly trains and systems development.

In fact, I am proud of the fact that the XPT train fleet will have its maintenance facility in Dubbo, creating hundreds and hundreds of regional jobs for decades moving forward. If it was not for our \$108 billion infrastructure pipeline, tens of thousands of people would not be employed in New South Wales. We know that for every dollar we spend on public infrastructure, private investment comes off the back of it. In fact, I remember vividly when we were criticised for building the South West Rail Link, which goes to the proximity of the Macquarie Fields community, because nobody would use it. Now we find that the Edmondson car park and the other car park supporting that rail line are already oversubscribed. So when it comes to creating jobs and manufacturing, New South Wales is ahead of the pack.

I make this point clearly: I was proud to be able to stand with Minister Ayres, the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Jennifer Westacott, head of the Business Council of Australia and chair of the Government's aerotropolis task force, to commit \$1 billion to establish Australia's first greenfield advanced manufacturing location. We know that the jobs of the future will be in advanced manufacturing, including robotics, logistics and IT—all those specialty areas. New South Wales is getting ahead of the pack by making sure we establish those jobs. We have already signed over 20 MOUs for global companies plus local companies. I am pleased to say that a number of those companies are shovel ready to build or relocate their facilities to facilitate those future manufacturing jobs.

New South Wales is on the precipice of being an advanced manufacturing capital for our nation and our region, and we are excited by that prospect. If we look at the three precincts we have established in each of the major cities in Greater Sydney and the regional activation precincts, jobs in manufacturing are increasing in New South Wales. The Government's strategies will make sure that they increase well into the future because we know that whatever jobs will be created in the future will require highly skilled workforces, especially in areas of advanced manufacturing.

The Labor Party can keep talking its drivel in opposition, but it failed to act when it was in government. If it was not for the Government's infrastructure pipeline and our strategy in relation to skill and manufacturing, we would not be in this position. I take this opportunity to thank Professor Shergold and Mr David Gonski for giving the Government a great strategy in relation to tertiary skills, including how we update TAFE and our universities, and the institute of learning that will provide a hybrid opportunity where some courses will involve a combination of TAFE and university. Advanced manufacturing requires skills and that is why New South Wales will be at the

cutting edge of this in the future. It would be dishonest of me or anybody else in my position to represent New South Wales as doing everything possible around the world well. What we have to do is harness what we do best and become global leaders.

We must make sure that we create jobs in those industries that will employ future generations. I live in hope and I know that when we are standing in Parramatta in a decade's time people will not be looking east towards Sydney CBD for the best jobs; they will be looking west towards the aerotropolis. They will also be looking at the many regional communities that will have the logistics and maintenance facilities and our intermodal activation precincts. I am excited by the fact that the Central to Eveleigh precinct will be the Silicon Valley of the future. COVID has ensured that some of our expats who are the best at what they do are back in New South Wales and supporting our research and development strategy, and our one-stop shop through Investment NSW. So I am happy for the Opposition to keep repeating its drivel about trains.

Ms Trish Doyle: You said it, Premier. You said it. Build trains here.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, but when you were in government you were happy to have the trains built in China.

Ms Trish Doyle: Eight thousand manufacturing jobs gone in 10 years.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You were happy to have them manufactured in China but could not do it here.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (14:52): My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital. Will the Minister update the House on what the Government is doing to cement its position as the nation's digital capital, and help our first responders in their hour of need?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital) (14:53): I thank the member for Terrigal, in particular for his advocacy for all things relating to Service NSW. I have been to Terrigal a number of times with the member and he is as passionate as you can be about the great work that the people of Service NSW are doing for his community and the broader community of the State. As we have seen through this pandemic, we cannot fight it with a vaccine alone—just like we cannot fight a bushfire with water alone. We need digital to help us out. During the bushfires the government radio network played a critical part in making sure we got messages out to the community to keep them safe. In relation to the pandemic, we are using the wherewithal of the Service NSW app, whether it is the QR code to help get real-time information to the impressive contract tracers so that they can do their work or the Dine & Discover vouchers, which are world leading in their implementation to bring back the economy.

So you need digital. That is why I am pleased to say the recently announced budget is visionary because it provides a significant amount of money for the Digital Restart Fund. To the credit of the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer, they have allocated an extra \$500 million to support both the metro and the bush. That is critical for our future growth and sustainability. As the Premier just said, we need to invest in future jobs, and future jobs—in my world at least—are going to be heavily dominated by the tech sector. If we invest in service delivery in that space, that creates even more jobs. We started with \$1.6 billion and that has now increased to \$2.1 billion, which is a record spend of any jurisdiction in the country. It makes us the digital capital not just of this country but of the Southern Hemisphere and it shows that we are definitely punching above our weight in terms of regional governments, particularly from a Five Eyes perspective.

Some of the \$500 million over the three years will be allocated to an ongoing commitment to the Data Analytics Centre [DAC]—again, nation leading. When that was introduced five years ago not many people understood its significance, but now look at our world and how much it is data driven; decisions have to be made with laser-like precision. That is why the DAC has come into its own, particularly throughout COVID. Another amount of money has been provided for the Ministry of Health Single Patient Digital Record. That is monumental reform. It changes the way we deliver health services and it will be so exciting to see that rollout because it will fundamentally improve healthcare services in a profound way for the people of our State.

We have got the eConstruction initiative—again, that is world leading. We are basically putting that on top of ePlanning spatial services, the digital twin and the strata portal all coming together. That means we will see real-time information on both the quality and content of building construction. We are setting up our State for the future, but we need to invest in that now because in the next 10 years we will not all be glued to our screens; we will not be slaves to our 2D screens. In a decade ahead we will be living in a world of mixed reality and augmented reality.

Ms Trish Doyle: I think we already are.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: That is the world we are going to be in. But in order for that world to be realised and for us to take a lead role in it, we need to digitise the construction sector now. I pay tribute to David Chandler, who is doing outstanding work in that area and is not just leading the country but also leading the world. I turn to other work that we are doing in this space. [*Extension of time*]

We are doing work in relation to online school enrolments; 1,877 schools now have access to online school enrolments. The old 16-page form has been replaced by a digital enrolment process, saving time for both parents and schools. There is a regional access gap and, as the outstanding Minister for education identified, we have to cross the sandstone divide. We have to make sure that it is not a digital divide, and we are putting money into the regions to ensure they have facilities that are just as good as we have in the metro areas. I conclude by imploring the business community to take up the challenge that is before us.

I know businesses are required to have QR codes, but I ask that they check to see customers have the green tick as they come into their venues. If they see the green tick, it means the QR codes are being used. If they see the green tick, they will keep their customers safe and their businesses open and we will get through this pandemic. In the past I have been to restaurants and cafes and immediately seen the QR code at the front of the door. Some people pay attention to it and some people do not. If the business community can help us out by asking customers to show them the green tick before they sit down, that will help us get through this in a big way. I thank the community of New South Wales for their patience and for their help during this time.

STATE BUDGET AND SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:59): My question is directed to the Treasurer. Last year Victoria promised \$5.3 billion for social housing; this year Queensland promised \$2.9 billion. In this State some families on the social housing waiting list have to wait over 10 years for a home. New South Wales needs 42,000 new homes every year. Why did this goal not rate a single mention in the budget?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (15:00): The assertion in the question is incorrect, but I will not rule it out of order. What I will say is that if those opposite look at the investment in social housing and want to compare Victoria with New South Wales, let us do that. New South Wales has 155,000 dwellings compared with Victoria, which has 82,000 dwellings. So when it comes to track record on—

Ms Prue Car: Yes, but it has got a much lower population.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That is why I think I think it is funny; it is a silly question. If you look at the investment that the New South Wales Government is making in social housing, it outstrips the former Labor Government's investment. We have been able to invest more because we have had innovative ways of financing social housing; we have piloted and implemented innovative programs along the way. The Together Home program, which we launched during the pandemic last year, has ensured that 400, I think, rough sleepers have been able to get into accommodation. Getting those wraparound services supports homelessness. In addition, when it comes to the Social and Affordable Housing Fund and a whole range of other innovative financing solutions, we have been able to invest more than ever before.

If you look at the support provided in this year's budget, as I said, we expanded the Together Home program with \$57 million to provide 250 households with extra support, and we have provided \$295.9 million for specialist homelessness services to continue their services across the State. Importantly, the \$812 million over four years not only increases the supply of social housing but also improves the maintenance and upgrades of the social housing stock. I accept that in terms of value for money it is probably an area we need to look at. Yesterday we had a very informative meeting with the member for Sydney, the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Lake Macquarie in relation to how, particularly for maintenance, those services that are provided by the Land and Housing Corporation and community housing providers could be improved. I have committed to them that we will look at that issue.

Out of the \$812 million investment in the stimulus last year, we put \$250 million into housing construction programs for 50 projects, and we have delivered about 500 new social homes across metropolitan and regional areas. We have provided \$150 million to accelerate the play space redevelopment projects at the Airs Bradbury and Claymore housing estates, which have delivered 500 new social homes and 1,000 new land lots to build private homes. We have allocated \$200 million to upgrade more than 3,500 social housing dwellings, including properties managed by community housing providers, to improve the quality, comfort and safety of housing for tenants and deliver more jobs for local tradespeople.

We have provided more than \$145 million to supply more than 200 new homes for Aboriginal housing and for upgrades and maintenance works including roof restorations and replacements, recladding, solar power installations, drought relief, hydro panels and air conditioning. We have also provided \$67 million to support the Aboriginal community housing sector to undertake maintenance, roof restorations, replacements, air conditioning,

solar panel installations and so on and so forth. As the Minister raised in the Chamber yesterday, we have provided \$8 million to support 300 new social housing sector pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships and cadetships to deliver 100 new social homes, providing career pathways for young people and social tenants.

I also address, in relation to question time, the Leader of the Opposition's comments in relation to the increase over time of tolls and payroll tax. If you look at that year on year, last year in a pandemic many people were at home during what was a very difficult time of the year. Car usage on our roads was down. So obviously, as the economy comes back to where it was pre-pandemic, there will naturally be an increase. In relation to payroll tax, that just goes straight to the point. As we have been saying, a strong economy leads to a better budget. We have cut the payroll tax rate. We have lifted from \$689,000 to \$1.2 million. The rate is 4.85 per cent—the lowest in the nation. And yet payroll tax is up. Why? Because our businesses are employing more people. They are making more profits. The economy is growing and that leads to more revenue coming into the State coffers.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:05): My question is addressed to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's investment in social housing across the State?

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (15:05): I thank the member for Tweed for his question. Only a few months ago I was with the member for Tweed starting to dig the soil on a new project right in the centre of Tweed Heads that will provide 40 new purpose-built social housing units. I might add that that is all from the proceeds of the sale of the Sirius building. In Dubbo we are building 26 homes, all from the sale of the Sirius building. In Gosford we are building 41. I was with the member for Terrigal last week looking at that project. I correct the record of yesterday—seven storeys. We are building 21 at St Marys and 52 units at Warwick Farm. We have done the right thing in recycling assets and using money effectively to provide more people with homes. Every unit that we sold in that development at Sirius is providing for new homes. We are building new homes. We are providing jobs, opportunities and traineeships. That is what we have been able to achieve through that recycling. Seventy-nine apartments that were virtually uninhabitable were transformed into new properties giving people new lives, not just near the building but throughout regional New South Wales.

I acknowledge my shadow counterpart in the other place, Rose Jackson, and look forward to sitting down with her. I saw that she had tweeted yesterday about the Sirius building. It is very clear that she does not have a business or economics background—we will be able to go through this in more detail with her when we sit down. But she was suggesting that it was a terrible deal and that all of the money that the property developer was making should have been money that we made. We are in the business of getting a good return on an asset that needed a huge amount of investment. Those 75 units have been turned into more units. They have added swimming pools, new kitchens and new bathrooms. I do not think it is the Government's role to do a high-end luxury development, putting in all that risk. The thing that the member in the other place has failed to understand, or is misleading the community about through her Twitter account, is that she is conflating gross profit and net profit. You have a property that has sold very well and I congratulate those on putting up the capital, taking the risk and taking a chance. We have had a fantastic return from that building—higher than anybody expected and even than the Treasurer expected.

Mr Dominic Perrottet: I would have preferred to knock it down.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: I know you wanted to knock it down, but we had a better bid for the building as it was. That is the extraordinary thing. It has cost that property investor a lot to fix that building up to get the returns he is getting. I do not know what the net profit is, but it is certainly not what Ms Jackson is suggesting and I think it is important to highlight this. The member for Kogarah understands that. He went to Princeton. He understands. There is a net profit and we have had an excellent return. I look forward to you explaining to the people at Warwick Farm with the 52 dwellings.

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: Campsie has 21 dwellings, St Marys has 44 dwellings, Shortland has eight dwellings and Gosford has 41. There are another 21 at St Marys and 40 at Tweed Heads. We have eight in Dubbo, 10 in Wagga Wagga, six in Nowra and 12 in Wauchope. If that was not a good deal, a good investment and a good way to invest in taxpayer dollars—I would be far more interested if the member for Kogarah went to Queensland and asked them to return the money that they owe us for looking after people travelling back from overseas. That would be an interesting dollar to put into social housing. That would be a far more effective debate and conversation for him to have.

Ms Trish Doyle: Ring Barnaby.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: Listen to you. This is a really important issue, talking about social housing, and I am proud of the investment that this Government— [*Extension of time*]

Whether it is the sale of the Sirius building or our recycling of other assets, we have been able to build a Pacific Highway that is saving at least 50 lives every year through that recycling of assets. We have built up the asset base of this State, as we are doing with social housing. We have increased the amount of social housing since we have been in office by 10 per cent. And it is not by Government doing it alone. One of the greatest innovations, as I explained here yesterday, is that we are partnering up with our community housing providers. Along with the 2,700 homes we plan to build from the Land and Housing Corporation over the next four years, the best part is that 3,000 additional ones will come from our community housing sector that manages and leases one-third of our assets. We have also enabled them to have some more security of leasing title so that they can get more funding from the National Housing Infrastructure Facility.

We have absorbed 80 per cent of the \$2 billion that has been on offer so far in that fund for projects in New South Wales. As the Treasurer pointed out, with 153,000 homes here, and 88,000 in Victoria, even the Productivity Commission has highlighted that we have invested \$9 billion in housing over the past five years, with \$5 billion in Queensland and only \$4.5 billion in Victoria. They have had to spend to catch up with us. But the saddest thing for Victoria is that they have also had to face rising business taxes and rising costs of doing business. That is why we are fortunate in New South Wales to have a responsible way forward recycling assets, doing the right thing by all our residents and looking after the most needy and those who need that help—the homeless. Our programs are good programs and decent programs that help the people of New South Wales get further ahead and support them in their times of need.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:12): My question is directed to the Premier. Considering the ICAC report on lobbying that was released yesterday exposed major systemic failures of the current system, will the Government implement all 29 of the ICAC recommendations as soon as possible?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:13): I thank the member for Balmain for his question. Indeed I acknowledge that yesterday the ICAC handed down its report into lobbying in New South Wales. I take this opportunity to thank Commissioner Peter Hall for his work and analysis on this important issue as well as others who supported him in this work. I also thank all those who took the time to make submissions and appear before the inquiry. At the outset, on a personal level, I say that the 29 recommendations made by the commissioner are extremely worthy for Government response. Many of these recommendations would require possible legislative changes and the Government will go through each of those recommendations.

But I also foreshadow that there are perhaps additional categories where the Government will want to go beyond what has been recommended. It is important we capture all second- and third-party entities that may otherwise not be transparent in this process. I place on record that the Government will also consider perhaps categories of people who try to influence Government members or officials who are outside what has already been addressed. But we look forward to the Government considering those recommendations in detail and coming forward with the required legislative changes. I also restate that the Government has always been at the forefront of ensuring lobbying has been regulated to high standards. In fact, in 2014 my predecessor introduced a suite of reforms, including the Lobbyists Code of Conduct, the Lobbyists Register and the regulation of the publication of ministerial diaries.

Of course, we will give this report the recognition, consideration and respect it deserves. I also take this opportunity to place on record that, as I understand, in yesterday's budget the ICAC received more than \$1 million in extra funding to its baseline. I also reiterate that every time the ICAC has asked for supplementary funding it has been granted. But on this occasion I commend the work of Chief Commissioner Hall and all those who have supported him in this important report. I confirm—in response to the question asked by the member for Balmain—that the Government will consider all 29 recommendations, formally respond to those recommendations and, if need be, even extend what has been recommended in the report to other categories of people who constantly lobby officials and members without that being disclosed.

STATE BUDGET AND POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:15): My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the budget is keeping our communities safe and resilient?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (15:16): I thank the member for Seven Hills and Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Justice for his question. I certainly note his strong advocacy for greater investment in frontline policing and emergency services given his prior role

as a police prosecutor for the NSW Police Force. He knows very well how important resources are. This budget, just like last year's budget and the budget before that, has continued to commit record funding to our police and emergency services. It has made this State safer and more resilient—and never have we needed that professionalism more than we do now. I thank the Treasurer for the \$4.7 billion that he has given to the NSW Police Force and the \$1.9 billion that he has given right across emergency services for the 2021-22 budget.

Combined, that equates to a \$6.6 billion injection into our frontline agencies to ensure that we have more police on the beat, more fire trucks on the road and more state-of-the-art facilities. Never has there been more equipment and technology made available for our great State. I take the opportunity whenever I can to get around to communities and speak with many of our frontline personnel, whom, firstly, I thank for their service. We also make sure that our deliberations in this place are well received. During National Volunteers Week last month I spent a week on the road to celebrate the service of our first responders. I travelled from Moree to Albury and all places in between. In many cases, I saw the celebration of service accompanied by the keys to a new truck or the cutting of a new ribbon for new facilities or, indeed, the inspection of new capabilities.

During the visits I was delighted to open the brand-new \$15 million police station at Inverell with the member for Northern Tablelands and saw the streets lined with the families, friends and residents of the Police Force there, who were so thrilled to see the newest police station in New South Wales. I was very proud of the fact that Inverell is the thirty-seventh new police station built or upgraded by the Government since we were elected. And our work is not yet over. We will continue to do this because the budget is for them: the men and women who put on uniforms every single day and shoulder the expectations of this community to make our State safe.

Western Sydney and our regions are truly the winners in this budget, with record funding for their frontline workers. New South Wales police are also the beneficiaries of a record \$389 million capital budget. I know the member for Upper Hunter, Dave Layzell, is very keen to receive updates on the new police station that we announced last month, which will see a \$12 million commitment in his area. The budget provides \$54.5 million as part of the \$100 million election commitment to build a brand-new \$35 million training facility in Dubbo and police stations in Bega, Jindabyne, Perisher, Thredbo and Goulburn. This is where the Deputy Premier says thank you.

Mr John Barilaro: Thank you.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: These are going to be delivered. The member for Goulburn, as we all know, is seeing \$19 million investment in her electorate through the academy upgrade, which is part of a \$60 million three-year program. Only last week I was at the academy to witness the attestation of 192 additional police officers. I know that the probationary constables of class 347 will work diligently and make the communities they serve very proud. Class 347 is another example of the end product of the New South Wales Government's \$583 million commitment to recruit 1,500 police over the current parliamentary term. The budget commits \$41 million to recruiting 250 additional police. Additionally and importantly, \$60 million is being funded as part of a \$107.9 million Multipurpose Police Station Program, which will see the redevelopment of metropolitan and regional police stations across the State, including at Broken Hill, as well as land acquisition and work at Port Macquarie.

Nearly \$19 million is committed over five years to commence phase two of the Marine Vessel Replacement Program, which will see new, state-of-the-art police vessels patrol the waterways of this State. As the Treasurer made clear yesterday, this budget has a heart, and I am delighted to note that \$47.9 million will see the commencement of a three-year pilot of an optional disengagement scheme, which the Police Force is very grateful for. The scheme will provide more certainty and financial security to officers who wish to leave the force after a period of 10 or more years of diligent service, because we know policing is a profession like no other. I was delighted to be with the Treasurer only last weekend to make a significant announcement about our continued implementation of the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry because, despite the pandemic, we still have not forgotten about the devastation wrought by the Black Summer bushfires and our necessary response to that disaster. [*Extension of time*]

We have not forgotten, just because it is not on the front pages of the newspapers or on the six o'clock news bulletins. We can never forget the devastation and we are very grateful for the recommendations made by the Owens-O'Kane inquiry. Those 76 recommendations will all be implemented. Funding is allocated for the construction of fire stations at Oran Park and Marsden Park, which I know the member for Camden and the member for Riverstone and their communities are very happy with. Our second \$268 million funding package once again puts our firefighters and the communities they serve first. Highlights include more than \$48 million for the continued accelerated program to deliver new and refurbished vehicles, with important safety upgrades to fleets right across our frontline firefighting agencies.

As I have mentioned before in this place, this is not just great news for our firefighters. It is great news for the economy, with 19 local manufacturing businesses working with the RFS to build and upgrade vehicles and create new jobs across the State, including in the Central West, the Riverina, the Hunter, the mid North Coast, Sutherland shire and the Hawkesbury. Some \$16 million has been committed for the continued support of our extra 100 Rural Fire Service mitigation crews to carry out more hazard reduction and mitigation works across the State. I have seen these crews work hard right across the State, whether in their core business or assisting with clean-up following the floods. We all know how important hazard reduction is to keep our communities safe from the threat of bushfire and how important the state of our fire trails is, the maintenance of which will keep our firefighters safe.

I am delighted to note that a further \$34 million is included to accelerate the delivery of our strategic fire trails network. Our State has led the way nationally with regard to aerial firefighting. That is why, with the procurement of the *Marie Bashir* large air tanker, our helicopter fleet and indeed our Citation jets are proof positive of our push for our agencies to work smarter and not harder. With \$5 million committed to acquire additional drones, we really are at state-of-the-art technology. It should be no surprise that since coming to government our frontline agencies have gone from strength to strength. With this record budget, we will continue to deliver.

Announcements

EMERGENCY SERVICES MEDAL

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge earlier today that the office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was presented with an Emergency Services Medal. The same medal has been presented to a number of emergency services workers who have assisted with COVID and the bushfires. On behalf of the Parliament, I thank the Minister and all under his charge for their great work.

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Deputy Chair

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 22 June 2021 Lee Justin Evans was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislation Review Committee.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Membership

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I move:

That Ron Hoenig be appointed to serve on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee in place of Ryan John Park, discharged.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

BUSINESS LAPSED

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105, general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 2164 to 2195 will lapse tomorrow.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PETITIONS

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:25): By leave: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone consideration of the petition on holistic consent sex education, presented by the member for Newtown, until Thursday 12 August 2021.

As members would be aware, the ongoing uncertainty around the COVID restrictions has meant that we have had to make a very tough decision today. I appreciate the support of the Government, the Opposition and the crossbench for doing this. Twenty thousand people signed a petition organised by Chanel Contos, which I was pleased to sponsor, to bring a debate on holistic sex education to this Chamber tomorrow. It was scheduled for tomorrow. There was a big action planned for outside Parliament that people have been organising for the past couple of weeks.

We have petition debates so that we can engage the public in what is happening in this Chamber and they can bring their issues to the floor. Given that it would be completely irresponsible at this stage for us to try to bring more people into this building or gather more people outside it, it felt like the most sensible thing to do was simply postpone the debate to the next available debate slot, on Thursday 12 August 2021. This will allow the public, the community and particularly the young women who shared their stories and talked about the need for

holistic sex education in our school system to be present—ideally in the Chamber, but if not then in other parts of the building—to watch and to gather outside the Parliament in large numbers.

I thank members for taking the sensible approach here and supporting this suspension. I also note, so it is completely clear, that the member for Lismore has already advertised a petition debate that she has triggered for 5 August. Her petition debate will happen first and proceed as normal on 5 August and we are happy to move our debate to 12 August. There will be no petition debate tomorrow, and if we agree to this suspension of standing orders as a Chamber then the debate of the member for Lismore will happen on 5 August and the consent petition debate will happen on 12 August. I think that is unfortunately the best way to proceed. Even though I would much prefer to bring this debate and this issue to the Chamber as soon as we possibly can, there are reasons we should hold off until August.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:28): The Government supports the suspension of standing orders. It is really unfortunate that the petition cannot be discussed tomorrow, but the only sensible course is to postpone it until August. I thank the member for Newtown for moving the suspension.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 10 June 2021.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:29): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The bill seeks to ensure that all entities claiming a primary producer concession on vehicle registration are primary producers to ensure a level playing field for freight operators; to address a 1998 drafting error that incorrectly applied a registration cost cap intended for light vehicles to heavy vehicles, as exposed by the member for Orange during question time in 2018 when he tabled draft RMS documentation containing sensitive legal advice on the issue; to allow for increasing motor vehicle registration fees by regulation only after consultation with the Treasurer; to clarify that the Point to Point Transport Commissioner should be treated as a public officer for the purpose of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986; and to make minor and consequential amendments to 13 Acts to address the transition from the Commonwealth Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989 to the new Commonwealth Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018.

While the New South Wales Labor Opposition supports a level playing field for freight operators in costs and charges, we place on record our concerns about the broader definition of primary producers that the Government is aiming to implement. We note that as an unintended consequence this may result in a policy change for primary producers who earn less than 50 per cent of their income from primary production activities. In briefings with Government members, they have said this amendment is necessary to achieve the Government's policy aim of restricting the eligibility of primary producers for concessional registration to those who gain at least half their income from primary production, so that it applies to real farmers and stops freight operators who happen to own a farm from using the concession against a whole fleet of vehicles. Currently, under section 3 of the Act, a primary producer is defined as a person:

- (a) who cultivates or uses the person's own land or that of another for the person's own benefit:
 - (i) for the production of fruit, grain, flowers, vegetables, tobacco or farm or agricultural produce of any description, or
 - (ii) for dairy farming, poultry or other bird farming, pig farming, bee keeping or oyster or fish culture, or
 - (iii) for a nursery, or
 - (iv) as a pastoralist for the rearing or grazing of horses, cattle or sheep, or
- (b) who gathers leaves from which eucalyptus or other oil is to be distilled.

The Act also defines a primary producer's vehicle. In addition, a definition of "load carrying vehicles" will be prescribed in the regulations. The definitions will be moved from the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act (1988) to the Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Regulation 2017. But the significant change in this bill is the addition of a new eligibility criterion for the primary producer concession, which will be prescribed in clause 127B as follows:

For the purposes of the Act, section 4 (1), definition of primary producer, paragraph (b), the eligibility criteria for a primary producer is that the primary producer must earn at least 50 per cent of the primary producer's total income from primary production activities.

There is no doubt that any concessions on motor vehicle registration fees should be targeted to those who most need them. However, there is nothing in the new criterion to address the growth in small and boutique farming operations in primary industries—those who may be called hobby farmers but who may also be, for example, participating in the slow food revolution. In such cases, there is a risk that the change in the threshold 50 per cent criterion will impact on the sector as a whole in regions where small and boutique farmers are clustered together, potentially wiping out agricultural businesses on arable agricultural land in a whole region.

For example, in my electorate of Maitland during the 2015 floods many farmers were knocked out of receiving subsidies because their individual farms did not produce enough income to meet the 50 per cent threshold. Remember, that means they could be knocked out if their income from farming or primary production was only 49 per cent. Yet across our electorate the impact of those floods on primary production as an industry was massive. Other farmers who will miss out include those who are engaged in succession planning—for example, those who are transitioning to retirement and gaining a lot more income from their superannuation, and those who are commencing in the industry and setting themselves up for farming. I remember the case of a family in my electorate who had been saving and working to build their farm, and the 2015 floods knocked them back seven years. They were eligible for no assistance to get back on track. We are trying to encourage young farmers into the industry.

The threshold will also disadvantage those who are diversifying their income streams to build resilience, those who are vertically integrating their production with manufacturing or retailing or are venturing into agritourism—as people are getting a lot of encouragement from the Government to do at the moment—and those who have suffered successive years of poor income as a result of natural disasters. They were often disadvantaged by the 50 per cent definition applied by the Rural Assistance Authority.

It can also be impacted by the financial structure of the business because there are a vast number of ways that a business can structure its ownership holdings that may have an impact on its production of income. This might be due to the decision-making of prior generations of a family farm business that has been passed down from hand to hand or even the need to invest in large and expensive farm equipment that might be put into a company, whereas the actual farm property that produces the income might be put into a partnership. There might be years where the Federal Government, for example, makes changes to the instant asset write-offs that may have an impact. There are numerous reasons why small farming businesses may structure their business assets in a specific way.

For example, I have had farmers in my community, say Jenny. Farmer X down the road from me could buy and sell me 10 times over, but because of the way the business is structured, all of the farm business is contained in one entity rather than across all of the family's income-producing activities. Again, the Government has not been able to provide clarity about how this kind of inequity can be addressed. It is something the Government has struggled with under the Rural Assistance Act. These are not theoretical concerns, and I am raising them with full transparency. I acknowledge the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads is in the Chamber today. I have raised it with his office and I am very grateful for their assistance and feedback during our conversations. I really want this to be positive feedback because I know—and I will get to this later—there are more conversations to be had about how this rolls out. I really hope you are taking this in the positive way it is intended, which is to assist farmers and to achieve the stated policy outcomes.

Having visited many of my primary producers over the past six years—especially in the past two years when I was shadow Minister for Primary Industries—during severe drought, catastrophic bushfires, flooding and the pandemic, I saw firsthand how that 50 per cent criterion in the Rural Assistance Act impacted on our State's farmers and excluded some of them from government assistance. I can think of one lady who had a fire come through her property and quite seriously threaten her whole livelihood. In fact, she was very lucky. She had survived all the others, but she survived the very last one only because it burnt the water tank, which flooded the house so it did not burn down. She was not eligible for any assistance because she had a farm that was growing herbs from which she was distilling oils and making them into face and hand creams, and selling them to tourists in the region.

It was bad enough that she could not get anything from the RAA, but when she went to Service NSW, she was told, "You don't need to come to us because you're a farmer." So there was an issue, and I am very pleased to see that the Minister has acknowledged that there is a need for a whole-of-government definition of "primary producer". That is a very important outcome. The current moue plague was ignored by the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South for a long time. I was pleased to hear the Deputy Premier in question time actually acknowledging that it is an issue. But those people will similarly be left out of any assistance measures because they do not meet the criteria. The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads has made a commitment to work with stakeholders to create a fit-for-purpose whole-of-government definition of primary producer. How and why this Minister rather than the agriculture Minister will be given the task to address that is obvious to everyone in

Parliament, given the failure of the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales to address many concerns of the State's farmers in his more than two years in this role.

I urge the Government, particularly The Nationals, to work on the relationship with the State's farmers because it is vital to ensure that we have a vibrant agricultural sector that reaches \$30 billion by 2030, despite the challenges of the past five years. In a sign that the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads is listening to the issues facing primary producers, his office has indicated that the definition being placed in the regulation means it could be more easily changed to, say, 30 per cent of income during a year of drought. However, as I have pointed out to the Minister's office, I am hopeful that this discussion could also look closely not just at the way the criteria are applied across the whole farming sector in times of natural disasters and plagues, but also to those farmers who are most vulnerable during those times, which can be lengthy, and just do not tick the boxes.

