



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday, 20 October 2021**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bills .....	7457
Local Government Amendment (COVID-19—Elections Special Provisions) Bill 2021 .....	7457
Returned.....	7457
Customer Service Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 .....	7457
First Reading.....	7457
Second Reading Speech.....	7457
Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Bill 2021 .....	7459
First Reading.....	7459
Second Reading Speech.....	7459
Payroll Tax Amendment (Payroll Tax Waiver) Bill 2021 .....	7464
First Reading.....	7464
Second Reading Speech.....	7464
Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021 .....	7464
Returned.....	7464
Consideration in Detail .....	7464
Business of the House.....	7469
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Committee Reports.....	7469
Budget.....	7469
Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022 .....	7469
Committees .....	7483
Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety.....	7483
Reports.....	7483
Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.....	7485
Reports.....	7485
Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning .....	7487
Reports.....	7487
Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission.....	7490
Reports.....	7490
Legislation Review Committee .....	7492
Reports.....	7492
Question Time .....	7493
Icare and State Insurance Regulatory Authority.....	7493
State Economy .....	7494
Icare .....	7496
Tourism and Visitor Economy.....	7496
Icare .....	7497
Icare .....	7498
Health Infrastructure.....	7499
COVID-19 Vaccine Passport.....	7500
Food Insecurity .....	7501

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

COVID-19 Recovery and Skills Training .....	7502
Business of the House .....	7503
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills .....	7503
Reordering of General Business .....	7504
Personal Explanation .....	7506
Member for Pittwater .....	7506
Bills .....	7506
Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Consent Reforms) Bill 2021 .....	7506
First Reading .....	7506
Second Reading Speech .....	7506
Budget .....	7514
Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022 .....	7514
Public Interest Debate .....	7517
Regional, Rural and Remote Mental Health Services .....	7517
Private Members' Statements .....	7524
Little India Harris Park Business Association .....	7524
Paint the Town Read .....	7525
COVID-19 and Bathurst Electorate .....	7525
Tribute to Norm Provan .....	7526
COVID-19 and Auburn Electorate .....	7527
Oxley Highway .....	7528
Uncle Micklo Jarrett .....	7528
Domestic and Family Violence .....	7529
COVID-19 and Charlestown Electorate .....	7529
Holsworthy Electorate Local Businesses .....	7530
COVID-19 and Central Coast Small Businesses .....	7531
Pink Elephants Support Network .....	7532
Public School Funding .....	7533
Tribute to Uncle Mark Flanders .....	7533
Northern Beaches Citizenship Ceremony .....	7534
COVID-19 and Teachers .....	7534
Motel Ratchet Clauses .....	7535
COVID-19 and Lakemba Electorate Community Groups .....	7536
Thurgoona Public School .....	7537
Wyong Public Hospital .....	7538
Teacher Salaries .....	7539
Penrith Panthers .....	7539
TAFE NSW .....	7540
Bills .....	7541
Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill 2021 .....	7541
First Reading .....	7541
Community Recognition Notices .....	7541

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Somali Australian Community Association .....	7541
House of Welcome .....	7541
Wscce .....	7542
Bass Hill Medical Centre.....	7542
Dr Van Lanh Nguyen.....	7542
Dr Yvonne Huyen Pham.....	7542
Dr Andrew Lam.....	7542
Casino CWA.....	7543
Samson Alston .....	7543
Erin Jacob .....	7543
Spotgo .....	7543
Emma Peat.....	7543
Jennifer Cameron.....	7543
Jade Crook .....	7544
Spotgo .....	7544
Hardys Bay Men's Shed.....	7544
Tournament of the Minds .....	7544
Chloe Green – Finalist 2021 School Reconciliation Awards .....	7544
Surf Life Saving Mid North Coast.....	7545
Ethan Francis – Local Government Candidate .....	7545
Uki Refugee Project.....	7545
Lismore Council's Recycling Initiatives .....	7545
Bolt and Buckle in Murwillumbah .....	7545
Amelia Russ.....	7546
Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre .....	7546
Soroptimist International Griffith .....	7546
Finley Community Help Group .....	7546
Katelyn and Matilda Eddy .....	7547
Megan Barnes .....	7547
Pets in Pink .....	7547
Knitting for Others.....	7547
Tamara Dean.....	7547
Speed Dial.....	7548
Community Referees of the Year .....	7548
Newcastle Beacon.....	7548
Newcastle Netball Association .....	7548
Nigel Boogaard .....	7549
Project Kindness .....	7549
Kari Foundation .....	7549
Steve's Easy Squeeze .....	7549
Peter Wakeling, Forster Tennis Club.....	7549
Amarley Bron .....	7550

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Ivor Thomas, Manning Valley Cycle Club.....	7550
Jake Maurirere, Manning River Ratz.....	7550
Old Guildford Public School .....	7550
Our Pure Planet.....	7550
St Merkorious Charity .....	7550
Pcyc Fairfield Cabramatta – Fit for Work Program .....	7551
Queen's Birthday Honours 2021 .....	7551
Leppington Public School.....	7551
Move it 4 Mater Dei .....	7551
Mount Annan Christian College Slc 2022.....	7551
Marco Corbo .....	7552
Cheryl Bellet.....	7552
Aleisha Taylor, Cfo Mutual Bank .....	7552
Welcome to Our Newest Police Recruits .....	7552
Lauren Parker – Champion Sportsperson .....	7552
Maitland Communities Celebrate Their Teachers.....	7553
Erik Horrie .....	7553
Barry Gray .....	7553
Bayley Baragry .....	7553
Ronnie Riskalla.....	7553
St David's Uniting Church Climate Action .....	7554
Goodwood Bakery .....	7554
Connect Marrickville Schools As Community Centre .....	7554
AIDS Council of NSW – Covid Response .....	7554
Tribute to Kim Williams.....	7554
Western Sydney Local Health District Staff Queen's Birthday Honours .....	7555
Seven Hills Public School .....	7555
Places of Faith COVID-19 Support for Seven Hills Electorate.....	7555
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Reopening .....	7555
Rosina Armstrong – Mensah .....	7556
Lil' Bookworms .....	7556
Molly Stewart .....	7556
Cowra Region Show Volunteers .....	7556
Temora is A Place to Provide Ideal GP Training .....	7556
Jordyn Ballard.....	7556
Belinda Stanton.....	7557
Dr Geoffrey Hayman .....	7557
3 Bridges Movember .....	7557
Revival Church Penshurst.....	7557
Elizabeth Friend.....	7557
Michael Ibrahim.....	7558
Tracey Everingham Armstrong .....	7558

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Solar Buddies.....	7558
Galston Community News.....	7558
Sarah Jensen.....	7559
Alison Broinowski Western NSW Business Awards .....	7559
Taje Fowler, Regional Youth Taskforce.....	7559
Joshua Shields Western NSW Business Awards .....	7559
Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury .....	7559
Jack and Jill Kindergarten .....	7560
Shamida Bright Vision .....	7560
Suzie Van Opdorp: Compassionate Community Worker.....	7560
National Threatened Species Day.....	7560
Glebe Youth Service Mural .....	7560
Mr Jack (John) Peattie .....	7561
Mrs Adrienne Fisher.....	7561
Upper Hunter Electorate 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours Recipients.....	7561
Najeeba Wazefadost .....	7561
Rotary Club of Granville-9675 .....	7562
Sadat Welfare & Sports Association .....	7562
Parramatta River Catchment Group.....	7562

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday, 20 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.

## *Bills*

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

#### **Returned**

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

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Victor Dominello, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital)** (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Customer Service Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which makes miscellaneous amendments to 18 Acts and one regulation across the Customer Service and Better Regulation portfolios as well as amendments to related Acts. These reforms cover amendments to various legislation to correct minor drafting errors, deliver on Government commitments, make consequential amendments following the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission and make new minor amendments that support COVID-19 economic recovery. I now turn to the contents of the bill.

Schedule 1.14 to the bill amends the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. This amendment aims to enable the sharing of personal information during emergencies and natural disasters and subsequent recovery operations. This is a public commitment from the New South Wales Government response to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and means that people will only have to tell their story once to receive assistance from a range of agencies, local councils and non-government organisations [NGOs] that support people during and after natural disasters and emergencies. This amendment will enable Government to coordinate supports effectively and efficiently. It will facilitate supports for people through evacuations and provide financial and material help and in the recovery phase help to rebuild their communities and their lives. We have seen the devastating speed at which the bushfires tore through New South Wales during the 2019 bushfire season. This amendment is critical to make sure we can provide comprehensive assistance to people immediately, when they need it. The amendment must be enacted before the commencement of the 2021 bushfire season to enable an effective disaster response.

Schedule 1.4 amends the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 and mirrors the amendments to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act made by schedule 1.14 to the bill to ensure that health information can be shared between government agencies and emergency support services during an emergency. For example, health information would include providing an eligible participant's basic personal information to providers of mental health supports during the recovery phase of emergency management. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Resilience NSW, has given his full support to these amendments. Commissioner Fitzsimmons led the State's emergency response to the 2019-20 bushfires when he was commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Commissioner Fitzsimmons is now leading the State's recovery from those bushfires and the March 2021 floods as the State Recovery Coordinator and Commissioner of Resilience NSW.

The commissioner has noted the vital importance of a timely and effective response to protect life and property when disaster strikes and also the importance of providing easy access to welfare and support services to help disaster-affected people recover and rebuild in the days, weeks and months after an emergency. Requiring disaster-affected people to repeat their story to multiple different agencies or service providers only adds another



trauma to the one they have already suffered. These amendments will help to ensure that they will need to tell their story only once.

