



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

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

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

[*Notices of motions given*]

## *Motions*

### **YOUTUBE LIVE STREAMING**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I move:

That this House authorises the live streaming on the New South Wales Parliament YouTube channel of the Leader of the Opposition's speech on the Appropriation Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2021.

**Motion agreed to.**

## *Members*

### **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** On behalf of Mr Dominic Perrottet: I inform the House that on 8 October 2021 the following 19 members were appointed as parliamentary secretaries:

Mr Stephen Bruce Bromhead, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Housing

Mr Kevin Francis Conolly, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Education

Ms Stephanie Anne Cooke, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health

Mr Adam Sibery Crouch, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast

The Hon. Scott Glynn Farlow, MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and for COVID Recovery

The Hon. Samuel Jacob Farraway, MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier and for Water  
Infrastructure

The Hon. Benjamin Cameron Franklin, MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary for Energy and the Arts

Ms Melanie Rhonda Gibbons, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and for Families,  
Disability and Emergency Services

Mr James Henry Griffin, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Veterans

Mr Christopher Gulaptis, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC  
Cabinet Secretary

The Hon. Maxwell Shayne Mallard, MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and the Aerotropolis

The Hon. Taylor Mitchell Martin, MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and Cost of Living

Ms Eleni Marie Petinos, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads

Mr Geoffrey Keith Provest, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Tourism and Hospitality

Mr Mark Owen Taylor, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Justice

The Hon. Gabrielle Cecelia Upton, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier

Mr Raymond Craig Williams, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Western Sydney

Ms Felicity Lesley Wilson, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment

*Bills*

**COASTAL MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Shelley Hancock, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (09:33):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Coastal Management Amendment Bill 2021 will provide local councils additional time to implement actions in their existing Coastal Zone Management Plans [CZMPs] that deliver the Government's commitment to better manage the coastal environment for the wellbeing of the people of New South Wales. When the Coastal Management Act was originally introduced in 2016, it was an important part of the Government's coastal management reforms. It established a simpler, more contemporary legislative framework for the management of the coast. The Act is helping us to resolve some of the more complex, longstanding issues and to manage the unique environmental, social and economic values of the coast in a planned and strategic way, and, importantly, to provide better support for local councils.

Local governments across the State have been dealt a tough blow over the past two years with bushfires, floods—and let us not forget the impact of COVID-19. With these challenges councils across the State have been supporting their communities. As a result, for coastal councils unfortunately, programs such as implementing and transitioning to a Coastal Management Program have taken a back seat as more urgent decisions for their community's wellbeing had to be made. When the Coastal Management Act was introduced to Parliament in 2016 it contained important transitional provisions that aimed to provide councils the opportunity to continue to implement their existing CZMPs under the former Coastal Protection Act 1979 whilst they prepared their Coastal Management Programs [CMPs] under the new arrangements and Act.

Under the provisions currently in the Act, existing CZMPs will cease to have effect on 31 December 2021—not too far away. Most councils are progressing with the preparation of their CMPs. However, the majority are unlikely to be ready to replace their existing CZMPs with a certified CMP by 31 December 2021. Not having a certified CZMP or CMP in place is particularly problematic for councils in times of emergency. In this case emergency works will not be considered exempt activities and will require more complex development approvals. This situation, of course, is causing concern for many councils on the coast, which have made representations to me seeking extension to CZMPs so they can continue to implement agreed actions. Implications of the CZMPs are stopping on 31 December 2021. When they cease to have effect, there will be varying implications in relation to eligibility for councils to seek grant funding to implement actions and works in CZMPs and to planning assessment pathways where certain coastal protection and emergency works under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the Coastal Management Act 2016 and the State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018 occur.

It is fair to say that our coastal communities are reliant on their local councils now more than ever to work with them to manage the coast effectively for current and future generations. Local managers of the coast councils are continuing to play a critical role as they help manage our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the recovery from multiple natural disasters, such as devastating bushfires, drought, coastal erosion and floods, and at the same time drive new economic activity. As a result of all of these recent challenges facing councils, making the 31 December 2021 deadline to implement actions in CZMPs while preparing their new CMPs is proving difficult for some. The bill is essential, providing the well-needed breathing room for councils. If CZMPs cease to have effect on 31 December 2021, approximately 35 councils, including 16 in regional New South Wales, may become ineligible to apply for grant funding under the Government's Coastal and Estuary Grant Program.

The bill provides a two-year extension for CZMPs until 31 December 2023. This will enable councils to continue to implement actions in their CZMP with grant funding support from the Government bolstering local economic activity. Importantly, it also means that councils will be able to continue to implement their planned response to coastal erosion emergencies. The aim of this extension is not for councils to defer on preparing their Coastal Management Programs. Instead, it is to encourage them to maintain the good progress made to date and

to have further opportunities to access grants that can help them better manage the coast for the benefit of their local community.

This bill features amendments to enable local councils to continue implementing actions in their Coastal Zone Management Plans for a further two years until 31 December 2023. The bill provides for many councils to continue to be eligible to apply for funding assistance under the Coastal and Estuary Grants Program, which is managed by the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [DPIE]—Environment, Energy and Science. It will also enable councils to continue to respond to coastal erosion events in a planned and coordinated way. Most importantly, this bill recognises the enormous pressure that local councils have been under responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovering from multiple natural disasters while still maintaining the local economy and environment.

Our coastal environment is precious and councils continue to work hard to protect their waterways, monitor water quality and assess coastal erosion in many areas. The Government also continues to support our coastal councils with these huge responsibilities. It is providing \$83.6 million towards coastal management. This includes \$72.7 million in grants and support to local councils to complete and implement coastal management programs and restore bushfire-affected coastal waterways. The Government's response to a review of the Coastal and Estuary Grants Program resulted in a considerable increase in the number of applications to implementation streams in the 2020-21 funding round.

The program received 49 applications requesting \$21.4 million. Since 2016, 217 new grants totalling \$43.14 million have been awarded to local government under the Coastal Estuary Grants Program. One hundred and two grants, totalling around \$10.8 million, have been awarded under the planning stream. Ninety eight grants, totalling around \$27.34 million, have been awarded under the implementation streams. Seven grants, totalling \$5 million, have been awarded under the Bushfire Affected Coastal Waterways Program. An additional \$7.3 million has been provided to existing grants awarded prior to 2016. This Government continues to assist local councils by providing them with technical advice and some of the difficulties to which I referred in my earlier comments on the bill were related in many ways to that lack of technical expertise within some of our coastal councils. The State Government and the Coastal Management Team, under my jurisdiction, continue to help those councils come to a resolution in their coastal management programs.

This Government is assisting and continuing to assist coastal councils and is working with them. I am confident that the applications that have come to me—I have a whole stream of applications and letters asking for an extension to these programs and time to implement them—have not come as a result of a lack of work or effort on the part of those councils. Things have simply frustrated their attempts to complete these programs. This was laid down in legislation. Even though the legislation was passed in this Parliament in 2016, it was not gazetted until 2018. Originally, all councils believed they had five years to complete these programs but, as a result of the later gazettal of the legislation, they had only 2½ years in which to prepare them.

Changes to the Coastal and Estuary Grants Program, following the program's review, resulted in a considerable increase in the number of applications to implementation streams in the 2020-21 funding round. I have already referred to the number of applications that have been received. In many cases councils were not applying for grant funds because at that stage there was a 50:50 funding arrangement between the State Government and councils. Many councils were simply not in a position to apply for a grant because they did not have 50 per cent of the funding available for some of the serious remediation works that were required. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL 2021**  
**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2021**

**Second Reading Debate**

**The SPEAKER:** I remind all members to extend the usual courtesy to the Leader of the Opposition for the budget reply speech to be delivered uninterrupted.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (09:44):** For so many of us this is a good week—the first week of reopening, family members finally able to see one another, businesses reopening, and people back at work. We hope we have been through the worst of the year. Kids are going back to school, cousins can visit and business owners have some hope. Through the worst of winters in 2021 we have seen the best of New South Wales. To every health worker, paramedic, nurse, doctor, hospital cleaner, right up to Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant—and, yes, the former Premier of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian—thank you so much. To every frontline worker: We will not forget what they have been through this year. They have stuck together, they are sticking it

out and they are getting us through the pandemic. But I know that for so many people, in my community and across the State, it is not like that. For the families of those who took their last breath, I pay tribute to all those who have suffered such sad loss since this Parliament last met in June. I am so sorry. I want them to know that we are all thinking of them.

People across our State—in Sydney, the Illawarra, the Hunter, Central Coast, northern New South Wales and the South Coast—have done it incredibly tough. The health crisis that has gripped Wilcannia and western New South Wales is particularly devastating. We know the human toll of disease. We know the economic cost of lockdown. The impact of the Delta outbreak in our State is very raw and it is very real. The people of the west and the south-west of Sydney had the harshest lockdown of any place in Australia at any time during the pandemic. The numbers are absolutely stark. It is bad that job advertisements close to the city are down by 25 to 30 per cent. But it is a disaster that job advertisements are down over 60 per cent in parts of the west and the south-west.

It is wonderful that in parts of Sydney businesses have seen increases in trade over this period but it is a catastrophe that small businesses have suffered trade losses of up to 70 per cent in parts of the west and the south-west. In those parts of our city over 30 per cent of businesses are receiving support via government grants or JobSaver, which is double the rate of some other regions. Nearly 18 per cent of jobs were lost since the start of the lockdown in parts of the south-west—in areas where 20 per cent of adults are on disaster support payments. That more than doubles the rate in other parts of Sydney. Think about Fairfield. As well as people on disaster payments, one in seven people are on JobSeeker—the highest number in the State. No-one can make the case that the devastating effects of this outbreak have been felt evenly. The Government must help our State rebuild. The Premier must plan to bring our city back together. I want to live in one Sydney, not two. Our people want to live together and not be pulled apart. No-one in the State has been spared but the people of western and south-western Sydney have paid the highest price.

Three things should be done as part of this budget: Extend COVID economic support as the jobs crisis is not over, extend the payroll tax reduction as the business crisis is not over, and we need a big build in social housing and schools. Let us bring back jobs, get more people into homes and our kids back learning in classrooms that are fit for the future. Nothing about our current situation is easy. Sydney is a global city. At a time of global pandemic New South Wales is a tourism mecca—a world leader in international education and the heart of the nation's logistics chain. Tourism businesses across the north and the South Coast have been devastated. Industries in the Hunter, Central Coast, and the Illawarra have ground to a halt. Our international student markets have been gutted and international events have completely disappeared.

Regional New South Wales, after years of drought, bushfires and floods, now faces a pandemic with a chronically under-resourced rural and regional health system. Our community groups, not-for-profits and local council workers all did an incredible job. This year this State needs a budget blueprint for a decade of inclusive growth. This week this State needs a positive plan for the time after outbreaks and lockdowns. That is not the budget we got from Treasurer Dominic Perrottet almost four months ago and it is not the plan we have heard from the new Premier in the past eight days. I do not blame the Government for the fact that COVID hurt our economy, but I do want the Government to have a plan to get our economy back to normal and to be even better than it was before the pandemic. And be very clear: We are not back to normal until we are all back to normal.

I believe our State is truly at a tipping point. For all our disagreements, I never doubted Gladys Berejiklian's dedication to New South Wales during this time of crisis, or her work in the service of it. But now, in the most uncertain of times, and in the most extraordinary of circumstances, we have a new Premier—another new Premier—now the fourth Premier under this O'Farrell, Baird, Berejiklian and now Perrottet Government. The new Premier has been tasked with a huge challenge: rebuilding the economy and stopping the division of our State—the two Sydneys, the two States. The early signs are worrying.

It brings me to the new Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, a politician who demanded that two million people be subject to curfews, worker permits, enhanced restrictions and all of the resulting economic heartache that followed while excluding his own electorate, even though other areas of concern had lower case numbers. What would you expect that politician to say three days after these divisive restrictions were lifted following 16 weeks of harsh lockdown for two million people? He would utter those hollow words, "We're all in this together". We heard it in question time yesterday. Isn't it funny? After 16 weeks of heartache with not a word being uttered, but now that two million people are released he would say with a straight face, again in question time:

I have heard from those opposite the concept of division and the propagating of a tale of two cities. I have not seen that once.

Two million people yelled it at the Government every day for 15 weeks straight. It was constantly in the news, on television, on the front pages of every newspaper, in every home that was subject to a curfew, in every park with a low-flying helicopter and in every business that saw their turnover smashed to pieces. The only possible way

that you would not know what the people of this city were saying is if that person was not listening. The people of New South Wales have a Government that will not listen, with a new Premier whose record the people of this State should be very concerned about. I suspect that the taxpayers will be more concerned about his shocking record on tolls, taxes, fines and charges than about the Perrottet collection of Trump hats and toy nuclear power stations.

Every time you pay a toll, send your kids to an overcrowded school, are stuck in traffic, or find the cost of living just that little bit hard, that is the record of the former Treasurer and the new Premier. But what New South Wales people really need to know about him is what he has done as their Treasurer. Let me introduce you to the budget that was introduced four months ago: fines go up a staggering \$3.5 billion over four years; tolls go up—Sydney motorists now pay \$2.3 billion a year in tolls—the blatant revenue-raising from low-range speed cameras rolls on; housing affordability gets worse in both Sydney and regional markets; and stamp duty increases by 65 per cent in just two years. What is more, debt is forecast to be \$104 billion by 2025—or a whopping 13.7 per cent of gross State product.

The people of New South Wales are pretty realistic. They do not expect a State Government to solve every problem in life, but that does not mean they do not want hope. Even in complicated times, the test of a good State budget is pretty simple in the end: Make lives a little easier; reward those who work hard; make sure education standards do not fall; do not unnecessarily increase taxes and tolls; help the State rebuild day by day; and bring people together. We actually want the Government to get that right so here are a few things the new Premier could do to see our great State get ahead. This is what should be in the plan this week: First, extend COVID economic support—the jobs crisis is not over. When the Prime Minister decided to cut our business support earlier the New South Wales Treasurer should have publicly stood him up—State before party. The Federal and State governments decided to withdraw support before businesses had a chance to recover from forced closures and restrictions. We need to understand just how big the impact is on business.

Western Sydney businesses have just been hit by a massive reduction in the business support from the levels they have relied on to survive and they will get nothing at all from 1 December—on the first day that businesses can operate with reduced restrictions of one person per two square metres. After months of lockdown it is not as simple as opening the front door and turning on the lights for tens of thousands of businesses across this State. Business relies on ongoing support to cover debts and to support cash flow during reopening. Our businesses have taken huge financial hits because they personally followed the health advice of the New South Wales Government. They have done the right thing and we must back them in. Nobody expects support payments indefinitely, but cutting too quickly will have serious consequences. We should be talking about economic support packages to kickstart the economy again, not winding them back. The Government should fundamentally change the way to support business. It should not be based on vaccination rates. It should be after business has recovered, trade has recovered and people are back in jobs.

Next, extend the payroll tax reduction. The jobs crisis is not over and the business crisis is not over, either. We welcome the modest plan the Government announced some time ago of cutting the benchmark tax rate from 5.45 per cent to 4.85 per cent for all payroll tax paying businesses this financial year and last financial year. It was the right thing to do and we supported it. But from 1 July 2022 the rate will revert to 5.45 per cent. It is too much too soon. The Government should extend the payroll tax rate reduction for another year at least to help with recovery and support business growth. Right now, businesses are making hiring decisions for next year. They need to know that this payroll tax reduction will not disappear in eight months' time. The people who they will hire need to know those opportunities will still exist in eight months' time. This would be a billion-dollar boost so that business can rebuild and rehire when they need it most.

Next, it is time for a big build in social housing and schools—bringing back jobs, getting young people into their homes, and our kids learning in classrooms fit for the future. If we learnt two things this winter they are that homes matter and classrooms really matter. In so many ways the core of a good life for a working family is a good home and a good school. We know this in our own lives; we certainly learnt it this year like never before. That is why I want the Government to fast-track its urgent social housing repair and maintenance work to bring forward long-planned school building projects. It is one of the most practical things a State Government can do to help people put their lives back together after COVID. And the policy case is absolutely compelling: We should go big and fast and do this at scale. In June 2020, 51,395 people were on the social housing wait list and 1.4 million people were experiencing housing stress in the State. During lockdown that has only got worse as maintenance works slowed even further.

Each \$1 million investment can generate nine jobs, and around \$2.9 million of industry output and consumption across the economy. We especially want construction firms and tradies in western Sydney who were shut out of the industry through restrictions to have a chance to win back some of that work and we want local material suppliers to get the contracts. According to industry, the social housing repair and maintenance backlog

is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A significant proportion of New South Wales' social housing was built before 1970. A huge number of homes are no longer fit for purpose to meet the needs of older Australians who live in them today. So many homes were built for young workers in the 1960s, not retirees in the 2020s, and many homes were absolutely not built for climate change. More than half of our social housing is draughty in winter, impossible to cool in summer, and exposed to unhealthy heat and cold extremes. They are just not safe to live in now that climate change is moving so fast. We can cut carbon emissions and costs by reaching modern energy efficient standards. Let's make social housing a big part of our clean energy future.

The big build should be for schools as well. Three elections in a row, the Coalition has driven over to the west and south-west, promised new schools and upgraded schools, went home, gone missing and four years later has come back just to re-announce them. It is just not good enough. If I ran through the list of school communities left behind, it would sound like a street directory, not a budget reply speech. Dozens of Sydney suburbs have waited while whole class groups have gone through schools from K-6 or from 7-12 without promised projects being delivered and promised schools being opened. It is a shambles and it is time to fix it. The Government should start today with four key projects in the four education communities hit the hardest this year by school closures. These are long-planned, long-promised projects that are not just shovel ready, but shovel overdue. They are schools such as the primary school in Tallawong, the high school in Marsden Park, the K-12 school in Rydalmere, and the primary school in Gregory Hills. They were all promised but have still not been delivered. They are growing communities that urgently need dozens of classrooms, libraries and playgrounds. Tens of millions of dollars should be at work there, with all the economic boost that would bring.

Mr Speaker, that is a plan to rebuild the State's economy, to bring our city back together, to grow jobs and heal the divide in this town. I want the Government to think about something that has troubled me a lot through this winter; it was not just a lost winter of trading, for a lot of kids it was a lost year of learning as well. Every parent feels the anxiety of "Did I do enough?" and "Did we get it right?" Schools across Sydney have been closed for months with the west and south-west seeing the highest demand for computers and internet dongles, especially in the Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Campbelltown and Liverpool local government areas. We should all be really concerned about what the long-term effect for our kids will be and we should be working really hard right now to help them catch up on the time they lost.

It has to start with a special focus on the places hardest hit by the lockdowns. The Government should extend the COVID intensive learning support program into 2022. The program provides small group tuition to help students catch up after disrupted learning in 2020. Every teacher and parent—or anyone with common sense—can see that this year's disruption has been far more significant than last year's. The Government should fast-track additional school counsellors in New South Wales schools to support children's mental health. Mental health issues affect one in seven young people; yet the Government has still not delivered enough school counsellors. We must have one counsellor for every 500 kids, just like the experts say. We are currently a long way from that. It is presently one counsellor for every 709 students. It will take some time. I could not bear it if our kids are still catching up on 2021 when they are finishing school in five or even 10 years' time. My fear is a form of long-COVID for our education system, and together we cannot let that happen.

Budgets are about priorities and hard choices, especially when facing record debt—and that was before the Delta outbreak. This Liberal Government is pushing their \$10 billion northern beaches tunnel, even though the business case barely stacks up. Once again the priorities here are all wrong. Over the next two decades Parramatta's population is set to increase by 204,000, Camden's by 227,000, Liverpool's by 229,000 and Blacktown's by 264,000. The northern beaches will grow by just 31,000 and Mosman by just 1,000 people over the same period. That is why last weekend I announced that a New South Wales Labor Government would not approve this toll road. Our priority is building infrastructure where Sydney is growing. It was interesting to hear the new Premier say yesterday that the Coalition will "not play the politics of envy", as if everyone in the west is poor and everyone in the east is rich. It is a fundamental misunderstanding about the State that he leads. The problem is that the Liberals have played the politics of geography their entire decade in power and the two million people who live in western Sydney are sick to death of it.

Instead of another expensive toll road for the northern beaches, Labor will spend funds straight into western Sydney for much-needed public transport infrastructure. We will fund projects that open up economic opportunity and jobs for the people of the west. I hope the Government will accept the challenge to: Keep economic support flowing until businesses and families are back on their feet, extend the payroll tax holiday, supercharge jobs with a big build and get alongside our kids so they can recover from one of the worst years of their young lives. We honestly believe that if we do these things it will make a difference. The need is really clear, the case is compelling and the opportunity is really big. The 2023 election in 18 months will be a contest about the future—an argument about what kind of future we build after the pandemic is over. I have said since the day I took the job that I will lead New South Wales with a positive, alternative vision for the State and realistic, long-term thinking with practical ideas to solve problems. We will reach out to the suburbs, the regions and the towns of New South Wales

with optimism and hope. We will work together for every citizen of this State with new energy and new ideas. A better New South Wales is possible. Let us work together to achieve that outcome.

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge that other members are virtually attending this Chamber and I recognise their presence for the Leader of the Opposition's reply to the Budget Speech.

## **WATER INDUSTRY COMPETITION AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Melinda Pavey, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (10:05):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Water Industry Competition Amendment Bill 2021. The Water Industry Competition Act, known as the WIC Act, was enacted in 2006 to introduce innovation and competition into the water market and encourage water recycling. The Act established a licensing regime to allow private companies to provide water, recycled water and sewerage services while also ensuring that public health, consumers and the environment continue to be protected. There are now over a dozen private operators in New South Wales, recycling up to 5,000 million litres a year across 22 schemes. These schemes include innovative water recycling schemes servicing developments like Barangaroo and Central Park, which are reducing the demand on our precious drinking water while increasing our green space.

Although still a fledgling industry, these schemes are important for the innovation and competition they bring to the market. Developers and others now often have a choice in water and sewerage servicing between a private or public water utility. Their role is recognised in the NSW Water Strategy and the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy, especially in facilitating the uptake of more water recycling. The reforms contained in the bill are designed to strengthen the regulatory framework for private utilities in light of the experience of the past 15 years. The reforms will ensure the framework is fit for purpose as the sector continues to grow, while also reducing costs and delays in the licensing process so that private utilities are in a better position to boost water recycling and urban greening, and help accelerate new housing supply.

Implementing these reforms will provide certainty and reduce red tape for industry and increase protection for customers. I acknowledge that these reforms have been a long time coming. But the Government believes it is better to take the time to get things right, particularly with matters as important and complex as the regulation of utilities providing essential services like water and sewerage. In 2014, following a comprehensive review, the Government enacted major reforms to the WIC Act. However, the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Act 2014 has not commenced operation due to concerns about the complexity and practicality of some of its provisions.

Since that time my department has been working with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]—the regulator under the WIC Act—to simplify that regulatory framework while retaining its benefits. That work has resulted in the amending bill before us, which repeals and replaces the 2014 Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Act. Most of the provisions in the bill were debated and passed by Parliament in 2014. Although there are important changes to the design of the regulatory framework to make it work better, the policy objectives have not changed substantially from 2014. The major change from 2014 is that the licensing system will require every scheme to have a registered operator and in some cases a registered retailer who is responsible for ensuring that the scheme complies with the Act, the regulations and the scheme's approvals.

The other changes from the 2014 amendment Act are an increase in investigative powers and penalties under the Act, additional considerations for IPART when assessing applications for scheme approvals, and modifications to the cost recovery options following a last-resort event. The opportunity has also been taken to redraft the bill in plain English and fix drafting anomalies. Targeted consultation on the draft bill was undertaken with key stakeholders last year to ensure that the revised framework is practical and workable. A number of changes have been made to the bill in response to comments and submissions received from stakeholders. I thank the private water industry and other stakeholders for their engagement in this process.

I now turn to the content of the bill. The bill addresses the lack of an objects clause in the current Act by introducing an objects clause at new section 2A. Based on the licensing principles in the current Act, the new clause includes as key objects the protection of public health and safety, the environment and the interests of consumers, including in the longer term. The explicit reference to longer-term considerations is important as experience in other markets has shown that short-term approaches can result in inefficient costs in the longer term, which have adverse impacts for consumers, the broader community and the environment. The objects also include

the facilitation of competition with a view to encouraging innovation and improved efficiency, and the provision of efficient, reliable and sustainable water and sewerage services, having regard to financial, environmental and social considerations. The triple bottom line approach is vital given the nature of the water industry and its potential for significant public health, environmental and social impacts.

The bill seeks to complement rather than duplicate other frameworks such as the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. A key change made by the bill is to narrow the scope of the Act's licensing regime. Under the current regime, a licence is required to construct, operate or maintain "any water industry infrastructure" unless an exemption applies. The result is a licensing regime that is too far-reaching. It entails costly requirements, including for small-scale, low-risk schemes. Such schemes are often governed by other frameworks, such as the Work Health and Safety Act, and do not warrant additional oversight under the WIC Act.

The bill narrows the current licensing regime by clearly articulating the kinds of schemes that are to be regulated under the Act rather than casting a wide net and relying on exemptions to narrow its reach. The current Act's one-size-fits-all approach imposes high costs, and stakeholders tell us these are acting as an unwarranted barrier to developing lower risk schemes. The Government wants to remove unwarranted barriers and has adopted a risk-based approach to refocus the scope of the Act. Consistent with this, the bill focuses on those schemes involving the greatest risks for public health and safety and leaves other more appropriate frameworks to regulate lower-risk schemes.

New section 5 sets out three kinds of schemes that will require approvals and licences under the Act. The first category is schemes providing water or sewerage services to 30 or more small retail customer premises, by which we mean residential premises and small business premises. The focus of this category is on the customers and the essential nature of the services provided to them. Our objective is to protect the interests of small customers and to ensure services that are vital to public health meet appropriate standards. This is particularly important given that water and sewerage infrastructure has strong natural monopoly characteristics. For example, only one set of sewerage pipes connects each home to the sewerage network and you cannot switch provider if you are not satisfied with the physical service provided. Schemes in this category will require approval and must be operated by a licensed operator. This category of scheme will also be required to have a licensed retailer.

The threshold of 30 or more small retail customer premises has been chosen with a view to balancing the costs and benefits of being regulated under the WIC Act. We can reasonably expect the costs of regulation to be passed on to customers and so we need to ensure that those costs are warranted, having regard to the resulting benefits. Requiring licences for all such schemes regardless of size would impose unjustifiable costs on customers and make the regulatory task unmanageable. A balance has to be struck, and stakeholders have been supportive of the approach adopted in the bill. Smaller schemes that do not trigger the 30-customer threshold will not be left unregulated. Sewerage systems will be subject to approval by councils under section 68 of the Local Government Act, and the requirements of the Public Health Act will apply to reticulated drinking water systems and drinking water suppliers.

The second category that will be regulated under the Act is large drinking water facilities, such as a water filtration or desalination plant, with a capacity to produce more than 500 kilolitres per day. This category is designed as a fallback to catch any drinking water facilities that do not form part of a scheme servicing 30 or more small retail customers. Such schemes will require approval and will be operated by a licensed operator. These requirements are designed to ensure that the infrastructure complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and that the operator is competent to operate it. However, no retail licence will be required as there will be no direct relationship with small customers. The Sydney Desalination Plant, which is currently licensed under the WIC Act, is an example of the sort of facility that will be regulated under this category.

The third category of scheme to be regulated under the Act is large sewage, stormwater or recycled water treatment facilities—those with a design capacity of more than 750 kilolitres per day. Again, the intention is to catch any facilities that do not form part of a scheme servicing 30 or more retail customer premises. As with drinking water facilities, such facilities will require approval and must be operated by a licensed operator, but no retail licence will be required as there will be no direct relationship with small retail customers. The 750 kilolitres per day threshold has been selected to align with the environment protection licence threshold in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, or POEO Act. As I mentioned earlier, the amendments made by this bill seek to complement rather than duplicate other regulatory frameworks. While environment protection licences focus on pollution prevention and monitoring, WIC approvals and licences will focus on ensuring that infrastructure designs comply with industry and public health standards, that assets are maintained over time, that private operators are competent and that small customers are protected.

The bill also addresses a regulatory gap by providing new sewage, water recycling and stormwater harvesting schemes run by metropolitan councils under the WIC Act framework. Currently, such schemes are not regulated. The regulations will specify which new schemes proposed by metropolitan councils will be captured.

The regulation will focus on stormwater harvesting and other sewage or water recycling schemes that warrant regulatory oversight to protect public health and safety. Duplication with other regulatory frameworks will be avoided. For example, the regulation will not deal with schemes involving only occupational risks because such schemes are already covered by work health and safety requirements. The Government is mindful of the need to keep regulatory costs down, particularly in relation to stormwater irrigation schemes that reduce pressure on rain-fed supplies and improve urban amenity. The department will be consulting metropolitan councils on the contents of the supporting regulation early in the new year.

I note that the member for Hawkesbury, Robyn Preston, has been in conversations with my office and me seeking important information for councils that she represents, such as Hawkesbury City Council. The bill will address an historical anomaly whereby the sewerage system operated by Hawkesbury City Council is not regulated under the Local Government Act 1993 along with other local water utilities. This is due to the fact that the system is located within Sydney Water's area of operations and division 2 of part 3 of the Local Government Act, which regulates local water utilities, does not apply within Sydney Water's area of operations. Hawkesbury City Council has been voluntarily complying with the relevant requirements of the Local Government Act but the bill will formalise this arrangement and bring council's sewerage under division 2 of part 3 of the Act. Hawkesbury City Council is supportive of this change. I thank council members for their professionalism and cooperation.

One of the bill's most important reforms is separating the licensing of operators and retailers from the approval of individual schemes. Similar to the way driver licences and car registrations operate, licensing will focus on the suitability and capacity of operators and retailers to construct and operate schemes, while approvals will focus on the design of an individual scheme's infrastructure and its financial viability. Licences will continue to be granted by the Minister but will authorise a licensee to operate anywhere in New South Wales. This means that licensees will no longer need to apply for a new licence each time they wish to build or operate or retail a new scheme, which will save time and money for both business and regulators. Currently, a WIC operator has to apply for a new licence for every scheme they build and operate. This means they have to go through the same tests of competence and capacity every time they want to operate a new scheme. Using the driver licence analogy, this is like forcing a driver to obtain a new licence every time they want to drive a different car. This change will also enhance competition by allowing a scheme owner to change their operator or retailer if they are not satisfied with the operator's or retailer's performance.

The bill also includes a new test of the suitability of corporations seeking a licence. This will ensure that licences are only granted to appropriate entities and brings the WIC Act into line with similar legislation, such as the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. The bill requires consideration of whether a company or any of its directors has committed an offence relating to the water industry, public health, environment protection, development control or consumer protection. This is in addition to the existing requirement that applicants have the technical, financial and organisational capacity to undertake the proposed activities. It is in the interests of all parties that companies entering the water market are reliable and robust and willing to make the ongoing investments needed to maintain their assets and comply with all applicable standards. Most importantly for consumers, the need to protect public health and maintain essential services underscores the importance of only granting licences to suitable corporations.

The approval of individual schemes by IPART will ensure that scheme infrastructure is appropriately designed, constructed at the outset and maintained over the life of the scheme. Every new scheme will need a scheme approval before it can be built. Once it is built, it will need an operational approval before it can commence operation to check that the scheme has been built in accordance with the original scheme approval, is fit for purpose and safe. The scheme approval is designed to ensure that schemes are well conceived from the outset, and that the proposed design will meet national standards for drinking water and recycled water. It will reduce the risk of finding out after a scheme is built that it is unable to meet standards such as those for water quality or water pressure and then having to undertake costly reworking to fix. Most importantly, IPART must assess the financial viability of a scheme to make sure it stacks up. This will minimise the likelihood that a scheme will have an adverse financial impact on its customers or fail financially and cause a last-resort event. New section 7C sets out the range of matters of which IPART must be satisfied before it can grant a scheme approval.

The key change to the reforms passed by Parliament in 2014 is the requirement for every scheme before it can be approved to have a registered operator and in some cases a registered retailer. This registered operator and registered retailer must hold an appropriate licence and will be responsible for ensuring that a scheme complies with all the conditions of its approval. IPART will maintain a public register of licences and schemes, identifying the registered operator or retailer and other details of each scheme. This change greatly simplifies the regulatory framework because it means that IPART can focus on scheme operators and retailers and not also have to regulate infrastructure owners, which would be problematic given the complexity of today's property ownership arrangements. The change will also eliminate any blurring of accountability and responsibility between owners and operators. Under the registration system, IPART can more clearly identify who is responsible when licence

or approval conditions are breached or who to seek information from if, for example, NSW Health is not notified of a contamination incident in a timely fashion.

The bill will significantly strengthen protections for customers of private water and sewerage schemes. First, there will be a standard customer contract that will apply to residential and small business customers, called "small retail customers". The terms and conditions of the customer contract will be set out in the regulations, and a draft will be released for public consultation with the new supporting regulation next year. Secondly, the bill introduces a new test in new section 7C (1) whereby IPART cannot approve a scheme unless it is satisfied that it is not reasonably foreseeable that the scheme will have significant adverse financial implications for small retail customers. Thirdly, retailers will be required to publish their prices and notify customers at least three months in advance of any increase above inflation. The Minister will retain the ability to issue a monopoly supply declaration under section 51 of the current Act and ask IPART to determine a pricing methodology if a retailer were considered to be overcharging.

Fourthly, the bill amends the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 to ensure that parties are informed before buying a property, and that the property is or will be serviced by a private water utility under the Water Industry Competition Act. In this way, buyers can find out who services a property and the applicable water and sewerage charges. This will be achieved by including additional information in the planning certificate that is required to be included in a contract of sale for land. Fifthly, consumers and public health and safety more generally will be further safeguarded by the increased investigative powers the bill gives to inspectors, together with the new offences and increased penalties for serious offences that pose risks to public health and safety. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the bill will ensure continuity of essential services for customers of private schemes through comprehensive last-resort provisions. Last-resort arrangements are designed to ensure continuity of essential services in the event of the financial failure of a licensee under the Water Industry Competition Act. They provide for another utility to step in to operate a service if the operator or retailer fails.

The current Water Industry Competition Act provides for a retailer of last resort to take over in the event of a licensee failure. However, there are no provisions to enable an operator of last resort to step in and operate infrastructure if a licensed operator were to fail. The bill corrects this omission by introducing provisions for the appointment of operators of last resort within a much more comprehensive last-resort framework. A new part 5A of the Act sets out detailed requirements for the appointment of last-resort providers, the preparation of contingency plans and the recovery of the costs of a last-resort event. However, the first critical step in reducing the risk of a last-resort event is IPART's assessment of a proposed scheme's financial viability at the beginning of the approval process. The next step is the requirement for IPART to determine when it is assessing an application for a scheme approval whether a proposed scheme is essential infrastructure. New section 54 sets out what constitutes essential infrastructure. Most standalone schemes servicing residential developments in outer suburban and regional areas would qualify.

If IPART determines that a scheme is essential infrastructure, then an operator of last resort, and in some cases a retailer of last resort, must be appointed before the scheme can commence operation. The Minister appoints last-resort providers on IPART's recommendation or, if urgent, on their own initiative. Last-resort providers will usually be the local public water utility in whose area of operations the scheme is located, but there is the option for another water industry competition licensee to apply to IPART to be the last-resort provider for a particular scheme. The regulations will set out requirements for the preparation and testing of contingency plans for a last-resort provider to step in to operate an essential service, and these will be the subject of consultation next year. The bill sets out the triggers for the Minister to declare that a licensee has failed, the arrangements that will apply during the last-resort event, and how a last-resort event can be resolved, for example, by acquisition of an affected scheme by a public water utility.

New section 56F allows for the recovery of a last-resort provider's costs of stepping in and operating the scheme of a failed licensee. The Minister would first seek to recover costs from the failed licensee, a related corporation or their insolvency official. If all the costs cannot be recovered from the failed licensee, the Minister can establish an industry contribution fund to which public and private water utilities must contribute or, with the Treasurer's approval, can recover the costs from the Consolidated Fund. In a change to the Water Amendment Act 2014, recovering costs from the customers of a failed licensee has been removed as an option in the bill. The option was perceived as unfair to customers who played no part in the licensee's failure. Moreover, the risk that a customer might be called upon to meet last-resort costs in this way would have to be disclosed to prospective buyers of properties serviced by private utilities, which would make the properties less attractive to buyers and their banks compared to properties serviced by public water utilities, where taxpayers underwrite such risks.

I turn to an issue that was the subject of much debate in 2014—the onselling by private water utilities of drinking water sourced from public water utilities. New section 66A makes it abundantly clear that private utilities cannot use their infrastructure to onsell drinking water obtained from a public water utility unless they are also

providing a sewerage service and both services are the subject of a single contract with the customer. That is, private utilities will not be allowed to operate or retail a scheme unless there has been investment in new physical infrastructure such as sewage treatment facilities. This explicit prohibition replaces section 10 (4) (d) of the current Act, which is less clear in requiring licensees to source sufficient quantities of water other than from a public water utility.

The objective of both the old and the new provisions is to ensure that new entrants bring additional infrastructure to the market and that competition does not compromise existing water resources. Retailers will not be allowed to cherry-pick customers from existing utilities and provide retail services to them without there being any investment in physical infrastructure. Such activity would undermine drought resilience, be costly for customers and run counter to the proposed objectives of the Act. It could erode the benefits of the enormous water efficiency improvements made in recent years and will not be permitted. The bill also gives inspectors appointed under the Water Industry Competition Act greater investigative powers similar to those in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act and the Water Management Act. They include the power to question and identify persons, require information or records, examine equipment, enter land, undertake tests and take samples. The powers are subject to the limitations already in the Water Industry Competition Act, that entry to residential premises only occurs with the occupier's consent or with a warrant, that care be taken and that compensation be paid in the event of loss or damage.

The bill abrogates the privilege against self-incrimination in certain circumstances to strengthen the capacity of the Minister, IPART and inspectors to properly investigate breaches of the Act. The Minister, IPART and inspectors appointed by the Minister or IPART will have the power to compel persons to provide documents and information and to answer questions. A person will not be excused from complying with such a requirement because the record, information or answer might incriminate the person or make the person liable to penalty. Provisions would mainly be used when investigators are seeking information from directors or employees of licensees in relation to breaches or offences committed by the licensees. For example, if inspectors were investigating a water contamination incident, they would be able to compel employees of a private water utility to answer questions about the incident. The abrogation of the privilege is considered appropriate and proportionate in this instance, given the serious public health and safety risks that can attach to breaches of the Act and the provision of water and sewerage services.

Limitations have been placed on the use of the abrogation power. For most offences, information provided by a natural person can only be used as evidence to prosecute the person if the person did not object to providing the information or was not warned they could object to providing it. The Government is satisfied that the abrogation is appropriate and proportionate, with adequate safeguards against misuse. New section 82B allows higher penalties to be imposed for an offence if the prosecution proves that an intentional or negligent act or omission caused actual or potential harm to the health or safety of human beings. That is consistent with the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, which refers to wilful and negligent acts that harm or are likely to harm the environment. Higher penalties are appropriate given the potential risks associated with water and sewerage infrastructure and the consequences for public health and safety if licensees do not comply with requirements.

For example, if a licensee's intentional actions result in poor quality water being delivered to customers and illness results or could result, a maximum penalty of over \$5 million can be imposed. The bill introduces review and appeal provisions against decisions of the Minister and IPART. Under section 11, an applicant for an approval or licence, a registered operator of a scheme, an owner of a scheme or an owner of land on which a scheme is located may apply for an administrative review of a decision of IPART or the Minister by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Under new section 11A, appeals may be made to the Land and Environment Court against decisions to issue compliance notices, disciplinary action, cancellation of an approval or orders for forfeiture of security.

Before the amendments commence operation, the Government will finalise a new supporting regulation and release it for public consultation next year. The amendments can be commenced together with the new regulation in late 2022. There will then be a minimum 12-month transition period to allow existing licences to be transitioned over to approvals and licences under the new framework, in consultation with licensees. The bill makes important and long overdue changes to streamline and strengthen the Water Industry Competition Act and ensure that it effectively protects public health, the environment and consumers, while also removing unnecessary red tape. That will allow private utilities to prosper and continue to bring the benefits of innovation and competition to the provision of water, sewerage and recycled water services in New South Wales.

I thank and acknowledge all the people within my agencies, IPART, local government and the private sector who have contributed to the formation of the improved bill. I look forward to the debate in the House and

also acknowledge the local members who have also contributed to conversations around making sure that we get things in a stronger place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Budget*

**BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2021-2022**

**Debate resumed from 24 June 2021.**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (10:34):** I am pleased to speak on the budget for 2021. I take the opportunity to acknowledge our former Treasurer, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet, who delivered this budget back in June. I thank him for his incredible work managing the New South Wales budget over many years. I also acknowledge and commend our former Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, for the role she played and the incredible work she did over so many years to put us in a significantly good place despite the many challenges we have had across the State, particularly over the past few months in relation to COVID-19. I also congratulate the former Treasurer on his new role as Premier of the State. I know that he will continue to do the great work that he has done over the many years as Treasurer. It would be remiss of me not to commend also our new Treasurer, the Hon. Matt Kean. He certainly has a lot of work ahead of him to make sure we stay the course and continue to deliver for our communities as we come out of COVID, and to make sure that our businesses are in a good place and our communities are ready to move forward as we move out of lockdown.

It is thanks to the dedication of the Treasurer at the time, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet, and the Premier that we are in such a solid economic position. Like every year since 2011, when I was elected to this Parliament as the member for Port Macquarie, the 2021 budget has delivered for the Port Macquarie electorate. It has ensured that critical infrastructure projects will continue and, in some cases, commence in the months ahead. Across our community, the budget will deliver key projects that the Government committed to previously and will respond to our growing communities on the mid North Coast. In fact, on the mid North Coast we have some of the fastest-growing areas right across the State, including the regional city of Port Macquarie itself.

I will start with some of our school projects and what the New South Wales Government is delivering for education, particularly at Hastings Secondary College. The 2021 budget included \$18.5 million for the first stage of the redevelopment of Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie campus. The budget also allocated \$500,000 for the design of a new PCYC. This, of course, is part of a \$2.1 billion budget allocation, which includes funding to deliver 44 new and upgraded schools right across New South Wales. The redevelopment of Hastings Secondary College is welcome news and I look forward to continuing to work alongside the school community as this critical project evolves. Detailed design for stage one of the upgrade at the Port Macquarie campus has progressed. Stage one includes a new technological and applied studies building, refurbished learning spaces in one building and landscaping. A complying development certificate has been received for the works. Stage two will include a new creative and performing arts building, the refurbishment of two buildings, external works and a new school entrance. Stage three will include the shared multipurpose facility with the PCYC, which is subject to further approvals.

The design work is progressing well and I commend the school community under the strong leadership of principal Meaghan Cook. She has worked collaboratively with the PCYC team to make sure that the shared facility will be an exceptional piece of infrastructure not only for the school community, but for the broader community as well. It is something our community is excited about. We have had a PCYC in Port Macquarie in the past, but we are certainly waiting to see what our new multipurpose facility is going to look like. At this point I take the opportunity to commend all our teachers in public schools, independent schools and Catholic schools across the Port Macquarie electorate. It has been a difficult time for them but, as always, our schoolteachers stepped up to the challenges of COVID-19. Obviously that meant teaching and students learning remotely, and our teachers did an exceptional job. I thank them for the role that they played in ensuring that effective learning continued to take place for all those students who were working at home for so many months.

The Port Macquarie electorate is a growth area, in particular in the south in the areas of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills where I live. It is important to ensure that we upgrade our local roads and work closely and collaboratively with our local council. A road project that is on the drawing board and on which work is now commencing is the duplication of Ocean Drive, one of the main arterial roads that goes into Port Macquarie. Some 15,000 people use that road every day, including my husband and I as we head into work, and it is becoming a bit of a bottleneck. Coming off Ocean Drive and heading into the lake road intersection leads to our industrial area, which carries a great deal of traffic. It then goes onto the Oxley Highway, the main intersection and thoroughfare not only to our increased residential development but also to the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. The Ocean Drive duplication is an important upgrade. I mentioned earlier that it is a local council road but I am excited that the

Minister and the New South Wales Government are supporting council and ensuring the delivery of this important road duplication.

That construction will soon be underway, and in the budget this year \$30.8 million was allocated to Port Macquarie-Hastings Council to undertake works along that piece of road. The community would have seen the activity there at the moment, and geotechnical investigation works are currently being carried out at a number of locations along Ocean Drive as part of the early preparation works for the duplication. The duplication of Ocean Drive between Greenmeadows Drive and Matthew Flinders Drive will cost a total of \$95 million. The works will include clearing of vegetation at select locations within the Ocean Drive road reserve, followed by geotechnical investigations. While preliminary works are currently being undertaken along Ocean Drive, the 3.4-kilometre project will not commence in earnest until mid-next year. I thank the community for their patience as we get on with that important project—one of the major thoroughfares into Port Macquarie from the south.

The budget also includes some funding for Houston Mitchell Drive, and that work has already started. Sadly, the intersection of Houston Mitchell Drive and the Pacific Highway has the attention of the community because of a number of incidents and fatalities over the past 10 years. That \$2.9 million project will ensure that safety improvements are carried out. As I said, work has already commenced and the community is pleased to see those safety improvements take place. It will include an extended turning lane for southbound traffic which turns left onto Houston Mitchell Drive and, importantly, it will include the creation of a southbound slip lane into the highway from Houston Mitchell Drive. The community and I want to see work progress on planning for a greater separation or overpass, as it is often termed. I will continue to advocate strongly for that to happen in the future. In the meantime, safety improvements are critical and this is a responsible approach while we wait for an overpass in the future.

I refer briefly to the Fixing Local Roads Program. I thank Minister Paul Toole for the work he has done in making sure local roads in our regional communities are improved so that journeys are safer not only for regional communities generally but also for farmers and those who use it for freight. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has been granted \$1.564 million to rehabilitate Pembroke Road, which is at Telegraph Point. The community is pleased to see that allocation of funding and to see work commence on the rehabilitation of that road. To the south of Port Macquarie, Mid-Coast Council will receive almost \$712,000 towards the rehabilitation of Hannam Vale Road. That is in addition to the \$3 million already granted to seal the Hannam Vale to Waitui Road. Work is currently underway and the community and I are pleased that the project has now commenced.

Those projects are important. The roads are under the jurisdiction of local government but it is important for the Government to give councils a helping hand to address the maintenance backlog and to maintain those roads that are critical to our communities to ensure that we deliver safer trips to school or to the shops and more efficient journeys for freight operators and primary producers at Hannam Vale-Waitui Road. Once again, I commend and thank the Minister for his support in those projects. Communities right across the State are already reaping the benefits of the program, with 97 projects now open to traffic and a further 138 projects over the next two years, including the projects that I previously mentioned. They might not be enormous projects but they are significant and they make a big difference to the roads that our locals use every day. They also support our local domestic tourist market as our regions open up again. As I said, Fixing Local Roads is a \$500 million New South Wales Government program and it has been boosted by the Australian Government over the first two rounds with an additional \$191 million. I thank the Federal Government for supporting those projects.

As many people in the House would know, one of our most isolated communities is Lord Howe Island, but it has not missed out when it comes to funding support from the New South Wales Government. The Fixing Local Roads Program will deliver upgrades to some 10 kilometres of roads on the island—an aging road network. Whilst 10 kilometres is not a lot, these roads are certainly critical to that community. We must ensure that they are safe not only for vehicles—because there are limited vehicles on the island, as there should be—but also for those who use it for walking and cycling, locals and tourists alike. It is important that we have safe roads for them. Nearly all the roads on the island will be upgraded, including the important Anderson Road, which is one of the main thoroughfares, and also Lagoon Road to Middle Beach Road, which are also important. That will give the Lord Howe Island Board, like our local councils, a helping hand to address its maintenance backlog. Again, I thank Minister Paul Toole, who took the time to meet with me on a number of occasions to talk about why that project is so important for the Lord Howe Island community and the tourism sector that is critical to the local economy.

I am not ashamed of the fact that a lot of the budget in my electorate is for road projects, as I think it reflects the needs of our growing community on the mid North Coast. Mr Assistant Speaker Coure is nodding his head in agreement as he knows that the mid North Coast is a growth area. It is great to see the Government responding.

I will briefly talk about the upgrade to a significant section of the Oxley Highway that extends 9.5 kilometres from Billabong Drive, just to the west of the Pacific Highway, right through to Hastings River Drive or Gordon Street intersection in Port Macquarie. This is obviously a significant project and work is already

underway. The Government invested \$850,000 to progress designs for those improvements and develop a longer-term transport strategy, again in conjunction with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. In so many of these cases we are seeing local roads intersecting with main highways such as the Pacific or Oxley highways. More than 23,500 vehicles use this section of the Oxley Highway every day, including about 1,500 heavy vehicles. As our community grows to the west of Port Macquarie we are continuing to see increased congestion, so it is really important that we start work on improving this section of road.

The local insights we have received during the consultation process have been invaluable. I thank the community. We received over 450 submissions in relation to the three options we put forward, particularly around the Wrights Road roundabout and the Oxley Highway intersection, which is the intersection that leads not only into the Port Macquarie Base Hospital but also Charles Sturt University and our health precinct. We were really pleased that community members were engaged with this project and were able to provide their insights, which were so very important. Transport for NSW sought feedback on its proposals to increase capacity of the Pacific Highway interchange and those options for upgrading the intersections with John Oxley Drive. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House for its indulgence. Three options were presented for the planned upgrades to the Wrights Road and Lake Road intersections. The community was largely in favour of building an overpass for the Oxley Highway westbound lane and installing traffic lights on the Oxley Highway eastbound, Wrights Road and at Lake Road. I acknowledge that through the submission and engagement process community concerns were raised about pedestrian safety, including the need for additional footpaths and the lack of bicycle paths in the area. I acknowledge and share those concerns because it is critically important to ensure that all road users have access, not just vehicles.

We will continue to work with council to make sure we deliver the best outcome for the community, motorists, pedestrians and cyclists to ensure that everyone has a safe and smooth experience on and around the Oxley Highway. I remind the community that the report detailing submissions and responses for the proposed upgrades to the highway is available on the Transport for NSW website. I join Transport for NSW in again thanking the community for its feedback and contribution to the planning work through the consultation period. I advise the community that currently planning investigations for the Oxley Highway concerning funding and timing for major works will be confirmed in the near future.

The other thing that is critically important for a growing community in a growing regional city is health. Once again, the budget in 2021-22 is continuing to deliver in response to our growing population. The budget provided \$9.9 million for the new helipad at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. I was pleased to have the Minister, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, there at the end of last year to make that announcement and that has been followed up with funding in the budget this year. We will continue to see the ongoing expansion of the hospital car park. Any member who has a major hospital in their electorate knows that one of the real issues is often car parking and access. The New South Wales Government has previously responded with a commitment of \$11 million to significantly expand the car park at the hospital. Some of that work has already been done and the new car park has opened for staff, which is fantastic, but we will continue with that work.

The budget has earmarked \$3.8 million to continue the expansion of the car parking space at the hospital. I know that is good news for our community members who use that world-class health service each and every day. Like our teachers, I thank our healthcare workers and commend their work through what has been such an extraordinary time during both 2020 and 2021 with COVID-19. It is not only health workers in the wards at the hospital who are on the front line but also those who have stepped up to take on roles such as COVID testing, which has been an enormous task. I note that it has been the same across all electorates with the changed roles that many of our nursing and healthcare staff have had to play. As always, they have stepped up to the plate and met the challenges of COVID-19. We are indebted to them for their work.

It is not only in Port Macquarie that we are seeing our healthcare services improved and expanded. It is pleasing that the Government has responded to the needs of the Camden Haven community, which is situated mainly around Laurieton, Dunbogan, Kendall and Kew, with an upgraded HealthOne facility. We already have a community health facility there but we are getting a brand-new one, called Camden Haven HealthOne. That is part of the New South Wales Government's \$100 million HealthOne program, which delivers integrated healthcare services to local communities like Laurieton and Camden Haven. The HealthOne centres really make a big difference to our communities right across the State because they provide essential healthcare services in the one hub. It makes it easier for those people who have to access services, it is much more convenient and at the end of the day we see an improvement in health outcomes for our community. It brings healthcare services together under the one roof and closer to home. It makes it easier for people in the Camden Haven to access a range of health professionals to meet their varying healthcare needs.

The new HealthOne centre, which is already well underway, will provide additional healthcare services for the whole Camden Haven community. It means that residents will not often have to travel to larger centres

like Port Macquarie to address many of their healthcare needs. HealthOne centres aim to create a stronger and more efficient primary healthcare system by bringing together general practice and a range of community healthcare services. I know that local staff are very excited about this new health facility. I thank them for their patience as they continue to work alongside the construction site and get on with the job of servicing our local community. I am pleased to say that they have been involved in the planning of this new HealthOne centre at every step of the way. Some of the services to be provided in our new HealthOne at Camden Haven include oral health, chronic disease management, allied health services, aged-care services, child and family health services, mental health, and drug and alcohol services.

It is expected that the completed Camden Haven HealthOne will be operational by early next year. While construction of the centre is underway existing services will continue. I commend all of the team at the Mid North Coast Local Health District under the leadership of CEO Stewart Dowrick. His team has been so accessible, particularly during COVID-19 and those challenges. As the local member I have been appreciative of the fact that they continue to provide us with updates as they happen, such as COVID cases and venues of concern. We have worked alongside them as best as we possibly can to make sure we get those important messages out to the community. I thank Stewart, Lynn, Vanessa, Delwyn and all the team who have worked alongside us. We are really appreciative. That is a most sincere message from not only me but all of our team at the electorate office.

Just to finish on health, I will talk about the Lake Cathie ambulance station. Again, it is a new infrastructure project. Lake Cathie is a growing community. I have lived there for nearly 25 years now and the growth I have seen there is really quite incredible. The Government has again responded to that growth and announced a new ambulance station. Work is scheduled to commence in early 2022 and the station will service our local communities. That is a part of the New South Wales Government's \$232 million Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration program, or RAIR. The new purpose-built ambulance station, which I was pleased to announce a couple of weeks ago, will be located at 1379 Ocean Drive. This is an optimal space for the new facility because it will be able to service the local communities very well in not only Lake Cathie but also Bonny Hills. Now that the site has been chosen, the community can look forward to having an ambulance station in Lake Cathie in the not-too-distant future. It will be a first-class facility to support local paramedics as they continue their excellent but challenging work of providing life-saving emergency medical care.

The construction of the ambulance station will commence next year and be completed by the end of 2022. It is being tailored to meet not only the current needs of the communities in Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills, both of which are key growth areas in the region, but also the future needs of those communities. I thank the Minister for Health and Medical Research and the New South Wales Government, which has continued to deliver record investment in regional and rural health infrastructure to support better outcomes for our local communities. I also thank the community for its advocacy on local health issues. I particularly thank the Lake Cathie Progress Association, which has made health in the area one of its priorities. I know it is very pleased to see that work on ambulance station will be underway in the not-too-distant future.

I also talk about the Lake Cathie Public School, which is nearing completion. I commend principal Jock Garven for the incredible work that he has done and the leadership role that he has played during the construction of the 17 new learning spaces at the school. It has been a significant infrastructure project but the education of the students has continued. Construction is nearly at an end and once it is finished, there will be not only 17 new learning spaces but also a new library, which will be the repurposed existing hall. The current library will be repurposed into two support units. We have new bus bays and some really beautiful landscaping. The Government is responding to growth areas and expanding communities up and down the mid North Coast. I thank the education Minister for her commitment to the Lake Cathie Public School project. I ask her to consider the completion of the master plan for the project, because I know there continues to be pressure on the school. We need to make sure that we keep up with that growth and that there are additional permanent classrooms for the future.

I will comment on the statewide announcements, which are, of course, beneficial to the Port Macquarie electorate. One effective initiative that has been taken up by my community is the regional seniors travel card. There has been a fantastic response to year two of the trial of the \$250 prepaid Visa card. In 2020 it benefited over 330,000 seniors get around their communities. In the Port Macquarie local government area there were 18,336 eligible applicants for the card. Over 14,000 people have applied but I give a shout-out to those who have not yet done so. There are still people out there who are eligible. I encourage them to go on the New South Wales Government website and apply for the card.

It is a really effective way of making sure that we support seniors not only through the difficult times of COVID but also by making sure that cost-of-living pressures are reduced. There has been record investment in mental health from this Government, particularly in childhood and adolescent mental health. That will be critically important as we move out of COVID-19. In closing, I thank the communities of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and MidCoast Council in the Port Macquarie electorate for their advocacy on a range of projects. I look forward

to continuing to work with them to make sure that we deliver better outcomes and improved infrastructure and services across the electorate.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (11:04):** I start by recognising all of our frontline workers, who have led our communities through the pandemic. Workers in health services, retail, emergency services and local councils have turned up for work to make sure that our communities continue to function. I give a special shout-out to our teaching workforce, who have been providing learning from home. My wife is an assistant principal. I have been there while she has been doing story time and online Zoom classes with her kindergarten students. She has done dress-ups and singing and all sorts of things to try to make sure that our young people have access to education. She has also prepared work packs so that the kids can be involved when learning from home. It is important that members of Parliament acknowledge the hard work that our teachers have been doing. I also acknowledge all of our electorate office staff, including mine, who through very difficult times have been answering questions from the community. As members would agree, it has been challenging at times when every individual in a community has a different set of circumstances and a generic set of rules have to be applied to those circumstances.

With regard to my contribution to debate on budget estimates and related papers, I acknowledge the very good way in which I work with my Labor colleagues on the Central Coast: the member for The Entrance, David Mehan; the member for Swansea, Yasmin Catley; and the member for Gosford, Liesl Tesch. I also acknowledge the member for Terrigal, sitting on the Government side of the Chamber, who has supported grant funding for several projects in my electorate. I appreciate his support. On the Coast we know that when we work together, we achieve more. Any outcome is a good outcome for our community. That is really important. In the cut and thrust of politics, when members are often in the media having a go at each other, the public can be pleased that behind the scenes we can and do work constructively.

In the 2021-22 budget the Wyong electorate received upwards of \$100 million in project funding, which is very good, particularly because the northern part of the electorate is a growth area. Several of the projects are shared resources. Constituents of The Entrance, Swansea and Lake Macquarie electorates will also benefit from access to those projects even though the numbers will appear on my budget paper. I acknowledge that Porters Creek Public School, which is the newest school on the Central Coast, is due to open in 2022. It has been great to watch the progress of the construction of the school. The 2021-22 budget allocated upwards of \$16 million for the school, which adds to the \$18 million allocated in the 2020-21 budget. This funding will deliver a school that will cost in the vicinity of \$38 million.