Such a regulatory change, even with the flexibility to change the numbers, would not address the concerns of individual farmers who have been unsuccessful in achieving RAA assistance due to the types of situations I have outlined. Presumably and additionally, they will now lose their entitlement to concessional vehicle registration fees under the changes proposed in the bill. Fifty per cent is an arbitrary figure. What happens to those farmers who, in the year they try to obtain registration, derived only 49 per cent of their income from primary production, or 48 per cent? Farms are not a business that you can rely on year on year. They can have a very "lumpy" income and cash flow, as NSW Farmers call it, so things can really change. Given the difficult situation this causes for many farmers in the State in times of crisis, we need to be cautious in applying that to a general concession. Further, the RAA uses the 50 per cent eligibility criteria across three years. When farmers go to the RAA for assistance they have three different years to choose from. When they have to get year-on-year losses they can choose from a number of years.

That is very important because sometimes your loss might be so bad in the first year that you do pick up a little bit in the second year, but you are still so far back from where you started that you are still struggling. Often that is not obvious after a single year of growth after a sustained drought. It might be that in some years the farmer had to diversify their income to be more resilient. That is why the RAA has the flexibility to look back over a number of years to find the data that will support a grant. This is a function of the operations of grants under the RAA. It is usually a one-off, but it can recognise multiple years of disadvantage. When this same principle is applied to vehicle registration, it is based on an annual registration, so how many years will farmers be able to look back on when they are registering their vehicles? The Federal Government uses instant asset write-offs to achieve real assistance for those people in purchasing major farm equipment like vehicles. The Government must ensure that the principle does not have the perverse impact of making that difficult for them.

I acknowledge again the Minister's promise to work with farmers to design a form and process that will implement the criteria to provide for the same flexibility that applies to grants to help compensate farmers for loss of income. However, it appears that it could have the effect of imposing more red tape on farmers to claim the concession, with no guarantee that the change will achieve the policy outcome of a level playing field for all freight operators. I know this, having been a tourism operator and an operator of heavy vehicles for nearly 20 years. Often the Government comes up with a great idea—and this is not a political thing because it happens under all parties. You try to streamline a process to achieve a policy goal, but unless you really listen and look through a lot of those examples, you do not get the outcome you want.

Mr Paul Toole: I have spoken to the stakeholders, yes.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Yes, but I say to the Minister, I would really like to help in this process because I see it as very important for our State's farmers. It is important to recognise that vehicle registration is not just a one-off grant, it will be continuous. We must not forget that the Government is belatedly seeking to address a drafting error that was brought to its attention nearly two decades after the original legislation was drafted but which it has known about for three years, which is when it was brought to the attention of the Parliament by the member for Orange in 2018. The legal advice showed that. It was only after the document was tabled in August that the February document started to get some action. In seeking to remedy the impact of the drafting error, which incorrectly applied a primary producer concessional registration cost capping intended for light vehicles to heavy vehicles, and in responding to the recent severe drought, the Government refunded \$42 million in vehicle registration fees in 2018 because the legislation allowed it to go back only three years, which is fair enough.

It has since paid some \$100 million in drought support waivers for those using the primary producer concessions to register their fleet. Those concessions are slated to end by 30 June 2021. The waiver meant that primary producers did not pay registration fees for eligible vehicles but still had to pay all the other charges. I am not having a go at the Minister; I acknowledge he has not had the portfolio for the whole three years. There has been an election and COVID and things are busy. But it is three years since the document was drafted and less than a month before the waiver runs out. The Government is trying to address a legislative error that it has known

about for at least three years, possibly longer—from whenever drafting of that document began. We must ask: How has this gone wrong for so long? Why has the Government waited so long to address the underlying issue, particularly when further consultation is required to bring this to fruition? Even if the bill is passed today and receives assent, a lot of legislation in the portfolio is yet to be proclaimed and enacted, so it could be some time before it happens.

It is also concerning that the Government cannot provide any estimate of the quantum of funding in the forward estimates that would be saved by changing the eligibility criteria for a primary producer in the bill. The transparency of fees and charges is dealt with elsewhere in the bill, but if changes are moved to regulation, particularly around the 50 per cent of income test, the Government is not required to come back to the Parliament—the elected representatives of our State—before amending criteria again and potentially knocking out more primary producers from concessions in the future. It can go down but it can also go up. We must remember that currently anyone who satisfies the definition of "primary producer" in the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act is not doing the wrong thing. They meet the criteria—it is nothing about the timelines—no matter the percentage of income that is produced by these activities.

In his second reading speech the Minister could tell us that for approximately 131,000 light vehicles primary producers pay 55 per cent of the business registration rate capped and for approximately 36,000 heavy vehicles, the lesser of either the national registration charge of 55 per cent of the business rate of tax. The total value of that concession for the 2020-21 financial year—the last financial year—is approximately \$67 million. In briefing me, Transport for NSW advised that approximately 55,000 entities own those vehicles. It surprises me that there is no modelling of how that would play out. I do not have access to the figures but the Minister and the department would have access to figures that would tell them how many primary producers have 20 vehicles or 100 vehicles under this system, and they would be able to have some kind of back-of-the-envelope idea of what the amount is. The lack of modelling is not credible. It beggars belief that they would not have done any data analysis on the figures to estimate the saving to the budget bottom line. If 167 vehicles in total are covered by the grants and only 55,000 registered entities, that is an average of three vehicles per primary producer. A lot of farmers have only one primary vehicle. We need to get an idea of how widespread this is.

I have spoken to the Minister's office about how concerning it is that in 2021 we do not have an exact idea of how many farmers or primary producers there are in this State. If the NSW Nationals do not know how many farmers there are, there is clearly a problem. In the dairy industry, for example, the number of dairy farmers in the industry is reported regularly, so trends can be observed. But if we, as an agricultural State, have the great target of getting to \$30 billion by 2030, we have to know how many farmers we are talking to and how we access them. After the April super storms six years ago I raised that problem in this place when I wanted to write to all the farmers in my electorate. I approached Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries and asked, "How many are there?" They said, "We don't know. We can't tell you because our registration system for farmers does not allow us to have that information." If we are going to be fair dinkum about being a State with a proper agricultural industry, those numbers are important.

If the Government does not want to do it on numbers, it could make an educated guess based on the names of some of these entities. For example, if a registered entity's name contains words like "freight", "logistics" and "transport", rather than "farm" or "agriculture" or "primary producer", it would get an idea for its own modelling purposes. I have requested such information from the Minister's office, but it does not have it. We must work on that. This situation confirms that this bill is all about reducing the number of primary producers who are eligible to claim the concession, which will increase the cost of living for many farmers in this State. As I said, many of them are some of the most financially disadvantaged and distressed in our State. I know the Minister will have a story about big, rich people—the Government's favourite example is usually the Hunter Valley miner who has a farm or the doctor who has a vineyard and those sorts of things. I apologise to the Minister for using examples, but it is an old, broken record. We must look at what we are doing because we have a whole region with a whole lot of little farmers.

The NSW Agriculture Commissioner is running around the State talking about how we protect State significant agricultural land, but we are not recognising the way that farming is being undertaken, particularly when a lot of farmers cannot afford to buy a massive farm or are not interested in broadacre farming; they may want to do boutique farming and possibly export to other countries. I have spoken to a number of freight operators. Their understanding is that the intent of the bill is not to disadvantage primary producers but rather to ensure a level playing field. Having operated heavy vehicle transport fleets, I understand that smaller operators do not want to be disadvantaged, as often happens, by being unable to access all the concessions that the big guys have. When they quote they are more expensive because their fixed costs are more than everyone else's, so I totally get it. But even the freight operators have said to me, "I don't know why the farmers would cop the 50 per cent definition."

The Minister should look at that. He has the chance to do it because it will be in the regulations. We must remember that on the back of the tolls, charges, taxes, fees and fines that are increasingly being imposed on people in New South Wales under this Government's budget, we should not be surprised. If the Minister really wanted to help heavy vehicle operators, the thing that they are really stressed about with freight and logistics is waiting in the queue at the port, the tolls and all those sorts of issues. Operators who are now coming down the M1 from the Hunter have to drive their heavy vehicles through Sydney via NorthConnex to sell their produce. The Government could look at other ways to address the cost of living for freight transporters, who are often small family-owned company operators, instead of cutting them out of this one.

The Government has delivered a budget that includes toll increases of more than 8 per cent a year. Heavy vehicles often bear the brunt of those toll increases. They are often forced to use the toll roads, which has an impact on their fixed costs that cannot be recouped from the person who uses them. We know that is the case. It is alright for an airline to add a fuel surcharge, but coach operators and transport operators cannot do that. People take transport and logistics operators for granted. They assume that the goods will arrive at their door. If there is an increase in the fuel price or the tolls, or if there is a reduction in eligibility for a concession, our society thinks that is simply the operator's problem. These are the pressures that are on these small business people.

Another aspect of the bill is increased enforcement powers. New section 169B increases the powers of authorised officers, who may be roadside inspectors or other employees of Transport for NSW, to require a relevant person to produce information to prove that they are eligible for a concessional charge for the vehicle and that they have paid the correct registration fees and charges, et cetera. That has to be in the form specified by the authorised officer. I know there is a commitment to work on that paperwork, but we must make sure that it is good and consistent. I have lived through all of these changes. I could tell stories about government bureaucrats telling us as transport business operators crazy and unachievable things. So we must make sure that it is right. Where desktop audits of a business occurs—I am told that might be an option—we must make sure that they are not used to simply strike fear; they should have clear guidelines that people can meet.

Again, I urge the Minister to remember that farming can be a precarious, tenuous business in cashflow and profitability, which can vary widely from year to year. The last thing that government should be doing is punishing innovation, diversification and resilience building. If the Government implements these changes, it must ensure it does not do that. The bill increases the penalties for an individual and a corporation to more accurately reflect the real cost of registration. As those heavy vehicle registrations can be in excess of \$10,000, it is important that the penalty reflects the crime—if it becomes a crime—and that it provides a disincentive against doing the wrong thing. Most importantly, it must be backed up by compliance activity. Otherwise, yet again we will run the risk of eligible primary producers doing everything they can to reach the bar but then the rogue operators walk under it easily, limbo style.

Most importantly, we need an education campaign for operators and for their accountants who provide the sign-off because accountants normally tick those off, but they will need to know they have a new regime to deal with and that will mean changes for their clients. They probably also need time to account for those changes so that they can look at how to manage their cashflows because, for example—and I know that it will not happen—if the Act came into effect on 1 July it would have a significant impact on the cashflow of a lot of businesses and that would mean jobs would be lost in regional areas. The bill specifies that the regulations may provide for consumer price index [CPI] adjustments to motor vehicle taxes. The Minister's office has sold it to us by saying the bill specifies that the regulations might provide for CPI adjustments on motor vehicle taxes, and of course it contains the requirement to consult with the Treasurer prior to recommending a change to the regulation. But that does not always mean transparency; it means an increase in the cost of living, particularly for small owner-operators.

When those changes are governed by delegated legislation such as by a regulation it reduces the ability of elected members of Parliament to properly scrutinise such changes and that reduces the accountability of the Government. I return to that important point. The Legislative Council's Regulation Committee report entitled *Making of delegated legislation New South Wales* was published in October last year. Associate Professor Lorne Neudorf is referenced in that report, which stated:

An analysis of primary and delegated legislation conducted by Associate Professor Neudorf found that:

- of the 437 enactments published on the NSW legislation website in 2019, 6 per cent, or 25 enactments, were pieces of primary legislation enacted by Parliament, while 94 per cent—

the vast majority—

or 412 enactments, were 'regulations'

- of the 3,470 pages of legislative text enacted in New South Wales in 2019, 13 per cent, or 462 pages, were in primary legislation, while 87 per cent, or 3,008 pages, were in delegated legislation ...

The report continued:

Associate Professor Neudorf observed that the results of his analysis demonstrate that delegated legislation 'is the principal form of lawmaking in New South Wales'. Further, the New South Wales Parliament is delegating 'tremendous lawmaking powers' to the Government and the Government has no hesitation in using those powers to make new laws.

Further:

Associate Professor Neudorf submitted that the figures reinforce the need for robust parliamentary oversight as a critical check on the use of delegated legislative power to prevent executive overreach and preserve the Parliament's constitutional role as lawmaker in chief.

That is so important. If the Minister goes down that path, consultation with stakeholders is vital. The Minister should also acknowledge that Opposition members, including Labor and colleagues from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and The Greens, also have an interest in those rules. Exemptions for the payment of motor vehicle tax will be removed from section 17 of the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 and will be covered under section 19 of the Road Transport Act 2013, which allows the Minister to exclude vehicles, persons or animals by gazettal. Again the Minister is increasing powers from the oversight and scrutiny of the Parliament and the elected representatives of the community, who should all be working together to reduce the cost of living.

The bill also provides changes to the powers of the Point to Point Transport Commissioner, which are well overdue. The Point to Point Transport Commissioner is the independent regulator of the point to point transport industry. However, as is usual for the Government, it is fond of appointing commissioners with little to no power to carry out their functions. One need only look at the NSW Agriculture Commissioner and the NSW Dairy and Fresh Food Commissioner. I urge the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to not continue in that way. The function of the commissioner is to administer and enforce the laws around point to point transport, including industry safety standards. However, the original drafting contained an omission that meant the commissioner was not deemed a public officer for the purposes of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, so the commissioner could only commence proceedings as a private individual and did not have protection or indemnity from legal liability as other public officers do.

For practical purposes, that means if the Point to Point Transport Commissioner had taken any action against someone in the course of carrying out his statutory roles he would not have been indemnified against any costs awarded against him personally over the past five years—a bit of a mistake. The Government should have ensured the Point to Point Transport Commissioner had proper enforcement powers to undertake the role in the first place. Further, it beggars belief that it has taken the Government over five years to work out the omission. How hard is the commissioner working? In highlighting the disincentive for the commissioner to take such action, the Government has shown that its champion of fairness is really a toothless tiger. It is also concerning that the Government has failed to address all of the recommendations of the Point to Point Transport Independent Review of 2020 that was undertaken by Ms Baker-Finch and released on 24 February.

The review took nearly 12 months and the Government released its response only two weeks ago. Given the difficulties faced by taxi owners in this State over the past six years, I can understand why they might feel cheated: The first piece of legislative reform after the Baker-Finch report indemnifies the Point to Point Transport Commissioner from personal loss in the execution of his duties. It does not "set up an appropriate industry assistance scheme to balance the impacts of the reforms" as promised by the Minister. It is understandable that those in the taxi industry who lost up to \$400,000 in the value of their taxi plates as a result of the Government's botched attempt to properly regulate the point to point industry might say they have never been properly indemnified for their personal losses. The Opposition does not oppose those changes, but urges the Government to work harder to implement the recommendations of the Baker-Finch report and, most of all, to support our hardworking taxi owners.

Finally, the bill makes minor consequential amendments to reflect the transition to the Commonwealth's Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018 and to implement the new Register of Approved Vehicles, which the Opposition does not oppose. I thank shadow Minister for Roads the Hon. John Graham, shadow Minister for Transport Jo Haylen, shadow Minister for Agriculture the Hon. Mick Veitch and shadow Minister for Small Business Steve Kamper for their input into Labor's response to the bill. I am sure the member for Kogarah and shadow Minister for Small Business will also contribute to debate on the bill. He has been a real champion of the taxi industry and he also has concerns around the primary industries issues, as do I. I place on record my thanks to Isabella McDougall from the Minister's office and Cheryl Richey from Transport for NSW. I thank the Minister for the briefing and for a real conversation about the bill.

While I have pointed out some of the potential pitfalls of the bill, as someone who has been subject to those kinds of regulatory changes in the heavy vehicle industry for nearly two decades, and as someone who has lived in the regions for even longer than that, I appreciate the opportunity to provide that feedback, both in briefings and in this place, in the hope that those regulatory discussions, which will be held away from the scrutiny of the

Parliament, take into consideration the issues for primary producers because that has not happened under the agriculture Minister. Those producers are trying to undertake their legitimate businesses as farmers and they need help. I also thank some of the key stakeholders whom I have consulted with during the development of the bill, including Colin Henderson from the Transport Workers' Union, Kathy Rankin and Annabel Johnson from NSW Farmers, Martin Rogers from the NSW Taxi Council, Simon O'Hara from Road Freight NSW and President of the Livestock, Bulk and Rural Carriers Association and Paul Pulver, amongst many others.

We often take for granted the importance of transport and logistics in our daily lives. Today it is particularly important to recognise that the pandemic has provided an opportunity for many people who have been housebound during periods of lockdown across Australia and the rest of the world to understand the importance of freight transport companies, especially those smaller family and individually owned companies that operate on tiny margins, sometimes of only 2 per cent to 3 per cent, to deliver to us the things that we all need. It is important to realise that every time the Government changes regulations, or when large privately owned tolling companies raise fees and charges, there is rarely an opportunity for those operators to recoup those expenses due to the contracts or pricing pressures in the supply chain. I thank each and every transport and logistics operator in our State for their work during COVID. I assure them that, as the shadow Minister in this portfolio, I will continue to put their needs first.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:02): I speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I am pleased to contribute to debate on the bill, which provides a pathway for improving and modernising the framework used by Transport for NSW to administer and regulate vehicle registration concessions and to ensure those concessions are granted only to eligible primary producers. The bill will also provide additional powers for authorised officers to require the production of documents from drivers or third parties to ensure that the claim for the concession on a vehicle's registration is legitimate and that the vehicle is being used in accordance with the terms and conditions of use of a primary producer vehicle. New South Wales farmers have shown extraordinary resilience in recent years in the face of some of the worst drought conditions ever experienced in this State, and I can speak firsthand about that.

Many farmers in Wollondilly work in a range of industries. If it were not for groups like the Dilly Drought Drive and others, our farmers might not be there today. A lot of community help went into getting water to those farms. It was a tough time. Then we were hit by fires, floods and a pandemic. We have copped it all in Wollondilly. The arrival of the pandemic in 2020 has further demonstrated the need for a more agile regulatory framework to enable the Government to respond quickly to environmental factors that adversely affect our farmers. The ability to mitigate the opportunity for exploitation of vehicle registration concessions offered to eligible primary producers is needed to create a level playing field. There is also a need to prevent the exploitation or gaming of the concession to mitigate the opportunity for some road transport operators to gain an unfair business advantage over others.

With those outcomes in mind, the bill seeks amendments to road transport law to strengthen the eligibility criteria for granting the primary producer concession to eligible farmers through the introduction of an income threshold and to remove the opportunity for exploitation of the concession. The income threshold will require that at least 50 per cent of income is derived from primary production business. That requirement is consistent with eligibility criteria currently in use by other New South Wales Government agencies that offer financial assistance to primary producers, including the Rural Assistance Authority. The legislative framework will continue to provide for those requirements to be waived by the Minister in certain circumstances. Transport for NSW is aware that some large transport companies that may have only a single token aspect of their business involved in primary production are currently claiming the concession for their entire fleet of vehicles. Typically most, if not all, of those companies transport goods that have no direct relationship with primary production.

As the primary producer registration concession for a single heavy vehicle can be as much as \$10,000 per vehicle, the incentive to falsely claim eligibility for the concession is high, especially across entire fleets of vehicles. In the interests of ensuring a level playing field for transport operators and responding to stakeholder concerns about the issue, it is essential that the concession is granted only to genuine primary producers who can demonstrate they satisfy the eligibility criteria. The bill proposes to relocate the definitions of "primary producer" and "primary producer's vehicle" from the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act to the statutory rules of the Road Transport Act to enable a more agile approach by government in responding to farmers in times of need. That would also permit Transport for NSW to adopt any future government-wide definition of "primary producer" and "primary producer's vehicle" that might be developed by the NSW Department of Industry as a result of its upcoming review of the New South Wales Rural Assistance Act.

The current definition of "primary producer's vehicle" provides for a broad range of uses, which presents compliance and enforcement challenges for Transport for NSW due to interpretation issues. For greater clarity, it is proposed to revise the definition to limit the use of a heavy vehicle owned by a primary producer, and when

operated on a road or road-related area, solely for primary production activity under normal circumstances. It is important to note that the Minister can waive some or all of those requirements in unforeseen circumstances, such as drought, which we have just gone through. The Government recognises the variety of environments and challenges faced by primary producers in their primary production activities and the need for that flexibility. Primary producer light vehicles will be able to continue to be used for the household activities currently provided for within the definition, such as shopping or taking kids to school. That will remove the pressure of either foregoing the concession or running a second vehicle for the 44 per cent of primary producers who currently operate only one light vehicle.

Under current and proposed arrangements, no primary producer vehicle will be permitted to be used or let out for hire, fee or reward. That maintains a level playing field with road transport companies that are not entitled to primary producer registration concessions. Penalties for breaching such a condition, including registration suspension, currently exist under road transport law. The statutory rules will be able to prescribe non-eligible vehicles, such as large street motorcycles, identified through compliance and enforcement activities should the need arise. The amendments will deliver better customer outcomes by ensuring that only genuine primary producers are granted the concession and opportunities for exploitation of the concession are minimised. Transport for NSW will work with NSW Farmers to refine processes to support the implementation of these changes, including the design of declaration forms and other communication material, to ensure that farmers receive clear and concise messages about the changes.

The bill will provide an authorised officer with powers to request the production of documents, evidence or information from the registered operator of the vehicle or any other person for the purposes of determining vehicle registration concession eligibility and compliance with vehicle registration requirements and conditions. The bill will provide increased penalties for corporations that attempt to register a vehicle by dishonest means, and it will permit the creation of a new offence of "obtain or attempt to obtain a vehicle registration concession by false statement, misrepresentation or other dishonest means". Those penalties are considered necessary to deter fraud and unlawful behaviour and are aligned to similar level penalties imposed on corporations under road transport law for offences including knowingly providing false or misleading information to enable the amount of registration charges to be determined; failure to pay the full amount of registration charge for a vehicle; or using a vehicle on a road with unpaid registration charges.

Our primary producers have done it tough in recent years. The Government is committed to continuing to support our farmers by providing a pathway of reform that will improve and modernise the framework used by Transport for NSW to administer and regulate vehicle registration concessions to ensure that those concessions are targeted to those who need it most. This is great work by the Minister and his office, because so many farmers in my electorate went through hell during the drought. Wollondilly has a wide range of farmers and primary production; we have equine and agritourism. As soon as they got out of the drought, they copped a flood and the fires, and now we are going through COVID-19. My electorate has copped everything; it reminds me of the scene from Charlton Heston's *The Ten Commandments* with the seven plagues of Egypt. Wollondilly has copped everything but it is still moving forward. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (16:12): I speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. It is an amendment that we have needed for a long time. It fixes a loophole that has let a good policy—the primary producer concession—be misused, and has hurt local transport businesses in the process. Family farms are the lifeblood of my electorate and of the State. Living on the land they work on, farmers are deeply in tune with the land and with the best farming practices. But farming is an expensive business; there is a lot of big machinery and transport costs that other small family businesses do not have. While the machinery is essential to our business, we might run it only a few times a year, such as at harvest. That is when we have the trucks on the road. That is why past governments quite rightly brought in the primary producer registration concession to ease some of that burden, but they did not define it very well.

A concession that was designed for farmers to get their own or their neighbour's product to market has been used by big transport companies or corporations that run massive fleets of trucks and get away with it because they own a couple of chook sheds. Because they get the benefit of the concession, those huge, complex companies have an unfair advantage over the little guys, who might not have as many trucks but pay full fare to keep them on the road. It is a double whammy. It is another chapter in the long story of how short-sighted politicians in the city have hurt the small businesses, which are the life of our bush communities, and of how family farms and small truckers have had to sell up and get re-hired as contractors in their own businesses, becoming gig workers for companies that do not invest in communities. So I welcome this amendment. It streamlines the law and makes clear what we have always known: that a farmer is someone who makes their living by farming. It also introduces some hefty penalties for those corporations who have played fast and loose with the spirit of the law.

This bill is a good start to levelling the playing field, but there is an open question about whether it will do what it says on the tin. The stronger definition of "primary producer" is a good thing. Defining a primary producer as someone who makes 50 per cent of their income by farming should weed out the companies taking advantage of this law, while reflecting the reality of diversified farm incomes. It is also fair that the Minister can lower that percentage figure in times of hardship, like the droughts that are always on our horizon. But does this discretion create new loopholes? I am not convinced that the Minister has thought this all the way through.

Will we see those non-genuine actors jumping back in to take advantage if the threshold is lowered? Will it open the door to creative accounting? This may seem perhaps a small or hypothetical problem, but it can be easily fixed by tightening up the text. With that in place, I believe this bill will be a good start. But I ask the Minister whether there is a simpler way to close that loophole. What if there is a user-pays model that charges by the kilometre? Then no-one can cheat. That will not only protect our farmers but also create a level playing field to keep all our truckers on the road.

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:16): I speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which provides a number of road transport amendments that will modernise the regulatory framework administered by Transport for NSW in granting vehicle registration concessions for primary producers. It also seeks to rectify a technical drafting error in the legislation. In the mid 1990s national heavy vehicle registration charges were introduced in Australia to recover the heavy vehicle share of road expenditure. In 1998 a legislative amendment was made to New South Wales road transport law that applied a monetary cap to primary producer light vehicles so that the motor vehicle tax for those vehicles would not be greater than the national registration charge for a heavy vehicle of more than 4.5 tonnes. However, the legislation was drafted in such a way that heavy vehicle charges were also captured and inadvertently gained the benefit of the cap.

The policy intention was for the monetary cap not to be applied when calculating the registration charge concession for primary producer heavy vehicles so the lesser of either the uncapped tax or the registration charge applied. The drafting error remained undetected following the passage of the legislation. The relevant IT systems were changed by the Roads and Traffic Authority to reflect the policy intent of the Government, and the concession has been administered in the manner that was intended but technically contrary to the legislation. New South Wales farmers who operate light vehicles have continued to receive the concession as the Government originally intended, and the monetary cap has not applied when calculating the registration charge concession for primary producer heavy vehicles.

Let me illustrate why the legislation must be corrected to reflect the longstanding policy intention of the Government in calculating the concession to ensure that all citizens in New South Wales receive a fair go with respect to registration concessions. Heavy vehicle registration charges are applied nationally across Australia and aim to recover heavy vehicle related expenditure on roads from heavy vehicle operators to allow governments to invest in building and maintaining productive and safer roads. The annual registration charge for a medium combination truck with four axles, which unladen weighs seven tonnes but can have a total weight of up to 20 tonnes when fully loaded and using the road network, is \$10,320. The current concession for a primary producer reduces the registration charge on this vehicle to \$1,803. However, if the registration charge were calculated in accordance with the anomaly in the current legislation, the registration charge would be further reduced to \$745 for the same vehicle.

To put that into perspective, the annual motor vehicle tax for a large four-wheel drive vehicle that weighs around 2.5 tonnes operated by a non primary producer business is \$745, but that vehicle is substantially smaller in terms of weight, size and impact on the road infrastructure. As registration charges are levied to recover expenditure used to maintain our roads, the legislation must be rectified to support the policy intention of the Government and the current calculation of the primary producer heavy vehicle concession, which is the only option that ensures that heavy vehicles pay their share of road spending. That is what this bill seeks to do. Let me remind members of the action this Government has taken to address the consequences created by the legislative anomaly since it was identified in 2018. In 2018 Roads and Maritime Services issued vehicle registration refunds dating back three years to more than 9,000 farmers affected by the error, at a cost of some \$42 million. The Government has also waived registration fees for all primary producer heavy vehicle operators for the past three years, at a cost of more than \$100 million.

This Government will continue to support our farmers through good times and challenging times. We recognise the importance and value of concessional registration to primary producers and will continue to work closely with New South Wales farmers to ensure that this concession continues to support genuine farmers. This bill will ensure a robust primary producer registration concession, one that supports farmers and provides a more flexible legislative framework for government to respond to the needs of farmers in times of natural disaster. I do not doubt this bill is extremely important not only to the farmers of this State but also to all of our communities.

I thank the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and his staff for working diligently on this important legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:22): I note the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads is in the House. I thank him for bringing the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 to this place. The bill amends the Road Transport Act 2013 and the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 as well as makes other minor amendments. As my colleague the member for Murray indicated, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party supports the bill. I have read the Minister's second reading speech that he delivered a few weeks ago about the objectives of the amendment. One of the primary objectives was to rectify a longstanding legislative anomaly caused by a drafting error, which incorrectly applied a monetary cap on heavy vehicle primary producer registration charges. The anomaly dates back to 1998.

As I was informed when I raised this issue in this Chamber with the previous Minister, Minister Pavey, during question time, the anomaly was caused by a software or algorithm issue that led to primary producers being overcharged for their heavy vehicle concessional registrations then going back 20 years to 1998. At the time our primary producers had been overcharged to the tune of well over \$130 million. To be fair, I will say it was not this current Government; it happened under successive governments dating back to 1998. However, none of this was ever disclosed to the public or the affected customers until I raised the specific issue with Minister Pavey. I have gone through the *Hansard* and will read the question I asked the Minister on 16 August 2018 on this very issue. I said:

I direct my question to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. Having regard to Roads and Maritime Services' Primary Producer Concession Options Paper, dated February 2018, when did the Minister intend to tell our battling drought-affected farmers, many of whom have been struggling to put food on the table and to keep their starving stock alive, that they have been fleeced of more than \$130 million of their hard-earned money by Roads and Maritime Services? It has knowingly, and contrary to legislation, ripped it from them in farm vehicle registration for the past 20 years. When will the Government give them a refund?

There was some banter, as there is in question time, and avoidance of the question. Eventually I tabled the document, and the Minister said:

This is not the time for politics and little stunts across the Chamber. This is the time for communities to work together to support farmers during a difficult time. We should remember that it is this Government that has doubled the Roads budget in New South Wales. We are improving the State's roads, supporting local councils and it is a shame that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party continues to play politics over policy.

That was back in August 2018, during the midst of what was at the time one of the worst droughts in living memory. The Government kept that rip-off a secret and sat on and suppressed releasing the report. Why? That is because it would have brought criticism of both the department and the Government, eroded public confidence and trust in the processes of both the department and the Government, and given rise to calls for compensation and refunds, costing the Government hundreds of millions of dollars to compensate affected primary producers impacted by that rip-off. As I said, all of this was at a time when one of the worst droughts in living memory was occurring.

It was completely and grossly unsatisfactory when our farmers were struggling to put food on the table, pay the bills, feed their stock and run their properties. That was the only reason this information was not publicly disclosed earlier by the Government to the customers who had been unknowingly and inadvertently paying excessive registration fees for 20 years. I will let that sink in for everyone who is listening. We all have cars and we all get registration papers in the mail that we assume are correct. We might think the price has gone up a bit one year but who are we to question Roads and Maritime Services? We just pay it. As I said, it was grossly negligent of this Government and other governments over the past 20 years not to bring this to the attention of the affected customers, consumers, farmers and members of the public.

In any event, I welcome the Minister bringing this bill before the House and I commend him for doing so. I question why it has taken three years to introduce this bill and rectify the situation. I am sure the Minister is listening and will answer that in his reply speech. Had I not brought this matter to the attention of the Government, I suspect that everyone would still be none the wiser and primary producers would still be getting ripped off to the tune of millions and millions of dollars. As I said, I give credit where credit is due and I thank the Minister for introducing the bill. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:28): I speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads in the Chamber. It was a pleasure to be his Parliamentary Secretary for the earlier part of this term of government. He has been a terrific Minister for the regions, particularly in providing councils with funding to fix country roads and bridges, and working in collaboration with his Federal counterpart to secure record funding for regional New South Wales. We in the country acknowledge his efforts and thank him. The bill proposes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 and the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 that will create a more flexible legislative

framework to enable the Government to more readily respond to the needs of farmers in times of drought, flood and other natural disasters.