Schedule 1.8 to the bill makes amendments to the Liquor Act 2007 to exempt certain applications for temporary and permanent changes to the boundary of outdoor parts of a licensed premises from consultation and fee requirements and extends the operation of certain special provisions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic by 12 months until 11 December 2022. This amendment will streamline outdoor dining applications and support the New South Wales Government's economic recovery efforts once the COVID-19-related restrictions are eased. As New South Wales hits the vaccination targets, it is critical to safely bring patrons back to bars and restaurants. This amendment will enable businesses to use a streamlined application to temporarily change the boundary of a licensed premises for outdoor dining. Schedule 1.9 makes consequential amendments to the Liquor Regulation 2018 that support these amendments.

The amendments to the Motor Accidents Compensation Act 1999, Motor Accident Injuries Act 2017, Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 and Personal Injury Commission Act 2020 are consequential on the establishment of the Personal Injury Commission or otherwise support the commission in addressing COVID-19-related delays in settling disputes. Schedule 1.13 makes amendments to ensure that the Personal Injury Commission can arrange to have medical assessments and hearings conducted outside of New South Wales. These amendments also ensure that commission members and medical assessors are covered by the protections in the Personal Injury Commission Act when exercising their functions, as was intended when it was established.

The commission has an increasing number of assessments and hearings that are indefinitely delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing restrictions. Compounding on existing backlogs from the 2020 lockdown, this disadvantages out-of-State claimants and places an unnecessary burden on the commission for when in-person assessments resume. Schedules 1.10, 1.11 and 1.19 to the bill introduce amendments to allow for an extension of time to make an application for a review of a merit review decision, review of a medical assessment or appeal against a decision of a non-presidential member of the commission beyond 28 days, in accordance with the Personal Injury Commission Rules. Schedule 1.17 makes amendments to the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Act 1975 to clarify the remuneration arrangements of the Independent Review Officer consequent on the enactment of the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. I move this amendment with the agreement of the Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations.

Schedule 1.15 amends the Registered Clubs Act 1976 to modernise governance arrangements and remove membership costs as part of a COVID-19 assistance package. That includes enabling virtual attendance to board meetings, alternatives to in-person voting and reducing board meetings from monthly to quarterly. It also removes the requirement for the \$2 annual membership fee and the requirement to display any new member's home address prominently in the venue for a week and for new members to state their occupation on joining. That final measure facilitates the greater adoption of the digital driver licence by limiting information to only information held on the licence and protects the privacy of potential members.

Schedule 1.3 amends the Conveyancing Act 1919 to enable corporations to execute deeds in electronic form. That schedule is needed in response to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 lockdown. Schedule 1.5 amends the Home Building Act 1989 to allow a licence holder or other persons such as a developer to enter into an agreement with NSW Fair Trading in lieu of prosecution or an order for rectification works that have adverse impacts on a licence holder going forward. By creating an undertaking power, inspectors could save time; as the agreement is voluntary, evidentiary thresholds are not required to be met. That can be diverted to resolve more complex breaches of the Act that more adversely impact customers.

The following schedules to the bill have previously been tabled in Parliament as statute law revision amendments and as such do not seek to make significant policy changes. They propose minor changes to update legislation to current drafting conventions, to correct drafting oversights or to otherwise make minor changes to existing regulatory frameworks. Schedule 1.1 amends the Betting and Racing Act 1998 to explicitly enable regulations that require a sports controlling body to notify the Minister of a change in the sports controlling body's circumstances and enables the Minister to, by order, authorise the use of New South Wales race field information by a betting service provider or prescribed person.

Schedule 1.2 amends the Casino Control Act 1992 to update it to match current drafting conventions. That involves clarifying that regulations may confer functions on the Minister or a delegate. Schedule 1.6 amends the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 to enable the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to correct minor, obvious, clerical and administrative errors in certain pricing determinations made in relation to monopoly services and fares for public passenger services. Schedule 1.7 amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 and provides that appeals against a decision of a planning authority to refuse to amend a development contract under the Community Land Development Act 2021 are class 2 proceedings in the Land and Environment

Court. That Act is administered by the Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence and is progressing through this bill with his explicit agreement.

Schedule 1.12 amends the Music Festivals Act 2019 to protect officials administering the Act from personal liability. The schedule corrects a drafting oversight and aligns existing protections from personal liability with those for liquor and gaming officials administering the Act. Schedule 1.15 makes a correction to add a missing word to the Real Property Act 1900. Schedule 1.18 amends the Totalizator Act 1997 to enable the Minister for Customer Service to exclude a person or a person belonging to a class of persons from the definition of a key employee and to enable the regulations to apply, adopt or incorporate the provisions of a document as in force at a particular time or as in force from time to time. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **PLASTIC REDUCTION AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY 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) (09:45):** On behalf of Mr Matt Kean: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Bill 2021 forms an important part of the New South Wales Government's commitment to reduce plastic waste and protect the New South Wales environment. The bill will give effect to key reforms outlined in the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 and the NSW Plastics Action Plan. The bill will support a paradigm shift in the way that products are made, used and disposed of. It will help transition New South Wales towards a circular economy where materials and resources are valued and kept in the productive economy while creating jobs and protecting the environment and the community. The bill will give effect to the New South Wales Government's commitments to prohibit problematic or unnecessary plastic items; to set design standards for items for environmental, human health or economic purposes; and to establish mandatory product stewardship requirements for brand owners of regulated products.

Plastic is an incredibly useful material and is an integral part of modern technology, transport and health care. However, its versatility and widespread use has also led to a range of environmental, economic and health issues. Plastic waste is an intergenerational problem. We often use a piece of plastic for mere minutes, but it can remain in our environment for hundreds, or even thousands, of years. It is estimated that eight million tonnes of plastic leak into the world's oceans every year; that is equal to a dump truck every single minute. While it is a global issue, the problems are occurring in our very own backyards. Plastic packaging and single-use plastic items make up 60 per cent of all litter in New South Wales. Single-use plastic items are designed or intended to be, or are ordinarily, used once and then often thrown away. They are cheap and convenient, but they are also posing an enormous risk to the environment.

Around 575 million plastic items were littered in New South Wales in 2019. Much of those were single-use items such as plastic bags, straws and cutlery. Those items break into smaller pieces of plastic over time. They can be ingested by wildlife, killing or injuring them, and can even enter the human food chain. Plastic kills or injures many thousands of animals every year. Research suggests that turtles have a 22 per cent chance of dying if they ingest even just one piece of plastic. There are also significant economic costs to manage plastic litter and it usually falls on the taxpayer to manage that cost. A 2016 survey of New South Wales local councils, public and private land managers and community groups found that more than \$180 million is spent each year on managing litter. Even when plastics are not littered, they still pose significant environmental and economic challenges.

Currently, only around 10 per cent of plastics in New South Wales are recycled, and that includes plastics in the Return and Earn scheme. That means that most plastic waste ends up in landfills, which prevents valuable resources from recirculating in the economy. We can and we must do better if we want to achieve our goal of encouraging the development of a circular economy. We also need to do more to address the design and manufacture of products at source. Many products are made from harmful materials or they are not designed to be easily re-used or recycled. Producers are not required to consider the end-of-life impacts of their products. That means that many products can be problematic when disposed of, and the costs of managing them often fall to the community and, ultimately, have an impact on the environment.

To address these issues, in March 2020 the New South Wales Government released a discussion paper entitled *Cleaning Up Our Act: Redirecting the Future of Plastic in NSW*. More than 16,000 submissions were received in response to the paper from the community and key stakeholders, including retailers, peak bodies, local

councils and community groups. Those submissions showed overwhelming support for action on plastics, including more than 98 per cent support for the phasing out of single-use plastics. Submissions also revealed strong support for product stewardship schemes, with 93 per cent of community respondents agreeing that companies should be held more accountable for their own plastic packaging. Environmental groups, local councils, and waste and recycling groups shared that sentiment. Many businesses requested that the Government take action, such as those that identified the wider cost of inaction to our environment and economy. Businesses noted the importance of harmonising plastics rules with other Australian jurisdictions to minimise the regulatory burden for companies that operate Australia wide.

The Government also commissioned research on a representative sample of the New South Wales population to better understand community views during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The research found that, despite concerns around COVID-19, the community still strongly supported prohibiting single-use plastic items. The Government incorporated that feedback into the NSW Plastics Action Plan, which was released in June 2021. The plan sets out clear actions that not only deal with downstream activities like recycling and litter prevention but also focus attention on design and production, stopping plastic waste before it even becomes a problem. It is one part of the Government's approach to transition to a circular economy. A circular economy involves a shift to where materials are used more efficiently, where waste is designed out or avoided, where materials are recirculated for as long as possible and where there is an ecological sustainable management of resources.

To help the transition to a circular economy, the New South Wales Government also released the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 alongside the NSW Plastics Action Plan. The strategy outlines the actions the New South Wales Government will take over the next six years, the first phase of the strategy, to deliver on its long-term objectives. These actions are backed by \$356 million in funding over five years to help deliver the strategy's priority programs and policy reforms. The strategy includes targets that the bill will help to achieve, including to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025, to reduce plastic litter items by 30 per cent by 2025 and to triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030. To make that transition, the responsibility must be shared between governments, industry and the community. That will not only lead to reduced waste and litter but also drive job creation and innovation in many sectors across the State.

I turn now to the provisions of the bill. In a first for New South Wales, circular economy principles will be enshrined in the objects of the legislation. That signals the Government's commitment to transition to a circular economy by valuing resources and maximising material re-use while conserving our environment. It also underpins its sustainable approach to resource and waste management into the future. To support those principles, the bill establishes a framework to prohibit the supply of plastic items that are unnecessary, or are problematic for environmental, human health or economic reasons. The framework recognises the complexities that sometimes arise in establishing conclusively that plastic items are unnecessary or problematic. That issue is dealt with by providing the Minister with the power to deem that a plastic item is unnecessary or problematic.

The bill will deliver on the Government's commitment to phase out the supply of lightweight plastic bags, single-use plastic straws, single-use plastic stirrers, single-use plastic cutlery, single-use plastic cotton buds and expanded polystyrene food service items. Lightweight plastic bags will be phased out a minimum of six months after assent to the bill, with the other listed items to be phased out from 1 November 2022. The focus of the bill is on single-use plastic items, which are ordinarily generally designed or intended to be used only once. Those items were identified for phase-out due to their impacts on the environment and the availability of sustainable alternatives.