As a former teacher and principal, I know any dollar spent on education is a great investment in any community. Porters Creek Public School will be state of the art. I have been impressed with the work of Robyn Christie, who has been appointed principal of the school. She is leading her establishment team through the process of setting up the school. Having seen the creation of Warnervale Public School, which was constructed when Labor was in government, Woongarra Public School and Wadalba Community School, which opened in 2000, I know that setting up a new school from scratch is quite a challenge. It is not just about getting the rooms in place; it is also about creating the rules, policies and ethos of the school. The establishment team of Porters Creek Public School has been doing a great job. I also acknowledge Julie Griffith, who was appointed as business manager. We used to call that role the "front office lady", but these days the front office lady has a huge range of skills. I have always said that when you arrive at a school as a principal, the first person you make friends with is the office manager. Ultimately, whilst the principal is the figurehead, it is usually the people in the front office who are running the school because they have their fingers on the pulse.

Kelly Becton and Brooke Maasepp have been appointed assistant principals. Alicia Page and Rachel Perry, who are also assistant principals, have been working remotely to help to set up the school, which initially will have 460 students. The core facilities, which include the hall, the canteen, outdoor learning areas et cetera, will eventually cater for 1,000 students. The new core facility, which is a really good project, will have 20 classes. Many times I have spoken of the need for new educational infrastructure. We certainly will continue to talk to the Department of Education about the provision of sufficient secondary education infrastructure. I have been referring to the Porters Creek Public School, which is a primary school, but with the increase in population in the local area, there will be a need for either a new high school or a reconfiguration of the existing high schools to ensure that secondary education can be provided to students locally. Those discussions will certainly continue.

I acknowledge that today the first patients at the \$200 million upgraded Wyong Hospital will be able to access the new emergency department in Block H. In the current budget almost \$33 million was allocated to finish the upgrade. I have visited the site and have seen the upgrade from the outside. I am looking forward to a tour. Block H is very impressive. It includes a new emergency department plus surgical and other facilities. Interestingly, I saw on Facebook that the hospital's anniversary is coming up. The member for The Entrance will know that initially there was a push by the Government to privatise the operation of the hospital. At the time, the Government told us that the only way Wyong Hospital would get an upgrade would be if the privatisation went

ahead. Luckily, the Minister for Health and Medical Research saw sense and changed that decision. Now the Wyong electorate has a fantastic upgraded public hospital, which is really good news for our community that fought so hard. I remember distinctly a rally of between 2,000 and 5,000 people who turned up to the Wyong Rugby League Club to voice their opinions on keeping their hospital not only in public hands but also run as part of the public health system.

I have spoken to Brad Astill, who is the acting chief executive of the Central Coast Local Health District, about staffing at the hospital. Last night I received a text message from staff who had written an open letter to management to voice their concerns about staffing levels and the pressure on staff. Brad Astill assured me that staff had been recruited to cater for the opening of the new facility but nursing staff particularly still have concerns. I will be talking about that issue in the coming days to make sure that we have not only the nice new shiny buildings but also the fantastic people inside the facility to make it work. As I have said, the Wyong Hospital services my constituents and people from The Entrance electorate, the southern part of the Swansea electorate, Lake Macquarie, Cooranbong and Morisset. The upgrade of the hospital facilities occurred at the right time but there needs to be continual growth.

As all members of the House would know, one of the perils of politics is that no sooner has one project or upgrade been completed than it is time for the next one. When planning starts for the next upgrade, the Wyong electorate has to be placed on the funding list again. I sometimes think the public does not necessarily understand that the cycle of projects, planning and applications for funding is a process that is never-ending. As facilities age, there are always projects added as populations of an electorate increase and more modern facilities are required. The Wyong electorate is no exception to that. Last year two new ambulance stations were opened and the police station, as well as a whole lot of other facilities, were upgraded. I think the community recognises that electorate representatives in the Central Coast and Wyong areas are working really hard to obtain the very best facilities to cater for increases in population.

Another project that I know is very dear to the heart of the member for The Entrance, because of the good job he has done advocating for it, is the upgrade of the Tuggerah railway station and the car parking facilities. The budget has allocated almost \$17 million to continue planning to deliver the additional and very necessary commuter car parking spaces at Tuggerah station. The Tuggerah station services a huge part of my electorate and The Entrance electorate. Sufficient commuter car parking and installation of lifts are essential because the station is located close to two business parks and two major shopping centres and many people, including elderly people, travel by train to work and to shop. Currently the station has ramps but the member for The Entrance and I will be really pleased when the lifts are installed and operating. The budget has allocated \$912,000 for commencement of that project and for expansion of the station as part of the Westfield Tuggerah package, which is a massive undertaking.

Previously I called on former Deputy Premier John Barilaro, and I will organise a meeting with the new Deputy Premier, Mr Toole, to have the expansion project declared a special activation precinct because the potential for jobs creation in that area is absolutely huge. It is essential for the Government to work with private investors to ensure that necessary infrastructure is provided. Westfield, through the Scentre Group, has a huge plan for housing, retail, entertainment and parks. The people who own the Tuggerah Super Centre on the other side of the railway line are considering stage three of the development, having completed stage two. The Fudicia Group also is considering the development of more housing, retail and commercial space. The precincts need special attention and special planning. As all who know the Wyong electorate would attest, the current council is struggling with applications for development. The applications for development approval cannot be held up because important infrastructure is not in place.

One of the banes of my life is the upgrade of the Pacific Highway through Wyong. The current budget allocates an additional \$4 million for planning. Some members would probably be horrified to know that up to \$38 million now has been spent on planning, although some land acquisitions and preliminary works, such as demolition, have commenced. However, as our communities move back to normal activity post-COVID, the Pacific Highway in the Wyong area will return to carrying huge volumes of heavy vehicle traffic, as I noticed last Monday. I will continue to raise this important issue with the Government. I note also that in the budget papers relating to Restart NSW, under regional growth roads, an additional \$16 million has been allocated. One would hope for an announcement sooner rather than later of upgrade construction beginning. I accept that this massive project must be a staged construction that includes the upgrade of the railway station, the commuter car park and a whole range of accompanying projects, but the community is looking for the unmistakable sign of the project's commencement.

I acknowledge that the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, Adam Crouch, knows as well as I do that a lot of preliminary work is being done behind the scenes, which includes moving some underground utilities such as power, water and gas. The community is looking for a significant announcement that that project is

officially underway and that all the years of lobbying from 2007 onwards, when I was first elected, have not been in vain. The first budget allocation for the project was \$125 million. Unfortunately, the chamber of commerce at the time talked then Minister Nathan Rees out of it and got another study done. I still remember that day, in despair that they wanted an underpass! An underpass had been investigated and it cannot be done as it floods. It was never going to happen. Anyway, instead of getting the \$125 million we got \$3 million for another study, which ruled the underpass out and probably put us back 15 years—but that is what happens.

The chamber of commerce was then worried about a lack of parking in front of businesses, but for 15 years they have been putting up with traffic chaos, so I am not sure if that was the best decision at the time. But that is what it lobbied for and that is what it got. As I said, it was one of the most disappointing days in my political career. No-one likes seeing \$125 million walking out the door. That is a huge project that will need attention. Earlier I mentioned some grants that we got. A really important one is the Warnervale Town Centre water and sewer grant, which is about \$7.3 million. One cannot have new housing, commercial and retail in that area without water and sewerage connections. That grant has meant that some projects can now proceed. One of those is Beerfarm, which is a brewery from Western Australia that is setting up a second operation. It will create about 90 jobs in that area and give us a great new facility for locals to enjoy. It is just off the M1 freeway so it will become a bit of a tourist attraction as well. That will be a brewery, restaurant and bar. It will also have a farm-type set-up, which will be unique. Next to that there is another project in the pipeline that will be able to come sooner rather than later because of that \$7.3 million.

Another grant we received in road funding was \$800,000 to assist council to upgrade Louisiana Road. It is a road we have been trying to get fixed for quite a while. The council had been relying on the developer to fully fund that but the State Government stepped in with the \$800,000, which meant that project could be brought forward. It is fantastic for that area. It has a culvert that floods on a regular basis. It became very apparent early after the ambulance station was built at the southern end of Louisiana Road that we cannot have the road closing on a regular basis every time it rains because it blocks off the ambulances. That money is certainly appreciated in the electorate. We also received \$6.8 million for the upgrade of the Mardi Water Treatment Plant. Again, although it appears on my budget paper it is something that is good for the whole northern part of the Central Coast. It means that treatment plant has greater capacity and, again, allows that commercial development to go ahead, which is a really good thing. [*Extension of time*]

I appreciate the enthusiastic indulgence of the House—maybe not those members online but those who are in the Chamber. Overall it has been a pleasing budget for the Wyong electorate and the northern part of the Central Coast. There is a new school, a hospital upgrade, new road funding and upgrades to some of our transport facilities. But, as I mentioned, our role is a never-ending one. As we come to the close of the hospital and school projects and people move in and start using those facilities, it is obviously time to start advocating for some new projects. One that is really important is the Warnervale railway station. At this stage it is not a project that requires funding but we need a decision.

Currently the station is south of Sparks Road. It is a very general station. It has two short platforms. It has no facilities. It has a small car park. There were plans in place to move the station to the Warnervale Town Centre. That was going to cost around \$64 million. Concept plans were drawn up for that and there were a number of studies done, but over the past few years it has disappeared off the radar. As we move all of those people in—and there will be about 40,000 new residents living in that area—public transport is incredibly important; otherwise we are continually putting people into cars, which then puts greater strain on the road system. If we do not improve the railway station, the commuter car park and the facilities then we will have to spend money fixing the roads. It cannot continue to be put off. What I ask the new transport Minister—and I will seek a meeting with him—is to start to work on what the decision will be. Will it be moving it north to the Warnervale Town Centre or will it be leaving it where it is and just upgrading the existing station?

When this was first mooted back in 2004 it made sense that we would move the whole station north to the town centre. However, since then development has changed. Currently construction is commencing on about 2½ thousand homes parallel to the current railway station, along with some retail and a community centre. The new school is located near there. There is the Anglican school a little further down the road and then there is Warnervale Public School up the other end of the road. Now it may make sense to leave the station where it is and upgrade it. That may be a better option. Council also has a precinct that will be an education/sports facility that is only 1.2 kilometres from the current station. If we move the station further north, housing and development are going on up there as well but it moves that transport across a busy road—Sparks Road, a main road. What I ask is that we have a discussion about what is the best option and make a decision so that the community knows what will happen.

One of the downsides of the current station is that there is a physical railway crossing with gates there. That will have a massive impact on traffic in that area as it grows. These are the things that need to be looked at

and the planning needs to be clear so that we get the best outcome for the community. Trying to fix it after the houses are already in place will be too late—it is not going to work. We need a set plan for Warnervale railway station. The second major issue relates to where Woolworths and the shopping precinct will be located in Warnervale Town Centre. I have had talks about this with the current planning Minister, Rob Stokes. The original plan was for it to be built on land Woolworths owns at the top of the hill at the town centre, in conjunction with the railway station. Woolworths has since put forward a proposition to move the site to land further down on Sparks Road and it is willing to fast-track that project if it gets permission to do it. Now we have argy-bargy between the developer, Landcorp NSW—not Landcom, but Landcorp—the council and Woolworths about what is the best option.

What we need is for the State Government to step in and make a determination because that project is frozen. All those houses are going in and there is no retail north of Sparks Road in that whole precinct, which means that every person has to jump in a car and travel to do their shopping at the moment. That has put huge pressure on the roads. Every roundabout and every road is choked. People have to move relatively short distances but they do not have a choice: They have to get in the car and drive. We need to get that done sooner rather than later. They are not real funding commitments, but they are planning commitments that will lead to necessary funding down the track.

Locating Woolworths at the bottom of the hill next to Sparks Road will ultimately save the Government money because the intersection is already in place and the developers are building Mataram Road, which will be located at the back of that area. We will get a good outcome. It may not be the one that was planned back in 1975, but as we know things change and we have to be flexible. We cannot stick to a plan that was drawn up decades ago that does not recognise the realities of how the area is changing. I appreciate that was recognised by Rob Stokes. Some members of council still have it in their heads that it is not going there under any circumstances, but it is literally 500 metres. I cannot see how that would have such a huge impact, particularly when Woolworths want to invest and spend money doing it.

Woolworths at Wadalba was built and it was predicted that it would take a store of that size five years to reach its average turnover, but it was reached in three months. It shows that there is demand and that is why the community is so keen to move ahead. As the local member I am keen to make sure that people have services as close to them as possible. We have a number of walking and bike paths planned for that area so people will not have to use their cars. They can walk or ride their bike to access those facilities. At the moment, they are forced to jump in their cars and choke the roads. That is another important issue to look at. We have been advocating that the Government look at extra support for Central Coast Council and its IT system. We know a poor choice was made. The new CEO explained it to us as: They needed to buy a ute to take the pigs to market, but instead of that they bought a Ferrari that leaked oil.

The system the council is using needed an upgrade, which cost \$1.5 million. The you-beaut system was not fit for purpose and it is bleeding the council dry. It could have purchased a normal, manageable system that other councils use with a contract in place for ongoing upgrades, but that did not happen and now it is an issue. I cannot see the council moving forward unless it receives funding to fix that issue. As the CEO described it, they bought the Ferrari instead of the ute. The pigs do not fit in the Ferrari and even if they bought a trailer to fit the pigs, it still leaked oil and needed servicing on a regular basis. The council is stuck with it now. It is trying to make it work but it is continually costing money. It should have cost \$10 million, but it cost over \$50 million. The ratepayers are now having to make up the difference. We will continue to advocate for that extra assistance. They may have a case because of COVID and the bushfires. We will continue to talk to the Minister about it.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (11:33):** In 2011 we promised the people of New South Wales that we would make New South Wales number one again, and we have delivered on that. We recognised that to make this State number one again, we had to make regional New South Wales number one again, and that is what we have done. After 16 shameful years of Labor, for too long this State was known as Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong, while the rest of regional New South Wales was left behind. We have turned that around. The 2021-22 budget is another budget delivers for regional New South Wales, which is a key component of the State's economic success. It accounts for around 34 per cent of the State's population, around 25 per cent of the economy and it makes a very significant contribution to the State's exports.

The 2021-22 budget continues this Government's focus on vibrant and dynamic economies in regional New South Wales, ensuring that regional communities have the additional boosts they need to rebuild, recover and rebound from recent and current challenges. It is not just the pandemic. We have had drought, devastating fires, COVID number one in a sense, floods and now COVID number two. Regional communities across the State have proved their resilience in the face of drought, bushfires, flooding and a mouse plague. The New South Wales Government, together with the Commonwealth, has supported this resilience with close to \$10 billion of natural disaster response and recovery funding.

The New South Wales Government remains committed to supporting vital regional industries, including agriculture, forestry, mining, fisheries, manufacturing and services sectors. A forward-looking focus will help regional economies to further specialise in new industries and adopt innovative practices. The investments this Government is making will assist businesses to expand, establish, invest in and create more jobs. It will ensure that communities get the services they need to recover, grow and thrive; protect and improve the environment and local character of our regions; enable the continued response to recent natural disasters of storm, flood, COVID, mouse plague and drought; prepare for the future with drought and regional water strategies; and improve road, rail and digital connections between the regions and cities to speed up the movement of goods and improve access.

The Government's \$4.2 million Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund is capitalising on regional strengths and supporting businesses to create jobs in the regions. The recovering economy needs the right skills for today, while maximising the opportunities for tomorrow. The Government is establishing the \$2 billion Snowy Hydro Investment Fund for projects identified in five priority areas: water security in priority catchments, investing in digital connectivity, improving passenger road and rail, freight linkages, and establishing Special Activation Precincts. In 2021-22 new investments and allocations include \$50 million for mobile coverage, which will invest in infrastructure and emerging technologies to deliver improved mobile coverage across regional New South Wales. That is extremely important. Living in regional communities in New South Wales where there is no digital access and no mobile phone coverage not only affects the capacity of people to be educated, to work and communicate, but it also impedes first responders.

There is \$47.9 million allocated for an expanded Farms of the Future program, which is in addition to the \$400 million Regional Digital Connectivity program. Communications is a Federal responsibility. We as a government and The Nationals in government have identified this as a real problem. We have put money in to leverage Federal funding with private telcos to remove those communication black spots across regional New South Wales. This Government's investment also includes \$79.5 million to continue the \$100 million Regional Job Creation Fund. The fund supports the growth of local businesses in the regions and encourages interstate or overseas businesses to invest in regional New South Wales. The Regional Job Creation Fund has \$100 million already committed, \$26 million approved and has leveraged \$75 million of private investment, which will create 1,000 construction jobs and 1,600 ongoing jobs.

The New South Wales Government's refreshed *A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW* has outlined the importance of helping regional communities prepare for future challenges and opportunities. That support includes \$260 million in this budget as part of a \$1.3 billion project to expand and enhance the public safety network to deliver full State coverage, enhancing the ability to respond to emergencies across the State and addressing recommendations from the New South Wales bushfire inquiry. That was touched on earlier; the black spots impact not only families but also education, businesses and so many other aspects of life. Importantly, it affects the first responders' ability to communicate. The funding improves coverage of the emergency services radio network and will enable all New South Wales emergency service organisations to be put onto one network. The lack of communication played out in the 2019-20 fires and was referred to in the investigation into those fires. In my area the devastating fires destroyed many houses, a life was lost and people were impacted so devastatingly, and the Rural Fire Service volunteers were let down on many occasions by the communications network.

Approximately \$550 million of the Restart NSW funding in this budget has been granted directly to local councils and organisations to enable the funding and delivery of infrastructure projects that improve the State's economic growth and productivity. That includes \$168 million in this budget through the Regional Growth Economic Activation Fund for business enterprise areas, airport upgrades, industrial and logistics hubs, innovation precincts and other infrastructure projects. Funds of \$63.4 million will go to the Future Ready Regions package over four years to help regional communities prepare for future droughts by investing in tools, skills and data initiatives. That includes \$47.9 million for the Farms of the Future program, \$5.5 million for the Farm Business Resilience Program, \$4.3 million for enhanced drought information systems, and \$5.8 million to assess groundwater and underground storage in central and far western New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government's \$2 billion Regional Growth Fund is delivering projects that facilitate regional development, and deliver new and upgraded local amenities. In this year's budget, programs within the fund forecast spending of almost \$400 million to continue delivery of more than 2,100 projects. That includes \$100 million in round four of the Stronger Country Communities Fund, including up to \$50 million in funding to increase female participation in sport. That is an extremely important fund. The Stronger Country Communities Fund was put in place by The Nationals in Government for regional New South Wales because we had been left behind for 16 years. Regional New South Wales was totally forgotten by the previous corrupt and shameful Labor Government, but we have turned that around. For the first time there is funding specific to regional New South Wales.

Wingham Riverside Reserve received \$102,000 and Cundletown Soldiers Memorial Hall received \$108,000. Forster's Main Beach precinct received \$200,000 and the equal access playground in Fotheringham Park, Taree received \$240,000. Upgrades to toilets at Little Street, Forster benefitted from \$100,000. The Great Lakes Aquatic Centre received \$120,000, the Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre received \$201,000 and the Wingham Rugby League Football Club received \$511,000. There is currently no women's shelter in Forster. The Great Lakes Womens Shelter received \$605,000 and The Nationals in the Federal Government under Dr David Gillespie are also contributing to that. We will see construction of that begin very soon; it is very important. What does that mean? It means that the women's shelter in Taree no longer has to look after the Great Lakes part of the electorate of Myall Lakes; it can concentrate on the Manning Valley and the Great Lakes Womens Shelter will look after the southern area of the electorate of Myall Lakes.

The MidCoast Council received \$550,000 for playground shading, and so many playgrounds in the area are having shade put up. The Old Bar Men's Shed, which is a great organisation looking after men and their mental health, received \$98,000. That shed has been built and they have now received funding for an expansion because they have so many members. The SES at Tuncurry received \$162,000, which enabled it to bring forward its new headquarters, have it fitted out and ready for purpose. We had the floods and the SES was getting out there and looking after the community. If it was not for this funding, the SES would have been in its old shed at Pacific Palms.

Valley Industries, which is a disability support organisation, received \$100,000 for an upgrade to its amenities. Dundaloo Active, which is another disability support organisation, received \$146,000 to put in a commercial kitchen in one of its buildings so that its participants can cook and learn how to be hospitality workers. It also opened up a coffee shop in the shopping centre in Wingham where some of its participants go to work. It is a fantastic organisation. Valley Industries and Dundaloo Active have been around for about 60 years looking after people with disabilities. As a result, so many people have moved to the area because they know that their disabled adult child will have a future, and somewhere to live and work and make a contribution where they feel accepted.

The Old Bar Sports Complex, which is something like six sports joined together, received \$445,000, which included new netball courts and a seven-bay storage shed so that each of the organisations could have their own bay to store their gear. That is absolutely loved by the people in Old Bar. Cundletown Soccer Club received \$133,000 for lights and the Great Lakes Pearl Dragons received \$98,000. The Boronia Park Sporting Complex, which is a joint application for soccer and netball in the same precinct, received \$730,000 to expand both of its facilities. The Blackhead Path has been funded to continue the footpath, which runs from Lions Park over to the surf club, and to build adult exercise equipment along the path. The applicant for that was the local Lions Club. Taree Showground received \$151,000 for a cattle shed; the previous cattle shed had been condemned and was leaning over. It is an extremely important part of the showground not only for the show but also for other cattle competitions, including the schools cattle competition. It was great to visit last year, when we could, and see local schools competing and showing their cattle.

Marlee Hall, which is a hall in a farming area, received \$62,000. It is the focal point of that area. During an emergency like the fires, Marlee Hall plays an extremely important role as a place of safety for people to take shelter. That is the same for Bobin Hall, Elands and Killabakh. Those halls play such an important and critical role during disasters that affect the Myall Lakes community. Croki Recreation Area had its river baths, picnic areas and amenities including toilets improved with \$271,000 in funding. Wingham Tennis Club received \$94,000 for a lighting upgrade. Aub Ferris Oval at Nabiac had a fantastic facility built with nearly \$400,000 in funding. That facility was built not only for males but also for women; the needs of the women's soccer team are very much part of the reason for that facility at Aub Ferris Oval. North Tuncurry Sporting Field received \$114,000. Wingham Showground received a little over \$600,000 as part of its funding, which has delivered a phenomenal cattle shed and pavilion. It is a huge multipurpose facility.

A couple of weeks ago I saw that one of the doctor's surgeries had set up a COVID clinic in the showground, which is great. They delivered 575 doses in 2½ hours, helping the community of Wingham get their jabs. Other organisations that benefitted include the Blackhead Tennis Club, which received \$99,000 to resurface its tennis court. The Taree PCYC, which plays such an important role in looking after young people in the Manning Valley, received \$188,000 for improvements to its facility. It is the home of the Gymaroos, an internationally famous gymnastics squad that has competed overseas. It is also the home of the Manning Great Lakes Traffic Offender Intervention Program, which is a great program that works towards changing the behaviour of drivers referred to the program from court. The Taree PCYC has a very strong Indigenous connection. The Mitchell Island Public School received \$75,000, which enabled the school to buy a small bus to get its students around the area, to other schools and to other parts of Australia, such as the Federal Parliament in Canberra.

Sailability at Coomba Park received \$144,000 on top of the \$1.2 million that it received from the Regional Sports Fund. It is now the North Coast headquarters of Sailability and holds a number of State and national regattas for people with disability. The Manning River Rowing Club received \$350,000. The Manning River Rowing Club was hit by a huge storm a couple of years ago and the insurance paid out about \$800,000. The \$350,000 went towards more than just repairs—it transformed the rowing club. It is a very popular rowing club and has a number of regattas during the year. Rowing is a very strong sport in the Manning Valley. A number of Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games athletes, including some medallists, have come from that area. Taree Basketball Inc. received \$355,000 to improve the basketball stadium, focusing on upgrading the amenities and the change room facilities. The Manning Valley Kart Club received \$251,000. That funding was used mainly to resurface the go-kart track. The nature of the bush and trees in the area caused parts of the track to be damaged by tree roots, and that had to be fixed. It is great to see a go-kart club that has a number of days and weekends where people come from all over New South Wales to participate in that sport. [*Extension of time*].

The Bulahdelah Soccer Club received \$92,000 to improve the lighting. The Rotary Club of Taree received \$67,000, which allowed a number of Rotary clubs in the area to combine and build a shed to store equipment such as trailer barbecues and facilitate programs like Driver Reviver. Rotary clubs do a number of things in our community that require equipment, and the shed is for that equipment. Tuncurry Memorial Hall received \$71,000 to do up the kitchen. The Taree and District Netball Association received \$174,000 to upgrade the existing hard courts. I look forward to working with the association to expand the number of hard courts. The Delhantie Park Youth Care and Lifestyle Centre received \$126,000 for a youth program that looks at mental health in schools in the local area. That is Stronger Country Communities. I reinforce that the only reason it exists is The Nationals in government insisting that we get our fair share.

It is transforming communities in regional New South Wales. Those organisations—whether it be a women's shelter, an art society or a sports club—could never afford to do this sort of work without that funding. Councils often cannot afford to assist. Many of these organisations are on council-managed properties and ordinarily would never be able to do such things without this funding. We are transforming public infrastructure across the electorate. I turn to the Resources for Regions Fund. In round eight of the Resources for Regions Fund we received \$75 million. A further \$69.9 million is allocated for projects from the Stronger Country Communities Fund. The Regional Events Acceleration Fund will provide \$20 million and the Regional Tourism Activation Fund will provide \$30 million, totalling \$50 million to promote regional tourism and events. Projects funded through round seven of the Resources for Regions fund will receive a further \$20 million. There are so many other investments that are occurring.

I will now move on to health. The Manning Base Hospital—formerly named the Manning Rural Referral Hospital by the previous Government—was underfunded. The Nationals turned it around by more than doubling the recurring funding. The hospital now has specialists that previously were not available. It has gone from having no oncologists to having one and now two oncologists. There is a brand-new oncology unit, a new renal dialysis unit, new medical imaging equipment and a car park. Funding for stage one of \$40 million was delivered by this Government. In this budget there is funding of \$100 million towards stage two of the hospital's redevelopment. A few months ago I had the great pleasure of going there with the Deputy Premier to announce the project team that will deliver the planning for stage two of the redevelopment. The project manager, the architect and Health Infrastructure NSW were there and they are now doing the detailed planning and design for the stage two redevelopment. It will total \$140 million for the stage one and two redevelopment of the Manning Base Hospital.

It is not all about bricks and mortar. We have increased the number of specialists. I mentioned the oncologists but there is also an obstetrician. Instead of fly-in fly-out anaesthetists, there are two anaesthetists living in the area. A number of other specialists have moved to the area. The medical imaging equipment includes a high-resolution MRI, an improved CAT scanner and a bone density scanner. These are things that we did not previously have but are now available at the hospital. It is not just about bricks and mortar; it is also about increasing the number of staff and improving the services at the hospital. There is funding in this budget towards that planning and the delivery of that project. The budget also provides for delivery of the Forster Tuncurry Public Hospital, which is the number one priority for the Forster-Tuncurry-Great Lakes area of the Myall Lakes electorate.

The planning is underway and a consultant was appointed earlier this year to advise the Government on which option to choose. One option is to do a deal and acquire the Cape Hawke Community Hospital, where there are already public facilities for renal dialysis, chemotherapy and rehabilitation. The hospital's facilities include operating theatres, pathology, X-ray and a hydrotherapy pool within a precinct of medical clinics and specialists. There are 32 blocks of vacant land attached to the existing hospital. That is one option. Another option is to look at a greenfield site on vacant land and build a new hospital. Every single person in the electorate is waiting for that announcement. I call on the health Minister to make that announcement. We were told that it would be made earlier in the year, but we have had the COVID pandemic. We understand the significant impact of COVID on

communities, on staff working in health and on budgets, but that is no reason not to make the announcement. I call for the Minister to make that announcement.

Pleasingly, in the budget is funding for the Myall Lakes electorate for the upgrading of social housing and for the supply of new social housing. Further, there is funding for the hospital and for improvements and ongoing upgrades to all of our public schools, and there is \$2.3 million for an accessibility upgrade to Taree railway station. The council will receive funding of \$4.5 million to undertake road improvements and \$9 million has been allocated for the Northern Gateway freight hub, which is an important project. Of the \$15 million that has been promised for the Northern Gateway project, \$9 million has been allocated in this budget. The new roundabout is already up and out of the ground. Jim Pearson Transport is starting on stage one of the project, and we are looking forward to many more freight companies using that freight logistics hub when it is completed.

There were many projects for the electorate of Myall Lakes in the budget. Just over \$1.2 million was allocated from the regional growth economic activation fund towards an electrical upgrade of the Whitbread Industrial Estate. The electricity output will be increased so that there is less likelihood of blackouts, and underground powerlines will be installed. The overhead powerlines were interfering with the movement of boats and cranes and other equipment and many businesses in the area were being affected by the lack of reliable power, which they needed for their machinery and equipment.

I am also pleased to see in the budget funding for ambulance services. Forster will be getting a new ambulance station at Breese Parade, the old MidCoast Water building site, and additional paramedics. That facility will be in addition to the ambulance station at Tuncurry. The Government is not closing one station and opening another. It is an additional ambulance station at Forster, with at least 12 paramedics. We are also delivering an ambulance station at Old Bar, again with at least 12 paramedics—and that is in addition to the ambulance station at Taree. Once again, we are not closing one and opening another. It is an additional station at Old Bar, and 12 more paramedics will move into the area. The site for this new station has not yet been announced. Contract negotiations are ongoing, but they are close to finalisation. I look forward to announcing the new site.

Another great announcement in the budget—which I am sure will interest most people in New South Wales—is funding to continue the planning of the motorway extension to Raymond Terrace, allowing motorists to bypass Hexham. I am also pleased to see the continued funding for another two years for the regional seniors travel card. Over 17,000 people in the Myall Lakes electorate have taken advantage of this \$250 prepaid card, which can be used for fuel, taxis and transport. This fantastic initiative was introduced by The Nationals in government purely for regional New South Wales because we know the importance of regional New South Wales. It is also great to see funding go to Aboriginal communities, including at Tobwabba. Roadworks are already underway out there, and the Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service is doing a fantastic job delivering vaccines to its community in Forster.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (12:03):** Mr Speaker, it is great to see you and I hope your community is doing well. I also wish my colleagues in this place and their communities very well. I am very pleased to be here representing the community of Canterbury. It has been a very long time since Parliament has sat. It was four months ago, but it feels like four years. I left this place four months ago after the then Treasurer and now Premier Perrottet delivered the budget. I now come here to raise the many issues and concerns of my community, whom I represent with the consideration and dignity they deserve. Today, before coming to Parliament, I visited and thanked all the health workers and volunteers at the All Saints Greek Orthodox parish. The All Saints Grammar School has opened its gym for a pop-up vaccination clinic—something for which we had been calling for many months before it was opened in August.

I acknowledge the All Saints Greek Orthodox parish board, the Mother Maria of Paris volunteers, the volunteers across Sydney who came to assist and, of course, the health workers from the Sydney Local Health District. I thank each and every one of them for their compassion and their support. It has been a very long and intense time for many people in my community, and I wish them well. Boy, did we work hard, working 18-hour days to make sure that our community was vaccinated. About 4½ months ago our first-dose vaccination rates were hovering around 20 per cent. Today I can report to the House that our first-dose vaccination rates in our multicultural community are hovering around 91 per cent, and that is a credit to our community. I know of the many barriers, the disadvantages and the inequities, about which I have pleaded for assistance from the Government for many years, but I will never, ever forget what I saw on the ground during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I will raise those issues here.

I wish that I had a long list of projects in my electorate, like my good friend the member for Myall Lakes. He had a list as long as his arm of projects and funds that have come to his electorate. I have talked about a division creating two cities, two States. I was right in the middle with my community and I can tell you, hand on heart, that I saw the division. I saw the cuts to services, the cuts to public sector wages, the cuts to government offices. The cuts and axing are there for all to see. It was family and friends, our community and volunteers who instigated

a community-led response. It was not led by the Government. The community was at the forefront, working together, to increase first-dose vaccination rates. Why? It is because we live in dense environments. We live in multi-generational communities made up of the kids, the grandparents who come from overseas to help the parents make a go of it, the parents who save up for a house deposit by working three jobs. The jobs they work in are cleaning, stacking shelves, driving trucks—jobs that cannot be done from home.

So many times I was talking to the media, writing and speaking, trying to get the Government to listen to make sure we had sufficient resources on the ground. I have been begging this Government for mental health support, yet we are going to receive only a tiny bit of money for the community organisations who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, who have assisted our community by providing services above and beyond the services funded by the Government. I would need days to speak in this House about the issues and concerns of my community, about the devastation, about the refugee families and the parents who have to work in insecure workplaces. Insecure work is another massive issue inflicted on our communities by Federal and State Coalition governments. People who are trying to make a go of it, who are trying to do the best they can, who are following the rules and abiding by the laws of our State have been left hamstrung. These people are not teachers; they do not read and write in their own language. I can vouch for that because my mum is one of these people, an elderly lady who came to Australia in the sixties as a young 20-year-old who was not able to get a formal education.

There are many people like that in my community who cannot help their kids read and write. That is why today our Labor leader, Chris Minns, made an important announcement advocating for those people in our communities across western Sydney and New South Wales, to invest in tuition and intense learning. Our kids need to catch up. They should not be disadvantaged because their parents were hamstrung. I have been calling for the funding of Canterbury Hospital for a long time. I will read a letter that I wrote to Premier Perrottet. There are two things in this budget that I agree with. I know that there is a range of funding for roads but some members opposite received funding for individual projects. Our community has done the hard yards and the inequity in our community has been exposed by the pandemic. I congratulate Premier Perrottet on his appointment and acknowledge that a year ago he came to Canterbury Boys High School with former Prime Minister Howard and announced funding for a new school hall that has been provided for in this year's budget.

I acknowledge also that we had to work hard with our local health workers and community leaders to get \$1 million reinstated for the Canterbury Hospital Clinical Services Plan, which had been cut. We fought in the media and in the Parliament and after thousands of petitioners signed a petition that \$1 million was reinstated. I do not want that \$1 million to go to waste; that is, nothing happens and the plan is put on the shelf. If the Government is serious about helping people from the south-west, the west and inner south-west, it will direct funds into Canterbury Hospital. I wrote a letter to Premier Perrottet on 23 September 2021 titled, "Economic Stimulus Submission: Canterbury Hospital", which states:

As you know, the economic impact that this pandemic has had on NSW has been devastating. To drive our State's economic recovery, I am sure that the NSW Government will be looking at funding projects that will create jobs and support small business. Accordingly, I ask you to consider funding the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital as a matter of priority.

Canterbury Hospital has reached its tipping point this year with the current outbreak and the outbreak has particularly affected the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area, including the suburb of Campsie ...

Campsie is a dense, transient suburb. There are 25,000 residents in this very small suburb. Thousands of people live in those old, red-brick flats. It is tough. Most of the people who live in Campsie are essential workers. Eight out of 10 speak a language other than English. We punch above our weight and our students do a phenomenal job and are accepted into selective schools, universities and TAFE. I know many students who are very successful. The Government should not continue to impose barriers on suburbs in my electorate. My letter continues:

During this pandemic, and despite a herculean effort by health staff, Canterbury Hospital is struggling to run its usual operations and simultaneously provide essential COVID services for the local community. These services include testing sites and vaccine hubs as part of an effort to stop the spread of the virus throughout the local community.

This was written to Premier Perrottet when he was still the Treasurer. I continue:

Now that we're in the eleventh week of lockdown, the NSW public health system is in overdrive. Canterbury Hospital continues to struggle to cope due to unprecedented demands on its facilities and resources. The area served by Canterbury Hospital has been a major hotspot with high case numbers placing significant pressure on the hospital. Staff are perpetually exhausted and overwhelmed and the number of patients requiring the hospital's services remains high. As the Premier has indicated, the strain on hospitals is only going to increase in severity in the upcoming months. NSW Government models are predicting a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations once restrictions begin to ease, and the hospital is ill-equipped to handle the surge.

... for years I have warned the Government about the consequences of not redeveloping Canterbury Hospital. Even before the pandemic, Canterbury Hospital was on life support as it was severely under resourced and its staff overworked. Canterbury Hospital had no capacity for renal dialysis, angiograms, or MRI scans. Wait times for emergency and non-emergency patients was growing year by year, as was the time for patient discharge.

A few months ago just before lockdown I had the opportunity to speak to Minister Hazzard and Sydney Local Health District CEO Dr Teresa Anderson about this. Minister Hazzard was concerned that we do not have renal dialysis and I understand that NSW Health will do something. I am waiting to hear back about that. My letter continues:

I note too that Canterbury Hospital has not been redeveloped since 1998, despite the area around the hospital undergoing significant population growth. The area around the hospital is also projected to continue growing. As Canterbury Hospital's own Strategic Plan for 2019-2024 states—

—this is the Government's own report:

"Population projections indicate a 39% increase in population between 2016 and 2031. This represents significant growth ... Over recent years, residential development has grown significantly. For example, the area along Canterbury Road adjacent to the hospital is planned to have an additional 7,000 dwellings. The Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Corridor includes four planned precincts including Canterbury, Campsie, Belmore and Lakemba. The Corridor Strategy plans for 35,400 new homes and 8,700 jobs over the next 20 years and infrastructure to support the future community's needs."

I now draw your attention to the persistent increase in the number of patients at the Emergency Department (ED) at Canterbury Hospital in the last decade. Between January 2010 and September 2011, the average number of ED patients attended to at the hospital was consistently over 8,000 and close to 9,000. That figure reached over 11,000 a year later in third quarter of 2015. In the July quarter of 2017, Canterbury Hospital received its most ED patients in its history: a staggering 12,453. Following this, from 2017-2019 attendance averaged over 11,000. The number of patients at Canterbury Hospital is projected to continue to increase in future years.

More specifically, the Bureau of Health's *Information Healthcare Observer* shows emergency presentations and the waiting list for elective surgery have increased significantly over the past decade.

...

The growth in the local population that I have already referenced is placing immense pressure on Canterbury Hospital's hardworking and highly skilled staff. As a result, between April and June 2021:

- Only 69.5% of emergency patients started treatment on-time;
- Patients waited an average of 3 hours and 14 minutes to leave the emergency department; and
- 10% of patients waited an average of 7 hours and 4 minutes before leaving the emergency department.

Beyond population growth and Canterbury Hospital's patient load, the Government must also be minded to unique local demographic factors that justify additional investment. Almost half of Canterbury residents were born overseas, and around two-thirds of Canterbury residents do not speak English at home. This cultural diversity requires staff at Canterbury Hospital to exercise special skill and take additional time with patients to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers.

Another important demographic factor that affects Canterbury Hospital is the ageing population. The population over 65 has increased by 1.5% between 2006 and 2016. Furthermore, Canterbury Hospital serves one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities in Australia. As the Government's own strategic plan states:

"Around one third (33%) of the Canterbury population live in areas that are among the most socioeconomically disadvantaged in Australia. Data from the 2016 Census suggests that Canterbury is more socioeconomically disadvantaged than other surrounding areas, with 31% of Statistical Areas Level '1' (SA1s) among the most disadvantaged 20% of SA1s in Australia. A number of indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage are more prevalent in Canterbury than in the surrounding areas and in Greater Sydney, which is relevant to health service planning because of the well-established links between social disadvantage and health need."

Additionally, the area served by Canterbury Hospital has higher levels of many chronic diseases compared to the rest of NSW, including:

- Higher rates of asthma-related hospitalisations compared to the rest of NSW ...

That could be attributed to a number of things. There are a number of people in this place who have medical backgrounds and understand what I am talking about when it comes to asthma-related issues. My letter continues:

- Higher rates of Type 2 Diabetes relative to the rest of NSW; and higher rates of bladder, liver, lung, stomach and thyroid cancers relative to NSW.

Cancer treatment is not available at Canterbury Hospital. I am not talking about the electorate of Canterbury; I am talking about the region that it captures. The region does not have a lot of multilingual prevention health information available on high cancer rates. By the time a lot of our elderly people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities get a diagnosis, their cancers are probably at stage three or stage four. The lack of access to treatment and other supports makes it very difficult for them. This is a massive issue.

I am not alone in calling for the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital. As has been reported in the media, dozens of senior medical staff at the hospital wrote to Minister Hazzard calling for its urgent redevelopment. Last year, 60 senior doctors from Canterbury Hospital wrote to the Minister, and have since spoken to the Government, about the need to upgrade the hospital. It makes economic sense. That expression of concern from 60 senior hospital doctors sends a very strong message to the Government. In the letter they stated that care at Canterbury Hospital is delivered in dire conditions and that the non-clinical space is grossly inadequate. They also

warned that patients will inevitably suffer adverse outcomes if urgent attention is not given to upgrade the facility, which is too small, too old and not fit for purpose.

The public health and economic benefits that would follow from such a huge public works initiative are clear. For that reason, the redevelopment of Canterbury Hospital is the type of project the Government should focus on and commit to for a post-pandemic economic recovery in south-west Sydney. The economic benefits would be widespread. The upgrade to Canterbury Hospital would create thousands of direct jobs in south-west and western Sydney, as well as indirect jobs, including suppliers, and in local businesses and local shops. At the moment Canterbury Hospital employs 900 health staff, most of whom come from western Sydney and south-west Sydney and speak a second language. How good would it be if Canterbury Hospital became another major teaching hospital in the community?

The population of the Canterbury region has grown. I have spoken before in the House about my views on the development on Canterbury Road. More development will take place around train stations, but there needs to be wider infrastructure to meet the needs of the community. People cannot be dumped 20 minutes from the city or Parramatta without sufficient infrastructure in the area. By upgrading Canterbury Hospital, the Government would be investing in local students' education. The number of young boys and girls involved in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and health who can speak another language would increase. We are not going to stop immigration. Some people in our communities still have many barriers. They made a choice when they came to Australia to not go to night school or TAFE or take English lessons. They had to work three jobs. It is still very hard for elderly people to communicate. The upgrade to Canterbury Hospital would serve not only the Government but also the community by increasing investment in the region.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:24):** I make a contribution to debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022. The budget was very interesting. It confirmed the Government's commitment to regional areas. It provided an extra \$2.4 million for Aboriginal housing. The Bundjalung people of the North Coast of New South Wales, who are very proud to walk on the lands that are under their custodianship, do a fabulous job and are very well respected in the wider community. Education was a big winner in the 2021-22 budget in my electorate. Just over \$100 million was allocated for upgrades to schools in the area, including \$32 million for Kingscliff High School, \$39 million for Kingscliff Primary School, \$25 million for Tweed Heads South Public School and \$26 million for Tweed River High School.

Also, \$20 million has been allocated for a trade school at Tweed River High School, which will bridge the gap for many students seeking to learn a trade. This funding is on top of the \$25 million that was allocated in 2018 to rebuild Pottsville Beach Public School, which is a great school south of my electorate. The spending does not stop there. Tweed Heads is one of the fastest-growing regional areas outside of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. It has recently been designated as a city and major plans have been announced for the region. The Tweed is to Brisbane what the Central Coast is to Sydney. I can travel from my electorate office in the Tweed to Queensland Parliament in an hour and 15 minutes. I acknowledge the member for Terrigal, who does a fabulous job on the Central Coast.

Many years ago I believe Tweed Heads started off as a little fishing village. It then morphed into a holiday destination. As a young child I holidayed in Terrigal, and I am sure that many south-east Queenslanders have holidayed in the Tweed. The Tweed then became a retirement destination. It can be argued that, technically, the area is a southern suburb of Queensland. However, at times my very good friend Anastacia Palaszczuk has a different view on that, which I deeply respect, which is demonstrated by her State's use of concrete barricades and barbed wire, as well as by her opinions on the role of the police, the army, the air force and the navy at the border. Despite that, I am working collaboratively with her on such matters.

The Tweed has changed. The 2021-22 budget recognised the need to upgrade utilities in the region. One example was the \$4.7 million for the redevelopment of the existing fire station at Kingscliff. I must admit that I got very excited in 2007 when the police Minister, Tony Kelly, announced a new police station for the Tweed. Nine years later and after three different sites had been chosen, we got to cut the ribbon. Wherever you are, Mr Kelly, I thank you for that. The new ambulance station at Pottsville was opened just over two years ago. The commitment to the project was made a number of years beforehand. It has been a great plus for the area. Similar to the great electorate of Coffs Harbour, a large percentage of the population of the electorate of Tweed, probably around 29 per cent or 30 per cent, is over 65. I think that figure is similar to other electorates on the North Coast. Those people need extra services.

I come to the jewel in the crown, the famous Tweed Hospital, which is currently under construction. It is due for completion at the end of 2022 and will be operational in 2023. The hospital will cost in the vicinity of \$700 million. Its construction has been an amazing exercise. I recently went through the building site, and the hospital is rapidly coming out of the ground. For example, our old hospital has approximately 220 beds and 1,200 staff and our new hospital will have 499 beds and 2,700 staff, but it does not end there. Currently in the

vicinity of around 1,800 people are undergoing cancer treatment. Every year 5,000 people make trips to the fine Lismore hospital, which is one hour and 10 minutes away or to Brisbane if the border is open, to access cancer treatment. The new hospital will have oncology and radiation services. I praise the Minister for Health and Medical Research for his tireless work and advocacy. We meet regularly and he corresponds regularly with the Tweed Hospital medical council.

The hospital is getting a cath lab, which it does not have. Currently people who need a stent in their heart, artery or veins have to travel to Brisbane, if the border is open, or down to Lismore hospital, which can cause bed block. People have to wait for their treatment; they cannot go home so they have to stay there. With any large hospital development a mock-up ward and operating theatre are built because old and new hospitals are vastly different. They are usually kept for three to six months and are used as a training facility for the staff to learn new procedures and to learn about new equipment, but at Lismore a deal was struck to build a permanent training facility because one of the great TAFEs of this State, the Kingscliff TAFE, is just across the road. This training facility will be used by people working in allied health, aged care and so on. It is a legacy of this Government. I pay tribute to a former TAFE Minister, Adam Marshall, who announced that facility, which was warmly received.

In this House there has been a lot of talk about so-called cuts to TAFE or issues affecting TAFE. I am extraordinarily proud of Kingscliff TAFE. The North Coast and across the border are experiencing a building boom. One has to understand that in the Tweed, 30 per cent of the population are employed across the border. Every day in the vicinity of 16,000 to 20,000 people from my electorate work in Queensland, but it is a little bit difficult at the moment, thanks to Annastacia Palaszczuk. A person can learn a skill—for example, building, construction, aged care, catering, hairdressing and the list goes on—at one of this State's TAFE colleges and use it in another State. I am very happy that the number of apprenticeships in this State has increased by about 30 per cent from last year. Multimedia courses are extremely popular. Before lockdown I had the privilege to attend Kingscliff TAFE where the automotive and diesel engineers' courses are fabulous, but another one specialises in movie make-up.

Members may not be aware of the studios at Movie World where many great movies are made. We are fortunate that a number of movies have been made there. The biggest one on everyone's mind in my neck of the woods was *Muriel's Wedding*, which was based on a true story. I admit that the screenplay was very close to the truth. Some time ago the famous Johnny Depp flew into Australia with his dogs, Pistol and Boo—our Deputy Prime Minister had a different view from us. *Pirates of the Caribbean No. 5* was filmed in a studio at Cabarita Beach, which is a great surfing break that recently featured in the World Surfing League. The outdoor scenes for *Aquaman* were also filmed in my electorate. Recently *I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here* was filmed in my electorate, but it was a disaster when one of the make-up girls from Sydney brought COVID-19 to my electorate and caused a week-long lockdown. Fortunately she was double vaccinated and there was no spread of COVID.

My electorate is a dynamic area. I have been pleased to be able to assist in funding for a lot of sporting groups. Three of our surf clubs have been funded to enable extensions to be carried out. The agriculture Minister announced three weeks ago that my electorate will get 15 extra SMART drumlines. On a negative note, we have lost several people in great white shark attacks: one in the Tweed and one just around the corner at the famous Coolangatta Beach and Snapper Beach. We are also getting a number of extra drones. Steve Pearce, the Chief Executive Officer of Surf Life Saving New South Wales, ran one of the first pilot programs for an emergency beacon in my area. A tower was placed on the very picturesque Dreamtime Beach, which is extraordinarily dangerous because we have lost more than five lives over the past seven years to a rip to the north through the rocks. The button on an emergency beacon, which cost \$27,000, can be pushed rather than using a phone. On top of the tower is a camera so Surf Life Saving emergency can refocus that camera out to sea to direct emergency responses in a far more appropriate manner.

Social housing is unpopular. We are part of an ongoing pilot program thanks to Minister Alister Henskens. Tweed outreach is a group of five individuals who visit the homeless on the streets to arrange services for them from the back of a van. Recently they have been using the van to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations to the homeless. Queensland has far more rigid move-on powers so, therefore, a large number of Queenslanders come over to our State. Queensland decided to shut down all its charitable work on the beaches during the Commonwealth Games so as to not create a stain on people coming for the Games and forced people over the border. Believe it or not, at that time Queensland wrote to the New South Wales Government and asked if it could increase the funding to look after its homeless people who had been displaced to New South Wales. Queensland does not have a charitable Government. When the Olympic Games are held in Queensland in 2032 it may happen again.

Our level of social housing has been announced and it is underway with \$15 million for the building of just under 50 units. This will be a new idea. It will enable people residing in older social housing to move into brand new units with a possible redevelopment of the existing sites that were built in the 1960s or 1970s. They

are small three-bedroom houses on a quarter-acre block. If redeveloped, four or five townhouses could be built on the same block. Therefore, the supply of social housing is increased. It is a good plan that has been well received within my local area. Moving along, it has been very good news for the Tweed. We have had a number of local grants: we have a fishing fleet within the Tweed and we have had upgrades to the fishing wharves. I was very proud when we lobbied in this place a number of years ago—I remember being on the Opposition benches—for the provision of water police. Until recently, the only water police were located as far south as Coffs Harbour, which takes about six hours to get to.

For the benefit of my colleagues, in the Tweed the border runs up to the famous Duranbah—or Dee-bah—which is recognised as one of the top five surfing spots in Australia. Then, for some reason, the border doglegs 30 degrees to the north. Eighteen nautical miles off Surfers Paradise is New South Wales jurisdiction. One may well ask, "How did this occur?" Approximately 140 years ago New South Wales and Queensland, believe it or not, were one. They decided to form a border. It was sparsely populated back then, so they asked a number of landowners, "Where do you want to be? New South Wales or Queensland?" If they said Queensland, the border ran south of their property and vice versa. Then they realised that just off Palm Beach, which is about five nautical miles to the north, there is a large lucrative prawning ground. Being the dominant State, New South Wales said, "We need that," and so the border was moved. It is a bit confusing.

While we are on issues that are confusing, the famous Gold Coast Airport that is currently off-limits to people in New South Wales has 10 metres of the new international terminal and half the runway built in New South Wales. The funny thing is that some of the toilet blocks and cubicles are in New South Wales and some are in Queensland. It is a consultant's dream retirement fund, but it is a planning nightmare. Technically there are two local governments, two State governments and the Federal Government over the top—five consenting authorities. Trying to get two of those consenting authorities to agree is difficult, but trying to get five to agree is virtually impossible. The Queensland Airports corporation does a fabulous job in doing that. I refer next to fixing country bridges. I was amazed to find out that we do have one wooden bridge, which has recently been replaced. I thank the regional transport Minister for that. I will also speak about bus services. In recent times there has been an increase of around 400 extra bus services per week. There is one every 15 minutes running up and down the spine. The next step is to fix some of the cross-border issues. I pay tribute to my good friend, James McTavish, the Cross-Border Commissioner. I seek a small extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

People cannot use an Opal card on my public transport; they cannot buy an Opal card. To go from Tweed Heads to Queensland, commuters need to pay cash for their tickets, get to the border and then use their version of the Opal card, which is the go card. That is what we are working on and it is difficult. It has been in the pipeline for some time. Lastly, there is the famous Northern Rivers Rail Trail. I participated in debate in this Chamber on the Tumbumba to Rosewood Rail Trail around Wagga and at the same time I spoke about the Tweed. The great news is that funding has been allocated and work will commence shortly on the famous rail trail going down to Crabbes Creek all the way from Murwillumbah. The trail is approximately 27 kilometres long.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Bills*

### **ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

#### **Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments. I order that consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments be set down as an order of the day for a later hour of the sitting.

#### *Committees*

### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COERCIVE CONTROL**

#### **Reports**

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

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (12:45):** Via video link: On behalf of the Chair: I was the proud Deputy Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control. I will indulge members of the Parliament for a few moments as I note the report entitled *Coercive control in domestic relationships* and the work of members and many others on this committee. Some of my colleagues are in the House and I acknowledge the members of the committee—Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC, Mr Justin Clancy, MP, Ms Steph Cooke, MP, the Hon. Rod Roberts, MLC, Mr Peter Sidgreaves, MP, and Ms Anna Watson, MP. We were ably chaired by the Hon. Natalie Ward,

MLC. I acknowledge the fantastic committee members who worked with us and walked beside us through what was a harrowing experience at times.

I thank Clara, Dora, Sally, Abigail, Ilana and Derya for their professionalism in walking beside us through the process. I also acknowledge many of the stakeholder groups who prepared much material for our consideration and education: Domestic Violence NSW, Women's Safety NSW, author Jess Hill and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia. I thank those who made submissions, those who spoke to their submissions in the public hearings, which were very long days and those who attended public hearings in some of the regional areas, like our trip to Wagga Wagga and Narrandera. Their harrowing stories reflected real lives and real experiences. For the record I quote the words spoken by the Chair:

Our deepest appreciation is extended to the brave souls who took the time to prepare written submissions, who shared their experiences, and had the guts to re-open their wounds in order to educate us. To those who work in, care for and provide services for victim survivors, and families of those victims who haven't survived...we thank you for your persistence.

The committee recommended that the Government criminalise coercive control, but attach safeguards to educate the public about coercive control, prevent intimate partner homicides, make it easier for victims to get help and access legal protections, improve the enforcement and prosecution of domestic abuse and have specific penalties for the offence in sentencing. I commend the report to the Parliament.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (12:49):** Via video link: I contribute to the take-note debate on the report of the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control entitled *Coercive control in domestic relationships*. I very much echo the words of the deputy chair in the sense that it was an immense privilege to have been part of the committee. I thank the chair and deputy chair for their guidance and also my fellow committee members for coming together from diverse backgrounds to find consensus on the matter. It was an important step in moving forward. I thank the staff, as did the deputy chair, for working with the committee on the inquiry. Most importantly, I feel a deep sense of gratitude. I thank all those who shared their wisdom, insights and experiences. To the organisations and particularly to the individuals with lived experience, we hope that the findings of the committee reflect your thoughts and views. Again it moves our State forward on that important matter.

One of the important learnings is that right at the start we must recognise patterns of behaviour and coercive control as a form of domestic violence. There are a number of important recommendations and findings, but recommendation 2 was a key recommendation for me in terms of accepting that coercive control is a form of domestic violence. It must be defined in legislation and recommendation 2 speaks to the need to create a clear and accessible definition of domestic abuse in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, which includes coercive and controlling behaviour. The other important aspect that I draw to the attention of members is the need for a holistic approach. A matter should not just be a police matter; it should be a whole-of-government matter. We must look at early intervention and we must take a public health focused approach, and recommendation 8 speaks to that. We must improve awareness in our community and we must improve our understanding of that type of abuse.

The other aspect in terms of being whole-of-government is to have a shared understanding across the various agencies. An aspect that is important from my perspective, and it is a learning from other jurisdictions, is the importance of having a multiagency risk assessment and management framework, which ensures that services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family violence. Again my thanks go out to all the people who were involved in the inquiry, particularly the individuals and the organisations [inaudible] from. I certainly commend the report. Again I thank the committee, the chair and staff.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:53):** I contribute to the take-note debate on the report of the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control. I also echo the contributions from the deputy chair and from fellow committee member the member for Albury. I thank the chair, the deputy chair and the committee for working constructively together over many months to address the issue and to give it the consideration that it deserves. I also acknowledge the committee staff who worked tirelessly on the issue. We had many submissions and a lot of work had to be done behind the scenes, and we are all very grateful for that. From my perspective as a rural member of Parliament, as most people in this place would know, I thank the committee and the chair for taking the time to come to Narrandera on 22 April this year. The committee took that opportunity to meet with people in a rural setting.

Domestic violence can be difficult for a lot of people to talk about, so for the committee to come to the region enabled victim survivors and other stakeholder groups to talk directly to them about the issue in a familiar environment, which made a big difference. It made people feel comfortable to share their stories, which were very difficult to hear at times, though it was really important that we did hear them. I thank all of the victim survivors, support groups and frontline workers who appeared as part of the inquiry, particularly those from our rural areas and those in Narrandera who attended that hearing. We heard from the deputy chair that it was the committee's unanimous view that we should criminally recognise coercive control and that it be done with an extensive

implementation process that includes consultation, education, resources and a lead-in time, acknowledging that those elements are imperative for it to succeed.

Once again I personally thank everyone who was involved in the inquiry. I thank the Narrandera Shire Council for working with us, for supporting our visit to Narrandera in April and for its work at a grassroots level in terms of the Domestic Violence Advisory Committee. It was a wonderful experience to be part of, though heart-wrenching at times. It was really important work and hopefully it marks the start of real change in relation to recognising coercive control and seeing its prevalence reduce in our society because its impact is huge on women, families and broader communities. It has a disproportionate impact on small country towns, so it was good to ensure that rural people had the opportunity to speak face to face to the committee as part of the process. Once again I thank the committee, the chair and everyone involved in the inquiry. We look forward to seeing where it goes from here.

**Report noted.**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS

### Reports

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

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (12:58):** Via video link: As Chair: I contribute to the take-note debate on the report of the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics entitled *Review of the proposed resolution for the establishment of a parliamentary compliance officer*. The report was tabled out of session with the Clerk on 16 July 2021 and follows a review that the committee conducted into a proposed resolution before both Houses for the establishment of a parliamentary compliance officer. The committee received the referral to conduct the review in November 2020 amid concerns about a jurisdictional gap in regulating the conduct of members of the New South Wales Parliament. In carrying out its review, the committee sought comment from five targeted stakeholders: the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption, the United Kingdom Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, the Chief Executive of the New South Wales Department of Parliamentary Services, the New South Wales Parliamentary Ethics Adviser and the Secondary Compliance Officer of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal. Their wealth of experience assisted the committee to formulate its findings and recommendations, and I thank them for their participation in the review.

The committee's report contains 42 recommendations and six findings. In particular, the committee recommended the establishment of an independent complaints officer to receive and investigate complaints about members of the New South Wales Parliament across a number of areas, including minor breaches around member entitlements and the disclosure of pecuniary interests, as well as matters of bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The committee's recommendations are intended to address the concerns about a jurisdictional gap in regulating certain conduct of members—for example, regulating an entitlements breach that is not serious enough to be referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption or, given that a member's seat has never been declared vacant under the Constitution Act, for wilful failure to comply with pecuniary interest disclosure requirements and the fact that legislation does not provide for the examination of breaches that are not wilful.