We have seen the travails that farmers have been put through in the past few years with a drought that made the history books—and rewrote them—bushfires, floods, the pandemic and a mouse plague. They certainly deserve support and the Government is providing that in this legislation. In the interests of ensuring a level playing field for transport operators and responding to stakeholder concerns on this issue, it is essential that the concession is only granted to genuine primary producers who can demonstrate their eligibility for a registration concession. The bill also proposes amendments to a range of New South Wales Acts and other instruments that reference the Commonwealth Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989, which will be replaced by the Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018 on 1 July 2021. The Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016 will be amended to clarify that the Point to Point Commissioner should be treated as a public officer for the purposes of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, and an amendment to the Interpretations Act 1987 will extend an existing provision under the Act.

On 1 July 2021 the Commonwealth Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018 will replace the Commonwealth Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989. Those Acts regulate the provision of road vehicles to the Australian market and national road vehicle standards. Schedule 5 to the bill updates references across the statute book to reflect the transition to the Commonwealth Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018. Those amendments will make consequential changes to refer to the new Act and also make provision for the transition from identification plates—also known as compliance plates—which were required under the Motor Vehicle Standards Act, to the new Register of Approved Vehicles under the Road Vehicle Standards Act. The new Register of Approved Vehicles will act as an online, publicly searchable database of information for vehicles approved for use on Australian roads under the Road Vehicle Standards Act.

The amendments to be made to the New South Wales Acts and instruments will ensure that New South Wales remains in line with the current Commonwealth laws and that New South Wales Acts and instruments continue to operate as intended. The bill will also amend the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016 to clarify that the Point to Point Commissioner should be treated as a public officer for the purposes of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. It has always been the Government's intent that the commissioner be treated as a public officer, given that taking enforcement action is one of the commissioner's statutory functions. However, the commissioner can only commence proceedings as a private individual. As a result, the commissioner does not have the benefit of the indemnity that public officers enjoy. Public officers are indemnified in respect of any costs awarded against them personally in proceedings in which they are acting in their capacity as a public officer. The amendment will ensure that the commissioner continues to be effective in ensuring the safety of the point to point transport industry.

Schedule 5.2 to the bill amends section 30A of the Interpretation Act 1987 to provide that provisions may be transferred from an Act or statutory rule to another Act or statutory rule without affecting the operation or meaning of the provision, putting beyond doubt that the meaning of a transferred provision is preserved and remains consistent with its original meaning in legislation. Schedule 5.12 to the bill amends the Road Transport Act 2013 and schedule 5.12 (2) provides that if Transport for NSW cancels the registration of a written-off heavy vehicle, the offence of using the unregistered vehicle applies from the day on which the registered operator of the heavy vehicle is notified of the cancellation. These amendments are an example of the Government's commitment to modernise legislation and remove inconsistencies and red tape to better serve the needs of New South Wales farmers and the citizens of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:35): I make a short contribution to debate on the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I say from the start that Labor supports the bill. The bill seeks to sort out some anomalies associated with primary producer registration concessions that historically were introduced by legislation to assist and support people or entities carrying on a business of primary production.

Mr Paul Toole: It's about farms.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: I know plenty about farms. I used to represent many of them as an accountant and I used to get many registration notices where they required a primary production declaration and required their tax agent to sign off on those things. So I am quite familiar with the concessions that are available. I also understand the pitfalls that are associated with past practices and how the actual concession was exploited by people who were not primary producers. I support the bill on the basis that it is looking to provide concessions to people who are carrying on a primary production business, but I am concerned somewhat that we are moving it out of legislation into regulation.

I believe it is really important that we consider how we establish whether someone who is a primary producer is eligible. I am concerned when I hear statements such as if 50 per cent of their overall earnings is from

farming activity or primary production activity they will be entitled to concessions. Let us say that James from Manly put a substantial investment into running a goat farm. It may take a fair bit of time before that is generating revenue, depending on his natural increases and whatever—I appreciate that—but whatever the case, he is still running a primary production business and if there is a vehicle that has been used specifically for that how are we going to capture that within regulation? I think it is important that a lot of consideration is given to that and that consultation is undertaken in the process. I do not think one can just generally put aside a percentile of revenue. James might be embarking on a substantial investment in jojoba beans. It could take seven years to generate revenue from jojoba beans.

The part of the bill that concerns me the most is how we are going to identify and define a person or an entity that is eligible for these concessions. I believe there should be greater concentration on that in the future. This bill was pretty much a mop-up bill to sort out a number of little issues, but in relation to the Point to Point Transport Commissioner, obviously it is important that the commissioner—who is to be treated as a public officer for the purpose of the Criminal Procedure Act—receives legal cover. I hope that the commissioner will focus on giving a little bit of cover to the poor people who have owned taxi plates over the years and have lost all their asset base over a very short time. So all protection to the commissioner, but we look for some support back from the commissioner. That is all I have to say. I support the bill.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:39): I support the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, a bill that is right for the times. I acknowledge the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and his hardworking staff on introducing the bill. The bill proposes a number of amendments that collectively will deliver improved customer and economic outcomes for New South Wales by providing a modern, agile and regulatory framework that can be effectively administered by Transport for NSW. First, in 1998 a legislative amendment was made to the New South Wales road transport law that applied a monetary cap to primary producer light vehicles so that the motor vehicle tax for those vehicles would not be greater than the national registration charge for a heavy vehicle more than 4.5 tonnes. However, the legislation was drafted in such a way that heavy vehicle charges were also captured and inadvertently gained the benefit of this cap.

The policy intent was for the monetary cap not to be applied when calculating the registration charge concession for a primary producer heavy vehicle, so the lesser of either the uncapped tax or the registration charge applied. The drafting error remained undetected following the passage of the legislation. The relevant IT systems were changed by the former Roads and Traffic Authority to reflect the policy intent of the Government, and the concession has been administered in the manner that it was intended, but technically contrary to the legislation. New South Wales farmers who operate light vehicles have continued to receive the concession as the Government originally intended, and the monetary cap has not applied when calculating the registration charge concession for primary producer heavy vehicles. The fix is a simple one: completely separate the charge and tax provisions for heavy and light vehicles and place them in their respective regulations.

Secondly, the bill will provide for the definitions of "primary producer" and "primary producer's vehicle" to be moved to the regulations of the Road Transport Act 2013, which will enable Transport for NSW to respond in a more agile way to issues affecting farmers and primary production businesses in receipt of or looking to obtain a vehicle registration concession. This will also permit Transport for NSW to adopt any future government-wide definition of "primary producer" and "primary producer's vehicle" that may be developed by the Department of Industries as a result of its upcoming review of the New South Wales Rural Assistance Act. Thirdly, an improvement of information-gathering powers is overdue. We have heard how Transport for NSW has faced a number of challenges with compliance activities and the prosecution of parties who are unlawfully claiming eligibility for the primary producer vehicle concession. It is also suggested that vehicle operators are in some cases flouting vehicle conditions designed to protect public safety. These additional powers will ensure that these practices no longer go unchecked.

The next amendment will increase the transparency of annual motor vehicle tax adjustments by moving the tax schedule from the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 to the regulation. All motor vehicle tax is directed to the roads program, and motor vehicle weight tax is automatically adjusted annually in line with the consumer price index. However, as the schedule that shows the individual tax amounts is located in the Act, it cannot be updated without passing an amendment to the Act each year in Parliament. As this is not practical, the schedule is now outdated and one must calculate successive adjustments to arrive at the present values. The bill will provide for the schedule to be relocated to the statutory rules. To manage any potential impact on revenue, the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and the Minister for Transport and Roads will need to consult with the Treasurer prior to seeking any amendment to change the manner in which the indexation provision currently operates.

These changes will provide a clearer publicly accessible option for viewing motor vehicle tax that is increased annually to reflect the consumer price index adjustment. While Transport for NSW will continue to publish current registration costs on its website, relocating the tax schedule to the regulation will enable greater

public accessibility to view these charges within the legislative setting. Finally, ministerial exemption powers currently provided within the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 are now outdated. While relevant around 30 years ago, the exemption powers in the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act have been superseded by overarching exemption powers available to the Minister under the Road Transport Act 2013. As such, it is proposed to remove these obsolete provisions. It is clear that the changes proposed in this bill will improve the current settings in relation to vehicle registration concessions for primary producers.

The New South Wales Government remains committed to supporting our farmers, who make an enormous contribution to the New South Wales economy. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show the total value of agriculture in New South Wales was nearly \$11.7 billion in 2018-19. In particular, in my electorate of Upper Hunter agriculture plays a very important part. The Hunter region has 2 per cent of the State's grazing land yet produces 6 per cent of the beef cattle sold for slaughter. The area produces 16 per cent of New South Wales milk, worth \$170 million to the New South Wales economy. Transport and freight are very important to the industry. Let me give an example of a freight company that supports this bill. I have spoken to Gordon Martin, who runs Martin Transport. He sold an old farm tractor and borrowed money from an older sister to make up the £500 deposit to buy his first truck back in 1958. His first job was carting young dairy calves and pigs from his home town of Singleton.

After a few years Mr Martin was able to add another truck. Fast-forward 60 years and Mr Martin has just stepped down as managing director of the Martin Group, which is headquartered in Scone, in the electorate of Upper Hunter. He has major trucking depots in Dubbo and Oakey in Queensland and is running a fleet of 85 Kenworths. Now 82, Mr Martin and his son remain the directors of his family-owned business. Besides being one of the biggest livestock transport companies in the country, Mr Martin has also developed a diversified large-scale cattle and farming business, which started with him buying his first farm in 1979 at Merriwa. While the Martins are still involved with bulk haulage, livestock transport remains the focus of their business.

Martin Transport is a reputable company that believes in a fair playing field across the board. While it is highly involved as a primary producer, it is predominantly a freight business. These are the businesses that are the gold standard of the freight industry. This bill is about protecting concessions for primary producers while levelling the playing field for those in the freight industry. The changes proposed in the bill will deliver improved customer and economic outcomes for our State by providing a modern, agile regulatory framework. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:49): I am pleased to speak in support of the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which will benefit primary producers. The amendments will also ensure a level playing field for transport operators and respond to stakeholder concerns on the issue. This will ensure that registration concessions are only offered to genuine primary producers and that the regulatory framework is sufficiently robust to enable Transport for NSW to detect and penalise those who choose to commit fraud by claiming the concession unlawfully. The NSW Farmers Association, the Livestock, Bulk and Rural Carriers Association and the National Road Transport Association, who were consulted about the proposed reforms, all agree that there is a need to improve the current administrative and regulatory framework to ensure that the concession is only given to those who genuinely deserve it. Exploitation of the concession must be stopped. It is essential that the concession is only granted to those who can demonstrate that they satisfy the eligibility criteria, including the income tax threshold.

As stated earlier, the objective of the amendments is not to reduce the number of eligible primary producers but rather to ensure that genuine primary producers receive the concession. It is also designed to prevent some road transport operators from obtaining an unfair business advantage over others. Collectively, these amendments will provide a regulatory framework that is sufficiently robust to ensure that primary producer concessions are given only to those who need them most and to detect and penalise those who choose to commit fraud by claiming the concession unlawfully. In addition, in the interests of ensuring a level playing field for transport operators and responding to stakeholder concerns on the issue, the amendments will also ensure that the concession is only granted to genuine primary producers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (16:51): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Maitland, Wollondilly, Murray, Miranda, Orange, Clarence, Rockdale, Coffs Harbour and Upper Hunter for their contributions to the debate. Before concluding, I will address some particular matters that have been raised. I note the contribution of the member for Maitland and appreciate the concerns she has raised and the spirit in which she indicated she has raised them. In relation to the member's concern regarding the eligibility criteria, it is important to note the 50 per cent threshold applies only in normal seasonal circumstances. Sadly, as many farmers can attest, there have not been many normal seasons in recent times with bushfires, floods and drought. The Minister, by way of order, will declare when circumstances are not normal and when the 50 per cent income requirement does not apply, either in part or in full.

For example, the New South Wales Government recognises that, in times of extreme hardship such as drought, primary producers may seek additional income off farm that can impact on their earnings. This measure will provide flexibility to relax the 50 per cent income requirement during unforeseen events such as drought, when primary producers may need to supplement their income by other means. As noted, the income level threshold is adopted from and aligned with other government agencies that provide financial assistance to farmers, such as the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. The New South Wales Government has consulted with the NSW Farmers Association and committed to work closely with it on the implementation of these changes, including the design of declaration forms and other communication material. The Government will also review the operation of the scheme after 12 months to ensure that the policy intent is being delivered, including consultation with key stakeholders.

It is important to understand that the intent of these changes is to ensure that we continue to support genuine primary producers whose primary business is farming and to deliver a level playing field for road transport operators. It is not to achieve cost savings. There is absolutely no limit on the number of vehicles that primary producers can claim this concession for. The New South Wales Government recognises that many primary producers are looking to diversify their income. The 50 per cent income threshold recognises this and provides the capacity for this flexibility while still ensuring the scheme supports primary producers whose primary business is in fact farming. However, we also recognise the need for fairness, not just for road transport operators but for other regional businesses. Again, I make the point that this is not about reducing the number of concession recipients or achieving cost savings; this is about fairness. The New South Wales Government acknowledges the need for a consistent definition of "primary producer" that can be applied across all agencies.

Transport for NSW will work with the Department of Primary Industries during the upcoming review of the Rural Assistance Act with the view that a common definition be adopted for this concession in future. The member for Maitland also raised concerns about the consolidation of the exemption order. As ministerial exemption powers already exist under both the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act and the Road Transport Act, this amendment will remove the duplicative provision and consolidate the exemption powers in the Road Transport Act. I note the support of the member for Murray for the changes, in particular for a stronger eligibility test of who should receive primary producer registration concession. I note the concerns she has raised about the potential for creative accounting to get around these strengthened provisions and, as I have noted, a review will be conducted after 12 months and this could be considered as part of that. As has been noted through debate, the penalties for claiming the concession unlawfully have been increased—which we also believe will be a stronger deterrent for fraudulent claims.

As the member for Orange noted, this legislative anomaly dates back 20 years to 1998 under the former government and, as I noted in my second reading speech, it was first raised by him in this place. The bill makes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 and the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988 to rectify a legislation drafting error that incorrectly applies a monetary cap on primary producer heavy vehicle registration charges; introduce eligibility criteria so that the concession is only offered to genuine primary producers; strengthen information-gathering powers for authorised officers in relation to the administration and enforcement of registration concessions, registration conditions and other registration requirements granted by Transport for NSW; improve customer service outcomes; and make minor and consequential amendments to a range of New South Wales Acts and other instruments.

The bill will provide for the introduction of an income threshold to prevent exploitation and ensure that the primary producer concession is granted only to genuine primary producers; provide the necessary powers for authorised officers to fully investigate suspected instances of exploitation of registration concessions and conditions; increase the penalties for corporations who attempt to register a vehicle through the making of a false statement and provide a new offence and penalty for corporations that falsely claim a registration concession; provide a single point of reference for all heavy vehicle registration charges and consolidate the Minister's exemption powers within the Road Transport Act 2013 by removing duplicative provisions in the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1988; and provide a clearer, publicly accessible option for reviewing motor vehicle tax, which is increased annually to reflect consumer price index adjustments.

It will also introduce minor changes and consequential amendments to a range of New South Wales Acts to update references across the statute book to reflect the transition from the Motor Vehicle Standards Act of 1989 of the Commonwealth to the Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018 on 1 July 2021; to clarify under the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act that the Point to Point Transport Commissioner should be treated as a "public officer" for the purposes of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986; and to amend the Interpretations Act 1987 to extend an existing provision under the Act. I consider that the amendments in the bill will provide a more modern and agile regulatory framework and continue to support genuine farmers with a registration concession. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Public Interest Debate

STATE BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT CHARGES

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:59): I move:

That this House acknowledges that the Government's 2021-22 budget delivers higher tolls, taxes, fines and fees, and is built on picking the pockets of working families.

If a budget is built on rising fees, fines, taxes and tolls that are charged in perpetuity, then it cannot claim to be a sustainable budget. The same can be said for a budget that has slow growth and diminishing productivity because we all know that productivity is the key to growth. We know that there are no fully commensurate budget measures to address this. Revenue is up \$4.5 billion but that is from stamp duty, not from productivity—and that is what we need to see in the budget. Recently the Treasurer denigrated MPs on this side of the Chamber by saying we probably did not know the NSW Intergenerational Report existed, let alone had read it. I say to the Treasurer that he can come into the Chamber and parade and display his intellectual arrogance—it is a sign of disregard for fellow MPs but it is also simply not nice and bad manners—but he can also come into the Chamber and have an open debate about the Intergenerational Report.

The Treasurer could use it to benchmark his budget and show that it is fair, that there is productivity and growth—which there is not—and that it is not just about hiking up fees, taxes, tolls, charges and levies and putting the Government's hand into the pockets of working families. He could also benchmark it against inequality because we see rising inequality. Budgets can do a lot to address that. He could also benchmark it against the Gini coefficient. We do not do too bad on that measure in Australia but we need to, and can, do better on it in New South Wales. So the Treasurer should bring the Intergenerational Report in here, benchmark it and have that debate. You can ask me what I know about tolls. I do not know a lot about tolls but I do know that they are rising—like fees and charges right across New South Wales and its regions.

This is about a budget that delivers fairness and this one is not delivering fairness right across the board. We hear about fiscal responsibility and get a lecture from the Treasurer—as we do—about it. But despite the humbug and the invective that we endure from him when he is talking about the budget, we all agree on that. We all know that when Labor was in government there were 16 years of triple-A ratings. Of the 16 years, one—from memory—was in deficit and that was when we had the global financial crisis. So let us just put that to bed because we have to listen all the time to that nonsense when the Treasurer goes on about what he inherited from Labor. He inherited fiscal responsibility and sound budget settings with 16 years of triple-A ratings. In terms of the cost of living, we know that the budget is built on high and growing fines, fees, taxes and tolls. As people struggle to pay their bills, they cannot afford to pay government bills as well.

We know that the budget expects \$3.5 billion in revenue from fines. That is a 35 per cent jump from last year. We also know that the sneaky government action with secret cameras and the 1,599 per cent increase in low-range speeding fines have done nothing to address safety issues. All of us here agree that it is always about safety and it cannot be just about raising revenue by charging us. We know that when we see a sign we slow down and we stop. It changes human behaviour, and yet we also have \$96 million in fees charged to small businesses and working families. We see the Premier stand in the Chamber and hear her tell us that the Liberal Party has somehow morphed into the party of workers. Those opposite are dreaming, really; the Premier is dreaming when she tells us that.

There is one key thing missing from the budget, and that is housing. We know a lot about housing and when we read the Intergenerational Report—this is the one that the Treasurer really likes to tout and display—it tells us housing matters for the economy and for people's living standards. Where is the housing? Where is that challenge being addressed in the budget? It is simply not there at all. If we do not have that, we do not have fairness or equity. We know that to attack and address housing in New South Wales we need 42,000 additional homes to be added to the housing stock every year. I think there were 800 social housing dwellings provided in the budget, which goes nowhere near to addressing that need.

It is not all the Government; it is also the private sector. But the Government has to own its role in housing supply, housing affordability and attacking homelessness. Until the Government does that—I think the Liberals find that very difficult to do, while The Nationals have just vacated the field—housing will not be addressed in any way. If we do not do that, we cannot address any of the other challenges we have. In my area alone we have a waiting list of up to 10 years for housing. I know all members are impacted by it, but it is like amnesia—they come in here and it is as though the policy settings and budget settings do not count. They do count, and they are important.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:07): New South Wales is back. From the deepest recession in our lifetime, we are back to growth and back on track. Our best days are ahead of us here in New South Wales.

Ms Janelle Saffin: Back from where—the sleeping dead?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Lismore will remain silent.

Mr MARK COURE: You have had your chance; we have heard you.

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

Mr MARK COURE: Now it is my chance. From recovery to reform, keeping people safe as well as boosting economic recovery and creating a prosperous future through innovation, continued investment and reform is at the heart of this budget in New South Wales. After the sharpest fall in nearly 80 years—and I am sure the member for Rockdale remembers—the New South Wales economy is rebounding rapidly, with 300,000 jobs added since the height of the pandemic in mid-2020. It is through strong economic management that the New South Wales Government has improved our State since 2011, as we embark on another decade of delivery right across New South Wales. What we heard from the member for Lismore—and I like the member for Lismore—was wrong on many fronts, and it breaks my heart to say that.

When it comes to this budget, more than \$6 billion in new and existing rebates, concessions and cost-of-living measures are available to households to assist in reducing the impact of everyday living costs and to encourage involvement in activities to support development and participation. Key budget announcements include over \$330 million for energy social programs to provide the community with more affordable energy, over \$240 million to extend the regional seniors travel card to the member for Lismore and \$43.9 million over two years to provide a \$100 learn-to-swim Active Kids voucher for children aged three to six not yet enrolled in school to develop important water safety and swimming skills. My children and the children of the member for Manly will benefit from this program. Additionally, the Government has committed to continuing existing measures including Active Kids, Creative Kids, Smart and Skilled, student transport schemes and toll relief alongside a number of tax relief measures.

It is not just cost of living. My favourite portfolio, Health, has seen record \$30.2 billion investment. NSW Health has received \$30.2 billion in the budget, with almost \$11 billion being invested to build and upgrade 37 hospitals across New South Wales, along with \$1.4 billion to boost ambulance services, over \$1 billion to continue the State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and \$159 million to fund services in newly constructed hospitals. Locally, St George Hospital—to the benefit of the member for Rockdale, whose thumbs are up—will continue to benefit, with \$385 million recommitted in the budget for stage three of its redevelopment. That brings the total investment since our election to office in 2011 to \$700 million. But what was Labor's track record?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Terrigal will come to order. The member for Swansea will come to order.

Mr MARK COURE: It was ignored for 16 years under Labor. In fact, the last government to upgrade that hospital was the Greiner-Fahey Liberal-Nationals Government in the eighties and the nineties. Before that it was the Askin Government. When it comes to St George Hospital, Labor is no friend to the member for Rockdale. When it comes to this budget, our Government is turbocharging our economic recovery, creating a future for local residents and their families through innovation, continued investment and appropriate reform. Community sport—but I only have three seconds and I will not continue.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:12): I support the motion moved by the member for Lismore, which states:

That this House acknowledges that the Government's 2021-22 Budget delivers higher tolls, taxes, fines and fees, and is built on picking the pockets of working families.

In supporting the motion, I also posit the view that because it is one of the most expensive places on earth to live, an increasing number of our citizens—especially if they are working people—are going to other States of this great country to find a more affordable place to reside. Let us go to the tolls, charges and fees being levied by this Government on the backs of working people across New South Wales. Fines are up \$229 million this year on last

year—35 per cent. Wages have increased barely more than 2 per cent and a 35 per cent increase in fines is being paid by those who work either as employees or for themselves by the sweat of their brow—the self-employed—travelling our roads every day and paying the fines levied by this Government.

Regulatory fees, licences and other revenue collected by the Government are up \$117 million—again, much more than the increase in wages and income earned by my constituents and the working people of this State. We are the most tolled country on the face of the planet and tolls continue to rise, up 25 per cent this year with \$33 million more being levied on the working people of this State. From an electorate like mine and that of the member for Swansea on the Central Coast, where so many of our citizens travel for work on the highways of this great State, that tolling hits them disproportionately hard compared with its impact on people in the Sydney area. The Hon. John Graham, MLC, the shadow Minister for Roads in the other place, has highlighted the iniquity of tolling under the Government, especially with respect to hidden cameras.

Revenue increased from \$478,000 in the year to March 2020 to \$6.3 million in the year to March 2021 and, in his words, "without saving a single extra life on New South Wales roads". If that is the case, it is disastrous for the people of New South Wales. It is filching on an unprecedented level. The money being returned to community safety programs is the lowest on record. I do not know how those opposite can lie straight in bed with that sort of outcome. Housing in this country has never been more unaffordable for working people, particularly in New South Wales. Over the past 10 years under this Government, we have nothing but shit apartments and some of the most unaffordable homes on the face of the earth.

Mr Mark Coure: What was that? There are kids watching this.

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

Mr DAVID MEHAN: The member for Oatley knows the quality of apartments. Apartment quality is poor, energy costs are very high, and I could go on. The Minister today in question time talked about social housing. We used to refer to social housing as public housing. The Minister talked about the number of social housing dwellings being built in the State. You could count them on your fingers and toes—41 on the Central Coast. The Central Coast now has 200 fewer social housing dwellings than it had 10 years ago. The Government is building 41. That is great and I welcome it, but we are still way behind where we were. Evictions are going up and up as people in Sydney who cannot afford to live there move to the Central Coast, pushing out people who have lived for generations on the Central Coast. Working families expecting affordable housing are pushed out of our area further north.

I will move to population. Interstate migration is a telling figure for this State, as the Australian Bureau of Statistics clearly shows. New South Wales has lost more people than any other State. More people are moving out of this State than moving into it. They are all going to Queensland and Victoria because it is too expensive to live in New South Wales under this Government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Manly, I remind the member for Oatley and Opposition members to sit in their allocated seats.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:18): I speak to the motion moved by the member for Lismore. I appreciate that the member for Oatley is now sitting in his designated spot. I will comment on some of the arguments put by the member for Lismore and, more recently, by the member for The Entrance, whom I have a great deal of respect for. This debate was the Opposition's opportunity to dismantle, attack and poke holes in the State budget and quite frankly it has fallen flat. Its response to what is an outstanding budget has been to quibble and argue. If you care about difficult challenges like homelessness and supporting the vulnerable in our community and you respond by pointing out that revenue from fees and registration and fines has increased, then God help us if those opposite were ever to get on to this side of the Chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Rockdale will come to order.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: The member for Lismore raised the issue of productivity, which is a very important one. I refer her to page 13 of the Treasurer's speech, where he pointed out that we appointed a Commissioner for Productivity back in 2018. So there is, in fact, someone in New South Wales whose single role it is to extract and get more productivity out of the workers and the good people of this State. That is how seriously we take the issue of productivity, which the member for Lismore is right in raising as a challenge. In addition to that, the Treasurer's speech outlined that he will update the Parliament every six months on how we are progressing on each of the 60 recommendations contained in the *NSW Productivity Commission White Paper*. So suggesting we are not taking productivity seriously is incorrect.

The second comment that did not seem to stack up with reality was the suggestion that the Government inherited fiscal responsibility and a sound budget from the previous 16 years of Labor governments. There is a

very interesting story on the internet from *The Sydney Morning Herald*. The title says it all: "NSW - the sad state". It talks about the final years of the decade of Bob Carr and beyond. It goes on to say that perhaps it was not just "a faltering economy, inadequate and crumbling infrastructure, health and transport systems stretched and under stress, the lost opportunity of the Sydney Olympics". It continues that New South Wales was the worst performing State economy, "the most regulated and highest-taxing State and the one with the worst budget bottom line" in all of Australia.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Could have read that today.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: No, it is not today. If we compare the last 10 years of the Labor Government with the past 10 years that this Government—

Ms Yasmin Catley: You were still in school when that was written, James.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: I was, and I remember vividly the Sydney Olympics and how impressed I was with it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Terrigal will come to order. I call the member for Swansea to order for the second time.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: It is such a shame today to think back on the missed opportunities and a government that was asleep at the wheel to leave us with a busted and broken State economy, which put us in the position that we were left with to come along and fix it all up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Rockdale will come to order.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: To compare the last 10 years of the Labor Government with the past 10 years of this Government is to see a government that is in very stark contrast.

Mr Stephen Kamper: You were was still watching The Wiggles, James.

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

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: The Wiggles are a fantastic outfit. The past 10 years of this Government have been about building the foundations to ensure that every person in this State, no matter where they live, has the opportunity to succeed. We have set the foundations that will build a brighter future for the people of New South Wales. The budget clearly demonstrates how that has been set out. To suggest that we have done that without managing a one-in-100 year pandemic sets aside reality. Those opposite should respect the fact that the budget sets up New South Wales for 10 years of success. It goes to the heart of supporting all people in New South Wales, including the vulnerable and the voiceless, and does an incredibly good job of doing just that.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:23): At the conclusion of the Budget Speech by the Treasurer, as I was sitting in the gallery not far from here, I saw Government members all stand up congratulating each other, high-fiving each other and shaking hands with the Treasurer and telling him, "A good job you have done there in conning the people of New South Wales into believing that this is a great budget". It cannot be a great budget. No great budget should rely on revenue being raised from tolls, taxes and increased fees.

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

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: It is not a sign of a good budget when you rely on increased taxes and so forth. Let me tell you a story—and it does not have a happy ending. Once upon a time, many years ago, the government of the day—and it was not this Government—wanted to address the crash hotspots in New South Wales, so it installed speed cameras only at those hotspots. Its motive was road safety. That was the only motive for those speed cameras—to ensure no accidents or fewer accidents, no injuries and no deaths at those locations. Then the Liberal-Nationals Government came in. Those opposite looked at the books and said, "Wow! These few cameras are bringing in some dollars. Let's roll out these cameras all over New South Wales, not necessarily in accident spots."

Then the Treasurer and the roads Minister had a discussion over dinner not far from here, and said, "Look at how much money all these cameras across New South Wales are raking in." Their eyes twinkled. "What more can we do to rip more money out of the people of New South Wales?" And the roads Minister said, "Let's remove all the signage." What was the result of removing all the signage? Did the revenue from low-range speeding increase by 100 per cent? Let me impersonate the health Minister. Did it improve by 200 per cent?

Opposition members: No!

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: Was it 500 per cent?

Opposition members: No!

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: Was it 1,000 per cent?

Opposition members: No!

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: It was a 1,600 per cent increase in revenue. The Government ripped that 1,600 per cent from working families. Does this Liberal-Nationals Government care about saving lives at crash hotspots? When those opposite remove the signage, they are saying, "We don't care if people have accidents there. We don't care if people get injured there as long as we rake in the dollars." That is what it is all about—raking in the dollars from working families. Let us move to the other story about the tolls. Once upon a time, tolls were put on roads to recoup the cost of constructing those roads.

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

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: That was the only motive—to pay back the construction cost of the road. I remember travelling along the F6 to study in Wollongong and I would drop my 20¢ into the basket. Do members remember those baskets? They calculated how much money they needed to collect to recoup the cost of the road. Then this Government came in and said, "This is a business venture—tolls, tolls, tolls!" [*Time expired.*]

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (17:28): The history-making budget we have handed down for New South Wales sets us up for the future of not only this generation but generations to come. Some of the highlights include \$200 million in tax relief for hardworking people across New South Wales; lifting wages from 1 July through a new wages policy that offers an increase of 2.5 per cent to all New South Wales public servants, who number over 400,000; and free registration for regular toll users. I think the Opposition missed the memo about the free rego from the Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital. There is a whole section on toll relief.