All Australian States and Territories, including New South Wales, have agreed to phase out some single-use plastic items by 2025 as part of the National Waste Policy Action Plan. The prohibited items in the bill are consistent with a list agreed to by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers in April 2021. By phasing out those targeted items, almost 2.7 billion pieces of plastic will be stopped from being littered in New South Wales over the next 20 years. Compostable plastic alternatives to these items can pose similar risks to the environment as do traditional plastics. Given those items are highly littered and are unlikely to be disposed of at appropriate composting facilities, compostable plastic alternatives will also be phased out. I acknowledge the efforts of many businesses and consumers in helping to drive a change in behaviour that has already resulted in a shift away from problematic plastics in many parts of the economy. The Government will pay close attention to ensure that suppliers comply with the intent of the phase-outs.

The Government acknowledges stakeholder concerns regarding the risk of greenwashing of products through inaccurate or misleading relabelling. The Government will work closely with industry and other jurisdictions to address that issue when it arises. The Government also remains committed to helping businesses recover from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To support businesses to understand how to comply with the new laws and transition to sustainable alternatives, the Government will implement a

comprehensive education and engagement program. The program will focus on retailers, hospitality venues, suppliers and community organisations that will be impacted by the phase-outs. It will provide practical guidance, simple fact sheets and ongoing support to assist businesses to understand their new obligations. It will have a strong focus on small businesses, including those run and owned by culturally and linguistically diverse members of our community.

The Government recognises that some people or businesses will still need access to certain items. To ensure that reasonable access is available, the bill includes a broad exemption framework that will be tailored to the specific needs of the community. An important exemption provision directly referenced in the bill is the supply of single-use plastic drinking straws for people with a disability or other medical requirement. During stakeholder consultation the Government heard how important these items are for many people to safely consume food and beverages. Stakeholders noted there are no current alternatives that are fit for purpose and meet the needs of people who rely on single-use plastic straws. To maintain reasonable access, the Government will continue to work with key stakeholders on an exemption framework that will exempt supply at certain businesses such as pharmacies and in other situations.

It will allow people who rely on straws to continue to buy them online so that a broad selection of competitively priced straws remains available to those who need them. It will also allow hospitality venues such as cafes and pubs to provide, on request, a single straw from behind the counter to those who rely on them. That framework will balance the needs of people who require straws with efforts to address harmful environmental impacts. Before straws are phased out, the exemptions will be published and a comprehensive business education and engagement campaign will be implemented. The campaign will make it clear that it is not an offence under the legislation to provide single-use plastic drinking straws under these circumstances.

The New South Wales framework will closely align with the exemption provisions implemented in South Australia. The bill includes a pathway for additional items to be prohibited in the future. The Government has identified additional plastics for review in three years under the Plastics Action Plan. These include plastic bowls and plates, plastic cups, oxo-degradable plastics, non-compostable fruit stickers and heavyweight plastic shopping bags. The bill will enable the regulations to prescribe other items where the item is unnecessary or is problematic for environmental, human health or economic reasons. The Minister may take into account several factors if considering an item for phase out, including whether it contributes significantly to litter, is difficult to recycle, can be replaced by a non-plastic item or is made from a material that may cause harm to human health.

The Government acknowledges that extensive consultation with the community, businesses and other stakeholders will be critical when making those decisions. To reflect this, the bill legislates a minimum eight-week consultation period for any new plastic item proposed for phase-out, except in limited circumstances. The Government will seek and consider public submissions during that period, which will ensure a broad range of views can be heard on the potential impacts before any decision is made. It will also assess the environmental, economic and social impacts of new proposals, including items for phase-out. In addition, the Minister must publish notice of an opinion in the *NSW Government Gazette* as soon as possible after forming that opinion.

New South Wales is committed to striking the right balance between making sure we protect our environment and giving business and consumers access to viable alternatives. The Government will, where appropriate, consider the availability of practical and sustainable alternatives when assessing an item for phase-out. Any regulations prescribing new items will need to consider the impacts of the proposal in accordance with current legislative requirements, including any requirements in the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989, to prepare a regulatory impact statement or comply with the guidelines in schedule 1 to that Act. The Government will also work closely with retailers and the community to help them make the transition. It is recognised that businesses and others in the community will need sufficient time to transition from prohibited items to alternatives. The bill provides a minimum six-month transition period from the time the regulation commences until the phase-outs take effect. That is the minimum time frame required. Additional time may be warranted in certain circumstances.

The bill will lead the nation in introducing a new legislative power to set design standards that can tackle problematic products and materials. A design standard may be set by regulations for environmental, human health or economic reasons, as outlined in clause 8. That will allow the New South Wales Government to ensure, where appropriate, that products are placed on the market that contribute to improved environmental and economic outcomes or reduce risks to consumers. For example, a design standard may require that products are made with a minimum amount of recycled content, can be easily recycled or are designed to encourage appropriate disposal. That will help to reduce the use of virgin materials and the generation of waste and it will also support re-use and recycling in a circular economy.

The first design standard will prevent microbeads in certain personal care items. Microbeads are small particles of plastic that can be used in rinse-off soaps and exfoliates. When rinsed off, microbeads enter our

waterways through our drains, causing harm to wildlife and the environment. While industry has progressively phased out microbeads from its products under a voluntary agreement, New South Wales will use these new design standard powers to complete the removal of these items. Similar to the phase-outs, the bill legislates a minimum eight-week consultation period and six-month transition period for any new design standard set to be introduced, except in limited circumstances. Any new design standard proposals will also need to comply with any requirements in the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989 to prepare a regulatory impact statement or comply with the guidelines in schedule 1 to that Act.

The bill allows for product stewardship requirements to be established for brand owners of certain products. The Government intends to use that power to strengthen product stewardship for packaging brand owners to align with the 2025 National Packaging Targets. Currently the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure [NEPM] establishes a co-regulatory arrangement for brand owners who use packaging materials to package their products. That includes packaging for consumer goods like clothing, electronics, food and beverages as well as business-to-business packaging, such as packaging used to transport products from manufacturers or distributors to a retailer.

Plastic packaging makes up almost 30 per cent of all plastic used in New South Wales every year, with the most recent report from the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation [APCO] finding only 16 per cent of that was recycled. The NEPM applies to brand owners who use packaging for their products and have an annual turnover of \$5 million. Brand owners who have an annual turnover of less than \$5 million do not contribute significantly to the packaging problem and are exempt from the NEPM. Under that arrangement, eligible brand owners of packaging can choose to become a member of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation or to be regulated under State law.

Presently, brand owners who choose to be regulated under State law are regulated under part 8 of the Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014. However, the regulation does not have the power to set upstream targets for packaging, such as recyclability or recycled content, and is out of step with the agreed voluntary 2025 National Packaging Targets, which include recyclability and recycled content targets. As a result, the mandatory State-based requirements are less onerous and out of step with the agreed voluntary 2025 National Packaging Targets. That acts as a disincentive for packaging brand owners to become a member of APCO, with 91 businesses opting out of APCO and choosing to be regulated under State law since 2017. That puts businesses who are doing the right thing at a competitive disadvantage by wearing the cost of action for the entire industry.

During consultation on the discussion paper, businesses raised concerns that free riders, or businesses who were not taking action to meet the packaging target, are undermining the success of the covenant. Business has clearly requested that government level the playing field to ensure that all businesses that contribute to the packaging problem are required to be part of the solution. That is why the NSW Plastics Action Plan commits to strengthening product stewardship for packaging brand owners who are not compliant signatories to the Australian Packaging Covenant. The bill will provide the necessary powers to do that by establishing a product stewardship framework. The framework can be used to address the packaging problem as well as product stewardship of other products.

Brand owners of products that are prescribed by regulations to be "regulated products" will be required to meet mandatory product stewardship targets or requirements as outlined in clause 13. That may include targets such as recycled content or recovery of products at the end of their productive life. That will help to shift the responsibility for products back onto the businesses who profit from their sale and drive the transition to a more circular economy. By making brand owners responsible for managing the whole life cycle of their products, we will ensure they improve the environmental and economic outcomes of their products, while supporting innovation. That will ensure brand owners assess the impacts of their products and consider how their products are made and disposed of and the impact on the environment.

The bill also includes the power to prescribe record keeping and reporting obligations in regulations. Brand owners may also be required to hold an approved action plan before a regulated product is supplied in or into New South Wales. The action plan will outline how the brand owner plans to meet product stewardship targets. That holds brand owners to account, while providing the flexibility to meet the targets in the manner that best suits their business model. At this time, the bill does not set any product stewardship requirements. However, as well as using that power to strengthen product stewardship for packaging brand owners, the Government will also investigate product stewardship for brand owners of tobacco products to help manage the scourge of cigarette litter.

The New South Wales Government has a strong track record with successful product stewardship schemes through the container deposit scheme Return and Earn. Extensive consultation with key stakeholders will be conducted when considering new product stewardship responsibilities. That will help us develop fit-for-purpose

regulations that work for businesses and the environment. When product stewardship requirements are set for new products, the bill generally provides for eight weeks public consultation and a 12-month transition period when product stewardship requirements are established. That ensures all impacted stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback and it also provides time for businesses to get the systems and processes in place to meet the requirements. It is important to note that the transition period is the minimum time provided and may be extended depending on the specific needs of the industry. Any new proposals to prescribe a product as a regulated product will also need to comply with any requirements in the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989 to prepare a regulatory impact statement or to comply with the guidelines in schedule 1 to that Act.