The recommendations are also intended to address a process gap that the committee found exists around complaints against members for bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The committee identified that the parliamentary administration does not to date have the power to formally receive such complaints nor to investigate them. To assist the independent complaints officer to carry out his or her role, the committee also recommended that a panel of three people be appointed to whom the officer could direct complaints for investigation if he or she did not carry out the investigation himself or herself. Two of the people on that panel would be required to have appropriate skills and experience to investigate complaints about bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour by members. The third panel member would need appropriate skills to investigate complaints about other matters covered by the independent complaints officer, such as breaches relating to member entitlements and pecuniary interest disclosures.

In addition, in the course of its report, the committee noted that members appear to have a number of legislated obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. It appeared that members are liable for harm to their staff caused by bullying or harassment because of the operation of those Acts. Therefore, in its report, the committee also highlighted the importance of education for members and staff about those legal obligations in creating a safe, secure and respectful workplace. In closing, I thank my fellow committee members for their diligence throughout the review process. The committee's deliberations for the review were very productive, allowing us to fasten upon the areas of concern in regulating member conduct and to formulate recommendations to address identified gaps. I also thank the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly,

Ms Helen Minnican, and the committee secretariat, particularly Elspeth Dyer, for their professionalism and support in the conduct of the review. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (13:02):** I contribute to the take-note debate on the report by the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics entitled *Review of the proposed resolution for the establishment of a parliamentary compliance officer*. I very much appreciate working with members of the committee, both the constitution of the current committee and the committee that existed prior to the last election. The committee has worked in a very cooperative way with a unanimity of views that has been reflected firstly in the rewriting of the Code of Conduct for Members, which has been adopted by the House, and now in this report. First, I thank the current and previous members of the committee and the many members of the House, particularly those who are legally qualified and considerably eminent legal professionals, who validly contributed to the Code of Conduct for Members.

They had a valuable input in that report, as they did for this report, although they did so informally. I thank them for that, particularly those from the Government side. The other people I pay tribute to are the Clerk and her staff; it has been their work that has given effect to the unanimous view of the committee. To produce such a report is certainly beyond our capacity. Although it contains our unanimous views, the report is the work of the Clerk and her staff and I thank them sincerely for giving effect to the committee's views in this report. With the plethora of oversight agencies that exist in the State that oversight elected representatives at every level, we are judged in respect of our performance every day by the people in a democracy and that is who we are ultimately accountable to. If we commit acts that are in breach of the criminal law, then we are liable to prosecution. If we are in serious breach of the Code of Conduct for Members, then under that code of conduct the Independent Commission Against Corruption has powers to investigate our conduct.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members require, effectively, an intentional act, and there are a range of inadvertent errors that occur. In terms of our expenditure and utilisation of parliamentary assets, for example, which are in fact public assets, we are bound by the requirements of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal and we are also audited by the Auditor-General. We conceded that there is a gap for inadvertent errors. Much of those errors may well be caused by staff, who we are responsible for. There needs to be a way to diffuse those who constantly wish to complain about individual politicians over matters that are relatively minor in a way in which complaints can be received, looked at and dealt with promptly and quickly—and that is the intention of the committee—and to enable a compliance officer to outsource it to people who have the appropriate qualifications. In other words, we do not want to employ in-house detailed investigators because each complaint may well relate to areas where a specialty is required. I commend the report to the House and again thank all the members of the committee for working diligently and unanimously in the preparation of the report.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (13:06):** I was in the Chamber and heard the contribution of the member for Heffron. I make a very brief contribution to the take-note debate on the report by the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics entitled *Review of the proposed resolution for the establishment of a parliamentary compliance officer*. I acknowledge the Chair of the committee, the member for Camden, and my colleague the member for Heffron. I also acknowledge the great work that the committee has done in drafting the report, with a view for the proposed resolution of the establishment of a parliamentary compliance officer. From the outset, it is a pleasure to sit on the committee with all of the members. We work collegially and for the betterment of the members of the New South Wales Parliament.

As the member for Heffron articulated, the process of the most suitable people taking on the role of compliance officer or officers is the best outcome for members of Parliament. Concerns were raised about the potential weaponisation of that sort of process. The member for Heffron and I are on a unity ticket when it comes to that because a compliance officer or a team of those people have to have the faith and trust of members of Parliament. We want to encourage members of Parliament to realise that they can come forward if they feel they have done the wrong thing. It is not like these are deliberate acts of systemic corruption. A member could make a very simple mistake and not realise it, but they have the confidence to talk to a compliance officer and have that issue dealt with in a fair, just and honest way without the possibility of any unnecessary retribution.

That was one of the things that the committee discussed at length during the inquiry process. The recent actions of the ICAC also raise concerns about the weaponisation of process. It was a very good report with a very good outcome, and members can have confidence that the processes being put forward will provide them with fair and honest advice that will then not be used against them. Obviously the area of privilege was raised multiple times. I think the report provides a lot of detail and a very solid background moving forward for members of Parliament. Every day we are responsible for making decisions regarding travel allowances, where minor infractions may arise without any malice or deliberation. I acknowledge the great work of the elected members. I acknowledge Elspeth Dyer and the rest of the staff for working with us as elected members, and the amount of work that they have put into this report.

We value the outstanding and professional way in which they provide this information to us in a very timely way. They were presented with a number of challenges in the production of the report due to the difficult conditions presented by the COVID pandemic. I acknowledge the great work being done by the chair and all of the members. In particular, I mention the member for Heffron and his extensive legal knowledge. I personally found it very beneficial to this committee. It is a pleasure to serve on the committee with him. I think this is an excellent report and I encourage members to read through it. Members have the opportunity to access information about how to do things correctly in this Parliament through the EdApp process, and all the other engagement options. Should a member make an honest mistake they can go to this particular team of people to rectify the mistake that they have made without it becoming a major political or public issue, which is quite unnecessary. I commend the report to the House and thank all those members who took part.

**Report noted.**

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

### Reports

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

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (13:11):** On behalf of the Chair: As the Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, I speak to the committee's report on *Reducing trauma on local roads in New South Wales*. I take this time to acknowledge the chair, Lou Amato, who is in the other place, and fellow committee members. I know that the safety of road users and pedestrians is a top priority for every person in this Chamber, and every fatality or injury is one too many. Behind every statistic are loved ones whose pain touches our communities. As local roads are a fundamental part of everyday life, we must do all we can to reduce injuries and fatalities. That is why we left no stone unturned as we worked towards delivering the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety entitled *Reducing trauma on local roads in New South Wales*, dated July 2021.

The committee received 36 submissions from government agencies, local councils, research bodies and academics, and industry peak bodies. We held an informal roundtable with road safety officers from a number of local councils and conducted two hearings that were broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The report consists of the following four findings. First, better planning and coordination about road safety issues, campaigns, and projects is needed across all levels of government. Secondly, local councils often have insufficient funding to adequately address local road infrastructure needs. As a local councillor with the Hills Shire Council for over 12½ years I fought for improvements to intersections. Some areas had a crossover with State Government funding and joint council funding. For one particular project I spearheaded—traffic lights at a major intersection at Glenhaven—it took 10½ years to get the funding and finish the project. I understand the battle that some councils have without sufficient resources, and having to find funding and support from other government sources.

Thirdly, local councils are a vital partner in the Government's efforts to reduce trauma and improve road safety on local roads. Fourthly, in a future inquiry the Staysafe Committee should examine *the NSW Speed Zoning Guidelines*, the processes impacting speed zone decisions and the impact of speed zone signage on road safety. The report has 22 recommendations on how to reduce trauma on local roads in New South Wales. The report raised the importance of effective collaboration between the different levels of government. All three levels of government have responsibilities and important roles to play to reduce trauma and all levels must work together to enable each of us to play an effective part in ensuring safety on our roads. The safety of road users and pedestrians is a priority of the Coalition Government.

The Government has allocated \$683.5 million over the next four years towards road safety investment. Furthermore, our projects to upgrade roads that are funded by the Government's record infrastructure pipeline of \$108.5 billion over the next four years prioritise the safety of pedestrians and road users. It is important that the committee analysed submissions and delivered this report. It will further guide us in the work towards reducing road trauma and saving lives. I thank the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, the Hon. Lou Amato, in the upper House, and our fellow committee colleagues from across the political spectrum, for their tireless work on this committee. I thank all stakeholders for contributing to the outcome of the report. I look forward to continuing to work hard to protect the lives and wellbeing of my constituents in Hawkesbury and the people of New South Wales.

**Report noted.**

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

*Question Time***PAYROLL TAX CONCESSION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:18):** My question is directed to the Premier. In order to get the economy growing and help support businesses through the recovery, will he support Labor's plan to extend the payroll tax concession?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:18):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and for his budget reply speech today: a ringing endorsement of Liberal-Nationals policy. It has been a policy-free zone on that side of the House ever since he became leader. I cannot believe I would say this, but even the former Leader of the Opposition had more policy nous than the current Leader of the Opposition. He articulated four key policies today. The first, as he quite rightly states in his question, is an extension of our payroll tax concessions that cut the payroll tax rate from 5.45 per cent to 4.85 per cent. Who did that? We did! It is the lowest payroll tax rate in the nation and we did it to stimulate business growth during this period. What did we do with the payroll tax threshold when we came to office? We increased it from \$700,000 under former Treasurer Mike Baird to \$750,000. As Treasurer, I increased the payroll tax threshold from \$750,000 to \$1.2 million: one of the highest payroll tax thresholds in the country. What does that mean? It means more money in the hands of businesses to invest.

I made this point yesterday and I will make it again: It is not how you govern in the difficult times but how you govern in the good times that helps drive growth and economic support right across the State. What did we see from those members opposite at the last election? Watch the member for Keira start to hide in the Chamber and sink down in his chair. The former shadow Treasurer ran a policy at the last election to cancel the tax cuts to businesses across the State. Those opposite were trying to find savings to create billions of dollars in surpluses—and that is when the New South Wales economy was strong. What did our tax cuts achieve? They gave businesses the best start and the best prospects of success as we headed into the pandemic.

The Leader of the Opposition was a member of the shadow Cabinet that supported cancelling our tax cuts for businesses at the time. Today in his great budget reply speech he said, "Actually, you know what? They've got it right. We'll extend it." Today he talked about the JobSaver program. What does he want to do with that? He wants to extend it. Whose program was that? It was a policy of the Liberals and The Nationals. We fought the Federal Government. We wanted the JobKeeper program but we did not get it. The JobSaver program was a good program. The Federal Government said that it will not extend JobKeeper, so what did we on this side of the House do?

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** We did it.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We did it. We extended our share because we know—as the Leader of the Opposition knows, and it is the proposition of his question—that we want to give extra business support as we move through this difficult time. The third point he made in his budget reply speech regarded tutors. Once again, whose policy is that? It is a policy of the Liberals and The Nationals: world-leading education policies on tutors in schools. That is exactly what we have come up with. What is he doing? He is extending it. This is a ringing endorsement of everything we are doing. Then we move to mental health counsellors. Whose policy is that?

**Government members:** Ours!

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** It is Liberals and Nationals policy. During this entire lockdown period this is the man who had the 100-day plan—but we have not seen one policy that has come through. At a time when we are driving confidence in businesses and confidence in consumer sentiment around the State, those opposite are finding issues with everything that we do. But today we have had the best budget reply speech in 11 years because it backs in absolutely every one of our policies and asks for an extension. This guy must have been sick the day they taught public policy at Princeton. We have the best policies, which have driven economic growth in this State and driven jobs growth. As I said yesterday and will continue to say, those foundations did not just happen. They have happened because of a decade of investment on this side of the House that has turned around the State's finances and laid a strong economic foundation for our businesses not just to get through this but to bounce back stronger.

**HEALTH AND HOSPITAL INVESTMENT**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (14:23):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Premier. Will he update the House on how the New South Wales Government's investment in health is supporting our frontline workers to provide world-class health care in a once-in-100-year pandemic?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:24):** I thank the member for Goulburn for her question, for the support that she has provided her local community through this difficult time and for her advocacy

in relation to a range of health and economic policies that we have pursued during this difficult time. As we move into a post-lockdown world and start to live alongside the virus, it has been our investment in health care that has set us apart from the other States. Alongside the very high vaccination rate in this State—and all around the nation, but New South Wales leads the way—there is greater confidence in New South Wales about our capacity to open up to the world and lead the nation out of this pandemic because of our investment in health care. That is a tribute to the health Minister and the investment and advocacy he has made prior to and during this pandemic. But there is significant opportunity for our State as we move through a difficult time. The silver lining of the pandemic will be setting up our State for opportunity and prosperity as we move forward.

Today I was with the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier when we announced our \$3 billion hydrogen strategy that will leverage between \$80 billion and \$270 billion in private sector investment. It will grow our economy by well over \$600 million. It will create 10,000 jobs in a very short period. This Government has a vision for the future and wants to set up not just a greener future by ensuring as we move forward that our kids and their kids will have more opportunity than we have had as jobs transform over time. It is governments that make the investments today that will lead our nation through what will be a very different world from now and as the decades go on.

The Government does not want to be judged simply on one-off announcements of the day. This is a play for the future and this Government is setting up for the future success of New South Wales. In decades to come, the people of New South Wales will look back and not just see the Treasurer, Matt "Green"; they will see a Treasurer with vision who has set up jobs so that as we evolve when it comes to energy and as we move through to a renewable future it will be our kids who will be equipped for success and end up being like the Western Australians. The Western Australians will start contributing less to GST for a change because New South Wales will be at the forefront of energy policy in this nation.

As I said earlier, this Government's Health investment has put New South Wales at the head of the pack in the fight against COVID-19 as we continue to invest in keeping the people of this State safe by providing world-class health care in a post-lockdown world. That did not happen overnight. In the past 10 years this Government invested \$16 billion across the State's health and hospital network building world-class facilities matched by world-class service. This Government has built 170 new and upgraded hospitals right around the State and 110 more are in the pipeline. Since 2011 there has been a 24.5 per cent increase in health staff. That has resulted in employment of close to 9,600 more nurses and midwives, which represents an increase of 27 per cent. This Government has employed 3,736 more doctors, which represents an increase of 39 per cent and 2,444 more allied health practitioners, which represents a 27 per cent increase. The numbers do not lie. I have cited undisputed facts. The Health budget is \$30.2 billion, which represents an increase of 84.4 per cent from Labor's last Health budget.

In context, Labor's last Health budget provided for a \$16 billion investment in health. Under the Liberals and Nationals, the investment is \$30.2 billion. Can members imagine what the pandemic would have been like if we had not won the 2011 election? We would not have had the available health support. This Government had to clear up the backlog—the poor health investment that had been implemented by the then Labor Government over time—and invest in strong foundations. As the Minister for Health and Medical Research eloquently pointed out yesterday, when he speaks to his fellow health Ministers right across the country, they know, as we know, that the New South Wales health system is the best in the nation and the most prepared. [*Extension of time*]

Let me go through some more facts as I show the work done by the Minister for Health and Medical Research in putting the State in this position. Yesterday during question time the Opposition played the game of two cities in an attempt to instil fear and division. It was reminiscent of the old Bruce Walker Labor way and it is all coming back, but let me go through some facts: patients leaving Western Sydney emergency departments [EDs] within four hours of presentation—under Labor just before the 2011 election at the Auburn Hospital 54.8 per cent but under Minister Hazzard 78 per cent; and in Mount Druitt—where is the member for Mount Druitt? I hope he is tuning in—presentations that were out within four hours under Labor were 48.7 per cent and under Minister Hazzard 70.4 per cent.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Yeah, but under Labor they had more freedom.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I will get to Blacktown; it is coming. At the Westmead Hospital, the figure is 30.2 per cent under Labor. This is all about western Sydney. I talk about western Sydney every day of the week and twice on Sunday. Under Minister Hazzard, the Westmead Hospital emergency department turnaround time was 52.3 per cent. What about the Blacktown Hospital? Under the Labor mob, the turnaround time was 40.2 per cent and under Minister Hazzard it is 57.9 per cent. If we are talking about wait times, I look at wait times all the time and at the Liverpool Hospital the wait time was 34.2 per cent under Labor and under Minister Hazzard it is 52.4 per cent. This Government could get that higher, but the point I make is that the

turnaround time for patients under this Government is almost twice as good as it was under the former Labor Government.

For the information of the member for Londonderry, the figure for Nepean Hospital under Labor is 41 per cent and under Minister Hazzard 50 per cent. The figure for the Campbelltown Hospital is 49.3 per cent under Labor and 55.4 per cent under Minister Hazzard. This Government is twice as good as Labor any day of the week. The foundations that this Government set for the New South Wales health system have set up New South Wales to deal with this pandemic and beyond.

### TAX POLICY

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:31):** In directing my question to the Premier, I point out that this year his budget is expected to collect over \$36 billion in taxes and, under his budget, taxes will then increase 3.2 per cent every year for the next four years, totalling almost \$151 billion and that he has said, "We believe in lower taxes." I ask: Does he plan—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Finish the rest of the sentence and then I will hear the point of order.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Premier said, "We believe in lower taxes." I ask: Does he plan to continue his current approach of taxing New South Wales the equivalent of over \$4,400 per person every year?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 128. Yesterday the Opposition repeatedly breached that standing order. It states:

Questions should not contain –

- (a) statements of facts or names of persons unless they are strictly necessary to render the question intelligible and can be authenticated;

It would be very embarrassing for the Opposition to contend that their questions are completely unintelligible unless they have lengthy preambles in which Opposition members engage, so presumably Opposition members are not saying that. It is not permissible to have a lengthy preamble to provide some kind of colour, movement and emotion. It is not permissible to have a lengthy preamble to get a television grab for the news tonight. It has to be strictly necessary, not desirable and not a bit of context but strictly necessary, to render the question intelligible. Mr Speaker, unless the Opposition wants to contend that its questions are unintelligible, you should disallow this question and questions like it.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask for a copy of the question from the member for Londonderry.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order: Mr Speaker, it is abundantly clear if Standing Order 128 (2) (a) is examined that the statement of facts in the question are specifically necessary to enable the Premier to be able to clearly answer the question; otherwise, he would just ramble on at length about a whole range of irrelevant material, as normal. The other point I make is that the Opposition has sat quietly, not interjecting and paying due respect to the new Premier, and the first act of those opposite on the second day of sitting is a spurious point of order taken by the Attorney General, when clearly it is a reasonable question to ask.

**The SPEAKER:** I have ruled previously that questions can refer to facts in a concise way to give the question context. Former Speaker Murray similarly ruled on a number of occasions that where there is preamble, it should be concise. Standing Order 128 also requires that such statements of facts must be necessary to render a question intelligible. By listing a series of facts, the member for Londonderry has exceeded what is reasonable in the circumstances. The member may make statements that put a question in context, but stating a series of facts at some length, as the member has, goes beyond Standing Order 128. The question of itself is intelligible without the preamble or the statements that have been made by the member. While I recognise that some context is acceptable, I ask the member for Londonderry to rephrase her question.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:36):** I will keep it very simple. Does the Premier plan on continuing his current approach of taxing the State of New South Wales the equivalent of over \$4,400 per person every single year?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:36):** I thank the member for Londonderry for her question. It is basic economics—which Labor will never understand. I will go to Labor's track record in response to the question. The Liberal-Nationals Government believes in growing the economy. Talking dollar figures, when you grow the economy and reduce the tax burden, you grow the pie and that generates more tax revenue which government can then invest in schools, hospitals and public transport across the State. That is what Labor does not understand. Labor has never understood basic economics or the State's finances. That is why Labor should never be on the Treasury benches.

As a result of the New South Wales Government being in office for the past 10 years and growing the size of the economy through our policies across the board, we have been able to cut the tax rates. On this side of the House we cut taxes, and that is exactly what we have done in every single budget. During the last election campaign we had a glimpse of the socialist philosophy of those opposite—taxing farmers in the middle of a drought. Who would do that? Well, the Leader of the Opposition would because he was a member of the shadow Cabinet that devised the policy. The best indicator of future performance is past performance. If Labor runs its election campaign on increasing taxes on farmers in a drought and increasing taxes on small businesses—which we had cut—what would it do if it were elected? On this side of the House our growth policies have created more jobs. Our State has had the lowest unemployment rate on average in the nation for almost the entire past five or six years because of the economic growth policies on this side of the House.

What did we see from Labor? Outside of cutting payroll tax, Labor proposed a luxury car tax, which also would apply to buses and trucks, and cancelled the Government's stamp duty tax cuts. Labor would cancel that important Liberal-Nationals Government policy to give young people a key to their first home. It also proposed a new levy on retirement villages, a parking tax, a boat tax, a strata tax. There is nothing Labor would not tax. That is the Labor way. What does increasing taxes do over time? It worsens the economy. Then what happens to government revenues? They decline. Then what happens after that? Government investment in hospitals, in schools and in public transport falls away. That is why we had a \$30 billion infrastructure backlog when we came to office. That is why the State had the worst performing schools and the worst performing hospitals. Then the Liberal-Nationals Government turned around the budget, started to grow the economy and went from last to first. Then guess what? We cut taxes. Then what happened? Revenue flowed through because businesses grew. Businesses thrive under the Liberals and The Nationals.

The proposition in the question from the member for Londonderry demonstrates why Labor is not fit to lead this State—because it does not understand basic economics, which those opposite could have learnt at university. That is the difference between those opposite and the Liberals and The Nationals. We believe in reducing the burden on businesses, on farmers and on families. When they do better, that drives revenue growth. Under our philosophy, revenue comes in by reducing the tax burden on families so that they can do better and prosper and look after themselves while government gets out of the way, cutting red tape and regulation. That is what sets the Liberals and The Nationals apart from the Labor Party.

Labor has never met a tax that it did not want to increase. Every single budget our Government has cut taxes and we have provided greater opportunity and prosperity for businesses and families across the State. In doing so, we have had significant jobs growth across the State. As seen in the June budget, our economy was stronger than it was at the commencement of the pandemic. That is what good economic managers demonstrate. What does good economic management do over time? It allows society, businesses and families to flourish. And off the back of that, revenues come into government so we can continue to provide the best, world-class health, education and public transport systems for the people of our State.

### HYDROGEN POLICY

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (14:41):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Perrottet-Toole Coalition Government's hydrogen policies will make New South Wales a hydrogen superpower?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:42):** What a great question from a great new member, who, unlike those opposite, wants to see the regions become an economic and energy superpower. That is what the member for Upper Hunter is all about. He wants to see jobs and investment going into the regions. He wants to build a stronger and brighter future, not just for the Hunter but for everyone living in rural and regional New South Wales. Today's announcement on hydrogen will achieve just that.

The Upper Hunter has powered our State economy for generations. It has helped power the economies of our friends and allies around the world for generations. Today's announcement will ensure that that continues for generations to come. Hydrogen is essential if the world is to get to net zero emissions, and we are well placed to help the world meet their needs. In doing so, we will make a lot of money, create a lot of jobs and enjoy prosperity—as a result of the policies put in place under a Perrottet-Toole Coalition Government. Some of our biggest friends and trading partners have focused on getting green hydrogen from New South Wales. Japan, Korea and the European Union, some of our closest friends and allies, need our green hydrogen to achieve their economic goals. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of meeting with the Japanese and Korean ambassadors, and they emphasised to me the importance of New South Wales as a source of green hydrogen for their economies.

Green hydrogen is a massive opportunity for our State because of our world-class renewable resources and because of the energy infrastructure roadmap that this Government implemented. We will take full advantage of

it because of the skilled workers and infrastructure that we already have in places like the Hunter and the Illawarra. This is futureproofing those regions and setting up a brighter, more prosperous future for everyone across the State. We are in pole position to win the hydrogen future. Today's strategy is about ensuring that we do exactly that: We win the future and become a clean energy super power. Our strategy will create 10,000 new jobs by 2030 at a time when there are risks to existing jobs because of changes in the global economic landscape. We are futureproofing and turbocharging those regions.

Our hydrogen strategy is forecast to grow our economy by an estimated \$600 million in Gross State Product by 2030. It is also forecast to drive between \$80 billion and \$270 billion worth of investment by 2050, largely going into the Hunter and Illawarra. That is an absolute game changer for the regions and our State and will put New South Wales ahead of the pack and make us the world capital of green hydrogen. We have the renewable energy resources to not only save the planet but also underwrite the State's prosperity for generations to come. The Government is determined to do exactly that. Our plan will seek up to \$3 billion worth of support to build the hydrogen industry in New South Wales. We will invest in hydrogen hubs in places like the Hunter and the Illawarra. We will build the hydrogen refuelling networks to support our heavy vehicle industry, which will enable it to cut emissions whilst also cutting costs. That is what good policy looks like.

We will slash electricity fees and charges on the production of green hydrogen and will make new laws to encourage and incentivise the production of green hydrogen in New South Wales. Our strategy will halve the cost of green hydrogen in the State and set us up for the future to grab huge export markets that are emerging very quickly. We know, for example, that Germany has set aside €900 million to import hydrogen. We will be at the front of the queue to make sure we bring that money into New South Wales. We know that Japan has said it wants to import three million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030. We will be at the front of the queue to take that opportunity. [*Extension of time*]

Good policy, delivered by good government, is setting up our State to take those opportunities and have a brighter and more prosperous future that everyone will be able to enjoy. The government focuses on developing policy that is in the interests of the State. That stands in stark contrast to those opposite. They have been in Opposition for 11 years and we have seen no policies that will build a better New South Wales for everyone. In fact, the Labor Party has had more leaders than it has had policies since it has been in Opposition. That is the reality. Nothing has changed under the new Leader of the Opposition. He came to the job with a plan only to become the Leader of the Opposition, a plan to take out Jodi McKay, but no plan to improve the lives of the citizens of the State.

We heard an announcement with great fanfare that the Leader of the Opposition would have a 100-day plan. We are at day 115 and the only plan we have seen is for him to get a haircut. It is a very stylish haircut; I am very envious of this haircut. I wish I could get such a haircut. The reality is that the people of New South Wales do not want style; they want substance. That is what they will get from a Perrottet-Toole Government—style and substance—which will build a better and brighter future for everyone. Those on the other side are in a policy-free zone. They have not done the work. They have all played internal games amongst themselves rather than focusing on the community of New South Wales. That is the difference between the Coalition Government and the Labor Party. It is all about them and not the people. It has no policies, no plans and no idea.

#### GOVERNMENT FINES

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (14:49):** I direct my question to the Premier. Over the next four years, the budget will collect \$3.5 billion in fines, including an increase of 35 per cent in one year. Will the Premier be continuing this policy?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:49):** Sorry, which policy? Are we getting rid of fines?

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Fines—collecting \$3.5 billion in fines. Are you going to continue collecting the fines?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The total policy of collection of fines or are there are specific ones that you are referring to? Do you want to speak to the leader?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Mr Speaker, I am unsure of the question in terms of the point that the member has raised. I think speeding fines are an important part of public policy. I am a big believer, as are the Liberals and The Nationals, on road safety. We believe if you speed, you are breaking the rules. Fines play an important role of keeping people safe on our roads. I do not understand why today the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Canterbury would like the Government to remove speeding fines across the State. But I must say, congratulations on day 115 that we finally have a policy—a policy to make our roads unsafe and a policy that

has been around in every single country for a long period of time: to fine people who speed on our roads. It is a unique policy from the Labor Party. Congratulations on it. I do not know how it will go down with the public who enjoy travelling on our roads and being safe.

Members on this side of the Chamber believe that speeding fines play an important role in road safety. We believe that our roads should be safe and, like every other government around the country and around the world, speeding fines deter people from speeding. We also know, as most governments do, except obviously the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Canterbury, that not only do they deter people from speeding but also that speeding causes injuries and deaths on our roads. Our job as the Liberal-Nationals Government will always be to put our people first and to protect people on the roads. I find it very strange today that the Labor Party believes that speeding fines are a problem in this State and that people should not be fined for speeding on our roads. It is unique, but hey, at least it is a policy.

#### MENINDEE LAKES

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (14:53):** Via video link: I address my question to the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. Will the Minister update the House on the recent inflows into Menindee Lakes?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (14:53):** I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. I understand it is raining in Dubbo like it is raining in Sydney; it is raining everywhere. In fact, the rain has been the quiet achiever of the past 12 months. Every major storage across New South Wales is full or overflowing and it has given such a sense of optimism and hope. Whether it is the cattle prices or the luscious crops throughout all of regional New South Wales, water has given regional New South Wales a sense of opportunity and optimism, which is ready to explode. I point out that the rain has been the great enabler for regional New South Wales over the past 12 months and we are excited to welcome tourists back to regional New South Wales. Why would anyone want to go anywhere else? We have the rivers, oceans, lakes, dams, water skiing and all those incredible opportunities. And there is no more beautiful part of New South Wales at the moment than Menindee Lakes.

Only a short time ago we were confronted with the most terrible scenes of the drought and what happened to the incredible river system to Menindee Lakes, the Darling-Baaka River. We have seen an incredible transformation. Today there is the equivalent in volume of water of four Sydney Harbours in Menindee Lakes, nearly 2,000 gigalitres of water. It is 114 per cent at capacity, which is a life-changing amount of water to those communities. The Menindee Lakes are putting water down the Darling Anabranche so that we can grow the fish, the natural habitat and the native species and continue to have fun and enjoy what we love doing out there.

It is great for tourism, our producers and the environment. It is particularly important to our local Indigenous communities. The native fish are the beneficiaries of these flows. Monitoring in Lake Cawndilla by Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries, by the Barkindji river rangers and our community groups has confirmed juvenile golden perch are now fattening up in that productive lakes system. In fact, it is a fish-feeding lot out there. We know that the Menindee Lakes have the native fish feed lots and fish from here are dispersed through the Southern Basin into New South Wales, Victoria and, importantly, South Australia. The great news is they do not need a COVID access pass to get into those other States.

That is great news for our wildlife and the communities that thrive along these systems. What a transformation! The hard work we have done as a Liberal-Nationals Government since 2019 has ensured that water flowed down this system so that today it has 114 per cent capacity. The changes the Government made with water and into Menindee have improved the environmental outcomes for the region. The Government's amendments in 2019 to the Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated Alluvial Water Source 2012 protected the low flows by raising the threshold for when A-class licence holders can access water. The Government prevented water from being taken out of the river after an extended dry period. We also introduced individual daily extraction limits to limit the amount of extraction during low flows.

This was coupled with this Government's actions last year to protect the first flush flows from the last drought, which helped to achieve connectivity across the Northern Basin, down to Menindee and protected environmental water as it moved through the Barwon, Darling, Macquarie and the Gwydir systems. Our hard work, policy commitment and consultation with the communities is in absolute stark contrast with the laziness of policy and the unholy alliance that has been created with the Labor Party; the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; and The Greens blocking our licensing of floodplain harvesting so that we can measure that water and ensure that we have more water flowing into our river system and our wetlands.

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** It is shameful.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** Yes, it is shameful that this unholy alliance actually defies and is not listening to a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party in that community, who knows that this needs to happen [*Extension of time*]

It is important to acknowledge that even Bret Walker, SC, who headed the royal commission for the South Australia Government into the Murray-Darling Basin has said floodplain harvesting is legal and should be licensed. We need to be able to measure that water so that we can ensure even more flows through the system into the wetlands and into our communities. We need to do the right thing. I implore members opposite to listen to not only the Government but also important members of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party who know that this needs to happen. We will license floodplain harvesting, provide certainty for producers, boost tourism, help the fish and protect the environment.

As we emerge out of lockdown and as travel restrictions are eased, there is no better time to head out to regional New South Wales to do a lap of the Darling-Baaka, or go to Wilcannia, Menindee and Bourke and all those incredible communities where there are fish and birdlife for anybody to see. We saw this area in a terrible drought but now it has hope and optimism from the life that water has given. I encourage all members and all people in regional New South Wales and Sydney to go and enjoy that incredible experience.

#### ASSET PRIVATISATION

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (14:59):** I direct my question to the Premier. Over the past 10 years four Liberal-Nationals governments have sold more than \$93,000 million of public-owned assets to private owners. Will the Premier rule out any further privatisation?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (15:00):** I thank the member for Blacktown for the dixer. He knows as well as I do the importance of our asset recycling program because that Doonside lift is finally coming. The Holy Grail of lifts across train stations in New South Wales is coming to Doonside. The member knows it. Why is it happening? It is because of the sound financial management of the Liberals and The Nationals. I would expect the new Treasurer to follow in the line of treasurers and will continue to provide opportunity and prosperity and ensure that at one time every train station—this is our dream—will have a lift like the one at Doonside. That record investment in infrastructure right across the State can only happen because we manage money well.

We swap old assets for new assets. The member for Blacktown wants to talk about privatisation and selling off assets but the reason that the asset base of the State has only grown under the Liberals and The Nationals is that we have swapped old, unproductive assets that are not working for the people of this State for schools, hospitals, public transport and even lifts in Doonside. We will always do what is in the best interests of the people of New South Wales. Recently we saw our transaction in relation to WestConnex, a road that was opposed by members of Labor Party. They opposed the construction of WestConnex. They opposed the transaction of a road that they opposed and we built. What happened after that? We have now got \$5 billion in extra head room that we can invest in every single electorate in western Sydney, including that of the member for Blacktown, but we will not hold that against him.

Unlike the Labor Party, we will not discriminate on geography; we will always invest in every single seat right across the State to better the lives of families right across New South Wales. Whilst I know that every single time we make the difficult and tough decisions to get our State moving, the Labor Party will play politics every step of the way, but that will not deter the Liberals and The Nationals doing what is right for the people of our State. The \$108 billion infrastructure investment over the next four years did not just happen. Roads like WestConnex did not just happen and a record number of schools and hospitals did not just happen.

There is a reason Labor closed 90 schools and we are building 200. We are building twice as many as the Labor Party closed, not opened. That is the difference between the Liberals and The Nationals and the Labor Party. The reality is a government cannot build the infrastructure, schools, roads and public transport that will make a difference to the lives of people if it does not manage money well. That is exactly what the Government has done since it came to office. It took the poles and wires to the election that turbocharged infrastructure investment in the State. It added half a percentage point to public investment in infrastructure to our economic growth. It created hundreds of thousands of jobs right across our State during construction. Ultimately we have infrastructure that provides the best health care for families, the best education system for our kids and the best public transport and road network so people can get home to their families faster. That is what it is all about.

The stark difference between our side of politics and their side of politics is that we are the party of progress whereas Labor continues to be the party of protest. They will always look for a cheap headline or a fearmongering campaign to scare the public. They did that for 16 years and built absolutely nothing. The Leader of the Opposition knows it because he worked for Carl Scully at the time. This is a return to old Labor politics, which drove our

State and its economy into the ground. We will be reminding the people of New South Wales of that every single day, through the election and beyond. Those members opposite will never be forgiven for their track record in politics. Every single question they have asked today, whether on taxes, on fines, on whatever the third one was—I have forgotten—or that last question on asset recycling, shows that Labor has not changed. We will keep building and delivering the infrastructure to make people's lives better right across our State.

#### COVID-19 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICY

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:05):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government has been assisting councils to ensure that more local communities can respond to, and recover from, the impacts of the pandemic?

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (15:05):** I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question. I can see her on the video screen. I thank her for her passionate advocacy for her electorate right throughout the recent pandemic and before that. In fact, I thank all the members in the Chamber who have worked so hard during this pandemic with their local councils. I acknowledge the member for Lakemba is in the Chamber. I know he has been working really hard with his community. It has been a really tough time for many members, as it has been for me on the South Coast. We have not seen quite the same number of cases but it has been difficult for everybody. I know all members have worked really hard and I thank them all. Now we are coming out of this pandemic, it is timely that we pay tribute to all our councils, which have worked hard right throughout the State: the mayors, the councillors and, in particular, the workers, who have worked so hard to deliver to their areas the services that people need. I say well done to all of them.

Thanks to the current Premier, and former Treasurer, the Government has supported local government every step of the way since the start of the pandemic last year. Apart from all the other incentives, such as economic stimuli to councils, he has supported them every time I have gone to him to say local government needs help. Believe it or not, they are not getting any assistance from the Commonwealth Government. They are not getting JobKeeper or any of that. Local government workers were left to their own devices. They were not covered in any way, if members can believe it. Of course, we came up with a fantastic economic stimulus package, thanks to the Premier. What a brilliant, brilliant leader he has been through that period and through the latest outbreak. We called it a Job Retention Allowance, designed to prevent workers being stood down from local councils. They were at risk of being stood down without pay after a certain period. That was delivered to the 128 local councils across this State.

We also delivered a number of other economic stimuli to local councils last year. We increased the low-cost loans through TCorp to \$250 million. We also spent \$82 million to support council-run childcare facilities—members will remember when that happened. All of those amounts of money were then extended and reintroduced once the new outbreak hit. As a Government, we did not waste any time helping local government. We did not ignore local councils—as many people do, because they can stand on their own. We realised the challenges for them. With many of them coming out of floods, bushfires—certainly in my area—and then two episodes of COVID it was really challenging for those councils to continue to deliver services to their people. Therefore, we continued to pick up the tab. The increases in the emergency services levy were picked up over two financial years so that councils would not be faced with those kinds of increases. Why did we do that? We made those kinds of investments into local government so that councils could concentrate on continuing to build and deliver infrastructure for their communities.

We rolled out programs for greening public spaces, outdoor recreation facilities and showgrounds. You name it, we delivered it for local government. I am so proud that we did. I am sure those members opposite who continue to complain about what this Government has or has not done do not even know what we did to help the 12 local government areas of concern. They call it a tale of two cities. I am just ashamed of the childishness of that particular sentiment. Resources were absolutely delivered hand over fist to those 12 local government areas of concern, because they were under huge pressure and the case numbers were high. We delivered translation services and caseworkers. I pay tribute to the Hon. Natalie Ward, who worked so hard to help those local government areas. In light of the additional funds sent to those areas, the only way I can describe some of the politics that were played out in some of those areas is "childish".

Through the Office of Local Government we had regular webinars so that every council could ask questions, with the answers delivered to their councillors and their workers. We also had daily newsletters going out to those areas and every other area. We had them translated into 55 different languages so that there could be no confusion. Those people who spoke of "confusion" had no reason to be confused because we clarified and clarified and clarified. [*Extension of time*]

This was to the detriment of regional areas like mine. We saw a whole lot of vaccinations going to those affected areas. Some people asked why those vaccinations were going elsewhere. My answer was that these are areas of concern and high numbers, and that we need to help those people. We helped them; we did not discriminate against them. We did not discriminate against those local government areas. In fact, I had a webinar with all of the mayors of those areas.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Well, you were not there; you would not even attend. I can tell members that I spoke to the mayor of Blacktown earlier today and he made very positive comments, as did the mayor of Liverpool. I do not know how much correspondence I have received from some councillors and mayors in those areas thanking us for the support that we directed to those areas—to the detriment of some of the areas throughout New South Wales, may I say. But there was not a great deal of concern about the amount of money we were directing to those local government areas of concern. We did it happily and gladly. We kept doing it—and we did more and more and more. And we would do it again to help those people who needed our help.

This was not a tale of two cities at all. That is the most childish remark I can ever imagine being made either in this Chamber or in the media. This Premier, the former Treasurer, has directed enormous amounts of money—almost \$1 billion of expenditure—to local councils, not including the additional expenditure to the local government areas of concern. We have protected local government workers. We have ensured that local councils can deliver those services, which they continue to do so well. We have looked after the very special people who needed our help more than anybody else—and we have done it happily. We did not discriminate. We do it equally and we do it happily.

### ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:13):** My question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Environment. I note the Government's recently released Electric Vehicle Strategy and the fact that most people in my electorate and many across Sydney do not have a garage in which to charge an electric vehicle. How will the Government ensure adequate on-street fast charging facilities in high-density areas without off-street parking?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (15:13):** I thank the member for Balmain for his question. The member and his constituents know that if they want action on climate change that is going to grow the economy, create jobs and drive investment then they should vote for the Coalition. In fact, the member for Balmain also knows that if his constituents just want a policy to take action on climate change—or anything else—then they should vote for the Coalition. We have just heard the Opposition's vehicle policy, which was to remove speeding fines across New South Wales. It is extraordinary. It was cooked up by the member for Canterbury. She has done more policy work than anyone from the Opposition has done in 11 years. We know that is not the way to build a better, fairer and more prosperous future for everyone in New South Wales. That is why we have delivered the best EV policy in the nation.

Members should not take my word for it, although I am very modest about these things; they should take the word of the Electric Vehicle Council in New South Wales, who ranked New South Wales' electric vehicle policy as the number one policy out of every other State and Territory. Behyad Jafari, a very fine gentleman with a great policy mind—the Labor Party could use a few of them at the moment—said that New South Wales has introduced Australia's best electric vehicle policy to date. The \$500 million worth of investment and package of incentives to accelerate the uptake of zero emissions vehicles is finally comparable with jurisdictions overseas. There we have it. If people want action on climate change that will turbocharge our economy they should vote for the Coalition. I am sure that The Greens members and the people in Balmain are all saying, "Vote for policies that will grow our economy."

*[A Government member interjected.]*

I am sure we can find Peter Shmigel to run up there again. I am sure we can find a good economically rational, private environment candidate to run in Balmain. But we like the member for Balmain. Our EV strategy is a plan to make New South Wales the easiest and most affordable place to buy an EV. As I often say, I want to make New South Wales the Norway of Australia. That is how good our EV policy is.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** I do not want their climate.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The Hon. Melinda Pavey does not want their climate. That is not happening at the current rate, so do not worry about that. We will be addressing some of the biggest barriers to EV take-up—higher upfront cost, lack of models in the market and range anxiety. Which brings me to the point of the question from the member for Balmain. We know that potential drivers of EVs are concerned that they might run out of battery charge and will not be able to find places to charge their battery electric vehicles, especially on longer trips. The

Electric Vehicle Council stated that the EV report found the biggest barrier to consumers purchasing plug-in EVs was range anxiety, with 72 per cent of respondents saying conveniently charging would be the biggest encouragement to purchase a battery electric vehicle.

The Government is tackling the lack of EV charging infrastructure across the State head-on, including in those inner-city areas. One of the things we have done is put aside \$171 million in funding to address that range anxiety. The first part of the strategy is to address charging gaps in dense metropolitan areas, like the electorate of the member for Balmain. Where residential building types do not always allow for off-street parking, charging stations will be installed no more than five kilometres from one another. That will ensure fast charging options are available at convenient locations to all residents across the State.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** That is too far. It has got to be closer.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The member for Balmain says he wants more.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Yes. Five kilometres to charge your car?

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Five kilometres is basically as far as the electorate of Newtown.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Are you going to walk for five kilometres to get your car after you have charged it?

**Ms Jenny Leong:** One per electorate.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** As someone who owns an electric vehicle, I can inform members that we need to make sure there are a number of charging stations around the place so people can charge as conveniently as possible, including in buildings when they go to work. That is one of the reasons that we are rolling out charging infrastructure at train stations and bus stops, so that when someone parks their car and goes to work, et cetera, they can charge up all day. We have a suite of measures to support people in those densely populated areas. We also have other things: we will install chargers at convenient locations across strategic highways and commuter corridors. That will make recharging fast and easy for commuters across those densely populated urban areas. We will provide a range of information and tools aimed at owners, tenants and building and strata managers, which will help to educate and guide them through the process of retrofitting existing buildings to be EV ready. *[Extension of time]*

We are rolling out—ultra fast—charging infrastructure across those densely populated areas, in addition to rolling them out at key commuter locations like train stations and bus stops. We will also be creating EV superhighways to make sure that people travelling those longer distances from the outer urban areas—western Sydney and the regions—can get access to fast charging infrastructure. We want to support people to buy an electric vehicle at an affordable rate and be able to charge it when they need to without having to queue up. That is exactly what our \$171 million package is designed to do. We are working through the detail and we want to make sure that there is enough charging infrastructure in those highly densely populated areas. We have set a minimum plan to have one ultra-fast charger every five kilometres. That is the minimum plan, but we are working through the design principles.

I will certainly work with members in densely populated areas, like the member for Balmain, to make sure we get this infrastructure built and built right. This is a big opportunity for New South Wales. It is a big opportunity to de-carbonise our transport fleet and to lower the running cost for vehicle owners across New South Wales. We want to embrace it. The reality is that the manufacturers of right-hand drive vehicles are transitioning to battery electric vehicles. We need to be ready for that change because it is coming whether we like it or not. That is exactly why the Coalition Government has put in place the best electric vehicle policy in the nation. That stands in stark contrast to those opposite who are a policy-free zone. They do not have a policy. As far as we can tell, their only policy to do with vehicles is to remove fines for anyone speeding and being reckless on our roads. It is a disgrace and the member for Canterbury should be ashamed.

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** And withdraw the policy.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** And withdraw the one policy that they have.

#### COVID-19 AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:21):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on how police and emergency services workers have assisted the State response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (15:21):** I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question and his ongoing support for our first responders. First responders have done a magnificent job over the course of the pandemic, particularly the Delta strain.

Unfortunately, I have been inundated with comments and questions from first responders from around the State who have expressed a great deal of concern at the stated policy of the member for Canterbury to abandon speeding fines. Those first responders are the ones who attend those car crashes that occur so often. I appeal to the Opposition to repeal this policy before it does real damage on the motorways of New South Wales.

Off the back of the worst bushfire season, devastating floods, storm activity and of course the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have never been prouder of first responders and emergency service workers, particularly police. I give credit to all members on both sides of the House—on both sides of the dispatch box—who have reached out to their local emergency services and provided their support and encouragement to the 200,000 uniformed members of our agencies who put their own safety behind the safety of the people of New South Wales. It is important that we pay tribute to them. From day one the NSW Police Force—an organisation with 18,000 officers—tirelessly worked to ensure the Public Health Orders are complied with and communities are safe from the pandemic. Of course, it would be remiss of me not to thank on behalf of the members of the House the outgoing Commissioner, Mick Fuller, who worked as the State's emergency operations controller over a multitude of operational theatres, including hotel quarantine arrangements where the safe processing of 250,000 people was facilitated.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Minister will continue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Those 11,000 police officers facilitated tens of thousands of border crossings that occurred every day. Deputy Commissioner Mal Lanyon led the efforts when it came to the operational challenges of the health orders and, of course, we managed to quell what turned out to be very unfortunate, unlawful and violent protests around the State, which ensured the safety of the community was not compromised. Deputy Commissioner Gary Worboys became a cult figure over the course of the pandemic, with his countless hours instilling confidence in the community through his messaging to the public. I also thank the Australian Defence Force, led by Brigadier Mick Garraway, who conducted the welfare and compliance checks of the community and worked alongside police to ensure that all those who were required to comply did so.

Police worked across the State through the pandemic. In Wilcannia police conducted 1,600 welfare checks to COVID-19 positive cases and close contacts. Of course, our wonderful Aboriginal liaison officers within the Police Force were hard at work ensuring that our Aboriginal communities throughout the State, including in Enngonia, were kept safe. The Rural Fire Service stepped up to the mark on the back of what was a devastating bushfire season last year. I know many members in the House have strong relationships with police and emergency services personnel and also with Foodbank, which worked with the Rural Fire Service to ensure that 12,405 food hampers and personal care packs were distributed. Last month the Premier and I joined John Robinson, the CEO of Foodbank and well known to many members of the House, as we assisted volunteers to prepare some of those hampers, ensuring that the strong relationship between Foodbank and the combat agencies remains strong.

In western New South Wales, mitigation crews assisted Health in setting up and running the Wilcannia base camp. The camp accommodates 48 personnel, from Health to the Australian Defence Force and the Police Force. In Boggabilla and Toomelah in the State's north, the border communities, which traditionally rely on Queensland for shopping, were ably assisted by the Rural Fire Service, which delivered more than 660 hampers at short notice to those who were unable to access food. I note also that the member for Northern Tablelands joined local crews and can attest to the importance of that work. The RFS assisted regularly in the administrative duties of the incident management team at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. [*Extension of time*]

From 14 July through to only a few weeks ago, members of the Rural Fire Service in Macarthur joined Health and St John Ambulance volunteers to assist in the delivery of almost 70,000 jabs in arms at the Prairiewood vaccination hub. Their commitment also saw them contribute 1,500 volunteer hours under very difficult circumstances. I thank group officer Andrew Macdonald and all the brigades that assisted in that critical work. Resilience NSW, under the stewardship of Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, has also done a magnificent job, delivering 17,000 hampers, distributing more than 500,000 kilograms of personal care and food products, and establishing the regional isolation care program, which met the immediate needs of people in the bush. There were 10 locations for the regional isolation care program, including Orange, Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Dubbo and Tamworth.

At Bourke, Resilience NSW set up primary food distribution through the council. Under the scheme, they mobilised 780 food hampers and 60 personal care hampers. In Wilcannia, another 600 hampers were distributed. Fire and Rescue did its bit, conducting 33,000 home fire safety visits. Also during the pandemic, because we were all at home, Fire and Rescue installed 13,000 smoke alarms and changed nearly 5,500 batteries in existing alarms for high-risk groups. It has been a magnificent effort from all of our combat agencies. None of them would have been prepared to do it without the enthusiasm and volunteer ethos in our volunteer agencies. The professionalism

across our salaried organisations working alongside wonderful charities like OzHarvest and Foodbank meant that this State was once again allowed to boast of being world's best practice in responding to a pandemic.

#### *Ministerial Statements*

### **STATE ECONOMY**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (15:28):** I provide the House with an update on how the State's economy has fared throughout the past 18 months during this unprecedented health and economic crisis. The New South Wales economic performance over the past 18 months has been dominated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It hit the State almost immediately after the severe bushfires that preceding summer, which had followed hard on the heels of the devastating drought. The pandemic forced unprecedented restrictions aimed at reducing the spread of COVID to be imposed on the citizens of New South Wales. The measures succeeded in mitigating rates of hospitalisation and death, but they forced thousands of businesses to close temporarily and carried significant economic cost.

The Government's successful management of the Alpha variant last year saw the State's economy rebound strongly. The recovery was aided by an unprecedented monetary stimulus from the Reserve Bank and fiscal support from all levels of government, including the New South Wales Government. Constructive actions were also taken by commercial banks and landlords. The subsequent recovery far exceeded expectations, with activity and employment rising above their pre-COVID levels within a year. By June 2021 there were more than 30,000 additional jobs in New South Wales than before the pandemic. Business and consumer confidence dived during the lockdown but recovered strongly as restrictions eased. Business confidence in New South Wales reached a record high just before the Delta variant hit.

The New South Wales economy was the best performing of all States in the recent June quarter, the last quarter for which there is published data. The economy grew by nearly 15 per cent in the year to June. That is the strongest rate of growth ever recorded, albeit off last year's suppressed base. Of course, the unexpected emergence of the Delta variant across Greater Sydney in late June necessitated the reintroduction of stay-at-home orders, which were also required across the State. The lockdown ended only this week after 106 days, twice as many as last year's Alpha variant lockdown. The latest restrictions have had a marked impact on economic activity. Employment dropped by 210,000 in the first two months of the lockdown, while hours worked plunged by 13 per cent. The fall in hours last year during the lockdown was 11 per cent.

Tomorrow's employment report for September will probably make for uncomfortable reading, with more job losses expected. Parts of western Sydney were hit hard by the Delta variant-related restrictions on activity, which was necessary to mitigate the spread of the pandemic. The local government areas [LGAs] that make up western Sydney are hugely important for the economy. In the 2018-19 financial year they generated around \$130 billion of economic activity. That represents almost 21 per cent of the New South Wales economy, or 7 per cent nationally. The region's importance to the State's economy has risen noticeably in recent years. As of August 2021, about 1.3 million employed people were living in western Sydney. That represents about 35 per cent of all employed people in New South Wales.

The restrictions imposed on the LGAs of concern in western Sydney affected household spending and employment in particular. However, they had a less dramatic impact on mobility. Given the mobile nature of many of the jobs performed by people living in the area, the imposition of the curfew had little direct impact on the economy of western Sydney but was an additional drag on sentiment. Although it was short-lived, the pause on construction caused additional disruption to workers. While the economic impact caused by the Delta variant has been more pronounced than that of Alpha in 2020, the economy will rebound as restrictions are removed. Businesses have reopened and pent-up consumer demand is returning. The rebound will be aided by substantial policy stimulus, including record low interest rates. In addition, early estimates suggest that up to 100,000 jobs will come back thanks to the Government's JobSaver program. A record high level of job vacancies amidst labour shortages from closed international borders will also aid the recovery of local jobs.

Because most published economic data is backwards-looking, in early December the New South Wales economy will be reported as having contracted sharply in the September quarter. The Treasury forecasts robust rates of economic growth. However, that will be both in the December quarter and will go through to March next year. A robust rebound out of lockdown is expected by the Reserve Bank. However, the Government still needs to get the reopening right. It needs to make sure that it respects citizens' inherent freedom, the economy and the imperative to keep citizens safe. When some countries have reopened, there has been an increase in COVID cases. Any increase in New South Wales will need to be managed from a public health perspective. Throughout this pandemic, good health strategy has proven to be good economic strategy. The pace of the economic recovery will also be impacted by the reopening of international borders. While welcome, that reopening will initially shift some expenditure from domestic tourism and home renovation to overseas destinations.

To address the possible long-term economic impacts on the New South Wales economy, in the coming week we will release our post-pandemic Economic Recovery Strategy. This strategy will build on the support and stimulus measures already in place to boost confidence and will support our State's transition back to the way of life we know and love, while making sure no-one gets left behind, and laying the foundations for a brighter future. This strategy will work alongside the Reopening NSW road map to ensure the people and businesses that make up the New South Wales economy have the support they need to sustain a safe, robust and rapid recovery. The strategy will provide targeted support for vital sectors and localities and stimulus for individuals and families to ensure New South Wales is perfectly placed to bounce back faster and stronger than ever, getting back to work and back into life for a summer to remember. It will ensure that those hit hardest by the health and economic crisis of COVID-19 have the ongoing support they need, not just to recover but to rebuild even stronger for a future where everyone in New South Wales can share in the prosperity and opportunity on offer across our State.

COVID has hit some harder than it has others. We know the impact of these lockdowns on the people of western and south-western Sydney. As we recover, we will have their backs. Their sacrifices bought the country time to get vaccinated and the people of this State will never forget that sacrifice and will stand with western Sydney as we recover from this crisis. We also know the impact COVID has taken on our young people; our hospitality businesses, hotels, bars, cafes and restaurants; our CBDs; our entertainment sector, artists and performers; and the women and children who have suffered domestic violence. Our recovery plan is not just an economic recovery plan, it is a recovery plan for the people of this State.

The Government has announced a number of key measures in this strategy. They include a business support package that will provide a summer holiday stock guarantee of up to \$20,000 for small and medium enterprises and will expand the Small Business Fees and Charges Rebate, allowing small businesses to claim back up to \$2,000 in government fees and charges, including road tolls, licensing fees and council rates. The strategy will supplement existing measures and spending by the New South Wales Government over the past few months that were intended to maintain support for business and the economy through the course of the Delta outbreak. Since July over 194,600 businesses and not-for-profit organisations have received JobSaver payments worth almost \$5.6 billion. This is a joint New South Wales and Commonwealth supported program.

Further, more than 50,000 small businesses and sole traders have received over \$505.55 million in payments through the 2021 COVID-19 Micro-Business Grant program; 183,755 businesses received \$2.3 billion in payments through the COVID-19 2021 Business Grant; \$35 million has been paid out to over 1,000 venues, organisations, producers and artists through the performing arts sector relief package; and more than 13,000 people and over 9,000 households have been assisted with temporary accommodation. OzHarvest and Foodbank have supplied more than six million kilograms of food to individuals and families in need, equating to approximately 12 million meals that have been provided to individuals and families in need. Also, 990 households have been assisted with Rent Choice packages. Multicultural NSW has funded support to provide for additional emergency relief support to vulnerable temporary visa holders, asylum seekers and, of course, refugees.

Through these measures the New South Wales Government has committed over \$10.2 billion of support to businesses and the community through these difficult times. This is in addition to the \$7.1 billion health and stimulus spending announced in the budget. This is further demonstration of the Government using its fiscal power prudently to prioritise the health of the community and protect the economy at the same time. Compared to the 2020-21 budget, our deficit, debt and borrowings will be higher, but we will recover just like last year. We expect that the impacts to the budget result will be largely contained to the 2021-22 budget year, but we want to caution that forecasting is extremely challenging in the current environment. The Government will continue to assess the rapidly changing fiscal situation and provide a revised outlook when we hand down the 2021-22 half-yearly review.

S&P Global released its credit opinion for New South Wales in September 2021, affirming the State's double-A+ credit rating, supported by our strong financial management. We expect that Moody's will release shortly its annual credit opinion for the State. With new challenges ahead, now is not the time for reckless spending but neither is it the time for severe austerity. Our strong balance sheet and credit rating mean we have more freedom than other States to access the funds we need. We will press on with our \$108.5 billion infrastructure program and invest in economic support and recovery where required. COVID has highlighted the importance of saving when times are good to invest in the economy when times are tough. Over the long term we need to rebuild our fiscal buffers. This is not going to be easy; it is going to require tough decisions. But we owe it to the future of our State to make those tough decisions so that future generations have the same resources that we have had to get through the inevitable challenges that they will confront.

COVID has shown us the importance of resilience in our economy. We had structural weaknesses in our economy before COVID, which we need to address on the way out. It is not fair and it not good for our economy that a girl born today will likely not have the same economic opportunities as a boy. COVID also has shown us

the importance of science and technology to addressing the challenges of our time and improving our way of life. We are only reopening at the moment because of the creativity and determination of the scientists around the world who developed our vaccines. These lockdowns have highlighted what we value: our friends and family; our freedoms; our natural environment, our bays, beaches and national parks which so many of us have used to get respite from lockdown. If we value these things when times are tough, we need to invest in them when the grass is greener, and that is what the Government will do.

While we need to recover what we have lost, we also need to build more than what we had. Moving from our recovery to the future, we need to bounce back better, and the Government will develop a plan to do precisely that. We will manage this recovery, support the economy and bring back the jobs and then build a stronger, more resilient, more sustainable, more prosperous State for everyone. That is exactly what the Coalition Government will do.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (15:41):** I speak on behalf of the Opposition to the Treasurer's ministerial statement. Responsible economic management requires not to do economic damage in the first place—or as the Latin phrase says, *primum non nocere*: first do no harm. I am delighted that the Treasurer has acknowledged the importance of south-west and western Sydney in terms of its workforce and of course its engine room to ensure that New South Wales recovers properly. But an economic recovery requires more than rehashed announcements and press releases, press conferences and prepared ministerial statements. If anyone is looking for economic solutions to get the economy back on track, they can start by re-reading the speech of the Leader of the Opposition.