Toll relief provides free vehicle registration for drivers who have spent \$1,352 or more on tolls in the previous financial year—an average of \$26 per week. Drivers who have spent \$811 or more during the previous financial year—an average of \$16 a week—are eligible for half-price registration. To qualify for a privately registered vehicle's free or half-price registration, toll relief will be calculated on the toll spend of all eligible vehicles linked to one personal toll account. So the "toll mania" and all the rest of the hoo-ha members opposite go on about—that there is no relief for drivers who use toll roads—is absolute hooley.

I will mention some other highlights. I note the member for Rockdale has left the Chamber. The budget provides \$2.7 billion for the M6 extension, which is fantastic for people south of the CBD. The Government is also building 250 Aboriginal housing dwellings and upgrading 7,000 more. I agree with the member for Lismore that we need to do more in that space, but Rome was not built in a day. I am a member of an inquiry that is looking at public housing and its maintenance. It is a losing battle; more people are becoming eligible for public housing than we can keep up with. It is a major issue for our communities. I feel greatly for people on waiting lists. The member for Lismore referred to a wait time of 10 years in her electorate. People in my electorate of Heathcote are waiting for 15 years for public housing.

I highlight the announcement of the Bundeena to Wollongong walk in my electorate. I am happy that it has come to fruition. It traverses the oldest national park in Australia, the second oldest in the world. The walk follows the edge of the wind-sculpted and ochre-tinted sandstone cliffs, crosses the sandy beaches of Big Marley and Little Marley, and takes in the heathlands and cliff-top waterfalls at Curra Moors, the serenity of Wattamolla Inlet and the big surf at Garie Beach. There will also be some reasonably priced accommodation along the way, so you can do a two- or three-day walk from Bundeena all the way through to Wollongong.

It goes through the heart of my electorate and the electorate of the member for Keira. We are proud of that. There is also a South Coast biking strategy to get off-road biking through my electorate. These are examples of how the Government is giving the communities in our electorates world-standard facilities and spending more money on people. The member for Oatley mentioned a lot of those initiatives. One is the absolutely fantastic policy of swimming lessons for preschoolers so that we can have those kids "waterproofed", so to speak, in the future. It is important that a government with a heart, like the current Government, gives back to the people of New South Wales.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:33): In reply: I thank the member for Oatley, even with his \$6 billion fiction and the water babies story, which was great—we all love the babies to have those \$100 vouchers—but this budget does not cut it as a budget of equality. The member for The Entrance made it clear that we are the most taxed and tolled State. The member for Manly said that revenue had increased, which I said as well, but the challenges of housing are not being addressed, which was one of the big points I made. The member for Manly also talked about the white paper and the NSW Commissioner for Productivity, but having a productivity commissioner does not mean that we have productivity growth. We all support the Commissioner for Productivity but we want to see results. Getting an update from the Treasurer every six months, during which he hectors and lectures us, will not tell us what the Government is doing about productivity.

The member for Mount Druitt told a great story. It was good to hear the facts about the speed cameras in those hotspots. Those cameras are in place for safety, as they should be, not just for revenue. The member for Heathcote gave a very thoughtful contribution on housing. He said that it is a losing battle, but it is a battle that we cannot lose. We cannot throw our hands in the air and say that it is a losing battle; we must address it systematically at a State level. The State must talk to the Federal Government and the Federal Government must also be involved.

A number of schemes were introduced at a Federal level under Labor, including the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which worked to provide affordable housing in the private sector. Everybody said it worked. Recently I was at a housing forum with the member for Tweed and the housing providers acknowledged that it worked, though it was clunky in reporting but we can always change those things. We must address the problem. We cannot say that public housing is for the most disadvantaged or for the homeless; it is also for working families and for workers. Members in the Chamber contest who looks after workers; we must do something for them. In closing, fines are up, tolls are up, taxes are up and housing affordability is down.

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

The House divided.

Ayes34
 Noes40
 Majority.....6

AYES

Atalla, E	Doyle, T	Mehan, D (teller)
Bali, S	Finn, J	Minns, C
Butler, R	Harris, D	O'Neill, M
Car, P	Harrison, J	Park, R
Catley, Y	Haylen, J	Parker, J
Chanthivong, A	Hoening, R	Saffin, J
Cotsis, S	Kamper, S	Scully, P
Crakanthorp, T	Leong, J	Tesch, L
Daley, M	Lynch, P	Voltz, L
Dalton, H	McDermott, H	Watson, A (teller)
Dib, J	McKay, J	Zangari, G
Donato, P		

NOES

Ayres, S	Griffin, J	Piper, G
Barilaro, J	Gulaptis, C	Provest, G
Berejiklian, G	Hancock, S	Roberts, A
Bromhead, S (teller)	Hazzard, B	Saunders, D
Clancy, J	Henskens, A	Sidgreaves, P
Conolly, K	Kean, M	Singh, G
Constance, A	Layzell, D	Speakman, M
Coure, M	Lee, G	Stokes, R
Crouch, A (teller)	Lindsay, W	Taylor, M
Davies, T	O'Dea, J	Toole, P
Dominello, V	Pavey, M	Tuckerman, W
Elliott, D	Perrottet, D	Upton, G
Gibbons, M	Petinos, E	Wilson, F
Greenwich, A		

PAIRS

Aitchison, J	Anderson, K
Barr, C	Cooke, S
Hornery, S	Evans, L
Lalich, N	Marshall, A
Mihailuk, T	Preston,
Warren, G	Smith, N

PAIRS

Washington, K

Williams, R

Motion negatived.*Bills***ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS) BILL 2021****Second Reading Speech****Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (17:48):** On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Electoral Legislation Amendment (Local Government Elections) Bill 2021 introduces important amendments to help in the upcoming local government elections in September 2021. The bill amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to expand the circumstances in which a party agent can choose to be responsible for electoral expenditure and donations disclosures on behalf of endorsed candidates, councillors or groups. Part 3 of the Act requires participants in elections to disclose information about political donations and electoral expenditure to the NSW Electoral Commission. The rules setting out who is responsible for making those disclosures are set out in section 14 of the Act. For local government elections, the Act currently provides that candidates, councillors and groups are generally responsible for making their own disclosures, including those who are members of a registered party. That is unlike the requirements for State government elections, where a party agent is automatically responsible for the disclosures of endorsed candidates, members of Parliament and groups.

A party agent can choose to be responsible for the disclosures of candidates, councillors or groups in a local government election, but only with their consent—that is, the party agent can opt in to being responsible for disclosures after negotiating an agreement with the relevant councillor, candidate or group. The proposed amendments in the bill before the House make a minor adjustment to those requirements. In addition to being able to opt in with consent, a party agent will also be able to opt in to being responsible for disclosures without the agreement of the relevant councillor, candidate or group. These amendments will result in disclosure requirements for local government elections being more closely aligned with State government elections, where a party agent has much greater control over the disclosures of endorsed candidates. The changes are also expected to reduce administrative inefficiencies experienced by parties and candidates by allowing party agents to become responsible for an endorsed candidate, councillor or group's disclosures without the administrative burden of first negotiating an agreement.

New sections 14 (5A), (5B) and (5C) provide that a party agent can withdraw a decision to be the agent by written notice to the Electoral Commission. In those circumstances, the agent must give a written copy of the written notice to the elected member, candidate or member of the group concerned as soon practicable after giving notice to the commission. However, such a notice is not invalid if a copy is not given to the elected member, candidate or member of the group concerned. It is important to note that being responsible for disclosures triggers other responsibilities in relation to electoral expenditure and donations under the Electoral Funding Act. For example, where a party agent is responsible for the disclosures of a candidate, the party agent also becomes responsible for accepting donations made to the candidate and paying those donations into the party's local government campaign account. As a result, the increased flexibility for party agents to take control of disclosures will mean, in turn, that party agents have greater scope to oversee campaign finances in local government elections, and that is good policy. These are sensible amendments and should be supported by the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (17:52): The Opposition does not oppose the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Local Government Elections) Bill 2021, some of which contains quite sensible amendments. The Government has worked quite sensibly with the other place on some of the amendments and has repaired some of the drafting provisions. That is consistent with feedback I get from the local government industry that the Minister has been very receptive and constructive in the way she has dealt with the industry, whether it be the outstanding president of Local Government NSW, Councillor Linda Scott, or the General Secretary of the United Services Union. There is appreciation within the industry of the Minister's ability to consult, and there is also a measure of appreciation in the other place for the way in which the Government is prepared to negotiate legislation.

Having said that, I make the point that there is something fundamentally wrong with the administration of the Office of Local Government. The Government cannot even rush in sensible legislation at the last minute, within six or eight weeks of a local government election. It has had a considerable amount of time to resolve these

issues in advance. Just as it did recently in respect of the rating provisions for merged councils, the Government waited until the last minute, tried to bounce the Parliament with a whole heap of other extraneous issues, and then complained that it was being obstructed in what virtually became an omnibus bill.

The Minister is responsible for the management of the Office of Local Government. I do not know whether it is resourced properly or what the problem is, but all those issues should have been foreseen by the Government of the day, which oversees the management of the Local Government Act. The bill makes sensible provisions to enforce COVID-safe regulations in the management of the elections. New section 296 (2) provides for the continuance of arrangements entered into by councils with the Electoral Commissioner prior to the postponement of last year's local government election. Another provision will ensure that the additional costs associated with running a COVID-safe election do not fall upon local governments.

For some decades I have been supportive of the Electoral Commissioner conducting local government elections. When I was first elected to local government, they were run by town clerks and the controlling interests of the day were often accused of interfering with elections. Prior to the 1993 Local Government Act I advocated for and obtained amendments to the 1919 Act to enable the Electoral Commissioner to conduct elections. This Government, however, was elected with a mandate to enable councils to run their own elections again, which was inconsistent with that policy. The Government did that on the basis that in many parts of rural New South Wales and in Sydney the costs that councils were being charged by the Electoral Commissioner bordered on extortionate. As a result, the conservatives promised that they would return election powers to councils if they so wished—a promise that they honoured. Many councils opted to outsource to private companies the running of elections.

I do not support that decision, although I must say that the council of which I was a member before I was elected to this place did that simply on the basis of cost. If the Electoral Commissioner is to operate on a cost-recovery basis, the cost of running elections becomes extortionate. If the Electoral Commissioner and the returning officers want to keep charging money for every photocopied page of paper, all the Electoral Commissioner will be doing is pricing himself out of existence. In my view the cost of running the elections should be borne by the State, bearing in mind that those elections are generally conducted in respect of State legislation. The Electoral Commissioner should stop gouging councils. It has become apparent that the Electoral Commissioner, one of a number of integrity agencies, has been complaining for some time about the lack of adequate funding. He has had to look for funding and he discovered that local government was quite a source of funding. I hope that the step being taken by the Minister at least to pick up the additional cost for the COVID mitigation strategies will not be the first time that the State honours its obligation.

The other interesting provision in the bill that the Opposition supports could be called the Liberal Party amendment. I know how difficult this must have been for the Government. Many prospective candidates for the upcoming local government elections—that is, if the Liberal Party does endorse for local government elections—have expressed their opposition to the Liberal Party about the cost of enabling the party to set up agents and to take control of funding. The Labor Party has always operated on that basis but I can well understand why the Government is concerned about allowing endorsed Liberal Party candidates to take control of their own funding and donations. I can imagine Bayside or Georges River Liberal Party current and prospective councillors screaming if the Liberal Party central executive takes over the control of any funding of a local government election.

This is a very good provision. If political parties are endorsing candidates they should accept responsibility for controlling and disclosing the funding arrangements. It would certainly make the administration of local government elections easier if the Electoral Commissioner was simply dealing with those political parties that had a disclosure obligation. Another issue that arose in the other place but which was excised as a result of the splitting of the bill was that the legislation should include a provision banning property developers from being councillors at local government level. The amendment was moved by Mr David Shoebridge in the other place and there was considerable sympathy for it. In the spirit of cooperation, the Labor Party agreed to place that provision in a separate bill, which is in the hands of the Government.

The Labor Party is of the opinion that its candidates should not be property developers. That is a right that the Labor Party has in regard to the candidates it endorses. There are major threats to the integrity of local government decisions, in particular, planning decisions and those sorts of provisions would prevent corruption. However, a difficult constitutional issue is whether a third tier of government should disqualify a class of person engaged in a lawful profession or enterprise from being democratically elected in this country. I think it was a wise decision to include that provision in a second bill. That bill will not be debated in this House now. I invite the Government to request the Attorney General or the Crown law officers to examine it to determine the constitutional provisions and to see whether a provision like that would survive a constitutional challenge in the High Court.

Mr Jamie Parker: Let the developers take it to court, Ron.

Mr RON HOENIG: If the Government is splitting the bill and not putting it before the House, when it does introduce the bill it must come before the House with the view of the Solicitor General as to whether it is constitutional. I hear the member for Balmain say "Let the developers take it to court". That is probably an attractive suggestion because most of them seem to have plenty of money, but it is the responsibility of this House to not proclaim or seek to enact legislation that may not be constitutionally valid. Even if the sentiment expressed by Mr David Shoebridge is constitutionally valid, I am sure it takes a considerable amount of skill to draft a bill that would survive a constitutional challenge. The High Court previously held that it would permit the burden to exist in respect of democratic provisions if they are to address corruption or are a corruption prevention mechanism. But if the burden is too high then it may not survive that challenge.

Mr Jamie Parker: They are involved in a court case, Ron.

Mr RON HOENIG: As much as I value the input of the member for Balmain, I am not sure his interpretation of the common law or determinations of the High Court is necessarily the accurate way in which this House should proceed. I say to the Government that the Attorney General should make sure that he has examined the constitutional provisions if and when they bring that bill before the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejikian: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2020-2021

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there are no further speakers, the question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that there are allocated spots to sit due to changes in the COVID safety measures.

Community Recognition Statements

THOMAS CAMPOREALE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (18:08): I bring to the attention of the House Thomas Camporeale for his outstanding contributions to our local community. Most people in the local area know Thomas from his 20 years of work supporting the Italian community through Co.As.It, which has its head office, "Casa d'Italia", in Leichhardt. Thomas started work with Co.As.It in 2000 as a social worker and progressed quickly to head of community services and later general manager. Thomas has had a number of notable achievements, both as a volunteer and in his professional life. His leadership and dedication to the culturally and linguistically diverse community is remarkable. That dedication was recently celebrated on the occasion of his investiture as Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia, awarded by the President of the Italian Republic.

I have had the pleasure of working with Thomas on several occasions over the years representing the people of Leichhardt and as the mayor. I cannot speak highly enough of the work he has done for the Italian community, and I was delighted to present Thomas with a NSW Government Community Service Award this year. On behalf of the everyone in my electorate, I sincerely thank Thomas for his many years of service—grazie mille!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members of restrictions in the House and to be mindful of the number of people in the Chamber.

SUPERINTENDENT RASHELLE CONROY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:10): Superintendent Rashelle Conroy, a former police officer in the Gosford crime scene section, has been awarded the prestigious Australian Police Medal. Superintendent Conroy joined the NSW Police Force in 1995, and served at Blacktown and Cabramatta police stations before transferring to the physical evidence section at Penrith in 1999. In 2001 she moved to the Chatswood section and then to Gosford in 2002. In 2006 Superintendent Conroy was promoted to the rank of sergeant as a supervisor in the Gosford crime scene section, before being promoted in 2008 to the rank of senior sergeant as the Hunter Zone commander and then rising to the rank of inspector at the Tuggerah Lakes Police Area Command in 2011. She

returned to the forensic services group in 2014 as the human resources/professional standards manager and in 2019 was promoted to superintendent of the crime scene service branch. She has been instrumental in facilitating strategic business changes within the crime scene services branch to support forensic investigations. I congratulate Superintendent Rashelle Conroy.

TRIBUTE TO NEIL EL-KADOMI, OAM

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:11): I speak in honour of Mr Neil El-Kadomi, OAM, who passed away in June. A Palestinian refugee, he was one of the founders and a long-time President of the Parramatta Mosque. He spent years teaching Arabic and Islamic studies to children and helped establish a community language school. Neil spent much time engaged in many multi-faith groups in Sydney's west, aware of the great harmony that is produced when people of faith come together. In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1996 he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of service to the Arab-speaking community and to the Parramatta Islamic Cultural Association. Mr El-Kadomi spent his life in Australia serving his community and enriching our great western Sydney cultural melting pot. He will be greatly missed by so many in our community. May he rest in peace.

HOP, SKIP & JUMP BUS

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:12): The Hop Skip & Jump Bus is one of Manly's favourite and most useful means of free community transport. It has been in operation for many years and was one of the proudest achievements of the former Manly Council. It serves many members of the community and often plays an important vital role for the vulnerable in our community, providing them with an efficient and free means of travel. The Northern Beaches Council must consult the community widely before it makes any changes to or considers cancelling the Hop, Skip & Jump Bus service. I commend the bus service to the council and encourage it to retain it for many future years.

SURF LIFE SAVING ILLAWARRA BRANCH

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (18:13): Last Friday night more than 200 people representing the 17 surf clubs that make up the Surf Life Saving Illawarra branch gathered to celebrate a busy, but safe, season at the Awards of Excellence presentation. In a busy but safe season on the beaches in Wollongong, and on behalf of grateful beachgoers, I thank our surf lifesaving volunteers for the hours they gave up to keep our beaches safe. The major awards this year included Jackie Percy and Brody Robertson from my own club, who received Assessor of the Year and Youth Lifesaver of the Year respectively; Morgan Clarke, Surf Life Saver of the Year; Marcus Meier Lindner, Patrol Captain of the Year; Jamie Caldwell, Support Operations Member of the Year; and Wollongong City, Patrolling Club of the Year. The event also marked 40 years of women in surf lifesaving. I acknowledge Gina Crick, who spoke on behalf of the first group of women to become patrolling members, and Kaye Norris, from Windang Surf Life Saving Club, who was recognised with life membership of the Illawarra branch.

WANDA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (18:14): I commend the members of Wanda Surf Life Saving Club for their success at the Surf Life Saving Sydney Branch Awards of Excellence evening held on 29 May 2021. Wanda dominated the evening, winning an outstanding 11 awards including Club of the Year, Community Education Program of the Year and Most Awards Per Operational Area. This is testament to the strength of Wanda's over 1,000 active members and positive and dynamic culture. Over the past year Wanda's members have again achieved no lives lost during patrols, performed hundreds of rescues, delivered crucial education programs and participated in emergency call-outs for serious drownings and flood assistance across New South Wales.

I particularly acknowledge Jeffrey "Charlie" Brown, who was also awarded the President's Medal for his outstanding commitment to the organisation, primarily through surf sports as a carnival referee and official. Mr Brown is one of Wanda's incredible life members who has devoted much of his life to volunteering through Wanda and the Sydney branch. I congratulate all members at Wanda Surf Life Saving Club on their exceptional achievements and thank them for keeping our community safe.

MR MICHAEL TOUFIC RIZK, OAM

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:15): I am delighted to congratulate Mr Michael Toufic Rizk, an outstanding community member, who has just been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Mr Rizk, a past president of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy Council from Greenacre, received an Order of Australia Medal for service to business and commerce, and to the Lebanese community. Michael has been a director of the Australian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce since 1987, held the position of president for six years and has been head of trade relations between Australia and Lebanon to date. One of Michael's many achievements includes organising

the first Australian product exhibition in Lebanon in 1997 during the official visit of then New South Wales Premier Bob Carr. I have seen Michael in action over the years and I am always impressed by his commitment to and love and passion for our community and his work towards universal goodness. In short, he is an honourable and decent man. I acknowledge his outstanding work in organising aid to Lebanon after the 2020 Beirut explosion. Funds and goods went to schools, families and medical establishments. I congratulate and thank Michael. He has done the community, his family and friends very proud.

MR PAUL BARBER

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:16): I congratulate Richmond local Mr Paul Barber on being awarded the Order of St John on 14 May 2021, in recognition of his volunteering work, at the St John Ambulance NSW Investiture Ceremony at Government House, Sydney. The Order of St John has the objective of preventing and relieving sickness and injury and acting to enhance the health and wellbeing of people anywhere in the world. This recognition was presented to Paul by the New South Wales Governor, Margaret Beazley, AC, QC, as a result of Paul's volunteering service with St John Ambulance NSW. Membership of the order is sanctioned by the Governor-General on behalf of the order's sovereign head, Queen Elizabeth II. I am proud to represent an electorate with such outstanding people as Paul Barber. I thank Paul and commend him for his service to our community and beyond.

FERNCOURT PUBLIC SCHOOL WASTE WARRIORS PROGRAM

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:16): I congratulate Ferncourt Public School on its Waste Warriors program. The Waste Warriors program encourages students to reduce food waste by bringing a nude lunch to school every Tuesday and Wednesday. A nude lunch is a lunchbox that does not leave any nasty plastics in school bins. As well as going into the draw to win a weekly raffle prize, students and families who bring a nude lunch also get the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing their bit to reduce plastics and help our local environment. This is one of the many efforts by schools across my electorate. They are acting locally and thinking globally. I congratulate the principal, the teachers, families and students at Ferncourt Public School on doing their bit to keep the inner west greener and cleaner. They are an example to us all of what we can do to try to make our environment cleaner.

SECOND NORTHMEAD SCOUT GROUP

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:17): On 15 June I had the pleasure of awarding the Second Northmead Scout Group a Premier's grant. The Northmead Scout Group has been serving the youth of the Northmead community for over 60 years; its historic hall was opened in 1959. Northmead Scouts do a fantastic job in equipping young people with life skills, such as teamwork and leadership, which give them the tools to become strong and resilient members of our community. It was great to speak with the Scouts about their ambitions for the future, and to answer some questions whilst I was there. The grant will be put towards new camping gear and sporting equipment, which will help the Scouts considerably as they continue their great work. I make special mention of the Scouts' dedication to the beautiful local environment at Northmead. I thank them for their stewardship of Moxham Park, John Curtin Reserve and other areas across Northmead and Winston Hills. I thank the group leader, Louise Gale, for her dedication to the Northmead Scout Group and for her outstanding work for the whole community.

LARA WILBOW

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:18): On 19 June I was honoured to attend the annual dinner of the Ilma Nicholson Wing of the local Australian Air League Squadron. Congratulations to Doyalson Air League's Lara Wilbow from Warnervale, who was awarded the Overall Cadet of the Year 2021. Lara prepared a speech and shared her most memorable times within the Air League. At age nine, Wilbow competed in the State Junior Cadet of the Year back in 2015 at the Blacktown headquarters. It was the first time she had represented Doyalson by herself and this was a whole new experience for her. Wilbow became a cadet and has achieved NSW Junior Cadet of the Year, NSW Cadet of the Year, Doyalson-Wyee Youth of the Year and Shortland's Volunteer of the Year. She gradually made her way through the ranks and was promoted to sergeant in 2020. Her experience in the Australian Air League has opened up many opportunities for her and has created long-lasting friendships and bonds. Wilbow is now preparing to compete to be a State representative in the Air League NSW Group Review to be held in September.

RIVERWOOD GLORY FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:19): Today I recognise the Riverwood Glory Football Club on its outstanding season in 2020. Despite the difficult circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the club still received some outstanding results. I am pleased to announce that the under-12 boys team won their grand final, which is a fantastic achievement. I particularly thank Arthur Sakellaris for coaching the team. The Premier

League women's team was also lucky enough to win 14 out of 14 rounds during the home and away season. Although they unfortunately finished in sixth place, this is testament to the high quality of football being played by local women. These are two of the many success stories from the organisation and it was great to see those achievements despite the fact that the start of their season was suspended due to COVID-19. I have no doubt that the club will achieve more outstanding results in the 2021 season, which we are in the middle of, and I look forward to hearing about them in the future.

LEANNE "LULU" ZAPALA, OAM

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:20): I congratulate Leanne Zalapa—Lulu—in my electorate of Coogee, who has received an Order of Australia Medal for her outstanding service and achievements as a part of the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2021. I commend Lulu today for her significant service to the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation and to health education. Lulu's years of service with the Prince of Wales Hospital as a former Patient Access Manager and senior cardiac nurse, as well as her contribution to the establishment of the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation as founder and CEO from 2004 to 2020, have demonstrated her ongoing dedication to her work in health services. As the Adjunct Associate Professor of Industry in the faculty of Health and as a member of the Dean's Industry Advisory Board at the University of Technology Sydney, Leanne has been recognised as a highly worthy candidate. I congratulate Lulu on all the work she has done in our community.

PENRITH MUSEUM OF PRINTING

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (18:21): I congratulate the Penrith Museum of Printing, which recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The museum is a fully functioning letterpress printing shop that offers tours and classes to ensure that letterpress printing equipment and techniques continue to be showcased. A not-for-profit organisation, the museum is located at the Penrith Paceway and is run by volunteers, including committee members George Gearside, John Berry, Anita White, Bob Lockley, Graham Elphick and Juliana O'Dean. One piece of equipment of particular note is the Columbian press that was brought to Australia in 1841 and transported over the Blue Mountains by bullock dray to Carcoar, where it was used to print newspapers for 100 years. In addition, the museum has a Wharfedale printing press, which was used to print the *Nepean Times* for close to 100 years. I thank all the volunteers at the Penrith Museum of Printing for their time and their commitment to ensuring that this interesting piece of printing history is maintained.

CATHERINE HILL BAY SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:22): I congratulate all the winners at the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club end of season awards. I had the honour of attending the awards evening and it was a fantastic night. The night saw six members receive patrol awards for a combined amazing 105 years of service. They included Gary Brooks for 40 years of service and Bob Hall for 25 years of service, along with Kelly Elasi, Nicholas Bolton, Josh Bolton and Sam Johnston, all for 10 years' service. Alongside the patrol awards, Holly Callaghan was named Official of the Year, Andrew Adamson was named Administrator of the Year and Jo Mathews was awarded Trainer and Assessor of the Year, while Charlotte Dobson took out Junior Volunteer of the Year. Christopher Renshaw won Junior Patrol Person and Paul Smith took out the senior category. Lifesaver of the Year was Mitch Ford and, finally, the prestigious award of Club Person of the Year was presented to Dominic Nash. I congratulate all the winners and thank them for volunteering in surf lifesaving and keeping our community safe.

MADDI WREN

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:23): I congratulate seven-year-old Maddi Wren from Port Macquarie on raising valuable funds for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Described as a little angel with a heart of gold, Maddi Wren recently coordinated a fundraiser for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service from the sale of her very own art pieces, which raised almost \$800 from a stall held at grandpa Bill Yates' home in Greenmeadows on 14 June. Maddi created 11 unique paintings featuring unicorns, fairies, flowers and butterflies, including one still-life drawing, over a 12-month period. Every masterpiece was sold out within one hour. Donating to Maddi's fundraiser was Sharon Drew from Port Macquarie Boutique Glasshouse Emporium, who gifted a generous \$200. Maddi created the brilliant initiative after recognising the marvellous contribution the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service offers to people needing urgent medical attention. Having been a premature baby, Maddi understands how essential it is to receive early medical treatment—she surprised her parents with her birth in Fiji during a wedding in 2014. True to form, the community rallied and raised more than \$20,000 for their return.

AC UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:24): AC United Football Club recently celebrated Female Football Week with a special night dedicated to the women of the sport and to honour the women's game played at Powhatan Reserve in Greenfield Park in May 2021. AC United FC boasts a high level of female players in its ranks, with more than 130 women and girls choosing to represent the club in the game. On this particular evening the young women players of AC United FC enjoyed lucky door prizes and giveaways as well as being greeted by Matildas and Melbourne City player Teigan Allen and new Western Sydney Wanderers W-League coach Catherine Cannuli. From players through to coaches, managers, committee members and volunteers, women have contributed greatly to the running of the club and have played key roles in its development over the years. I commend AC United football club for its efforts in recognising the massive contribution of women and girls to the game of football. I congratulate it on a very successful evening.

#PLAYINPURPLE CAMPAIGN

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (18:25): I recently joined Lilli Pilli Football Club President Greg Storey and #PlayinPurple founder Isabella Di Manno for Pankind's #PlayinPurple campaign in the shire. Now in its seventh year, the campaign is being embraced by Australian football clubs determined to do their bit to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer. Lilli Pilli FC is one of the biggest fundraisers in the country and this year is expecting to raise around \$20,000. Pankind aims to triple pancreatic cancer survival rates by 2030 and significantly improve quality of life for people with the disease. Funds raised through campaigns like #PlayinPurple will support Pankind to fulfil its mission. I thank Greg and the club's more than 1,300 #PlayinPurple participants for their efforts to support pancreatic cancer awareness. I also acknowledge the efforts of the other local clubs supporting the campaign, including Gynea United Football Club, Caringbah Redbacks Football Club, Cronulla RSL Soccer Club and Grays Point Soccer Club.

GENERAL MILLS ROOTY HILL

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (18:26): I thank the hard workers of General Mills Rooty Hill, who have been on an indefinite strike for 20 days fighting very hard for a 3 per cent pay rise. I acknowledge how phenomenal the workers at General Mills are. Day in and day out they go to work at General Mills to produce household products that we are all familiar with. I have with me today a simple Old El Paso fajita kit that allows people to make dinners for their family. Old El Paso is one line of products produced by the hard workers of General Mills. Tonight I am calling on the bosses, who have made a 40 per cent profit, to pay a reasonable pay rise. It is a shame that those bosses are taking the profits and not giving them to the workers. I acknowledge the hard workers of western Sydney and the strength and solidarity of the United Workers Union.

TRIBUTE TO MOIRA DE VOS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:27): It is with deep sadness that I acknowledge the recent passing of Moira de Vos, a local McMahons Point resident and valued member of the North Sydney Sunrise Rotary Club. Moira had two daughters and was grandmother to seven grandchildren. She will be greatly missed by her family and fellow Rotarians. Moira served as president and treasurer of North Sydney Sunrise Rotary Club and has been a member of the club for many years. Moira previously received the Paul Harris Fellow award as special thanks and in recognition of her commitment to Rotary and to our club. She made a positive impression on all those she met. As a member of North Sydney Sunrise Rotary Club, she always made me feel very welcome. I recognise the North Sydney Sunrise Rotary Club for making a donation to the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Moira's memory. The donation can go towards research to better diagnose, treat, predict and prevent a range of diseases. My thoughts are with Moira's family, especially her daughters, Alison and Keris, and their families at this difficult time.

BLUE MOUNTAINS NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:28): Working in the healthcare sector is challenging at the best of times, but since the world was brought to a standstill by a global pandemic these challenges have increased exponentially. Today I pay tribute to Blue Mountains nurses and midwives. They are a remarkable bunch. They work under circumstances that are at times immeasurably demanding, unpredictable and downright tough. They work long hours, face people at their best and worst, are exposed to physical and emotional risks, and provide comfort, kindness and care to patients every day. They are extraordinarily dedicated, resilient and knowledgeable. They are the backbone of our healthcare system. They witness some of life's greatest joys and, in contrast, experience some of its greatest suffering. They are a rock in times of trauma and pain. They are a shining light in some of the darkest hours. I thank them for leading the way in taking care of us through these most difficult of

times. I also thank the mighty Nurses and Midwives' Association. I thank our Blue Mountains nurses and midwives on behalf of a community that truly appreciates who they are and what they do.

KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE OLYMPIC REPRESENTATIVES

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (18:30): I acknowledge six exceptional women with connections to Ku-ring-gai who have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games. I congratulate Loreto Normanhurst alumni Ellen Roberts, class of 2009, and Tahli Moore and Liz Clay, class of 2012. Tahli and Ellen, whom I met here at Parliament, are part of the Aussie Spirit Softball Squad and will go up against Japan in their opening game. Liz is running in the 100 metre hurdles event. Liz's qualifying time of 12.72 seconds has made her the second fastest hurdler in Australian history. Cate Campbell is a swimming icon and, after recently coaching and training at Pymble Ladies' College, will be attending her fourth games. I congratulate Amy Ridley from Turrumurra High School. Amy will debut at the Paralympics after being selected for the Australian Goalball Team. Finally, ex-Ravenswood student Tiffany Thomas Kane, OAM, secured her spot in the Paralympics swim team. Ku-ring-gai is home to an extraordinary level of sporting talent. I wish all the athletes all our best for the Olympics in Tokyo.

ARCHIE PULLEY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:31): How wonderful was it for Kincumber Avoca junior cricketer Archie Pulley to receive the inaugural Toby Martin Award. Archie plays for the under 12s and was surprised when he received this special award. The award is in memory of another young local cricketer, Toby Martin, also from the Kincumber Avoca Club, who sadly lost his battle with cancer. The award was designed to both remember Toby and his love of the game and also to acknowledge his perseverance, courage and strength. Archie is the beneficiary of support for costs associated with maintaining up-to-date equipment, his registration fees for the upcoming season as well as some one-on-one training to hone his skills. I commend the Martin family for their generosity in the face of their own grief and congratulate Archie on his award. I cannot wait to maybe one day see Archie playing for New South Wales or even Australia. I congratulate Archie Pulley.

HORNSBY HEIGHTS 1ST SCOUTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:32): I acknowledge the Hornsby Heights 1st Scouts Nicola Heath, James Leverton and Alex Matula, who recently received the Australian Scout Medallion, and Abbey Skene, who received the Australian Scout Award. The Scouts have shown their leadership skills by running a range of activities for the younger members of the troop, including building a new sign, refurbishing the flagpole and putting together survival and first aid kits. During lockdown the group motivated the unit to connect with 13 weeks of online meetings, including an online Easter weekend camp. Nicola, Alex, James and Abby were in regular contact to ensure that the meetings would go ahead each week just like they would in person. Each Scout had to plan and lead a three-day 30-kilometre hike with only remote adult supervision. It took months of planning, but it was a great success and a testament to the hard work of these young Scouts. I congratulate Nicola, James, Alex and Abby on these prestigious awards. No doubt their stars will continue to rise. I wish them all the best as they continue on their scouting journey.

MARY MACKILLOP CATHOLIC COLLEGE WAKELEY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:33): I commend the efforts of the student dance team at Mary Mackillop Catholic College Wakeley, who recently competed in the SCC Dance Competition. The students have been working diligently for several months along with their tireless choreographers and team manager Mrs Pauline Jeffrey to get ready for the competition. The students did very well, with the junior jazz team placing third and the cultural dance team placing first. I congratulate the students on a fantastic result. I thank Mrs Jeffrey, the choreographers and all involved for their contributions to the successful SCC Dance Competition.

MAKE MUSIC DAY

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:33): Coffs Harbour's city centre brings people together to engage in community activities like the global event Make Music Day on Monday 21 June. The CBD came alive to see local artists take centre stage. It was a celebration of place, people and pride, where performers added their unique voices to a worldwide chorus with free live music. Make Music Day is part of the New South Wales Government's annual Festival of Place. The Coffs Coast's BlackLight Collective secured one of six \$15,000 State Government grants on offer for this extravaganza. BlackLight Collective is a social enterprise dedicated to redefining the Coffs Coast as a creative industries hub. Its co-founders are Dave Horsley, Catherine Reynolds, Alison Page, Coco Varma, Dave Mansfield, Jane Tavener, Phil Nicholas, Shane O'Brien, Stephanie Abbott and Stephanie Sims. I congratulate the BlackLight Collective on everything it is doing to further the creative sector on the Coffs Coast.

CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:34): A special thanks and commendation goes out to everyone who volunteers with our fabulous community radio stations across the Central Coast. We have some of the densest populations of community radio in Australia and, as the shape of our media changes, it is fantastic to hear that we have more listeners tuning in to community radio and more people participating in live streaming than ever before. Radio Five-O-Plus had a technology upgrade thanks to generous benefactors and has had a governance structure improvement in recent years. Also worthy of acknowledgement is Coast FM 96.3, which is a phenomenal community radio station broadcasting across the Central Coast from Patonga to Norah Head, offering brilliant programming. Rhema.cc 94.9 FM broadcasts Christian services and is a marvellous station for heavenly programming. We have so many amazingly talented local radio announcers, programmers and volunteers. I thank each and every one of them, especially our more experienced announcers who give so much time to improve the skills and quality of radio on the Central Coast.

ROYAL FAR WEST

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:35): For more than a century Royal Far West has supported kids in country New South Wales with complex developmental and mental health challenges. Its Paediatric Developmental Program relies heavily on donations, with its largest fundraiser being the Ride for Country Kids. This year 79 cyclists rode more than 400 kilometres over three days from Dubbo to Cobar. I was delighted to speak at the launch of the ride at Dubbo's Taronga Western Plains Zoo. It was great to meet some of the riders. Many had been part of the fundraising ride before, but a whole group of new riders were looking forward to a new experience while also raising money for a great cause. They had an ambitious goal to raise \$450,000, which is the amount required to fund all 156 children on the waitlist. The good news is they smashed that goal, raising \$535,000. The funds will help connect those wonderful kids and their families to the care they need and deserve. Well done to Royal Far West and all involved.

PETER MOORE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (18:36): I congratulate the outstanding president of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade, Peter Moore, who was awarded the first clasp to his National Medal on 29 May 2021. Peter has served our local community with distinction for 27 years, commencing his distinguished career with the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade in February 1994. His volunteering journey led him to contribute significantly to hazard reduction activities across our community, as well as battle many major fires across our State. Over this time, he held the rank of president for 16 years and deputy captain for 11 years. It is undeniable that Peter is a truly selfless and community-minded individual. Peter gives freely of his time to support community organisations, such as the Lions Club and Menai Wildflower group, and also supports other members of the emergency services family as a mentor and instructor. In recognition of his important contribution, Peter was awarded the National Medal in 2019 and was made a life member of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade in 2020. Peter is a worthy recipient of the National Medal first clasp and I thank him for his ongoing contribution to our community.

TOONGABBIE EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (18:37): Toongabbie East Public School is flourishing within our community, particularly in the southern area of Constitution Hill. I recently attended Toongabbie East to be part of its moving Anzac Day ceremony. It was great to pop by again to award the new Toongabbie East Public School with a Premier's grant for additional sporting equipment. I thank the new P&C president, Sarah Irani, for her dedication to the role and ensuring the small yet growing school has all it needs for students to have a great learning environment and have fun. I thank the new principal, Kristy Haggett, for her success in building enrolments and community support for Toongabbie East Public School. I place on record my appreciation to the instructional leader of literacy and numeracy, Adele Koulouris, who is leaving the school. I understand she is well liked by the students and will be missed by all in the school community. I thank the teachers, support staff and administration staff for their work for the students of Toongabbie East Public School.

Community Recognition Notices

ST EUPHEMIA GREEK INDEPENDENCE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I extend my congratulations to St Euphemia College for their event celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the Hellenic Struggle for Freedom. This celebration took place on June 10th, 2021 at St Euphemia Church. In March 1821, Greece began its war for independence from Turkish Occupation and this year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek Revolution, an important historical milestone for the Greek Community. The evening was attended by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia and featured a keynote address from Dr Panayioti Diamidis titled "1821 - The Australian Stories". The evening also included addresses from the Very Reverend Father Panagiotis Protopsaltis and

Mr Constantinos Yiannakodimos, Head of the Public Diplomacy Office, as well as a prayer led by His Grace Bishop Emilianos of Meloia. I thank all involved for their hard work in organising the event and thank Father Peter Mavrommatis for his kind invitation.

JORDANIAN INDEPENDENCE RECEPTION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I would like to extend my congratulations to the Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for their successful evening reception celebrating the 75th anniversary of Jordanian independence on June 18th, 2021. This event was held at the Highline Event Centre in Bankstown, with invitation extended to any member of the Jordanian-Australian community. This reception marks an important occasion for the Jordanian-Australian community with Jordan having officially marked its independence from Great Britain 75 years ago on May 25th 1946. This anniversary, and the event held to celebrate it, represents the spirit of self-determination, courage, and hard work that defines this proud community. I would like to thank and congratulate Ambassador of Jordan Dr Ali Kraishan, the Australian Jordanian Society, the Jordanian Hub Almdafah, the Australian Jordanian Community Association, the Australian Jordan Nashama, the Australian Jordanian Chamber of Commerce, and all of those who were involved in organising this reception.

PAULVIN MATHEW

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Soul Cafe was established in August 2003 to serve hot meals free of charge to the highly disadvantaged of the Newcastle region. Soul Cafe provides hundreds of free sit down and take away meals each week. Many of Soul Cafe's guests are dealing with issues of homelessness, drug or alcohol addiction, crime or violence, poverty, separation, mental health or illness concerns and accommodation needs. To help raise funds to support the homeless and vulnerable in our community, Paulvin Mathew and his wife, Merlyn George, took part in the Sleepout for Soul. On a cold May night, Paulvin and Merlyn slept out in the Bolton Street Carpark with other leaders from the community. As part of the Orica team, Paulvin and Merlyn managed to raise \$5,261.25 out of the team's total of \$6,352.60. A total of \$175,584.86 was raised from the 2021 Sleepout for Soul. All of the money raised is used to provide meals, food care packages and other essential services for their guests. Well done Paulvin, Merlyn and the Orica team for their efforts.

MACKENZIE AND SAMANTHA

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Tenpin bowling is an excellent social sport and two students at Glendale Technology High School are reaching new heights in competitive bowling. Mackenzie Dunbar-Roberts and Samantha Clifton bowl at Dullboy's Social Co and both competed in the NSW State Championships this year. Mackenzie bowled in the Junior Classic Cup where she placed third, scoring a total of 990. Samantha bowled in the Junior Open Masters where she placed first in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 for females, scoring 1,510 and 634 respectively. Samantha also bowled in the Queensland Junior Cup 2021, where she placed equal third, scoring 3,474, and in the 2021 Sydney Youth Cup, where she placed twenty-fifth and scored 2,447. These young women have put in extraordinary performances so far and the best is still to come! Both Mackenzie and Samantha have qualified for Nationals and they're off to Tasmania to represent NSW in July. Well done Mackenzie and Samantha on your outstanding achievements and I wish you all the very best in Tasmania and for your future bowling careers.

THE LAKES SLSC

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—I congratulate The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club on taking out the Innovation Award, Community Education Award and Rescue of the Year Award at the Surf Life Saving Central Coast Awards of Excellence. The Innovation Award 2020/21 was in acknowledgement of the Club's Little Rippers program which caters to children aged 3 to 5 and introduces them to the beach environment. The Club took out the Community Education Award 2020/21 in recognition of its partnership with St Bridget's Catholic College for its Bronze Medal and Surf Rescue Certificate program. Rescue of the Year 2020/21 was awarded for an out of hours rescue at Soldiers Beach in November 2020 conducted by John Walker, Dave Solman, Ben McCulken, Brayden Hawkins, Cooper Sweeney and Daniel Leahy. Congratulations to The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club and thank you to all of our surf lifesaving volunteers.

MOBILITY MONDAYS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—I acknowledge the work of Independent Mobility & Rehab and the Shake n Bean Café to support the mobility community. The two organisations have teamed up to host mobility Mondays, on the first Monday of each month. The event is an opportunity for members of the mobility community to meet each other and also allows people to test drive and become more comfortable using the scooters. Mobility Mondays begins at the Shake n Bean Café before taking a trip down to Humphrey's Reserve, Swansea where a mobile coffee vendor provides free beverages. Along with Mobility Mondays, Independent Mobility & Rehab

have sponsored a free public mobility charging station in honour of the late Ron Hunt. I thank the Shake n Bean Café and Independent Mobility & Rehab for their support of the mobility community.

MIKE BAILEY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I wish to acknowledge the life and death of Mike Bailey. I particularly want to acknowledge him as a committed Irish Republican. He was frequently in attendance at Irish events. Most especially he frequently was Master of Ceremonies at the Easter Sunday event at Waverly Cemetery at the tomb of Michael and Mary Dwyer. Dwyer was the Wicklow County Chieftain involved in the 1798 rebellion and guerrilla resistance until 1803. The event also commemorated the 1916 Easter Uprising and the gallant struggle of the hunger strikers. Mike was also a regular MC at the annual event held in March each year to commemorate the 1804 Battle of Vinegar Hill led by Irish convicts. The event is held at the Vinegar Hill memorial at the Castlebrook Memorial Park. Mike was also a member of the Brehon Law Society of Australia. He has, and will be remembered, for many things but I think it important that this aspect of his life be placed on record.

NADA BRISSENDEN

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—I congratulate Mrs Nada Brissenden from my electorate of Coogee who has received an Order of Australia Medal for her exceptional service and achievements as a part of the Queen's Birthday Honour List of 2021. Today, I commend Nada for her outstanding service to music. As the co-founder of the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music, former Patron for the Wollongong Symphony Orchestra and founder of the Harold Brissenden Memorial Foundation, she has given many individuals the chance to experience music through providing scholarships to music students. As the Head Teacher and Co-Founder of the Suzuki Talent Education Association of Australia, Nada enriches the lives of young children with music through her not-for-profit organisation. Nada's other appointments extend to her patronage for the Collegiate of Specialist Music Educators and teaching at Alexander Mackie College which later became part of the University of New South Wales. I congratulate Nada on receiving an Order of Australia Medal and thank her for all the work that she has done for the arts and for music.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL BENNETT

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—I wish to congratulate Professor Michael Heywood Bennett in my electorate of Coogee who has received an Order of Australia Medal for his outstanding service and achievements as a part of the Queen's Birthday Honour List of 2021. I commend Michael today for his commitment and dedication to medical education, and to hyperbaric medicine. Michael's years of service with the Prince of Wales Hospital where he is currently a Professor in the Department of Anaesthesia and Senior Staff Specialist of Diving Hyperbaric Medicine have demonstrated his ongoing dedication to his work in medical field. His work with the Australia and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists and the South Pacific Underwater Medicine Society where he held the title of President from 2007 to 2014 are to be commended. Not only was Michael the Vice-President of the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine Society but was also awarded the UHMS Excellence in Hyperbaric Medicine Award in 2018. I congratulate Michael on receiving an Order of Australia and thank him for all the work that he has done for medicine and medical education.

CHRISTOPHER DEMPSEY, OAM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I recognise Mr Christopher Dempsey OAM. Christopher was recently recognised for his service to cricket with a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours List. Christopher has held countless committee positions at Old Bar Cricket Club and Roslea Cricket Club having been made a Life Member of both as well as Manning Junior Cricket Association and Manning River District Association. He's the groundsman at the Chris Dempsey Field at Old Bar - the ground named in his honour. He was President and Secretary of Old Bar Cricket Club and introduced countless children to the game after starting a junior team at the club. Christopher became involved with Manning Junior Cricket Association, along with Manning Cricket, and Umpires Association having umpired A-grade games for years. He coached representative sides in NSW junior competitions from 1976 to '92 and was the Senior Vice President with the Northern District Cricket Association. Christopher is a dedicated ambassador for the game and his involvement has undoubtedly positively changed the sport and lives of those playing it. I congratulate Christopher on this well-deserved recognition.

GEORGE HOAD, AM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—I recognise Mr George Hoad AM. George was recently recognised for his significant service to the residential horticulture industry and to the community with a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours List. George held a number of committee positions including as President for the Garden Clubs of Australia. During his tenure he launched the inaugural National Gardening Week. He has raised funds for countless charities, including Ronald McDonald House by hosting the

'Art in the Garden' event since 2007. He has also held positions on the Manning Winter Festival, Sinfonia Mid-Coast Community Orchestra and Taree Arts Council while volunteering for Wingham Bonnie Scottish Festival and Manning Support Services among others. His voluntary service to the community has spanned 35 years, 20 of those years spent in the gardening world locally, and 10 years nationally. George's contributions to not only our local community but the gardening world are difficult to overstate. I congratulate George on this remarkable recognition and thank him for everything he has done.

NON RESIDENT NEPALESE ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Today I acknowledge a number of members of the Non Resident Nepalese Association who have done an outstanding job supporting local residents throughout the pandemic. I would like to make a special mention of Deb Gurung, Toran Awasthi, Anju Shah, Roshani Shrestha and Tirtha Raj Karki. These individuals have continued to support the local community with countless hours of emotional and mental health support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is for these reasons that these individuals were awarded with Individual Achievement Awards as part of the 2020 St George Community Awards. This is the 10th Anniversary of these Awards and they honour some of the many men and women who go above and beyond each and every day to make our community even better. The entire organisation is made up of selfless and committed volunteers and I am so proud to recognise their achievements and honour their continued service here today. I wish everyone at the Non Resident Nepalese Association all the best for the remainder of 2021 and beyond.

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Today I recognise the Chinese Australian Services Society for their continued commitment to the St George region. Every week, their services are utilised by more than 3,300 families across the Greater Sydney area. The organisation has played a critical role in supporting our community through the recent COVID-19 pandemic and for that we are all very thankful. During this time, the organisation has ramped up their services for the elderly including their home care packages to ensure that everyone has access to their food, groceries and essentials. I have been working with the team at CASS for almost 10 years now and in that time I have seen many faces, but what has not changed is the organisation's commitment to their clients. Whether you need disability assistance, child care or support as an elderly Australian, CASS has a program to suit your needs and I encourage you to reach out for their help and support. Thank you again to all staff and volunteers at the Chinese Australian Services Society.

CATHERINE OEHLMAN – EXCELLENCE AWARDEE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise the Head of Primary, Catherine Oehlman from the Nature School in Port Macquarie who was recently named the Excellence Awardee for the Australian Education Primary School Principal of the Year – Non-Government. Recognised as a key driver for improving educational outcomes and enhancing learning experiences, Catherine was overjoyed to be named the Excellence Awardee reflecting that it is not just one individual but the entire learning environment of the school. Since its founding on the 11 March 2015, the Nature School has grown from strength to strength from an early learning centre for children aged three to five to a Kindergarten to Year 2 in 2018. The unique concept of an outdoor learning environment for students to appreciate nature was a vision of educators Lloyd Godson, Sybil Juzwiak Doyle and Jodie Feeney. Today the school comprises 78 students from Kindergarten to Year 5 with seven teachers, an Aboriginal educator, three teacher aides and two administration staff as well as a business manager. Catherine has 20 years of teaching experience in independent schools from NSW to Queensland and is enormously proud to have been nominated for the Australian Education Awards in August.

NORTHSIDE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I acknowledge the recent changing of the guard of the Northside Progress Association Executive - an organisation that has been effectively advocating on behalf of their community since 1984. At the last Annual General Meeting held on 9 June 2021, the Northside Progress Association farewelled long time President Kingsley Searle and Secretary Vivianne Searle for fearlessly representing the 400 plus North Shore residents across all tiers of Government. During the meeting Kingsley Searle and Narelle Milligan were presented with Life Membership for their remarkable volunteer service to the North Shore community spanning over twenty years. Those also not re-standing for a position on the Board were Vice President Carla McKern and Public Officer Jennifer Labone who were recognised for their tireless volunteer efforts on behalf of the Progress Association. Acknowledging all of the organisation's triumphs would literally be impossible but include ferry fee structure, upgrading flood gates, electronic ferry payments, established local Landcare, street library, installation of bins for fishing lines and the list goes on. I congratulate incoming President Kerry Fox and her new Board and thank all members both past and present for their amazing contribution to the North Shore community.

AKOLDAH GAK

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—Akoldah Gak is on track to becoming the next NBA player to come from Penrith Basketball. I wish to acknowledge his most recent accomplishment of travelling to the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra after he was one of 18 athletes selected in the Australian U19 squad for a 2021 FIBA Basketball World Cup selection camp. Akoldah began his basketball journey with Penrith by representing NSW in multiple Junior State Teams, at the age of 12, before moving to the USA to finish high school. Gak was ranked 96th in the ESPN top 100 for high school basketball rankings, making him one of the most talented prospects in the world. He returned home to Australia, late last year when legendary Illawarra Hawks and current Boomers coach, Brian Goorjian signed him to a three-year deal to play in the NBL. Only starting with the Hawks as a development player in his first year, Gak was given permission to start getting ready for Penrith's Youth Men team this season. I wish Akoldah all the best and I look forward to hearing of his future success.

SUSAN MCHATTIE, OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Susan McHattie who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours for her ongoing service to people living with an Acquired Brain Injury, and their families. In 1987 Sue founded Headstart Acquired Brain Injury Service to fill a gap in the area and help people re-develop an independent lifestyle following a brain injury. More than 30 years later she is still working hard. Sue's efforts have been so appreciated that following a donation of a dinghy from Headstart to Sailability, a Lake Macquarie not-for-profit that provides sailing opportunities to people with a disability, the boat was not named after the organisation – it was named after her. Sue, you are a gem. Congratulations on this very deserved recognition.

MARK SCULLY, CSM, OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Mark Scully CSM who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours. Mark has been recognised for his service to youth through the Australian Army Cadets, where he has served as Unit Commander of No 217 Lake Macquarie and Officer Commanding of No 224 Canberra. He has held several positions within the New South Wales Australian Army Cadets, including Battalion Commander and Battalion Second-in-command, Assistant Commander, and Staff Officer Operations. Mark is also currently the Acting Officer-In-Charge for Cadet Promotion courses and the organiser of Brigade annual camps. Additionally, Mark has been a Reservist and a Permanent Serving Member with the Australian Army and was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal in 2010. Mark has dedicated himself to a life of service, and his contribution is extremely valued.

GODFREY PHILLIPS, OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)—I congratulate Caringbah South resident Godfrey Phillips, who received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for service to hockey. Godfrey Phillips migrated to Australia from India when he was 17. He became a star of his sport, playing hockey for Australia from 1969 to 1971 and in the premier division from 1967 to 1979. He later moved into coaching and state team selection. In 1983, Godfrey Phillips became a life member of NSW Hockey and was inducted into the Hall of Fame. From 1984 to 2012, he was a member of the Sutherland Club Advisory Board. This award is deserved recognition of Godfrey's significant and lifelong contribution to the development of hockey in NSW.

BARRY VINING OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)—Barry Vining of Dolans Bay was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to rugby league. As President of the Newtown Jets from 1986 to 2018, and a director from 1980, Barry Vining was instrumental in keeping the club alive after financial pressures forced the team out of the NSW Rugby League premiership in 1983. His presidency saw Newtown re-enter rugby league in 1991 in the NSWRL Metropolitan Cup competitions before being admitted to the NSWRL First Division competition in 2000. In its tribute to Barry Vining, the Club said: "The Jets' story is one of the great survival sagas of modern rugby league. Barry Vining's presidency and administrative capabilities surely share that legendary status." I congratulate Barry Vining on his fine achievements.

LENNOX HEAD LANDCARE

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—I recognise Lennox Head Landcare and in particular a long-serving member of its Skennars Head sub-group, Patrick Cawley, who has been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for 20 years of volunteering, by Ballina Shire Council. Patrick and the Landcare team have devoted many thousands of hours caring for and restoring the natural vegetation along the Lennox coastline, including tending to the

rainforest canopy on the headland at Skennars Head and restoring natural vegetation in the area, much of which is now listed as endangered ecological communities. Their efforts have transformed the area to benefit the wider community, as well as improve the significant conservation values along the coast. Pat has a special love of the area, having holidayed at the cabins at Iron Peg since he was a toddler. He recalls picnicking under the pandanus grove, swimming at Little Boulders and also jumping off the 12 foot high dunes at Boulder Beach before they were flattened by sand-mining operations. An active retiree, Pat says his weekly outing with Landcare is the best thing he does, and I applaud his commitment to the conservation of our beautiful coastline.

IGNITE YOUTH ANIMATOR PROGRAM

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I congratulate the organisers and young filmmakers on the launch of the Ignite Youth Animator Program. The launch saw the screening of the first films made by up-and-coming local indigenous animators at Ballina Fair Cinemas, where the team were joined by friends and family, including elders, and the tutors and collaborators in the program. Twenty students – most with no animation experience – worked in groups on five different short films covering a range of subjects and animation styles, with themes ranging from monsters to "Black Lives Matter". They learned the set of technical skills needed to produce a stop-motion film, from storyboarding, concept development, scene creation, and creating a production name for their production teams, through to animation and special effects. The seven-week learning program was hosted by the Northern Rivers Community Gallery and led by Daniel Elliott, of "Visitors From Dreams", and young emerging animator Sophie Baldwin. Fifteen of the students were from the Bunjum Goori Youth Program in Ballina and five from Southern Cross School of Distance Education. I commend Ignite Youth for their imagination, planning, perseverance and vision.

RAY RICE, OAM

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—Ray Rice of East Lindfield, a constituent of Davidson, recently passed away after an illness. In April this year Ray was deservedly awarded with a Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to the community. As both CEO and an advocacy consultant of Bicycle NSW I liaised with Ray on a number of biking issues in the electorate. He was a passionate advocate for bike riders and his loss will be profoundly felt in the community. Ray's services to the community included working in various roles in bike riding organisations including Bicycle NSW, the Bobbin Head Cycle Classic, Western Sydney Mountain Bike Club, NSW Mountain Bike Association and Mountain Bike Australia. Ray was also an active member of the Rotary Club of Turramurra since 2006, and along with his wife, hosted 25 students from the Youth Exchange Program. He was also involved with Lindfield District Cricket Club, the North Shore District Cricket Association and his local church. Ray's funeral was held last week, I would like Ray's family to know that our thoughts are with them at this sad time and we will remember him as a passionate and generous member of the community.

YOUNG ARCHIES FINALIST THEVAN BASNAYAKE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I congratulate Winston Hills local Thevan Basnayake for being a finalist in the Young Archies. This week the Art Gallery of New South Wales announced Thevan as one of the top entrants in the 5 to 8 years age category for his self-portrait, titled Me. The Gallery's Young Archies competition was established in 2013 and invites young artists to submit a portrait. This year, over 2,100 entries were placed in the Young Archies. This is a terrific demonstration of a flourishing environment for students across the state. I note Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School in the Seven Hills Electorate for its specialist support of future artists. The ten finalists from each age category will be displayed at the Gallery and honourable mentions at the SH Ervin Gallery. The competition was judged on merit and originality by the Gallery's family programs manager, Victoria Collins, and guest judge, artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran. I invite Winston Hills locals to view Thevan's portrait, which is currently displayed alongside the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes 2021 exhibitions until 26 September 2021, or online. Congratulations, Thevan! A great achievement.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY EDUCATION FACILITIES AT WESTMEAD HEALTH PRECINCT

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—Last month saw the official opening and celebrations of the new learning facilities of the University of Sydney at the new Central Acute Services Building at the Westmead Health Precinct. Westmead Hospital has had a long association with the University of Sydney and the additional learning spaces will host education and research spaces for students and researchers to ensure better health care services for residents of the Seven Hills Electorate and wider Western Sydney. The new building's many university-hospital spaces across multiple levels include hybrid flexible teaching spaces for in-person and remote learning with world-class audio-visual systems. The University contributed \$88 million to the new hospital facility, along with the \$1 billion invested by the New South Wales Government for the Westmead Redevelopment Project assisting the transformation of the Westmead Health Precinct. I thank the University, Health Infrastructure and

the Western Sydney Local Health District for working collaboratively to bring about more education and research spaces to support more Western Sydney residents in attending tertiary education and employment locally.

MARTIN GASPARI

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I wish to commend Mr Martin Gaspari, volunteer with St John Ambulance NSW on recently receiving The Order of St John. Martin was presented with the award by Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley, Governor of NSW at the St John Ambulance NSW Investiture Awards. Martin's dedication to helping others has been the guiding force behind this award, as he has put in over 200 hours in volunteer time with St John Ambulance, well over the mandatory 60 hours required of him. We are fortunate to have Martin in the St John Ambulance Division in Fairfield. He gives his services to those in need as well as educating others about first aid in the Fairfield area, on top of his regular duties as a registered nurse and paramedic. We are particularly grateful to him and all other volunteers for the time and effort put into swabbing people for COVID-19 at testing sites over the last year. I congratulate Martin on receiving The Order of St John and thank him for his continuing efforts in our local community.

ASSOCIAZIONE ABBRUZZESI SOCIAL EVENT

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—The Associazione Abbruzzesi of NSW held their Annual General Meeting and social event at Smithfield RSL on Sunday 6th June 2021. The event was well attended by members of the local Abbruzzesi community and guests were treated to a delicious banquet and entertained by the talented musician and singer Mr Michael Rivera. Michael played many of the crowd's favourite traditional Italian songs. After a one-year absence in activities for the association due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was wonderful to see the community come together to celebrate their Abbruzzesi heritage. This year's event also doubled as a fundraiser for the Heart Foundation. Each and every year the association dedicates fundraising activities to worthy charitable organisations. I wish to thank Mr Luigi Bucciarelli, President of the Associazione Abbruzzesi of NSW and the committee for inviting me to join the festivities and I congratulate the association on a very successful event.

EMILY BEATH-PEARCE, GOOLOOGONG & COWRA ROTARY CLUB

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I congratulate Miss Emily Beath-Pearce of Gooloogong who has recently been acknowledged by Cowra Rotary Club for her fundraising efforts which secured \$7,000 for the Black Dog Institute. Emily, who was sponsored by Rotary, coordinated a trivia night fundraiser which led to this incredible amount being raised for the very worthwhile cause of mental health. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Shane Budge and Katie McVicar who provided support to Emily in the process. It is always a pleasure for me to highlight the contribution of younger people in our towns and villages, individuals like Emily who embrace the opportunity to work with their community in the name of an important cause. On this note, it would be remiss of me to not thank the many generous families of the Cowra district who dip into their pockets time and again, through attendance, donations and sponsorship, in the name of fundraising activities like this. Congratulations to all involved.

BLAND SHIRE ARTISTS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I would like to congratulate six young artists from the Bland Shire who are being featured in the new stunning window display in the main street of West Wyalong. Council's Youth Art initiative asked local artists to submit artworks that represent the Bland Shire in the topic of 'Through My Eyes'. The works of Rebecca Cumming, Abi McCubben, Sam Koop, Gabriella Cumming, Sage Buys and Connor Costello have been featured in the window display which is brightening the Bland Shire. Rebecca used the community's indigenous culture and her living environment on the farm as inspiration for her oil based artwork, Gabriella captured the rural sunset in her acrylic piece, Abi created an oil piece which represented the time and state of West Wyalong, Sam created a pencil portrait of Federick Neale, the first man to discover gold in West Wyalong, Sage created 2 oil pieces on a ram with a personal twist and Connor produced 2 stunning photographs celebrating the subtle beauty and tranquillity of the Bland Shire Life. I congratulate these 6 artists for all their hard work in creating their masterpieces and I look to seeing their displays across the West Wyalong community soon.

KINGSWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STAR JUMP CHALLENGE

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)—My congratulations to the staff and students of Kingswood High School (KHS) who joined PCYCs Star Jump Challenge for Youth Mental Health. A fantastic initiative by the PCYC, The Star Jump Challenge funds will go towards adding a mental wellness program into PCYCs across NSW. Run during April, the KHS team comprised of over 30 staff and students including top fundraising students: Billy, Tyler, Maison, Eva, Kieran and Fatima. With an initial goal of \$1,000 the team reached a very impressive \$6,050 placing them as the 11th highest fundraising team in NSW. This is a tremendous effort by the Kingswood High School team.

NSW UNDER 15 BOYS HOCKEY

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)—I recognise that under local Penrith Coach, Kieran Knowles and Assistant Coach, Joshua Chapple the NSW U15 Boys Hockey Team recently took out the gold medal at the National Championships. My congratulations to the NSW team members on this terrific accomplishment: Oliver Bestwick, James Coleman, Toby Collins, Ashley Dimmock, Jared Findley, Olivier Flokstra, Kalani Franklin, Connor Makings, Nathan Marshall, Alexander May, Ethan Nicholls, Kane Nutley, Joshua Robson, Oskar Smith, Brayden Sutherland and Henry Tyree. I also thank team Manager, Guy Mannerling and Physio, Quentin Pursey for supporting the team. The commitment by these coaches and players is evident and it's great to see the NSW team giving their all in representing our State.

ALISON BATHGATE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)—I offer my congratulations to Alison Bathgate who recently celebrated 21 years of teaching line dancing within the Clarence Valley. Alison believes that line dancing is a wonderful way of socially interacting with others within the community and also pushing yourself to learn new steps and routines and a great way of keeping yourself active. The dance group have also performed in aged care facilities, have danced through the night at the Relay for Life events and joined 7000 others in the longest line to achieve the Guinness Book of Records title for the largest number of people dancing the same steps. The group also raise funds for local charities and have so far raised over \$30,000. Congratulations Alison and keep up the wonderful work of teaching people, young and old.

FRANK LAWTON

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I would like to pay tribute to the late Frank Lawton who recently passed. He was a committed member of the local community and served in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). I offer my condolences to his wife, Laraine, and his kids, Brooke and Ryan and grandchildren. Frank and Laraine married in January of 1974 and over the next 12 years, Frank was never home for a full 12 months due to his naval duties. When he was home Frank was very diligent to the family attending school functions, excursions and volunteering. The family moved to St Clair in 1985. During his 20 year naval career Frank had 25 postings, across 12 different ships and ended his service as a Chief Petty Officer. Frank joined the St Marys RSL Sub-branch in 2005, where he established many friends with his wit, charm and general good humour. He was an enthusiastic member who gave 110%. This determination was no more evident than, despite being gravely ill, he discharged himself out of hospital to MC the ANZAC Dawn Service this year. Rest in peace Legend of the Nepean, Frank Lawton.

KEN DONE CELEBRATES LAUNCH OF NEW BOOK AT MOSMAN ART GALLERY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—I congratulate Mosman local Ken Done on the launch of his new publication entitled Art Design Life, which was celebrated with a special event at Mosman Art Gallery. 80-year-old Ken has been a talented painter for more than 40 years and shows no signs of slowing down. Since his first exhibition in 1980, Ken has held over 100 solo shows across the world in Europe, America and Japan. He is known as one of Australia's most recognised and well-acclaimed artists. We have all probably come across Ken's work. His timeless paintings are famous for their bright and colourful depictions of Australia, including our unique landscapes and precious wildlife. Ken's new book details his incredible career and documents his expansive art and design practice, featuring some of his most special moments. Many of us would recognise some of his earlier works such as iconic paintings of Sydney Harbour, the Great Barrier Reef and the outback. Congratulations to Ken for the success of his new book and thank you for your inspiring artwork.

LOCAL ARTIST AND MUSICIAN LES GOCK'S ROCK AND ROLL EXHIBITION

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Mosman artist and musician Les Gock is best known for his role as lead guitarist of the Australian glam rockers pop band, Hush. A few years on, Les is now devoting his time to another passion of his: painting. Les is showcasing a series of new portraits that capture some of the famous faces in Australian music he came across during his career at Mosman Art Gallery. The rock and roll star has used oil on paper in a classic black and white colour scheme to keep the 70s theme rolling. A handful of musicians including Angry Anderson, Sarah McLeod, Marcia Hines, Daryl Braithwaite and singer Mark Williams from Dragon feature in the star-studded line up of portraits. The stand-out portrait is one of Brian Mannix, lead singer from Uncanny X-Men. Les is also performing a live show with former Hush bandmates at the Mosman Club on June 12. I want to congratulate Les for his latest exhibition and thank him for bringing true talent and artistry to the local area.

VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT – ORANGE BUSINESS CHAMBER TEAM

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise the Vinnies CEO Sleepout Orange Business Chamber Team 2021, comprising of Jack Evans, Jessica Hickman, Nic Drage, Mitch Colton, Kylie Duncan, Katie Baddock and Andrew de Graaff. Every night, thousands of Australians experience homelessness. The Orange Business Chamber Team have taken part in the 2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout to raise money for the St Vincent de Paul Society to provide people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of homelessness with vital access to food and accommodation as everyone deserves a safe place to call home. On Thursday 17th June 2021, CEO's from my electorate slept outside in freezing conditions to raise awareness and funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society for services such as education, counselling, employment and health services. To date the Orange Business Chamber Team have raised \$31,000. I congratulate the Orange Business Chamber Team on their efforts and thank them for bringing awareness to such an important issue. Well done.

PRINCIPAL MEG MANSON – CANOBOLAS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I recognise Ms Meg Manson's nomination for the Government Primary School Principal of the Year in the Australian Education Awards. Meg is Principal at Canobolas Primary School in Orange and is one of only two finalists who are from regional NSW. Canobolas Primary School is a close-knit community of 133 students, and Meg has worked tirelessly to create and nurture a safe and encouraging environment for both staff and children to learn and grow. Meg is a passionate and positive advocate for rural and regional education. Just like many schools in my Electorate, Canobolas Primary have faced the challenging effects of the Teacher Shortage. Meg has been open in encouraging stronger bonds between rural and regional areas and city universities to attract graduating teachers. This nomination recognises her 14 years of work at Canobolas Primary, and celebrates her nearly three decades of devotion to Education. I would like to thank Meg and congratulate her on this outstanding and well-deserved nomination.

TWEED VACCINATION CLINIC

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)—I congratulate the dedicated Northern NSW Health staff members currently working at the newly opened Vaccination Clinic at Tweed Heads. The new pop-up clinic opened last week next to Aldi supermarket at Tweed Mall. Eligible members of the public aged 40 and over, as well as other priority groups, can now get vaccinated against COVID-19. This new hub provides choice for people who have not yet secured the vaccine through their usual GP and I encourage anyone who is eligible to get the jab as soon as possible. I'm delighted that the NSW Government is vaccinating people as fast as supplies from the Commonwealth safely allow, and we are making sure regional areas like the Tweed are inoculated in the same time frame as the cities. The clinic is from 7.30am to 4pm on weekdays. Bookings are essential and can be made by calling 1800 438 829 (1800 GET VAX) for people who are eligible after visiting the online COVID-19 eligibility checker at www.health.gov.au. Anyone in NSW aged 50 and over can book to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine by visiting www.health.gov.au.

THE IMPERIAL HOTEL – CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I place on the parliamentary record my congratulations to the team at the Imperial Hotel Murwillumbah on celebrating 90 years as a beloved venue in Murwillumbah. The Imperial Hotel turned 90 on Wednesday June 2nd. The 90th birthday was celebrated with a family fun day on Saturday June 5th. It was a great community and family event with live music from Jerome Williams and Kristie Lea, food trucks, a jumping castle and market stalls selling great local products from across the Tweed Valley. I congratulate publican Shane Nugent and Hotel Manager Kian Watson on hosting the wonderful community celebration. Locals affectionately know the hotel as "The Impy" and the hotel underwent a great restoration in 2019. The restoration breathed new life into the pub. It kept the original charm of the beautiful pink heritage building but also extended a new carpark out the back which doubles as additional space for live music and entertainment. This was a great win for local patrons and local artists alike. The Imperial Hotel is a much loved local venue and a hub for Murwillumbah with a great team. I look forward to the next 90 years.

KYOGLA HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I want to acknowledge Kyogle High School's Student Representative Council's newly-elected members. I am mightily impressed by their calibre and commitment to serving their school community. The 2021 SRC members are:

Year 7: Kody Tobler, Georgia Duley, Georgia Thomas and Wyatt Galvin

Year 8: Nate Walters and Charlotte Whitehouse

Year 9: Mitchell Cannington, Ciska Laarhoven, Tyvan Catford, Felicity Duley, Larrah O'Reilly, Makayla Sneath, Nikoa Endres and Emily Newton

Year 11: Thomas Moorhouse

Year 12: Hayley Butler, Benjamin Field, Olivia Flower, Faryn Johnston and Rebecca-Star Pazos

I thank teacher Mia McDonough for running this important program at the school. It was wonderful to visit the school and hand out the badges to the SRC members. Talking with the students at the assembly it was clear they are passionate and have great ideas for the future. It was lovely to read in the Kyogle High School Newsletter how proud the school are of the SRC members. The SRC forms the basis of the leadership program at Kyogle High School. They meet each week or fortnight on a needs basis. I congratulate the SRC on their leadership. Our future is in good hands.

WEST MAITLAND CENTENNIAL LIONS FUNDRAISER

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I would like to acknowledge the West Maitland Centennial Lions who recently raised \$1,700 in support of people affected by Ovarian Cancer at their 'Host a Teal Tea, High Tea' event held on April 24th at Ducks in the Field, Duckenfield. I was fortunate enough to attend the event, which was meticulously organised by West Maitland Lions Member and known local fundraising volunteer Wilma Lilley. Wilma did an outstanding job at organising the event, arranging raffle prizes and bric-a-brac for sale on the day, in addition to acquiring donation funds from local Maitland businesses, that all went towards the final fundraising total. Following the success of this event Wilma has told me there is already a guest list for the next West Maitland Centennial Lions fundraising high tea, which she says will most likely have a floral theme. Congratulations, to Wilma and the West Maitland Centennial Lions on the success of the event. If this event is anything to go by the next will be just as successful.

MRAG WINTER EXHIBITION LAUNCH CELEBRATION

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—Just as sports fields, pools and parks are important community assets, so too are cultural activities like galleries and libraries. The outstanding Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) provides an excellent range of educational, health, community and cultural programs that enrich our lives. On June 18, MRAG launched its Winter Season Celebration launch for 'Shadow Boxer', 'Just Not Australian' and 'Barka: The Forgotten River', a collaboration between Badger Bates, Justine Muller and the Wilcannia Community, a video tribute to the life of local Wonnarua Elder Auntie Marj and a stunning solo show 'Impressions of a Journey: Landscapes Between Walcha and Paterson' by Paula Jenkins. The atmosphere on the night was electric, with many of the featured artists, with other artists supporting them. There was a diverse audience of people from all over Maitland and well beyond. Thanks to Gallery Director Gerry Bobsien and her team Senior Curator Kim Blunt, Exhibition Officer Linden Pomare, Gallery Coordinator, Operations & Engagement Celeste Aldahn, Learning & Audience Development Curators Michelle Maartensz and Anne McLaughlin, Collection Management Curator Cheryl Farrell, Volunteer Officer Maree Skene and all the gallery volunteers, all of whom make events such as this possible in my electorate.

DURAL SCOUTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today I would like to acknowledge a number of Dural Scouts who have earned the highest scouting honour. Over the weekend James Waterson, Elijah Dawson, Brigitte Zapletal and Christian Zapletal all received their Grey Wolf Award at a special ceremony. This is the peak award and the highest honour a Cub Scout can earn. This award is the culmination of three years of work in the cub scouts. They have shown leadership skills as well as designing and completing a number of personal development projects. They also must learn, perform and teach others a range of outdoor competencies. Finally they also all independently planned an outdoor activity for all their peers to take part in. Congratulations James, Elijah, Brigitte and Christian on your Grey Wolf Award and I wish you all the best as you continue your scouting journey.

UNIONS NSW YOUTH SURVEY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—I congratulate Unions New South Wales on their recent youth survey, which provides critical insight into the experiences of young people in our economy. Over 300 young people responded to the survey at the end of 2020 and the results paint a bleak picture of what it is to be a young person in the time of COVID-19, including reporting that 30% of respondents who did not live with their parents regularly skipped meals last year. 42% of respondents under 21 have less than \$100 left each week after paying for rent, bills and groceries. It's clear we can and must do much more. The survey recommendations include that: Adjustments to junior rates for workers over 18 need to be phased out and rates for those under 18 increased to guarantee young workers a living wage. The Youth Allowance must be raised to the equivalent of a living wage. We must criminalise wage theft; and Unpaid internships should be outlawed. Young workers in our electorates demand to be heard and I congratulate and acknowledge Unions NSW for this crucial body of work.

HABERFIELD LIBRARY UPGRADE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—I congratulate Inner West Council and Haberfield community on the newly refurbished Haberfield Library and Community Centre. Haberfield residents have been patiently waiting for the new library to open and are delighted with the result. The new facilities include two new flexible community spaces, meeting rooms, a protected courtyard for children to play in, purpose-built work and study spaces, and internet access throughout the building including outside on the verandah and in the garden. There will now be more bilingual picture books and Italian fiction, as well as more toys - including robots - for kids to play and learn with. I particularly commend the Inner West Council for their commitment to maintaining the heritage of the building, carefully integrating the old Haberfield School of Arts building, with its rich history and unique character. Congratulations to the Inner West Council and everyone involved. I especially thank and acknowledge Cllr Lucille McKenna, who has been a steadfast, visionary and persistent champion for public spaces in Haberfield. This is a wonderful outcome for our community and yet another example of exceptional, architecturally designed public space in the Inner West.

KARONGA SCHOOL OLIVE TREE WALK

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)—I recently had the pleasure of visiting Karonga School in my electorate. Karonga is a special needs school that caters and cares for children of all ages and abilities. Karonga provides a positive and supportive educational environment, with the aim of ensuring that children can succeed into the future. The school has a strong connection with students' families and the broader community, who in turn assist students going forward into their adult lives. I'm delighted to say that the NSW Government has given Karonga's P&C a \$20,000 grant to construct a new, accessible "Olive Tree Walk". This path, guided by olive trees, leads to an educational vegetable garden where students learn the importance of healthy eating. It was in this garden that I met the school captain Murray, who is currently in his last year of school. I very much enjoyed my tour of the school and I would like to express my thanks to Principal Ruth Rogers and Assistant Principal Murray Graves, who along with all the staff do a fantastic job in providing a quality education to some of Epping's most cherished community members. I look forward to visiting Karonga again soon.

CAMDEN HIGH SCHOOL WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I commend the bravery of three students of Camden High School who participated in the World's Greatest Shave by shaving their heads. I also commend the two Year 12 students who participated by waxing their legs. The World's Greatest Shave is an annual fundraising event from the Leukaemia Foundation that aims to raise money to support and empower families impacted by blood cancer and to accelerate blood cancer research. Collectively these students raised over \$1,800. A special acknowledgement to Emily Lawrence who alone raised \$1,500. I thank Lara from Cut It Out Hair Design for taking the time to shave these students' heads and for supporting the event. I also thank the students, volunteers and members of the community for their work and donations towards such an inspiring event.

BARRAMURRA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I am delighted to announce a new school in the Camden Electorate, Barramurra Public School. The students and staff have settled into their new school which opened the first day of Term 1. The new school includes 44 permanent learning spaces, administrative and staff facilities, a hall, library and covered outdoor learning areas (COLA). The school will accommodate approximately 1,000 students. These great new facilities at Barramurra Public School will benefit the local community for generations to come.

DR ANNETTE CARRUTHERS, AM

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—As part of the Queen's Birthday Honours, Dr Annette Carruthers has been named a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to community health. She is currently taking part in the COVID vaccination effort. She has worked part-time as a GP while fulfilling several roles on different boards, including Multiple Sclerosis Australia, Multiple Sclerosis Research Australia, and the National and NSW Heart Foundations of Australia. MS is an issue particularly close to my heart, so I would like to especially acknowledge Dr Carruthers' work in that field. She is also currently a director with Headspace, Calvary Health Care and aged care catering service Cater Care. Her medical interests include clinical risk management and quality improvement in health services. Dr Carruthers' honour is very well-earned, and I thank her for her tireless efforts for our community.

RUBY AND LILY BUCKTON

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—Young Charlestown-based artists Ruby and Lily Buckton are identical twin sisters—and Ruby's portrait of Lily has been selected as a finalist for the 2021 Young Archies prize. This is the fourth year the girls have entered the prize. In the past, they have chosen different people to paint for their entries. This year, however, the twins decided to paint each other: Ruby painted a portrait of Lily, and Lily painted a portrait of Ruby. While Lily's work was not selected as a finalist, she told the ABC "for this year's prize, I drew Ruby and Ruby drew me so it's hard to tell the difference between who drew who and who was the artist." The Young Archies have been run in conjunction with the Archibald, Sulman and Wynne prizes for the last eight years, and the finalists' works are displayed at the Art Gallery of NSW. I encourage everyone to visit the Gallery and view the finalists. Our State is home to such extraordinary artistic talent, and I am so proud of both Ruby and Lily for representing Charlestown. I wish them all the best in their artistic endeavours.

NICK SHEPHERD

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to recognise the dedication and advocacy of Nick Shepherd of Barham in relation to men's mental and physical health. Mr. Shepherd has been an advocate for men's mental health through Movember in recent years but decided last year to dye his hair as well as grow a moustache in order to raise more funds and increase awareness. Mr. Shepherd successfully raised \$1,000. I congratulate Mr. Shepherd on his fundraising efforts for such a worthy cause and his continued advocacy for men's health.

BEN CAUGHEY

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate Ben Caughey of Hay for his efforts promoting young rural voices, culminating in his appointment to the NSW Government's Regional Youth Taskforce. In March, Ben attended the three-day Rural Youth Ambassador Forum in Canberra, a venue for rural youth to build networks and advocate for their community. From here, Ben was selected to join the Regional Youth Taskforce, where he was given the opportunity to make a real and meaningful contribution for young people, not just in Hay, but in rural communities right across the state. Ben is a valued member of his community and is to be commended for his efforts in ensuring that rural youth have their voices heard. I congratulate Ben on his efforts thus far and look forward to seeing what he achieves in the future.

AMIR SALEM

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to offer my personal congratulations to Amir Salem, President, Australian Egyptian Forum Council, on receiving The Order of Australia Medal. I have known Amir for several years and have been fortunate to see firsthand his contribution and service to the Australian Egyptian and Coptic Catholic Community. Amir has demonstrated significant dedication in promoting Egyptian culture, heritage, and traditions through coordinating a diverse range of events and programs. These programs have strengthened the relationship of Australian-Egyptians with the wider community. Amir's work has also improved the welfare and interest of our Egyptian-Australian youth by supporting their development and connection with their culture. I am pleased to hear that Amir's contributions and achievements have been recognised with this prestigious award. Congratulations to Amir Salem for your outstanding support to the Egyptian-Australian Community and on receiving The Order of Australia Medal. I look forward to further working with Amir in the future to continue representing our multicultural community in Western Sydney.

CHRISTINE HOWE, OAM

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to offer my personal congratulations to Christine Howe on receiving The Order of Australia Medal. I commend Christine's excellent work in providing learning opportunities for students along with her outstanding dedication to Catholic Education, in Western Sydney. Christine began her career in 1984 at Parramatta Marist High School. Shortly after commencing work, she was appointed the school's Director of Studies. Christine held this position for a decade when she was then appointed Deputy Principal of Rosebank College. Further appointments include Campus Principal of Terra Sancta College in 1998, and Principal of Caroline Chisholm College Glenmore Park in 2001. Christine held this position for almost a decade. Christine took responsibility for the direction and performance of over 40 schools in Western Sydney when she became the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta's Director of Performance. Thank you Christine for your 35 years of commitment to shaping the future education of our children. By challenging the status quo, you have led transformational change across our system of 80 Catholic Schools. Your dedication to the young people of Western Sydney, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds is admirable. May the Holy Mother Bless you for your dedication and care.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF THE REV DR HUNG-EN (TALLIS) TIEN

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I am delighted to congratulate and commend Rev Dr Hung-En (Tallis) Tien for his recent appointment as Rector of St Mark's Anglican Church Granville on Monday 7 June 2021. I want to acknowledge Father Tallis as a member of the Chinese Theological College Australia Inc (CTCA) member. It is a non-profit theological education organisation that provides training and research to educate future pastors in Australia. Father Tallis was appointed by the Rt Rev Gary Koo, Archbishop of Western Sydney and the Ven Neil Atwood, Archdeacon of Western Sydney. Father Tallis will make a big contribution to our area and I welcome him and his family to Granville. I wish him all the best, and I look forward to seeing them soon again in our community.

YOUNG ARCHIE FINALISTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today I would like to congratulate two Hornsby artists who have made the finals of the Young Archie Award. Hanna Park of Waitara and Yebyul Park of Hornsby have both created eye-catching portraits of their grandparents. 15 year old Hanna attends Gosford High School and paid tribute to her grandmother using a traditional South Korean painting style. It is a beautiful portrait and Hanna credits her grandmother with teaching her about the rich culture of her heritage. 16 year old Yebyul who attends St Ives High School wanted to capture the spirit of her grandfather. She has fond memories of playing traditional Korean games and eating homemade dumplings with him. It reminds her of simpler times and her beautiful painting is certainly something special. I would like to congratulate Hanna and Yebyul on not just their amazing paintings but making the finals of this prestigious award. I am sure this won't be the last we hear of these wonderful artists.

DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN'S RIDE

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—Last month, more than 50 riders on vintage motorcycles and dressed in their finest suits were seen, and certainly heard, as they made their way through my Wollondilly electorate. They were taking part in the worldwide Distinguished Gentleman's Ride (DGR), which aims to raise awareness and funds for prostate cancer and men's mental health in collaboration with the Movember Foundation. The DGR has been running their annual ride since 2012 and has allowed more than 340,000 riders of classic and vintage style motorcycles from 107 countries to connect and collectively have raised \$35 million for men's health. This year marks 10 years since the event first commenced, but it is the first time the ride has ventured through the Southern Highlands. This leg of the ride raised over \$8,000 – a truly fantastic result. I commend those who rode for a great cause and thank everyone who gave generously to what is an outstanding cause.

THE POP IN HOUSE

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—The Pop In House is a place dedicated to giving care, support, and advice to women and children dealing with domestic and family violence. Domestic violence and abuse in the Wingecarribee Shire is a significant issue, with research indicating that up to 1,000 people are victims each year. Designed to be both preventative and restorative, Pop In provides a cosy cottage environment in the heart of Bowral. Two years ago, a number of Bowral residents, led by Vicki Kelley, committed to addressing the issue of domestic violence in the Southern Highlands and came up with the concept of Pop In. The operation is largely funded by private donations, and the house that is used to deliver their services was kindly provided by local doctor, Nick Hartnell. Recently, I was joined by the Mental Health Minister Taylor MLC, in a site visit to Pop In to meet their Board and staff. I found their novel approach in tackling domestic violence very refreshing and reassuring. I commend Vicki Kelley and all those involved in Pop In and encourage those that may be victims of domestic violence to reach out as help is available.

PREMIER VISIT ENGADINE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—Last week Premier Gladys Berejiklian and I visited Engadine High School. We were lucky enough to be treated with a performance by their outstanding acapella group who blew us away with their talent. We then had an opportunity to speak with the inspiring "Women United" Group who are empowering women in the school community and aspire to change culture amongst young people. It was great to listen to the intuitive young people and better understand the issues they face in today's society. I commend them on their initiative to start this group and hope they continue to spread the positivity throughout the school community.

ELECTRIC BUS LAUNCH

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge the wonderful students of Oyster Bay Public School who helped launch the first Transdev electric bus in the Sutherland Shire on 14 May 2021. The new electric bus is part of the NSW Government's commitment to transition its fleet of 8,000 diesel and gas buses across the state

to zero emission technology. These electric vehicles present a number of long-term benefits for our community including delivering a much quieter ride for customers than their diesel and gas counterparts. Supported by their wonderful Principal Wanita Bowles and incredible Vice Principal Elizabeth Rudder, students from Oyster Bay Public School were on hand to celebrate the launch of the electric bus. The students enjoyed a ride back to school on the electric bus, with year 2 student Allegra Blyton assisting me to cut the ribbon to officially declare the bus open for service. I thank students from Oyster Bay Public School for participating in the launch, and look forward to our community enjoying the new Transdev electric bus.

TAREN POINT BOWLING CLUB

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Taren Point Bowling Club who are the successful recipients of \$15,000 from the NSW Government's 2021 Local Sport Grant program. Established in 1950, Taren Point Bowling Club is a favourite amongst locals catering for over 6,500 social members. The Club has a growing women's and men's bowling program and a premises that is continually being updated to cater for all members. Through this grant, Taren Point Bowling Club will upgrade the current lighting on the bowling greens to brighten the area and maximise the use of this facility by allowing members to play for longer hours. Of course none of this would be possible without the team who lead the Taren Point Bowling Club. I acknowledge General Manager Tim Wolfe, Chairman John Canute, Deputy Chairman Paul Sullivan, President Garry Williams, Treasurer Lyle Keats and Bowls and Partnership Manager Chris Green. I thank Taren Point Bowling Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing our community members benefit from this funding.

Private Members' Statements

LENA MIHAILOVIC

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (18:38): I congratulate Caringbah South resident Lena Mihailovic, who will compete for Australia in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics as part of the Aussie Stingers squad. Her father, Predrag Mihailovic, who has been the head coach of the Stingers since 2018, and assistant coach Bec Rippon, who is a former Olympic bronze medallist herself, will travel with her. They are currently training on the Sunshine Coast before heading to Cairns to acclimatise in the lead-up to Tokyo. Lena grew up playing water polo in her native Serbia before relocating to Australia with her family in September 2011, when she joined the distinguished Cronulla Sharks Water Polo Club. Predrag Mihailovic said of the move:

It wasn't exactly planned. We were having a great time in Istanbul, but when my kids started talking about going to university, we decided to change our environment, once again.

In Australia Predrag started working with the Cronulla Sharks and, shortly after, the Institute of Sport. He also worked with younger national selections in Australia. In October 2018 he became the head coach of the Australian women's water polo team. At 24 years old, Lena has some incredible achievements to her name. She is a 2019 FINA World Championships bronze medallist and a 2019 FINA World League Intercontinental Cup silver medallist. She placed eighth at the 2017 FINA World Championships and was a 2015 World University Games gold medallist, a member of the 2015 Australian Junior World Championships team and a member of the 2014 Australia Youth World Championships team. While representing Australia at the 2014 Youth World Championships in Madrid, Lena was spotted by the head coach of Arizona State University's water polo team, Todd Clapper. Clapper remarked:

I liked the way she shot the ball and had good speed ... because she was a coach's kid, she knows the game really well.

Lena competed for the Arizona State University Sun Devils for four seasons. With a final result of 131 goals scored, Lena finished in ninth place on the club's all-time goal scorers list. After her stint with Arizona State University, Lena had some success with the Hungarian league team, Ferencvarosi. It is an incredible accomplishment to represent your nation at the Olympic Games—the pinnacle of global sporting competitions. Australia will be cheering loudly for the Stingers. On behalf of Lena's community in the Sutherland shire, I wish Predrag and Lena every success in Tokyo.

STATE BUDGET AND WEST AND NORTH-WEST SYDNEY

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (18:41): With the budget handed down on Tuesday, I take the opportunity to discuss the promises to west and north-west Sydney, which are now more than two years old and yet to be delivered. As a result of Tuesday's budget, we at last have some community wins on these issues, but our communities have been left in the dark on the time line and construction. There is still so much we are not told in the budget, which is incredibly frustrating for families in west and north-west Sydney. I begin with something I have spoken about many times in the past 12 months, which is the desperate need for the high school at Marsden Park. It is one of the fastest-growing suburbs in the entire State of New South Wales. The Government

announced the high school on the eve of the last election. Two years later, thanks to a strong community push—particularly in the suburbs of Elara, Newport and Melonba that I am so privileged to represent—we have some budget funding.

We received some allocation on Tuesday. The promised school that we have been waiting two years for was allocated \$9.8 million, but we know a high school of that size will likely require funding in excess of \$80 million to build fully. There is still no time line of when it will open. This lack of information makes it very difficult for families to plan for their future. That is important for families with young children moving into these new areas in Marsden Park. Many local students, particularly in the areas of Cambridge Park and Werrington Downs, go to Cambridge Gardens Public School. The school has finally received funding for a security fence, and I thank parents for their incredible work. I was proud to work with them in their campaign. They had to fight the Government to get an allocation for it after 19 break-in incidents in 12 months. I pay particular tribute to Belinda Adams, who is a mum at the school, and a group of very determined local parents who made this happen.

Members are used to me talking about the desperate need for the new primary school at Jordan Springs to be delivered. It was so popular—we could have told the Government that from the beginning—that it was pretty much fully subscribed on day one and we desperately needed stage two to be funded. Stage two of that project has finally been funded in this year's budget. However, the Government has made absolutely no admission that it is going to come any way to funding a high school for Jordan Springs and Ropes Crossing, which is desperately needed. This budget provides nothing for a high school to service those two huge and growing suburbs in western Sydney—popular suburbs full of young working families trying to get ahead with no public high school to send their children to. I will keep up the fight to make sure it happens.

That is not to mention the string of other infrastructure issues that need funding that this budget overlooked, including upgrading Werrington Road to connect with Gipps Street and fix that nightmare bottleneck—locals know what I am talking about; fixing Richmond Road congestion—it is a car park—including the connection to the M7, probably one of the worst roads in Sydney; extending the metro line to Marsden Park via Schofields; building the thrice-promised but still unstarted Rouse Hill Hospital; and building more classrooms at the incredibly crowded Ropes Crossing Public School. Earlier this year the Premier said what she really thought about infrastructure in north-west Sydney and what all the families I represent are facing every day. She said:

The residents of the North West should have nothing to worry about ...

I invite the people running this Liberal Government to actually move out to this part of north-west Sydney and experience the pressure facing local families for themselves. This Government is run by people who have never had to make the morning commute of hardworking families in the west and the north-west. We are simply not a priority because they live in completely different areas—and it really shows. That is what we have to show for a decade of Liberal mismanagement: constant congestion, broken government planning and a chronic lack of infrastructure investment in our part of western Sydney.

MANLY WARRINGAH GYMNASTICS CLUB

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:46): It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the Manly Warringah Gymnastics Club and its athletes' phenomenal participation in the Australian Championships which took place on the Gold Coast in May of this year. The club sent 32 athletes as a part of the 500-plus-strong New South Wales team. Their contribution was 13 individual and team championship medals, 18 runners-up and 12 members who came in third place. The areas in which they were successful were in tumbling, with Mia Kwintner winning bronze; Thomas Aivazian winning silver and team gold in the junior international under 17 boys; and Jade McDonald winning in the junior international under 22 girls. In the women's artistic category, Ella Perry won bronze in the team senior international; Imogen Schuitemaker won bronze overall and silver in the vault; Violette Erlenwein won team silver; Lukina Lu won team silver and bars bronze; Lauren Brown won team silver and floor gold; and India Wood and Emmy Hill won team silver.