The bill allows the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to impose financial assurance conditions on approved action plans. This acts to ensure that a brand owner has the money to meet their obligations. For example, this condition may be imposed for products that have particularly long product life cycles, where the product is not disposed of for many years after the initial sale. It means that if the company no longer has the money to pay for agreed actions, such as recycling their own products, the EPA can use the financial assurance to pay for what needs to be done. It will also limit the impact of businesses going into liquidation, not taking care of their responsibilities and starting up again under a different name. Brand owners will be able to seek merits review in the Land and Environment Court of any decision to impose a financial assurance condition.

Financial assurances are a common tool in environment legislation. For example, similar provisions are contained in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Financial assurances are an important tool in the regulatory toolkit to ensure that New South Wales taxpayers are not left to pay for large clean-up bills. For regulation to be effective, it also needs to be enforceable. The bill provides the right balance between hard and soft compliance measures. There will be a strong focus on education and engagement to ensure that impacted suppliers have every opportunity to understand their obligations. The bill includes a broad range of enforcement tools to enable the EPA to take regulatory action where appropriate.

For example, the bill enables the EPA to issue compliance notices to suppliers or occupiers if it reasonably suspects that a person is supplying a prohibited plastic item or an item that does not comply with a design standard. The notice may require a range of actions, including stopping or suspending the supply of an item, requiring an item to be independently tested or stopping a person from supplying false or misleading information about an item. The bill also draws on the investigation and court-related provisions within the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, equipping the EPA with the necessary tools to regulate the frameworks. The bill includes an offence for supplying a prohibited plastic item or an item that fails to comply with a design standard while carrying on a business.

The bill also imposes a tiered penalty structure for these offences. This tiered penalty structure places higher penalties on manufacturers, producers and distributors of prohibited items. This reflects their important role in the supply chain and the potential impacts when supplying prohibited items at scale. Penalties for brand owners who do not comply with product stewardship requirements are in line with penalties for similar offences under the NSW Container Deposit Scheme. The people and businesses of New South Wales want to do the right thing for the environment, but greenwashing can make it hard for consumers to understand which options are the most sustainable. The bill seeks to address this through comprehensive false or misleading information provisions, as outlined in clause 51.

Importantly, it will be an offence to provide false and misleading information in connection with the supply of a prohibited item or in relation to product stewardship requirements. This will give consumers the confidence to trust the information they receive. This bill will level the playing field and empower the people of New South Wales to help drive a more sustainable future. I acknowledge the assistance and advice of the many people who have provided input into the bill. In particular, I thank the members of the expert reference group, which included representatives from industry, environmental and disability advocacy groups. These experts devoted a significant amount of time to considering all the issues involved and ensuring the bill was fit for purpose. I also thank the officials in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment who have coordinated the work and engagement on the bill.

I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Energy and Environment and his office and team in putting this legislation together. The Government has listened to stakeholder feedback and incorporated much of it in the design of the bill. The Government also has consulted with other jurisdictions to maximise opportunities for harmonisation in policy and legislation. The bill makes significant progress in how we address the harmful impacts of plastics and use of resources in our economy. It allows us to maximise opportunities for businesses and the community as we transition towards a more circular economy. Most importantly, it will help to protect our unique environment for generations to come. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (PAYROLL TAX WAIVER) BILL 2021****First Reading****Bill introduced on motion by Mr Matt Kean, read a first time and printed.****Second Reading Speech****Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (10:16):**  
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government was quick to respond to the escalating spread of the new COVID-19 Delta strain in Sydney that started in June 2021. By 13 July, the New South Wales Government had announced a comprehensive economic support package that committed \$5.1 billion—including more than \$1 billion from the Commonwealth Government—aimed at helping businesses and employees right across the State get through the lockdown. This initial package included a payroll tax waiver of 25 per cent for businesses impacted by the COVID-19 public health orders. The additional economic support package announced on 2 September responded to the extended lockdown by increasing the payroll tax waiver to 50 per cent for businesses with Australian wages of up to \$10 million that have experienced a decline in turnover of 30 per cent or more as a result of the COVID-19 public health orders.

The bill before the House today will deliver much-needed tax relief in these difficult and uncertain circumstances. The payroll tax waiver is expected to benefit around 8,000 businesses in New South Wales and save businesses about \$410 million in payroll tax in 2021-22. The average value of the payroll tax waiver is estimated at around \$50,000 per business. The combined impact, along with the option provided by the Government to defer payroll tax payments until 14 January 2022, will be that businesses can start claiming the payroll tax waiver for any payments that will be due from 14 January 2022 in relation to their 2021-22 annual payroll tax liabilities. This will help businesses to manage their cash flows and increase the chances of a strong economic recovery.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The bill makes legislative changes necessary to enact a waiver of 50 per cent of payroll tax payable in the 2021-22 financial year for eligible businesses with Australian wages of \$10 million or less. To be eligible, businesses must also have experienced a 30 per cent or more decline in turnover due to the most recent lockdown. To demonstrate this decline in turnover, a business must either qualify for the 2021 COVID-19 JobSaver Payment or the 2021 Small Business Grant scheme, or otherwise meet the decline in turnover test that applies to those schemes. We know that not all businesses that are eligible for the payroll tax waiver will have applied for a COVID-19 grant or payment. Revenue NSW will develop a pathway for those businesses to be able to show their turnover decline. More information about that pathway will be communicated to businesses as it becomes available. Revenue NSW will automatically apply the reduction when an eligible business lodges its 2021-22 annual reconciliation.

The 50 per cent payroll tax waiver is an important part of the recently announced COVID-19 business support package, which will help to ensure that New South Wales remains the best place to do business in Australia. The legislative amendments in the bill will deliver tax relief to help businesses around New South Wales through the challenges posed by the COVID-19 public health orders. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.****ELECTRIC VEHICLES (REVENUE ARRANGEMENTS) BILL 2021****Returned****TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.**Consideration in Detail****Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.***Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 19 October 2021*No. 1 **GRN No. 1 [c2021-081E]**

Page 2. Insert after line 19—

**6A Parliament's intention**

It is Parliament's intention that the total amount of revenue collected under this Act from road user charges be paid into the Consolidated Fund.

**No. 2 GRN No. 3 [c2021-081E]**

Page 5, clause 16. Insert after line 34—

- (5A) At least one of the ways in which an odometer reading may be given under subsection (5) must be by using a device or system that does not transmit information to Transport for NSW without the intervention of the registered operator of the vehicle or another person.

**No. 3 GRN No. 1 [c2021-109B]**

Page 5, clause 16, lines 40–42. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

- (6A) The regulations may provide—
- (a) that a person who contravenes subsection (6) commits an offence against the subsection, and
- (b) for a maximum penalty for the offence of not more than—
- (i) 20 penalty units for an individual, and
- (ii) 100 penalty units for a body corporate.

**No. 4 GRN No. 4 [c2021-081E]**

Page 5, clause 16. Insert after line 42—

- (6A) Despite subsection (6), a registered operator of a relevant zero or low emissions vehicle does not commit an offence under subsection (6) if the operator—
- (a) travels no more than 500 kilometres more than the number of kilometres for which the road user charge for the vehicle has been paid, and
- (b) pays the road user charges for the additional kilometres within 21 days after the operator is given written notice by Transport for NSW that the charges are payable.

**No. 5 GRN No. 5 [c2021-081E]**

Page 5, clause 16. Insert after line 44—

- (8) Without limiting subsection (7), the regulations may provide—
- (a) that a reasonable excuse may include financial hardship, and
- (b) for the circumstances or criteria that constitute financial hardship, and
- (c) for conditions that apply to a reasonable excuse of financial hardship.

**No. 6 OPP No. 1 [c2021-082C]**

Page 8. Insert after line 1—

**20A Review of operation of Act by Parliamentary Committee**

- (1) As soon as practicable after the day that is 2 years after the commencement of the Act, the Legislative Council is to designate, by resolution, a committee of the Legislative Council for the purposes of this section.
- (2) The resolution is to specify the terms of reference of the committee, which are to relate to the conduct of a review of the operation of the Act.

**No. 7 GRN No. 9 [c2021-081E]**

Page 8, clause 22(1), line 9. Insert ", not less than 21 days," after "period stated".

**No. 8 GRN No. 10 [c2021-081E]**

Page 8, clause 22. Insert after line 13—

- (1A) To avoid doubt, information or a document may be requested under subsection (1) only if the information or document is reasonably necessary for the administration of this Act.

**No. 9 GRN No. 11 [c2021-081E]**

Page 8. Insert after line 17—

**22A Disclosure of information**

A person must not disclose any information obtained in connection with the administration or execution of this Act unless the disclosure is—

- (a) made with the consent of the person from whom the information was obtained, or
- (b) made in connection with the administration or execution of this Act, or
- (c) made under an arrangement under section 23, or
- (d) otherwise authorised or required by law.



Maximum penalty—

- (a) for an individual—20 penalty units, and
- (b) for a body corporate—100 penalty units.

No. 10 **GRN No. 16 [c2021-081E]**

Page 10, clause 27. Insert after line 12—

(4) To avoid doubt—

- (a) the regulations may not provide for the payment of fees under this Act, and
- (b) regulations providing for the payment of road user charges, the assessment of road user charges or the payment of interest and penalties in relation to road user charges may not include a requirement to pay administrative costs that are more than the costs reasonably incurred in producing notices and statements to persons required to pay the road user charges, interest or penalties.

No. 11 **GRN No. 1 [c2021-084D]**

Page 10. Insert after line 12—

**27A Minister to provide information about battery electric vehicle registrations**

- (1) As soon as practicable after the day that is 1 year after the commencement of this Act, and after each further period of 1 year, the Minister must give each house of Parliament an update of the following—
  - (a) the percentage of new vehicles registered during the preceding 1 year period that are battery electric vehicles,
  - (b) the date by which the Minister reasonably expects registrations of battery electric vehicles in New South Wales will be 30% of new vehicles registered in New South Wales.
- (2) This section is repealed on the earlier of the following—
  - (a) 1 July 2027,
  - (b) the prescribed date under Schedule 1, definition of *relevant date*, paragraph (a).