The economic solution, as we come back, starts with recognition and respect. The past three months of the pandemic have been particularly difficult in what was already a tumultuous time. I am incredibly proud of the residents in my local government area [LGA] and many other LGAs in south-west and western Sydney, where by early October the double dose rate of the COVID vaccine was more than 70 per cent and the single dose rate was more than 95 per cent. This is a remarkable achievement and reinforces south-west and western Sydney as the engine room that has allowed all of us to achieve the freedoms that we have.

To achieve a fair and fast economic recovery, we must not have unfair, inconsistent and harsher restrictions as were imposed on the people of south-west and western Sydney, which meant they suffered financially and socially more than other areas. When decisions are made that divide communities—decisions that are not based on sound scientific evidence or in many cases not even on reasonable logic—there are harmful social and economic consequences. The people in my local community of Macquarie Fields, and no doubt in other contiguous south-west and western Sydney electorates, had imposed on them harsh restrictions and measures that were not supported by science or logic. The restrictions were based purely on where and how people live. People's businesses, their work and their ability to go out and earn an income were affected in an unfair and inconsistent manner.

The economic engine room of New South Wales was chained to the floor by poor public health decisions with harmful economic consequences: curfews, highly restricted movement and one hour's exercise. A few days before these restrictions were imposed, we were advised at a press conference that there was no substantial evidence to impose the restrictions. Suddenly, after a few press conferences, restrictions were inflicted on communities in south-western and western Sydney—the engine room of New South Wales. I did not realise that with Liberal Party economics you could do a randomised control trial that met scientific rigour in between daily press conferences.

And then, of course, not long after that the former Deputy Premier said publicly that curfews do not work and the decision was only made based on media inquiries. It seems only in the Liberal Party universe can such outcomes be achieved. Someone should contact the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences committee to see how this works without unfair and inconsistent rules on a geographical basis producing different economic outcomes for those who were harshly locked down and those who were not. Dividing our community economically and socially based on media clips and journalists' daily questions is cynical at best. At worst it is actually quite cruel.

All members would be well aware that a large number of authorised workers were from my area and other areas of western Sydney. They turned up to work every day just to keep our economy going and to keep our community safe in our various health networks and health systems. They put themselves at great risk just to earn an honest living and to keep the economy going. Data from Accenture and Illion shows that spending on eBay and Amazon increased by 310 per cent and 122 per cent respectively during this lockdown. That spending would then necessitate the delivery of goods and purchases from workers in the very areas that were locked down most harshly. Get our economy moving by unfairly locking down those who work hard? Talk about an economic oxymoron; this just does not work and it was totally unfair. The unfair lockdown restrictions have significant economic consequences between the geographies of Sydney, and I believe that the very people who have kept our economy going were hurt the most.

Many local businesses and employees contacted my office during the lockdown period. It was very obvious to them that they were being targeted, despite the fact that they kept the economy going, by restrictions that were not imposed on other areas of Sydney. Western Sydney and south-western Sydney deserve the same level of social and economic freedom, but they were not given that freedom. We were the target of unfair and unsubstantiated restrictions, which had disastrous economic consequences. Let us look at some facts about how those restrictions hurt people in south-western and western Sydney. Job advertisements were down by 60 per cent in parts of western and south-western Sydney, while in the city the reduction was barely half of that. Small businesses in the areas with hard lockdowns suffered trade losses of up to 70 per cent, while businesses in other areas—and good on them!—have increased trade by up to 33 per cent. In those same locked-down areas over 30 per cent of businesses are receiving support via government grants or JobSaver, which shows that the economic consequences of lockdowns were extremely hard on people in south-western and western Sydney.

Nearly 18 per cent of jobs in south-western and western Sydney have been lost since the lockdown and 20 per cent of adults are on Disaster Support payments—more than double the percentage in other parts of Sydney. In the Fairfield local government area one in seven people are on JobSeeker, which does not include disaster payments that were the highest in the State. Combining the number of people receiving JobSeeker with the number receiving disaster payments, it is possible that up to one in three people in parts of south-western Sydney are receiving some sort of employment benefit. These are the real economic consequences for people in south-western and western Sydney, who experienced unfair and unsubstantiated restrictions on their movement and on their economic activity. This, of course, has had significant consequences for the businesses that they have worked so hard to build over so many years—all for it to be chained to the floor and unable to open.

There are many ways to get our economy going, particularly in the areas that were most affected, but we can start with a bit of recognition and respect for the more than 1.3 million workers—and growing, as the Treasurer said—who account for 35 per cent of our economy. That is what will allow our economy to bounce back better. We want to make sure that the stimulus supports, as outlined by the Leader of the Opposition this morning, should ensure that the recovery keeps going. If we turn off the tap too quickly, it will create more damage and we will go down an economic spiral that will hurt the very communities that need economic support the most.

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: BILLS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:51):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 to proceed through all stages in the same sitting at which notice for the bill is given.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:52):** Prior to the sitting of the House, the Opposition indicated that during this pandemic, with a minority government, the Opposition would support the Government to provide stable government. Because of the unique sittings of the House, I also gave an undertaking that if a dispute should arise in which crossbench and Opposition members voting together could cause the Government to lose a vote on the floor of the House, the Opposition would vote with the Government to delay the vote and maintain the stability of the Government. The Government will shortly have an even smaller minority. The Opposition has indicated it would cooperate with the government of the day, and that cooperation relates to agreeing to the suspension of standing orders and to amendments.

But what the Opposition asks for is a fair go. Calling questionable points of order, when the Opposition only gets four questions at question time, may very well risk the view the Opposition is going to take. It is not the first time the Leader of the House has done this. He prompted a motion of dissent when he pulled that stunt on the Temporary Speaker before the COVID adjournment. I forewarn the Government that if it wants the Opposition's cooperation then there should be no more of these dodgy points of order. We only get four questions at question time. To push the speaker, as the Leader of the House has done now for the second time, in the circumstances of the Opposition giving him confidence is not an appropriate response. The Opposition will support the motion to suspend standing orders on the basis that we will support the smooth government of this State. But I am telling the Leader of the House: No more of this stuff.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:54):** In reply: The Manager of Opposition Business was not to the point of the suspension of standing orders and I will not be intimidated by threats like that. A perfectly valid point of order was taken and upheld—there was nothing dodgy about it. It is quite simple for the Opposition to comply with Standing Order 128: pose a question that does not have a preamble, which is a stunt to get a grab for television news. I invite the member for Heffron to read the standing orders and encourage his colleagues to comply with the standing orders and there will not be a problem.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

**ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Felicity Wilson, on behalf of Mr Matt Kean, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:55):** On behalf of Mr Matt Kean: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Our energy legislation has served us well over the last few decades. However, events over the last few years have highlighted that updates to these frameworks are required. The purpose of this bill is to modernise and improve the legislative framework across a suite of legislation and to ensure that the legislation remains fit for purpose to support the Government's policy objective to make New South Wales an energy economic superpower. The bill makes a range of amendments to four principle Acts across the energy portfolio. They are the Electricity Supply Act 1995, the Energy Utilities and Administration Act 1987, the Gas Supply Act 1996 and the Pipeline Act 1967. The amendments to these energy Acts are in large part amendments to improve administrative processes.

However, the bill also makes other important amendments which are needed to deliver the Government's energy objectives, including to: support the development of the hydrogen and biogas industries; enable New South Wales to opt into the national regulatory framework for Distribution Network Service Provider-led standalone power systems; improve the administration of the Energy Security Safeguard, including expansion for other fuels and enhanced compliance powers; and modernise the energy emergency framework, provide a backstop for cybersecurity protections for critical infrastructure and update outdated penalties. The bill also makes amendments to the Forestry Act 2012 to remove barriers to enable renewable energy projects in State forest softwood plantations. I will now turn to the key parts of the bill. Hydrogen and other renewable gases have emerged as critical new industries to grow the economy while achieving the State's decarbonisation objectives, and I point to the Hydrogen Strategy announced by the Government today.

In Australia and internationally, industry and governments are dedicating enormous resources to commercialise hydrogen technologies and supply chains. A commercially mature green hydrogen industry can help to decarbonise our gas network, steel and industrial ammonia production, heavy transport fleets, shipping and aviation and create new regional industries that thrive in a net-zero economy. These hard-to-abate energy, transport and industrial sectors account for around 24 megatons or 18 per cent of the State's annual emissions. At the same time, modelling shows that a green hydrogen industry could attract between \$80 billion and \$270 billion worth of investment in New South Wales by 2050. The New South Wales Government's Hydrogen Strategy announced today by the Premier and the Treasurer will be the vehicle to capture this economic opportunity and transform our State into a green hydrogen superpower.

The bill I present on behalf of the Government today contains the first of several reforms this Government is implementing to support the development of renewable gas industries and provide a clear pathway to deliver the Government's Hydrogen Strategy. First, schedule 4 [18] to the bill will address the lack of clarity around the definition of natural gas as renewable gas sources are developed. It will allow the New South Wales Government to change the definition of natural gas in the Gas Supply Act via regulation to include suitable hydrogen blends and other renewable gases. This will ensure the consistent application of the regulatory framework on blends of gases that are suitable for consumption as natural gas. Under the current framework, a network operator who distributes both natural gas and natural gas-hydrogen blends must hold both a distributor's licence and a reticulator's authorisation. The reforms will remove duplicative licensing requirements and provide clarity as to the application of different parts of the Gas Supply Act 1996. This change seeks to support the biomethane and hydrogen gas projects such as Jemena's Sydney Green Gas Project, which is likely to commence operation later this year, and its Malabar Biomethane Project, which is expected to commence in 2022. Other projects such as the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group's Murray Valley Hydrogen Project, scheduled to begin operations in mid-2023, will be seeking regulatory certainty before making a final investment decision.

The amendments in schedule 4 [18] to this bill will amend the Gas Supply Act to allow the definition of natural gas to be prescribed by regulation. The definition will be drafted to enable renewable gases and hydrogen-natural gas blends to be regulated as natural gas in order to provide industry with that certainty.

New South Wales is actively participating in national processes that are underway to amend the definition of natural gas in the National Gas Law, the National Energy Retail Law and subordinate instruments. These changes look to bring hydrogen blends, biomethane and other renewable methane gas blends within the national energy regulatory framework. However, the outcome and timing of these national reforms is uncertain. Allowing the definition of natural gas to be set by regulation will provide the flexibility required to realign the definition of natural gas once these national processes have been completed.

Secondly, the bill will enable the introduction of new regulations and other exemptions that will significantly reduce the cost of producing green hydrogen in New South Wales. The purpose of these amendments is to implement the Hydrogen Strategy released by the Government today. One of the primary barriers to developing the hydrogen economy is the cost of electricity. In the early stages of industry development, the NSW Hydrogen Strategy commits to providing a range of concessions to reduce the cost of electricity for hydrogen producers and help kickstart the industry in New South Wales. Schedule 1 [37] and [38] and schedule 2 [10] to the bill amends the Electricity Supply Act and the Energy and Utilities Administration Act to allow electricity used to produce green hydrogen to be exempt from costs associated with the Climate Change Fund and schemes under the Government's Energy Security Safeguard. Schedule 1 [28] introduces a new section 192 to the Electricity Supply Act 1995 that will also allow, via regulation, people who buy electricity to provide green hydrogen to be granted exemptions from network use of system charges.

We have existing spare capacity in our electricity networks, particularly near our ports and major potential hydrogen demand centres, that electricity customers are already paying for and which will be underutilised in the coming years. Rather than let this capacity lie dormant, the Government intends to provide a 90 per cent exemption from network charges for green hydrogen providers who connect to parts of the network that have spare capacity. These concessions will encourage industry to bring forward investment in hydrogen production infrastructure and make the most of our electricity network assets during this critical time as jurisdictions vie for early market share. Eligibility for these concessions will be subject to a range of conditions to minimise impacts on other consumers or on the revenue determinations of electricity network businesses. These include a requirement to use only existing spare network capacity to be controllable by network operators if required during peak events, and concessions are subject to a statewide cap of 750 megawatts. Subject to the statewide cap, hydrogen producers will be able to lock in these concessions by 2030 for a period of 12 years. After this initial period, they will revert to paying standard network costs.

These changes, along with the other measures in the NSW Hydrogen Strategy, will allow the State's industry to produce some of the cheapest hydrogen in the region and position New South Wales to seize this opportunity for our regional economies. I now turn to the parts of the bill that align New South Wales legislation with the national framework for standalone power systems. Schedule 1 [1] to the bill amends the definition of a distribution system in the Electricity Supply Act to include a regulated standalone power system. The bill also makes other changes to allow New South Wales to apply the national standalone power systems framework. Standalone power systems are electricity supply arrangements that are not physically connected to the national electricity grid. The purpose of these amendments is to provide the option for New South Wales in the future to opt into the national framework for standalone power systems if it is beneficial to do so. Typically comprised of solar photovoltaics, batteries and a backup generator, standalone power systems are a more cost-efficient method to supply electricity to some regional and remote locations rather than maintaining a connection to the grid.

By removing the need to build and maintain long distribution lines stand-alone power systems will, over time, support reduced network charges for all customers. The need for the national regulatory framework to include standalone power systems was highlighted in the 2017 *Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market*, led by Dr Alan Finkel, and the 2019 Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's *Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry*. After undertaking a review of the regulatory arrangements for standalone power systems, the Australian Energy Market Commission has recommended a new national framework for standalone power systems to be utilised by electricity distribution networks. Aligning New South Wales legislation with the national framework will ensure that an electricity distributor is able to operate a standalone power system for a customer that has been transitioned away from physical supply connection to the national electricity grid. Schedule 1 [1] to the bill, in amending the definition of a distribution system in the Electricity Supply Act to include a regulated standalone power system, ensures that if a customer were to be transitioned there will be no change to the rights and obligations imposed on distributors in relation to the customer's electricity connection and supply arrangements.

I now turn to those parts of the bill relating to the Energy Security Safeguard. Schedule 1 [34] to [71] and [72] to [93] to this bill include amendment to the Electricity Supply Act to improve the operation of the Energy Security Safeguard, which is currently made up of the existing Energy Savings Scheme and the new Peak Demand Reduction Scheme. The purpose of these amendments is to give effect to parts of the NSW Electricity Strategy and Energy Security Safeguard position paper. As a market-based instrument, the Energy Savings Scheme has

been highly successful at delivering energy savings. Activities implemented under the scheme between 2009 and 2019 will deliver energy savings of about 32,500 gigawatt hours and bill savings of about \$6.1 billion by 2029. The Government has expanded the Energy Savings Scheme, continuing this good work by expanding the scheme under the Energy Security Safeguard, extending it to 2050 and increasing the energy savings targets. The Government consulted stakeholders to ensure the new energy savings targets and activities are consistent with the Government's objectives to maximise bill savings, improve reliability and protect the environment.

The NSW Electricity Strategy and the Energy Security Safeguard position paper signalled that the safeguard will cover a wider range of activities that reduce demand on electricity and gas networks. This could include, for example, switching from natural gas to biogas or to green hydrogen. The bill includes various amendments to allow for this broader range of fuel-switching projects within the Energy Savings Scheme. To support the extension and expansion of the scheme, the bill makes amendments to enhance the compliance powers for the regulator to better prevent, detect and respond to noncompliance issues. These amendments are made under schedule 1 [53] to [56], [60] to [62], [64] to [65], [69], [81] to [86] and [89]. This includes a new framework for compliance officers and a civil penalty regime, which will give the administrator more options in their regulatory toolbox. Schedule 1 [46] to [52], [57] to [59], [63], [66] to [67], [71], [74], [77] to [80], [87] and [88] to the bill will improve the administration of the safeguard scheme, including by streamlining accreditation requirements and clarifying certificate registration timing and registration requirements.

Another key reform in this bill is the modernisation of the State's energy emergency and compliance framework. Schedule 2 [2] to the bill includes amendments to the Energy and Utilities Administration Act to align the process for declaring an emergency with that in the Electricity Supply Act. An emergency situation, as we know, can evolve very quickly, which highlights the need to streamline and simplify the processes required before government action can be taken. That is why the first change aligns the process across our energy legislations to allow the Premier, instead of the Governor, to declare an emergency. Aligning and simplifying the process will allow the New South Wales Government to take quick action where necessary during emergencies. Schedule 2 [2] to the bill will also amend section 27 of the Energy and Utilities Administration Act to bring its information-gathering powers into line with the existing powers under the Electricity Supply Act. These information-gathering powers play an important role to inform government actions in relation to energy emergencies. Overall, these changes will support the New South Wales Government in implementing the appropriate response plan in an emergency and mirror those set out in the Electricity Supply Act.

Given the rapid evolution of cybersecurity risks, it is important that critical energy infrastructure has the right processes and systems in place in order to deal with these threats. The bill provides the New South Wales Government with appropriate backstops to ensure arrangements are in place to protect critical energy infrastructure against a cyber attack. One recent example of a cybersecurity incident was seen in May 2021 when the operator of the United States' largest fuel pipeline, Colonial Pipeline, paid US\$4.4 million in ransomware to hackers. The cyber attack resulted in the pipeline being closed for nearly a week, creating supply shocks throughout the US market. This is just one event that highlights the need for the New South Wales Government to be able to take action to ensure critical energy infrastructure companies—such as energy generators, networks, and pipelines—have the appropriate protections in place. Schedule 1 [16] to [25], schedule 2 [1] and [2], schedule 4 [14] and [15], and schedule 5 [1], [5] and [6] to the bill make amendments to include these backstop provisions in the Electricity Supply Act, the Gas Supply Act, the Energy and Utilities Administration Act, and the Pipelines Act, respectively.

Ongoing work is being led by the Commonwealth Government. However, the time frame for the implementation of the national reforms is uncertain. The powers provided for in the bill are designed to be able to align with the national cybersecurity framework. Schedule 2 [6] and [8] also update the penalty units relating to compliance with energy emergencies in the Energy and Utilities Administration Act with those in the Electricity Supply Act. This is to ensure that they are still relevant and appropriate to encourage compliance during emergencies. Schedule 4 [1], [3], [4], [6], [8], [9], [12], [13] and [16] update other penalties under the Gas Supply Act, while schedule 5 [3], [4], [8] to [12] and [14] to [18] update other penalty units under the Pipelines Act. These updates will align the penalty units across these Acts with those in the Electricity Supply Act or equivalent provisions in other jurisdictions. It is timely for these changes as all but one of the penalty units under the New South Wales Gas Supply Act and the Pipelines Act have not been updated for at least two decades. For example, currently under section 35 of the Pipelines Act, if a licensee whose licence has been cancelled fails to comply with a direction to remove certain property and make good any damage to the area caused by its removal, the maximum penalty is 40 units—or \$4,400. The bill will increase this maximum to \$250,000. These changes will ensure that this framework provides the appropriate incentives that will ensure compliance with safety and technical requirements.

I now turn to schedule 3 to the bill. Schedule 3 [1] to [3] will amend the Forestry Act 2012 to unlock opportunities for the development of infrastructure for the generation and storage of energy from renewable

sources which are located near available transmission assets within State forests' softwood plantations. The development of these electricity projects will support the delivery of the New South Wales Government policy priority for delivering cheap, sustainable power whilst benefiting the economic development of regional communities. The reform will do this by amending sections 59 and 60 of the Forestry Act to provide a clear mandate for the development of renewable electricity generation and storage projects in New South Wales State forests' softwood plantations. I stress that these changes will only permit infrastructure for renewable energy projects to be located in State forests' softwood plantations. The changes will not permit these projects to be located in State forest areas that contain native forests. This change will also not remove any approvals or requirements that energy projects are required to adhere to under the existing planning process.

Other jurisdictions internationally, and now Queensland and Victoria, have allowed renewable projects to be developed within exotic softwood plantation assets. It is estimated that wind farms with a total capacity of at least 1 gigawatt could be located near available transmission lines in New South Wales' softwood plantations. These renewable projects can play an important role in generating social and economic benefits for regional areas. The Forestry Corporation of NSW would implement actions to minimise the impact of any approved renewable project on forestry operations. These actions could, for example, include requiring developers to offset land losses at their own expense. Overall, this change will unlock a new revenue stream for the Forestry Corporation of NSW, alongside the existing activities of the corporation.

I turn now to several of the miscellaneous amendments in the bill that will streamline the administration of aspects of New South Wales energy legislation and cut unnecessary red tape. The bill will make minor changes that will increase the options available to networks to resolve issues of private structures encroaching on electricity and gas works. Schedule 1 [7] to [10] amends section 49 of the Electricity Supply Act while schedule 4 [11] amends section 50 of the Gas Supply Act to enable the network to offer the owner of the encroaching structure the option of having the network relocated. The owner will still have the current option of moving their structure, however it may be cheaper and better for the owner to pay for the relocation of the network and may lead to a faster resolution of the safety issue. Schedule 1 [4], [27] and [29] to the bill will repeal the redundant provisions in the Electricity Supply Act relating to the Solar Bonus Scheme. This scheme ended in December 2016.

Schedule 1 [12] and [13] to the bill will amend sections 63R and 63U of the Electricity Supply Act to reduce reporting obligations on networks for motor vehicle accidents on non-network owned or controlled land where electricity or electricity works did not contribute to the accident or any injury or death. Currently, networks are required to report on and refrain from disturbing or interfering with a site of motor vehicle accidents involving electricity works. All other existing legal obligations relating to the reporting of road accidents are unaffected by these changes. These changes will reduce regulatory burden and minimise delays in restoring power. Schedule 1 [30] to [33] make definitional changes to the Electricity Supply Act to align with the definitions under the National Electricity Rules that distinguish between metering providers and metering coordinators. This will provide greater clarity to stakeholders about who the responsible parties are for metering services for New South Wales.

Schedule 4 [2] and [7] make changes to improve administrative processes related to the determination of applications under the Gas Supply Act. The amendments to section 9 and section 38 of the Act will enable the Minister to grant an application for an authorisation or licence with modification. Currently, the Minister is only able to grant or refuse an application. The bill also streamlines the provisions in the Gas Supply Act and Pipelines Act for the setting of authorisation and licence fees. These changes, which are in schedule 4 [5] and [10] and schedule 5 [13] to the bill, will ensure the appropriate costs are recovered and align the provisions with those set out under the Electricity Supply Act.

Schedule 5 makes a few minor changes that will improve administrative processes under the Pipelines Act 1967. Schedule 5 [2] to the bill amends section 5A of the Pipelines Act to give the Minister the ability to set the date by which a particular pipeline needs to be licensed under the Pipelines Act. The current provisions require 12 months to pass before such an order can take effect. This change will ensure new critical pipeline projects can be subject to the appropriate safety and technical oversight in a timely manner. Schedule 5 [7] also amends the Pipelines Act to update section 20 to remove the requirement for the Registrar General to notify the Minister of charges incurred by the Registrar General in registering a deposited plan. Deposited plans contain information relating to the legal boundaries of the land. If an easement is applied for and granted by the Minister under the Pipelines Act, the applicant must lodge it with the Registrar General.

The bill makes important amendments to improve and streamline administrative processes, enhance network efficiencies, ensure robust compliance and enforcement regimes, and unlock low-emission technologies like standalone power systems and hydrogen. These amendments will provide clarity and improve regulatory processes for the New South Wales energy industry. The bill will strengthen protections for energy consumers,

safeguard the State's critical energy infrastructure, increase economic opportunities for State forests and pave the way for the New South Wales hydrogen industry. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (COVID-19—ELECTIONS SPECIAL PROVISIONS) BILL  
2021**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Shelley Hancock, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (16:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 is designed to ensure that the ordinary local government elections scheduled for 4 December 2021 are able to proceed and that challenges faced by the NSW Electoral Commissioner in facilitating the elections as a result of the COVID-19 virus are addressed in a timely fashion. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented risks and challenges to a range of everyday activities that we would have once taken for granted. Responding to these risks and challenges has forced us to rethink and adapt the way we would normally undertake these activities and to consider doing things in a way that we would never have once contemplated. Nowhere is this more evident than with the most fundamental of acts associated with our system of democracy, the casting of a vote at an election.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already forced the Government to make difficult decisions in relation to the next local government elections. The Government has been compelled to postpone the elections twice in the face of the insurmountable public health challenges of conducting council elections during a global pandemic. The elections which should originally have been held on 12 September 2020 will now be held on 4 December 2021. On each occasion the elections have been postponed, the decision to postpone the elections has been made in consultation with and on advice from the NSW Electoral Commissioner and NSW Health. Given the current and future level of restrictions, as outlined in the New South Wales Government's road maps, and the need to ensure we remain COVID-safe in line with health advice, the December local government elections are likely to be held in a different environment.

The election period will commence on 25 October 2021, with the close of rolls and pre-poll voting commencing on 22 November 2021 and election day held on 4 December 2021. Voters will have the option to cast their ballot utilising traditional voting channels, namely COVID-safe attendance voting, complemented by postal and technology-assisted voting. When local government elections are held in December, they will be COVID-safe. The NSW Electoral Commission has developed a COVID-19 action plan for the elections and amendments have been made to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to support the implementation of that plan. The criteria for pre-poll voting has been relaxed to allow anyone to vote during the pre-poll voting period. This will mean that voting will not occur on a single day but over an election period of 13 days, including election day. This will assist in allowing a range of COVID-safe measures to be implemented at polling places.

Additional eligibility criteria for postal voting has been introduced which will allow electors to vote by post if they are self-isolating because of COVID-19-related reasons or because they reasonably believe that attending a polling place on election day will pose a risk to their health or safety or the health or safety of another person because of COVID-19. Permanent and temporary residents in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages and similar facilities will also be eligible to vote using postal voting because of their particular vulnerability. Technology-assisted voting, or iVote, will be made available to electors at council elections for the first time, administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. Eligibility to vote using iVote is limited to the same criteria that apply at State elections. Electors who are eligible to vote by post and who have applied for but have not received their postal ballot paper eight days before election day will also be eligible to vote using iVote.

Regulations have been made to introduce new powers to allow election managers to maintain COVID-safe measures at and around polling places and at venues where votes are scrutinised or counted. The regulations empower election managers to restrict posters being displayed and canvassing activities within 100 metres of polling places where it may be necessary to comply with a public health order or to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19. Election managers can also prohibit or restrict the number of scrutineers present at polling places and places where ballot papers are scrutinised or votes counted where this is necessary to comply with a public health order or to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19, subject to there being alternative scrutiny arrangements, for example, filming the counting of votes. Election managers will also have the power to

temporarily suspend voting at a polling place for up to four hours and to adjourn voting for up to 13 days after election day in response to a health hazard.

The New South Wales Government has also provided the NSW Electoral Commissioner with \$57 million, including \$37 million to ensure that the 2021 local government elections are delivered in a COVID-safe way at no additional cost to councils. In July the NSW Electoral Commissioner wrote to the then Treasurer requesting additional funding due to the further delay of local government elections, and the New South Wales Government is currently reviewing this request. These measures are constantly under review to ensure they continue to be appropriate to accommodate and address the risks and challenges posed by the virus. Whilst we all have very good reasons to be confident of our pathway out of the current restrictions, as experience has repeatedly demonstrated with COVID, we can take nothing for granted. The measures contained in the bill will supplement the regulation amendments that have already been made to ensure that the 2021 local government elections are COVID-safe. They will allow the Government to respond to any unexpected contingencies or challenges that may arise as a result of the COVID pandemic that would otherwise prevent council elections proceeding in a COVID-safe way or that would prevent election outcomes being delivered in a way that could command the support of the community.

If passed, the bill will insert a new provision, new section 747C, into the Local Government Act 1993. New section 747C will allow the operation of the electoral provisions of the Act to be modified by regulation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic should this be required. New subsection (1) of new section 747C will permit regulations to be made to modify the application of one or more provisions of the Local Government Act that apply to the 2021 local government elections for the purposes of responding to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that even though the Local Government elections will be proceeding in December using traditional voting channels or methods, both the NSW Electoral Commissioner and the Government will be well placed to respond to any unexpected challenges posed by the COVID virus. The NSW Electoral Commissioner has strongly advocated to the Government for the ability to vary the requirements of the Act, on his recommendation, to avoid elections failing due to technical irregularities or missed deadlines because of COVID-19 impacts. The Electoral Commissioner has written to the Government to request:

... amendments to the Local Government Act which allow the Minister to vary requirements of the Act, on the recommendation of the Electoral Commissioner to deal with potential further health emergencies.

This flexibility is important not just for supporting the system of Local Government in New South Wales but also to support the NSW Electoral Commission being able to undertake its preparations for the March 2023 State election. It is important to note that the ability to make regulations under new section 747C to modify the operation of the election provisions of the Local Government Act for the 2021 local government elections is subject to two very important constraints. First, the Minister may only recommend to the Governor that regulations be made under new section 747C if the proposed regulations are in accordance with advice issued by the Electoral Commissioner. Second, regulations made under new section 747C must be reasonable to protect the health, safety and welfare of persons from risk of harm caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What this means in practice is that the Minister will only be permitted to recommend to the Governor that regulations are made under new section 747C where the Electoral Commissioner has advised the Minister that the regulations must be made to address risks to the health, safety and welfare of persons caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Another important constraint is that the ability to make regulations under new section 747C is restricted to the 2021 local government elections. This means that it will not be possible to make regulations under new section 747C for future local government elections. The local government sector has consistently opposed elections being held by full postal voting. The measures contained in the bill will not permit regulations to be made that would allow elections to be conducted exclusively by postal voting and iVoting.

The measures contained in the bill will not allow for a further postponement of the local government elections. Attendance voting will remain an option for all voters on 4 December. I can therefore assure this House that council elections will proceed on 4 December 2021 and that voters will be able to cast their votes in person, or by postal vote or iVote—if they are eligible to vote by those means—if they feel unsafe to attend in person due to COVID-19. I reiterate to the House that regulations can only be recommended to the Governor by me following advice from the Electoral Commissioner. The Electoral Commissioner has provided the Office of Local Government with advice that further minor changes may be required "to avoid elections failing due to technical irregularities or missed deadlines because of COVID-19 impacts." I remind members that I have now said that twice: It is to avoid elections failing. That is the advice we have received from the Electoral Commissioner. It is the Government's expectation and hope that further regulations beyond those minor changes will not need to be made under new section 747C.

As I have previously noted, the local government elections will be held in December under very different conditions to those that currently exist. The measures contained in the bill will provide me with additional options

that do not currently exist—which are constrained, as I have previously outlined—to allow the local government elections to proceed on 4 December. Finally, I sincerely thank and commend the shadow local government Minister for his engagement with me on this matter, his commitment to the local government sector and his intelligence in conversations with me. A few hysterical comments have been swirling around this Chamber and in other areas which have indicated that some people have misunderstood completely what has been intended in this legislation. Therefore, I appreciate his commitment to the local government sector and his ability to work in a bipartisan fashion with the Government to ensure COVID-safe elections occur in December. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:30):** On behalf of the Labor Opposition, I am delighted to speak in debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021. The Opposition will not oppose the bill. Local government elections in this State are so very important. Particularly during this time of pandemic, it is important to ensure the public safety of voters, volunteers, staff and community. I note that it has taken the Government over 20 months to come up with a plan and adequately fund a framework to have COVID-safe elections, but I am delighted that we are here now to get this done in a manner that ensures public safety and the democratic right of community members to vote without prejudice.

Following the continued pressure of the New South Wales Opposition, members know that the Government proposes to increase funding for the NSW Electoral Commission by \$29.1 million to ensure that COVID-safe local government elections will be held on 4 December 2021. Accordingly, the Government has given an undertaking that councils will incur costs for the elections based only on the projected expense as if the elections proceeded in September 2020. Any additional costs will be shouldered by the Government and rightly so, in light of what I previously stated: The Government has simply left it too long.

The bill proposes to insert additional provisions under new section 747C of the Local Government Act 1993 as follows. First, the regulations may modify provisions of the Act in relation to the election of councillors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the regulation is to provide additional mechanisms by which elections may be conducted in response to the public health emergency, which are only to be enlivened in accordance with advice from the Electoral Commissioner to that effect and in line with what is a reasonable response to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirdly, regulations made under this new section are not limited to the regulation-making power of the Act and may override provisions. However, regulations enacted under this new section must not enable the exclusive use of postal voting or iVoting for the purposes of the local government elections on 4 December.

Such amendments appear necessary to allow flexibility for the Electoral Commissioner to do their job. Should the elections within a local government area be threatened by a COVID-19 outbreak and the implementation of stay-at-home orders, people still deserve to exercise their democratic right to vote for their local representatives in their local government area. The Opposition understands that those provisions are required for the public health and safety of communities but also to ensure that people are simply not put at risk during a unique time. As I stated, the Government has had ample time to do so and has failed, but we are here now. I acknowledge all of the councils that have played a vital role in their communities during this pandemic, not only providing day-to-day services to their communities but also essential support services such as Meals on Wheels, seniors support programs, disability support programs and domestic violence committees.

Sadly, during the pandemic we have seen the need for these services increase in each and every community. The effect of COVID-19 has reached local businesses, families and community organisations. I call the Government out for the absence of adequate funding for local councils. Stimulus investment could have gone into local community projects and employment requirements for local workers in our local councils. We know that local councils do it best in local communities. That is why we support adequate funding and economic stimulus for councils to get on with the job that they do best. We know that councils were exempt from JobKeeper. Councils around the State—particularly in the 12 local government areas—are losing up to and beyond \$800,000 a month in revenue, which will have an effect on local councils and the services they must provide for their communities. Devastatingly, it will affect many local families during a time of desperate need.

I draw the attention of the House to the 12 local government areas in west and south-west Sydney where the Government took an inconsistent approach to isolate councils and place them under a microscope. A tale of two cities has been spoken about a lot. I draw the attention of the House to the Premier's comments and his track record in western Sydney and south-west Sydney, which is best described as fast. When I say "fast" I am referring to the fact he could not get out of western Sydney and his former electorate quickly enough to travel to the leafy, greener pastures in the northern suburbs of Sydney. I note the new Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Minister for Western Sydney and member for Penrith said the other day, "I can hear this concept of division, the propagating of a tale of two cities. I have not seen that once". I do not know where he has been, because he and his Government

made decisions in his electorate that actually segregated suburbs. It infuriated his local community. It infuriated people in west and south-west Sydney. While we were locked away we watched others on TV enjoying luxuries as an outcome of the Government's inconsistent approach.

I want to be very clear: We take nothing away from anyone who would like to have and were having a good time. That is fantastic. All we ask in west and south-west Sydney is that we are treated the same way, but that simply was not the case. Financial hardship has brought many challenges to local families, businesses and councils, which is reflected in the serious rise of mental health issues that people have been navigating. The elections must go ahead. They have been delayed and the uncertainty has been prolonged because this Government has not provided them with certainty. That is why we find ourselves here today, at the eleventh hour, making these amendments to ensure that the elections go ahead, and that they go ahead safely to ensure that local communities have their say by voting for their local councillors. I reiterate that the regulation in this bill must not enable an election to be conducted exclusively by means of postal voting, or postal voting and the iVote process.

We have sustained a position on this side of the House against mandatory universal postal voting and remain seriously concerned about the integrity of the iVote process. We will continue to pursue those matters. There is an expectation on this side of the House that the provisions proposed today, together with subsequent amendments, will not obstruct volunteers or campaigners, and will not stop people from voting freely. We do not want volunteers to have to stay 100 metres away from the polling booth or any other prohibitions that will reduce the opportunity for people to cast their vote in an informed and democratic way. We do not have any expectation that the Government will use these provisions for that purpose. I have discussed this with the Government and they have stated that is not the case. The Government has stated this is for emergency situations and to put funding in place to ensure that communities can go and vote for their local representatives in a safe manner during a pandemic.

When the Government introduced the first draft of this bill Labor said it would not support it. The Government asked why, in what circumstances would we support it and what are our concerns? We told the Government and they made amendments, which is why Labor does not oppose the bill at this time. I thank everyone who has worked progressively towards this bill. I thank my colleagues for their feedback and their continued strong advocacy for the local government sector. We know that it is only New South Wales Labor that understands the importance of democratic elections for these local councils. It is not just for the 12 local government areas of concern, but for every community across the State. The Labor Opposition does not oppose the bill.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:42):** Via video link: I speak in debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Election Special Provisions) Bill 2021. I can see no reason why anyone in this House would oppose the bill. The measures it contains are sensible and measured. It gives the Government the additional option of modifying the operation of the election provisions of the Local Government Act 1993, should this be required. I am sure we are all familiar with the NSW Electoral Commissioner's observations about the challenges of delivering council elections during a global pandemic. The commissioner's task is not an easy one. The least that this Parliament can do to support him in that task is to ensure he is equipped with the necessary levers he can pull, should it be necessary to change course in response to any unanticipated challenges that may arise as a result of the COVID-19 virus.

If passed, the measure contained in this bill will give councils, voters and election participants the added assurance that council elections will proceed smoothly when they are held in December. The measure contained in the bill carries with it certain safeguards that should give everyone in this House the confidence to support the bill. The Minister can only recommend that regulations altering the application of the election provisions of the Local Government Act be made if two preconditions are met. First, the proposed regulations must be made in accordance with advice issued by the Electoral Commissioner. That means that it will not be open to the Minister to unilaterally recommend to the Governor the making of regulations. Under the new provision the Electoral Commissioner must first advise that they should be made. Second, the proposed regulations must be reasonable to protect the health, safety and welfare of persons from risk of harm caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. If the proposed regulations do not satisfy this test then they cannot be made, even if they are in accordance with the commissioner's advice.

A second safeguard is that the new provision will only apply to the 2021 local government elections. This means that it has an in-built redundancy and cannot be used for future elections. I note the Minister's advice that the measures contained in the bill will not allow for a further postponement of the 2021 local government elections. This means that there can be confidence and certainty that council elections will proceed as planned on 4 December 2021. Finally, if the bill is passed it will not allow for regulations to be made that enable an election to be conducted exclusively by means of postal voting and iVoting. I understand that the local government sector is opposed to elections being conducted exclusively by means of postal voting and iVoting. This means that

councils and others can have confidence that voters will be able to vote in person when the elections are held in December, or by postal vote or iVote if they are eligible to cast their vote by those means. As I have said, it is difficult to see anything in the bill that anyone could object to so I am pleased to support it.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:47):** I make a contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021. I thank the Minister for bringing the bill to the House. I congratulate her on all the hard work she has put in to ensure that council elections will be COVID safe. We have worked so hard to keep our communities, families and friends safe. Local elections are the cornerstone of a democratic system and they have been sorely tested over the past two years. Local government elections have been postponed on two occasions in response to the COVID pandemic, initially for 12 months to September 2021 and then again in response to the Delta variant outbreak until 4 December this year. No responsible government would have allowed the elections to proceed in the circumstances in which the elections were postponed. To have allowed them to proceed when they were due to be held, when COVID cases were increasing, would have been highly irresponsible and could have contributed to a massive superspreader event.

The focus of councils should be on the needs of the community. During the COVID crisis, councils were called upon to help with testing and the delivery of vaccines into the arms of constituents. I will speak about local councils in the Upper Hunter electorate. Upper Hunter Shire Council Mayor Maurice Collison helped to set up a clinic in Merriwa, which is an area that is underserved by GPs and lacked the opportunity to get vaccinated. The mayor and I, along with a large contingent of the community, facilitated that much-needed opportunity for a large number of people. Muswellbrook Shire Council Mayor Rod Scholes and I also helped to set up a vaccination clinic at the local basketball stadium. Council workers were instrumental in coordinating traffic, as well as in managing people and the vaccine. Singleton Mayor Sue Moore helped to set up the vaccination clinic at the local civic centre. It was incredibly important for that community that this was done and now vaccination numbers are increasing all the time. Dungog Shire Council Mayor John Connors and I set up a COVID testing facility in 24 hours at the local bowling club to help manage the small outbreak in the town.

I thank the council for its efforts to make that happen. Finally, Liverpool Plains Shire Council Mayor Doug Hawkins and I, along with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, put together a clinic to put vaccines into the arms of over 1,000 people. These are major contributions to the community. Councils needed to focus on what was important, and the COVID crisis was important. Holding local elections in September 2020 or September 2021, when the Delta variant caused daily case numbers to soar, would have exposed electors, election workers, candidates, campaign workers and the broader community in every corner of the State to the risk of infection. It would have taken our eye off the ball and put at risk the ability of election providers to attract the necessary staff to support the elections, jeopardising their delivery. It is likely that holding the elections during the outbreak in September 2021, when stay-at-home orders were in place, would have resulted in a significantly lower turnout, putting at risk the democratic soundness of the elections and the community's confidence in their outcomes because communities were fearful of the outcomes of the pandemic if their interests and safety were not put first.

I pay tribute to the Government's sound management of the COVID crisis. Thanks to the measures implemented by this Government, the State now faces a vastly different situation to the one it faced only a few months ago. If the local government elections that were due to be held in September had not been postponed, it would have been major catastrophe. Rates of infection and the numbers of hospitalisations and deaths have been declining steadily. Extraordinary rates of vaccination have been achieved in New South Wales communities. By election day on 4 December 2021 the State will have every reason to expect that more than 90 per cent of those attending polling places will be fully vaccinated. Council workers and councillors have made that happen. I am pleased to hear that the Minister advised the House that council elections will proceed on 4 December. I am sure that sentiment will be shared by the State's long-serving councillors.

This recent period has coincided with some of the gravest challenges councils and their communities have faced in generations. They include the drought, the bushfires and a global pandemic. I thank all councillors for their service to their communities. They stood up when they were needed and I thank them for that. To those who have chosen to not stand again for election, I hope they enjoy their retirement—they have earned it. I wish them well in their future endeavours and thank them for their service. I have no hesitation in supporting the bill.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I call the member for Granville. I apologise for not giving her the call earlier. I remind her that debate will be interrupted at 5.00 p.m.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:54):** Via video link: I contribute to debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021. This is a really important bill to make sure we conduct the local government elections, which have been postponed twice, in a COVID-safe manner at the end of this year. I thank the Minister for introducing the bill. I also thank my colleague the member for Campbelltown and shadow Minister for Local Government for his contribution to the discussions to ensure that there is no capacity for this bill to be used to permanently entrench postal voting or iVoting and to make sure that

any of these provisions are limited to areas where there is a risk to health by conducting these ballots in the usual manner.

I appreciate that additional funding of \$29.1 million has been made available for the conduct of these elections and that councils will incur the cost of elections only on the basis of estimates for September 2020 elections. I appreciate that the only additional mechanisms that will be put in place will be those that are done on the advice of the Electoral Commissioner and they will not enable the exclusive use of postal voting or the combination of postal and iVoting. The bill will allow the flexibility needed to conduct elections should a local government area be threatened by COVID or stay-at-home rules. Over the past four months my electorate, which covers both the Cumberland and Parramatta local government areas, has been one of the areas of concern or one of the original 12 local government areas of concern, which was really 12½ local government areas because only half of the [inaudible] local government area was ever placed into hard lockdown. That created a tale of two cities.

As much as the Government might pretend that that did not occur—yesterday the member for Penrith and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party said that he had not seen that once, referring to the differences between the two areas; he must be wilfully blind—it was very obvious. It was even obvious for the few days between Cumberland being declared an area under the harsher lockdown and Parramatta not. It was obvious to me, as somebody who lives in the Parramatta local government area, how much more restrictive it was in Cumberland for just those few days before Parramatta joined Cumberland as a local government area of control. I appreciate that these [inaudible] will not be used for future elections. They will be used only to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and will not be used to make it impossible for people to campaign, such as the previous suggestion that you must stand 100 metres away from a polling booth to communicate, which is not possible and not feasible.

We need to be able to conduct these ballots in a COVID-safe way, but we also need to make sure that voters have the information before them to make their decisions and to exercise their democratic right; their democratic right that has been postponed twice. In my electorate people are itching to vote, particularly those on the Cumberland side. Over the past two and a bit years they have been alarmed by the antics of the current mayor and cannot wait for a chance to have their say about him at the ballot box. During the lockdown we saw a number of mayors and councillors across the 12 local government areas do a lot to support their communities to get through the lockdown and that is very much appreciated. Parramatta council turned off the parking meters and significantly reduced its parking patrols. In fact, every Sydney council did that as well, except for Cumberland, which increased its parking fines revenue by 8 per cent. Lots of councils waived charges for a whole range of groups, including sporting groups. In my electorate the Parramatta council waived fees for winter sports for the use of their grounds [inaudible].

#### **Debate interrupted.**

#### *Public Interest Debate*

#### **WESTERN AND SOUTH-WESTERN SYDNEY**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:59):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the people of the west and the south-west of Sydney have endured the harshest lockdowns of any place in Australia at any time during the pandemic.
- (2) Condemns the Government for hitting the west and south-west of Sydney with excessive tolls, fines and charges.
- (3) Calls on the Government to end the two Sydneys it has created, rebuild our State and end the division.

The past few months have been some of the toughest in the recent history of our State. People in the suburbs of the west and the south-west of Sydney have endured the harshest lockdowns of any place in Australia. Families have gone without seeing loved ones, small businesses have suffered losses in trade of up to 70 per cent in parts of west and south-west Sydney. Job ads are down over 60 per cent in parts of western and south-west Sydney whereas close to the CBD they are down only by 25 per cent to 30 per cent. In parts of the south-west one in five jobs were lost since the start of the lockdown. With not enough vaccines, communities, including my own in western Sydney, were left exposed. The Federal Liberal Government failed to secure enough vaccine supply to prevent another lockdown and the New South Wales Liberal Government broke Sydney into two—a tale of two cities, a tale of two Sydneys.

But families living in western Sydney and south-west Sydney have been putting up with this for a decade—a double standard. The west gets hundreds of thousands of new residents, straining our infrastructure, while Mosman and Woollahra are shielded from population growth. The west's essential workers power our economy and the Liberal elites reap the benefits. The Liberals are not for western Sydney. Are we surprised? No! They have never been for western Sydney. They put their own interests first. Under the Liberals, tolls are up, fines are

up and the cost of living is up in the suburbs of Sydney. Western and south-west Sydney workers do not ask for the world. They get up, they go to work and every day they work to provide a great life for themselves and their families. But this Liberal Government makes life harder. This Government has the west and south-west paying through the nose because that has always been their Liberal agenda—send the bill to working people in the west and make the west to do the hard yards.

We know what the Liberals think of the west: They put people under the harshest lockdown and now what are they doing? They are running away. Just one hour ago it was revealed that Liberal south-west Sydney MP, Melanie Gibbons, is now abandoning the New South Wales Government. This Liberal, who claims to represent south-west Sydney—what is she doing? She is running away. She is abandoning the community to try to get another job. What did she say this afternoon? She said, "Federal seats don't come up too often." For emphasis, I will say that again, "Federal seats don't come up too often." How indulgent is that? How selfish can you be to put your own personal career aspirations ahead of the thousands of people in south-west Sydney that she is supposed to represent? Six thousand people in her community lost their jobs and this Liberal MP is abandoning western Sydney. What a slap in the face to her community that she would hightail it out of the west when the going gets really tough. The Liberals were happy to whack the harshest restrictions anywhere in Australia on the suburbs of western Sydney and south-west Sydney and now they are abandoning ship.

This Government is off course and rudderless. While western and south-west Sydney businesses try to rebuild, the Liberal Government is resigning. Rather than stay and support the economic recovery in the suburbs, they are running away like Melanie Gibbons, who is leaving her community instead of fighting for her community. Some of the suburbs that she is abandoning because of her own personal ambition are Casula, Prestons, Liverpool, Lurnea and Chipping Norton. These Liberals have never truly cared about the west and the south-west and today proves that no end. What kind of message is this 10-year-old Liberal Government sending when its team would rather resign than do the hard work to rebuild our businesses? The Liberals have left her community because they do not care. I have her statement with me. This Liberal even has the gall to say:

I will continue to serve ... until I am required to resign ...

Newsflash! There is no requirement to resign. She is not being forced to resign. She is choosing to abandon her community. She is leaving her community for a chance at a bigger pay cheque. It is a selfish attitude that continues to let families in western Sydney down. Today we call on Melanie Gibbons to stay and fight for western Sydney. We ask every member to call on this Liberal to reverse her selfish decision and put her community before her own blind, personal ambition. I call on the new Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party to support his own colleague to stay and fight for western and south-western Sydney.

Yesterday the Premier confirmed with his own words that the Liberal Party thinks western Sydney is asking for class warfare. It considers that there are two classes of people in Sydney—the west and the east. It is how it has governed. The west can wait for schools, road upgrades and public transport, because we will not make a fuss. The west can be taken for granted because we are too busy working, running businesses and raising our families to fight back. It is why it has instituted more tolls on the workers of west and south-west Sydney, rising above inflation every year. Memo to the Premier: Wanting a school that was promised is not class warfare. He thinks it is the politics of envy but wanting schools and hospitals that were promised is not being envious. Asking for your fair share is not envious. Paying stamp duty and taxes, making your contribution and wanting your fair share is not being envious. The Liberal Party has run the politics of geography the past 10 years and during the pandemic we saw this writ large. It is a 10-year-old Liberal Government which looks out for city Liberals. The people of western Sydney are not second-class citizens. We should be one Sydney and our community deserves better than this. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade) (17:07):** I move:

That the motion be amended by removing paragraphs (1) to (3), and inserting the following paragraphs instead:

- (1) Notes that stay-at-home orders and local government areas of concern have been an important public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- (2) Recognises the resilience of people across western and south-western Sydney, the outstanding effort of health workers and the record-breaking uptake of vaccination across those local government areas.
- (3) Notes the Government's continued infrastructure investment in schools, hospitals, roads and public transport in western and south-western Sydney is driving the economic recovery of this State.

I thank the member for Londonderry for the opportunity to speak about western Sydney during this public interest debate. I have heard a lot about the tale of two cities and I can inform members opposite that no-one on that side of the Chamber has the class of Charles Dickens. Members on only one side of the Chamber are talking about the tale of two cities—that is the Labor side. They are the people who want to divide the community. They are the

only people in the Chamber talking about division. Everyone on this side of the Chamber is talking about commitment to western Sydney, vaccination rates in western Sydney, their pride in western Sydney and how inspired they have been by the way people in western Sydney have responded to this once-in-a-century challenge. The vaccination rates in the local government areas of concern allowed us to get out of the Delta outbreak much faster than anyone thought was possible because residents of western Sydney followed the health advice and got vaccinated.

Health advice is a phrase at which everyone laughs but I want to draw this out. It makes sense for those people who want to divide to argue that the Government should follow health advice, but when the Government follows health advice, which reduces the rate of infection across New South Wales by creating the local government areas of concern, Labor members ignore it and park it to one side. Labor members do not want to talk about New South Wales or Sydney being united; they do not want people in the east and west of Sydney and the regions being united; they want to talk about division. I do not mean to break it to them, but this is the reason why they have been in opposition for 11 years. People do not want to talk about division. They have fought a war and people have died. They do not want to hear about division. They want to hear about how every member in this Chamber, who is a privileged representative of their community, is uniting the State.

They want to hear about the things that we are going to do to drive their economic recovery. They want the jobs that they lost because of the way we had to fight this pandemic. That is what we on this side of the Chamber will deliver to them. That is why we will continue to deliver the roads like the Northern Road and the Prospect Highway, to ensure that people can move around western Sydney quicker. That is why we will continue to deliver light rail in Parramatta and metro rail to Western Sydney Airport. It is also the reason why, after years and years of neglect, Nepean Hospital is being completely redeveloped. A huge tower will act as a beacon, an icon to every person across the western Sydney area, across my community of Penrith. People will be reminded of what Labor did not deliver every time they at the hospital and see the tower. Labor had every opportunity to do that. I remember the year before I was elected it had an opportunity to do a proper redevelopment of the hospital.

What we got was scraps. We did not get scraps from the Perrottet Government, the Berejiklian Government or the Baird Government; we got a brand new hospital and new schools, and we got growth backed up by infrastructure. That is what will drive us out of this pandemic. Members opposite can choose to come into the House and neglect the people of this State by running a message of division. Go for your life. I will take them on if they want to do that. They can run division and I will run unity. They can run fear and I will run hope. I will never walk away from that. I thought some members opposite were better than this. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:12):** It is interesting to hear Government members talking about unity and saying that we are all in it together. The Liberals have thrown down the gauntlet and are saying that the two cities message—the eastern seaboard versus western Sydney—does not exist. They are saying that we are all together; that everything is wonderful; that Labor members are acting childish; that there is no difference in treatment; that there are opportunities for all; and that this is politics of envy and class warfare. They are throwing everything at us. How can we be so wrong? Is there any difference? The definition of western Sydney seems to change every two minutes. The latest definition of western Sydney includes south-western Sydney. There are 2.5 million out of five million people living in the Sydney Basin who live in western Sydney. That is 50 per cent of the population, or one in two people. If the regional population of 8 million is included, one in three people live in western Sydney.

Is there any evidence of the divide? Earlier today the Treasurer delivered a ministerial statement in which he said that the 9.00 p.m. curfew had no economic impact, so why worry about it. There was no health advice to demonstrate that a 9.00 p.m. curfew was needed. Why was there a 9.00 p.m. curfew in western Sydney when there were no economic or health grounds? It was not required. If that is not division between the eastern seaboard and western Sydney, I do not know what is. What about planning statistics? Minister Stokes is now in charge of both planning and transport. I turn to New South Wales population projections over the period 2016 to 2041. Let us make a comparison between Northern Beaches Council and Blacktown City Council—one western suburbs council and a council on the eastern seaboard.

The migration to the Northern Beaches Council for the next 25 years is projected to be minus 500 people. Blacktown City Council is projected to have an additional 129,250 people. Over the next 25 years the natural change in population—births minus deaths—in the Northern Beaches Council will be 31,000, compared to 134,850 in Blacktown City Council. That is an increase of 264,000 in Blacktown City Council compared to 31,000 in the Northern Beaches Council. Yet where is the infrastructure to support sustainable living? Eight times as many people will move into the west compared to the eastern seaboard, and the Government says there is no difference. With regard to university places, 85 per cent of university places are located on the eastern seaboard and only 15 per cent are located in western Sydney, yet we have got a fifty-fifty split of the population and the

Australian Catholic University has just moved in. Only 5.5 per cent of the State's entire cultural arts, heritage and events funding is spent in western Sydney, and yet the Government says there is no difference.

The member for North Shore spoke about the Government's wonderful \$7 billion public schools policy. The upgrade at Mosman High School includes 16 classrooms, new administration, staff facilities, a new library, a multipurpose gym, a hall, outdoor and rooftop space, new canteens and a new theatre. All western Sydney asks is "Can you please remove all the asbestos from the rooms? Can you throw in a couple of air-conditioning units?" In the next few years in western Sydney there will be 52 summer days that reach temperatures over 35 degrees Celsius. The member for North Shore then spoke about upgrades to North Sydney Demonstration School and Neutral Bay Public School and a whole range of other schools. And yet what do we get in western Sydney? There are brand new schools across the North Shore, and yet Galungara Public School only gets a prefab school.

Western Sydney does not get purpose-built schools. If we look at Blacktown city or western suburbs schools versus the eastern seaboard, we get a doughnut. The electorate of Mount Druitt and the electorate of Blacktown hardly get anything. What has the member for Riverstone done so wrong? The Government opened up a brand new school in his electorate and it had demountables on day one; it is ridiculous. For the past 12 years we have been asking for land to be released for the Riverstone West industrial precinct. That is six Premiers and seven planning Ministers; that is a lot of people it has gone through. That precinct would create 30,000 jobs and billions of dollars of investment, but nothing has happened. There is so much more to talk about, whether it is tolls or Western Sydney Parklands et cetera. There is a divide. Why does the Government not end the divide and unify Sydney?

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:17):** Via video link: I am wondering whether the member for Londonderry had prepared her speech before my announcement an hour ago. It seems she spent more time talking about me than the people who were actually impacted by the pandemic. That does make me wonder what she said to Labor's Linda Burney when she resigned as member for Canterbury to go to Canberra and to Kristina Keneally when she left. She obviously does not know me if she thinks I would ever abandon my community. I support the amendment of the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and—importantly—Western Sydney. I congratulate the Minister on recently being appointed deputy leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party. It is wonderful to see the Minister in the leadership team, as he understands western Sydney and I know he will bring a great deal to the team. He was a great line of support during the most recent lockdown. I was able to contact him with the concerns of my community and I knew he would take them to crisis Cabinet, talk them through and come out with something that would assist us and make a real difference. He provided clarification and guidance on the rules and restrictions as well whenever I reached out.

The latest COVID-19 outbreak was significantly hard for members of my community and the wider western and south-western Sydney community. I commend the people of western and south-western Sydney for coming forward and getting vaccinated. Our region has some of the highest vaccination rates. In Liverpool, 91.2 per cent of the population have received their first dose and 79.9 per cent of people are finally fully vaccinated. There were mobile clinics and walk-up clinics and there was every opportunity to get vaccinated, and they took it up in droves. It was brilliant to see. No-one wants to see two cities or for people to feel discriminated against. The restrictions put in place were to keep us safe. In my area alone, there were times where we had over 1,000 active cases and so measures had to be put in place. But support measures were also there to try to ease the hardship that they felt. I agree it was horrible, but it helped to keep us safe.

The New South Wales Government has a strong track record in investment and infrastructure in my area and we want people to know and feel that they are supported. We continue to commit funding in every budget to enhance local facilities, create better transport options, improve local roads and highways and provide better opportunities for our children by upgrading their schools. They need to go back to great schools when they can finally go back through school doors. Last month the New South Wales Government announced an investment of \$5 billion to go towards the WestInvest Fund. That funding will help revitalise our communities after they were hit so hard by COVID-19. It is a major step towards recovery after what has been a very challenging 18 months. It will provide new and improved infrastructure and facilities to my local area and will drive economic recovery and the creation of jobs coming out of the pandemic. We are focusing on what people in our areas need, like schools, hospitals, roads and public transport.

During the pandemic we started on the \$790 million upgrade of Liverpool Hospital and the \$50 million car park so that local families can have improved access to a hospital near them. They are both coming together really well. The car park will provide an extra 500 parking spaces for local residents. The Government has also announced a significant amount of funding to provide support and assistance for vulnerable people and multicultural communities across the State. We knew that they had started to feel left out and we wanted to make sure that was rectified straightaway. I thank the multiculturalism Minister—a very new Minister—who got involved so quickly in our communities to make a difference. The funding will be allocated to grassroots

organisations that work tirelessly to support members of our communities. They do it so tough, but a large proportion of that funding will go towards funding communities in the local government areas of concern and will really help those communities. The Government has committed \$43.2 million to provide immediate assistance and essential services such as food and other products and will support services for those experiencing domestic and family violence.