In the men's artistic category, Felix Clark won team gold, all-around bronze, floor bronze and pommel horse gold; John Carroll won team gold, floor bronze and vault gold; Christopher Dimos won floor silver and parallel bars silver; Jake Davies won team silver and high bar bronze; Ryan Barnes won team silver and floor gold; Nicholas Selleck, William Brewin and Benjamin Kropman won team silver; Jordan Wysman won team gold, all-around bronze, rings bronze and vault gold; Saxon Glendinning won team gold, all-around gold, floor bronze, pommel horse silver and rings bronze; and Minato Thomas won team gold, all-around silver, floor silver, vault silver and high bar silver. I congratulate all members of the team.

The Manly Warringah Gymnastics Club has been around for 40-plus years. It has a number of wonderful values that underpin participation in the club—for example, believing in yourself, being respectful, kind, supportive, determined and, my personal favourite, being happy. Gymnastics has many benefits. It brings the ability to learn balance, to learn strength and, of course, to understand, learn and appreciate discipline.

I congratulate all the members of the 32-strong team from the Manly Warringah Gymnastics Club that went to the Australian Championships. I congratulate them on their 13 gold, 18 silver and 12 bronze medals as a part of their contribution for Team New South Wales at the recent Australian Championships.

STATE BUDGET AND FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:49): In the 2021-22 budget it is clear that once again the residents of Fairfield have been overlooked by the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. This budget has haunting echoes of all the other budgets that have come before, throughout this Government's tenure. Year after year in this place I speak about the neglect to my electorate and therefore the neglect of my constituents. Once again Fairfield residents have been ignored despite the Government saying that it will commit to improving roads, rail, hospital, school, wages and social housing. Once again I see pride in the Treasurer as he hands down his fifth budget. I wish I could share his pride and know that my constituents' needs have finally been met. Unfortunately this is not to be.

In drafting this budget, the Treasurer has overlooked several key areas where the Government's assistance is urgently needed. The script remains the same for the Fairfield electorate when it comes to receiving real funds for important projects. It seems that the cost of the COVID-19 pandemic will be passed on to hardworking families at a time when the rising cost of living, increased tolls and increased taxes are pushing them to the brink. The budget allocation for the Fairfield electorate in true budget dollars is close to zero again. That is an insult to the hardworking families of my electorate.

Let us start with our local schools. The schools in the Fairfield electorate are feeling the weight of overcrowding—an increased population with little to no assistance from the Government to accommodate the increasing number of students in our schools. This budget has done little to address the crumbling and inadequate classroom infrastructure of our local schools. While some schools in the Fairfield electorate are currently receiving capital works injections from the previous 2018 and 2019 budgets, there is still no further funding for the majority of Fairfield's schools.

Let us move on to Fairfield's transport infrastructure. For years I have been calling on the New South Wales Government to address this issue and it looks like I will be continuing this call for yet another year. This budget has failed the people of Fairfield when it comes to our transport infrastructure, which has needed an injection of funding for many years to assist our elderly and mobility-impaired travellers across Yennora, Villawood and Carramar train stations. Those commuters have missed out again. Another area that the budget has ignored in the Fairfield electorate is our local roads. Local motorists are feeling the brunt of congestion on our local roads every day.

Traffic is getting worse and travel times are increasing by the day and yet the Government refuses to address the issue of realigning major intersections and increasing safety on our local roads. Dangerous intersections like Polding Street and The Horsley Drive, Nelson Street and The Horsley Drive, and the stretch of road from the intersection of the Hume Highway-The Horsley Drive to The Horsley Drive bridge over Prospect Creek and the railway received no allocation of funding from this budget. The Government's answer to this is to simply slap up more and more speed cameras and take away signage from mobile speed cameras, claiming that it increases road safety in the area. It does not. The only thing it increases is the amount of revenue that sits in the State coffers, none of which is injected back into the Fairfield electorate.

Fairfield Hospital is and will remain underfunded. Sadly, the Government refuses to fix this ongoing situation and our local hospitals have been crippled by this decision. Despite a parliamentary inquiry into south-west Sydney hospitals last year making 17 recommendations in a bid to remedy the situation, the Government has steadfastly committed to crippling our hospitals by deciding not to support those recommendations and saying that the health area already had a substantial budget. If the Premier would actually visit Fairfield Hospital and not rely solely on statistics, I am sure she would see for herself that the existing budget is clearly not enough.

South Western Sydney Local Health District is the largest of all the health districts in New South Wales and yet our constituents receive the lowest returns on their health care. The Government has acknowledged the difficulty of delivering health care in the south-west and yet has taken no steps to correct the systemic underfunding. My fear and the community's fear is that hospitals like Fairfield Hospital will go on to be neglected for so long that they will eventually be beyond redemption and will be closed, leaving local residents without a functioning hospital. All in all, it is another year of disappointment for the people of the Fairfield electorate.

KU-RING-GAI CHASE FUN RUN AND BARRY EASY WALK

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (18:54): Last month I joined more than 600 people to support our community's annual Special

Olympics Ku-ring-gai Chase Fun Run and Barry Easy Walk. The Ku-ring-gai Chase Fun Run is the major fundraising event for the Special Olympics Australia Sydney Upper North Shore Club. The Special Olympics are part of a global inclusion movement which supports athletes of all ages to participate in sport. In Australia over 7,000 participants and 47 clubs are striving to make a positive impact on the quality of life of adults and children with an intellectual disability. The Special Olympics play an enormous role in opening the door for members in the community who feel isolated. It was a pleasure to be able to participate in the event, not only as the local member but as the newly appointed Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

The Ku-ring-gai Chase Fun Run is such a rewarding event for everyone involved and it was great to see a strong crowd of locals taking part in either the five-kilometre Barry Easy Walk or the 10-kilometre fun run through the leafy streets of Wahroonga. The highlight of the event for me was the young boys from Knox Grammar School running or walking with the Special Olympics athletes as their buddies. Almost 400 students, including boarders and day boys, took part this year. I thank the school community for always rallying behind the spirit of the event year after year. The event was launched by its official ambassador and longstanding supporter Vic Lorusso. The team from Vision Personal Training led the warm-up session. I had the opportunity to address the crowd before the event commenced, along with my Federal colleague and friend the Hon. Paul Fletcher, member for Bradfield and Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts. At the sound of the air horn, the runners were off. It was fantastic to see the excitement and smiling faces on all of the athletes.

Once the runners were out of sight, it was time for walkers, like me, to line up at the start sign. Nothing beats the feeling of coming across the finish line and I am proud to say I beat my age, walking five kilometres in 56 minutes and five seconds. A special mention to our Special Olympics athletes who placed in the 10-kilometre run and the five-kilometre walk. I congratulate Nathan Whitty who placed first in the 10-kilometre run with a time of 58 minutes and 29 seconds, and Ross Whyte who placed second at one hour and 13 minutes. The five-kilometre walk was a popular choice amongst the athletes. In the female category I congratulate Jemima Heberden, Melanie Jacka, Nayln Sirivatnanon, Ashlie Becker, Bridget Maher, Brigitte Cook, Kate Simmons, Frances Scott and Jonathan Reiss. In the male category I congratulate Tim Rodgers, Christian Ridey, Michael Lee, Ramesh Maharjan, Mark Crighton, Alistair Hyman, Jarvis Cant, Andrew Rainsford, Declan Goh, Bowman Yu, Matthew Gow, Ross Bennett, Andreas Demetriou and Benjamin Hayman.

I had the honour of presenting the medals and certificates to those who placed first, second and third. Each athlete beamed with joy as they showed off their medals, which were engraved with the Special Olympics motto, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." On reflection, those words have a profound message which can be applied to anyone and in all aspects of life. All any of us can hope for is a chance to be brave and to pursue a dream. Each athlete embodies this motto. When I asked Nathan, who came first in the 10-kilometre run, what his favourite part of Special Olympics was, he replied, "To have the opportunity to play sport."

We all know how tough it was for our local charities last year, especially as they were unable to host their annual events. I congratulate the organisers on ensuring the Ku-ring-gai Chase Fun Run went ahead this year. Thanks to the generosity of its supporters, including local schools, businesses and community organisations, over \$11,500 was raised. I recognise this year's major sponsors, including Unisson Disability, Like Family, Differently Aabled People Association Inc., Knox Grammar School and Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre, to name a few. I thank all the volunteers, as without their hard work none of this would be possible. The Ku-ring-gai Chase Fun Run and Barry Easy Walk presents a fantastic opportunity for our community to unite behind and raise money for a truly worthwhile cause. I have no doubt that the Ku-ring-gai community will unite again to support this great fundraising event next year.

RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE FLOODING

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (18:59): As members will recall, in March this year there was heavy rainfall across much of New South Wales and flooding that occurred in a number of parts of the State. The Riverstone electorate, which I am privileged to represent, lies within the greater Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment and specifically parts of the catchment areas of South Creek, Bells Creek, Eastern Creek, First Ponds Creek and Second Ponds Creek. As the first three of those creeks are prone to major backwater flooding from the massive floodplain of the Hawkesbury River, significant variations in water levels can occur when the river system floods. Those variations can be seen from the following river heights at Windsor, near where South Creek joins the river. The normal non-flood height of the Hawkesbury River at Windsor is about 0.15 metres Australian height datum [AHD]—that is, just above sea level. The one-in-20-year flood height is a full 13.7 metres AHD. The one-in-50-year flood height is 15.8 metres AHD and the one-in-100-year flood height is 17.3 metres AHD.

The biggest flood on record since 1788 reached 19.3 metres and the estimated probable maximum flood, the PMF, would be 26.3 metres. There is no other floodplain in Australia where a height of 26 metres of water could ever occur. It is the equivalent of a 12-storey building. As a result, it has long been recognised that major

flooding of the Hawkesbury River can create the need for large numbers of people to evacuate their homes. In March this year the Bureau of Meteorology briefly predicted a one-in-50-year scale flood. That meant that planning had to occur for evacuation of homes built on land lower than the 15.6 metres level or in areas where road access would be cut off by water at that level. Fortunately, the bureau's prediction was quickly reduced as the intensity of rainfall eased, but a number of warnings to prepare for evacuation had already been issued. A number of these were directed to residents of areas within the Riverstone electorate.

It needs to be understood that the planning approval level for new residential developments has long been set at the one-in-100-year flood level and in recent years at a slightly higher level due to the inclusion of a half a metre safety margin, referred to as freeboard. So the only housing lots located down at the one-in-50-year flood level or below in the whole Hawkesbury Valley would be those developed many decades ago, before modern planning rules existed. Although across the valley there are thousands of such homes built on low land settled more than 50 years ago, no house on land developed since then would have been affected by the flood which occurred in March. That is why I was so surprised to read preliminary warnings from the SES which were directed to residents of about 12,000 to 15,000 homes in and around the Riverstone electorate, the vast majority of which were newer developments. Fortunately, those warnings did not flow on to actual evacuation orders. I have been in discussion with the SES since March about the experience of that event and I hope to be able to contribute to the refinement of the warning and evacuation preparations for future events.

Landowners in the region are aware that the investigation for potential rezoning of the Marsden Park North and West Schofields precincts has been impacted by the ongoing assessment of the capacity of the road network in the region to facilitate evacuation of all those residents who may need to evacuate in a major flood. It is important that it can be established that such a mass evacuation could be safely and successfully undertaken, even though the need for it would be very rare. Transport for NSW is leading the assessment of the capacity of the current road network and of the planned enhancements to the road network which further development would bring. As a concerned local member, I hope to have the opportunity to contribute to that assessment too and to bring local understanding to bear on the deliberations. The rare but possible need for evacuation highlights the two distinct risks which floods of the Hawkesbury-Nepean pose. The first risk is to property. The second risk is to life.

It may be considered that the risk to property is adequately addressed by restricting building to localities with less than a one-in-100 chance of being flooded in any given year. But the risk to life demands that residential development should take place only if adequate provision is made for people to be able to move out of harm's way if they should ever need to do so. The planning process for the region needs to be based on acceptance of this principle and adhere to it. I am confident that is exactly how the New South Wales Government is undertaking the process and that the decisions taken in due course will be designed to protect current and future residents of the region. The risk to life is also the most fundamental reason why the raising of Warragamba Dam must proceed as planned. The project offers the capacity to reduce major flood peaks and provide more time for people to evacuate. The incidence of the higher wall actually coming into play would be extremely rare, but it would be immensely valuable to public safety on those occasions when it did.

STATE BUDGET AND WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (19:04): I make some comments on yesterday's budget. The hours following the Budget Speech give everyone an opportunity to more thoroughly examine the budget papers. At the outset I acknowledge that the Government has, after a decade of delay, finally delivered \$12.4 million in funding for construction of lifts at Unanderra station. The funding has not come easily and has been the subject of an intense community campaign over many years. In recognising the role that the community has played in securing the funding, I particularly acknowledge Rebecca Schmidt and Richard Kramer, who never gave up despite numerous setbacks. I also recognise organisations including the Flagstaff Group, Greenacres, the Nan Tien Temple and many others that rallied for fairness in access for all at Unanderra station.

There have been many petitions, community walks, community barbeques and parliamentary speeches—and more petitions and more rallies. Some were concerned that they would never see the lifts built. When I was first elected in late 2016 I raised in my inaugural speech the issue of building those lifts and I have maintained a determination to secure the financial commitment for them ever since—and it is going to happen. The Minister has advised that a construction contract will be awarded next month, with construction expected to be completed by mid to late next year. We will be keeping a close eye on progress because we will not tolerate further delays.

But Wollongong is experiencing delays on another project: the upgrade of the Wollongong Entertainment Centre. The budget contained \$6.7 million to plan for the Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct. I do not begrudge the Hunter that. It contained \$8 million for business cases to upgrade suburban football stadiums in Sydney. I do not begrudge those suburban areas that. But there is not a cent for the business case and final design of an upgrade to the 22-year-old Wollongong Entertainment Centre. In a little over a year the eyes of the world

will be on Wollongong as the UCI Road World Championships take place, but the Berejiklian Government has obviously decided that it is willing to wear the potential global embarrassment if the region's premier entertainment venue is not up to scratch. And it is not as if the money is not there. As the editorial in today's *Australian Financial Review* states:

Interest rates nailed to the floor by the Reserve Bank and a surging house price boom have done for the NSW government what Chinese iron ore buyers did for the federal government's budget fortunes.

The Government has had a windfall gain in stamp duty and GST revenue. Road toll revenue is going up by an average of 8.1 per cent a year. Fine revenue is forecast to climb an average of 7.3 per cent a year. In fact, the tax take of Gross State Product will be 5.3 per cent next financial year and will rise again the following year to 5.4 per cent, which is the highest it has been since 2015-16. Total revenue as a proportion of Gross State Product is also going to reach new highs this year and next year at 13.8 per cent and 13.9 per cent respectively, levels that surpass every year in the more than two previous decades. This reckless revenue raising from higher taxes, tolls, fines and fees must stop. The Government is throwing fairness out the backdoor. Yet despite the reckless revenue raising from taxes, tolls, fines and fees, the budget deficit next year will be \$2.7 billion higher than forecast six months ago. And debt continues to rise, hitting \$104 billion or 13.7 per cent of Gross State Product in 2024-25.

The revenue to fund the \$3 million or \$4 million needed for the business case was there. The Government simply did not want to spend it on Wollongong. I also note the strong criticisms of the international border closures and their impact on jobs included in Budget Paper No. 1. The paper states that international border restrictions remain a major impediment to New South Wales economic growth. It notes that border closures are impacting on international education provision, which is New South Wales' largest services export. This is important to communities like Wollongong that have a world-class university that is central to its social and economic activity. The budget paper goes on to say:

Less than half of student spending is on tuition fees, with the rest spent on housing and general goods and services. Student activity also has large multiplier effects on the rest of the economy. Estimates suggest that each student creates on average 0.36 new jobs in the economy. Based on the change in enrolments to date, relative to last year, this would imply a loss of around 15,000 jobs.

Some of those jobs have been in Wollongong, which is not helped by a Government that does not seek to prioritise local content. But, of course, the Treasurer will not worry about any of this or what is happening with jobs and economic activity in regional areas. After failing to convince his Federal colleagues to return to the times when big hair, big shoulder pads and leg warmers were all the rage, he has thrown \$50 million of taxpayer money to bring back the 1980s long, boozy Friday lunch—but only in Sydney. Yesterday the Treasurer said that the key is productivity. We will prove that he does not really believe that. Instead, the Treasurer will be hanging up the "Back on Monday" sign on his office door at noon on Friday and heading off for a long, boozy lunch.

REFUGEE WEEK

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (19:09): I congratulate you on your new role, Madam Temporary Speaker. I wish you all the very best for it.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mrs Wendy Tuckerman): Thank you.

Mr JIHAD DIB: As a nation we have the opportunity during this Refugee Week to recognise and reflect on what we have achieved and how much more we can do to welcome those who find themselves alone in a new and foreign place. This now global event started in Australia in 1986 to celebrate the extraordinary and wonderful ways in which people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds enrich our communities. How fitting that this year's theme, "Unity—The way forward", offers us an opportunity to not only welcome, thank and celebrate our new neighbours who have come seeking safety but also to look at how we can continue to enrich the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. I acknowledge my dear friend Liz Deep-Jones who, along with celebrated photographer Tim Bauer, is currently holding an exhibition on refugees and anti-racism at the Addison Road Community Centre. It is an inspiring display of people who have made a difference.

Refugee Week gives us a chance to celebrate the contribution refugees make to our society. At the same time, it allows us to reflect on the displacement faced by millions of people who have fled their home countries. It also allows us to come together to celebrate the courage of refugees, who face the uncertainty of resettling in a new country. Under international law, a refugee is a person who is outside his or her country and cannot return due to a fear of persecution based on their nationality, race, religion or political opinion. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the moment there are an estimated 26 million refugees and four million asylum seekers around the world. While Australia has a refugee intake of around 18,000 per annum and has taken in more than a million refugees over many decades, many of the countries taking in the most refugees have far fewer resources and yet somehow seem to support many more. Some of those poorer nations are doing more than their fair share, taking up to three million or 4½ million refugees.

As for us, we currently have 1,437 people in closed detention, 536 in community detention and 12,059 people living in the community on bridging visas. The so-called Biloela family, the Murugappan family— asylum seekers from Sri Lanka—highlights how poor and heartless our treatment of others is. Our nation needs to do so much better than this. The too many examples of mental health struggles, self-harm and illness among people in detention centres should shame us. When COVID-19 impacted our lives, many refugees were further disadvantaged by the economic downturn we faced. Bridging visa holders were not eligible for JobSeeker, the Coronavirus Supplement, the Economic Support Payment or JobKeeper. Many of those living in our communities who have been issued bridging visas do not qualify for any government assistance. They must find help wherever they can.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedicated and passionate community organisations that assisted refugees with food hampers and other support services to meet their basic needs. It was heartening to see how our communities rallied to support those organisations to provide vital services to individuals and families who found themselves facing dire financial stress. Again, the kindness of people filled the gap left by government. On World Refugee Day the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to urge people to stand with refugees to ensure that every family has somewhere safe to live and the opportunity to work and learn new skills, and that every refugee gets an education. The plight of refugees and asylum seekers has long pulled at the heartstrings of our nation. We have a proud record of welcoming people from around the world and offering them every opportunity to succeed. We must continue to uphold and further build upon this stance.

Many Australians oppose the mandatory detention of both asylum seekers and refugees. It is particularly concerning that significant numbers of refugees are held in immigration detention centres, often for prolonged periods. We cannot avoid or keep putting aside this national conversation. Events like Refugee Week help raise awareness, remembering and acknowledging the often perilous journey that refugees have taken to reach our shores. The week highlights the generous acts of welcome displayed towards refugees by so many caring people. There are many success stories of refugees who arrived in this country with no possessions and who risked their lives on rickety boats to sail the oceans to get to a place of safety, escaping warzones, devastating poverty and deprivation. Through no fault of their own, these fellow human beings found themselves displaced and searching for a better life for their families.

Many of us cannot fathom what that means. But we can show compassion by welcoming and supporting those who, at times, faced their darkest days. Today I am honoured and incredibly proud of Abdulmajid Alawir from the electorate of Lakemba who, along with his family, arrived here from Syria in 2014. The young man could not speak a word of English. However, through support and sheer determination, he finished high school and is studying at university. In May this year he passed his commercial flight licence test with the support of his family, who scrimped, saved and borrowed so that he could fulfil his dream of becoming a pilot. As a nation we can be proud of achievements like these that serve as examples of a bit of kindness.

Abdulmajid's achievements also demonstrate that we are a land of opportunity. It is so important that we provide these opportunities for all. It is clear from all the evidence that the overwhelming majority of refugees, after an initial period of adjustment, repay our generosity many times over by making a valuable contribution to our multicultural society. Abdulmajid's story has been told, but there are countless others that no-one will ever hear of—stories of rebuilding lives and making positive contributions to a new homeland. We should never demonise refugees and asylum seekers or look down on them. Our nation can be big-hearted. We are, after all, a land of immigrants, a land of opportunity, and a land and people of compassion. Let us always remember that as we celebrate the nation that we are and the nation that we can be. Let us strive to be better than the low bar that we have set.

KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:14): I congratulate the Kogarah Historical Society, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year. The work of the society is essential in ensuring that historical treasures of the St George region are not forgotten. It was during the historical celebration of Captain Cook's arrival that the idea was first suggested that a society should be formed to appreciate and communicate the history of the St George area to locals. The Kogarah Historical Society was officially brought to life on 9 February 1970 by order of the then mayor of Kogarah, Ken Cavanagh. The society soon gathered a following and had its first official meeting the next month.

The study of history is critical to understanding our present. For example, the St George area was traditionally inhabited by First Nations people of the Dharawal tribe. This information is available to all of us today thanks to the conservation efforts of historians and people with a keen interest in history, who have found documents of original negotiations between English settlers and our Indigenous people. The society aims to encourage people to study the history of the St George area and promote awareness of the historical significance of the area. The society also provides members with exciting historical excursions. Most recently, a group of

members travelled to the Garden Island naval base for a tour of the facilities and to learn about the island's significance in Australian history. The society also has a considerable influence on the preservation of sites such as Carss Cottage and other historically significant sites across the St George area.

The original executive team envisioned the society being able to open a community museum that would provide local residents with an opportunity to view books, records, manuscripts and artefacts that hold historical significance across the St George community. This museum, known as Carrs Cottage, is still operating today and is located in Carss Park. It is an excellent testament to the commitment of the past and present members of the society. Carss Cottage sits like a jewel on the highest point of Carss Park, built with locally quarried stone in 1865 for William Carss and family. It is the oldest building still standing in the St George area. Wandering through the museum, patrons can experience what the cottage would have looked like back in 1865. The society is privileged to run the museum, which focuses on collecting items relating to the St George area's past and present history.

The society annually hosts a local historical writing competition that encourages members in the Georges River and Kogarah areas to research and record events, personalities or infrastructure from the district's past. In the latest round of the competition three winners were announced. They were Monica O'Brien, with the story of war veteran turned competitive sailor Stan O'Brien; Sue Castrique, who recorded the highly anticipated prize fights that would occur in Frog's Hollow in the 1840s and 1850s; and lastly the history of St Raphael's church and school in South Hurstville in the early 1900s. Members from the Georges River area and Greater Sydney can access those entries through the society's website.

I have been a member of the Kogarah Historical Society since 2004 and enjoy reading its bimonthly newsletter, which details stories of heroic war heroes, historical dates in Australian history and so on, all contributed by members of the society. I have also been able to enjoy the books published and printed independently by the society, which they sell online from time to time as well as at Carss Cottage. I also enjoy attending the local meetings to hear about upcoming events and to be a part of what is now a strong community brought together by a shared interest. I thank current president Beverley Earnshaw and vice president Adele Ryan as well as all the executive and committee members for their efforts and their dedication to conserve, record and preserve the history of our local St George community for present and future generations. I look forward to receiving the next instalment of the society's newsletter to learn more about the great history of my electorate and the St George community.

LAND TAX

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:19): I make another instalment in the humble working-class economist series, this one about the Liberal Treasurer's snake-oil never-ending land tax on the family home. It is a forever tax on people's forever home. Despite the Treasurer and wannabe Premier's big boasts of being the self-appointed great reformer—saying "Progress is never made by taking ideas off the table", talking about his "innovative reform" and of course his new favourite US presidential linguistic parallel that "We cannot let our success be our failure in the future"—this snake-oil salesman of a Treasurer cannot even decide whether he wears his darker-framed glasses to audition for *Superman* or his retro transparent ones for the lead role in *Boogie Nights 2*. He really is a puffed-up policy peacock, all plume and ready for a plucking.

Housing affordability was the current Premier's top priority, yet we saw nothing from the Treasurer and heir apparent in this budget, despite his promise from last year. He awarded a \$5.5 million contract to KPMG, and all we have so far are some glossy discussion pamphlets that promise everything to everyone and say it is the Pareto-optimal panacea to housing affordability. There are no losers in this new tax con—which brings me to his progress paper released earlier this month. Going through the paper, two things really stuck out to me. First, the paper mentions a 50 per cent increase in property transaction volumes in reference to the Malakellis and Warlters 2021 paper. I thought, "Gee, that's a frightfully big number". Secondly, it mentions that house prices—not land values, I might add—would decline by 3 per cent to 4 per cent but makes no reference to the source. A conclusion with no reference does not sound very rigorous to me.

One would have thought that as part of the positioning and strategy of this spin campaign, a reduction in house prices would be used as a political missile to launch the policy. The fact that it was assigned approximately 40 words in a 61-page document with more than 17,000 words made me curious about the accuracy of this conclusion. For one, the Australian National University and University of Canberra modelled the impact of the ACT stamp duty reforms compared with a land tax and concluded that house prices increased by 9 per cent and units by 4 per cent. Without going through each analytical step, the 50 per cent figure was obtained—in consultant-speak—through a literature review of academic journals using a symmetrical inversion approach to the findings and then applying linear interpolation. In community-speak it is, "Let us use and summarise other people's work, reverse the findings to meet our needs, use the mathematical timetable, find a gullible Treasurer to pay \$5.5 million for it and throw in some happy pictures of beautiful, smiling people". Voila—produit fini.

This would never pass the pub test so I got even more curious to source and analyse the academic papers—especially the ones that use Australia data—to determine where the 3 per cent to 4 per cent house price decline came from and whether it is even true. It is amazing what one finds when one goes digging. The Davidoff and Leigh and the Adams, Nassios and Sheard papers were the most relevant to what happens to house prices and land values when one imposes a land tax. And guess what? Neither paper supports the conclusion that house prices or land values fall when one takes away stamp duty and/or imposes a land tax. In fact, the model results show the opposite: House prices and land values actually appreciate. Oh, deary me—just when I thought the snake-oil forever land tax on the forever family home could not get worse.

Here are some of the findings as detailed in both papers, using Treasury's assumption that stamp duty equates to about 3.99 per cent. Firstly, a 10 per cent reduction in stamp duty—that is going from about 4 per cent to 3 per cent—will increase land values to the tune of 1.8 per cent to 4.1 per cent. But that is only a 10 per cent reduction, not taking it away totally. If one applies the linear interpolation approach used in the Treasury paper, the estimated land values increase many times. I will be conservative and say that a 1 per cent reduction in stamp duty from 4 per cent to 3 per cent could result in land values increasing somewhere from 3.6 per cent to 8 per cent. But then, of course, one needs to take the reduction to 0 per cent. This means that the estimated land value increases a minimum of about 12 per cent, which just means a higher land tax that goes on forever for the unsuspecting first home buyer.

For the average house, a 10 per cent reduction in stamp duty increases the house price about 3 per cent but that is only taking it down by 10 per cent. If one applied linear interpolation then house prices would increase a minimum of 15 per cent. The blunt conclusion is this: House prices and land values go up with this snake oil. First home buyers are priced out. The increase in land value means first home buyers will continue to pay a forever tax on their forever home. The humble working-class economist series continues.

SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE RUGBY LEAGUE CLUBS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (19:24): I gives me much pride to update the House on the growth of rugby league at the grassroots level and above right across the Seven Hills electorate. As all members would agree, rugby league is a sport that brings together the people of New South Wales, no matter who they are. We saw this as recently as the State of Origin, where the people of New South Wales came together to support our great State in taking on our historic rivals in Queensland—a match that we won decisively. It is events such as this that make us appreciate the power of sports including rugby league, which bring people together despite their differences. I am pleased to update the House on the great efforts by people and organisations in the electorate of Seven Hills to ensure that rugby league remains a community building sport at the grassroots level. Within the electorate of Seven Hills we have six junior rugby league clubs, the Lalor Park Kookaburras, the Toongabbie Tigers, the Winston Hills Hawks, the Winston Hills Tigers, the Seven Hills Kangaroos, and the North West Hurricanes. I am also aware of several more junior rugby league clubs that are just outside our electorate in places like Parramatta, Blacktown and Baulkham Hills. It gives me great joy to hear from junior clubs about the successes they are experiencing, especially considering that many younger kids from within my electorate play just outside the electorate.

Beyond the junior clubs it is fantastic to see the involvement of schools in developing rugby league programs for students. It is great to hear the terrific work being done at local schools like The Hills Sports High School in Seven Hills and Patrician Brothers College, Blacktown, both of which have a number of local students in programs across the State. I am continuously receiving updates about their success at the highest levels of schoolboy rugby league. As members of the House are aware, in recent times there has been great support for the development of high performance sporting facilities. These facilities are designed to foster sporting excellence for the next generation of sports stars. Rugby league clubs have made sure that their new facilities will feature dedicated female programs to improve the pathway for women and girls into the higher sporting arena. This is a major step forward for the growth of grassroots sports as we move into the future. I was also pleased to hear the recent news from the Parramatta Eels. They will be joining the National Rugby League Women's competition in 2021. It is a great endorsement for young female footy players in the area of Seven Hills and across western Sydney to have an elite women's rugby league team at the highest level so close to the electorate.

This provides a great opportunity for aspiring female rugby league stars, with more development, training and coaching available from the Eels and their new female players for girls in the local area. I look forward to watching the Parramatta Eels women's team compete in this competition, which begins in August. I wish the Parramatta Eels women's team all the best in their first year of the competition. Rugby league is one of the most played sports in our State. I am pleased to inform the House about the positive feedback I have received recently from families about their experiences with the game. I look forward to hearing more from constituents about their experiences with the game of rugby league, and I cannot wait to see the NSW Blues do us proud again in the next State of Origin.

TEACHING PROFESSION

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:27): The very best teachers, principals and early childhood educators live and work in the inner west. For so many parents and carers, including me, COVID-19 has been a stark reminder of just how difficult and challenging their job is; teaching our kids takes patience, care and, of course, expertise. But it goes much further than that. Not only do teachers work round the clock to support our kids; they often do so in the midst of constant policy changes, curriculum reform, increasing demands for compliance and reporting, and the evolving complexities of supporting kids in a rapidly changing world. This is demanding and complex work, but the fact is teachers' salaries have failed to rise in comparison to other professions and the work is made all the more difficult by the challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. It is clear we need to do so much more to support our teachers and the first step, I believe, is to sit down with them and ask them what they need from us to better support their critically important work.