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (10:21):**

I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

I am pleased to be in the House for the final stages of the Government's nation-leading electric vehicle [EV] legislation. There is no hiding the fact that Australia has fallen behind when it comes to EV uptake. While other parts of the world have powered ahead to put more EVs on the road, our industry has been held back by a lack of models and chargers, and high up-front costs. The NSW Electric Vehicle Strategy and the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021 will change that. From this day forward drivers across the State will reap the benefits of the latest technology our car makers have to offer. The benefits of EVs are clear. They are cheaper to run and maintain, they reduce noise and air pollution, and they provide a high quality driving experience—just ask anyone who gets behind the wheel of one.

Our strategy will help drivers to tap into those benefits while helping to clean up smog and air pollution across the road network. The strategy is the most comprehensive in the nation and includes \$3,000 rebates, stamp duty waivers, all-electric Government fleets, access to transit lanes and, importantly, a statewide ultra-fast charging network. From Bondi to Braidwood, Burwood to Bourke, EV drivers across the State will be able to get behind the wheel with the confidence that they can recharge when and where they need to. The Government has also sent a clear signal that it will not impose new taxes on EVs until they have found a strong footing in the market. By deferring the introduction of the road user charge, the Government is also driving uptake while sustaining road revenue sources into the future.

I acknowledge a number of people who have brought the bill to life. Firstly, I recognise the support of Opposition and crossbench members. In particular, I recognise the member for Summer Hill, who has been absolutely outstanding to work with. She has a real passion for moving our State and our country forward when it comes to electric vehicles. She deserves significant recognition for helping to deliver the bill. I also acknowledge the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, who has been a very constructive contributor throughout debate on the bill. I particularly acknowledge his great work last night in working through the amendments in the upper House. I also acknowledge the strong bipartisan support for the bill, which should provide everyone in the EV industry with the confidence to make significant investments in the New South Wales market. I also recognise the outstanding work of Ms Abigail Boyd in the upper House. She has been a fantastic partner to deal with and had a real vision for

what EV uptake should look like in New South Wales. I really appreciate the way she and her colleagues in The Greens engaged in the debate.

I thank the hardworking officials at the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Treasury who work tirelessly to support EVs across the State. I particularly thank Cris Hickey, Kate Wilson and David Malicki. David saw the creation of the bill through from start to finish. I acknowledge his awesome contribution. I also thank Esther Bailey, Ben Fitzgerald and Yisheng Ho. I thank my parliamentary colleagues, particularly the Premier and the member for Bega. We worked side-by-side to deliver the bill and make it the biggest investment in EVs anywhere in the country. I thank their staff: Bran Black, Eugenie Joseph, Michelle Gregory and Ellen Choulman. I also recognise the work of my staff: Dimitry Palmer, who was here at Parliament late last night negotiating amendments to the bill, and Ben Coles, who is a policy powerhouse and a complete superstar.

The person who deserves the majority of the praise for her incredible work to get the bill to this point is my outstanding energy adviser and the head of my policy team, Ava Hancock. She has "driven" this policy—pardon the pun, Ava. She researched what we needed to do, saw a better future for our State and made a plan to make it happen. Day in and day out she showed determination to get us to where we are today. She led the negotiations last night with crossbench and Labor members. I know that she is trusted by all stakeholders. The bill is as much due to her efforts as it is to anyone's, so I thank Ava so much. The bill would not have happened without my ministerial office staff, Dimitry, Ben and Ava. I thank them so much for their continued leadership in this space.

In conclusion, electric vehicles will revolutionise the weekend. They will make our road trips right across the State cheaper by slashing fuel costs for drivers looking to hit the road. They will make living in our cities and right across New South Wales better because we will have cleaner air to breathe. Electric vehicles will be cheaper to run and will provide a better all-round experience for everyone. By 2030 more than half of new cars sold in New South Wales will be EVs. That is a future that we should all embrace and accelerate towards. I commend the Legislative Council's amendments to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (10:27):** I support and acknowledge the contributions that have been made to bring to life the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021. What is so important about what is happening with electric vehicles in New South Wales, but sadly not in other States—look at the way that the Victorian Government has addressed the issue of EVs—is the rational assessment of the evidence. That is one thing that for decades The Greens have been pushing for with regard to issues around renewable energy, climate change, EVs, battery technology and so on. Let us have a sober, rational assessment of the impact of this technology and other current technologies, and look to the future to assess the importance of acting now to not only protect nature but also address the important advantages that those technologies represent to future generations.

While The Greens will not get everything we want, the bill is an important step forward, particularly for my community. One of the great challenges of my community at the moment is that when you go for a walk in the evening there are so many cables across footpaths where people are plugging EV into their houses, going under their doors, across the footpath and into their cars. It is becoming a challenge for councils because residents are saying, "I need to charge my car. I don't have a garage. There's no driveway. There's no off-street parking. All the parking chargers at Drummoyne are full and the next closest is at Broadway shopping centre in Ultimo."

I have told the Minister that charging infrastructure installed at five-kilometre intervals is great. However, I know his aspiration is to have as many chargers as possible in New South Wales. With the funds the Government is looking to provide for electric vehicles, The Greens want to make sure that there is as much charging capacity as possible in key locations but also in local streets, in the same way that there are car share spots in my street. My street has no off-street parking. The house that I live in is on a block of land of about 137 square metre, like everyone else.

*[A member interjected.]*

Yes, it is huge. The member's garage is probably 137 square metres. That is the normal pattern of development in my area. Car parking spaces are super rationed. We have a car share spot on our street so that share opportunities are available. It is important to think in an innovative way about that in our community. I acknowledge that the upper House and the staff who worked on that sat quite late. The amendments passed are good quality policy. In particular, the 500-kilometre grace period is important. It adds something positive to the existing proposals put forward by Government.

The financial hardship provision that will be looked at in regulation is important. We know people can be plunged into financial hardship as a result of a range of situations outside of their control. It is important to have

a mechanism to address that in a proactive way. In the same way, in a lot of areas, our Federal Government and State Government have been proactive in supporting vulnerable people and people who have fallen on hard times financially during COVID. There is also the issue around the period of time for review. That was a Labor proposal and we supported it, of course, as did the Government, but technology moves too quickly to review this in two years. It is important that we can reassess this. We were not particularly in favour of the user charge happening so quickly, but it is an opportunity to review it.

I acknowledge the departmental staff, who do an incredible amount of work but often are not acknowledged. Ministers and members always get the praise, so it is important to acknowledge all the people identified by the Minister. I also thank the people in the public sector who have been working hard to encourage governments around Australia and the Government in New South Wales to take action. This is what good policy should look like: good, thoughtful and rational policy is put forward that examines the evidence, is discussed and debated throughout the Parliament with good sensible amendments brought forward, and we come to an agreement and support the bill. We will not win every single thing we want, but, moving forward each day is the most important thing. In my community buses that are diesel powered regularly run along Darling Street. They spew pollution and when they go past it is impossible for anyone to speak. It has made a direct positive impact on local businesses, the community and air quality. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (10:32):** Labor supports the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021 and welcomes the sensible amendments agreed to by the Legislative Council last night in a marathon session. It showed where the vast majority of sensible voices in this place and the community are on the uptake of electric vehicles. The technology is moving very quickly and we want New South Wales to be a part of that. We want leadership in our State and leadership across the country. That is one of the missing key pieces. We await the decisions in Canberra so that we can be a part of what is an incredibly important move forward, particularly for those who use their cars a lot: people in western and south-western Sydney who travel great distances and, of course, in our regional and rural towns. They will benefit most from the opportunities that electric vehicles provide.

I also acknowledge the Hon. Daniel Mookhey in the other place, who led for Opposition in a long session and clearly articulated why the proposals put forward predominately by One Nation did not align with the vision of the majority of this place and the community. We want to see the proportion of our electric vehicle market drastically increased. At the moment electric vehicles are only 0.78 per cent of car sales in Australia. The bill and aspects of it that are connected to the Government's Electric Vehicle Strategy promises to increase that proportion by more than 50 per cent by 2031 and help our State to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. They are admirable goals. We want to see great ambition in this space. We support the targets and we want to make sure that the bill does what it says it will do.

I highlight our support for bringing forward the statutory review to two years. It is important that we assess success of the initiatives and take account of progress before the road user charge comes into operation. We are pleased there has been support for the amendment. A review of that progress in two years will ensure that we create local manufacturing jobs associated with electric vehicles. We remain concerned on this side of the House that opportunities may be missed. Huge elements of the supply chain come with the electric vehicle market: jobs mining lithium, nickel, cobalt and copper; manufacturing and refurbishing batteries; manufacturing, maintaining and installing the charging infrastructure; developing integration software and hardware development; and upskilling and training mechanics.

We can be a world leader in the EV supply chain and all the manufacturing elements, not just an exporter of materials and an importer of parts and cars. We need to be a part of that to create jobs for our kids in New South Wales. We are concerned that the Government strategy is not realising all of those opportunities. That is why the two-year review is critical to ensuring it is the people of New South Wales who benefit from the revolution of electric vehicles. We want to make sure we get the results here. We also welcome the amendments that deal with the penalty regime. I acknowledge Ms Abigail Boyd and her work in that space. We were pleased to work cooperatively with her and members of the crossbench to see the penalty regime amended. Labor members in both Chambers raised concerns about the proposed penalty regime and whether it was the best approach. The amendments agreed to mitigate some of the potential unintended consequences on EV owners. Again, we will have the opportunity to review its implementation at the two-year review.