Upgrading and building schools is a priority. We know that children, as I said, have had a challenging year remote learning for so many weeks. It is important that we invest in schools to create better environments for them to return to, and that is happening as we speak. I got to speak to a couple of school groups during lockdown as they shared their experiences of remote learning. Although it was challenging at times for them, I loved hearing their enthusiasm and eagerness to return to face-to-face learning. I know they are really looking forward to it. Importantly, their parents knew that it helped keep them safe while they were in lockdown. I thank all those parents who have made a difference to their children's education. In 2020 the Prestons Public School upgrade was completed. It had 10 new classrooms and the extension of its administration area and so many more things for them. That investment cost \$11 million, but it will meet that projected growth in the area and the— [*Time expired.*]

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:22):** I welcome this motion from the member for Londonderry and Labor's deputy leader. I thank her for the fantastic work and everything she has done in western Sydney and south-western Sydney and for raising many of these issues. I move:

That the motion as moved by the member for Londonderry and amended by the member for Penrith be amended by inserting after paragraph 3:

- (4) Urges the member for Holsworthy to stay and fight for western and south-western Sydney as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am urging the member for Holsworthy to stay. Her community needs her; the community of Holsworthy needs this member to stay and to fight. We do not need another by-election; we need her to stay and fight. The other week, Premier Perrottet was in Casula and he was talking to one of the local businesses. The Delta outbreak has shone a light on the deep inequities that exist across our city. The division has not been mounted by Opposition members. We have been with our communities every single day, making vaccination bookings in different languages so that people get vaccinated. We have been pushing and prodding and advocating so many times, especially in late June and in July. We knew what our communities were going through. We knew what resources were needed for them to go out and get vaccinated and we knew what to do about the hesitancy and resistance.

There were so many different messages. My community in inner south-west, south-west and western Sydney has some of the highest rates of essential workers—cleaners, truck drivers, council workers. They cannot work from home; they cannot drive a truck from home. They have to be out there. They come home at 11.00 p.m. or midnight and need to walk around the block to clear their head. They were not allowed to do that because of the curfews. In Casula, Liverpool and Moorebank there are three-generational families who live in flats. These multi-generational households have great difficulties in accessing health and language support. And the member for Holsworthy is abandoning her community.

We worked with the Government but we had to fight for resources, such as pop-up vaccination clinics. The first-dose vaccination rates in our areas—including areas represented by the member for Holsworthy—were 20 per cent to 25 per cent. We were united, working together, pushing and prodding, to make sure our communities in south-west Sydney were vaccinated. The member for Holsworthy knows that it was critical for the community to get vaccinated because of the impact of high case numbers on our intensive care units and hospitals. We needed those resources on the ground, and as a community, across the board, we worked in unity to push for those resources. Now is not the time for the member to leave. It is the time for her to stay.

Relief payments are eight weeks behind for the small businesses in south-west Sydney. They are not big business. They do not have big pockets so they can say, "Let me just go into my bank account or to my trust and get money". They are average mums and dads who have a business, and many of them are sole traders. They pleaded with the Government, "Please provide us with relief." They did not get relief until recently, after eight or nine weeks. In relation to inequities, there were people stuck at home with COVID. Ten days in, they were left there, without being able to be taken to hospital. I know of a household of 11 people where eight had COVID and the other three, who worked in factories, had to get tested and isolate every three days. Many constituents of the member for Holsworthy, who live in Casula, had to come to my electorate to work in factories. We had to keep the community going.

We all worked very hard and we will continue to work very hard, but now is not the time for the member to go. Now is the time for the member to stay with her community, to stand next to her community. Every single member of our community needs our support. We have written letters of advocacy and about the inequities. This Government has abandoned our community. After 10 years of this Government, I have been pleading with the

Government for social services, for mental health support. I need four bilingual workers who can speak Arabic, Chinese, Greek or Portuguese, but I cannot get them. People are suffering. That is the sort of inequity that I am talking about, and I will have more to say on this matter.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:28):** I speak in support of the positive amendment moved by the member for Penrith, the western Sydney Minister and, of course, the recently appointed Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. I congratulate him on that appointment and, more importantly, on his representation for western Sydney, particularly during the pandemic. The amendment moved by the member for Penrith included the positive statement of recognising the resilience of people across western Sydney, the outstanding effort of the health workers and the fantastic job they have done, and the outstanding uptake of the vaccine by those in the local government areas across western Sydney. He also moved to amend paragraph (3) to note that the way out of the virus is to continue the stimulation of the economy and to continue our record investment in infrastructure.

This morning at about 9.45 the Leader of the Opposition made positive comments and there was an air of positivity in the Chamber. He spoke of the great work that is being done to stimulate the economy and to get it going again. He spoke about the great work of the previous Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and her great effort in bringing our State safely through the virus. There was an air of positivity in the room for a short time. And here we are, some hours later, back to the old Labor. We are back to the member for Londonderry bringing doom and gloom, dividing the State and dividing the city. Once again, we are back to negativity oozing out of those on the opposite side of the Chamber.

I am very proud of the people of western Sydney, particularly those of the electorate of Seven Hills, as they faced some of the harshest lockdowns that we have seen across the country. The lockdowns were deliberately aimed at suppressing the virus until we could vaccinate our way out of this terrible virus. There was no discrimination against the people of western Sydney; there was only discrimination against the virus. When the people of western Sydney needed to get vaccinated, they did so in droves. They came out in support of their communities, in support of their families, and in support of their own health.

The Labor members of western Sydney began to gather around, to murmur and to push rumours that it would not work, it was all too hard, it was going to be difficult, it was confusing. But didn't they back away quickly. They ran and hid when their own communities came out in droves, hundreds of thousands of them, and did what they had to do. Their electorates showed community spirit and commitment, and they showed that their representatives were just plainly wrong. The people came out and showed community spirit. Elsewhere, community spirit was shown by our healthcare workers at Westmead Hospital and Blacktown Hospital, who once again were on the front line doing a fantastic job. They manned the testing clinics, the vaccination centres and the hospital wards. Many of those key workers who keep our hospitals going live across western Sydney—cleaners, orderlies, assistants, security guards—and they all do a fantastic job.

They are the residents of Seven Hills, they are the residents of western Sydney, as are the logistics workers, the retail workers, the couriers, the gardeners, all of those who keep this great State going. They are the ones who dug in and did their best for the community. I congratulate the multicultural organisations, charities and food banks that dug deep to supply food hampers. They put aside politics and self-interest to do the very best they could for the community. Meanwhile, of course, the Government provided support as best it possibly could, such as test and isolation payments, extreme hardship payments delivered through Red Cross, grants to multicultural organisations that were providing on-the-ground support, \$2 million to multicultural media to get the messages out, and, of course, support for those who urgently needed accommodation. The way out of the virus is to stimulate the economy and continue with the infrastructure build across western Sydney. The Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister responsible for western Sydney will lead our team and take us from good to great. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:33):** In reply: I thank all the members who spoke on this important motion this evening. I say from the outset that the suggestion that Opposition members of Parliament did not assist and fight for their communities to access vaccines and to support them during this difficult time is utterly wrong. In fact, Labor Opposition members fought alongside their community for access to vaccinations and for vaccination hubs. I was reminded by the member for Blacktown that we are still waiting for a vaccination hub in Riverstone—in a Coalition electorate. We have fought for things. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Seven Hills in which he referred to the Test and Isolate payments and vaccination leave. Those were things for which Labor members and the community fought and called for. The Government took up those issues because of pressure from the union movement calling for paid vaccination leave.

This afternoon the member for Holsworthy announced her resignation. If everything she said in her contribution is right about what the Government has done and its supposed support for western Sydney, why is she choosing to resign? Why is she abandoning her community in south-western Sydney at this time? Government members well know that the harsh lockdown restrictions in western and south-western Sydney brought those communities to their knees. Many of them were busy behind the scenes trying to remove lockdowns in certain

suburbs in their electorates. Melanie Gibbons said in a letter to the former Premier, "Premier, the restrictions are having an economic impact on our region and are also detrimental to our mental health and wellbeing." Government members knew it.

Earlier the Deputy Leader of the Government, Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade said that he had not heard any reference to two Sydneys. He must have spent his time in lockdown under a rock. Everyone in Sydney knows that people in western and south-western Sydney could not go to open spaces because of chronic underinvestment, while people in other parts of Sydney could. The member for Canterbury was correct when she said that workers in her community who got home at 10.00 p.m. or 11.00 p.m. were subjected to a curfew and could not leave their homes. Tell that to the people of Bankstown, Blacktown, Fairfield and Marsden Park. Tell people in western Sydney that it did not have an impact on them. This Government has a tin ear. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....15  
Noes .....11  
Majority.....4

**AYES**

Bromhead, S	Gulaptis, C	Preston, R
Cooke, S (teller)	Layzell, D	Saunders, D
Crouch, A (teller)	Lindsay, W	Speakman, M
Evans, L	O'Dea, J	Upton, G
Greenwich, A	Piper, G	Ward, G

**NOES**

Bali, S	Dib, J	Mehan, D (teller)
Car, P	Hoening, R	Park, R
Chanthivong, A	Kamper, S (teller)	Parker, J
Cotsis, S	Leong, J	

**PAIRS**

Anderson, K	O'Neill, M
Ayres, S	Harrison, J
Barilaro, J	Doyle, T
Berejiklian, G	Crakanthorp, T
Clancy, J	Aitchison, J
Conolly, K	Warren, G
Constance, A	Atalla, E
Coure, M	Washington, K
Davies, T	Watson, A
Dominello, V	Saffin, J
Elliott, D	Hornery, S
Gibbons, M	Catley, Y
Griffin, J	Zangari, G
Hancock, S	Minns, C
Hazzard, B	McDermott, H
Kean, M	Harris, D
Marshall, A	McKay, J
Pavey, M	Mihailuk, T
Perrottet, D	Finn, J
Roberts, A	Tesch, L
Sidgreaves, P	Scully, P
Smith, N	Daley, M
Stokes, R	Lalich, N

## PAIRS

Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

Haylen, J  
Barr, C  
Voltz, L  
Lynch, P

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The amendment of the member for Penrith having been agreed to, the amendment from the member for Bankstown has now lapsed. The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

**Motion as amended agreed to.***Bills***LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (COVID-19—ELECTIONS SPECIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2021****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:52):** Via video link: As I mentioned earlier, the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 will facilitate the local government elections going ahead on 4 December even in areas that may be subject to the COVID outbreak or additional stay-at-home restrictions. We are all of course hopeful that that will not occur. Over the past four months we have seen how difficult that can be. We have seen the really important role played by local government in funding [inaudible]. We have seen [inaudible] from across south-west and west Sydney rise to the occasion and help communicate with communities because at the very start the messaging was [inaudible], particularly the messaging relating to [inaudible] other than English and with the health orders changing [inaudible] times, making sure those changed messages got through really fell on the shoulders of community leaders, and a lot of those people are [inaudible] of western Sydney and south-west Sydney.

I acknowledge the work of Councillor Kun Huang, Councillor Ola Hamed and Councillor Suman Saha of Cumberland City Council for their work in reaching out to those communities. I am joined by Councillor Saha and Councillor Hamed on separate occasions in forums that they organised to get those messages out. Councillor Hamed, in particular, organised a really effective COVID [inaudible] casting sessions with the Arab community, with local general practitioners and an epidemiologist from that community to address a lot of the rumours that were absolutely rife and were really contributing to vaccination hesitancy among the Arabic community.

Councillor Huang played an instrumental role in getting messages out quickly and making sure the community [inaudible] with the Chinese community. Many other councillors in other areas across the west and south-west did this as well. I know Councillor Charishma Kaliyanda from Liverpool City Council was one such councillor who did an enormous amount of work making sure her community knew their obligations, but also came out to get vaccinated. I have been very critical of some of the things that Cumberland City Council failed to do in terms of supporting their community. They did do some things that I do feel deserve acknowledgement. They provided accommodation for OzHarvest in recent weeks. I have been volunteering with OzHarvest every week during the pandemic, and up until a few weeks ago we were providing food hampers out of the former United Workers Union building.

We outgrew that space at about the time that they transferred the ownership to Parramatta council. It has now moved to Granville Town Hall. The demand for those food hampers has more than doubled during the pandemic. I appreciate that Cumberland City Council has made that space available and is also distributing some food hampers. They also lobbied for a lot of vaccination hubs and hosted school vaccination hubs in some of the halls that could not be used at the start of the pandemic. Recently the Western Sydney Local Health District has ceased doing local vaccination hubs as pop-ups and the only ones that are being run are being run voluntarily by GPs and community organisations. I thank the Minister for Local Government for the support that was provided to keep childcare services running during the pandemic, both in 2020 and this year. When COVID started last year Cumberland City Council sent out a letter to 600 families announcing that their childcare centres were going to be closed immediately because they could not afford to keep them open. It was a bizarre decision to make for a council that has a \$2 million communications budget, but that was the decision they made.

Thankfully when Local Government NSW met with the Government and secured that additional funding for child care they postponed that decision. They considered privatising the childcare centres over the course of a

year and recently decided against privatising them because of the pressure from the community. I do really appreciate the support that the Government has provided in [inaudible] to keep those childcare centres open. In the west and south-west, where the essential workers live, people still needed to put their kids into child care and we had rolling closures of childcare centres because kids had to be looked after. But a lot of the staff members and occasionally the kids were infected with COVID and needed to be kept out. It was really difficult. Certainly it would have been a lot more difficult if the council childcare centres had been shut [inaudible]— [Time expired.]

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Granville for her contribution and also for her patience.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:58):** The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party will support the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 to ensure that democratic elections will be protected. In the communities of Barwon, Murray, Orange and many more across the State, there is zero appetite for any further postponement of local government elections. In Barwon the 12 eligible local government areas [LGAs] are looking forward to a democratic election. The one in administration, as the Minister and member for Shellharbour is aware, is looking forward to a democratic solution to representation. COVID-19 has taken so much from us in the past two years. The goodwill of people across New South Wales has permitted this Government to place hefty restrictions on how we all lived our lives, in the pursuit of keeping us safe and protected from an unknown global pandemic. But many people feel these powers have gone too far.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government stripped away democracy—one of the pillars that is fundamental to our society—when it suspended Parliament for an indefinite amount of time and when it postponed local government elections not once, but twice. The first time they were postponed was just days before Queensland went to the polls for its statewide elections—the second time Queensland had gone to the polls during the pandemic. They had held their local government elections in Queensland at the peak of the pandemic. Many lessons have been learnt from the Queensland elections, lessons that could have been applied here in New South Wales and would have allowed local government elections to go ahead last month, which was the first date they were postponed to.

I do not want to be too complimentary of Queensland because, as my fellow MPs who neighbour Queensland will attest, they have been pretty difficult to deal with about the border issues. But it beggars belief that New South Wales would not tap into the knowledge gained from the Queensland experience and hold local government elections in September. At that time our councils and councillors had gone an extra 12 months without facing their rate base through an election. It is important to note that there were no spikes in the rise in COVID-19 cases in the weeks that followed the elections in Queensland.

Two measures are attributed to the successful running of the elections in Queensland, and both of these measures have been available and used in elections in New South Wales for a number of years: postal voting and pre-poll voting. With minor tweaks to the established pre-poll voting system that include extending pre-poll voting hours until 9.00 p.m. and holding pre-poll for the first time ever on a Saturday, an additional 700,000 people participated in the pre-poll compared with the previous elections. Queensland, with all its faults throughout this pandemic, successfully held multiple elections while people in New South Wales were denied the ability to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Victoria—the most locked down State in the world—held successful local government elections last year. They had a contingency plan. It took a couple of days longer than usual to count, but they did it. The fear of COVID-19 has allowed a whole manner of decisions to be made by this Government under the guise of following the health advice and keeping us safe. Yet, what the Victorian and Queensland examples show us is that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government could not even bring itself to look over the fence into another State for a blueprint on how not to deny its citizens their democratically held right to vote. Never once did I see anything from this Government expressing the need to protect this right. Never once did I see them advocate for a way to hold elections safely. Never once did I see them move to draw on the breadth of knowledge in NSW Health, in the Electoral Commission, or in any department that hosts major events, to find a way to hold elections. The Government accepted "no" on face value. This Government so willingly endorsed a halt to democracy.

The intention of this bill, as outlined by the Minister and her staff, is to build on measures to ensure elections can be delivered even if there are areas in lockdown. It is essential work that the New South Wales Government has dilly-dallied around on. In my view, the lack of urgency applied by this Government shows how little value they place on the rights of people to have their say, vote and elect a council that is representative of their community. The results of the work following the passage of this bill will impact every single adult in New South Wales when they head to the polls. This work must be completed urgently, and must be communicated widely and appropriately for all audiences across the State.

In July this year I asked every newspaper in the Barwon electorate whether they had received a single advertising request from the NSW Electoral Commission regarding the upcoming election. Not one newspaper had been approached for advertising, nor had any advertisements been purchased through agents. I raised this issue with the Minister and Mr John Schmidt, the NSW Electoral Commissioner. The Electoral Commissioner responded, stating, "Our media spend has changed accordingly to be predominately digital to align with changing consumer behaviour." To me this says Sydney-based public servants fail again to understand the bush. Minister, I ask that you ensure print advertising is placed in every single local paper in the lead-up to the local government elections, especially this year as the Electoral Commission seeks to implement new processes for voting.

I am sure Country Press NSW would be delighted to assist reacquainting the Electoral Commission with our vitally important local papers, which—despite the beliefs of people in the city—are still the main source of news in country towns. Lastly, elections are an essential part of our democracy and they are inherently healthy. They ensure that those who are elected and those who want to stand for election face scrutiny and have to answer questions from the public. They serve as an opportunity for new talent: People with differing experiences and abilities can be put into the team. I implore every member of this Parliament to express in the strongest terms that local government elections must be held this year.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (18:03):** On behalf of the Greens, I address the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021. As we have heard, local democracy and local councils are the backbone of community representation at that level. I served 12 years on a council. It is the sphere of the democratic system that is closest to the people and those councillors do an incredible job working for the community. I acknowledge those councillors who have served way past the period of time that they first anticipated and have continued to serve during the COVID pandemic to represent their communities. While local council is often disparaged and dismissed, local council is the key to supporting and engaging with communities, especially in difficult times. I thank all the councils for the work they have done.

Everyone was very disappointed when the local government election was deferred. The deferral of any election undermines the process that people are aware of, that is, that elections for each level of government are held regularly at about the same time. We are lucky in New South Wales because our elections are held every four years. Changing the dates of the council elections has created a problem and I am concerned, as the member for Barwon said, that there will be low voter turnout. Voters will not have an understanding of the candidates because there has been no on-the-ground campaigning. In my local community stalls are usually set up months before election day. That is an issue we need to be aware of and that the Electoral Commissioner should address. This bill includes special provisions for the conduct of the 2021 local government elections. The Minister for Local Government is permitted to recommend regulations if a range of criteria has been satisfied. The bill specifically states in new section 747C (4):

A regulation under this section must not enable an election to be conducted exclusively by means of postal voting or postal voting and iVoting.

That is an important protection because people attending polling places and talking to polling volunteers is a very powerful way for people to vote and to understand exclusive polling. Postal votes and iVote bring with them a whole lot of problematic issues that cannot be addressed in the short time envisaged in the bill. The bill goes to the broader issue of funding of the Electoral Commission. This Parliament's Public Accountability Committee has addressed this issue with the ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission is challenged by a range of requirements as a result of the COVID pandemic.

I note in the evidence given by the Electoral Commissioner on 18 August 2021 that he suggested his office is underfunded and that the old systems are unlikely to manage to pivot in time not just for this election, obviously, which is very challenging, but for the by-elections. The Minister is working closely with the commissioner, and I encourage her to work on adequately supporting and enhancing the systems and processes and the independent funding of the Electoral Commission. It is absolutely critical. The Electoral Commission in New South Wales and federally are recognised as amongst the best in the world. They make sure that elections are run in a free and fair manner, and that has to be defended.

This is obviously a wideranging bill. Members in the other place will be considering these issues. We would like to see the health advice that the provisions are based on. If the Minister says that the Government has been advised by the commissioner, let us see the health advice. Let us make sure that the need for the regulations is based on advice from the New South Wales Chief Health Officer and not just on the basis that it is a provision the Electoral Commission might want to introduce to mitigate a difficult or expensive process. The Greens believe it is important that health advice is the bedrock for these decisions, and not resourcing, financial or budgetary impacts on the Electoral Commission. We would not like these provisions, which may apply to one council or all councils, result in the deferral of an election. We say that 20 February 2022 should be the latest date to defer an election to, although we would prefer that no election is deferred.

There should be visibility around the basis on which decisions are made. Decisions should be based on the health advice of the Chief Health Officer. We must ensure maximum transparency in this process, because we are giving very open-ended provisions to the Electoral Commissioner and the Minister. Of course, these provisions became necessary because of COVID. I am not seeking to undermine the advice of the Chief Health Officer; in fact, we have been strong advocates for it. But it is important to note that this House and the other place need to hold the Executive accountable. Therefore, we need to be very careful how we do that with these open-ended approaches. I commend the matters I have raised to the House. I encourage members to look at the evidence given on 18 August by the Electoral Commissioner. His evidence is very detailed in relation to postal voting and to a range of other important issues that the commissioner raised.

We want to ensure adequate funding of these organisations, which is at the heart of this matter. But funding should be at arm's length from the New South Wales Government and from the Executive. Whether it is ICAC, the Ombudsman or the now equivalent of the Police Integrity Commission, we need to ensure that they are independent and have adequate resourcing to do their job.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (18:10):** I make a contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19 – Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021. As has been indicated to the House by the member for Campbelltown, the Opposition does not oppose the Government's legislation. The bill is a product of last-minute discussions between the Minister for Local Government, the member for Campbelltown, the President of the Local Government Association and the President of the United Services Union. The bill was first shown to me yesterday morning by the member for Campbelltown, and I expressed concern about the provisions of new section 747C (3), which is to enable regulations not limited to the regulation power in the Act to be made to override the provisions of the Act. Those sorts of provisions, if I can use the Attorney General's description, are called Henry VIII powers and are powers that in normal circumstances would probably be ultra vires and not something that this House should give in a regulatory power. However, these are difficult times. The Minister has indicated to the member for Campbelltown that the bill is urgent and that nominations are shortly to open in the local government sector.

Arising from further discussions, the proposed bill was amended and new section 747C (3) was added. That encapsulates, firstly, the Opposition's view and, I am told, also gives effect to what the Minister was seeking to achieve when this bill was first proposed. I am somewhat concerned, however, and I often am, of enabling a variety of these independent agencies to have too much discretion because often too much discretion can override the interests of elected officials. I would like to ensure as best as possible a free democratic election on 4 December in an as COVID-safe way as possible and as close as possible to the way in which people normally conduct elections. I know that that may not be the case. I know that elections in Queensland were held earlier this year or late last year during the COVID pandemic and various restrictions occurred because of COVID—restrictions that would certainly worry us as members of Parliament. For example, they were not able to man polling booths to hand out how-to-vote leaflets. They had to leave their how-to-vote material there and place their posters up around the polling booth. It seemed to be relatively successful, but I would not like to see a repeat of that.

The second issue is a matter raised by the member for Balmain that we need to do everything to ensure as high a voter turnout as possible. Normally people are campaigning for an extended period. They are doorknocking and engaging in a variety of community activities to bring to people's attention that there is a local government election. On this occasion, with people being in lockdown and restricted until as recently as this week, that becomes somewhat difficult. It can be overcome if somebody direct mails everybody on electoral roll and tells them that if they do not vote they will be subject to a fine. That approach has been successful in the past, but it is an expensive exercise and someone needs to pay for it. If it is important to the Parliament, I would hazard a guess that either the State Government or local government would pay for it. In this environment it is important that we maximise the number of people voting in local government elections so that the election results are a true reflection of the community.

I would have worded new section 747C somewhat differently to ensure that the view of the Minister and the Opposition, which I understand is identical, was more tightly controlled. However, time does not enable us to make that change. The Opposition agreed to the suspension of standing orders and agreed that the legislation is urgent. The Opposition commends the bill to the House.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (18:15):** In reply: First, I thank all members who contributed to debate on the Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 this afternoon. In particular, I thank the member for Campbelltown, who worked very constructively with me over the past 24 hours to resolve some matters. I thank the member for Wollondilly, who, unlike some members who participated in the debate, spoke absolutely relevantly to the bill. His comments were relevant and showed that he understood what the bill entails. The member for Upper Hunter spoke passionately about his electorate and the activities that took place during COVID. I am pleased that he delivered

those comments to this House. I also thank the member for Granville, the member for Barwon, the member for Balmain and the member for Heffron for their contributions to debate on the bill.

I again emphasise to this House that the measures in the bill are designed to operate as a safeguard to address any unforeseen circumstances that may otherwise disrupt the smooth running of the local government elections that are due to commence in just two weeks' time. Thanks to the effective stewardship of this Government in addressing the repeated challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years, it seems unlikely that the measures in this bill will ever need to be exercised. Thanks to the Government's effective management of the public health crisis, the State now stands poised and well placed for recovery. When the local government elections commence in under two weeks, it seems likely that more than 80 per cent of the eligible population will be fully vaccinated. By the time elections are held on 4 December, the State will have fully reopened and most restrictions will have been relaxed. Thanks, too, to the work of the Government, regulations are already in place to ensure that the council elections will be COVID safe.

The regulations made by the Government will support implementation of the NSW Electoral Commission's COVID safety plan for the elections. However, as we have learnt with COVID, we always need to be vigilant and to expect the unexpected. The measure contained in the bill will allow the Government the flexibility to respond to the unexpected. That is the reason for many of the various conspiracy theories about the bill that have been swirling in the past 24 hours, not just in this Chamber but outside Parliament. Comments from various representative organisations have been very disappointing.

I also emphasise what the bill does not do. It does not allow the further postponement of council elections, nor will it allow council elections to be conducted exclusively by means of postal voting and iVoting. Despite what has been said by some of the conspiracy theorists who have been making trouble about the bill, that has always been the case. The Government expects council elections to proceed as planned and to be held on the appointed day, 4 December 2021. For the information of members such as the member for Balmain, who spoke about constant deferral of elections, the local government elections will take place on 4 December 2021. Electors voting at council elections will be able to cast their votes in person or by postal voting or iVote, if eligible. The measures in the bill will allow the Government to support the NSW Electoral Commissioner to deliver that outcome.

I will now address some of the comments made during the debate on the bill. In response to the comments made by the member for Campbelltown, it is simply not correct to say that the Government has done nothing over the past 18 months. I outlined in my second reading speech, and on many previous occasions such as when I introduced a bill to this House earlier this year, that changes already had been made in anticipation of COVID possibly not allowing a safe election. We have done that hard work; we did not wait 18 months to bring this bill to the House with two weeks to go. We worked very hard with the Electoral Commissioner and with NSW Health advisers to do everything we can to make sure that the elections go ahead. As the member has acknowledged, additional funding has also been provided to the NSW Electoral Commission to support it to deliver COVID-safe elections. The Government recognised the necessity for that and delivered. We knew that would be necessary and this is what we have delivered.

I turn now to the member for Granville's comments about restrictions on canvassing activities within 100 metres of polling places. The bill does not provide for that. I also assure this House that the Government, like members opposite, would like to see council elections conducted under normal conditions and sincerely hope to see candidates and campaign workers able to canvass outside polling places. However, as I noted in my earlier speech, COVID has made it difficult to undertake activities that we would normally associate with elections. The Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 already confers on election managers the power to restrict canvassing activities and posters within 100 metres of polling places. That power is conferred on election managers to make those decisions. The decision whether to restrict canvassing activities or posters outside of polling places is one that will ultimately rest with the NSW Electoral Commissioner and other election managers. The Government has no control over that decision. I have no doubt that election managers, including the Electoral Commissioner, will be sensitive to the needs of candidates and electors when making any decision.

Under the regulation, election managers are permitted to make a direction restricting canvassing activities and posters only where they are satisfied that the direction is necessary to comply with a public health order that is in force at the time of the election, or to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19. The regulation further provides that, if a direction is made restricting posters and canvassing outside polling places, the election manager may publish links to electoral material published by the political participants on the election manager's website. This bill, together with the other measures that are already in place, will give the electors of New South Wales and participants in the upcoming local government elections the added confidence that the elections will be safe and that the outcomes of the election will be democratically sound. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Private Members' Statements*

### TRIBUTE TO PETER GRAHAM, OAM

### TRIBUTE TO NEITA MATTHEWS, OAM

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital) (18:22):** It is with a combination of sadness and reverence that I note the passing of two Ryde legends. Sadly, in the last few months, the Ryde electorate has lost both Peter Graham, OAM; and Neita Matthews, OAM—two pillars of our local community. We bid farewell to Peter Graham, who slipped away peacefully at John Hunter Hospital at the end of July to be with his adored Betsy. In his 77 years of life, Peter made remarkable contributions to his local community. From 1980 to 1999—an astonishing 19 years—he served as an alderman and then councillor at the City of Ryde Council. Peter's service during those two decades have ensured that if you speak to any of his friends and colleagues from that time, they will assure you that he was a community man to the core. Such was his commitment to the Ryde area that he was elected to serve as mayor from 1997 to 1999, during which time he continued to put his community first.

The same is true of his contribution to the Liberal Party, when Peter would lend his personal support to numerous local leaders in the form of valuable mentoring. I received close mentorship from Peter during and after my time at the City of Ryde, for which I remain extremely grateful to this day. Beyond his political service, Peter was also a man of profound faith, serving as Assistant General Secretary and Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Peter's spirit of service ensured that he brought as much passion and dedication to his fellow parishioners and churchgoers as he did to the City of Ryde. Yet even with his many commitments, Peter still found time for his family. His love for and devotion to his wife, Betsy, was well known, as was his adoration towards his children and children-in-law, including John and Lauren, Kate and Dave and Lizzy and Dan. He was also a loving grandfather to Jade, Cale, Lucy, Maddie, Eve, Milla and Xander, as well as a brother-in-law and uncle of Helen, John and Robyn. In the community, whether in politics, faith or family, Peter was always sure to leave a positive impact. He was at heart a true servant of those around him, never failing to put others first. Vale, Peter Graham.

We also bid farewell to Neita Matthews, another stalwart of our community. Neita's fierce commitment to the Liberal Party is partly because of the development of a strong culture of activism within our local area. Throughout her many years of campaign volunteering and close support, Neita ensured that I and countless other local leaders were readily supported, enabling us to serve the community. She was, in the truest sense, a great supporter of grassroots leadership. Neita's passion for her local area also extended well beyond politics to the world of netball. I am told that Neita was a joy to have around the courts, being able to recognise talented players from a mile away. She was always willing to step in and offer coaching advice, ensuring that those around her grew and flourished in the sport. Neita's quick wit, tenacity and bubbly enthusiasm for all things netball have had a tremendous and positive effect on netballers across Ryde and New South Wales more broadly. So too has Neita's volunteering work left a huge impact on the Ryde area, be it through her service to Riding for the Disabled, Addington House, the Scouts or the Ryde Sports Foundation. Vale, Neita Matthews.

While we are all sorry for the loss of Peter and Neita, their shared commitment to the growth of the Ryde community means that new leaders now stand ready to serve in their stead. Though they have both left us, the impact of their lifelong service will not be lost. Indeed, when people speak of losing someone, I do not think it is really apt when people of this magnitude leave such a profound legacy. The body may have passed but the legacy is not lost. That remains forever. I am one of the beneficiaries, as are so many people, so many lives that both Peter and Neita and people like them have touched. They are never truly lost in that sense. Their legacy lives in eternity.

### WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (18:27):** Lately the people in the suburbs of western Sydney and far western Sydney that I represent have endured some of the harshest restrictions anywhere in the country. I am always proud of the residents in my electorate of Londonderry, but I am incredibly proud of the work that they did to get through the pandemic, managing the challenges of remote learning for their children and getting vaccinated, in fact achieving some of the highest vaccination rates in the country. As we begin to reopen our State

and the Government's restrictions are eased, the economic recovery of western Sydney is vital. For the past decade this Liberal Government has not delivered the infrastructure to keep up with the growth of residents, homes and traffic across western Sydney. The New South Wales Government needs to use these next few months to urgently build the much-needed projects that residents have waited too long for.

First, I speak of the Jordan Springs Public School and the stage two expansion. Members have heard me speak about the school in this place ad nauseam. It was desperately needed. It opened less than a year ago and already has more students than it has permanent classrooms for. That is because of poor government planning. The original school was simply built too small. Classes have been forced into the library and demountables are already on the very small playground. I remind members that the school is a year old. The promised stage two of the school is nowhere to be seen. It is not budgeted for. We urge the Government to commit to this stage. It is poor planning for the growth in our part of western Sydney.

In 2019 the Government promised a high school to families in the rapidly growing area of Marsden Park, of course on the eve of the election. Two years later and the high school site in Newpark is still vacant. Families in this community are rightly asking the Government why does it think it is okay to promise a school before the election and not deliver it? Ropes Crossing Public School is yet another example. Residents have been asking the Government for years to provide additional classrooms. It is the most overcrowded public school in the State yet there are no current plans to address overcrowding at the school. The current school site has permanent capacity for 231 students, yet 900 students are enrolled. There are 27 demountables overrunning valuable playground space.

We have some of the most congested roads in the State because the Government has failed to build the infrastructure needed for our rapidly growing community. Richmond Road, alongside Marsden Park, is at traffic gridlock pretty much all day. It is a car park. The Government has done nothing by way of planning or constructing an upgrade to this road. Werrington Road near Penrith is also one of the biggest bottlenecks. The corridor has been reserved for this upgrade, yet there is still no action from the Government to fix it. Imagine the families moving into these new areas. Of course I am biased, but why would people not want to live in some of these new areas of western Sydney to raise their families? But the Government does not support them with adequate infrastructure.

As we begin the economic recovery the New South Wales Government must look at these projects in western Sydney that it has neglected for years and finally build them. Families should not have to campaign for their government to deliver basic infrastructure. But that is what it has come to in the west of our city. The Liberal Party has installed a new Premier but that does not mean promises can be broken or infrastructure needs in western Sydney can be abandoned. It is well past time that the Government stopped the delays and stopped focusing on itself. My message to the Government—my plea to the Government—is to end the infrastructure delays, build our local school projects and upgrade our roads. It is well past time communities in outer western Sydney had these projects delivered. I will continue to fight until the Government sees sense.

### RIVERWOOD SPRING FAIR

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:32):** In 2019 I had the pleasure of attending the Riverwood Spring Fair, a great community-based event held next to the beautiful Salt Pan Creek. Currently it is in the electorate of the member for Lakemba—I am glad he is in the Chamber tonight to hear my speech—but because of the redistribution it will move into my electorate of Oatley. The Spring Fair is proof that our community is the best place to live in Sydney and, in fact, the State. It has an incredible sense of family and a strong spirit of supporting one another with events such as the Riverwood Spring Fair, the Oatley Village Festival and the Lugarno Spring Festival, tirelessly organised by many volunteers and community groups. I always look forward to attending events like these with my family.

Riverwood Spring Fair has been running for over 40 years and is one of the largest community events in the local area. It is consistently attended by thousands of people. The fair brings together local businesses, clubs and community groups for a day of fun, entertainment and fantastic food. I am constantly amazed by the diversity of attractions at the event. There is truly something for all members of the family. It means that my sons, James and Sam, look forward to the fair just as much as I do. One of the best parts of Riverwood is the suburb's diversity and there is a great representation of many multicultural groups and backgrounds. A unique element of the Riverwood Spring Fair is the fact that it celebrates this multicultural community with cultural performances and food samplings in an abundance to showcase the diversity of the area. Events like this promote community participation and encourage cross-cultural exchange.

The Riverwood Spring Fair is also a great way to show support for local business. We are very lucky in Riverwood and the surrounding suburbs to have a wide variety and array of small businesses that are family based, family owned and built from the ground up. The fair enables businesses to feature their products and services, and

it is a great opportunity to stimulate the local economy. I always enjoy chatting to stallholders and learning more about the hard work they put into their businesses. The 2019 Spring Fair blew me away; the event organisers truly outdid themselves. There was a nailbiting skate competition, amusement rides for kids to enjoy, arts and crafts stations for those feeling creative, and a massive chocolate wheel that James and I had to visit many times. What makes the event even more special is the fact that the beautiful Salt Pan Creek is the backdrop, which gives families a great chance to go for a walk and appreciate the nature and bushland that we are so lucky to have in our local area.

The Riverwood Spring Fair is principally organised by Riverwood Community Centre, which is an exceptional community organisation in my electorate. Riverwood Community Centre has provided invaluable services, spanning from aged-care and disability services to children and family services. In particular, I acknowledge former chief executive officer Michelle Newman for her outstanding leadership and coordination of the Spring Fair for many years. I also acknowledge the New South Wales Government's commitment to celebrating and promoting multiculturalism. I am pleased that the Government was able to support the Riverwood Spring Fair with the provision of a grant under the Celebrating Diversity Grants program, which encourages cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Events like this would not be possible without sponsors, event coordinators, stall operators and the thousands of local residents who pass through. I thank the event sponsors, coordinators and stallholders, and, in particular, Riverwood Community Centre. I particularly thank Karl Saleh, who has been with the organisation for many years in a variety of roles and positions. He is an outstanding individual who is, I understand, running for council again. It is always a pleasure to work alongside him and I thoroughly praise and respect his ongoing passion for the Riverwood community. The Riverwood Spring Fair is truly a highlight on our local calendar and I cannot wait to attend again next year in 2022. I thank Riverwood community services.

#### **ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (18:36):** Tonight I will talk about a very important role that some of our local health administrators and workers have undertaken over the past two years and to recognise their efforts. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, under the leadership of Margo Mains, has performed very well over the past few years under difficult circumstances. Our community, like many other communities across New South Wales, has had to go through a challenging period caused by COVID-19 and, in particular, the recent Delta outbreak. Every week my colleagues the member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, our Federal members and some of our local council representatives meet with Margo and her team, including Curtis Gregory from the Public Health Unit and Caroline Langston, who has been looking after vaccinations. We are briefed about what is happening, the number of cases and the challenges faced by the community. I have appreciated their openness and frankness. More than anything, I have appreciated their hard work and dedication.

I thank all health workers and staff across the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, which includes the cleaners, the people who work in our hospital pharmacies, pathology, emergency departments, special intensive care units, security—everybody who plays an important role, especially our nurses, doctors, clinicians and health specialists. I sincerely thank all of them on behalf of a very grateful community. I have the pleasure of being the shadow Minister for the Illawarra and South Coast. I know firsthand how difficult the last few years have been for our community. We have often followed closely the case numbers in south-western Sydney because, as the member for Lakemba knows, his community and my community are linked by a short distance. We send a lot of people up to south-west and western Sydney to be employed and engaged in other events and pastimes and they also bring people down to our first-class university and recreational facilities et cetera. Unfortunately, because we are closely linked the rise in cases in the south-west also led to a rise in cases across the Illawarra and then further down the coast.

I sincerely thank Margo, who has worked hard with her community and has always put the district first. She has gone above and beyond to try to make sure that we were all kept informed. We would have liked a bit more information a bit faster because that is what members of Parliament are like as a result of the demands of our communities, but she and her team did outstanding work. I thank all of them as well as the workers on the frontline. I say a big thank you to the Health Services Union for its advocacy to make sure that its workforce is protected. I thank the Nurses and Midwives' Association, which is another very strong union that has worked above and beyond for its members. I thank the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation and everyone who has helped ensure that the workforce was kept safe, protected and able to go about doing the very critical task of keeping us all safe. My colleagues and I sincerely thank everyone for their work, no matter what role they played across the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. They have saved lives and kept us safe, and our communities will be forever grateful.

**GEOFF MCKECHNIE, APM**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:42):** I congratulate Geoff McKechnie, APM, on his retirement from the NSW Police Force after more than three decades. The assistant commissioner and Western Region commander retired just a few weeks ago on 23 September, after 33 years of distinguished service. He gave a final message to staff over police radio and signed-off for the last time as Western One before marching out of Dubbo Police Station and giving a final salute. It was a very special time. Growing up at Mendooran, Geoff joined the force in 1988, spending the early part of his career doing general duties, but also starting his investigation duties at a number of different commands across the Western Region. He became a detective in 1993 and worked at several commands, including Orana District, Barrier Local Area Command, Canobolas LAC, Tuggerah Lakes LAC and Brisbane Water LAC, before rising through the ranks even further. At the end of 2001, he was promoted to the rank of superintendent at the Barrier Local Area Command, before moving and commanding the Canobolas, Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water local area commands. He returned to his home turf after a final promotion to assistant commissioner as the Western Region commander in 2012 and finished his career after more than three decades of distinguished service.

During his time as Western Region commander, Geoff was part of many different operations and changes. He led the successful re-engineering of 11 local area commands into what we see today, which is seven police districts, with an officer-in-charge model throughout the districts. Each regional police station now has a senior officer in charge of operations and a senior officer who works very closely with that community. He was also instrumental in the expansion of the rural crime investigation team and the formation of the Rural Crime Prevention Team within the NSW Police Force, which I spoke to him about many times. That team now operates across all of regional and remote New South Wales, and it is dedicated to preventing, disrupting and responding to rural crime. I have known Geoff for a very long time. When I first started at the Mendooran Central School, he was one of the big kids. I have also been fortunate to have worked with Geoff for quite a few years, first in my former life as a radio presenter and for the last 2½ years as the local MP.

I always have really valued his support, his insight and his extremely professional approach to every situation. Recently, that was highlighted during our current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly in the Dubbo area. During that time Geoff's experience and leadership has been a real asset for the entire western region, and that continued right up until his final day on the job. Geoff was leading the local and regional emergency management responses at the same time as he was helping two newcomers familiarise themselves with the region. His successor assigned to Dubbo is Assistant Commissioner Brett Greentree and Dubbo also has a new Orana Mid-Western Police District Commander, Danny Sullivan. I welcome them both and thank them for the outstanding contributions they also have already made to the Dubbo electorate and the wider region. While Geoff also helped to welcome them, he helped to manage the Australian Defence Force [ADF] presence across western New South Wales, which included the wellbeing and compliance functions, as well as the pop-up vaccine clinics, which have had such a massive impact and are still moving around the region as I speak.

Geoff also stood by my side day in, day out to help inform every person across western New South Wales and give each and every one of them confidence that together we would get through this really scary time. He took questions and spoke openly about how the police operations and ADF operations were progressing, and he was available whenever I asked him to provide that information. Geoff's service certainly has not gone unrecognised. As I mentioned previously, he has been awarded the Australian Police Medal, the NSW Police Service Medal, the National Police Service Medal and clasps to the NSW Police Force and national service medals. I have spoken about Geoff's leadership and calmness. It is safe to say that without him during the time we were going through a big crisis with COVID, we would not have come out in quite the same way without his influence. He is a really great bloke and he will be missed by many, including me.

Unfortunately, we did not get time to celebrate Geoff's career with a proper send-off. It had been planned: Former police officers and dignitaries from right across the State had organised to be part of a big dinner in recognition of the difference Geoff has made to people across the region and lots of communities, but hopefully that will happen down the track. Mate, well done! Enjoy your retirement. I am sure you will spend a lot more time with family and friends and with the farm. Thanks for everything you have done.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** With the indulgence of the House, I also pass on my congratulations to Geoff McKechnie and say that I know Geoff. I also know that his legacy in the Dubbo area will live on, as it will across policing in New South Wales. But the area has been left in the very good hands of Brett Greentree and Daniel Sullivan, who I believe are great police officers and people I am proud to call friends. I thank the member for Dubbo. It is wonderful to hear that tribute to Geoff McKechnie.

### TRIBUTE TO TOM RICHMOND

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:47):** Today I pay tribute to a local Hornsby legend, Tom Richmond. Tom, who passed away last month, was not only one of the great educators and historians of the local area but also someone I called a friend and one of the great people to have ever been in the Hornsby area. Born and bred in Hornsby, he nurtured thousands of students throughout his career in education. His knowledge as a local historian has been passed on through his books and countless articles and his love of cricket has helped to build one of the best local cricket clubs and associations in the State. He contributed so much to our community and his loss will be felt deeply.

Tom was born on 4 July 1941 in a private hospital in Hornsby. His mother was a theatre nurse at the Mater Hospital and his father was a hairdresser by trade. He grew up in Royston Parade, Asquith, and went to school at Barker College. It was as a child that he developed a love of cricket. In his final year of school he was selected in the school's first cricket team as a quick bowler. This would start a lifelong association with cricket in the Hornsby area. As a life member of more local associations than I have time to name today, he spent 50 consecutive years coaching teams, mentoring players and volunteering on committees. This legacy will remain not only in those who he helped to coach but in the Tom Richmond Trophy, given to a local Junior Rep player of the year.

Leaving school at 16 he attended the Wagga Wagga Teachers College. It was there that Tom started his career as one of the great teachers of our local area. He would take his first teaching post at just 18 years of age, which made him younger than the school's captain. Following postings in regional New South Wales, he returned to Sydney in 1964 to take a position at the Normanhurst Boys High School. It was during his tenure at the school that he would also complete his arts degree in 1968. At just 26 years of age he was promoted to head teacher at the Riverstone High School, making him one of the youngest teachers to hold that position. But the opening of Galston High School in 1974 saw him return to the Hornsby district. It was Tom who was responsible for the restoration of Waddell Cottage, which many will know stands at the front gates of the school to this day. His teaching career would last 36 years before he would retire on medical grounds. I must note his transformation of the Ku-ring-gai High School, where as principal in 1990 he saved the school from closure by changing the school's image and uniform and transitioned it to a creative arts high school, which resulted in increased enrolments and the school becoming successful once again.

Tom loved the Hornsby community. This came from his family's long association with the area. His great grandfather George Seymour was one of the first settlers and farmers in the area, which is now known as Brooklyn. His grandmother Anne Johnson was born in Brooklyn in 1871. When she passed away in 1962 she left her home to Tom and his brother, Peter. Tom purchased his brother's share and it would be this property on which he would stay for 40 years until his health declined. While he became a published author for the first time in 1976, it was his local history books which many will know and love. As a member of the Hornsby Historical Society, he would contribute two chapters to *Pioneers of Hornsby Shire, 1788-1906: a history*, which was published in 1978. After his retirement he would publish five more local history books and lend his expertise to the Hornsby council's information about heritage cruises on the Hawkesbury. He also spent 14 years as a contributor to the *Hornsby Advocate* newspaper. Editors would always say his columns were one of the most popular in each edition.

As a volunteer of the Muogamarra Nature Reserve he would lecture the local guides prior to the visiting season. I remember his joy when I visited Muogamarra after being first appointed as the Minister for Energy and Environment. It is impossible for me to list Tom's long list of acknowledgments and awards here today. But in 2002 he received the highest honour with an Order of Australia for his contribution to education and youth sport—an honour which was truly well deserved. Tom did not make my job easy. Even as his health deteriorated, he was still emailing my office, ensuring that I was regularly held to account. I valued Tom's local knowledge, his passion and I will never forget the time I spent listening to Tom's stories. He had an ability to capture the interest of whatever group, large or small, he was speaking to. His passion for lifelong learning has left Hornsby a better place. The Brooklyn community will not be the same without him. Thank you so much, Tom—you will be missed and never forgotten.

With the indulgence of the House, I add that Tom Richmond was one of the greats of the Hornsby shire and indeed the State of New South Wales. He dedicated his life to mentoring, coaching and teaching others and there are whole generations of young, and now not-so-young, people who owe the opportunities they have had in life to Tom, due to his dedication and service. Tom is a local hero. He has had a huge and profound effect on my community and on me. Rest in peace, Tom Richmond.

### COVID-19 AND WESTERN SYDNEY

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:52):** It is right that the Parliament is back. Democracy is not optional. At the outset, I want to thank the community for vaccinating—your response has been inspiring. I also want to thank our health professionals, our essential workers, our emergency service personnel and our incredible

community organisations for being present every day. It has been tough. I also want to thank Dr Chant and her team, as well as Minister Hazzard and former Premier Berejiklian. We may not have always agreed on everything so it would be unfair not to acknowledge their tireless efforts. In time there will be many future speeches made about exceptional roles of my local community groups and, in time, the story that will be written about the pandemic will have one common thread of community resilience, community struggle and community unity, as well as how we overcame a terrible division within our city.

In June this year we knew the challenge before us. We knew it was going to be a rough ride and, more importantly, we believed that we would face this challenge together. Labor took a bipartisan approach; after all, this was a health crisis, not a political crisis, nor was it a law and order one. In June vaccinations were hard to find and hesitancy was high. Communication was mixed and people were confused by the ever-changing health orders, yet we still believed that we were in it together. That was until decisions made by this Government split the city in two. For a Government that failed to act quickly when the outbreak occurred in the eastern suburbs, there was no delay in shifting the blame and imposing the most stringent lockdown rules on people in the west of the city. Over the past two days I have listened to Government members accuse opposition MPs of being negative for daring to raise the issue of a divided city. Mr Temporary Speaker, you cannot dismiss what I will say as being political or being negative or divisive. And I would challenge anyone in this Chamber to argue against my record during this pandemic.

We were accused of class warfare. The truth is, this Government does not know what class warfare is, even when it is the one waging it. It would be wrong of me not to express the frustration, disappointment and anger of my community during those difficult times. I recognise that there was additional support, but the division runs on something much more than that—the impact of the health orders. The truth is, we were judged in ways that simplify our community. We are the people that the Government spoke at, not with. These inequities were exacerbated by people who have never walked a mile in the shoes of those who live in western Sydney. People said, "We are in it together" and we thought we were in it together. But it did not feel like we were in it together when images of people openly flouting the rules in some areas were contrasted with those of people in helicopters ordering children from parks in other areas.

It did not feel like we were in it together when additional police were deployed to assist with compliance for one part of Sydney alone. It did not feel like we were in it together when language such as "boots on the ground" and "door-to-door" was used in the deployment of the Australian Defence Force and that was a far cry from the helpful role they played. Mr Speaker, language matters. It did not feel like we were in it together when large groups of people were sunbaking without masks, while others in western Sydney were being fined and arrested for not wearing masks. It did not feel like we were in it together when we heard the phrase "other people from other cultures don't follow the rules". Again, language matters. It did not feel like we were in it together when we were slapped with a curfew that had absolutely nothing to do with the health advice. It did not feel like we were in it together when we had to download and carry papers to be able to move around the city. It did not feel like we were in it together when tradies could come into our local government areas, but our tradies could not leave for their work, rendering them unemployable. It did not feel like we were in it together when we saw arrests at cemeteries.

We may have been in it together to begin with, but the longer the pandemic has gone, the further apart we have drifted. That is a shameful experience. It is easy to say we are in it together but as I read somewhere in the midst of all this, we might have been in the same storm but, by goodness, we were in completely different boats. We must move forward. As we move forward we cannot ever let ourselves get to this point again. We cannot ever be two cities again. We are one city and one State. In this pandemic we have seen those who rolled up their sleeves and those who went into hiding. We have also seen members of Parliament willing to put political differences aside to work with others to get through this. This pandemic has deepened and heightened lines of inequity and opportunity across the State. It has to be our mission to rectify this. We need to reflect on how we can include people on the journey, how we communicate up to, not down to, them.

Most importantly, we need to challenge ourselves with questions centred on who we are, what we represent and how far we are willing to put a stake in the ground. Politics is not a game, nor is it a sport. Every day people rely on us to do the very best for them. I will finish with these words from *A Tale of Two Cities*:

... it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

But let us remember that out of this:

I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from the abyss.

## COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:58):** Today I praise the tireless efforts of healthcare workers right across the Cootamundra electorate: the nurses, doctors, pharmacists and other medical staff within our small communities who have worked around the clock to keep our towns and villages safe from COVID-19. For this, I say thank you. The electorate of Cootamundra covers a large area—almost the size of Switzerland. Our small communities rely on a lot of outreach from bigger places both within and surrounding the electorate. Inevitably that means people have to step up and go above and beyond. Our healthcare workers have certainly done that. They have met the COVID-19 pandemic challenge head-on. They have been flexible in meeting testing and vaccination demands, while continuing to carry out their normal general practice duties. That feat should be greatly admired.

I have seen that dedication firsthand whilst on the ground with teams from the Western NSW Local Health District—in the Cowra local government area and the Murrumbidgee Local Health District of the Hilltops LGA—in response to two recent outbreaks. Both outbreaks have now stabilised. For a number of weeks now the Hilltops LGA has been sitting on 25 cases and Cowra LGA steady at 59 cases, and we are hoping that is where it stays. Since the start of the pandemic those two outbreaks are the only ones on record for the entire Cootamundra electorate. That is despite multiple exposure sites and scares in Junee, Coolac, Cootamundra, Gundagai and Temora. I attribute part of the combined effort to stopping the spread in my electorate to our local health professionals. It is the right thing to do.

This period of uncertainty has reinforced the trust that communities within the Cootamundra electorate have in their local health systems. It has also highlighted how dependent and reliant regional and rural communities are on our local health facilities and our healthcare professionals. I extend my thanks to the wider staffing teams within the Murrumbidgee and Western NSW Local Health districts such as the media and communications unit. Often they do not get spoken of. We mostly speak of, as it should be, our nurses and clinicians at the front line. These media and communication teams have played a crucial role in keeping myself and the community informed with the most accurate and up-to-date information. With each concern that arose—whether it be a positive sewerage detection, a new exposure site or a confirmed case—these health units had testing clinics deployed within hours. As I said, in a large electorate that is not easy to do.

Our local health units have been proactive in planning and preparation to accommodate every possible situation; their efforts have been second to none. I acknowledge the outstanding joint efforts that have been made by our doctors, nurses and pharmacists to vaccinate the residents of our communities. We have now had so many pop-up and mass vaccination clinics across the electorate that I have quite honestly lost count. They were the product of many open discussions that were had with community leaders, health professionals and me in an effort to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, such as the aged and our Indigenous populations, and to target particular local government areas struggling with supplies, such as Narrandera and Junee.

I thank also those people in our local community who looked after our medical staff in the mass vaccination and testing clinics. In a COVID-safe way locals dropped off huge amounts of baked goods and supplies and the Lions club ran barbecues to ensure those professionals were well fed while people came out in droves for testing. Our health staff worked hard to get people through it. I have received many expressions of praise and appreciation for the hard work the health units have been doing over the past 20 months and I wanted to make sure that was echoed in this place.

## COVID-19 DELTA VARIANT AND CANTERBURY ELECTORATE

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:03):** It has been nearly four months since I gave my last speech in this Parliament. Today I will discuss the health, economic and social impact of the recent Delta virus outbreak and lockdown. While we are all relieved about being here and representing our communities—in particular my community is relieved that it no longer has an LGA of concern status, a curfew and all the other restrictions that were placed upon it—my community will never forget the experiences of the past 100 days and how this Government abandoned them in their time of need. I said earlier today that I had spoken to the Government on many occasions to ensure that we had resources on the ground. However, we found it very difficult and I will outline why.

Last month one only had to take a two-minute walk from my electorate office to witness a sight that illustrated the sense of siege felt by my community—an encampment of Health, police and security tents outside a block of red flats that been locked down. We all appreciate the phenomenal work that our healthcare workers do. Those healthcare workers were in full protective gear and were mustering around while residents, including the elderly, families and essential workers, looked on from their balconies wearing surgical masks while in forced isolation. That was happening all across my community, which was labelled an area of concern by the Government

and subjected to the harshest lockdown restrictions in Australia. Very few small businesses, sole traders, workers and families have been left unscathed. We will not forget.

Sadly, many people in the community succumbed to the virus and many others continue to struggle with its after-effects. There are many more who have lost their livelihoods, struggled to put food on the table and experienced the pressure of their home life reaching a tipping point. Mental health concerns and domestic violence plagued my community while COVID-19 made the headlines. Local women's centres, such as the Sydney Women's Counselling Centre in Campsie, saw an 80 per cent spike in domestic violence cases and an unprecedented surge in demand for mental health and counselling services. Worryingly, much of the demand for those services came from vulnerable women of all backgrounds, who often do not reach out to organisations out of shame or embarrassment. For them to take the major step of reaching out highlights the state of distress our community has been in after the lockdown was imposed. Unfortunately, government budget cuts have meant many community centres and social services were unable to take new cases due to a lack of resources.

I held a number of mental health roundtables. My colleague Jihad Dib, the member for Lakemba, the Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, I and many of our colleagues worked very hard with councils and community leaders. I will acknowledge them in a future contribution. Because of those government cuts as well as privatisation, we saw the distress caused by the outbreak of the Delta strain of COVID-19 and we saw the inequities. We received letters and there was media coverage; we are not making that stuff up. We have been on the ground with our communities and we worked through it with the community leaders day in, day out. The inequities and the cuts to services meant that our communities had to rely on their families for social services and then those families were targeted because they were the only people who could provide support.

My community and I begged the Government. I was on Andrew Clennell's program on Sky News around 20 July detailing how a number of my community leaders had called on the State and Federal governments to provide pop-up vaccination clinics. At that time there were none. The only one that was like a pop-up vaccination clinic was provided by the fantastic Reverend Bill Crews in Ashfield. He said to the Government that there were a number of low socio-economic and homeless people who needed to be vaccinated. He was able to get the local area health district to provide health support. That was what we were calling for because in our communities there is a lack of access to transport, English language barriers and barriers to social services. Our essential workers work around the clock. The Government did not provide support for the existing barriers that face my community. I will have a lot more to say about that in the future.

### TRIBUTE TO HELEN MEARS

#### MARINE RESCUE NSW WOOLGOOLGA

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:08):** Mr Temporary Speaker, I preferred the beard rather than the clean-shaven look. I hope it makes an appearance again in summer.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** Thank you.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** I am continually inspired and delighted by the incredible people who devote their time and energy to benefit others across the Coffs Coast and beyond. In good times and bad, their community spirit and civic pride shines through, with a smile on their face or a shoulder to cry on. I pay tribute to the people of my community who are always searching for ways to drive change and bring about improvements for others. In recognition of her tireless dedication to the Coffs Coast community, Helen Mears was named the region's 2021 Senior Volunteer of the Year.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards recognise the significant contributions individuals and organisations make across all sections of the community. Helen Mears has been a United Hospital Auxiliaries [UHA] volunteer at Coffs Harbour Health Campus for the past 40 years, and I applaud her for her passion and dedication. She has fundraised for medical equipment, staffed the hospital's cafe and gift shop, and recruited, managed and inspired countless volunteers. Helen has been the president of the local UHA group, the Pink Ladies, for more than 30 years, overseeing the donation of more than \$3 million. Helen is ably assisted by secretary Heather Hardwick, treasurer Helen Hardingham and a 60-strong group of hardworking UHA volunteers in Coffs Harbour. An online ceremony gave us the chance to come together and say thank you to Helen Mears and other volunteers who are the lifeblood of our communities. We are extremely grateful for their continued commitment.