I was really pleased to meet with a group of local teachers in my office recently to discuss the Gallop inquiry and how they felt we could do better to support them in their work. They were a mix of new and veteran teachers from both primary and high schools. Despite the differences in their work, their experiences were remarkably similar. They reported often feeling overwhelmed by the workload and frustrated that the time spent on compliance, reporting and administration was diverting them from focusing on the job they were trained for and signed up to do: educating our kids. They are all committed and passionate teachers who dearly love their jobs. They want to see more and more committed teachers join the profession and, of course, they are frustrated by the number of good teachers they see leave to pursue other careers.

I am so grateful to them for sharing their experiences with me and for explaining the sensible changes that we can make to better support them to do the job that they love. The NSW Teachers Federation commissioned an independent inquiry into how the work of teachers and principals has changed since 2004, when teachers were last awarded a salary increase following a work value case in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. The federation notes that work value cases such as these are no longer permissible under the New South Wales Government's wages policy. The Gallop inquiry was headed by Dr Geoff Gallop, the former Premier of Western Australia, Dr Tricia Kavanagh, a former justice of the Industrial Court of New South Wales, and Patrick Lee, a former chief executive of the NSW Institute of Teachers. Over a thousand submissions helped shape the inquiry's recommendations. They called for a salary increase of between 10 per cent and 15 per cent to better reflect the responsibilities and demands on teachers, and an additional two hours a week for primary schoolteachers and a reduction of two hours in face-to-face teaching for secondary schoolteachers to allow them more time to prepare, assess and monitor things.

They also recommended increasing permanent teacher numbers and returning centrally employed specialist staff to assist teachers; establishing a statewide, standards-based promotions system to better shape the careers of teachers; urgently increasing the number of teachers and counsellors in our schools to address mental health challenges; and slowing down the implementation of the new curriculum to give teachers more time and professional development support to adapt. These recommendations were echoed by the teachers who came to my office. They are also echoed by parents and carers. Just this week I received an email from parents at Wilkins Public School in my electorate in response to the Gallop inquiry. They said:

As you know, an independent inquiry has found that the workload of teachers has increased, teachers' work has changed & intensified, teachers are dedicated & committed, relative salaries have declined, teacher shortages are predicted, and teachers need more time for prep & collaboration. It's been recommended to increase teacher prep time, increase salaries, increase staffing levels and increase the number of school counsellors. The P&C at Wilkins Public School is in full support of these recommendations and welcomes any opportunity to assist in supporting their implementation.

This email is indicative of the views of so many parents and carers across the inner west. They love their teachers. They love the work that they do for their kids and they want to see them better supported. They support the recommendations of the Gallop review. Like so many parents, we are in awe of our teachers—their professionalism, their expertise and the care that they provide for our kids. It is fundamental for their future but also for our wellbeing and our sense of belonging in the world right now. During COVID-19, when our kids' worlds have been turned upside down, their teachers have been a source of certainty and support. We are all feeling a level of anxiety and concern right now and these teachers are the rock of our kids' lives and of our lives. Teachers are turning to us right now and asking for nothing more than certainty and support in return.

FREE SPEECH

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:32): Today I will speak about the assault on free speech in my electorate of Murray and across New South Wales. Every day people come to me with serious complaints about our Government. Those people are from our hospitals, our schools, our councils, irrigation corporations and services. The complaints are different but they all say the same thing at the end of the conversation: "Helen, please

don't reveal my name." In a First World democracy, grown men and women are terrified to use their names. And why would they not be scared? We are seeing government gag people and silence dissent like never before.

Earlier this month a counterterrorism police squad burst into the home of journalist Kristo Langker, pinned him to the ground, charged him and arrested him. The squad arrested Kristo following a complaint by the New South Wales Deputy Premier. The most powerful man in New South Wales felt intimidated by a 21-year-old half his weight—so much so that he needed to involve the police. It is true that Kristo approached the Deputy Premier in a public setting twice. Just like comedians from *The Chaser* or Channel Nine, journalists have often approached politicians in the street. The question is: Will they continue to do so? The events of this month would make every journalist think twice about approaching our elected leaders. Maybe that is the aim. Friendlyjordies was about to release a documentary on The Nationals water corruption and illegal water use.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I do not want to take time away from the member. I am aware that the member moved a motion earlier in the week, as did the member for Balmain, on this issue, which I was considering. I will comment on that now, and I ask the member to take into account my comments on the nature of the sub judice convention, which requires members to refrain from making reference in debate, motions and questions to matters before the courts where this would prejudice court proceedings.

Mrs HELEN DALTON: This will not.

The SPEAKER: However, this danger of prejudice needs to be considered against the public interest and freedom of debate in the House, which may outweigh potential prejudice. I note that the sub judice convention is more strictly applied in relation to criminal matters, particularly those that have proceeded to a charge and may come before a jury. I caution you to be mindful of any comments that may have the potential to prejudice any criminal proceedings.

Mrs HELEN DALTON: I am talking about gagging.

The SPEAKER: That is okay. I simply wanted to put that on the record.

Mrs HELEN DALTON: I feel like I am being gagged now.

The SPEAKER: The member is not being gagged. The Clerk has stopped the clock.

Mrs HELEN DALTON: No, I feel like it.

The SPEAKER: The member will not speak back to the Chair. I have asked the Clerk to stop the clock and given the member counsel. I am simply warning the member to be mindful of those things. I have consciously preserved the member's time. I ask the member to return the respect that I have shown her and to be mindful of not making any comments that might prejudice any action before the courts.

Mrs HELEN DALTON: It will not. As I said, friendlyjordies was about to release a documentary on The Nationals water corruption and illegal water use. Now, it is too busy fighting court battles to complete the project and expose the Government. Most politicians in this Chamber and in Canberra have remained silent about this shocking abuse of power, perhaps because they dislike the friendlyjordies and its style. What happened to Kristo in his family home was simply an extreme example of a creeping trend that should terrify us all. Our free speech is under threat. It is not only journalists or YouTube comedians who are silenced. In Australia today doctors and nurses are not allowed to express their views on health care; teachers are not allowed to speak about education; child protection workers are banned from expressing their views about child abuse; and elected councillors cannot talk about council matters. There are even cleaners who are forbidden to talk about cleanliness. This sad state of affairs has happened gradually and without much resistance.

First, government departments tell their employees not to speak to the media. Every comment must be vetted by the media team. We have seen that in the Brittany Higgins saga. The first policy to change in the wake of an alleged rape in Parliament House was to make talking to the media a sackable offence. That is where our priorities lie. But media gags are only the start. Government departments are now monitoring their employees' private social media pages. Bosses have sacked workers for writing their personal opinions in their own time. Corporations have started to copy government departments and have introduced their own gags. Over time those policies have become regulations and laws. As with Kristo's arrest, most people accept that is now the way of life. We have learnt to self-censor and to do what we are told. The only way to stop this is for all of us to speak up. It is easy to silence one but impossible to silence many. A powerful man cannot sue everyone and a police force cannot arrest a nation. It is time for those who believe in free speech to speak up, or we will be held down forever.

MUOGAMARRA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (19:39): I celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Muogamarra Rural Fire Brigade. For the past 70 years the brigade has served our

community with the utmost distinction. The brigade was established in 1951 within the Muogamarra Nature Reserve by the reserve's founder, John D. Tipper. The brigade was located there for more than 20 years until it relocated in 1976 to a basic two-bay station in Glendale Road. A kitchen and bathroom were added later. In 1991 the meeting room was constructed. The original fire station from the Muogamarra Reserve was relocated to Hornsby Heights, where it is now part of the Hornsby brigade's station, keeping the rich history of the brigade alive in our community. The campaigns the brigade has participated in over the years read like a roll call of courage: the Coonabarabran fires in 2006 and 2012, the Kurri Kurri fires in January 2017, and the Hawkesbury floods and the hailstorms of 2019 that devastated many parts of the Hornsby electorate. In August 2012 members boarded a goods train from Cowan railway station to extinguish a fire between the railway tunnels south of Brooklyn.

The volunteers have always been willing to answer the call to not only bushfires but also motor vehicle accidents, floods and storms. They have supported our local community, travelled interstate and to the farthest corners of New South Wales. They have saved lives, homes and infrastructure, for which I say an enormous thank you. During the horror of the 2019-20 fire season, the Muogamarra brigade fought fires in campaigns from the Gold Coast to the Victorian border. In a truly incredible effort, in that season alone they accumulated over 4,500 hours of service and travelled 14,000 kilometres. For decades they have protected the jewel of the north—the Muogamarra Nature Reserve—from wildfire. Thanks in part to their efforts, the old-man banksias and delicate native orchids survive and thrive while wedge-tailed eagles soar overhead. There seems no limit to the brigade's resourcefulness and courage. However, service can come at great cost. In 1991 Syd Greathead died on duty at a fire in Fiddletown. Today we mourn his loss and stand in solidarity with his family. We acknowledge that service in the RFS comes with risk to life and limb, and that family time is foregone and weekends are sacrificed.

Today I acknowledge every member of the Muogamarra Rural Fire Brigade and the families who support their amazing work. The brigade membership stands at 53, with 40 active members, following a large recruitment in 2020. The volunteers are led and supported by Captain Gordon Morgan, Senior Deputy Captain Gus Gulicher, deputy captains James Leitch, Sacha Price, Peter Rosee, Darren Irwin, Daryl Johnson, Jack Barnett, Anthea Roache, Bruce Wooldridge and Jack Stoner. I acknowledge the amazing service of Jack Barnett. For 60 years Jack has served not only the Muogamarra Rural Fire Brigade but also our community with distinction. It is an amazing achievement and an amazing example of dedicated community service. I continue the call for the members of the Muogamarra RFS to keep volunteering because we will need them in the future as much as we need them now. On behalf of every person in the Hornsby community I extend sincere and grateful thanks to the amazing volunteers of the Muogamarra Rural Fire Brigade for 70 years of outstanding service. They do so much for our community in Hornsby and for our State of New South Wales. Our community and our country are better because of their service.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAFARER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:43): I acknowledge international Day of the Seafarer, which will be celebrated on Friday 25 June. The international Day of the Seafarer recognises the crucial contribution that seafarers make to international trade and the world economy. I represent an electorate with a proud seafaring and maritime history. I also have family connections in the industry: my father, my brother, my uncles, my husband and most recently my daughter. International shipping transports more than 80 per cent of global trade to people and communities across the world. Shipping is an essential aspect of our economy. It provides the most efficient, cost-effective method of international transport for goods that we consume on a daily basis. Australia's economy and society relies heavily on our seafarers who transport more than 98 per cent of our nation's imports and exports.

The workforce is invaluable to the day-to-day running of our State and nation, and provides essential supplies such as food and medicine. It is important to note the importance of the shipping industry and of our seafarers to the Swansea and greater Newcastle region. Newcastle Harbour is Australia's oldest export port and the largest bulk shipping port on the east coast of Australia. It is visited by more than 2,200 trade vessels each year and exports products such as grain, vegetable oils, alumina, fertiliser, ore concentrates and, of course, coal. International Day of the Seafarer is an opportunity to acknowledge seafarers past and present.

Earlier this month I attended the Merchant Mariners Memorial service in Newcastle. This year the service honoured the US Army Small Ships Section under which many Australian merchant seafarers served during World War II. It was fantastic to see the leaders from Swansea High School attend and address the ceremony. I look forward to the annual Merchant Mariners Memorial ceremony, which is held every December at Norah Head to honour the service and sacrifice of our region's merchant mariners. The service has special significance as it recognises those seafarers who were lost when the *Iron Chieftain* was sunk by Japanese torpedoes off Norah Head. The ceremony always receives wonderful public support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on seafarers. Many have been stuck on board vessels around the world, unable to return to their families due to border closures and governments that have failed to repatriate them.

Our seafarers have played a crucial role in maintaining global trade during the pandemic and in ensuring that countries have access to essential supplies. I thank them for their hard work and sacrifice during the past year, and for helping to keep our communities safe. International Day of the Seafarer is the perfect opportunity to raise the concerns of many seafarers about the decline of Australia's merchant fleet. That is an issue many local seafarers have brought to my attention.

The decline of Australia's merchant fleet has not only seen the offshoring of New South Wales and Australian jobs but it has also undermined the self-sufficiency of our nation. With fewer and fewer ships flying the Australian red ensign, our supply chains are becoming more precarious as the majority of ships servicing Australia are foreign owned, crewed and flagged. We need a national approach to rebuilding Australia's merchant fleet. This international Day of the Seafarer I pay tribute to and thank the seafarers from the electorate of Swansea as well as those from around the State and across the country. They do a fantastic job and sacrifice time with their families to ensure our State continues to operate. In particular I thank the Maritime Union of Australia, its leader, Paddy Crumlin, and his team for their work.

NARRABRI HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:48): Tonight I will read part of a letter I received from Denis Harvey, a research agronomist, father, and proud and loyal Narrabri local, who is angry and experiencing despair. It reads:

My name is Denis Harvey and I am no-one important. My wife Carmel and I and our 4 children live at Narrabri in North Western NSW.

We are desperately trying to raise the awareness of the chronic teacher shortage that is affecting our local high school. We keep hitting brick wall after brick wall.

Narrabri High School has been operating with at least 5-6 teacher vacancies for many months now and the reality of this is that our kids now have to regularly endure "minimal supervision" lessons. This is where they are told to go into the quadrangle or school hall where a staff member just monitors them. No lessons are taught—nothing. They basically just sit there—for hours on end sometimes. A conservative estimate from teachers at the school is that this has occurred for 250 hours of lessons this term alone.

My daughter in year 7 is having up to 2-3 lessons a day where they simply are not being taught. I also have a son in year 10 and a daughter in year 11. In some cases the older classes are left unattended as they "can look after themselves".

The existing staff are at breaking point, they are good people. They barely have time to teach, which means they have even less time to deal with discipline issues so it is a race to the bottom and the whole system is collapsing in on itself.

I am trying not to sound too dramatic or exaggerate—but it is so hard to suppress this overwhelming feeling of hopelessness.

We just want to educate our children locally without having to send them away to boarding school and the NSW education department is currently not providing that.

Let us consider that: The NSW Department of Education is not providing kids in New South Wales with an education. That issue is not isolated to Narrabri, nor is it isolated to the city or the country. The entire State is afflicted by a teacher shortage crisis. In answers to questions in the other place, the education Minister blamed the recent walkouts by teachers from schools right across New South Wales, including in Gilgandra, Broken Hill, Gunnedah, Armidale, Orange, Taree and Concord, on the NSW Teachers Federation as it agitates ahead of negotiations for a new award. In my opinion that is an offensive dismissal of the teacher shortage that has been allowed to occur by successive governments.

This year marks a milestone in the Department of Education and the teaching profession in New South Wales, and it is not one that the department should be proud of: It is 17 years since the work of teachers was subject to an in-depth analysis. We did not have smartphones back then. Most classrooms still had chalkboards. Kids were given a floppy disk to save their work and every week there were lessons on using computers. The world has undergone a digital revolution and so has teaching. We are in a vastly different society and a vastly different teaching environment. In 17 years education policy has been chopped and changed and added to and amended so many times that to attempt to get your head around it is an education challenge of its own. All of those policy changes have come with increased requirements for teachers: more reporting, more paperwork, more planning and administrative burdens.

More and more things have been rammed into the curriculum. As it has been described by one person, "Schools have become the solvers of all society's ills with lessons on road safety, water safety, healthy eating, bushfire safety, anxiety, depression, bullying, sexuality, gender identity, pet safety and drug awareness in addition to the basic education fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics." Then add to that the scrutiny placed on teachers from the Department of Education, parents, various standards organisations and the court of public opinion. One teacher stated:

We are all about collecting data and evidence and ticking boxes. Our focus is on paperwork rather than the kids' educational needs. We spend an hour on paperwork for an hour lesson.

In 2020 the NSW Teachers Federation commissioned an independent inquiry into the state of the teaching profession in New South Wales known as the Gallop inquiry, which made six key recommendations to the Government. Those recommendations are conscious of budgetary implications, they are evidence based and, most importantly, they are supported by teaching staff—not departmental boffins who have never taught a day in their lives. My recommendation to the Government is read the Gallop inquiry and implement the recommendations. One thing should always ring true when talking about education: Our kids deserve a quality education. They deserve to be able to go to school and be taught by a suitably qualified teacher and attain an education that will set them up for life.

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (19:52): Late last month I was privileged to attend Australia's Biggest Morning Tea held by Momenta Advisors in Oran Park. The Cancer Council event raises vital funds for those impacted by cancer, which is a disease of the cells. Cells are the body's basic building blocks; they make up the tissues and organs. The body constantly makes new cells to help us grow, replace worn-out tissue and heal injuries. Normally cells multiply and die in an orderly way so that new cells can replace the lost cells. However, with cancer those cells become abnormal and keep growing. Abnormal cells can form a mass or a lump and can form as a build-up in the blood. One in two people in New South Wales will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85. Last year alone an estimated 49,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in New South Wales.

Cancer survival rates in New South Wales are now increasing. In the early 1980s the survival rate for cancer was less than 50 per cent. As of 2020, seven in 10 people will survive for at least five years after a cancer diagnosis. Cancer Council is the only charity that works across every area of cancer, from research to prevention and support. Running by the motto "We believe in a cancer-free future", it supports people affected by cancer when they need it most. It speaks out on cancer issues on behalf of the community, empowers people to reduce their cancer risk and finds better ways to detect and treat. I thank the community for its generosity and the Cancer Council for its selfless hard work; it has invested over \$62.9 million into research. Events such as Australia's Biggest Morning Tea help contribute to this donated money. It was a pleasure to attend Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. The well-organised emcee Max Garcia hosted the wonderful event.

We were delighted with the presence of the inspirational and talented speaker Vittoria Lazzaro, who has completed over 30 years of research into cancer. Vittoria and her partner, Achim, offer therapy in mental health and wellbeing for individuals, couples and groups who experience the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Vittoria and Achim believe healing the mind can assist with the recovery and wellbeing of individuals who experience cancer. Councillor Warren Morrison from Campbelltown City Council, chairman of the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur, was the next guest speaker. The 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur is an annual fundraising movement that exists to provide the units, wards and hospitals in the Macarthur community with the extra services and equipment they need. This adequately assists with the treatment, care and comfort of children and adults dealing with cancer.

Since 2005, \$4.6 million has been raised for the community. The overall goal was to raise \$1,000. However, the guests exceeded all expectations. The total raised from the raffle alone was \$2,924.50. I thank the Macarthur FC Bulls, which donated its inaugural 2021 jersey, signed by all the players. The jersey sold for \$1,000. The generosity and selfless acts of the guests and donors shows the supportive community in which we live in Camden. I was proud to represent the community at an event that means more than words to many. I thank Cancer Council for its work, dedication and passion to help prevent and research cancer. I again thank Momenta Advisors, Cakes by Em Scott, JLM Creations, emcee Max Garcia and our guest speakers for their donations and time, and the inspiration given to such a successful event.

CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:57): I once again talk about the plight of Canterbury Hospital. I acknowledge that I have spoken about the campaign and fight for the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital on many occasions, but I am not going to stop. I am going to continue speaking in this place. I am going to continue fighting and campaigning with my community to ensure that adequate funding is locked in by the Government. Yesterday my community waited and waited and the Government did not give one dollar to fund Canterbury Hospital. Given how much my community continues to campaign on this issue, members can imagine the disappointment and frustration when they learned that again their hospital will not receive a single cent. What will it take for the Government to provide the funding to upgrade Canterbury Hospital? The Minister, the Premier, the member for Oatley and my Labor colleagues all know that we need funding to upgrade Canterbury Hospital. Our population has increased. We have all of that overdevelopment and we are going to get more development in Campsie; I have asked Minister Stokes for a moratorium in relation to that because the sequencing of infrastructure has not happened.

The Treasurer said that the budget was a "budget with a heart". I suggest that the Treasurer take the budget to a cardiologist, because refusing to commit any funding for Canterbury Hospital is just heartless. It is absolutely outrageous that there is not a single cent for Canterbury Hospital. Enough is enough; my community has had enough. Today there were 13 additional COVID cases. Who knows what is going to happen tomorrow? Our community is waiting once again to see what will happen in the middle of this pandemic. My hospital—with its 900 staff, who work very hard—is going to be there on the community's side, speaking to them in 150 different languages, making sure that they get tested and vaccinated, and that the message gets out there. They are going to be overworked and overtired. They are going to work overtime without getting paid to do the right thing and make sure our community is safe.

I am calling on the Government to pull out its chequebook and add that line in the budget. I am calling on the Treasurer; it is not too late to add that funding into the budget. The budget is built on slamming the public—people in my community—with higher tolls, higher fees and higher charges. Life during the recession is hard enough without the Government making the cost of living even more unaffordable. Where does the money collected from my community in the form of tolls, fees and charges go? Certainly not to Canterbury Hospital. Time and time again, my community, the hardworking professionals at Canterbury Hospital, the unions, the medical staff council, the local community, the Friends of Canterbury Hospital and I have continued to demand redevelopment. Time and time again, those requests have fallen on deaf ears. I will not yield until my community gets the hospital it deserves and the staff at Canterbury Hospital get the working conditions they need.

I have spoken about Canterbury Hospital for many years, ever since I was elected as the member for Canterbury and it was my platform in the by-election—and again in 2019. I will continue to fight on behalf of my community because it should not be different to the communities of Mosman, North Sydney, Vaucluse or Mona Vale. Just like every other community, my community deserves an upgraded hospital. Our hospital has not been upgraded for 25 years. Our population has increased. We have all of that Maguire overdevelopment. I am sick of talking about the Maguire overdevelopment, but I want the Government—for the mistakes it has made and the green light for that overdevelopment—to once and for all provide additional funding to Canterbury Hospital. I will continue to fight until we get that funding.

BLUE DATTO FOUNDATION

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:02): I commend and thank Joe and Colleen Vassallo and the Vassallo family for their tireless work in educating over 25,000 students on the issue of road safety, and for raising awareness within communities about the importance of road safety, through their not-for-profit organisation, the Blue Datto Foundation. I extend my appreciation to the volunteers and ambassadors at Blue Datto and all individuals and organisations who have supported the Vassallo family and Blue Datto in their very important work. The Vassallo family launched the Blue Datto Foundation in 2015 following the passing of 17-year-old Philip Vassallo in a crash in which both drivers were on their provisional P1 licence. Philip was a much-loved teenager who brought happiness to everyone who knew him, and he was affectionately known as "the kid in the Blue Datto".

The Blue Datto Foundation has run in-class and online programs and modules. Its award-winning Keeping Safe road safety education program has equipped many young drivers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to keep themselves, their friends, their family and the wider community safe. It has also educated people through the Safe Yourself program, which is a series of interactive online modules that are intended to improve knowledge and assist in developing practical skills and strategies for an individual to protect themselves, their friends and the wider community.

The foundation also undertakes initiatives to raise community awareness and create conversations surrounding road safety. It has also assisted and offered support to individuals and families who have been impacted by road trauma. Blue Datto is supported by a number of high-profile ambassadors, including Christopher Brown, AM; Liz Ellis, AM; Mark Geyer; Boyd Cordner and Betty Klimenko. Philip would be very proud of what his family has accomplished in his honour. Blue Datto has received many awards in recognition of the important work it has done. It was recognised for outstanding achievement at the 2018 Australian Charity Awards, while its Keeping Safe program has won the Community Program category at the Australian Road Safety Awards, the Founder's Award for Outstanding Achievement and a School Category victory in 2017.

The Vassallo family have announced that, due to the ongoing pressures Blue Datto places on them, they have decided to no longer deliver in-class road safety programs as of 30 June this year. They will, however, continue to support individuals affected by road trauma and be available to share their personal story as guest speakers when requested at the many schools and community organisations they work with. I recognise the time and energy such a workload can take out of a family and the pressures it can bring, which is why the extent and quality of their work is even more remarkable. I once again thank the Vassallo family, the volunteers and ambassadors at Blue Datto and all individuals and organisations who have supported the Vassallo family and the

Blue Datto organisation in their very important work. The Hawkesbury community is extremely grateful for their contribution to the safety of our community and youth.

REGIONAL SENIORS TRAVEL CARD

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:06): Tonight I draw attention to this Government's blatant discrimination against older members of my electorate of Blue Mountains. Seniors living across our region have been unjustly excluded from the Regional Seniors Travel Card program, with no reasonable explanation from those opposite as to why this exclusion has taken place. According to them, Blue Mountains is considered a metropolitan area—apparently nothing quite says urban jungle like a collection of small towns and villages surrounded by endless bushland in the middle of a national park. Of course, the suggestion that the mountains is a metro area is completely laughable, and it would almost be funny if it were not for the dire impact this has on my constituents.

One of my constituents who has been affected by this discriminatory practice contacted me recently to share his story. At nearly 70 years of age, Allan from Katoomba is not as mobile as he once was, before his battle with cancer. Allan needs a new pair of glasses but, as an age pensioner, he simply cannot afford the prices quoted by opticians. Seeking help with this problem, Allan sensibly contacted Service NSW to find out more about the NSW Spectacles Program, under which he is eligible for a free pair of glasses every two years. However, it turns out that the Government has not bothered to partner with any opticians within the Blue Mountains local government area to offer this service; the closest Spectacles Program partners are found in either Lithgow or Penrith. As it is difficult for Allan to use public transport in his condition, he is left with no option other than to drive himself to the optician. However, again due to his financial position, he struggles to find the spare funds to fill the tank with enough petrol for the nearly two-hour round journey down the mountain.

This Government could choose to help Allan like it has done for seniors in Government electorates, but it refuses. Of course, Allan is not the only person suffering from the Coalition's neglect of my community; my office hears on an almost daily basis from other seniors across the electorate who are baffled by their exclusion from this program. Seniors in the Blue Mountains are angry with this Government over this nonsensical decision, and they are demanding answers. They want to know why, if they lived in built-up areas of the Central Coast, 80 kilometres from the Sydney CBD, they would be eligible for this card but Allan in Katoomba, over 100 kilometres from the CBD, is ineligible. Residents in the small village of Mount Victoria want to know why they are ineligible for this scheme yet residents of Little Hartley, barely three kilometres away, are eligible.

Residents of the rural settlement of Mount Wilson want to know why they, despite being over two hours from the centre of Sydney, with no transport links and not so much as a grocery store, are deemed to live in a metropolitan area, while residents of Queanbeyan, a town of 30,000 people just 10 minutes out of Canberra, are considered regional enough to qualify. The double standards and inconsistencies in the selection of different regions for the Regional Seniors Travel Card are outrageous. In particular, it is disingenuous to classify regions as being metropolitan when they do not enjoy metropolitan amenities or facilities. The whole purpose of this program is supposed to be assisting seniors living in areas where they would regularly need to travel further than their city-based counterparts to access essential services.

The reality is that Blue Mountains residents do not enjoy a metropolitan level of access to most kinds of facilities and do regularly have to travel, and this no more apparent in any sector than it is in health care. Under this Liberal-Nationals Government, our hospitals remain deeply under-resourced and underfunded. Local residents are regularly forced to travel to Lithgow or Penrith for treatments that should be available to them locally. While it would be good for the Berejiklian Government to do the right thing and properly resource our local health services in the first place, if it is not going to do that and instead choose to force people to travel it could at the very least cut our older residents a bit of slack and allow them to access the travel card scheme that it has set up to help people in these very situations. Given the lack of logic or sense to this decision, it seems to many of my constituents that this ongoing exclusion must be politically motivated.

They wonder whether our community is being punished for its failure to support the incumbent Government at recent elections and whether this is just another example of the blatant pork-barrelling that has consistently defined this Government's attitudes towards different parts of the State based on their voting patterns. Whatever the Government's motivations may be, it is clear that it has got this wrong. There is no justification for the arrogant and persistent determination it has shown to deny the seniors of my electorate access to this program. It is about time the Government put its obligations to the people of my community ahead of its own political self-interest.

WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:11): All Australians are affected by the shortage of affordable and available rental housing, but women—particularly those reliant on either part-time wages or salaries or parenting payment as single parents—may be more at risk than men. One of the main reasons is related to gender-based economic and financial inequality. On the whole, women earn less income than men. Women are more likely to take leave from the workforce due to caring responsibilities and return to paid employment on a part-time or casual basis. Some 75 per cent of part-time workers in Australia are women. Returning to the workforce after extended leave can also be difficult for women. One-third of women returning to the workforce after maternity leave believe they work for non-family-friendly organisations, resulting in double the likelihood of psychological distress.

Domestic and family violence plays a part in homelessness for women, who are more likely to be victims of domestic and family violence. Because of this threat to their safety, women and children are forced to make decisions to leave their homes. Over one-third of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical, psychological and sexual violence at the hands of a current or former partner. Domestic and family violence is the number one reason people present to specialist homelessness services, with 55 per cent of female clients and 25 per cent of all clients citing this reason. Vulnerable groups of women, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, have a cultural aspect to their homelessness that impacts on their ability to access homelessness services. The closeness and breadth of kinship groups can prevent women from accessing counselling and legal and medical support services, particularly in remote communities and regional locations.

Aboriginal women may also face discrimination in the housing market or may be unable to find housing that is appropriate to their needs due to higher birth rates and the need for more four- or five-bedroom homes, which are in short supply in both the social housing sector and the private rental market. Many issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can lead to homelessness, including factors relating to alcohol and substance abuse, living in remote communities and social stressors. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also 35 times more likely to be victims of family and domestic violence.

Older women may be forced out the workforce early, have insufficient superannuation or savings to fund the cost of living, face discrimination in the housing market, or experience the death of an income-earning spouse or poor health or serious illness. Women with disabilities are overrepresented in the main factors that increase the risk of homelessness, including the lack of affordable, secure housing; unemployment and inadequate income; and domestic and family violence. According to specialist homelessness services collection data, the proportion of female clients accessing services increases with remoteness, which affects women in rural and remote locations.

For both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in remote and rural areas, access to independent services can be limited due to their geographical isolation and the limited availability of resources in local areas. For women who are culturally and linguistically diverse, specialist homelessness services data indicates that the proportion of people born overseas who are supported by services is significantly lower than the proportion of people born overseas in the general population. There is an emerging group in the homelessness population, particularly in relation to domestic and family violence. From 2011-12 to 2019-20, the increase in the rate of specialist homelessness services clients was higher for female clients—on average 1.2 per cent per year—than male clients, which is 0.7 per cent.

The overall rate for female clients increased from around 124.4 clients per 10,000 population in 2011-12 to 136.6 thereafter. The percentage of females presenting to specialist homelessness services for help form a client interest group that is overrepresented in all categories by women and girls: in family and domestic violence, 77 per cent are female; in current mental health, 61 per cent; in Indigenous Australians, 61 per cent; in young people presenting alone, 63 per cent; in older people aged 55 and over, 55 per cent; and in children under the age of 18 under a care or protection order, 51 per cent. I urge the Government to look at this issue more seriously. I know there was some money allocated in the budget for it, but so much more must be done.

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Membership

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council advising that the Hon. Sam Faraway has been discharged from the Legislation Review Committee and the Hon. Wes Fang has been appointed as a member of that committee.

The House adjourned pursuant to resolution at 20:18 until Thursday 24 June 2021 at 9:30.