Nearly 20 per cent of Australia's total emissions come from the transport sector, with over 60 per cent of that portion attributable to light vehicles. It is very important that electric vehicles are a part of that mix and that we rapidly bring them online so we can meet our targets, reduce our emissions and ultimately do our part when it comes to climate change action. We are pleased to support the amended bill. We look forward to holding the Government to account in two years time to review its initiatives and uptake of electric vehicles well before the road user charge is introduced in New South Wales.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to alter the routine of business today to permit consideration of committee reports from 12.15 p.m. for a period of up to 60 minutes.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Budget*

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

**Debate resumed from 14 October 2021.**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (10:38):** It is a pleasure to speak on the Appropriation Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2021. Firstly, I thank the Premier and former Treasurer, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet, who introduced the bills, for his service in the Treasury portfolio, his stewardship of the State's economy and his assistance to the people of the Seven Hills electorate. I will outline the positives in the 2021-22 financial year budget of the New South Wales Government for the electorate of Seven Hills and right across western Sydney. I hold particular affection for the local public schools across the Seven Hills electorate because I grew up there and attended a number of schools in the area—Westmead Public School, Model Farms High School and, later, James Ruse. It is fantastic to see that those schools, like all local schools across the area, are thriving and achieving outstanding results. In the Premier's second reading speech to the Appropriation Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2021, he outlined that 160 new and upgraded public schools had been delivered with a mammoth record investment of \$150 billion in the education sector for kids across New South Wales.

One of my election commitments was to assure Lalor Park, Kings Langley and Seven Hills north residents that their local secondary school, Seven Hills High School, would go on to year 12. Prior to 2011, senior years at the school were cut and students merged with Riverstone High School and Quakers Hill High School at Wyndham College, Nirimba. Many local parents had been sending their children to places like Crestwood High School in Baulkham Hill to ensure they could attend school from year 7 all the way through to year 12 and the HSC without having to move to complete it. Before the last election many parents wanted a local solution to that issue, and I made a commitment that Seven Hills High School would resume HSC offerings. It is great that funding was made available and that Seven Hills High School students are beginning their HSC studies this term for next year's exams. I thank the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, for her commitment to ensuring that all students have access to the same opportunities.

On another positive note for Seven Hills High School, I was very pleased to announce a vocational and education training facility for the school last year with the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, the Hon. Dr Geoff Lee. This year's budget outlines \$9.079 million towards that project, which will see students able to choose from all types of trades, logistics and healthcare courses. This month Minister Mitchell and I announced that the facility's development application had been submitted to Blacktown City Council and work should begin shortly once that is approved. Pendle Hill High School educates students from Constitution Hill, Old Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Toongabbie, Wentworthville and Westmead. In last year's budget the school's upgrade received \$1.2 million for planning and in this budget an additional \$12.38 million has been allocated to assist in constructing the upgrade.

The upgrade will deliver 14 new, modern, flexible learning spaces. It will also include a range of new core facilities and student amenities, a lecture learning unit, a new library unit, a prototype learning area and staff development spaces. The project will also see the construction of a new three-storey building and a new main pedestrian entry at Binalong Road, Toongabbie. Darcy Road Public School in Wentworthville has a fantastic P&C committee that has spoken with me about upgrades to the school. I am pleased to have secured \$4.479 million in this year's budget for those upgrades. The school community is in conversations with School Infrastructure NSW regarding their ideas and suggestions for the forthcoming upgrade. I know that fresh classrooms will assist the students from Constitution Hill, Pendle Hill, Wentworthville and Westmead who attend the school.

This year's budget also saw \$2.2 million go towards upgrades at Matthew Pearce Public School in Baulkham Hills for fit-for-purpose learning spaces. I know that the Astoria Park Road residents at Baulkham Hills in the Seven Hills electorate will be pleased with that continued funding and the upgrading of facilities at their

local public school. A new primary public school for Westmead has been committed to by Minister Mitchell, and this financial year's budget has seen \$5.428 million go towards planning for such a project. I look forward to the opening of the Winston Hills M2 bus commuter car parking along Junction Road at Winston Hills—which I hope happens as soon as possible. The project began mid-year and, even in light of the challenges faced during COVID-19, it is progressing well. In last year's budget \$212,000 was allocated to its planning, with both the City of Parramatta and The Hills Shire Council working in concert on the excellent project.

This financial year \$2.8 million was delivered to complete the project. I thank the former Minister for Transport and Roads, Andrew Constance, for the funds and Transport for NSW for its time on the project. I also thank the leadership of The Hills Shire Council Mayor Dr Michelle Byrne and former Parramatta Lord Mayor Councillor Bob Dwyer for their advocacy on the matter. I also thank Melinda Ta at the City of Parramatta Council for her great work on the project. For many years, constituents have wanted a resolution to the gravel track that lay beside the M2 and I am pleased that this project will deliver the car spots needed for commuters. Commuter parking at Wentworthville is another commitment of the Government and has received funding in the budget. This financial year \$175,000 was allocated for planning, with \$4.4 million in funding allocated in the previous financial year. I look forward to Transport for NSW delivering upgraded car parking spots for Wentworthville train station commuters.

Toongabbie Bridge was allocated a further \$1.6 million, which will drive upgrades benefiting all local government areas that are involved in the project. I am keen to see that project progress to ease congestion at both ends of the bridge. The Prospect Highway upgrade is racing along, with major and minor works underway. Minor works such as traffic light changes and rehousing utilities are being finalised to ensure less disruption along the corridor of the highway in the southern Seven Hills, Blacktown and Prospect areas. In this budget \$30 million was put towards the project. Last year Prospect Highway and the Memorial Road upgrade at Kellyville received \$13.8 million, and in the 2019-2020 financial year budget they received \$23.7 million. The Memorial Road upgrade at Kellyville will assist constituents in the Blacktown local government area of the Seven Hills electorate to get to and from The Hills local government area for work, sport and school via Sunnyholt Road or Old Windsor Road.

The Prospect Highway will have its lane capacity doubled from St Martins Crescent, Blacktown, along the corridor to Reservoir Road, Prospect. The latter intersection will receive a new set of lights and there will also be on and off ramps at the M4, the Great Western Highway and Stoddard Road, Prospect. There will be a shared user path upgrade for part of the corridor and a bus lane from Lancelot Street, Blacktown, to Leabons Lane, Seven Hills. A new roundabout at Keyworth Drive, Blacktown, will also be built to assist with resident traffic flow to and from the highway. Changes to traffic lights and upgrades at Vesuvius Street, Seven Hills; Pond Road, Prospect; and Roger Place and Tudor Avenue, Blacktown, will also occur. A new kiss-and-ride facility will be constructed for students at Shelley Public School, Blacktown. The City of Blacktown will greatly benefit from the vital upgrade of the Prospect Highway. The highway connects small businesses and multinational companies with warehousing and distribution networks throughout the corridor, along the motorway and right across western Sydney and the State.

The budget also continues investment for the Sydney Metro West. Once complete, the project will give more options to Seven Hills electorate locals for public transport travel for work, education, health and leisure. Westmead will be the closest station, with the metro taking residents to the city in around 20 minutes—which is an incredible feat. I know that the incredible investment in that project will also benefit the ever-growing Westmead health, innovation and education precinct. I note that additional research institutes and the University of Sydney are committing to growing their presence at the site. The \$2.4 billion Parramatta Light Rail will assist workers, students and patients across the corridor, with the link connecting Westmead to Carlingford via the Parramatta CBD and Camellia. The growth of Westmead and the Parramatta CBD continues to provide a stream of both public and private sector jobs, ensuring that people in western Sydney can work closer to home.

I also note that a further \$50 million was released in this budget for the planning and development of stage two of the Parramatta Light Rail. Speaking of Westmead, it is great to see continued investment in our hospitals. I note that the over \$1 billion redevelopment of Westmead Hospital is now complete and its additional bed capacity and research facilities are assisting residents in the Parramatta and The Hills shire local government areas in the Seven Hills electorate, including those who live in suburbs like Constitution Hill, Northmead, Old Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Wentworthville, Westmead and Winston Hills. A further \$700 million redevelopment of the Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospital will benefit residents who live in areas such as Lalor Park, Kings Langley, Seven Hills and parts of Toongabbie.

At the 2019 election, the New South Wales Government committed \$619 million towards the delivery of stage two of upgrades at The Children's Hospital at Westmead. In this year's budget, \$49 million will go towards that project. The hospital will have a new paediatric services building, which is currently in the planning and

design phase. The building will feature an expansion of acute paediatric services with operating theatres, a neonatal intensive care unit, paediatric intensive care unit, oncology services and a pharmacy. This facility will provide world-class critical care not just for children in western Sydney but also for the benefit of children right across the State.

I also note the continued investment in the NSW Police Force by the New South Wales Government. As a former police officer and the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Justice, it is terrific to see the NSW Police Force increase its number of officers by 1,500 in the current parliamentary term. Recently the Blacktown area command received six probationary constables from the Class of 349 attested from the Goulburn training academy, while Parramatta and Riverstone police area commands each received five, and The Hills area command received three. I also note increased funding for courts in the budget, including eight additional magistrates, and boosted resources for prosecutors and Legal Aid. This will increase the number of magistrates across the State to 149, as Attorney General Mark Speakman has outlined.

In Corrective Services, the Minister for Corrections and Counter Terrorism, Anthony Roberts, announced a \$27 million investment for this financial. As the former Parliamentary Secretary for Counter Terrorism and Corrections, it is pleasing to see funding of \$12.4 million go towards countering violent extremism via community programs as part of the Government's almost \$50 million plan over the next four years. The budget will also see more community corrections roles, \$120 million invested in infrastructure upgrades over four years and \$85 million invested in cybersecurity. The budget further outlined multimillion dollar investments in social affairs to address community safety. The investments include \$30 million in social impact investments for disadvantaged women and Indigenous youth to assist with pathways to working towards success.

I note the \$57 million expansion of the Together Home program over two years. This program has seen 42 rough sleepers receive housing. The new package aims to target 250 rough sleepers and to enable community housing providers to deliver more than 100 homes right across the State. I particularly note the investment to upgrade social housing in this year's budget. The Seven Hills electorate has multiple social housing estates at places like Constitution Hill, Northmead, Seven Hills and Toongabbie, Lalor Park and Seven Hills south. Aboriginal housing will also receive assistance right across the electorate. Last summer, Northmead in the Seven Hills electorate encountered a small bushfire in the local reserve. Although it was of no significance compared to the devastation faced elsewhere in the State, it was certainly significant and was a reminder of the 2019-20 bushfires that hit regional communities and also parts of western Sydney.