The annual awards are run by The Centre for Volunteering, the State's peak body for volunteering. The awards follow the release of the inaugural *New South Wales State of Volunteering Report*, which found that more than 4.8 million people volunteered in New South Wales in 2020. The awards recognise volunteers who have gone above and beyond for their communities. The pandemic may have tested the character and resolve of the State and the volunteers responded in a variety of ways. Woolgoolga Red Cross Branch is another local

organisation which is at the heart of the Coffs Coast community. This year the branch achieved 30 continuous years of service to the local community. Branch patron Robyn Rooth spoke to the *Coffs Coast News of the Area* and said:

Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, there have been no celebrations but branch members have faithfully and enthusiastically continued to assist with supporting the work of the humanitarian organisation.

Robyn Rooth's husband, John, is also a patron, and both have been members since the branch's inception in 1991. The Woolgoolga Red Cross Branch is led by a strong team comprising president Carol Rowe, vice-presidents Kerry Chaffey and Helen Michener, secretary Annette Dodsworth, treasurer Trish Pope and emergency services team leader Judy Jackson. The branch is renowned for being a fantastic group of volunteers who are happy and willing to put their hands up to help at every opportunity. Some of its projects range from knitting trauma teddies to being involved in Telecross and the Hands-On program where volunteers visit aged-care and retirement facilities, where permitted. Each year the branch has conducted the annual Red Cross Calling appeal to fundraise for local community projects, and over 30 years it has contributed tens of thousands of dollars to the campaign. Being unable to physically doorknock this year did not stop the volunteers, who set up collection tables at shopping centres and held a major event with the Red Cross Motorbike Dice Run. Robyn Rooth also said:

Once again, our community responded so generously and showed their appreciation for the work of the Australian Red Cross.

At the New South Wales Red Cross annual general meeting, held virtually from Sydney, it was announced that the Woolgoolga branch had again exceeded expectations by raising over \$5,000. The team was awarded second place in the Chairman's Shield for Country NSW for its efforts in the annual doorknock appeal. Robyn said:

It's teamwork and ours is a hardworking team who contributed hours and energies to the campaign. Once again, our members wish to thank the local residents for their ongoing support as we work to assist the vulnerable in our communities.

Meanwhile, the enthusiastic volunteers at Marine Rescue NSW Woolgoolga are the proud recipients of a new rescue vessel launching tractor. They turned on stunning weather and a warm welcome when I visited their Arrawarra Headland base to congratulate them on the new asset. The unit was the beneficiary of \$81,000 in State Government funding, courtesy of the Infrastructure Grants Clubgrants Category 3 Fund. The new tractor allows the volunteers to provide a safety net to thousands of water users on the Coffs Coast and helps them provide a reliable 24/7 emergency service to the recreational and commercial maritime communities. Marine Rescue NSW Woolgoolga boasts 38 dynamic members and I thank them all for the important work they do every day. I also acknowledge the leadership of unit commander Mitch Harvey, deputy unit commander Josh Stangl and operations manager Brian Taylor.

### COVID-19 AND WESTERN SYDNEY

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:13):** It is great to be back in the Chamber. A lot has changed in recent months, as members opposite know only too well. On reflecting on the past few months, I can say that accountability matters, trust matters and a fair go matters. I am incredibly proud of my community's overwhelming response to get vaccinated, achieving a double-dose vaccination rate of more than 70 per cent and a single-dose vaccination rate greater than 90 per cent by early October. That is a remarkable achievement on an international comparative scale. However, like other parts of south-west and western Sydney, my local community bore the brunt of the Liberal Government's unfair and harsh lockdown measures. There was no respect for my community's efforts and no recognition for the hardship we had to endure whilst other areas had limited restrictions.

Data shows that unfair bias. Suburbs in Liberal electorates with higher case numbers and fewer vaccinations had no extra restrictions. For example, on 29 August the suburb of Penrith had over 100 active cases but no extra restrictions. Caddens and Cambridge Gardens had more than 200 active cases and still no extra restrictions. The suburbs of Camden had well over 100 cases but no extra restrictions. Contrast that with the suburbs of Ingleburn, Minto and Glenfield in my electorate of Macquarie Fields, which is a Labor seat. They had fewer than 100 cases but were subject to the State's harshest restrictions. Residents in Liberal suburbs deserved to have their greater freedom of movement but so did people in my local community. It was gerrymandering at its worst. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen would have blushed at such a drawing of lines that punished people for all the wrong reasons.

I have two words for this targeted treatment: unfair and unacceptable. The policies were unfair from an uncaring Liberal-Nationals Government, which treated people in my community as second-class citizens. It fuelled unnecessary prejudices and created social divisions despite saying very clearly and repeatedly that "we are all in it together". The citizens of the Macquarie Fields electorate copped the harshest restrictions in New South Wales, including a curfew and one hour of outdoor exercise. The health Minister publicly stated that "fresh air we know is the safest place". If that is the case, then why did the Government impose a one-hour limit on outdoor

exercise in south-west and western Sydney? It does not make sense. I remind the House that even former Deputy Premier John Barilaro said curfews do not work. He said:

Curfews don't work. Let's be honest, guys. The reality that we went down the curfew model for south-western and western Sydney is because in one way there was a lot of media push.

How much more cynical can you get? A public health crisis has been managed purely through political messaging with total disregard for the harmful impact on communities. To add further insult, my community of Macquarie Fields looked on in utter disbelief and outrage at the images of people flocking to Bondi Beach in their thousands with scant concern for masks and social distancing. The contrast could not have been more blatant. The Delta variant does not recognise or respect local government boundaries, yet this Government's decisions only exacerbated the State's social, economic and geographic inequities.

The workers permits were designed to target my local community and noncompliance of them carried a significant fine. Workers from areas that provided the bulk of essential skills were asked to bear additional administrative tasks just to earn a living and pay their bills. Many workplaces had one worker from a local government area having to jump through administrative hoops to be at work alongside another from a neighbouring local government area separated by about eight metres of asphalt and concrete just turning up. Essential workers should not have been burdened with those administrative tasks just to make an honest living. On top of that, 40 hours before the permit system was due to come into effect the website was not yet up and running.

South-west and western Sydney residents in their hundreds of thousands did the right thing, but the Liberal-Nationals Government let them down and locked them up. People in my electorate were partners in the solution, but the Government brandished them as part of the problem with little regard to the harmful social consequences. Rather than accepting responsibility, it could not wait to cynically apportion blame for the Delta variant outbreak on the people who were not to blame for their own mistakes. Newly minted Premier Perrottet made unfair decisions at crisis cabinet, inflicting unnecessary pain on and encouraging prejudice towards south-west and western Sydney communities. The Liberals may say that south-west and western Sydney will be the battleground for the State election in 2023; I say bring it on.

#### TRIBUTE TO WING COMMANDER MIKE ALLPORT

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:18):** I pay tribute to a dear friend, Wing Commander Mike Allport, MBE, Royal Air Force, retired, who passed away peacefully on Tuesday 5 October at the Mona Vale Hospital palliative care unit following a courageous battle with cancer. He was 77. Mike was a fixture of Anzac Day services, but it was the more informal moments that I enjoyed such as sharing a drink in his backyard with his family around. It was at those moments that "Mike-o", as he was known to his friends and family, was at his vivacious best. His memory continues through his wonderful wife, Bunny; daughters Lara Allport and Manda Epton; son-in-law David Horsley; and his grandsons, my godson James, and his brother Will, Bea and Gigi. The well wishes for and good sentiment towards "Mike-o" have come from around the globe, reflecting his exciting life during which he grabbed all that was on offer. From the United Kingdom to his final resting place on the northern beaches, he lived life with service at his heart and integrity at his core. "Mike-o" loved life and sure had a good time living it. I will share a tribute to "Mike-o" from his local RSL branch, Harbord Diggers. It states:

Wing Commander Mike Allport, MBE, was a true gentleman and respected service member. He passed away surrounded by his family. Mike Allport, OBE, served with the Royal Air Force as a general duties officer pilot and did his flight training at the Royal Air Force College. Mike had a long and wideranging flying career. He became a qualified flying instructor on jets before joining the RAF C-130 Hercules force. Mike had flown all over the world and was based in Singapore for an extended period. There he met many Australian Air Force pilots, which was one of the reasons Mike formed his liking for Australia. Mike then took on a few roles as international training officer for the RAF. After several staff tours, he was seconded to the Dubai air force as the project officer for their new airbase at Al Minhad. Later, Mike returned to the UAE as the UK air attaché, which was his final posting. He was awarded an MBE for his service. Mike emigrated to Australia in 2013 and lived at the new diggers apartments. He honoured us by joining our RSL sub-branch, where he became an active member, which was our gain. He was a true gentleman who was always thinking of others. Mike Allport was a champion and will be missed by all.

I will finish with a poem by his daughter and my good friend Lara Allport.

Strong to the very end, he was my best friend  
Always ready to help me, he fiercely loved his family  
He stood tall and sure, he helped me mature  
His strength and his love for me will remain part of his legacy  
The hole in my heart will always be there, losing you now just doesn't seem fair

Vale, Wing Commander Mike Allport. May he rest in peace.

## CENTENNIAL PARK DEVELOPMENT

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (19:22):** Earlier this year I brought to the attention of the House my concerns, and that of Centennial Park residents, around Carsingha Investments' unsolicited development proposal for a 99-year lease on the Entertainment Quarter at Moore Park. The suburb of Moore Park is part of the Centennial Parklands, which is a collection of green spaces that includes Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park that was originally gifted to the people of New South Wales by Governor Macquarie. In the past I have called them the "lungs of Sydney", given the prevalence of medium- to high-density development surrounding parklands. Those green spaces are fast becoming important spaces for the health and wellbeing of people in the eastern suburbs and the inner city. They are an escape from the concrete and glass that surrounds them.

Carsingha Investments is a corporation partly owned by Gerry Harvey, John Singleton and Mark Carnegie. Their unsolicited proposal would see the Entertainment Quarter redeveloped into a commercial precinct, complete with a 20-storey tower and hotel. As I have outlined in the past, that would call into question the future of the Entertainment Quarter's State significant and world-class film, television and video production industry based at Fox Studios. I have referred to it as "Aussiewood", as during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic the facility hosted some of the biggest names in Hollywood who were in the country making billion-dollar blockbusters. From the Star Wars prequels to the latest Thor movie, the Entertainment Quarter has played a large part in the growth of the film and television industry in Australia. It has not only fostered on-screen talent but also created thousands of jobs behind the camera.

From camera persons to film editors and animators—many of whom would have had to travel overseas for work—can now express their creative outline in their own backyard, thanks to the vision of the Carr Government. During the recent COVID-19 lockdowns I am grateful to have been afforded a second briefing from the office of planning and public spaces. I thank the Minister for the courtesy. I was also briefed on the proposed legislative reforms impacting the future of the Centennial Parklands. I was provided insight on the now released exposure bill for the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust, which proposes to create a new statutory body to oversee the management of Centennial Parklands, Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park, Callan Park and Fernhill Estates. Once created, the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust will oversee some 6,000 hectares of parkland across Sydney.

Whilst the exposure bill contains provisions about including community feedback in the future body's decision-making process, it essentially gives authority for the future trust body to enter into commercial arrangements that will alienate public green spaces for exclusive private use. While the exposure bill gives the Minister with carriage the final say on a lease or licence, I am concerned that the provisions of the Act will provide a backdoor method for the unsolicited proposal to occur. Under the current Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act, an extension of the lease for 99 years is not permitted. In my view, it is grossly improper to even consider alienating publicly owned land to one organisation for 99 years without going to public tender.

The proponents of the Carsingha proposal, knowing when the lease is to expire, have paid well beyond the value of the site in the Entertainment Quarter. They also have a keen understanding of the restrictions imposed on the site by the State environmental planning policy, which have been there since the Entertainment Quarter and Fox Studios came into existence. I am also clearly aware, as are a variety of stakeholders, that the current leaseholders of the Entertainment Quarter have deliberately run down the site and not sought to redevelop it and are using that as leverage to persuade the Government that their proposal is the only way that can generate Carsingha's unsolicited proposal. I do not for one second believe the proposed legislation is for the benefit of the residents of Centennial Park.

## COVID-19 AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:27):** Via video link: On Monday the New South Wales Premier, Dominic Perrottet, raised a beer in front of the cameras to celebrate what he called "Freedom Day" in New South Wales. The new Premier must be totally unaware of life in New South Wales for those who exist west of the Blue Mountains. In much of regional New South Wales, Monday was the day when the Liberals and The Nationals stripped freedom away from so many residents. What is worse, they did not have the guts to tell the people they were doing it. Many people got the shock of their lives when they found out that on the Monday they were not allowed inside their local café, which they had been to on Sunday.

Last week the New South Wales Government put out a press release saying, "People can return to work if they are fully vaccinated." "Return to work" is all it said. The new Premier completely forgot about regional New South Wales. Many of us in the Murray region have been working for weeks. We have been dining out, shopping and visiting friends and family because we were not in lockdown. As late as Friday last week the

New South Wales Government was not sure if the new rules applied to towns like Griffith, Leeton and Deniliquin—towns out of lockdown. At the last minute we learned that new rules would apply to us all.

All communication and new city-centric rules have devastated local rural economies. Cafes in the main street of Griffith that are usually buzzing were almost empty this week. Some businesses closed their doors because they have not had enough clients to justify staying open. That is not because our country towns are full of anti-vaxxers. Many people want to be vaccinated but they have not had a chance. My staffer Alice Ryan got vaccinated as soon as she could, although she could not get an appointment until recently. The New South Wales Government put Sydney first and the regions last when it came to the vaccine rollout. The Liberals and The Nationals took 40,000 Pfizer vaccines away from regional areas and gave them to year 12 students in Sydney. Alice is not fully vaccinated because she has not had the chance to be. She has done the right thing, but the New South Wales Government is punishing her. She cannot go to a cafe and she cannot see her friends. Thousands of others are in the same boat.

The fact that the Government took vaccines away from our State's most Indigenous-populated health district, the Far West Local Health District, to give them to Sydney is a national disgrace. A Far West resident received this text message from their local vaccination clinic back on 29 July: "We tried calling but could not get through. The COVID vaccination bookings on 3 August have been rescheduled, due to Pfizer vaccines being redirected to Sydney. Your appointment for 3 August will be rescheduled in due course. Apologies for the inconvenience." That is the same region where COVID-19 is now spiking and spreading into our Indigenous communities. Why on earth did the Government fail to prioritise vaccinations for our First Nations people?

The Government has inflicted a double whammy on regional New South Wales. It has failed to protect our vulnerable residents from COVID outbreaks and it has managed to inflict unnecessary damage on regional economies. A more sensible approach would be to restrict travel from Sydney until high vaccination levels have been reached, and leave our businesses and residents alone. We would be happy with that. The Premier would know that if he bothered to talk to us. I urge the new Premier to please visit our region and speak to us before making new rules that change our lives.

#### **WOMEN AND SURF LIFESAVING**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (19:31):** The beach is an important part of our lifestyle in the Sutherland shire and would not be possible without the outstanding surf lifesavers who make it safe for our community to enjoy. Today I pay tribute to the incredible contribution that women have made locally to surf lifesaving over 40 years. Firstly, I acknowledge the wonderful women of Wanda Surf Life Saving Club. On 4 May 1980 a special motion was moved to allow women into the Wanda club. However, Wanda's history of female participation goes back well before 1980 to what the club calls its "tin shed days". The wives and girlfriends of the founding members formed the first ladies committee. Whilst they were not allowed to patrol the beach, they were dedicated to helping the Wanda club thrive.

In the lead-up to 1980, the Wanda women continued to fight for their place on the sand. During the 1976-77 season they helped establish the Wanda Mermaids and Nipperettes. Unlike the boys, who went on to do their qualifying certificate at age 13 and become patrolling members, the girls were not given this opportunity. However, their important presence laid the foundation for future women to thrive. Interestingly, the early days of surf lifesaving competitions for women saw them lining up against men. Whilst this never stopped the women from dominating at their sport, Wanda eventually offered separate events for females. Today, Wanda's Australian champion wall is lined with photos of outstanding Wanda women. It would be remiss of me not to recognise Anita Pryke, who truly captures the determination of Wanda women. When Anita first joined Wanda, she was not allowed in the clubhouse. She has since become Wanda's first female president and life member; she is an inspiration for young women in the surf lifesaving community.

I now turn to the deep history of incredible women at Elouera Surf Life Saving Club. Elouera was established in 1967 and so was the Ladies Auxiliary later that year. With Elouera in its infancy, the neighbouring, well-established ladies auxiliaries readily embraced the Elouera women. The ladies auxiliary conducted many social functions to raise funds for both the senior and junior sections of Elouera club and supported members completing their bronze medallion exams. The ladies also represented Elouera in the local swimming carnivals with great success and even held the trophy for a number of years. Whilst the ladies auxiliary disbanded in the early eighties, the meaningful contribution women bring to Elouera has only grown since.

I take the opportunity to acknowledge one of the wonderful women from Elouera who is instrumental to the club—Robyn Allan. Robyn began her service as a surf sports official in 1982 and has volunteered in numerous capacities since. Last year she was awarded the Surf Life Saving Sydney award for surf sports official of the year. Most recently, Robyn was awarded the prestigious President's Medal for her outstanding service to our community over decades. I thank Robyn for her contribution to our community and extend my best wishes for the future.

Finally, I recognise the amazing women from Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. On 1 July 1980 Surf Life Saving Australia permitted women to qualify for the Bronze Medallion, and by 1981 Cronulla passed a motion to grant full membership to any female who applied to the club. That December, nine women from the club obtained their Bronze Medallion and became the first in a long lineage of incredible Cronulla women to achieve the honour. Cronulla has a proud tradition of competition. By 1983 two women from Cronulla became Australian champions when they won bronze in the cadet surf teams. When Surf Life Saving Australia introduced a number of individual female events at the Australian championships in 1985—including the open women's surf race, open women's Malibu board race and open women's beach sprint—it was Cronulla who won the first ever Australian women's open surf race championship. Prior to that, women could only compete by entering against the men. Importantly, age-group-specific events for women were not introduced until 1992.

Cronulla is a close-knit community that continues to support its girls today. The club recently launched a Youth and Women's Mentoring Program where mentors and mentees work together to encourage young women into leadership roles within the club. Initiatives such as these are driven by the leaders on the club's committee, and I commend the incredible women from Cronulla's committee, including Emma Larssen, Suzanne Storrie, Carole Larssen, Nina Tetzlaff and Wendy Ward. Whilst it is impossible to capture 40 amazing years of women in surf lifesaving in such limited time, I am pleased to have highlighted some of the important history from Wanda Surf Life Saving Club, Elouera Surf Life Saving Club and Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. The contribution of women over the years to surf lifesaving has been so important to our community, and I thank these incredible clubs for sharing this information with me.

### COVID-19 AND BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:36):** Via video link: The latest lockdown has been a long old haul—months of restrictions, all of us nervously watching daily case numbers and feeling despair for those who have lost loved ones. Whilst I know many of us are breathing a sigh of relief that restrictions are easing, for some of us there is trepidation mixed with elation. We contemplate the days and weeks ahead and hope that things do not escalate uncontrollably again. Time will tell. Something like a global pandemic rocks the foundations for us all. Life as we knew it was ever changed. Things we took for granted were no longer available or accessible in lockdown; our vulnerability was exposed. I am well aware that I am one of the lucky ones. To be in lockdown in the beautiful Blue Mountains is far from a terrible fate. If it ever became too much, I had, and have, the choice to step outside into some of the most beautiful wilderness that this planet has to offer.

I live in a tight-knit community where we really do take care of each other. I guess we have all had some time to reflect on the events of the past 18 months—what has worked and what has not, what we have done well and where we can do better. We have seen people pull together, displaying such kindness towards others and, unfortunately, we have seen the opposite as well. I will use the time to share a few reflections, primarily based around my own observations as the member for Blue Mountains. I start by saying how proud I am of my community. I truly believe people in the Blue Mountains electorate have stoically faced the challenge of the pandemic, of the floods and of the fires. Some have found it easier than others but, on the whole, our community has shown an impressive strength to emerge from this by no means unscathed but with a determination not to be beaten.

There are so many people and workers across different sections to acknowledge. Time does not allow this, so I will name a few. I sing the praises of the Blue Mountains small business community. Many in this sector have done it tough and the devastating reality is that some may not survive, unable to weather the prolonged challenges of bushfires, floods and COVID. We have a local economy that is largely arts-, hospitality- and tourism-based—three of the sectors hit hardest by the Black Summer fires and the lockdowns. Some of them waited patiently for painfully long periods for government support that was promised and not delivered, or it was delivered so late that it did not end up providing the lifeline that they needed. Despite the New South Wales Government's insistence on labelling the Blue Mountains as part of Greater Sydney, we are not. We are mountains folk; once you cross the river and head up the hill, we are not Sydney. When a business shuts down in our local community it is noticed, and the loss is deeply felt. We have a unique topography, a string of villages in the midst of a world-heritage-listed national park. We are surrounded by valleys, cliffs and wilderness, and access to many services resemble that of the regions.

I use this time to also sing the praises of our teachers, school support and administrative staff. Each and every one of them deserves our deepest thanks. They have adapted to the changes brought about by the pandemic with such competence and compassion for our students, remotely and on site. They have been there to support students and their parents and to guide them, unfailingly. Today I recognise the great NSW Teachers Federation and note the significance of the More Than Thanks campaign, which observes that these days teachers do more than ever. Teachers work 55 hours a week or more and have to deal with student needs and constant curriculum changes, and teachers' salaries have not kept pace; in fact, they have fallen way behind other professions. One in

eight teachers now leaves the profession within six years because of the pay and workload pressures. There are 1,000 full-time teaching positions unfilled in New South Wales. Without great teachers, our kids do not get a great education.

No speech reflecting on the pandemic can be made in good faith without mentioning the brilliance of our healthcare workers in hospitals, health centres, doctors' surgeries and ambulances. I take a quick moment to thank them for the endless hours of work, the physical and emotional commitment, the sadness, the exhaustion and the frustration at having to stand up again and again and demand to be listened to. I say here and now that our community is eternally grateful. I have fought for many things over lockdown, repeatedly. I have asked for a vaccination hub for my community, which was ignored. I have asked for the then Treasurer to meet with owners of Blue Mountains small businesses impacted by the lockdown—that was ignored. My team and I have made inquiry after inquiry on behalf of our constituents. [*Time expired.*]

### COVID-19 AND ORANGE ELECTORATE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (19:42):** Via video link: I speak in recognition of the fantastic communities across my electorate of Orange. The COVID-19 health order restrictions imposed upon them have had social, financial, economic and psychological impacts, which cannot be overstated. Many lives and livelihoods, abruptly and unexpectedly, changed course and, in some cases, there are enduring ramifications. Businesses sustained financial blows, which some may never recover from. But, in spite of this, the stoicism displayed by the business community has been remarkable and exemplifies the fortitude of country folk who live in the electorate and across the broader rural and regional areas of the State. I am proud of the resilience demonstrated by the people across the communities of the Orange electorate. The health orders constantly changed and were often confusing, which added complexity to the lives of my constituents who were constantly adapting to the regulatory instability. The communities unified, broadly demonstrating patience and cooperation in spite of the chaotic and logistically spasmodic COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

The numbers speak for themselves. As of this past Monday, the vaccination rates of each of the four local government areas [LGAs] in the Orange electorate were as follows: Cabonne LGA, first dose 91.5 per cent and second dose 75.1 per cent; Forbes LGA, first dose 91.8 per cent and second dose 74.2 per cent; Orange LGA, first dose an astonishingly high 95 per cent and second dose 79.4 per cent; and Parkes LGA, first dose 91.5 per cent and second dose 72.7 per cent. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of people in the communities across the Orange electorate have pulled their weight in the State's proactive health response to the pandemic. I commend all those across the electorate who have come forward, and continue to come forward, for vaccination. I will add that I realise there are people who for whatever reason have chosen not to be vaccinated.

I have gone on record as promoting freedom of choice regarding the COVID-19 vaccination, as it is an individual's democratic right to exercise. I respect the decisions of those who have chosen not to be vaccinated. Having said that, I have supported the vaccination program and I am fully vaccinated. I recognise those who worked tirelessly on the healthcare front line and those who worked in the background to support them in a difficult time. There are countless others who have worked day and night to keep our lights on and to keep food on the supermarket shelves and essentials available for us during the stay-at-home orders. I thank all of them for supporting and delivering essential services for the ongoing function of our communities during this challenging period.

I thank the good people of my electorate: the people who live in Alectown, Amaroo, Baldry, Bedgerabong, Belgravia, Bocabra, Bogan Gate, Boomey, Boree, Borenore, Bowan Park, Bruie Plains, Bumberry, Byng, Cadia, Canobolas, Canowindra, Cargo, Clergate, Clifton Grove, Cookamidgera, Cooks Myalls, Corinella, Cudal, Cumnock, Daroobalgie, Derriwong, Emu Swamp, Eugowra, Eurimbla, Forbes, Forest Reefs, Four Mile Creek, Garema, Garra, Gooloogong, Goonumbla, Gowan, Gumble, Gunning Gap, Gunningbland, Guyong, Huntley, Jemalong, Kangarooobie, Kerrs Creek, Lake Cowal, Larras Lee, Lewis Ponds, Lidster, Lower Lewis Ponds, Lucknow, Mandagery, Manildra, March, Millthorpe, Molong, Moorbel, Mulguthrie, Mullion Creek, Mulyandry, Murga, Nashdale, Nelungaloo, Nyrang Creek, Obley, Ooma, Ootha, Ophir, Orange, Parkes, Paytens Bridge, Peak Hill, Shadforth, Spring Creek, Spring Hill, Spring Terrace, Springside, Summer Hill Creek, Tichborne, Toogong, Trewilga, Trundle, Tullamore, Vittoria, Waldegrave, Warroo, Winderera, Wirrinya, Yarrabandai, Yeoval and, finally, Yullundry.

The positivity of our communities in the face of adversity is exemplified by a 12-year-old girl from Orange. Madi Gwynne, a student of Orange Public School, was isolated from her friends and homeschooled, like so many of her peers. She performed random acts of kindness. Madi is a thoughtful young lady who wanted to put a smile on the faces of those in her community who were enduring isolation and the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdown. Madi decided to pick flowers, which she randomly delivered to the front doors of homes across Orange while out on her daily walks for exercise. Madi's floral gifts and personalised notes soon had people talking around

town and her identity was eventually discovered. Madi did not do this for recognition; she was just a thoughtful individual wanting to bring some happiness to people in her community. It is heartening to see such considerate and selfless acts of kindness from such a young person. It gives me hope for the future of our town and our country. Madi has shown what our community is made of—and what I am proud of. Thank you to all in the communities of the Orange electorate.

### INTERNATIONAL PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:48):** Via video link: The month of October is earmarked as International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. Every year around 110,000 Australian women have a miscarriage or early pregnancy loss. With October marking International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, hundreds of Australian parents are sharing what is hurting them right now: silence. October is a time for Australia to break the silence and acknowledge the heartbreak happening too often right now. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month is all about providing recognition for the hundreds of thousands of Australians who suffer in silence every year when they are experiencing what is often the worst moment of their life.

One of the most difficult aspects of early pregnancy loss to cope with is how invisible it feels. It is also made more complex as there are very few memories of the pregnancy to treasure. Often others do not understand the enormity of what a grieving parent is going through. However, the month of October is the time to acknowledge that this loss is real. The grief experienced for the little life that was imagined and planned for is justified, as is the grief for the sense that a life once imagined with this child will never happen. Kelly from New South Wales, whose daughter Leila was stillborn in September 2020, has described the pain of being unable to communicate and share her experience. She states:

Countless times, things were said to us that discouraged us from speaking about our loss. Things like, 'Oh well, you'll be able to have another one', and 'I guess it was good that she was so small and you weren't further along.' Knowing how to approach people who have lost a baby is such an important thing, and we as a community need to know how to respond to loss in an appropriate way.

In Australia the statistics are quite eye-opening. If you are pregnant there is a one in four chance that your baby will die before they are born. Some one in three Australian women will have had a miscarriage in their lifetime. Australian women are more likely to experience a miscarriage than to experience breast cancer. This year in Australia around 2,000 babies will be stillborn and another 850 will die shortly after birth. That means roughly one out of every 120 babies born will never live past their first month. Seven babies die in Australia every day and stillbirth is 10 times more common than SIDS. More babies die from SIDS and newborn death than people die from road accidents, yet stillbirths and miscarriages are rarely discussed in our society. The death of a baby also means the death of hopes, dreams and a future lifetime with that child.

Society and governments have taken action to chip away at the stigma around these difficult and painful personal situations of loss and grief. All States and Territories now offer a formal certificate of recognition of early pregnancy loss. There are numerous social media groups, not-for-profit groups and ambassadors who speak out about their journey to continue to break down the boundaries and silence. But there is still more to be done. I say to members that the October International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month is an opportunity, as community leaders, to raise awareness if they or someone they care about has lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth, SIDS or any other cause at any point during pregnancy or infancy.

A number of support and research organisations have been established to support women and their families during these times. They include Red Nose Australia, The Pink Elephants Support Network, Miscarriage Information Support Service Inc., Stillbirth Foundation Australia, and Bears of Hope. Recently I spoke with Sam Payne, the founder of The Pink Elephants Support Network. It is an NGO set up in 2016 to support parents and their families through early pregnancy loss. It completed research in Australia that found 74 per cent of women who suffered a miscarriage reported feeling very unsupported, and there is evidence that miscarriage can induce an intense period of emotional distress. If left unsupported, this can lead to heightened symptoms of clinically significant anxiety and depression.

Pink Elephants has been working with governments around Australia to raise awareness of miscarriage. With its extensive evidence and research, it supported the recent amendment of New South Wales public service policy to bring in miscarriage leave for women in the public sector. This year Sam Payne worked closely with Federal Government Ministers in a successful campaign to create an amendment to the Fair Work Act 2009 to include miscarriage under the compassionate and bereavement leave entitlements for all Australians. During October I will acknowledge the loss of these desired and loved children. As a society, we mourn for the parents and families living with this loss. As a wider community, we also mourn the lost joy of witnessing and knowing these children.

**TRIBUTE TO CLIFF MARSH****TRIBUTE TO KEN MURRAY****TRIBUTE TO MICK ELLERCAMP**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:53):** I honour the lives of three great local champions of the Swansea electorate who we have lost in the past few months. They are Cliff Marsh, Ken Murray and Mick Ellercamp. Firstly, I will address the legacy of Cliff Marsh. I know the Marsh family and the impact that Cliff has had on all their lives. Cliff left a lasting impression not only on his family but also on the broader Hunter community. During his 84 years Cliff had long associations with both the Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club and Hunter Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Mr Marsh was a director of the helicopter service from 1991 to 2017 and served as chairman from 1992. In 2017 Cliffy was named the service's very first patron. During his time with the service, he played a crucial role in helping to secure government funding to support the important role the service plays in our community.

Cliff also had a long tenure with the Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club. He served as club captain from 1962 to 1968 and as president from 1969 to 1974. He was awarded the Order of Australia medal for his services to lifesaving. The loss of Cliffy will be felt by the entire Hunter community. His years of community service helped to make the Hunter a better place to live. In the past few months we lost not only Cliffy but also Ken Murray, a legend of the surfboat. Ken compiled a phenomenal sporting career with both Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club and Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Ken's sporting achievements made him one of the best athletes of his generation. During his surfboat career he won a staggering 46 Hunter branch gold medals; 10 New South Wales State titles, four silver and nine bronze; nine Australian gold medals, six silver and six bronze; and one world championship gold.

If that was not enough, Ken also contested 31 Australian championship finals. Ken was a member of the Caves Beach senior surfboat crew, which won the New South Wales State title four years in a row, from 1961 to 1964—a feat that has never been repeated. For his sporting achievements Ken was awarded life membership of Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club, the Hunter Branch Association, Surf Life Saving NSW and Surf Life Saving Australia, along with being inducted into the Australian hall of fame, the NSW Sports Hall of Champions, the Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame, and the Australian Surf Rowers League [ASRL] Hall of Fame. Ken's passing is a great loss for our community.

Our community also lost another great: Mick Ellercamp, a legend of Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Mick joined Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club in 1948 and held numerous positions within the club, including serving as president from 1971 to 1972 along with two stints as treasurer from 1962 to 1968 and 1974 to 1975. He was a member of the legendary Caves Beach senior surfboat crew alongside Ken Murray. During the 1962-63 season Mick and the team secured a clean sweep of the Newcastle branch, New South Wales, interstate and Australian titles. The success of the crew was acknowledged when they were named the Hunter Boat Crew of the Century in 2008. For his sporting achievements and services to surf lifesaving Mick was awarded life membership to Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club, the Hunter branch association and Surf Life Saving NSW. He was also inducted into the Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame in 1996 and the ASRL Hall of Fame. The loss of Mick will be felt throughout our whole community.

I thank these great men, Cliff Marsh, Ken Murray and Mick Ellercamp, for their dedication to our community. My thoughts are with their family and friends. Sadly, we were unable to celebrate their lives and the contribution they made to our local community but, knowing those surf clubs, there is no doubt that there will be a beer at the end of it. Mr Temporary Speaker, I know that you knew Cliff Marsh very well; I will make sure you get an invitation, too. May they all rest in peace.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** With the indulgence of the House, I pay my respects to Ken Murray, Mick Ellercamp and particularly my long-time friend Cliff Marsh, whom I would call maybe twice a year—not enough. I note that he never really recovered from the loss of his wife, Leoni. He was an amazing man and a great advocate for the community, including through his love of the surf and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. I thank the member for Swansea for bringing him to the attention of the House.

**MID NORTH COAST BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:58):** I commend the member for Swansea for bringing a very important private member's statement to the House about three surf lifesavers. I take this opportunity to congratulate the 2021 Mid North Coast Business Awards winners, but in doing so I also acknowledge all businesses across the Port Macquarie electorate. To say that this has been a difficult and challenging time for local businesses is nothing short of an understatement. In 2019 mid North Coast communities were severely impacted by the bushfires. Then in March this year the region experienced significant flooding, which again had devastating

consequences for local businesses. Sadly, the flood event left its mark across so many communities in the electorate, with properties destroyed or damaged as low-lying areas became inundated along the Hastings River, Settlement Point and North Shore, as well as in the villages of North Haven, Laurieton, Dunbogan, Kendall and Telegraph Point.

Over the past 18 months, however, the impact of COVID-19 on our local businesses has been indescribable. For a number of them, the challenges of the pandemic have been simply overwhelming. As always, the local community stepped up as best they could as businesses, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors, were forced to switch to new modes of operating, including a focus on takeaway and click-and-collect, in order to survive the restrictions enforced through public health orders. As the business community pivoted to adapt, so too did Business NSW. Local businesses were recognised through an online gala event for the 2021 Business Awards. I commend and congratulate Kellon Beard, the Business NSW regional manager, and the mid North Coast team of Peter Bastian, Maree McEntyre and Jill Follington on their efforts in hosting the awards event and for the ongoing support they provide to our business community.

Mr Beard highlighted the importance of the Business Awards, which recognise growth and entrepreneurship and the opportunity to celebrate success and initiative. Local award recipients included Port Macquarie Performing Arts, the Excellence in Small Business category winner; I congratulate Stacey Morgan and her team for another outstanding year. Whalebone Wharf in Port Macquarie—a local institution that is renowned for serving up the most incredible culinary delights, focusing on the freshest of seafood—was the winner of the Excellence in Business category. I commend Nathan and the team for their well-deserved recognition. The Outstanding Young Business Leader award was presented to Guy Terkelsen from Hastings Physio and Health, Port Macquarie. I congratulate Guy.

The Outstanding Local Chamber award was presented to the Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce. I extend my congratulations to President Michael Mowle, Executive Officer Mark Wilson and all of the board members. The support provided by local business chambers has been critical during these challenging times, and we all look forward to joining them again at regular face-to-face events in the months ahead. Award ceremonies such as these, whether online or face to face, do not happen without the generosity of sponsors. On behalf of the business community I extend sincerest thanks to the NRMA, the primary regional sponsor. I also acknowledge and thank the category sponsors for their support of the local businesses community; they themselves have had to endure incredibly challenging times over the past few years. Coastline Credit Union, Cassegrain Wines, MBC Recruitment and Hastings Co-op made the 2021 Business Awards night possible.

I thank those businesses who supported the awards evening with giveaways: Akubra, Cassegrain Wines, Hastings Co-op and Meltique Beef. I express my heartfelt thanks to those businesses that have provided valuable and constructive feedback during the COVID-19 pandemic; at times that feedback resulted in changes to government policy that meant better support for local businesses during these challenging times. I thank Chris Genders of Plaza Newsagency, Skye Petho of Arthouse Industries, Melissa and Dirk Bermingham from Aqua Vitae Day Spa, Alistair Flower from Settlers Inn, Rob Dwyer from the Laurieton United Services Club, Kieren Dell from Majestic Cinemas and Kellon Beard from the NSW Business Chamber. I wish the small businesses across the electorate all the very best for the months ahead. The local chambers of commerce, the NSW Business Chamber and I will continue to do whatever we can to support them as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **TOMAREE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (20:03):** Via video link: First, I acknowledge this special moment with the ability for me to appear virtually tonight. It is the first occasion that someone has spoken in this place, the oldest Parliament in Australia, from the land of the Worimi and the beautiful electorate of Port Stephens that I am so honoured to represent. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I thank my community for the trust they continue to place in me to be their voice in the New South Wales Parliament. Like every community in every State in every nation, COVID-19 has hit Port Stephens hard. Workers have lost jobs, businesses have struggled, special occasions have been missed, heartbreaking choices have been made, families have been forced apart and students have done their best at home online.

With businesses starting to reopen and people seeing loved ones again, finally we are starting to feel a weight lift. In Port Stephens we are focused on recovery, but we are also wary of the impacts of reopening in a community that is largely unscathed by the virus. We are lucky in so many ways because we have not seen the large numbers we have seen elsewhere. We are wary because we have a vulnerable community and, to be frank, we do not feel equipped if the virus takes hold. Today I was relieved to see that Port Stephens has reached the 70 per cent double vaccination rate, and 95 per cent of people have had their first dose. It is an incredible achievement and shows that our community has been working well with health professionals to give ourselves

the best protection going forward. But we know that residents—young children and people with disabilities—will remain at risk as the pandemic roller-coaster rolls on.

Our concerns would be lessened if we were confident that our health systems and services had the capacity to respond to a local health crisis, but that is far from the case. In Port Stephens it is hard to see a GP, and everyone knew well before COVID came to town that our hospital is not able to meet the health needs of our community. Incredible local nurses, paramedics, hospital staff, doctors and their staff, and pharmacists and their staff were working around the clock before as well as during the pandemic to support our community. On behalf our community, I share our immense gratitude to all of our health professionals who have been incredible throughout all of this. But they are exhausted. They cannot keep going at this pace and need more support.

The Government has been missing in action for years. Today I put clearly on record our community's frustration and despair at the underfunded and inadequately resourced Tomaree Community Hospital. It is the only hospital in Port Stephens, yet often we do not have a doctor on site. People seeking emergency treatment can wait for hours [inaudible] before being seen. Patients are fed up and I am fed up. The hospital services the entire Tomaree region, including the tens of thousands of tourists and visitors. The small number of hardworking nurses and staff who run the hospital deserve more support from this Government. We need more nurses and more staff. At the very least we deserve a doctor on site 24/7, but we deserve more than that. For years I have been fighting for an expansion of health services at Tomaree hospital.

Whilst our hospital looks like it has had a makeover, the reality is that it has not provided any more hospital beds or staff. The makeover did not add any of the additional services we need, such as rehabilitation services, renal dialysis, acute mental health services and seven-day access to ultrasonic X-rays on site. Those services would be life-changing and life-saving if they were provided where and when they are needed instead of forcing people to travel over an hour for basic health care or, worse still, emergency care. I took the matter of expansion of services to the last election, but sadly this Government was returned and we have not seen a cent spent since.

Now it is time for change. Time and again I have pleaded for more resources for our hospital from this Government but it has not listened. That does not mean I will give up; it means I call for the best backup I know. That is why am asking my community to back me and join the campaign to send a strong message to this Government that we need more doctors, nurses and paramedics. I encourage everyone to sign my online petition to add their voices to this campaign, which I will share on my social media soon. As the COVID roller-coaster ride continues, let us travel safely in Port Stephens.

### COVID-19 AND EAST HILLS ELECTORATE

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (20:09):** I pay tribute to the many organisations and volunteers who have devoted large amounts of their time to help others in need throughout the recent lockdown, including faith and sporting groups, local organisations, school communities, and our clubs and small businesses. I took part in several initiatives over the past 15 weeks to assist local groups with help on the ground. Sir Joseph Banks High School in the East Hills electorate had groceries donated, which I assisted in delivering to the school to be redistributed to the families of some of their students. I thank and acknowledge Mohammad Zaman and Sazeda Akhter, who, in conjunction with the Bangladeshi community in Lakemba, collected and distributed groceries to those in need. I saw firsthand the work that was undertaken, and along with councillors George Zakhia and Philip Madirazza we loaded many bags of groceries into a Maronites on Mission van to be delivered to families.

Robert Ayoub and the team at the Trinity Christian Church have been tirelessly distributing bags of groceries to anyone in need on Sundays at the Padstow Congregational Church. I joined them several times over the past three months, with police from Bankstown station and Councillor George Zakhia and his wife, Mireille, to help load loaves of bread, milk, eggs and groceries into people's arms and cars, with many donations coming from the local community. I joined representatives John Khoury and Aaron Warburton of the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs—go the doggies!—Canterbury League Club staff, the outstanding local program the Community Care Kitchen and councillors George Zakhia and Philip Madirazza in preparing and distributing meals. With support from local businesses, Community Care Kitchen is delivering fresh meals to over 600 families each week, with Canterbury League Club chefs providing over 200 of those meals as part of the program. I also acknowledge former Bulldogs star Hazem El Masri, who is the program ambassador and coordinates the delivery of the meals.

It has been a tough time for our students and families navigating homeschooling and working from home and, for some of our essential workers, having to manage both. Along with many other students in New South Wales, my eldest daughter, who is undertaking the HSC, saw her exam dates moved, her end of year rites of passage as a year 12 student changed and her motivation for her trial HSC exams disappear. The only time my youngest daughter saw another person other than her family was on a Zoom class for school. To remedy that

I ensured we went for a bushwalk within the five-kilometre radius of our home for one hour every weekend. This caused me to rediscover some of the areas from my youth, and I enjoyed walking down memory lane with my daughter on the weekends. It was one of the few positives of the past 106 days.

I thank our community's fantastic efforts in rolling up their sleeves to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. I pushed hard for a vaccination walk-in centre to be established at Bankstown Sports Club to service the CALD communities and the greater community of Bankstown and East Hills. Close to 12,000 AstraZeneca shots were delivered there. The emergence of vaccination hubs in local communities, such as the pop-up clinic established at St Charbel's College school hall, have been vital in the rollout of vaccines and for seeing the end of stay-at-home orders and lockdowns. Belmore Sports Ground, under the care of Dr Jamal Rifi, has been utilised as a drive-through vaccination hub. Some parents with young children had difficulties getting vaccinated. This simple and safe process of not getting out of your car is a great initiative because children can be in the car whilst their parents are getting vaccinated.

On Monday I attended the Lebanese Muslim Association clinic in Lakemba with multiculturalism Minister Natalie Ward, the member for Lakemba, Councillor George Zakhia and former President of the Legislative Council John Ajaka. I pay tribute to general manager Khaled Alameddine, Sheik Yahya Safi, vaccine hub project manager Ahmed Malas, Sydney Local Health District chief executive Dr Teresa Anderson, and all the vital health staff, translators and other workers who have administered close to 10,000 doses at that site. As we near the 80 per cent double dose mark, it is a relief for businesses to finally be able to clear away the cobwebs from their doors and dust off their COVID-safe plans to reopen and look forward to a summer of prosperity and hope. I thank the local businesses in my community who have hung in there, particularly in our small shopping villages. They are the heart of our community and we have missed you.

I thank Lisa Lovehill from Service NSW at Revesby, who has been amazing, along with the rest of the Service NSW team. I also thank Ellie Stamatelatos in the health Minister's office, who honestly has not stopped and deserves a well-earned rest in the coming weeks. Most importantly, I sincerely thank my staff: Jennifer Mehanna, Ruth Le Bas, Matthew Connor and William Derederenalagi, who the people of East Hills are so blessed to have servicing their needs. They answered hundreds of calls and emails and I cannot thank them enough for their dedication.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I acknowledge the dedicated work of the staff of the member for East Hills. All our electorate office staff have lifted way beyond what they should have to. It has been amazing. I thank the member for East Hills.

#### **COVID-19 AND WESTERN SYDNEY**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:14):** We went into the pandemic and lockdown with Premier Berejiklian and we have emerged from the hibernation with new Premier Perrottet. Whilst the Government loves taking credit for the vaccination rates as we come out of the lockdown, the true credit really goes to the people of New South Wales. Government seems to have been overwhelmed with the response of the vaccination take-up across western Sydney. The answer is simple: Health orders essentially forced people in local government areas in lockdown to get the vaccine to keep their jobs and their livelihoods. They therefore took their whole family to get vaccinated. Despite the member for Mulgoa stoking the flames of the anti-vaccination message, people looking around their communities saw thousands upon thousands of COVID cases around them and the death toll rising, so they went for vaccinations.

The tale of two cities can be no starker than in Blacktown. In July, Blacktown city had over 7 per cent of the Greater Sydney population but only 5 per cent of the vaccination centres. And the Liberals talk about equality of resources. I appreciate the strong advocacy of Mayor Tony Bleasdale and the offer of council sites for vaccination centres, and of our local Federal members and the State members representing the electorates of Prospect, Mt Druitt and Londonderry as we worked together to lobby Western Sydney Local Health District for a fair share and equitable access to vaccination resources.

In the end, over 116 days of lockdown, on about 18 occasions vaccination hubs were opened in various locations. The Western Sydney Local Health District CEO was probably not happy to deliver any additional vaccines in the city of Blacktown, preferring people to travel many hours to go to mass vaccination hubs at Homebush or Penrith. More obstacles were placed before us as community volunteers had to book in people and get their names, Medicare details, contact details and other personal details. Was any other community in New South Wales required to get all this personal information before vaccines were administered? Most of them were just pop-in centres. Regardless, the community rallied and we got the details.

I thank Joanne Lee, manager of Blacktown PCYC; Pastor Mark Tough from Lalor Park Anglican Church; Morgan Stewart and Shelley Fletcher from Blacktown Workers Club; Imam Kauser from the Ahmadiyya Muslim

Association; and all their teams for working hard to find so many people and book them in and provide the support they needed. We also had help from many community leaders, including Mayor Chagai, founder of Savannah Pride; Patrick Dako; Elfa Moraitakis and her team at SydWest Multicultural Services; Haylene "Maria" Carr; Angela Van Dyke and Sue Lawrence from Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre and Community Aid Services; and Jhan Leach from Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre.

Bradley Scott from Hands and Feet Community and Disability Services, located in Kings Park in Blacktown city, which is a mini food bank that deliver tens of thousands of hampers and meals to people across New South Wales, is particularly happy because he takes delivery of a new Hyundai truck tomorrow, with the support of Stewards Foundation. John Robertson and his team at Foodbank NSW also delivered tens of thousands of hampers to charities to support local communities. Many other organisations, such as Blacktown City Lions Club, coordinated by Rebel and Rachael Hanlon, delivered many hampers and support packages to vulnerable communities and Blacktown & Mt Druitt Hospital health workers. Durga Owen helped coordinate Community Care, which delivered food and hygiene products to vulnerable communities and foreign students.

Despite the obstacles confronted by the Western Sydney Local Area Health District CEO, I say a big thank you to all the health staff who participated at the clinics, and all the nurses, doctors and health support workers at Blacktown & Mt Druitt Hospital, who, under difficult conditions, delivered great outcomes for our community. My appreciation also goes to the police and Blacktown City Council for their efforts in assisting to make life under lockdown slightly more bearable. I also thank my electoral staff, who have worked under difficult circumstances trying to resolve difficult issues for people in the many hundreds of inquiries that we received. I have mentioned only some people; due to time limitations I cannot mention everyone. I thank one and all for all their care and support. It is you, the community, that banded together and delivered us from the worst of this pandemic.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:19):** I put on record a correction to the contribution from the member for Blacktown. As the member for Terrigal, I can confirm that anyone who wanted to attend one of the drop-in vaccination centres on the Central Coast had to produce on their mobile phone or by other means some photographic ID and their Medicare card to provide their identification. That happened at walk-in vaccination centres at both Gosford and Wyong, which were run by the local area health district. If anyone wanted to attend one of those centres they had to bring those forms of ID with them when they came into the centre.

I am very pleased that the member for Blacktown commended and congratulated the frontline staff, who have done an amazing job in his area keeping his community safe and having them vaccinated. So many communities have had a very difficult time through this whole period, including those on the Central Coast and all across New South Wales. I just wanted to put on the record the example of the Central Coast, where if anyone wanted to attend one of the mass vaccination centres—and in our case it was at the two hospitals—they had to provide some ID to receive vaccinations.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** That is completely wrong and misrepresented my key points.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I will not entertain any further debate. That is just the way the system works: The member at the table can comment on a member's contribution. I appreciate everybody's passion about this matter but we have reached the end of private members' statements.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

#### **FIRST NATIONS COVID-19 INNER WEST RESPONSE GROUP**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—**I draw the attention of this house to the incredible work of First Nations COVID-19 Inner West Response Group for their tireless work during the Sydney lockdown and beyond to provide much needed support to those most in need. First Nations Covid-19 Inner West Response Group are a small collective of community volunteers, led by the incredible Coral Levers and Nellie Pollard-Wharton, who delivered food hampers, cooked meals, phones, laptops, and Wi-Fi dongles to First Nations families in isolation, as well as checked in with elders to make sure they were ok. Nellie, Coral and countless Inner West volunteers went above and beyond to ensure that everyone in our community received the support they needed during this very tough time. Special shout out as well to the endlessly kind team at Parliament on King who stepped up to support the group by providing cooked meals for distribution in social housing estates. Ravi and the team of refugee and new migrant chefs provided 100s of much needed meals to those who needed them most. I thank them all for their amazing efforts.

#### **ELAINE FOSTER**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)—**I would like to send birthday wishes to Elaine Foster who in August celebrated her 100th birthday. Elaine, who now lives in

Galston, was a long-term resident of Berowra. Elaine and her late husband Bill along with her brother Neil Davis are well known in the local community. She grew up in Berowra and remembers making the trip into the city for VJ day on August 15th 1945. She has always had a love of horses and as a child rode from Berowra and Pymble, something you would never be able to do today. Her horse Rhana was one of the last in Berowra grazing on the vacant block on Goodwyn Road until 1991. Many in Berowra remember Elaine's beautiful garden and buying her home-grown plants at markets. She now welcomes new members at her retirement village in Galston. Due to COVID the family had to settle for a remote celebration but look forward to one in person when it is safe to do so.

#### **RAY AGOSTINO**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Ray Agostino who stepped down as General Manager of Magpies Waitara in July after over 3 decades at the helm. Ray spent 41 years at Magpies Waitara, with 30 years as General Manager. He worked with 6 Presidents and 28 directors over his time at the club. He has steered the club through ups and downs and most recently forced closures due to COVID. Over this time he has ensured the continued success of Magpies. Magpies Waitara is a loved Hornsby institution. This is due to Ray's work and dedication which has ensured the club is continued to be a popular destination for locals whether it is for events or just to spend a Saturday afternoon. He has overseen two major renovations in 1998 and 2016 along with lots of minor updates along the way. He was named Club Manager of the Year in 2006, with the Club named Most Improved Club in 2000 and Best Theme Bar in 2004. I would like to wish Ray all the best in his retirement and thank you for all you have done to ensure the success of Magpies Waitara.

#### **LUCY BOKULIC OAM**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Lucy Bokulic OAM who recently passed away. I pass my condolences onto her family and friends. Lucy served as president of the management committee for Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services, and began the Global Friendship Group to provide support for migrants in the Manning Valley. She was a foundation member of the Manning Valley U3A from 1999 and was made a Life Member of Manning Valley U3A, the organisation's highest honour. Lucy also was president of the Manning Valley Senior Citizens Association, a member of the Multicultural Network, on the Manning Hospital's Multicultural Access Committee, was on the board of Taree Community College, and a member of the Greater Taree Social Development Committee. Lucy received recognition for her community work with both the state and commonwealth governments. She received a Seniors' Week Award in 2021 for Advancing Learning for Life in the Mid North Coast, and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (OAM) on the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2013. I pass my condolences onto Lucy's family and recognise her outstanding work for the Myall Lakes community.

#### **WINGHAM SPORTING COMPLEX AND WINGHAM TIGERS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise the committee of Wingham Sporting Complex and Wingham Tigers. Significant upgrades have been made to Wingham Sporting Complex with \$511,000 coming from the NSW Nationals in Government's Stronger Country Community Fund. These upgrades which will benefit the community for years to come, would not have been possible without the hard work of the committee. A new scoreboard, grandstand, amenities block and changing rooms will make a huge difference to locals and visitors so I congratulate those who have worked towards getting these works completed.

#### **ROBYN LAURENSEN AND WINGHAM SPINNERS AND WEAVERS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Robyn Laurenson and the members of Wingham Spinners and Weavers. They recently surprised the people of Wingham with 520 crocheted flowers scattered across the CBD in honour of Stillbirth Awareness Week which runs from October 9th to October 16th. I congratulate them for their efforts and for endeavouring to raise money for The Stillbirth Foundation, Bears of Hope, Black dog Institute, and Beyond Blue, while putting a smile on the faces of Wingham residents.

#### **TERRY STANTON**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Terry Stanton, founder of the Manning Homeless Action Group. Terry is excited has created 'the Bed Inn Bus campaign' in order to create a sleep bus for homeless men in Taree. Terry is currently fundraising in order to refurbish the bus which will undoubtedly help many. I would like to thank Terry for his tireless work in pushing this initiative and helping those in the Myall Lakes who are doing it tough.

### WISEBERRY FOUNDATION

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong)**—I congratulate the Wiseberry Foundation for its continued effort to give back to the community since 2014. Darin Butcher who is the Principal for Wiseberry Heritage Group Charmhaven held a fundraiser to raise a house deposit for Central Coast local Bobbi Jo Dillion to purchase an investment property. Bobbi Jo Dillion, was diagnosed shortly after birth with Rett Syndrome, a neurological condition affecting speech, motor and development. There is no cure for her condition which is progressively deteriorating. Wiseberry Heritage Group in conjunction with The Wiseberry Foundation hosted a Race Day back in May 2021 at the Wyong Race Club to fundraise for Bobbi Jo. Through raffles, auctions and ticket sales, \$40,000 was raised. What a great effort and contribution from Wiseberry Foundation and the community. I wish Bobbi Jo Dillion and family, The Wiseberry Foundation further success with their search for Bobbi's new home.

### ALISON CLARK

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong)**—I congratulate Alison Clark for being awarded with The Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching for her innovation shared at school especially during lockdowns. These Awards celebrate exceptional work in NSW Education by Schools students and teachers. Here is what was quoted about Alison upon receiving the award: "Alison Clark has demonstrated qualities of a world class teacher. This is demonstrated through her support of highest level academic achievement by her students, coupled with their appreciation for her commitment to supporting their excellence and growth as learners". Ms Clark's pedagogical practice is a model of excellence. Her practice is student focused, innovative and shared beyond her classroom. This includes sharing of her practice across school, local, state and national levels. Her quality practice prior to COVID-19 and innovative practice during and post "learning from home" is an exemplar of next practice for the teaching profession." Well done Alison Clark on these achievements.

### JAYDEN DELBRIDGE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong)**—Congratulations and well done to local Wadalba Resident, Jayden Delbridge who was recently nominated as a leader for the State Youth Council. There are 12 Leaders for the Youth State Council. Jayden is a Year 11 student at St Peters College, when he was 14 he addressed the Central Coast Council public forum and suggested Council support World Suicide Prevention Day program which resulted in Council producing a suicide report which is done annually stating what it has done in relation to suicide prevention for the year. Jayden also started his own mental health charity for teenagers called Michael's Foundation. Jayden plans to study a Diploma in Community Services and potentially work in the Mental Health field. I wish Jayden all the best in his future endeavours.

### VALE DON SMITH

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Don Smith sadly passed away on 1 July 2021. Don worked for many years at the ABC, including as Head of Workplace Relations, and established the ABC's occupational health and safety unit. He was a stalwart of the Labor party, his commitment solidified on the day of the Dismissal where he was among the crowd gathered on the steps of Old Parliament House. Don was a proud advocate for human rights, public education, young people and the arts, serving for many years on the Board of the Bankstown Youth Development Service. He was President of both the Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and Ashbury Public School P&C. Don was a prolific poet. As "Angry of Ashfield," one of the "Pens of Fury" regularly appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald letters pages, one of his proudest achievements was appearing on the same letters page twice in one day. Don will be dearly missed by his long term partner, Trish Anderson. He was the beloved father of Samantha, Daniel (who sadly passed away in a car accident in 2001), Josh, Shelley, and Chloe, and grandfather to Coral, Maddy, and Dominic. A True Believer to the end - Vale Don Smith.

### ASHBIZ BUSINESS CHAMBER

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—I warmly thank the members of the AshBiz Business Chamber for their leadership and support of the Ashfield, Haberfield and Summer Hill businesses during the COVID-19 lockdown. I was honoured to host a Roundtable with AshBiz members alongside Steve Kamper, Shadow Minister for Small Business and Clr Lucille McKenna, a great opportunity to learn more about the experiences and concerns of local small businesses. It is clear that while local business owners have extraordinary optimism about the future, the past four months of lockdown have been tough, made harder for some by difficulties accessing the Government's small business support. The ingenuity and resilience of local businesses has been on full show during these difficult months and I stand with business owners as they work to reopen in the weeks ahead. I especially acknowledge members of the Haberfield Heritage Village Committee, including Mary Balfonte, Raj Suri and Lucille Scaltrito, for reaching out to my office and for all they are doing to support local Haberfield businesses. I also acknowledge Jo Rechichi, President of AshBiz. I wish all businesses across the inner west the very best as we move towards reopening and again thank AshBiz for their important work.

### INNER WEST TEACHERS - GALLOP INQUIRY

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Once again, COVID-19 has given us all an even greater appreciation for the work of teachers and educators in our schools. While parents have attempted to juggle work, family and home-learning commitments, we have seen up close the expertise, care and diligence of the people who teach them every day. Over the course of the lockdown, I have had the opportunity to speak with many teachers, including a delegation of local teachers and members of the Teachers Federation of NSW to discuss the Gallop Inquiry. They explained the pressures on teachers in NSW, including the ever-increasing demands of reporting, the need for a salary increase, and teacher shortages. I note recent reporting around Department of Education modelling that suggests NSW is set to run out of teachers within the next five years unless we act now. The teachers I met with have also raised the need for additional resources to support students and young people with their mental health, particularly as we return to school following months of home-learning. I sincerely thank the teachers from Inner West schools who met with me and again reiterate my support for teachers and educators across NSW.

### MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—October is Mental Health Month and there has potentially never been a better time to reflect on how we can work together to support mental health in our community. Lifeline reports that record numbers of people have called for assistance during the COVID-19 lockdown, with the community grappling with anxiety, fear, social isolation and a sense of disconnection and hopelessness. Waitlists for counselling and psychological services have continued to grow, with a greater number of people reaching out than ever before. Local organisations in the Summer Hill electorate have been on hand to assist, including HeadSpace Ashfield, Marrickville Community Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Service Camperdown, Concord Centre for Mental Health and Leichhardt Womens' Community Health Service. These organisations not only provide direct face-to-face services for inner west residents, but also raise awareness and to reduce the stigma around mental health in our community. I also acknowledge the extraordinary work of essential and front-line workers in mental health for all they do to support our community 365 days a year, and acknowledge everyone in the community with lived/living experience of mental health.

### NEPALI DIASPORA AROUND AUSTRALIA

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Warm Greetings and Namastey, I would like to send my best wishes to Nepali Diaspora around Australia on their biggest and longest Festival Dashain which is celebrated for 15 days. Each year in NSW there are more than 500,000 people who celebrate this festival. Dashain is also called Vijaya Dashami, and Hindus of Nepal celebrate this festival in the months of Ashwin or Kartik according to the Nepali calendar. Dashain commemorates a great victory of virtue or over sins. Most importantly this is also a festival of reunions, exchange gifts, and blessings. Happy Dashain 2078 B.S.

### CONGRATULATING THE YEAR 12 STUDENTS IN THE CAMDEN ELECTORATE

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Today, I recognise the hard work of the Year 12 students in the Camden Electorate and the whole of NSW for their commitment to their studies during the state wide lockdown. The students have faced the pandemic several times during their senior years of school and their ability to constantly rise to the occasion has shown the resilience and determination of these young adults. I congratulate these students on their efforts during the lockdown and send them my best wishes in their HSC exams next month.

### 9TH ANNUAL SERBIAN FESTIVAL SYDNEY

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Earlier in the year, I had the pleasure to attend the 9th Annual Serbian Festival Sydney and the Serbian Statehood Banquet. It was an honour to experience Serbian culture, tradition and to acknowledge the positive contribution of the Serbian community to not only multiculturalism but to Australia more broadly. I would like to thank Sandra Milisavljevic and Michael Mijatovic the directors of the event, for your invitation and a successful day. I congratulate you on the evening's success and look forward to any more celebrations with you in the future.

### INGE BOLENSKI 100TH BIRTHDAY

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Today, in NSW Parliament I would like to recognise Ms Inge Bolenski who recently celebrated her 100th Birthday on Wednesday, September 29 with a special cake and morning tea. Inge was born in Germany, 1921. Inge met her first husband, Heinz, in Germany, and welcomed her first child before he left for the war and unfortunately was killed in action. She later met her second husband, also named Heinz and had two children before moving to Australia in 1955. Inge later moved to Canley Vale after her Heinz passed away. Inge has always had a passion for art, completing a Diploma of Art in 1984 and a Bachelor

of Arts in 1997. Happy Birthday Inge, you are an incredible inspiration and role model to many with your accomplishments and challenges in life.

#### **LOMANDRA COMMUNITY PANTRY**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—There are so many community groups throughout Campbelltown that make an incredible contribution within our community. It's not fame or recognition that drives the members of these groups, it's the satisfaction in knowing they have made life better others. One of the groups who has served our community so well – particularly over the past four months – is Lomandra Community Pantry. The community pantry started from humble beginnings on the grounds of Lomandra School to now a large warehouse in Leumeah. The team at the pantry provide food and toiletries to residents within the Campbelltown and wider Macarthur community who are in need. That need only increased following the Delta outbreak and subsequent lockdown and restrictions that were placed on Campbelltown. I had the pleasure of once again visiting the pantry recently to thank the volunteers for their hard work and unwavering dedication to the cause. Our community is certainly much better off for having the Lomandra Community Pantry around. Thank you again to the entire team at the pantry for all that you have done and continue to do in an effort to make lives better for those in our close-knit community.

#### **LIFELINE MACARTHUR**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—There have been many organisations and community groups that have really stood up in the past four months. Some have dedicated their days to cooking meals for those in need, while others have provided vital services. One of those organisations is Lifeline Macarthur. The recent lockdown has taken a toll on many people – particularly those in the Campbelltown, the wider Macarthur region and Western and South Western Sydney. The social disconnection that many of us faced really had a negative impact on our mental health. However, the dedicated team at Lifeline Macarthur made sure there was always someone on the other line to listen and help when needed. The staff and volunteers really are some of the most selfless and passionate people that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Their contribution makes an enormous difference to the lives of so many and that should never be forgotten or underestimated. I recently toured the facilities at Smeaton Grange and was able to thank many of those staff and volunteers in person. Once again I would like to extend my gratitude on behalf of the Campbelltown community to everyone at Lifeline Macarthur.

#### **MAREE MCLEOD**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise the efforts of Ms Maree McLeod, a founding member and long-time contributor to Ruby's Cargo in Wentworth, which showcases local products and goods. Ms McLeod was there at the beginning 21 years ago and remains one of eight members of Ruby's Cargo cooperative, supplying crafts for sale, working in the shop and generally managing the business. Ms McLeod's Woolshed Pantry products are well-regarded as excellent examples of traditional recipes that showcase local produce. Ruby's Cargo has become an icon of Wentworth and a hub of the community. Ms McLeod is to be commended on her efforts in founding Ruby's Cargo and congratulated for her unwavering, decades-long dedication.

#### **JORDAN JASNOS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to congratulate Ms Jordan Jasnos of Griffith who was recently selected for the Young Matildas training camp. Ms Jasnos was among 29 other female footballers chosen as the squad begins to prepare for the 2022 AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup. Prior to this, Ms Jasnos had been playing elite football in Sydney as part of the Football NSW Institute Women's side who compete in the Football NSW NPLW competition. Ms Jasnos has a bright future in this sport and I commend her dedication to the game. I encourage her to continue to work hard to achieve her aspirations and look forward to following her career.

#### **DUNERA MUSEUM**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to congratulate the efforts of all involved in managing the Dunera Museum in Hay, which has recorded 45,000 visitors from around the globe. The Museum, opened in 1999, honours Hay's incredible history by educating locals and its many visitors about the town's contribution to the Second World War effort. Dunera Museum is led by a number of committee members who are to be commended for their efforts in ensuring the continuation of historical knowledge locally, nationally and internationally. Their efforts have added to Hay's growing reputation as a tourist destination, and their continuing dedication is to be admired.

### INAUGURAL MARCH FOR LIFE MASS

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I wish to thank Mr Chris Da Silva from the Life, Marriage and Family Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney for the kind invitation to join in with the Most Reverend Anthony Fisher Archbishop of Sydney to celebrate the Inaugural March for Life Mass. The Mass was live streamed from St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney due to lockdown restrictions which unfortunately meant that the Mass could not be held with the congregation in attendance. This, however, did not take away from the solemnity of the service which was conducted with a sense of reverence. The religious service celebrated the Catholic Church's continued determination to build a culture of life that witnesses the inherent dignity and worth of each individual human person. The Mass also coincided with the second anniversary since the passing of the Abortion Law Reform Act 2019 in NSW Parliament. I take this opportunity once again to thank Archbishop Fisher and the team at the Office of Life, Marriage and Family for their work and invitation to the live-streamed mass.

### TURBANS 4 AUSTRALIA

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I would like to commend the efforts of Turbans 4 Australia for their hard work during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown period. Turbans 4 Australia is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2015, always there to lend a helping hand during challenging times. During lockdown, the Fairfield area was visited regularly by this amazing organisation when they delivered hampers to the area for distribution to people who were doing it tough. The Fairfield community is very grateful for the service provided by Turbans 4 Australia during this particularly challenging time for the community and I commend them for their efforts.

### HELPING HANDS NSW SYDNEY

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend the efforts of Mrs Norma Boutoubia and the team at Helping Hands NSW Sydney for their efforts in organising and delivering food hampers to those in need during the recent June 2021 lockdown period. The lockdown placed the Fairfield community under significant strain and this dedicated group of volunteers packed and co-ordinated resources from various donors to make a difference for families and individuals. Helping Hands NSW Sydney has been distributing fresh food hampers locally since November 2020. This is an enormous task for Norma as she has opened up her home to visitors and volunteers in a safe and welcoming way. The volunteers at Helping Hands NSW Sydney weekly deliver fresh food hampers to over two hundred and fifty families locally on top of the hundreds of hampers sent out right across the Sydney Basin. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Norma Boutoubia and Helping Hands NSW Sydney for their work and commitment towards looking after the most vulnerable in the community.

### ASSYRIAN AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—On 20th September 2021, I met with Dr Ben Daood, President of the Australian Assyrian Association and Treasurer Mr Ninus Kanna via a Zoom meeting. It was a pleasure to connect to discuss matters concerning the local community during the 2021 lockdown period. The Assyrian Australian Association were established in 1969 and since that time have supported the settlement of Assyrians in Australia. The organisation was instrumental in the establishment of St Mary's Parish Fairfield, the Nineveh Club, the Assyrian School as well as the Assyrian Resource Centre. Throughout lockdown, the Assyrian Australian Association have been connecting with the community through webinars and zoom meetings as well as through the more traditional means of radio, print media and multicultural television in an effort to keep the community positive and supported throughout this challenging time. I take this opportunity to commend and thank the Assyrian Australian Association for their efforts for the Fairfield community during this time.

### AMITAYUS HOME HOSPICE SERVICE

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the wonderful and inspiring work of Amitayus, a community-based, not-for-profit organisation providing Home Hospice Services in the Byron Shire and surrounds. Through the provision of education and support services, it is Amitayus' mission to support and care for individuals with life-limiting illnesses who wish to be cared for at home. Amitayus supports people to remain empowered and self-determined during this incredibly challenging period in a person's life. Established in 1994 at the height of the AIDS crisis, Amitayus has continued to fill a need in the community. Amitayus is non-sectarian and entirely composed of trained volunteers. It is completely funded by donations from individuals, local businesses and fund-raising activities. Funds are used to run training programs for volunteers, like Last Aid: Caring for the Dying course, which make a huge difference to the lives that Amitayus supports. Volunteers work closely with family, friends and medical support staff, engaging in all manner of tasks to help make end of life as stress-free and manageable as possible. I applaud the integral and indispensable work of Amitayus, and thank them for providing a safe and supported space for people in our community.

### **SURF LIFE SAVING FAR NORTH COAST 2021 AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I congratulate the winners of the Surf Life Saving Far North Coast Branch 2020/21 Awards of Excellence. The branch is made up of ten Surf Life Saving Clubs from Fingal Head in the north to Yamba in the south. The winners from the clubs in the Ballina Electorate include Garry Meredith (Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore) who collected the inaugural Support Operations Member of the Year Award. Garry has been a duty officer in the branch since 2000 and this season completed 490 volunteer patrol hours in various capacities, which equates to about 61 eight-hour days. Other winners from clubs within the electorate were: Samantha Miller (Lennox Head-Alstonville), Coach of the Year; Stephen Perris (Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore), Facilitator of the Year; Joanne Kay (Byron Bay), Masters Athlete of the Year. Club winners were Lennox Head-Alstonville, Education Club of the Year; Lennox Head-Alstonville, Junior Club of the Year. The Community Education Programme of the Year went to the Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore club for its Intro to Surf Life Saving Surf Awareness Program. My compliments – and thanks – to all the winners.

### **AUNTIE DULCIE NICHOLLS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today, with great sadness, I acknowledge the passing of Arakwal elder and matriarch, Dulcie Joan Nicholls, nee Kay, at the age of 91. My sincere condolences go to Auntie Dulcie's family and the broader Arakwal, Bundjalung community. Auntie Dulcie was a proud Bundjalung woman born on Country at Tallow Creek, Byron Bay, on October 21, 1929. She was widely-known and well-loved throughout the Byron Shire community, and was an honoured and respected traditional custodian of Byron Bay, where she lived for most of her life. Auntie Dulcie and her sisters played a key role in having the Byron Bay area recognised as Arakwal country, and specifically in the creation and preservation of the Arakwal National Park – a stunning strip of coastal land enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. The sisters began their Native Title rights claim on behalf of the Arakwal people in 1994 before formal recognition in 2019. Auntie Dulcie was a staunch upholder of her people's culture, giving generously of her time to talk about Aboriginal culture to thousands of people over many decades. Auntie Dulcie's passing marks the passing of a much loved elder, matriarch and powerful woman who will be sorely missed.

### **NORTH COAST TOXIN ACTION GROUP**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the tremendous work being done by the National Toxics Network (NTN) and the North Coast Toxin Action Group in working to control and eliminate toxic chemicals. Both organisations raise awareness about the negative impact of chemicals that harm humans and the planet. In particular, the 'forever chemicals' or old multigenerational toxins like Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB's) and dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT) that continue to cause cancers in the grandchildren of those exposed. The agricultural system, which is still based on using dangerous combinations of pesticides are linked to mental health, physical health problems and neurological diseases. The National Toxics Network played a key role in the early campaigns to stop CSG mining and fracking in the Northern Rivers. I salute the vision of Ballina resident Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, who formed the local North Coast Toxin Action Group. She has worked with and co-chaired the International Pollution Elimination Network, made up of hundreds of environmental health and justice campaigners in more than 100 countries. Dr Lloyd-Smith has also been involved in ocean and water pollution campaigns and continues to challenge the fossil fuel and chemical industries in all countries.

### **MARIE KENNEDY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I congratulate Marie Kennedy who is a constituent of the Goulburn electorate. Ms Kennedy is a Riversdale National Trust volunteer and was recently named the 2021 Southern Inland Senior Volunteer of the Year at a special online ceremony for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are run by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding effort of volunteers working across all sections of communities throughout the state. Marie began volunteering as a tour guide with the National Trust at the historic Riversdale property in Goulburn over five years ago. She has run the property since COVID-19 began, working with tradespeople and Sydney based staff to re-open safely in time for the National Trust's 75th Anniversary open day in February. Marie has been training guides, managing the office, writing the newsletter, and even baking for visitors. I want to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Ms Kennedy of Goulburn.

### **BRENDAN SHANNON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I congratulate Brendan Shannon who is a constituent of the Goulburn electorate. Mr Shannon is a Windellama Rural Fire Service volunteer and was recently named the 2021 Southern Inland Volunteer of the Year at a special online ceremony for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are run by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding effort of volunteers working across all sections of communities throughout the state. Brendan is the

Senior Deputy Captain, Executive Committee member and Community Engagement Officer of the 100 strong Windellama Rural Fire Brigade. Brendan worked on many of the larger fires during 2019 - 2020 fire season, spending almost 3 months of work fighting fires full-time. He was part of the Southern Tablelands strike team that provided flood relief on the mid-North Coast, clearing mud and furniture from over 50 flood damaged homes. In addition Mr Shannon manages the Brigade's communication to residents which includes the Windellama Get Ready Days. I want to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Mr Brendan Shannon of Windellama.

### ROTARY AWARDS

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The COVID-19 pandemic meant that the Wallsend-Maryland Rotary Club Wallsend Business and Community Awards night this year highlighted two years of excellence within the community. The honoured recipients of these awards were:

Business Charity Champion: Lemon Grove, the Colliery Inn

Connecting Communities: Maryland Neighbour Centre, Sugarvalley Neighbour Centre, Cameron Park Community Centre, Survivors R Us Incorporated, Rotary Club of Waratah

Excellence in Community Service: Survivors R Us Incorporated

Outstanding Community Service: Cameron Park Fellowship Church

Business Service to the Community: Transformational Institute, Office of the State Member for Wallsend

Women in Business: Mary Metcalfe, Ann-Maria Martin

Business Role Model of the Year: Kelly Moratidis

Outstanding Business Leader: Yianni Moratidis, Alyn Miranda

Charity Champion: Tim Barley, Roanne Walmsley

Great & Green: Peter Brown

Valiant Volunteer: George Ditz, Cory Lavelle

Community Contribution: Margaret Walker

Lifetime Achievement: Steve Pratt

Service to the Community: Crystal Keelan, Gina Smith, Alan Llewellyn, Phillip Woodman, Robyn Sanderson, Donna Stephen, Kim Lawrence, Sandra Eaves

Excellence in Customer Service: Café Tempest

Excellence in Business Service: Wilson's Pharmacy Wallsend

I would like to recognise each of these individuals and businesses for their continued contribution to making Wallsend a better place.

### STATE OF ORIGIN TOUCH REPRESENTATIVES

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—It doesn't matter what level of football you play, there is nothing better than taking on the Maroons in a State Of Origin battle. COVID-19 had a huge impact on our sport last year and the 2020 Touch Football Australia State of Origin series was postponed. But in June this year, teams from NSW and Queensland took to the fields in Coffs Harbour, across a number of age divisions, in the battle of mate against mate, state against state. Here in the Hunter we are very lucky to have so many talented players representing us. Congratulations to Club President Natalie Little, who was Assistant Coach for the Ladies 40s team. Congratulations also go to Zoe Parish, Kelly Nicholas, Amanda Hollis, Nicole Grose, Michelle Botham and Kellie-Jean Johnston, who were all representatives in the NSW Ladies 40s team. Congratulations to Heemi McGarvey and Geoff Power, who were players in the Mens 60s team and to Joseph Caruso, who was the Manager of the NSW Mens 20s side. NSW were able to win the series against Queensland 9-6 and retain the Origin shield.

### STUDIO C BRIDAL

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The Sassies are awards created by Sassy Celebrants to help recognise and thank the amazing wedding services that make your wedding day magical. The Sassies have been around since 2017 and are a way for the fearless, tireless, passionate wedding people of the Hunter to come together and celebrate their industry. This year, Studio C Bridal from Wallsend was awarded The Sassie for best Fashion Designer. Caitlyn Elliott, owner of Studio C Bridal, started Studio C in 2013 as a textile workspace, producing theatrical costumes and special occasion wear. NIDA trained, with a Bachelor of Dramatic Arts in

Costume, Caitlyn has made for award winning, internationally recognised theatre and film designers, actors and production companies. Along with her theatrical work, she designed and made wedding gowns for Sydney based bridal boutiques. Studio C evolved into Studio C Bridal. Caitlyn moved her studio from Adamstown to Wallsend in 2020. Like many businesses, Studio C has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but I wish Caitlyn well as we move out of lockdown. Congratulations on your Sassy, Caitlyn. We are very lucky to have such an accomplished designer in Wallsend.

#### **WALLSEND TOUCH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION COMPETITION WINNERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Community sport was ravaged by COVID in 2020 with many sports unable to finish their seasons. Thankfully 2021 saw a return to the playing fields for the Wallsend Touch Football Association. After some very cold winter nights, the Grand Finals for the 2021 Autumn Competition were concluded. Congratulations to all the winners and also every single player who participated throughout the first post COVID competition. Special thanks go to night supervisor, Cameron Maxwell, the hard working committee, all the volunteers and the referees, especially Blake Brown and Kurt Grogan, the Night Referee Directors, for keeping them all organised. Congratulations to the following teams who won their division: Mens A/B- Touch the footy , Mens C/D – Gorillas, Mens E - In financial services, Mixed A – RSF, Mixed B – Scorchers, Mixed C - Nuts in jugs, Mixed D - They call me magic, Mixed E - Fresh out of touch , Mixed F - Outa touch, Family comp - All for the kids, Mens A - Off in church, Mens B - Out of shape, Mens C – ATB, Ladies A – Ducks, Ladies B – Baawaas and Ladies C - Young Guns. Well done.

#### **MID NORTH COAST WRITERS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I congratulate the Mid North Coast Writers for celebrating their first birthday following the club's inauguration in October last year. The Mid North Coast Writers are a team of experienced authors, writers and business leaders who offer a wealth of knowledge and expertise to those interested in improving their creative writing skills. Leading the team is President Wendy Haynes, an award winning author who wrote novels titled; Hayden's Bedtime, Saving Hollow Woods and prize winning Going Knowhere. Since stay-at-home orders were introduced the committee have run live and interactive workshops via zoom, designed to help writers build on their knowledge and writing skills. To celebrate their birthday the organisation staged a "Bubble & Banter" event for members on 1 October involving a quiz, story circle and a Bubble and Banter, with the lucky winner gaining free membership. A Poetry and Pinot event is scheduled for the 16th October that offers an opportunity for people to recite or perform their poetry in front of a live online audience. I congratulate Wendy Haynes, Lorraine Penn, Jackie Mohr, Lyndall Ward, Alex Gray and Emma Gaulton for coordinating the celebrations and introducing writing and culture to our region.

#### **PETER & SHARRON LAMBERT**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I applaud the volunteer efforts of Peter and Sharron Lambert from the beautiful coastal town of Harrington for dedicating their spare time and energy to the local Community Transport team and paper run. Peter and Sharron moved up from Sydney 14 years ago after establishing a special connection with the Harrington community through a much loved grandparent who previously lived in the area. They had hardly settled in when a calling to service directed them to join the Community Transport team where they have volunteered ever since. Sharron has only recently retired from her position on the transport team, however she fondly recalls her time transporting those in need to medical appointments who could not otherwise attend. If this wasn't enough our community-orientated-duo joined the TellEverybody paper run, delivering the local magazine to 88 households each month, a volunteer service they have provided for over five years. Apart from the transport car and paper run, Peter also donates whatever time he has left to the weekly shopping bus, performing regular pick-ups and drop-offs for locals to access essential services. On behalf of the Harrington community I thank Peter and Sharron for their long-lasting contribution to society.

#### **COFFEE CHARITY FUND**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise the outstanding members of the Coffee Charity Fund in the Camden Haven for their generosity and kindness in supporting local and international charities groups. This unique group was formed in the Camden Haven community to attract like-minded people that seek to make a difference in supporting those less fortunate. The group meets weekly at the Top Spot Too cafe on Fridays to socialise and to plan the next fundraising initiative. Group representative Graham Lee is the driving force behind the Coffee Charity Fund which formed from a group of local church people meeting up to discuss worldly events, opinions and daily struggles in society. Since the early meetings the group has transformed to become an influential charity that focuses on contributing to support those most vulnerable in our community. The Coffee Charity Fund has to date provided valuable funds to support single parents, Endeavour Clubhouse, Make a Difference Port Macquarie, Camden Haven Community at 3, Down The Track Charity and the funding

of six eye operations through the Fred Hollows Foundation. Members contribute \$5 per meeting which is the cost of a coffee to donate to nominated charity.

#### **BREAKWALL CAFÉ AND TAKEAWAY HARRINGTON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I acknowledge the new owners of the Breakwall Café and Takeaway shop in Harrington who purchased the business in mid-August after moving from Western Sydney to the beautiful coastal region. Seeking a sea change in a local regional setting, George and Julie Waterhouse decided to call it quits on metropolitan living after experiencing a downturn in their property management business due to the pandemic. Relocating to the town of Harrington in November last year, the two entrepreneurs began considering their next business venture, this time in the hospitality industry. Located adjacent to the beautiful Manning River, the Breakwall Café and Takeaway is situated in the heart of the Harrington community with breathtaking views of the beach and the mouth of the river. During stay-at-home orders, George and Julie seized the opportunity to renovate the café inside and out, painting, cleaning and modernising the new business they had recently purchased. George was an Ausgrid employee of 25 years and Julie an accountant turned property manager, now hospitality owner. Both are keen and confident to establish their grassroots in Harrington and welcome both locals and visitors to their café for a meal set to impress.

#### **ADOLFO GONZALEZ**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade)**—I congratulate and recognise Mr Adolfo Gonzalez who was recently named as the 2021 Outer Western Sydney Senior Volunteer of the Year at The Centre for Volunteering virtual awards ceremony. Originally from Argentina, Adolfo was one of the founding members of Nepean Migrant Access. He has taught Spanish language classes and Mediterranean cooking classes at U3A, hosts a weekly Spanish radio program on WOW FM and, following a heart attack in 2016, to add to his volunteering roles, Adolfo signed up to offer his help with fundraising and to support men at the Nepean Hospital Cardiology Unit. It is important to acknowledge people like Adolfo who give their time for the benefit of the broader community. Thank you Adolfo, you are well deserving of this recognition.

#### **AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Wednesday 21st July 2021, I was pleased to make my 109th blood donation to the Australian Red Cross, at the Parramatta Donor Centre, Rosehill. The current outbreak of the Delta-strain of COVID-19 had led to state wide lockdown and the closure of many businesses. However, the need for blood donations is still as vital as ever. In Australia, a blood donation is needed every 24 seconds, with 1 in 3 Australians needing a blood donor at one point in their lives. Donating blood is considered an essential service and is a very worthwhile reason to leave the house. I encourage all who physically can, to give blood to the Australian Red Cross. Giving blood only takes about an hour out of your day, but will undoubtedly save lives. I would like to thank the wonderful staff at the Parramatta Donor Centre Rosehill, for another pleasant experience giving blood. Your dedication to saving lives, even during the challenging times of a global pandemic is truly inspiring. I would also like to more broadly thank the Australian Red Cross, in particular, CEO, Kim Pfitzner, for delivering humanitarian aid and community service charity throughout Australia and overseas.

#### **TRACK AUSTRALIA**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Friday 20th August and Saturday 11th September, I had the pleasure of helping pack essential food hampers with TRACK Australia. Tamil Resettlement and Community Konnect (TRACK) Australia have been doing incredible work assisting our Australian Tamil Community with their Tamil Community COVID Emergency Food Relief Appeal. Through this food relief appeal, TRACK Australia packs and delivers essential food packs to 100 households in need, reaching approximately 400 people. Additionally, TRACK Australia arranges cooked food to be delivered to families affected by COVID-19. Finally, TRACK Australia focuses on providing mental health support to asylum seekers from Tamil speaking backgrounds. In the Electorate of Prospect, we have a wonderfully vibrant Australian Tamil community. However, many members of our local Tamil community have come from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, and therefore were not eligible for COVID-19 financial assistance. Many member of our Australian Tamil community have lost work due to COVID-19 restrictions and desperately need assistance. Thank you to Rishi Rishikesan, Dr Thava Seelan, and the entire team at TRACK Australia for supporting our Australian Tamil community in a time of need. Your selfless work throughout the entire COVID-19 lockdown has truly changed lives.

#### **BLACKTOWN RSL BRANCH AND AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the work of the Blacktown RSL sub-branch, who have been working alongside the Australian Defence Force throughout Western Sydney in recent times during the 2021 Greater Sydney lockdown. The many RSL volunteers have teamed up

with the Australian Defence Force troops, and the hunger relief charity FoodBank, to pack, coordinate and deliver care packages to our war heroes and war widows. In the month of August, more than 200 care packages were delivered across Western Sydney, each containing food, clothes and blankets. A widow from Blacktown, Mavis Melville, who is 93 years of age, said the food packages allow her to shop lighter when she goes to the supermarkets. It is through these acts of community service that our community has been able to stay strong and keep its spirit during the recently difficult times brought on by lockdowns. I would like to thank the RSL sub-branch President, Bradley Lawless, for the great work he is doing with the branch of Blacktown.

#### **DR GRAHAM MALOUF FROM WESTMEAD HOSPITAL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—It brings me great pleasure to acknowledge Dr Graham Malouf from Westmead Hospital, who is retiring after nearly 50 years of service in the Western Sydney Local Health District. Dr Malouf is a recognised doctor by many constituents from The Hills and Parramatta areas of the Seven Hills electorate. Since following in his father's footsteps by studying medicine in the 1970s, Graham has lived a life of service and compassion in our local hospitals around Western Sydney. In his long-standing service to the local area, Dr Malouf has delivered over 1500 babies and conducted countless autopsy reports. Graham Malouf grew up attending local schools and it has been great to see him continue his work around the local area. Dr Malouf is a community man. He spent many years as the president of local sporting clubs as well as serving the Parramatta Football Club as a board director. It brings me great joy to congratulate Dr Graham Malouf on such a successful career, and I wish him all the very best for his life in retirement.

#### **KINGS LANGLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—On 17 June I had the pleasure of visiting Kings Langley Public School to speak with the Year 6 students about a range of topics. Among many things, I spoke about the responsibilities of our local, state and federal Governments, as well as how Bills are passed in parliament. It was inspiring to see so many young people engage with topics about parliament and politics. It was great to speak about what it means to be a good person in the community, along with discussing the importance of teamwork. I was also able to answer questions by the students on different processes of parliament and various contemporary issues. I would like to thank the school principal Chris Lambert, as well as the terrific year 6 teachers who do a fantastic job in teaching the students about what happens in Parliament.

#### **RAY AND GWEN FULLER – URALLA VINNIES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Gwen and Ray Fuller, volunteers with Uralla Vinnies for more than 20 years. Vinnies is well known for its service to the community and without the volunteers the organisation could not function. To give of themselves for twenty years is a significant commitment and with it comes the fellowship from other volunteers and the many patrons who frequent the shop. This is the mutual benefit of volunteering and the reason people commit to these service organisations. Thank you Gwen and Ray. I congratulate the Fullers on their twenty year commitment to service at Uralla Vinnies. I commend Gwen and Ray for their generosity and service to the Uralla community.

#### **CAROLYN OSMOND – FORK AND SPADE NURSERY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Carolyn Osmond of Moree, another enterprising country businesswoman whose nursery has become a Moree institution. It isn't just the array of thriving plants but the memories of happy times adults share, remembering Sundays spent playing with the cats and dogs, chasing the chickens, feeding the caged and colourful birds, and being bitten by the ducks. Carolyn allowed touching the ceramic gnomes and earth fairies and as she shared her generous heart at the Fork and Spade, so it encompassed all of Moree. There wouldn't be a district organisation that hasn't known Carolyn's help in some form over the years. If she isn't donating plants then she has donated her time and knowledge of all things growing. Carolyn is committed to a thriving planet and treating all living things with care. I congratulate Carolyn on the many years of successful business at the Fork and Spade. I commend Carolyn Osmond on her generous heart and her commitment to the community.

#### **DR ROBERT BANKS – ANIMAL GENETICS AND BREEDING UNIT**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Dr Robert Banks for his valued service in the genetic improvement of Australia's livestock industries and as Director of the Board of the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU). Dr Banks has been in the forefront of the development of the genetic evaluation system for the Australian Meat Sheep industry making Australia a world leader in the innovative technology of genetic improvements. The economic benefits has escalated to over \$2 billion for this alone. Since 2012 Rob has worked tirelessly leading the AGBU and now we wish him well in his retirement, although Rob says he anticipates ongoing involvement with AGBU and his

interest in genetic improvement. I congratulate Dr Banks on retiring from the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit with a remarkable history of achievements in research and development in genetic technology. I commend Rob for his dedication and service to the livestock industry and for the many lives he has mentored during his career.

#### **DARREN BYRNES-CARETAKER AT MOREE SHOWGROUND CAMPING GROUNDS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I recognise Darren Byrnes as the Caretaker at Moree Showground Camping and Caravan Grounds. Darren has been praised by campers for a well-run and well-presented facility. However, Darren has gone beyond the usual employment duties during the COVID-19 pandemic in complying with regulations and more specifically in caring for stranded travellers during the periodic border closures. Frustrated Queenslanders waiting to return home have found Darren to be caring and compassionate in helping them manage day to day concerns that arise from the unexpected delay of their Moree stay and keeping their spirits up. I congratulate Darren for his commitment to the well-being of others as the caretaker at the Moree Showground Camping Grounds. I commend Darren for his adaptation to his job during a difficult time and for making a frustrating delay into a well-remembered Moree experience.

#### **HANNAH DODD**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Hannah Dodd of Arcadia who represented Australia in the Paralympics. The 29 year old was a member of The Gliders, the Australian Women's Wheelchair Basketball Team. This is her second Paralympics having represented Australia in London in 2012 as a Grade 4 para equestrian rider, finishing just outside the top 10. Hannah was born with sacral agenesis and had to undergo many painful operations as a child. However, her love of horses was clear from a very young age. She joined the Pony Club at just 4 and by the age of 13 was competing at an elite level. However, in London her parents Brian and Phyllis met Jerry Hewson a wheelchair basketball coach who suggested Hannah give it a go. She did and by 2013 had progressed to the National league and has continued to rise through the sport. Hannah is an inspiration not just on the court but off having graduated with two degrees and is a public speaker for Wheelchair Sports NSW. The Gliders finished in 9th place in Tokyo and I would like to congratulate Hannah on representing Australia yet again in Tokyo.

#### **LUGARNO PHARMACIST ADVICE PHARMACY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Today I recognise the Lugarno Pharmacist Advice Pharmacy which has celebrated its 50th year of service to local residents. Warren Del-Grande and the team run an exceptional service and they are always willing and able to provide professional advice and friendly support, regardless of the issue. In 2020, the organisation also received a national honour, after being awarded the Professional Services Champion Award as part of the 2020 Pharmacist Advice Awards. This is a fantastic achievement and I know that it is one that Warren and his staff hold in the highest regard. Earlier this year, I visited the pharmacy to congratulate them on these fantastic achievements and to present them with a certificate for their continued service and commitment to the local community. I have no doubt that after 50 years of service, Warren and the team will go on to provide many more years of outstanding service to residents of Lugarno and the wider St George region.

#### **DIETRICH ROACHE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—The 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be remembered as the COVID-19 Games of 2021. From coaches to physios, parents to sponsors, carers to Olympic and Paralympic committees, thousands of people played their part to allow our athletes to do their best and represent our country in some of the most challenging conditions the Olympic and Paralympic Games have ever faced. I would particularly like to congratulate Dietrich Roache from Merrylands. Dietrich switched to Rugby Sevens and rugby union from 13-a-side rugby league after his family attended a Sydney 7s match. In 2020 Dietrich signed a two-year deal with the Australian sevens side. In 2021 he played for Australia at the Olympic Games. The event schedule was gruelling. In high temperatures the Men's Rugby Sevens played 6 matches in 3 days. In Men's Pool A they played against Argentina, South Korea and New Zealand. He scored a try in the third minute against South Korea. They proceeded to the quarter finals but were beaten by Gold Medallists, Fiji. The team played South Africa, finally placing 7 of 8 when they defeated Canada 26 - 7. Congratulations Dietrich on your achievement and for representing your nation at the highest level.

#### **VALE RON SHARPE OAM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is with deep sadness to speak on the passing of Mr Ron Sharpe OAM who passed a few months ago suddenly after a short illness. Ron was a former Director and Life Member of the Gosford Erina Business Chamber. He held several advisory and support positions including his role as the Chamber Officer representing the Central Coast Council Traffic Committee for many years. In addition to his work representing business and being a successful businessperson in his own right, Ron had made a significant

contribution to the Central Coast. In January 2005, Ron was named Citizen of the Year for the City of Gosford. On Australia Day 2006, he was awarded an Order Of Australia Medal in recognition of his service to the community of the Gosford region through a range of service and social welfare organisations. Ron remained actively involved in the Chamber, well beyond his official period of recorded service and was always a strong but sound voice for business in the city. Ron was a dedicated husband and father, and on behalf of all of our Members, I would like to express our deepest condolences to his wife, family and friends.

#### **PATONGA PUBLIC HALL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—In June this year I was fortunate enough to present a \$57,600 cheque to Patonga Public Hall thanks to the NSW Government's COVID-19 stimulus funding for Crown Land reserves. The hall will benefit from a facelift, with the amenities building adjacent to it to undergo a range of upgrades, including the installation of new fixtures, re-tiling, new flooring and electrical works. Patonga Public Hall is regularly used by volunteers at the nearby Rural Fire Brigade as well as the wider community, and I am pleased the NSW Government can provide the funding required for a facelift. This latest announcement is on top of \$19,250 which I announced in February to paint the interior and exterior of the Hall, and I want to congratulate John Quigg, Dain Simpson and Mark Austin for successfully receiving for the COVID-19 stimulus funding.

#### **BRIAN GEE, OAM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Congratulations to Brian Gee of Narara on being awarded an OAM in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Richard has been recognised for his "service to surf lifesaving, and to junior rugby league". Brian joined The Entrance Surf Life Saving club in 1948 when he was 16. Since then he has been involved in almost every role in the club operation. He became Junior Club Captain in 1949 and 1950, then moved through a number of roles to become patrol Captain from 1963 to 1967. From 1965 to 1986 he was an Executive Committee Member and also held the roles of Treasurer, Secretary, Trustee, and Deputy President at various times up until 2007. He became a life Member in 1986 and is now the club's historian. Brian is also the Patron of the Central Coast Division of Junior Rugby League and over the years has been on the General Committee, an Assistance Secretary and a member of the Judiciary from 1985-2013 and was made a Life Member in 2018. Brian's contribution to sport on the Central Coast has been immense and I congratulate late him on this worthy award.

#### **CENTRAL COAST ACADEMY OF SPORT TRIATHLON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—In the wrap up of the 2020/21 Triathlon season earlier this year, two Athletes from the Central Coast Academy of Sport Crowne Plaza Terrigal Pacific Triathlon Program managed podium positions in the Triathlon NSW Billigence Pathway Series (TBPS). Morgan Charlton and Wade Barr both managed a third place in the overall series – a true testament to their training attitude and commitment to the program and their ability to recover and back up for the multiple events. The formats were varied and required the athletes to think a lot more tactically than what they would normally in a more traditional triathlon format. Athletes needed to self-manage to be able to keep performing at this level, with hydration, nutrition and recovery a major focus during these race weekends. In a challenging time when events had been cancelled, it was great to have these races, and at such a high level of competition. All of the Central CAS Triathlon Program athletes raced exceptionally well. I congratulate all the athletes that competed and in particular Morgan and Wade for their podium finishes.

#### **KEVIN STOKES – SENIOR NSW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Kevin Stokes is one of the founding fathers of the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens and its longest serving volunteer. Under Kevin's leadership, the Gardens have overcome many obstacles, including the various financial challenges experienced by all community organisations, drought and COVID-19 restrictions. Kevin's knowledge of plants, particularly Australian native plants, and his willingness to share this knowledge are legendary. Whilst the gardens are renowned for their focus on Australian native plants, they are constantly growing in size and in diversity. The Gardens' Australian flora include acacias, Australian plants for the home garden, banksias, hakeas and grevilleas, plants of the Hunter Region, boronias and their relatives, prostantheras, eucalypts (mostly of the Hunter Region), local water plants, myrtaceae, palms, rainforest plants, Australian arid plants, conifers, cycads and ferns. Collections of exotic plants include bromeliads and camellias but it is the impressive cacti and succulent collection, which is my favourite area of the gardens! Rare and endangered Australian species are also cultivated and their seed bank is extensive. The orchid houses are extremely popular with visitors. Congratulations Kevin, and the Gardens, on a fabulous partnership, and thank you for all your hard work and dedication!

### MAITLAND METEORS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Earlier this year I had the pleasure of presenting the Premiers Sporting Award to two of our junior local community sporting members at Maitland City Softball Club – the Maitland Meteors. Both Sienna Burgess and Makye Telfer received the award for representing NSW in Softball in under 16's boys and girls last year. This is a tremendous effort from both Sienna and Makye and I hope they are extremely proud of themselves for all their hard work in achieving this acknowledgment. I would also like to congratulate the club on receiving a local sports grant with \$2,000 now able to go to the development of coaches, umpires and scorers for the club. 2020 saw unprecedented times for all sports and I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the clubs President Shane Haley, Shareese Waipouri and all the committee members who have kept the club alive, allowing local kids like Sienna and Makye the opportunity to continue to shine through their sport.

### HAYLEY JOHNS – YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Congratulations Hayley Johns, the Hunter's 2021 Young Volunteer of the Year. Hayley is a Justice of the Peace and the Allied Health Officer for the National Rural Student Network, a voluntary role that Hayley took on "to promote and empower a multidisciplinary network of health students – the future of rural health!" Hayley volunteers for St Johns Ambulance at Maitland, and the State Emergency Service (SES). Hayley is a member of the Lake Macquarie Youth Advisory Committee, moving to Maitland before winning the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association's Ms Maitland Show Girl Competition, becoming Maitland's Youth Ambassador. As Maitland's Youth Ambassador, Hayley gave the Youth Address at Maitland's 2021 ANZAC Day Service, representing her Great Grandfather (WWI) and Grandad (WWII) and regularly represents the city's youth as an ex-officio member of the Maitland Business Chamber Committee. Hayley recently won Wake Up!'s 2021 Photo Competition with stunning contributions in two categories: Health: "Promoting healthy eating in an image that reflects the colours of the fruit in the softened urbanscape" and Rural: for "Wonderful competition of sculptured trees and textural surfaces." Hayley is an impressive young woman, and it's great she has been recognised! Congratulations!

### MELISSA HISTON-BROWNING – ROTARY INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN'S AWARDS 2021

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I first met Melissa Histon-Browning when she was the guest speaker at a domestic violence fundraiser for Cessnock BPW's 60th anniversary in 2015. Mel inspired me on that day, as she inspires so many others across the Hunter every single day. Melissa has made a massive contribution to Maitland, through her regional focus on the prevention of domestic violence, through her extremely effective "We Say No to Violence Campaign", and her support for women and children escaping domestic violence at Carrie's Place, Domestic Violence and Specialist Homelessness Service. After being diagnosed with breast cancer in her mid-thirties, Mel went on to become the Founder and CEO of Got Your Back Sista charity, Founder of The Sista Code community and events organisation, and Host of Hey Soul Sista podcast. She is all about empowering and inspiring others. 2017 Newcastle Woman of the Year, and a finalist in the Newcastle University Alumni Awards, Mel was nominated by the Rotary Club of Newcastle Sunrise for the Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards 2021 Urban Category, which she won. Mel lives the Rotarian motto "Service Above Self", on a daily basis and encourages others to do so too. Congratulations!

### KEN MURRAY

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—I honour the life of Ken Murray, a legend of the surfboat and both the Swansea - Belmont Surf Life Saving Club and Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Ken's sporting achievements make him one of the best athletes of his generation. During his surfboat career he won: 46 Hunter Branch gold medals, 10 NSW state titles, four silver and nine bronze, nine Australian gold, six silver and six bronze, and one world championship gold. Throughout his career Ken contested 31 Australian championship finals. He was also a member of the Caves Beach senior crew who won the NSW state title four years in a row from 1961 to 1964, a feat that has never been repeated. For his sporting achievements Ken was awarded life membership to Caves Beach SLSC, Swansea-Belmont SLSC, Hunter Branch Association, Surf Life Saving NSW and Surf Life Saving Australia. He was also inducted into the Australian Hall of Fame, NSW Hall of Fame, Hunter Region Hall of Fame, and ASRL Hall of Fame. The loss of Ken will be felt by the Swansea community. Vale, Ken Murray.

### PETER "MICK" ELLERCAMP

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—I rise to honour the life of Peter "Mick" Ellercamp, a legend of the Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Mick joined Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club in 1948 and held numerous positions within the Club, including serving as president from 1971 to 1972, along with two stints as treasurer from 1962 to 1968 and 1974 to 1975. Mick was also a member Caves Beach senior surfboat crew that won four

consecutive state titles from 1961 to 1964, a feat that has never been repeated. This included a clean sweep in the 1962-63 season of the Newcastle branch, NSW, Interstate and Australian titles. So successful was this crew they were named the Hunter Boat Crew of the century in 2008. For his sporting achievements and service to surf lifesaving Mick was awarded life membership to Caves Beach SLSC, Hunter Branch Association, and Surf Life Saving NSW. He was also inducted into the Hunter Region Hall of Fame in 1996, and ASRL Hall of Fame. The loss of Mick will be felt by the entire Swansea community. Vale Peter "Mick" Ellercamp.

#### **JESSICA PICKERING**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Today I congratulate Jessica Pickering, who made her Olympic debut at this year's Tokyo Games, as a member of the gymnastics team. Jessica's journey to Olympic glory commenced when she was seven years old, when she joined Eastlakes Trampoline Sports. Since then, her passion and determination to excel in the sport has flourished, with Jessica achieving outstanding results at both national and international levels. Prior to the Tokyo Games, Jessica placed 5th in the Women's Individual category, at the 2021 FIG World Cup. Jessica is an outstanding sportswoman, who is a role model to aspiring young athletes not only in the Swansea electorate, but Australia wide. I congratulate Jessica on her Olympic debut and wish her all the best with future competitions.

#### **SHARNAE BERESFORD**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Today I congratulate Sharnae Beresford, who has been awarded Woolworths NSW Check Out Operator of the Year. Sharnae is a dedicated member of the local community, who takes great pride in assisting customers at Woolworths Swansea. Working as a check out operator is Sharnae's dream job, which she was able to achieve through the support of nationally accredited specialist disability employer partner, Job Centre Australia. Although the pandemic has been challenging for supermarket workers, Sharnae has remained resilient and continued to help local shoppers. As a result of her achievement, Sharnae is also in the running for Woolworths' national Check Out Operator of the Year award. I congratulate Sharnae on her achievement and thank her for continuously supporting the people of Swansea.

#### **TOUR DE COAST**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—In an exciting new development the leader of the Pack in the coast will don a yellow jersey this season. Congratulations to everyone involved at Central Coast Bugg bicycle users group for their efforts to support and increase cycling across the Central Coast. The tour of the coast runs parallel to the Tour de France and is an innovative way to get people from the across the coast on their bikes. Each weekend hosts a different tour to new locations with the challenge to record times and most importantly to have fun. Thanks ever so much to everyone involved

#### **CENTRAL COAST MARINERS SUPPORTERS TRUST**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Huge congratulations and massive thank you to everyone involved in the Central Coast Mariners Supporters Trust. From a twinkle in the eye to very close to a tangible reality, the supporters trust is going to add a new dimension to the power of the fans of the Central Coast Mariners. We will be the first ever community owned cooperative sporting team in Australia. Starting at a small percentage of the total value of the Club, the Central Coast Mariners supporters trust has the potential to grow to the size and fame of the Green Bay Packers. The Green Bay Packers are the world's largest community own sporting team, where community members work together to shovel snow off the pitch in winter and also unite to find and fund some of the best players in the NFL. Hey Coasties, the Mariners have had an awesome season and it would be fantastic if you could get behind them when they launch as a community and cooperative. Thanks to Mark Brogan, Michael Pilbrow, and the Central Coast Mariners fans for getting behind this fantastic idea!

#### **YERIN ELEANOR DUNCAN ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I wish to acknowledge the hard work and achievements of Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services, who have worked closely with MINGALETTA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corp to open an Aboriginal Health Clinic on the Peninsula. Both of these groups are vital in supporting the Coast's Indigenous community, but throughout the pandemic they have really stepped up. Recently they have joined forces to transform a now closed Doctor's practice into an Aboriginal Health Clinic in Umina Beach. It is fantastic to finally have dedicated Aboriginal and community-controlled health clinic on the Peninsula, and it's something that MINGALETTA have been advocating for, for a long time. I would also like to thank Dr Jay Chelladurai for his contribution to this initiative, and for assisting in the administering of COVID-19 vaccines in this health clinic. It is so important that we work to 'close the gap' in health outcomes, and I am grateful to have such fierce and dedicated community organisations in my electorate who are working towards these goals.

### **DOM HALL – ROTARY 2022 NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE FORUM**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I congratulate local Brisbane Water Secondary student, Dom Hall, on having been accepted to attend the Rotary's 2022 National Youth Science Forum. Dom had been nominated by the marvellous and hard-working Rotary Club of Umina Beach and I commend this group for always elevating young people in my community to achieve their very best in whichever field they are passionate about. Dom will gain excellent insight into STEM-related lectures, keynote speakers, hands-on workshops, debates, expos and enriching social activities at next year's forum. This opportunity will assist Dom with his transition from high school to university and expose him to the latest cutting-edge research and introduce him to industry partners and research providers. As a former high school teacher, I know firsthand how important opportunities like this are to young developing minds and the long-lasting impact these experiences have on students. I encourage Dom to be a life-long learner and continue to work hard to make his dreams a reality. Good luck Dom and cheers to all our STEM workforce!

### **CONNELLS POINT NETBALL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I acknowledge Sanjana Anugu, Zoey Antoniou and Sheree Geddes from the Connells Point Netball Club for their outstanding commitment to the organisation and netball more broadly. Sanjana and Zoey are both umpires for the organisation and they regularly officiate matches for local teams. Sanjana herself is the captain of the Under 16 A2 side and Zoey is well renowned for her coaching skills, given her impressive career in netball. Sheree is an outstanding member of the Club and I have always heard good things from committee members, players and their parents about her willingness to help others. All three outstanding individuals were honoured in 2020 with a St George Community Award for their service to the Club and the community. Every year these awards recognise the hard work of men, women and youth across the region who go above and beyond to make our community the best it can be. I thank the trio for all of their hard work over a number of years and I wish them all the best for the season ahead.

### **OATLEY LIONS CLUB CHRISTMAS 2020**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I recognise the Oatley Lions Club who did an outstanding job at caring for and looking after vulnerable community members during the many challenges of 2020. There are so many wonderful initiatives to recognise and I do wish to name a few. In particular, the Geurie Help a Farmer Christmas BBQ Bash which assisted regional families by providing much needed food and essential supplies, the Quilt Raffle which raised money for St George Hospital and their raffle at Oatley Hotel. I want to thank President John Morgan, Secretary John Perkins, Vice Presidents Richard Sheahan and Wayne Smith along with every other member of the team. I know first-hand through my role within the organisation that everyone works very hard and they are always there to help and assist those less fortunate. They are a fantastic community organisation and I wish them all the best for another outstanding year.

### **CITY OF SYDNEY SUPPORTING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney Electorate I commend the City of Sydney for the extensive support for vulnerable communities during the pandemic. The City of Sydney has worked closely with social service providers to help disadvantaged people and groups who have been disproportionately impacted by restrictions due to a lack of affordable housing, food security and adequate federal income support. The City of Sydney has given financial support to food services OzHarvest, Foodbank and SecondBite to ensure no one goes hungry. Council funded emergency quick response grants to help community organisations meet increased need. For non-residents and asylum seekers experiencing homelessness, the City worked to secure emergency accommodation through the Haymarket Foundation and the Department of Communities and Justice. In conjunction with Sydney Local Health District, the City has increased vaccination clinics and outreach services providing information, testing, and critical supplies such as masks and food for local First Nations communities, social housing tenants and isolated people. I congratulate and thank the City of Sydney under Lord Mayor Clover Moore's leadership for this strong commitment to care for vulnerable communities throughout the pandemic.

### **WOOLLAHRA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate I commend the Woollahra Municipal Council for council's community support during the pandemic. In recognition of the diverse communication needs, Woollahra Council worked to keep the community well informed on NSW Health guidelines, testing and vaccination clinics, small business support and local pandemic help initiatives. Woollahra Council worked with state and federal MPs, advocating for the small business and hospitality sectors to ensure financial assistance and a safe return to operating in time for the summer months. Council funded programs through Holdsworth Community to support vulnerable older people, people living with disability and families impacted by restrictions through food delivery, transport to vaccination clinics and one-on-one support through

in-home visits. Woollahra Library has had staff reading aloud to people and providing vital social connection to isolated residents by phone and online. I thank the Woollahra Municipal Council and all councillors for this commitment to care for local communities through the pandemic.

#### **ARIA AWARDS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I would like to commend the steps taken by the ARIA Awards to be more inclusive. Public recognition in many industries has historically favoured men, and this continues despite many efforts to redress imbalance and promote equality. The recent decision to give a Best Artist award instead of best male or female artist will mean artists who are non-binary will be considered along with those who identify as male or female. It is simply not fair that they should be excluded and their talent ignored. This should also mean that female artists are recognised in the same category as male artists, instead of being seen as second-best. While we have more work to do to be inclusive, it is inspiring to see yet another body moving to recognise excellence and great achievement wherever it occurs. I commend the ARIAs and music industry for this step towards inclusion and equality.

#### **PROGRESS PRIDE FLAG**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I welcome increasing use of the Progress Pride flag to symbolise inclusion and acceptance for the LGBTQI+ communities. Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras adopted this flag for the 2021 Mardi Gras and the City of Sydney will now use this flag to demonstrate council's support for our communities. The Progress Pride flag adapts the existing Rainbow Flag symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities. It adds a chevron with black and brown for Indigenous people and people of colour, and the white, pink and blue coloured stripes of the Trans Pride Flag. Non-binary artist and graphic designer Daniel Quasar designed the Progress Flag in 2018 and it builds on Gilbert Baker's rainbow design used first at the 1978 San Francisco Freedom Day Parade. The Trans Pride flag designed by American trans woman Monica Helms in 1999 represent trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people. The Sydney electorate is diverse and welcoming. I am proud of these latest steps to demonstrate support for everyone to be a welcome part of our community and be treated with dignity and respect.

#### **MICK'S HAIRDRESSER**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I acknowledge Mendo Cirkovski from Mick's Hairdresser in Banksia for his service to the community for over 30 years. Last year I had the privilege to head over to his shop to present him with a Business Achievement Award as part of the St George Community Awards. These awards recognise businesses like Mick's Hairdresser who continue to give back to the community and this has been particularly important during these trying times. Mick sweeps the footpath outside the shopping precinct every single morning and he is always there for a chat and to share stories about his cultural history and the local community. While I was not able to stay for a haircut on the day, I have heard so many wonderful things about his business and I will most definitely have to return in the future. Thank you again for your continued commitment to our local community. I wish you all the best for many more great years of service to the Banksia community.

#### **CHARLI HUBBER**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—It is a pleasure for me to congratulate Year 11 student Miss Charli Hubber who has shown great promise when it comes to the skill of bricklaying. I understand Charli has learnt the skill of bricklaying as part of her studies as a Construction student at St Raphael's School in Cowra, and the skills she has developed in this field have gone on to earn her a position on the NSW World Skills Team for 2021. This is a fantastic achievement given Charli had to contest and earn her position on the bricklaying team, which involved honing her skills on a weekly basis at school in preparation for the World Skills Competition in Perth. While it is a disappointment the NSW team was unable to compete in Perth as planned, I congratulate Charli on pursuing this exciting opportunity regardless and hope it will not dampen her enthusiasm for other opportunities which may come her way in the future. It seems fitting the school has since asked for Charli to build some courtyard seats, which is a special way for her to showcase her interest and skill with her peers and the broader school community. Congratulations once again.

#### **INDIANA COOPER - KURT FEARNLEY SCHOLARSHIP**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to congratulate Indiana Cooper, a talented para-sport athlete from Gundagai who has been selected as a recipient of the 2021/22 Kurt Fearnley Scholarship. Indi has been named as one of three recipients of the prestigious scholarships named in honour of one of Australia's greatest Para-sport athletes. This well-deserved scholarship will provide both financial support and mentorship to the next generation of para-sports stars. Furthermore, Indi is well placed to qualify for the upcoming Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games so this added support through the 2021/22 Kurt Fearnley Scholarship comes at a great time. This is not the first big achievement for Indi. Apart from her rapidly growing collection of medals

which grew at the Australian Athletic Championships with an amazing four individual gold medals and two Australian records in the T-38 classification, Indi was also recently recognised for her great sportsmanship being named a recipient of the Daniel Berry Inspiration Award, presented at the Cerebral Palsy Sporting and Recreation Association (CPSARA) NSW awards ceremony, held online on August 13. Congratulations to Indiana and I wish her the best of luck in her journey towards qualifying for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

#### **CHRISTINE EDWARDS – DANCE TEACHER RETIRES**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to thank Christine Edwards for her contribution to the arts in the Cootamundra Electorate. Chris has been teaching classical ballet and jazz to her students in Cootamundra for the past 37 years. Throughout her career, Chris has taught several generations of families in the town and to her credit, is loved and adored by countless students, both past and present. Her passion for music and dance originally stemmed from her family, and from her early years, Chris knew it was one she wanted to share with the wider community. The loyalty of Chris's students is a tribute to her kind and caring character which will be sorely missed by many as she commences her retirement. Not only has Chris been able to give back to the community through educating her talented students, but she has also generously given over \$100,000 in donations from her dance school to charity. I wish Chris all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

#### **COOLAMON YIELD FESTIVAL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate the Coolamon Shire Council, Capture Coolamon Shire Photographic Competition, and the Up2Date Art Show exhibition for coming together to create the first ever Coolamon Yield Festival. The Yield Festival is a celebration of the creative arts sector in the Coolamon Shire. It is a collection of events, workshops, performances and experiences that highlight the makers, thinkers and creators in the community. The Festival is hosted over 2 weeks with the official launch evening on Friday 12 November 2021. The event is set to bring over a 1000 people to Coolamon during the course of the 2 week period. It is spectacular to see events right across the Cootamundra Electorate start to come back to life after the Covid pandemic. Community events provide a great opportunity for people to come together and interact with one and another which puts life back into the community. I congratulate the organisers once again for putting what will be a fantastic event on.

#### **VALE EDDIE JAKU, OAM**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)**—I pay tribute to Eddie Jaku, OAM, who has passed away, aged 101. Anyone who met Eddie knew instantly that he was "the happiest man on Earth" – a self-proclaimed title which he used to describe his approach to life. Eddie was born in 1920 in Germany and through World War II, he survived both the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Like many survivors of the Holocaust, he made it out alone. Eventually he met his wife of 75 years Flore, and together they came to Australia in 1950 to start a new life. When the Sydney Jewish Museum opened in 1992, he volunteered to be a guide sharing his remarkable story with visitors. I vividly remember my first tour of the Museum with Eddie and, like others, was inspired by his personal story, resilience, ability to forgive his oppressors and optimism. I send my deep condolences to his family including his wife Flore, his sons Michael and Andre and his grand-children and great-grandchildren. We were all so lucky to have known Eddie. He will be profoundly missed as a remarkable person who found joy in everything that life offers up.

#### **DURAL MEN'S SHED RECYCLING WHITEGOODS PROGRAM**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—It is my absolute pleasure to be able to recognise the collaboration between the Dural Men's Shed and Living Choice Retirement Villages in recycling household appliances, kitchens and other whitegoods in order to help those who lost their homes in the devastating bushfires on the South Coast during the 2019-20 bushfire season. The blokes from the Shed and Living Choice are now working together to dismantle and restore old whitegoods from recently renovated villas, and then bring them down South to install them in the new homes. So far the blokes have done this for more than 15 kitchens down South, and not only does it help those who lost their homes in the fires rebuild, but they have also saved these appliances from landfill. Both Living Choice and The Shed, especially President Chris Thomas, should be congratulated for their hard work and charitable spirit.

#### **VALE DAVID SOMMERLAD AM**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)**—It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of David Sommerlad AM, who had been a Member of the Castle Hill Rotary Club since 1983. Before this he had been involved with Glen Innes, Inverell and Armidale Rotaries, and at the time of his passing had been a member of one rotary club or another for a total of 68 years. As a keen journalist David worked and edited for plenty of rural and regional newspapers, most notably for my area working with the Hawkesbury Gazette. David was well regarded in the local community and received the Rotary Award for Vocational Excellence in journalism, and was

recognised by becoming a Paul Harris Fellow. He was also recognised by being made a Member of the Order of Australia for Service to Print Media. David was very active in the community, and will perhaps best be remembered for his tireless work in conserving and improving the Castle Hill Heritage Park, where I am advised a memorial plaque will be placed in his honour. David truly was a local legend, he will be missed, and he is survived by his wife and 5 children.