That was why it was pleasing to see that this year's budget allocated an additional \$268 million over four years to respond to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommendations. It will mean almost half a billion dollars will be put towards implementing the recommendations, along with Commonwealth assistance. The additional funds will support tanker replacement and safety retrofits for frontline NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Forestry Corporation fleet. Funds will also go towards additional mitigation crews to deliver more hazard reduction and accelerate the statewide delivery of strategic fire trails. More funding will go towards additional protective clothing for Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters as well as upgrading its dispatch systems. Further funds will be invested in more drones, training helicopters and implementation program for a national fire danger rating system.

I note the sale of WestConnex, which was raised by the Premier in his second reading speech. The sale delivered \$5 billion worth of funds for projects right across western Sydney. Not only are the current projects boosting construction jobs and the economy, but further investment will ensure that the local economy of the Seven Hills electorate right across western Sydney and south-western Sydney bounce back even stronger. As the Treasury outlines, the WestInvest Fund will help build new and improved local infrastructure to assist the communities hardest hit by COVID-19. Such communities include residents who live in the Parramatta, Blacktown and The Hills local government areas, which cover the Seven Hills electorate. Other local government areas [LGAs] will also receive funding, including the Blue Mountains, Burwood, Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith, Strathfield and Wollondilly.

The WestInvest Fund will assist those LGAs through economic, social and green infrastructure projects on many different scales. Projects will include providing parks, urban spaces and green spaces; enhancing community infrastructure such as local sporting grounds; modernising local public schools; creating and enhancing arts and cultural facilities; revitalising high streets and CBDs; and helping unblock local traffic. Recently I was pleased to join the Premier and the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, Stuart Ayres, to announce the WestInvest Fund in Blacktown. Other Liberal Party colleagues who were also present at the announcement—including the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Parramatta and the member for Riverstone—have all received great feedback in their electorates on this outstanding investment.

I return to education to talk further on the investment from the budget for the Department of Education and its teachers, and the students they teach right across the State. The budget will invest \$720 million into early

childhood education; in particular, I note the \$150 million investment towards free community and mobile preschools. This investment will benefit families whose children attend one of the 740 community and mobile preschools in New South Wales. The Start Strong free preschool program will commence in January 2022, and will save families up to \$4,000 a year in preschool fees.

The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Sarah Mitchell, has also announced a \$196 million package to reform the State's curriculum. Of note, the reform's investment will update and streamline the curriculum by more than 200 syllabus experts to provide a stronger foundation in literacy and numeracy, with a new digital portal for teachers aimed at delivering new kindergarten to year 2 English and mathematics syllabuses. I also note the continued investment for the Intensive Learning Support Program to assist students who have been impacted by COVID-19, which was announced this week. Investment of more than \$2 billion in TAFE NSW will deliver skills training and a stronger workforce right across multiple key trades in our State. I will also speak further about the health investment by the New South Wales Government and, in particular, the budget's \$82.8 million boost for palliative care over the next four years. [*Extension of time*]

The Minister for Health and Medical Research, Brad Hazzard, has outlined that local health districts will receive funding to enhance hospital-based palliative care services with additional in-patient beds. This is a great positive step towards hopefully reopening a palliative care unit at Westmead Hospital and will assist the local health district's palliative care service at Mount Druitt Hospital. It is important to note that the previous palliative care space at Westmead was, unfortunately, closed in 2009. The funding announced in the budget will add 120 full-time staff—including nurses, allied health and medical team members, and multidisciplinary care—to maintain patient wellbeing and independence at home; additional consumer information; and support patients, families and carers. The funding will also go towards supporting dedicated inpatient beds at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and recurrent funding for the Manly Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice, which I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary in the chair is very proud to have helped achieve.

I acknowledge also the budget's focus on economic recovery as we transition through the pandemic. The New South Wales Government has continually provided new or differing programs in order to support small businesses throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This was demonstrated recently during the Delta outbreak across Greater Sydney and the State. Now is the time to support small businesses in western Sydney, south-west Sydney and regional New South Wales. I welcome the Premier's recent announcement of additional Dine & Discover vouchers and the extension of current vouchers. I urge the people of the Seven Hills electorate to use their vouchers at local cafes and restaurants in places like Lalor Park, Kings Langley, Northmead, Seven Hills, Pendle Hill, Toongabbie and Winston Hills.

Additional funds for COVID-19 support for hospitals was part of the budget and there has also been assistance from the Commonwealth. The nurses, doctors, allied health staff, environmental staff, administrative staff and security staff at Blacktown hospital, Westmead Hospital and The Children's Hospital at Westmead have served local residents in the Seven Hills electorate and wider western Sydney with distinction. I thank them for their outstanding service during this most difficult time. I note also the additional funds for multicultural media communications to assist with the western Sydney public health response to produce the messages and announcements that were vital at the time. I know these funds worked in helping to turn the tide of the Delta strain, along with the vaccination program and information about staying at home.

In the past decade under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government there has been record investment in infrastructure, given the backlog left by the previous government. Incredible projects have been achieved, such as the Metro North West and WestConnex, and I cannot wait to see Metro West, Metro North and Metro South and the Western Sydney Airport come to life and benefit the people of Greater Sydney. The Seven Hills electorate and the future electorate of Winston Hills will continue to benefit from this New South Wales Coalition Government. I thank the Premier for his assistance and the further assistance of the Minister for Western Sydney and the new Treasurer. Under this leadership team, we on this side of the House are taking the State from being good to being great.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (11:02):** It is my great privilege and pleasure to speak to the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022. It is amazing to think what challenges the State was confronted with when these budget papers were being put together in the weeks and months leading up to the Treasurer's speech. No-one could have forecast all the things that the State would be confronted with over the forthcoming 12 months. I am proud that our State in many regards was an exemplar on how to manage all those challenges. More importantly, our people stepped up to the mark—our volunteers, frontline emergency personnel and health staff, who recognised the extraordinary challenge facing our State. No amount of money can have regard to the strength of purpose, the zeal and the effort that they invested to ensure we got through what has been the greatest challenge of our time. I thank every one of them.

I thank former Premier Gladys Berejiklian for her leadership. This budget was very much her budget. I think the House would generally join me in acknowledging her extraordinary efforts not just through droughts, bushfires and floods but also throughout COVID. It is entirely appropriate for me to use this speech in reply to the Budget Speech to acknowledge her incredible efforts and wonderful leadership. I also acknowledge and congratulate the new Premier. This is the first opportunity I have had to do so. As Treasurer, he played a critical role in putting the budget together. As Premier, he now has the opportunity to build on that leadership and legacy.

I reflect on the investments made in my electorate of Kiama. It would not be a speech in this place by me if I did not mention roads. I am very proud of the record investment that I have been able to secure for the Princes Highway in my electorate. One of the reasons I stood for election to this place was to fix the Princes Highway. Now as people travel through my electorate they can see that when I make a promise to my community, I always get it done. The Gerringong upgrade is an enormous investment in our local community that has saved countless lives. It was previously a deathtrap—tragically, for too many young locals—but now countless lives have been saved. It has also provided greater flood-free access to the town of Gerringong, where I was born and grew up. As people travel further south, there is the spectacle that is the Berry bypass. The pharaohs have the pyramids; I have the Berry bypass. I am very proud of that project that has slashed travel times, provided greater access to the town of Berry and enabled the locals to get their streets back.

Because of those investments no more are there trucks rumbling through the main street of Berry and no longer are there delays as people snake through the town heading south on holidays. I am proud of the O'Farrell and Baird governments that were critical to making those investments, and of course the Berejiklian Government that built on those investments with the announcement of funding for the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade. I thank the team at Downer and Seymour Whyte for ensuring that we deliver this project on time and on budget. As people drive through the southern part of my electorate they will see the wonderful work underway at the moment that will offer guaranteed travel time and make our South Coast roads safer for locals—a \$450 million project that builds on the more than \$300 million we invested in the Gerringong upgrade and the \$580 million we invested in the Berry bypass. Now we are investing more than \$300 million to upgrade and replace the existing Shoalhaven River bridge with a new crossing that will ensure crossing security of the Shoalhaven River for years to come.

The existing old iron bridge is 140 years old and has reached the end of its serviceable life. It was never built to carry the 55,000 vehicles on average that cross it every day. As a result, we have received from the Commonwealth funding to ensure that we can secure the crossing of the Shoalhaven River. It does not stop there. We have been able to secure investment in the Jervis Bay Road upgrade. I thank the community and the member for South Coast for her advocacy on all the South Coast projects I have mentioned. This investment means that the Jervis Bay interchange can be delivered. It is a \$100 million project. The concept plans have been released and I look forward to seeing further detailed design made available to the community so we can get rid of that bottleneck. This is an issue that the community has raised and campaigned for, and we ensured the people were heard at the very heart of government. The project will be delivered as promised, with work set to start next year. It would not be a speech about roads if I was not only talking about them, but also calling for more.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my previous comments about the need for a Nowra bypass. A bypass at Nowra would alleviate traffic through the middle of Nowra, where there are several sets of traffic lights that also result in congestion. There has been talk about ameliorating traffic congestion around Nowra, and Shoalhaven City Council certainly has its work cut out in addressing the problem. I have noticed in recent months that, as we get closer to a council election, local councillors try to shift the solutions towards one particular level of government when so much congestion in the centre of Nowra is because of bad planning decisions that have led to further congestion throughout Nowra. It is important that we adopt a cooperative approach and that Shoalhaven City Council recognises it has a role to play in ameliorating traffic congestion, not simply adding extra sets of traffic lights as it has done in the past.