#### **COLIN CELEBRATES 70 YEARS IN BUSINESS**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing)**—In 1951 Colin Ball's father Charlie Parnell Ball purchased a butcher's shop at South West Rocks to provide employment for his sons, Kevin and Colin. Fast forward to 2021 when Colin Ball, now aged 84, celebrated 70 years in the business on October 4. Like his father before him, Colin has provided two of his sons, Grahame and Geoffrey, with a full-time livelihood. Today they operate the Ball's Butchery shop at South West Rocks, with their Arakoon Beef, fresh seafood and home delivery service proving popular. It all began for Colin at the age of 14 learning his trade from Nelson Cooper. In 1963 a second shop was opened at Gladstone which Colin ran for 11 years, including making 154 deliveries on a Friday. Colin's father died in 1965, leaving the business and his cattle grazing property, Longreach, to his sons. There have been numerous changes over the years including selling Longreach, which had been in the family since 1862, and the passing of Kevin. But Ball's Butchery is still very much the family business it started out to be, and Colin is still out on the delivery truck and smiling with the customers.

#### **2021 NSW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—I attended the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremonies online for the Northern Beaches region on 6 September, and the Upper North Shore Region on 15 September. I acknowledge all awardees, and particularly the following recipients from my electorate of Davidson: Penelope Howell from St Ives, Adult Volunteer of the Year, who visits Cerebral Palsy Alliance each week to share live music. She continued to stage virtual concerts during lockdown, and has volunteered with other organisations including the RFS and St Ives Football Club. Stephen Harman from Killara, Senior Volunteer of the Year, for providing support to the Asylum Seekers Centre, refurbishing electronic devices, and organising inventory. AASHA Australia Foundation from St Ives, Volunteer Team of the Year, for providing free medical support for elderly people, particularly with Alzheimer's or dementia. I commend and congratulate all volunteers whose essential service has helped so many in my local and the broader community, especially through difficult times. I also acknowledge the NSW Government and ClubsNSW, the principle partners of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

#### **WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Learning to collaborate with peers in support of community causes is important to students' development. So I am pleased that many students in my electorate of Davidson, and across NSW, partook in the Write a Book in a Day Competition. This year's challenge involved students in years 5 to 12 who had the opportunity to collaborate, write, edit and illustrate a book in 12 hours for children aged 10-16. With Covid-19 snap lockdowns introduced students needed to work in teams in an online setting. The funds raised through the initiative went to The Kids' Cancer Project, a national charity supporting childhood cancer research, and the completed books were presented to children in hospital. I commend my local schools and students, and those across NSW, for participating in the challenge and raising thousands of dollars for this important cause.

#### **AUTHOR RAE CAIRNS**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—I acknowledge Rae Cairns, an author from Lindfield in my electorate of Davidson, whose debut novel 'The Good Mother' was shortlisted for Best Debut Crime Fiction in the 2021 Ned Kelly Awards. The book is about an Australian soccer mum who keeps the secrets of her time as an overseas aid worker from her family, until she is hunted down by two men from her past. It is a story of betrayal and courage, and draws on her background as a youth worker mentoring disadvantaged youth. Rae has previously co-managed a crisis refuge for street children in Sydney's inner west, and worked as Program Director for the Sydney Olympic Youth Camp. I commend Rae for her commitment to youth as both youth worker and now author, and am pleased that she has gained recognition for her efforts.

#### **LINDFIELD COMMUNITY BANK CAMPAIGN**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Earlier this year, Lindfield Community Bank in my electorate of Davidson launched the 'Double the Impact' and 'Art in Lockdown' campaigns, alongside Turramurra Community Bank. The 'Double the Impact' initiative helped local community groups raise funds for nine community projects, initially valued at \$50,000 in total. Between 17 May to 18 June, donations to the projects were made available online and over the counter, and the banks promised to match every dollar donated to double the impact.

Ultimately, all 9 projects achieved or surpassed their fundraising goals, totalling \$59,090 in contributions. The successful projects in, or who service, my local community included Eryldene Historic House and Garden, Killara Rural Fire Brigade, BlowFly Cricket Club, Pymble Public School and Marian Street Theatre for Young People. Moreover, the 'Art in Lockdown' campaign gave young people the opportunity to create art, and for the winners to nominate a community organisation to receive a \$1000 donation. Highfields Preparatory and Kindergarten School was a recipient, in my local community. I commend Lindfield and Turramurra Community Bank for their continued support to community groups, as well as the applicants whose projects will improve services to my local community.

#### **ST JOHN AMBULANCE MOLONG CADET DIVISION**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge the dedicated volunteer members of the St John Ambulance Molong Cadet Division. Volunteers are the backbone and the soul of rural and regional communities. The spirit and community of the St John Ambulance has flourished as a result of the division's committed leadership and the passionate mentorship of their fledgling and developing young members. A testament to the Molong Cadet Division is that in spite of the relatively small country town they're based from, their membership makes them one of the biggest divisions in New South Wales. At the recent regional ceremony for the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year awards, Julie Dean, Jazmin Pietrzak and Jade Kirk were each recognised for their significant volunteer work. Divisional Superintendent Julie Dean was announced Volunteer of the Year for 2021. There is no one more deserving of this prestigious award than Julie, who has dedicated more than a quarter of a century to volunteering to community through her service to St John Ambulance. Congratulations and well done.

#### **MULLETS FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge Paul McDonell, Louis Carr and Michael Rothnie on their local fundraising campaign for the Black Dog Institute's Mullets for Mental Health initiative. The institute's fundraising initiative challenged participants to grow and style a mullet for the month of September, openly discussing mental health, and fundraise for research. For Paul, Louis and Michael, growing a mullet was about shining a light on an important subject, one which can often be difficult for people to talk about. They managed to raise more than \$11,000 for the Black Dog Institute, simultaneously emphasising the importance of talking about mental health issues and preventing suicide. With suicide being the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15-44, and approximately 50 per cent of people reporting symptoms of mental illness who don't seek help, it's critically important that we raise the profile of this issue which indiscriminately impacts families, and no community is immune. I applaud the united fundraising efforts by Paul, Louis and Michael, who have endured a month of wearing their retro hair-dos, to purposefully stimulate conversation about, what has traditionally been, a socially sensitive issue. Congratulations Paul, Louis and Michael, I applaud your efforts. Bravo.

#### **MADI GWYNNE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge 12-year-old Madi Gwynne, of Orange. Madi, a student of Orange Public School, has been recognised for her random acts of kindness during a period in which many people have endured the challenges and hardship of the pandemic. It all started when Madi decided to pick a bunch of flowers because she was bored. Madi had so many flowers and then she had the idea to randomly deliver them around town with a little note while she was going out on a daily walk, to perhaps bring a smile to someone's face and make their day little brighter than it may otherwise have been. Until recently, just like Madonna or Beyoncé, she was known only by her first name she used to sign off on her kind messages. Madi's floral gifts and personalised notes soon had people talking around town, and on social media. Eventually Madi's identity was discovered for her unique and thoughtful acts, bringing happiness to unknown people throughout her community. It's heartening to see such considerate and selfless acts of kindness from such a young person, which gives me hope for the future of our town and our country. Well done, Madi.

#### **FAIRLIE DALTON**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge the late Fairlie Dalton, of Orange. It was my pleasure to have met Fairlie in 2018, when I presented her the Premier's Award for Volunteering. Once a week for 22 years, Fairlie would attend Anson Street School and volunteer her time for the betterment of students and staff. Fairlie commenced her volunteering in 1996 at the school and the Orange Hospital kiosk. During her time at Anson Street School, Fairlie assisted with everything including literacy and numeracy, communication, art and crafts, eating and drinking, cooking, laundry, personal hygiene and care, hydrotherapy/spa, physiotherapy, Riding for the Disabled, movement exercises, dance and music, modified sports and excursions. Fairlie attended an overnight excursion with the school to Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. Then aged 70, it was the first time in her life she had been camping. Fairlie will be fondly remembered as a wonderful person with a warm and welcoming

nature. She was kind and caring, and gave so much of her time to others. My heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of Fairlie Dalton, and to the community of Orange who now mourn the loss of an exemplary citizen and a mighty pillar.

#### **WOLLONGONG LABOR LIFE MEMBERS**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong)**—Life membership of any organisation recognises years, often decades, of commitment. Being awarded Life Membership of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party is no different. As part of the recent online conference of Australia's largest branch of Australia's largest political party a group of dedicated members from the Illawarra had their Life Membership conferred. I would like to congratulate my good mate Brian Dellit who was at the first meeting I ever attended, Chris Christodoulou who delivered the address on behalf of Life Members to the conference, Anne Knight, Kevin Parsons, Dot Royle and Reg Wearing. Also awarded Life Membership was Professor Stephen Martin, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and former Member for Cunningham – someone who has provided considerable advice and assistance to me over many years. Also recognised were Colin Hollis, former Member for Throsby, and his long term partner Gordon Streek. Gordon passed away only days before the conference and was awarded Life Membership posthumously. Between them there is nearly 300 years of Labor Party involvement that I look to harness and build on. Thank you for your contribution to our Party and to working men and women.

#### **VAX THE ILLAWARRA**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong)**—Thank you to the Vax the Illawarra campaign for encouraging more Illawarra residents to get their COVID vaccination. The Illawarra has always been a community that supports one another and this campaign was no different. Its purpose was simple – get people vaccinated and get people back into the work and social life that they enjoy in Wollongong. It attracted the support of people like Emma McKeon, fresh from her Olympic success. UFC world champion Alex Volkanovski who also volunteered his time to NSW Health to encourage his fans in south west and western Sydney to get vaccinated. Others involved included multiple Wollongong Citizens of the Year, the Governor-General who grew up in Port Kembla, local media personalities, entertainers, clubs, the University of Wollongong, aged and disability care providers, Destination Wollongong as well as many, many local businesses. All of this was coordinated by the small but committed team of Vicki Tiegs, Toby Dawson, Kylie-Ann Haynes and Jeremy Lasek. This week the Wollongong local government area hit the 70 per cent fully vaccinated target with nearly 90 per cent having had a first dose and the campaign of this group has certainly helped us get there.

#### **SAM FRICKER**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)**—I congratulate Greenhills Beach resident Sam Fricker who recently competed at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in the men's 10m platform diving. Sam has won various medals at junior national and international events and in 2019 he became the first Australian to ever win the Dresden Youth International Diving Meet in the Boys Platform. Sam earned his spot for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics at the 2021 Australian Open Championships, where he finished second in the 10m platform. Sam's also a social media superstar with 1.2 million followers on TikTok where he documents his training, creates memes and promotes his company Tsarian. Tsarian was established in 2019 by Sam and sell disposable and natural wheat straws. These straws act as a substitute for single-use plastic straws. Sam is also on the Youth Advisory Council for World Ocean Day where he can connect with other people focussing on action for a healthier ocean and more sustainable society. Competing at the Olympics requires strong discipline and athletic prowess, Sam has clearly demonstrated that he has these qualities.

#### **COLIN CELEBRATES 70 YEARS IN BUSINESS**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing)**—In 1951 Colin Ball's father Charlie Parnell Ball purchased a butcher's shop at South West Rocks to provide employment for his sons, Kevin and Colin. Fast forward to 2021 when Colin Ball, now aged 84, celebrated 70 years in the business on October 4. Like his father before him, Colin has provided two of his sons, Grahame and Geoffrey, with a full-time livelihood. Today they operate the Ball's Butchery shop at South West Rocks, with their Arakoon Beef, fresh seafood and home delivery service proving popular. It all began for Colin at the age of 14 learning his trade from Nelson Cooper. In 1963 a second shop was opened at Gladstone which Colin ran for 11 years, including making 154 deliveries on a Friday. Colin's father died in 1965, leaving the business and his cattle grazing property, Longreach, to his sons. There have been numerous changes over the years including selling Longreach, which had been in the family since 1862, and the passing of Kevin. But Ball's Butchery is still very much the family business it started out to be, and Colin is still out on the delivery truck and smiling with the customers.

### OLIVER HOARE

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)**—I congratulate Oliver Hoare, hailing from Caringbah South, who recently competed at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Oliver made the men's athletics 1500m final after strong performances in the heats and semi-final. Oliver ran 3:36.09 in his heat, 3:34.35 in the semi-final and 3:35.79 in the final. Oliver began his career as a swimmer but realised he was better suited for athletics. He rotates training between the Sutherland Shire and Wisconsin, USA, where he graduated with a degree in economics. Oliver is no stranger to success, in the past he has been recognised as an 11x All-American, 9x Big Ten Champion and a 3x NCAA Great Lakes All-Region Performer. More recently, Oliver beat the Australian indoor 1500m record with a 3:32.35 run. Competing at the Olympics requires strong discipline and athletic prowess; Oliver has clearly demonstrated that he has these qualities.

### TIA HINDS

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)**—I congratulate Caringbah South resident Tia Hinds who recently competed at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as a part of the women's rugby sevens team. Tia competed in games against the USA twice, China, Russia, Japan and Fiji. Tia competed in the quarter-final of the competition where the team suffered a heartbreaking loss to a strong Fiji team. Aged 19, Tia was the youngest member of the team and was left speechless at her selection. Originally tipped as a star of the future, Tia was surprised by her Tokyo 2020 call-up. She's been playing rugby since she was six years old and grew up playing with her mother in the garden, who was a touch rugby player herself. Competing at the Olympics requires strong discipline and athletic prowess, Tia has clearly demonstrated that he has these qualities.

### NATHAN LAWSON

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)**—I congratulate Burraneer resident Nathan Lawson who recently competed at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as a part of the men's rugby sevens team. Nathan and the team competed in hard-fought games against Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Fiji. Locally, Nathan plays for Southern Districts in the Shute Shield and was a part of NSW's U17 winning team at the National Youth Titles in 2016. Before COVID-19, Nathan was playing 15 a-side rugby but then switched to sevens and after impressing during a practice match in lockdown was offered a contract. Prior to the Olympics, Nathan made his international debut in 2021 against New Zealand. Competing at the Olympics requires strong discipline and athletic prowess; Nathan has clearly demonstrated that he has these qualities.

### 2021 LOCAL PARALYMPIAN

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Rheed McCracken is a para track athlete who has competed and won medals at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games – and he's a Charlestown local! Rheed took home silver medal at both Games in the men's 100m, a bronze at the London 2012 games in the men's 200m and bronze at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games in the men's 800m. At Tokyo, Rheed once again brought home the silver in the Men's 100 metre T34. Rheed has also won multiple world championship medals, including back to back silver in the 100m at the 2017 and 2019 IPC World Athletics Championships. He set a new world record time of 14.93 in the 100m T34 at the 2017 Swiss National Championships – a record he then broke the very next year, crossing the line in 14.80 at the 2018 World Para-athletics Nottwil Grand Prix. Along with being an international standard athlete, Rheed has a fabulous sense of humour, calling on social media for people to send him "stuff" while he was isolating in a Sydney CBD hotel room on his return from Tokyo. I hope he received some lovely deliveries! My congratulations to this extraordinary athlete!

### EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK 2021.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—This year, Early Learning Matters Week took place in the midst of a COVID-19 lockdown. Early childhood education has always been so important, ensuring the youngest members of our community get off to a great start in life, but the last two years have made it clearer than ever how vital our early childhood education and care workers truly are. Once again, the pandemic has made clear how much we rely on the staff at early childhood education and care services. These are essential workers who allow other essential workers to do their jobs. Our early childhood education and care workers have done an extraordinary job over the course of the pandemic, ensuring their fellow essential workers can stay working at our supermarkets, hospitals and schools. To say thank you, and to offer a little bit of extra help, I visited local preschools with a box of chocolates and some hand sanitiser – a small show of thanks and support for these centres. Once again, I want to thank all the amazing, hard-working early childhood educators across the Charlestown electorate and around NSW.

### 2021 LOCAL OLYMPIANS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Though the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics were delayed almost a year thanks to COVID, when they got under way in July Team Australia did not disappoint. With seventeen gold medals, seven silver and twenty-two bronze, Australia ranked sixth on the medal table – once again punching well above our weight in the quest for Olympic glory. During this Olympics, the Charlestown electorate had two extra special reasons to cheer on the Aussie team. Local women Emily Van Egmond and Katie Ebzery donned the green and gold representing Australia in the soccer and basketball, respectively. Our women's basketball side, the Opals, fought a strong campaign before being knocked out in the quarter-finals by Team USA. The Matildas went all the way to the semis, breaking viewership records with their match against Sweden, and finishing fourth after a nail-biter against Team USA. I wish Katie the best in her retirement from the Women's National Basketball League, announced earlier this month. Both teams, and these extraordinary athletes, represented the best of Australian sportsmanship. Congratulations to them, their teammates, and every member of Team Australia. You have done us all proud. Great job.

### DEAF SOCIETY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—The last full week of September was the 2021 International Week of Deaf People. This year's theme is "Celebrating Thriving Deaf Communities". Charlestown is home to the Newcastle branch of the Deaf Society, based out of our local community centre, the Place. The Deaf Society one of Australia's leading providers of specialist services for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people and their families. Their focus is ensuring access to all areas of life on an equal basis with others. They offer a range of services, including Auslan training. Over the course of the pandemic, Auslan interpreters have become a familiar sight at daily press conferences. These interpreters have done extraordinary work, ensuring that Deaf Australians have access to critical health and safety information in their first language, Australian Sign Language, or Auslan. I've definitely learnt the sign for "vaccination"! I want to thank these interpreters for all their hard work over the course of the pandemic, the Deaf Society for everything they do, and celebrate the rich, diverse Deaf community in the Charlestown electorate and across NSW.

### ALBION PARK CROWS AFL CLUB

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I would like to acknowledge the Albion Park Crows AFL Club who have applied for funding under the Community Building Partnerships program. The Club is seeking to purchase replacement smaller junior AFL goal posts and pads and I was very pleased to recently discuss this application with Treasurer and Secretary Ms Kristy Browne. Albion Park Crows AFL Club is now based at the new Croome Road sporting complex facility and as local Member I was also pleased to secure previous funding to supply new playing uniforms for their junior Crows players. I would like to acknowledge the President George Taylor, Vice President Brad Browne and Secretary/Treasurer Kristy Browne for all the hard work and dedication they put into the Albion Park Crows AFL Club. I'll be working hard for this great club to secure this grant from the NSW Government.

### ALBION PARK TOUCH ASSOCIATION

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I would like to acknowledge the outstanding team at the Albion Park Touch Association who have applied for funding under the Community Building Partnerships program. The Association is seeking funding for the acquisition and installation of a PA System at the touch football amenities block at Albion Oval in Albion Park Rail. I have visited this location several times and I was very pleased to secure funding previously around twelve months ago to assist them purchase two portable gazebos to provide shade on local match days as well as for representative teams during official tournaments. Commencing in 1978, the Albion Park Touch Association is now in its 43rd year and is affiliated with NSW Touch Football. I acknowledge the President Cody Hutchison, Treasurer Jacob Lambert, Administrator Brittany Hudson, Junior Coordinator Craig Johnson and the Grants Officer and Life Member Adrian Lambert. I'll be working hard for this great club to secure this grant from the NSW Government.

### BERRY-SHOALHAVEN HEADS JUNIOR LEAGUE INCORPORATED

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I would like to acknowledge Berry Shoalhaven Heads Junior League Incorporated who have applied for funding under the Community Building Partnerships program. The Club is seeking funding to purchase a digital scoreboard for the Berry Shoalhaven Heads Junior Rugby League Football Club's home ground in Berry. I would like to acknowledge Mrs Clare Leslie, Volunteer Grant Officer for the outstanding work she has done in submitting a detailed application on behalf of the Club. I'll be working hard for this great club to secure this grant from the NSW Government.

### CALDERWOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I would like to acknowledge Calderwood Christian School who have applied for funding under the Community Building Partnerships program. The school is seeking funds to improve access and safety at school pick up by laying bitumen to reduce congestion on Calderwood Road to improve safety at school pick up times. I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr Rob Thomas Business Manager at Calderwood Christian School for submitting such a detailed application on behalf of the school. I also acknowledge the amazing Principal Mr Darren Hutton. Calderwood Christian School is a terrific local school in our region which promotes academic achievement, community involvement and develops well rounded and responsible students and future leaders. I pray that the school is successful and that the funds will be a great investment in education and Christian teaching in our region.

### AUSSIE ARK EASTERN QUOLL JOEYS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—The Upper Hunter electorate is home to a unique wildlife sanctuary which continues to prove that with commitment we can preserve endangered Australian wildlife. Congratulations Aussie Ark, Barrington Tops on this year's births of Eastern Quoll joeys. 2021 has proven to be another successful year for Aussie Ark with 28 joeys born at the 400 hectare sanctuary. The Eastern Quoll has taken to its special high country home with the breeding program producing 150 joeys since 2017. The significance of Aussie Ark's work is nothing short of amazing with the endangered species returned to mainland Australia for the first time in over 60 years. To Aussie Ark president Tim Faulkner, the organisation's rangers and workforce in the Barrington Tops as well as the conservation and corporate supporters of the organisation – feel very proud of this latest achievement and the important work that you continue to do.

### DUNGOG 2021 BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate the Dungog District Chamber of Commerce 2021 Business Awards Winners that were recently announced by the Chamber. The awards recognise excellence, supporting great service and encouraging quality. I would like to congratulate the following winners: Ride Dungog, The Barracks, Tocal, Billie & Grace, Sassafas, Meg's Kitchen, Dungog Natural Health Clinic, Chic & Antique, Addison Partners, Dungog by Design, Just Been Laid, Shine Hair and Beauty, Ray White Dungog and Clarence Town, Sculpture on the Farm, Up the Creek Plumbing, Charlie Boyton and Nina Williams. Again congratulations to all the award winners and I look forward to personally catching up with them in the near future.

### MYALL CREEK MASSACRE MEMORIAL

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the significance of the Myall Creek Massacre Memorial located near Bingara. It commemorates the massacre of at least 28 Wirrayaraay men, women and children in June 1838. It is one of the most notorious massacres of Aboriginal people in this country because perpetrators were arrested and convicted and thus was comparatively well documented. The memorial site is the scene of annual commemorations in June of each year. I've attended many of these commemorations. The commemorations include descendants of victims and perpetrators who come to acknowledge their shared history. This is a place of reflection and healing. The site was placed on the Australian national heritage list in 2008 and the NSW heritage register in 2010. Regrettably, the site has recently been damaged. In particular, buildings, sandstone steps and railings have been damaged and a racist slogan was scratched into the ground. This repeats vandalism at the site that occurred in 2005. These incidents are to be deplored.

### BRUCE MCDERMAID VOLUNTEER AWARDS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tune into the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year award virtual ceremony for the Orana region. I would like to congratulate Bruce McDermaid from Dubbo, who was announced as the Orana 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year. Bruce volunteers for the Justice Advocacy Service, supporting young people, and people with an intellectual disability, in the justice system. As a volunteer justice advocate, Bruce attends court in Dubbo two to three days a week to ensure clients who may be victims, witnesses, suspects, or defendants, understand their legal rights and are emotionally supported. He has supported clients at almost 50 visits in police stations, correctional facilities, and courts in Parkes, Forbes, Narromine, Warren, and Dubbo. Congratulations again Bruce, and thank you for all that you do. I wish you the best of luck at the Gala State Ceremony later this year.

### JANICE STANFORD VOLUNTEER AWARDS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tune into the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year award virtual ceremony for the Orana region. I would like to congratulate Janice Stanford from Dubbo, who was named the Orana 2021 NSW Senior Volunteer of the Year. Janice is a long-time volunteer at the Terramungamine Country Women's Association Branch, having served as both treasurer and secretary. She

is now currently the Branch President, a position she has held for the past five years. In this position, she has helped connect existing and new volunteers with the organisation through various events and activities. And if Janice wasn't already busy enough, she also serves as a board member of Rural Sector Support Inc. since 2012, and Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW – Central West Inc. since 2006. For over 37 years Janice successfully managed a small farming enterprise with her husband outside of Dubbo. Congratulations again Janice. I wish you the best of luck at the Gala State Ceremony later this year.

#### **NARROMINE ROTARY CLUB VOLUNTEER AWARDS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tune into the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year award virtual ceremony for the Orana region. I would like to congratulate the Rotary Club of Narromine who were named the Orana 2021 Volunteer Team of the Year. The nine volunteer team members at the Rotary Club run the club's food van at local events, such as races, picnics, shows, and markets. Their efforts helped raise more than \$20,000 in 2020 for important community groups and services. The team also maintains walking tracks, bird habitats, and picnic areas at the Narromine Wetlands. The club has built shelters and picnic facilities, planted trees, and continues to maintain the facility, which is an important tourist and ecology attraction for Narromine. Congratulations again to the Narromine Rotary Club. I wish you the best of luck at the Gala State Ceremony later this year.

#### **PAT AND GERALD ROWLES RETIREMENT**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to acknowledge Gerald and Pat Rowles who have marked 34 years running Gulgong Timber and Hardware, an incredible milestone. Recently, they made the decision to sell up and pass the baton to new owners. The business was purchased in a three-way agreement between Gulgong locals Troy McKellar, David Woods, and Tony Ruming. It's something Gerald and Pat are very happy with, as they hoped to sell it locally. For Gerald and Pat, the sale of Gulgong Timber and Hardware 'pretty much' means retirement for the pair, though Gerald will stick around the shop for a few more months to show the new owners the ropes. Gerald has said that there will still be plenty for him to do, but not having to jump out of bed at six o'clock in the morning will be a nice change. Congratulations Gerald and Pat on a fantastic achievement, and all the best with retirement.

#### **THANK YOU TO FRONTLINE WORKERS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—Today I will pay special tribute to the extraordinary efforts of our frontline workers who have kept us safe, kept our economy running and kept our community connected throughout the pandemic. Across the Eastern Suburbs, Greater Sydney and New South Wales, we have seen remarkable things being done by everyday people that has saved lives and livelihoods. I wish to thank the remarkable Eastern Suburbs locals who work in healthcare, aged and disability care, emergency services, transport, education, child care, cleaning and in our supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices and in many more essential industries. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that in times of crisis we see the true character of our communities. Time and time again, we have seen local people showing up for work on the front lines of the pandemic and making sure that our community is safe, that people can access food, healthcare shelter and all the necessities to make it out of lockdown. So thank you to each and every one of our local frontline workers for the amazing work you have done and are still doing to get our community back on track.

#### **VALE SYDNEY 'SYD' JOHN WALTER D'ORNAY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise to acknowledge and pay tribute to Sydney 'Syd' John Walter D'Ornay who sadly passed away on May 21st 2021. Syd was a Clovelly man through and through. A 50 year member of Clovelly SLSC, Syd held many positions across the Surf Club, Eskimos and Nippers. His many roles included Nippers President, Vice-President and Club Captain of Clovelly SLSC and President of the Clovelly Eskimos. Gaining his Bronze Medallion in 1965, Syd went on to become both a Bronze Medallion Trainer and Assessor and was instrumental in the introduction of girls into Nippers. In his later years Syd was the coach of the Clovelly Nippers March Past team which won Gold at the Branch Championships in 2009, and was awarded life membership of the club. A Bunnies man, Syd will forever be known as a loyal and doting husband, a giving father and grandfather, a friend to all, and the patron of Clovelly. His cheeky and jovial nature, subtle quips and backhanders, and smiling face, always good for a yarn. Syd, you will be sorely missed by all who knew you. May you Rest in Peace.

#### **SOUTH SYDNEY MARCHES ON**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—Today I wish to congratulate the South Sydney Rabbits for a sensational season and send my commiserations on very tough fought loss in this year's Grand Final. In a season where the club was on the wrong end of 50 point losses, pundits had ruled the Rabbits out as a contender for the flag, but like it has countless times before, the South Sydney spirit shone through and the Rabbits lifted to come

within two points of the crown. Despite the close loss in the Grand Final, the 2021 season was sensational from Souths and their aggressive and expansive style of play has surely made the diehard fans smile and has undoubtedly won the club new fans across Sydney and New South Wales. The club farewells one of the all-time great coaches in Wayne Bennett, centre Dane Gagai and one of the club's greatest servants, half-back Adam Reynolds. The end of the season also saw the retirement of one of the greatest NRL players of the modern era, Benji Marshall. Congratulations to club CEO Blake Solly as well as every staff member and every dedicated fan for a fantastic season. South Sydney marches on.

#### **BRAVERY TREK**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I acknowledge an important event for our Veteran community starting on the 16th October, in conjunction with National Veterans Weeks. Bravery Trek is an annual event by the National Charity Bravery Trust and this year's trek acknowledges the Centenary of the Royal Australian Air Force with a 100km virtual trek. Bravery trek challenges veterans and the broader community to get outside and be active while raising awareness and vital funds for those current and former servicemen and women who have been injured during service. The Virtual challenge this year can be done over 50 days and participants can run, walk or cycle to help support our Veteran community. I would encourage you all to register at [www.braverytrek.com.au](http://www.braverytrek.com.au).

#### **FELIX STEPHENS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I wish to congratulate a young inspirational constituent of mine, Felix Stephens. Felix attends Manly West Public School in year 5W and has managed to raise \$1255.00 for the charity Surfaid by surfing every day in September. Surfaid provides remote communities with clean water, sanitation and midwifery service. Felix is exactly the type of leader that I know all Members in Parliament wish they had in their community. I thank Felix for his fantastic effort and wish him well with his studies.

#### **KIM SMEE**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I wish to acknowledge the work done in the Manly community, indeed the wider northern beaches, by Ms Kim Smee. Kim started a Facebook group called Manly Observer that has grown into a highly regarded news and information source for the people of Manly. Importantly, the focus of the Manly Observer is on community issues, and I know firsthand, the positive impact that Kim makes when the call is put out for help. The support provided to many, particularly given the challenging past 18 months, has been invaluable. I wish Kim, and the Manly Observer community well into the future.

#### **CELEBRATING OUR SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDERS**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse)**—Social service providers are the backbone of our local community. They support the most vulnerable and have played a crucial role during the COVID lockdown period offering mental health support, food and crisis accommodation to anyone who needs it. In recognition of their important work, a number of local organisations received funding through the NSW Government's 2021 Social Sector Transformation Fund to extend the reach of their services through updating their IT systems and digital platforms: Bondi Beach Cottage, North Bondi led by Manager Sandra Von der Heyden - \$20,000. Caretakers Cottage, Bondi Junction led by CEO Laurie Matthews - \$20,000. Jewish House, Bondi led by CEO Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM and President Roger Clifford OAM - \$50,000. Our Big Kitchen, Bondi led by Founder Rabbi Dr Dovid Slavin, his wife Laya and Chair Richard Andrews - \$20,000. REELise Inc, founded in 2013 by Managing Director Karen Hamilton were also granted \$20,000 to upskill the REELise team. The REELise film festival and their movement led by young people aims to create a safe, creative space online. I've seen the amazing work of these organisations firsthand. Congratulations and thank you for the work you do.

#### **SAHARAWI DAY OF NATIONAL UNITY**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the 46th Saharawi Anniversary of National Unity commemorated on Tuesday 12 October 2021. This day celebrates the human rights and right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa. The day is a celebration of the Saharawi people who suffer under a military and illegal occupation. This event was commemorated around the world. One of the many events held was a Zoom panel discussion with participants from England, Australia and New Zealand. They included Jeremy Corbyn, Kamal Fadel, Polisario Front representative in Australian and New Zealand, and Francesco Bastagli, former Head of the UN Mission in Western Sahara. This was a particularly significant time to hold the commemoration granted the recent Court of Justice of the European Union decision rejecting the application of existing trade deals between Morocco and the European Union to Western Sahara.

#### **TOM MAYE**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I wish to congratulate one magnificent person in our community, Mr Tom Maye. Tom recently celebrated more than 70 years of service to the NSW Rural Fire Service. Tom was

presented with a 70 year long service clasp at a small celebration with RFS members and his family, where Tom shared stories of his years in the service. From starting out with using local farmers tractors to create fire breaks and fighting fires barefoot to now having access to some of the most fantastic state-of-the-art protective equipment. Tom has shared his service over Duranbah and Cudgen Stations. Cudgen has been one lucky brigade having Tom stick around after his retirement in 2001 to share his experience and knowledge with the younger up and coming recruits. Tom is an extremely well respected and admired man and his service to his community is outstanding. Thank you Tom.

#### **BIRCHGROVE P&C**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Birchgrove Public School P&C. Birchgrove Public School has a 130 year history of delivering best practice education to the community of the Balmain peninsula. I had the pleasure of attending a P&C meeting on Tuesday 18 May 2021 and was delighted to see such a passionate and committed group of parents. In particular I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the volunteer committee including: President Yvonne Hilsz, Vice President Jonelle Mullings, Vice President 2 Nikki Dryden, Treasurer Ev Lau, previous Treasurer Jacquie Gilmour, Parent Coordinator Gabby Suhr, Grants Andy Beck, Fundraising Jonathan Borowski, Ethics Nicole Swanson, Uniforms Catherine Mazzeo, and Environment Amelia Seddon. On behalf of the people in the Balmain Electorate, thank you for making Birchgrove Public School and our broader community a better place to live and learn.

#### **ALEXI BOYD**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—I would like to congratulate my friend and small business advocate Alexi Boyd who has taken the role as CEO of the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia. This is the peak body for advocating on behalf of small business and I could think of no one better suited to the role. Alexi through her Small Biz Matters podcast and program on Triple H has highlighted, celebrated and fought for the rights of small business. I have been proud to have appeared on her show and co-hosted my Small Business Networking night each year with her. This year we held the event successfully online and it was wonderful to connect with local business owners. As former Vice President of the Hornsby Chamber of Commerce she is a passionate supporter of our local area and the businesses in Hornsby. Congratulations Alexi on your appointment and thank you for your work both in Hornsby and across the state on behalf of local business.

#### **RENEE STEWART**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate local Erskine Park resident, Renee Stewart, for accepting a job as an Operations Manager at Atlantis Aquaventure Waterpark, one of the world's largest waterparks in Dubai. At her young age of 23, Renee has already achieved so much in the aquatic industry driven by her passion for keeping active. She started at Wet 'n' Wild Sydney in 2015 and continued on when it became Raging Waters in 2018. She quickly rose in the ranks before she achieved her role as an Aquatic Manager. The end of her time at Raging Waters has saddened Renee however, she thanks the company for developing her aquatic career. She found this opportunity on Raging Waters' Lifeguard page, applied and ended up getting the job. Renee was shocked in the job offer and is now preparing her move to the United Arab Emirates during the COVID-19 pandemic. Renee is grateful for the Atlantis team in helping her with the overseas move and finds them absolutely amazing for their efforts. I look forward to hearing of your career success as an Operations Manager for Atlantic Aquaventure. Good luck Renee!

#### **NATASHA DUARTE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I wish to acknowledge Glenmore Park resident, Natasha Duarte on the release of her new EP, titled Free Bird. This release also heralds in a new chapter for Duarte as an Independent musician. This is her first EP to come out since she was 15, and purely her own. She is truly independent and not connected to any record labels, managers or agents and was created exactly as she wanted. She feels the writing and recording processes was completely rewarding as a result of none of these boundaries. The main idea behind the EP was an array of organic and raw songs with a folk spirit. All instruments are played live and real and despite the recent lockdowns for Greater Sydney, she remains positive about her musical plans for the year ahead. Congratulations Natasha on your recent success, I look forward to hearing more wonderful music from you and good luck for the future!

#### **ROHAN SYDIR**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate local Glenmore Park resident, Rohan Sydir, on his eighteenth birthday on 6th July, in the middle of the Greater Sydney lockdown. Despite this, Rohan's mum, Sarah Sydir had the creative idea to make his 18th birthday a memorable one resulting in an outstanding amount of community support. She posted on the local community's Facebook page about his birthday

and she was overwhelmed and very grateful for the amount of support. Some people even took the extra step and drove past the Sydir family home, waving and wanting to give their well wishes for Rohan's birthday. For Rohan, this was the best way to celebrate and loved watching the cars and people drive by and described it as 'the best birthday ever'. The Sydir family thank everyone that helped to make his birthday a special one, especially his mum who worries about him being a young person living with a disability and feeling like he is isolated or misunderstood so to see this shows the community's amazing spirit. I hope Rohan and his family celebrated well this great milestone in Rohan's life despite the lockdown!

#### **KAITLYN HORNE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate Caroline Chisholm College alum Kaitlyn Horne on her impressive achievements on being awarded one of the highly esteemed ICMS Professional Scholarships 2021. The program has an unwavering system and process which prioritises both objectivity and inclusiveness, applicants submit a written essay, academic transcripts and an array of relevant documents which highlight leadership roles, community contributions, certificates, and high school achievements. This shows that Kaitlyn further progressed to the panel interview round which includes a highly competitive field of candidates. Congratulations to Kaitlyn on her accomplishments, and I wish her all the best for the future!

#### **DR MUSTAFA AL-ANI**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—At the beginning of August, Dr Mustafa Al-Ani launched the 'Towards 100 per cent' campaign, and I am pleased to acknowledge this wonderful South Coast resident's service to our local community. Dr Al-Ani's campaign focuses on spreading awareness on the important message that receiving the COVID-19 vaccine will protect you, your family and the broader community. His message is simple. "Do your vaccine, any vaccine, anywhere". Dr Al-Ani's goal is to see the Sussex Inlet community be the first in Australia with a fully vaccinated population. This will not only provide public health benefits, but encourage other communities in the South Coast to also get vaccinated and bring tourism back to the region. Over 95% of the eligible population in the Shoalhaven local government area have had one dose of the vaccine and 73% are now fully vaccinated. I thank Dr Al-Ani for promoting this important message to the South Coast community, and encourage anyone who hasn't already to go and get vaccinated.

#### **VALE JIMMY SAAD**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—With great sadness, I speak on the death of Jimmy Saad, a much loved local businessman, who at 80 died of COVID-19 in August this year. Jimmy had worked at Milsons Point Shoe Repairs and Key Cutting in Kirribilli for 58 years since 1963. Jimmy was hard working and had a passion for boot making, having learned the trade from his grandfather. He loved his job and had strong connections to all his customers, and always had a funny story to tell. Tributes flowed from customers after hearing of the tragic news. Locals described Jimmy as a cheerful and funny man that knew how to make people smile. In Jimmy's extensive career as a cobbler, he repaired shoes for locals and did repairs on the shoes of the famous Luna Park clowns and even former Prime Minister John Howard's shoes. I extend my sincerest condolences to Jimmy's wife Lametta and their children and grandchildren.

#### **JILL WALLER'S COVID-19 FRONTLINE STAFF FUNDRAISER**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I commend Jill Waller for raising over \$1,900 to support our fantastic COVID-19 frontline staff. Jill had set up a GoFundMe campaign to provide a particular brand of face masks that are easy on the skin and comfortable for Royal North Shore Hospital staff. As we all know, these essential staff have been working long hours in PPE gear to ensure the safety of our community. After speaking to both nurses and doctors, Jill decided that providing these essential workers with skin-care face masks was one way of showing appreciation of the community. We know that it has been difficult for so many people locally; however, one positive has been our local community's overwhelming support and gratitude in rallying behind our front line health care workers. The success of this fundraiser is one way our community demonstrates gratitude and appreciation for these workers. Thank you to Jill for raising over \$1,900 to support them. A big thanks to our local frontline workers who have worked tirelessly throughout this pandemic to keep us all safe.

#### **MOSMAN WOMAN ELIZABETH 'BETTY' GEMMELL CELEBRATES 104 YEARS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—In May of this year, one of Mosman's oldest residents Elizabeth 'Betty' Gemmell, celebrated her 104th birthday. Thankfully, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions at the time, Betty was able to celebrate this milestone in grand style with lunch and lots of laughter with friends and family. Betty was a pioneer for women in banking and, throughout her career, was always focused on getting the job done. She served as a teller with a regulation loaded gun under her counter and worked tirelessly for 38 years with ANZ Bank. She retired in 1977 and has since remained an active volunteer. Betty is a true Mosman local, having lived in the area for nearly 70 years and counting. Known for being independent, she cooks her own

meals, enjoys knitting and reads anything she can get her hands on. Word has it Betty is as mentally sharp as a 45-year-old, and nothing looks to be slowing her down. I want to congratulate Betty on reaching 104, and I am thrilled she could celebrate this very momentous occasion with those close to her.

#### **RECOGNISING DAVID BRADY FROM HEAR FOR YOU**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I would like to recognise David Brady who recently concluded a successful eight years as the CEO of Hear For You. Hear For You is a not-for-profit charity that provides programs, workshops, and support for deaf and hard of hearing young people and students. David has commenced a new role as Director of Advocacy and Engagement with the Shepherd Centre, after the successful integration of Hear For You into the same organisation. The combined team are realising the greater potential for all children with hearing loss from birth to the time they enter the workforce. As Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Hearing Health and Deafness I have worked closely with David and Hear For You, conducting hearing tests for members of Parliament, and wearing dosimeters in the chamber to record the level of sound during question time. I thank David for his contributions and assistance in raising awareness of deafness and hearing health in Parliament. I congratulate David on his new role and the successful merger of Hear For You and the Shepherd Centre, and look forward to continuing to work together to assist young deaf and hard of hearing kids.

#### **CHAPEL ROAD MEDICAL CENTRE**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—Since March 2020, New South Wales have been coping with the challenging outbreak of coronavirus. Over the last few months, my electorate of Bankstown has particularly been impacted by the devastating effects this pandemic. I take this opportunity to acknowledge all the health personnel for their tremendous efforts during this period and in working hard to keep our community safe. In particular, I wish to recognise and pay tribute to Chapel Road Medical Centre in Bankstown for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Anthony Lam and Dr Anh Lam for their tireless efforts in helping our community stay safe and vaccinated. I am pleased to see that Electorate of Bankstown and South West Sydney is well on its way to a 90% first dose vaccination rate. I commend the Chapel Road Medical Centre on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

#### **DR TIN'S SURGERY**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—Since March 2020, New South Wales have been coping with the challenging outbreak of coronavirus. Over the last few months, my electorate of Bankstown has particularly been impacted by the devastating effects this pandemic. I take this opportunity to acknowledge all the health personnel for their tremendous efforts during this period and in working hard to keep our community safe. In particular, I wish to recognise and pay tribute to Dr Tin's Surgery in Georges Hall for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Yu Tin, Dr Daniel Wynn, Dr Christina Wynn, Dr Patrick Yue for their tireless efforts in helping our community stay safe and vaccinated. I am pleased to see that Electorate of Bankstown and South West Sydney is well on its way to a 90% first dose vaccination rate. I commend Dr Tin's Surgery on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

#### **BANKSTOWN SPORTS ATHLETICS CLUB (BSAC)**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I wish to recognise the tremendous achievement of Bankstown Sports Athletics Club, and its two Olympic athletes, Jessica Hull and Eleanor Patterson, for each successfully making the Olympic final. Jessica ran 11th in the Olympic 1500m final in 4:02, and has previously broken several Australian running records. Eleanor, in high jump, cleared an astounding 1.96m in the Olympic final, placing 5th for Australia. This marked the first time in its 50 year long history that the Bankstown Sports Athletics Club had two athletes make the Olympic final. This is a terrific achievement for the Club, and one worthy of recognition. Jessica and Eleanor deserve to be commended on their efforts and have made their local community proud. I wish to acknowledge Bankstown Sports Athletics Club President Mr Colin Whitbread, and Secretary Mr Mathew Whitbread, for their dedication to promoting sport in our community. In nurturing local talent, their efforts have seen our community reach international recognition in the Olympics.

#### **GAIL EVANS**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I am delighted to have nominated Ms Gail Evans for the Rotary Inspirational Women Health Care Worker award, earlier this year. Gail is a Food Service Assistant at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, and a long-serving delegate with the Health Services Union (HSU). For many patients, Gail is a friendly and welcoming face that they look forward to seeing when their food is delivered. For over two decades, Gail has consistently placed service to her fellow employees and to her patients above herself. Gail is a tireless advocate for workers' rights, often attending meetings and rallies outside of her regular work

hours. During the pandemic, Gail arrived at work two hours before the start of her shift to take the extra care needed to prepare patients' meals and to make sure they were delivered on time. Gail as a long-time member of the HSU has been committed to ensuring that her colleagues and staff are provided with the best industrial support. Congratulations to Gail for representing our community and working so hard throughout the pandemic. Thank you to HSU General Secretary, Mr Gerard Hayes and Mr Adam Hall from the HSU, for their outstanding support of their members across the health sector.

#### **BILL ELLIS, OAM**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Bill Ellis of GyMEA who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to harness racing for over 60 years. Bill's journey is quite remarkable, beginning as a schoolboy with a part-time job as a messenger for Trotguide. Although Bill knew nothing about harness racing, the editor saw Bill's future as a journalist and offered him a cadetship. It was through this role that Bill found his love of horses, reporting on harness racing at the Royal Easter Show and then training, breeding and driving horses for many years. His editor's vision for Bill was in fact correct, as Bill later worked for the Daily Telegraph as the harness racing writer for more than 35 years. Bill's undoubted passion for the industry resulted in him becoming President of the NSW Harness Racing Media Guild from 1990-2008 and Executive Director of Club Menangle (formerly NSW Harness Racing Club) in 2018. Bill continues to share his love of harness racing with his loving wife Maureen, and his profound knowledge is a continued asset to the industry. I commend Bill for his highly deserving receipt of the Medal of the Order of Australia.

#### **JASON ESHMAN**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate Illawong Rural Fire Brigade member Jason Eshman, who was awarded with the 2nd Clasp to his National Medal earlier this year. Jason has selflessly served our local community for over 37 years, commencing his distinguished career with the Waterfall Rural Fire Brigade in November 1983 before transferring to Illawong in July 2007. His volunteering journey has led him to battle many fires across our state. Over this time, he has held the ranks of Deputy Captain, Crew Leader, RFS Assessor, Rural Fire Service Instructor, and Rural Fire Driver. It is undeniable that Jason is a truly community minded individual. Jason gives freely of his time to support the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade by sharing his business skills and extensive knowledge, making him an integral part of the senior management group. In recognition of his important contribution, Jason was awarded the National Medal and 1st Clasp in April 2017, the NSW Rural Fire Service Long Service Medal and 1st Clasp in October 2011, and 2nd Clasp in November 2020. Jason is a worthy recipient of the National Medal 2nd Clasp, and I thank him for his ongoing dedication to keeping our community safe.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber's ("SSBC") new Board of Directors who were elected at the annual general meeting on 30 September 2021. The SSBC is a not-for-profit organisation comprised of dynamic individuals who are passionate about local business. The group provide a number of resources such as educational events, free business listings, newsletters, and social events to support small businesses in our community. Leading this powerhouse team is newly appointed President Hima Gupta. Hima is the Director of 3E Accounting Solutions Pty Ltd in Alford's Point and has been involved in the SSBC since 2016. With 21 years of accounting experience, Hima's passion for small business, wealth of industry knowledge and networking skills are an asset to community entrepreneurs. I also congratulate newly elected board director Joel Curtis who is the owner and Principal Psychologist of Endeavour Wellness in Kirrawee. Joel started his company in 2009 and is passionate about building connections, nurturing people's goals and business growth. I commend the SSBC's new Board of Directors and thank all members of the chamber for the contribution they make to small business in our community.

#### **RUAN SIMS OAM**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Ruan Sims of Miranda, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her immeasurable contribution to rugby league. It is undoubted that Ruan has been a trailblazer for women in rugby league. From her early years, Ruan was the only girl in her team when she started playing for the Gerringong Lions at 8 years of age. By age 16, Ruan brought her tenacity to rugby union leading her to represent NSW and Australia before turning back to rugby league. Ruan was the NRL's first contracted female player and her incredible skills shone during her time with the Cronulla Sharks, Sydney Roosters and as Captain of the Australian Jillaroos and NSW State of Origin team. Ruan is no stranger to breaking down barriers in otherwise male dominated environments and is an inspiring role model for all women. Ruan is a firefighter for Fire and Rescue NSW, a rugby league commentator, and also an ambassador for the NRL's 'State of Mind' and 'Voice Against Violence' initiatives. I congratulate Ruan on receiving the highly deserved Medal of the Order of Australia, and thank her for continuing to empower women in sport.

### LIVERPOOL LIONESSE CLUB

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise the Liverpool Lioness Club, as it has sadly decided to close after 40 years of service to the local community. I would like to congratulate Liverpool Lioness Club for all they have achieved during their time of service. Together, over the years, they have raised more than \$250,000 for various initiatives and community groups, and have completed over 150,000 hours of voluntary work in our area. The Club was officially formed on May 8, 1981, and started with a membership of 30 people. They have achieved a lot in this time, including supplying Easter eggs and Christmas puddings to Meals on Wheels annually, worth an estimated \$16,000. I would like to especially thank the Club's remaining members, Ruth Gimson, Nell Corliss, Janelle Collins, Pauline Dinning, Lynette Dupon and Trish Friend. Even in their last year, which was during COVID-19 2020 lockdown, they managed to raise \$22,000 in donations to help the community. Mr Speaker, once again I would like to thank the Liverpool Lioness Club for their commitment to helping the community over so many years.

### LAUNCH OF PRESTONS HORNETS CRICKET 2021-2022 SEASON

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—I would like to acknowledge Prestons Hornets Cricket Club and wish all of their teams the best of luck for their season launch. The Club has been a part of the local sporting community for over 50 years and continues to encourage young people and their families to get involved in cricket. Registrations are still open and I know they will get many local junior players signing up, as they always do. Post lockdown, it is important that our young people are getting back into community sport and staying active. The Club prides itself on helping junior players develop their skills as well as the importance of maintaining sportsmanship and integrity. Once again I would like to wish all the teams at Prestons Hornets Cricket Club all the best for this upcoming season and hope they enjoy being able to play outdoors with their friends again. Thank you.

### HARB CHARITY ASSOCIATION INC

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to join the celebrations of the Harb Charity Association's Golden Jubilee Celebrations on Friday 11 June 2021 at Granville – before the recent COVID-19 outbreak and associated stay-at-home orders. Congratulations to the Association for their 50 years of support to the community here and in Lebanon. It was lovely to join members to celebrate this important milestone. The event reminded me of my visit to Tannourine in 2016 with other Labor MPs, where we were delighted to meet the family of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay. The Harb Charity Association was established in 1970 and provides financial support to those in need in Sydney and Lebanon. They also donate to other foundations, charities where needed and to other members of the Harb community. In 2020 the Association opened a humanitarian account and raised \$50,000 to help assist the citizens of Lebanon facing difficult socioeconomic times. Once again, congratulations to the association for your hard work.

### ERIC TWEEDALE

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Belated birthday wishes to Eric Tweedale and a big congratulations on turning 100. Born on 5 May 1921 in Rochdale, England, Eric's family immigrated to Australia in 1924 and settled in Merrylands. Eric attended Guildford Public and Parramatta Intermediate Schools and joined the Navy in 1941. He was drafted into the role of convoy signalman to a naval ship escorting merchant ships up and down the Australian coast to guarantee their safety from enemy attack. A keen cricketer, Eric played first grade with Central Cumberland. At 17 he was selected to play 1st grade Rugby with Parramatta (now the Western Sydney Two Blues). After his provincial debut for NSW he earned a spot in an Australian side and an international debut in Dunedin during the 1946 Wallaby Tour. Eric is a Life Member of Parramatta Rugby Union and Parramatta Junior Rugby Union. He was capped 10 times for Australia and played 123 First Grade games for Parramatta. Eric is Two Blues Club Patron, former captain, coach and president. Eric is also a Life Member of Merrylands RSL. It is an honour to pay tribute to Eric Tweedale's contributions and indelible links to our community spanning two centuries.

### FRANK WALKER LECTURE

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I wish to recognise the New South Wales Society of Labor Lawyers who presented the 2021 Annual Frank Walker Lecture on 29 July this year. Due to the consequences of the pandemic the Lecture was held virtually. The lecture was delivered by guest speaker Milton Cockburn. Mr Cockburn gave a quite interesting presentation in particular defending Neville Wran and commented on some of the ABC coverage about him. Mr Cockburn worked closely with Wran when he was Premier and you'd expect an address to Labor Lawyers to defend Wran. But the strength of Mr Cockburn's argument was very powerful. And it seems clear that doubtful, uncorroborated claims would never have been made against Wran if he were still

alive. The Annual Frank Walker Lecture has over a number of years added usefully to political debate. The Society should be congratulated for the initiative of conducting such a lecture.

#### **ONE THOUSAND MEALS A DAY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to place on the parliamentary record my appreciation for the Brown Boyz Indian Restaurant a local business that has shown great generosity during the Covid lockdown. When Lismore went into lockdown in August, Tarsem Singh the owner of Brown Boyz Restaurant noticed many people struggling. He decided his restaurant could help by providing free meals. On the first day the restaurant prepared three-hundred takeaway meals. The next day that grew to five-hundred meals and soon they were making one-thousand meals. The restaurant continued to provide one thousand free takeaway meals for a total of 33 days of lockdown. Every day the meal options, vegetarian and non-vegetarian were posted on community Facebook pages, and prepared meals would be out the front of the restaurant at lunchtime and dinnertime. Tarsem said people were waiting each day to pick up meals, including one community welfare worker who would pick up 20 to 30 meals. For a business that only opened in July 2020, Brown Boyz has quickly built a reputation as a strong community supporter and for great food and service. With lockdown over the restaurant is back to regular business and I wish them well.

#### **TENTERFIELD HOSPITAL PANDEMIC MUSEUM**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—In July I attended the opening of Tenterfield's Museum of the Spanish Flu Pandemic 1918-1919 in the former pandemic isolation ward at Tenterfield Hospital. The museum covers the major topics of the pandemic, including border issues between Queensland and New South Wales, with some interesting parallels with current times. The story of how this museum came about is also fascinating. Back in 2003 the building was a maintenance workshop slated for demolition. Doctor Ian Unsworth found out that the building had originally been built as an isolation ward during the Spanish Flu epidemic, and was probably the only such facility in regional Australia. After years of lobbying and research, a NSW Heritage Grant, and the support of Hunter New England Health, the Spanish Flu pandemic museum in Tenterfield has become a reality. Congratulations to Dr Unsworth and all those involved in this achievement: Deborah Wray, Tenterfield Shire Heritage Advisor, John Brown, Lu Potter, Bev Chorley, Fiona Dodds and Mac Fraser from the Isolation Block Restoration Group, Libby Newell, Tenterfield Shire museum advisor and Kay Hurtz and Helen Petrie from the Family History Group and the many other volunteers. This is a wonderful addition to Tenterfield's heritage.

#### **KYOGLA LIONS CLUB COMMUNITY FOODPANTRY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—The Kyogle Lions Service Club on Thursday 23 September, 2021 took over the management of the Kyogle Community Foodpantry after many years of the Seventh Day Adventist Church running the pantry. The food pantry provides plentiful fruit, vegetables and fresh food to locals in Kyogle who need a helping hand. They have been a lifeline for so many in the community particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. When speaking to my office, Project Manager and Lions member Roz Knights said that it's a team effort to keep the pantry going. She says they never want to be named or never ask for thanks but countless volunteers, tradies, grocery shops and business give their time, product and labour for free or a very reduced rate. The premises at 33-35 Bloom St Kyogle has been transformed into a larger and upgraded location for the pantry. "The igloo" as locals call it has increased from 30m<sup>2</sup> in size to 190+m<sup>2</sup> in size, allowing for the food pantry to accommodate 20 plus people at a time to be assisted with their weekly food shop. This is possible by much reduced rent provided by the landlord and a NSW Government grant.

#### **URBENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL – COUNTRY CHOIR SUPERSTARS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to congratulate the wonderful students and staff at Urbenville Public School for their country choir initiative. The country choir throughout this year has been singing to the residents of the Urbenville Residential Aged Care facility. Providing much joy and support to both the residents and staff at the aged care facility during what has been an isolating time away from friends and family. I want to acknowledge Principal Chris Sifko, Teacher Melanie Sifko and the superstar members of the country choir – Kilyn, Michaela, Marlia, Gabby, Hunter J, Hunter MW, Amelia, Ethan, Faith, Leighton, Tyler, Jethro and Thaine. When COVID-19 restrictions tightened in recent months the country choir were not deterred. Instead they sang to the aged care residents on the microphone from a safe distance out the front and posted songs online for the community to enjoy. The school has invited Keith Urban to visit the school and perform. They have changed their school logo to Keith, written letters to him and have dedicated the school notice board to him. In parliament today I want to put the call out to Keith to come to Urbenville and sing with the country choir.

#### **VIRAL KINDNESS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—I would like to draw the attention of the house to the work of the community group Viral Kindness Sydney Foodcare who have been providing fresh fruit and vegetables to people

facing food insecurity in Sydney's inner city and surrounding suburbs since 2020 and the initial impacts of COVID-19 hit. Operating out of the Counterpoint Community Centre in Redfern, Viral Kindness prepares hundreds of food boxes weekly for a dozen local community groups and NGOs who deliver to families and individuals in Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria, Marrickville and Darlington. It was wonderful to join the Viral Kindness team led by Alisdair Grant and Linda Robson along with regular volunteers to help them pack boxes of fruit and vegetables for distribution. Viral Kindness Sydney Foodcare receives food from some large companies and support from the City of Sydney Council. A shout out too to Counterpoint Centre staff, Jeff Rogers, Tracey Hamilton and Adam Antonelli. I acknowledge their important contribution to supporting our local community to provide adequate support to people severely affected by the pandemic.

#### **ADDISON ROAD COMMUNITY ORGANISATION**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—I would like to congratulate and thank the Addison Road Community Organisation for its outstanding work providing food to some 8000 people each week all over Sydney and into regional NSW during this pandemic. Addison Road has been providing this service since the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and their contribution to our local community and other communities throughout NSW is remarkable. Their massive response is due to the work of 720 volunteers and donors - many of whom are locals in the electorate of Newtown and the inner west - who have taken up the challenge to provide food to support those who are facing food insecurity due to the pandemic's impacts. This operation has been led by Rosanna Barbara CEO, Addison Road and her team including Damien Moore, Susan Conyers, Gurwinder Kaur, Mina Bui Jones, Mike Hayes, Dulcie Munoz and Mark Mordue. Some of the well-knowns volunteers include Sam Mostyn, Sam Lane, Clint Bolton, Craig Foster, Kylie Kwong, Brain Brown, who regularly join others like Dr Juliana from Bankstown Hospital, Mostafa Azimitabar, Lighthouse, the Bulldogs, GWS Giants and so many more. We thank you for all your work and care at this time.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 20:22 until  
Thursday 14 October 2021 at 9:30.**