The council must look at what road options and solutions can be applied to ensure that traffic is diverted perhaps to the east of Shoalhaven, if that is its intended destination, rather than through the centre of Nowra. A Nowra bypass will be critical to looping around all that. It is a long-term project but every journey starts with the first step. Whilst there is a corridor set aside in the regional environmental plan, we need funding to shore up the corridor and start that important work. To the north is the Albion Park Rail bypass, which was opened in both directions a few weekends ago. It is a \$630 million project that was committed to by then Premier Mike Baird following the poles and wires lease and on which former Premier Berejiklian turned the first sod. This project was always going to be difficult to deliver, but we fought for it and secured it.

We have now been able to get rid of the only sets of traffic lights between Bomaderry and Heathcote. This was voted the most hated piece of road in all of the South Coast—in fact, I think at one point it was all of the State—but now we have been able to deliver that project. I thank Fulton Hogan, the contractor on that project and also on the Shoalhaven River bridge, the Berry bypass and, of course, the Albion Park Rail bypass. We set Fulton



Hogan a number of challenges around the employment of women in non-traditional roles and the employment of Aboriginal people, contractors, trainees and young people, some of whom got their first chance on some of these projects to work locally. The overwhelming majority of employees on these projects has come from the local community. I am so pleased that we are not only delivering infrastructure but also delivering changes and opportunities to give people the skills and expertise they need to work on not just this sort of major infrastructure but further projects in the future. Regardless of who is in government, you still need people to build these things. These young people have had opportunities to gain skills that would not normally be afforded to them but for the decision to incorporate those targets into these contracts.

The Albion Park Rail bypass is something I thought I could never deliver. In fact, so many people said to me, "I will never be alive to see it! I will never drive on it." Well, today motorists get that opportunity. Of course, for those people further south in Kiama who currently cannot leave for holiday or recreation, they will have to wait a little bit longer to drive on it. However, I am sure that they will appreciate it, particularly approximately half of the people in the Kiama municipality who go north for work each day. They are really going to appreciate that. But I know that the people of Albion Park Rail who have their streets back, like the people of Berry did, are so thrilled. The people in Albion Park, which is a growing community that needs that infrastructure—it should have been done years ago—will also appreciate it.

I will be calling for further support for the Albion Park bypass, which runs along Tripoli Way. It will help get traffic around Tongarra Road, which is currently choked at peak times because of the congestion created by more development in places like Calderwood. I acknowledge and thank the Government for investing in planning work and Shellharbour Council's work on this project. It is a local road but, like so many local road projects, unless you help local councils get there it simply will not happen. I secured more than \$4 million for that project, but I think it is important that the Government partners with Shellharbour Council to make sure we get it across the line. While we fixed one big problem with Albion Park Rail bypass, we still have another problem in Albion Park CBD Park. I know that the Albion Park Chamber of Commerce would want me to mention that it is absolutely committed to seeing this project delivered and wants to make sure that, as the local member, I continue to fight for this project and work with council. I certainly will do that.

I am pleased that as per the commitment I made at the last election the Government will deliver a \$438 million upgrade of the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. I met with the health Minister, and with nurses and doctors. We talked about what options they wanted and they supported the upgrade. Months before the council election some are using this as a springboard to talk about State issues. In one case, one of those councillors stood for State Parliament. They did not mention that at the time, but they want to use State issues to run for local government. I probably did that when I was there, but because I am not there now I will criticise it because I do not agree with it! Shoalhaven Hospital needs an upgrade, but it needs more nurses and doctors. There is no point doing these upgrades unless you provide the additional staff. I know that the Minister said he will do that and I am very grateful for that.

Additional services are key, and that is what the master plan has outlined: everything from MRI to improvements in paediatrics to oncology—but also, importantly, cardiology. This has been a bone of contention for many years and I am pleased that we are seeing investments in cardiology, not just at this hospital but right across the district. I commend Margot Mains and her team at the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, which is doing a tremendous job to ensure that these investments expand opportunities for our people. Importantly, there is also an expansion in mental health services. We have subacute beds at Shoalhaven Hospital largely due to the hard work of the member for South Coast. However, under this master plan we will see an expansion to cover acute care as well, which is incredibly important. Previously acute care was only available in Shellharbour. I understand that the Mirrabook Mental Health Unit will move to the Shoalhaven as part of this upgrade, which is tremendous news. It is another program of works that the Government has secured. Work is underway and it is being delivered.

It was exciting to stand with the former Premier, the then Treasurer and now Premier, and the health Minister to announce a more than \$700 million brand-new hospital for Shellharbour. After all of the discussion we have had about hospitals and resources we have been able to secure a major investment that recognises the growth of that local community. The southern Illawarra is the second-largest growth area in the State outside of south-west Sydney, so it needs resources such as hospitals—hospitals that are able to deliver children and a ward that can actually provide support for mothers and families, which does not currently exist at Shellharbour Hospital. However, a new Shellharbour hospital will have those critical supports so that women can have their children locally without having to go further north. That project will generate an anticipated 2,800 jobs. I am proud of the fact that I have been able to fight for and secure that project, which will make a huge difference in a bipartisan way. I acknowledge my Illawarra colleagues from all sides of politics, all of whom worked together to deliver that. At the end of the day, people do not really care whether it is the red team or the blue team; they just want to see the outcomes. That is exactly what we have been able to deliver with that project.

Schools are also very important. Having grown up and gone to school in my local area I was pleased to see an allocation of \$2 million to my former school, Bomaderry High School. I have been campaigning for this, given that the floods affected a school that is now more than 50 years old. I hope that this is the first allocation and not the only allocation. Bomaderry High School is the only public high school north of the Shoalhaven River between Kiama and Moss Vale and it needs this investment to ensure that its outstanding teachers can continue to deliver a quality education. This Government has made a lot of noise about being a government for public education and I support the investments that it makes. However, unless teachers have the facilities to deliver quality teaching they will not be able to support students in the way they need it.

Not every young person will have the best job, the best house and the best car, but every young person deserves the best shot at it, no matter their background or their circumstances in life, or whether they are a kid growing up with a disability like I was. I want those kids to have opportunities that I did not have. Unless Bomaderry High School gets those critical upgrades it will seriously hold back the capacity of teachers to deliver. While I welcome the \$2 million that has been invested, I call for the Government to do a proper refurbishment of Bomaderry High School so that it can be ready for the next 50 years of challenges, education and inspired learning. I am proud of the fact that I have been able to secure a range of commitments for air conditioning in classrooms for schools that I know need it desperately, particularly in the Shellharbour area. I look forward to continued support, particularly for children with disabilities in my area, which is absolutely needed.

In particular, I note the need for transport for children to get to schools such as the Five Islands Secondary College, which is well out of my area. It is just not possible for parents to get their kids there, but their kids need that specific type of access to learning to get the chance they need. I call on the Government to make sure that it coordinates those critical transport supports and resources. I am pleased that I was able to secure a commitment of \$125 million for a passing loop on the South Coast line so that trains between Bomaderry and Kiama can pass each other. I understand that the former transport Minister, Andrew Constance, has arranged for a hybrid train that runs on both diesel and electric power so that, in theory, trains could run from Bomaderry to Sydney without the need to change. Also, such arrangements would double the capacity of the South Coast line, which is incredibly important.

People want to increase the number of services and some have called for the electrification of the line. Not only would that not be a viable proposition for Government but if you electrify a single track, you have still have only a single track. You cannot increase capacity. A four-kilometre passing loop will deliver electrification with the hybrid trains for a fraction of the price. It is beautiful in its simplicity and delivers great outcomes for public transport users, of which I am proudly one. I encourage the Government to make sure it continues to deliver the station upgrades to facilitate those, specifically the upgrade of Bomaderry. I call on the Government to release the plans for that station upgrade so that the community can give feedback and comments. I know that Private Bomaderry, which is the community association there, has asked me to try to obtain those plans. I have asked the Minister for those plans and I encourage him to provide them.

Mental health is incredibly important to all of us in this place. I want to reflect on the tragic loss of young life in my community over the past few years. Members have heard me speak about it before. Headspace centres located in Wollongong and Nowra currently receive funding from the Commonwealth Government. Given the spike in youth suicides in my electorate I have requested the Federal Government consider funding for a new headspace service in Kiama. The facility will provide vital services to support those who are vulnerable, as well as educate local young people from the ages of 12 to 25 years on things like suicide prevention and the importance of youth mental health. The service could also cover issues such as relationships, vital counselling for those at risk, drug and alcohol support services, and work and study support. It could also put young people in touch with local employment opportunities.

Those support services are currently available. However, in my view the services are poorly coordinated. If we want young people to access the services, they need to trust the people running the services, which often takes time, effort and coordination. We have a responsibility to do everything we can to provide the necessary access to services and support for vulnerable young people at risk. I am encouraging interested people across my electorate to continue to sign my petition. Sadly, the Federal Government has said that it will not provide that investment. I will continue to take the fight to whoever is in Canberra and seek investment in those vital services, particularly considering the spike in suicides in our local area. A bureaucratic response and a bandaid solution that places a few extra counsellors at a high school for a few weeks will not cut it; services are needed in the community over the long term.

I thank the Hon. Bronnie Taylor in the other place for listening to my concerns. I note the mental health announcement that was made earlier in the week. I commend the Government for what it has done but there is still a lack of coordination at the district level. We have the opportunity to deliver better bang for our buck and better outcomes for our young people in particular when we work with primary health networks and teams such

as COORDINARE. I encourage the Government to make sure that investments follow the spike in suicides in those areas. As the local member for many years, it is horrible to get the call and realise that you actually know the person who has made that terrible decision. You know the impact that it has on the family and friends of that young person who has, for whatever reason, felt there was no other way out. It is incredibly important that we seek every opportunity to support them and make sure that it does not occur into the future. [*Extension of time*]

I will briefly touch on a few other matters. I thank the former Deputy Premier for his investment in the Shellharbour Airport Development Project through the Resources for Regions program. It has been opened and is making a hell of a difference. In my electorate, we need continued investment in emergency services. I want to see the Berry Rural Fire Service station delivered. Members of the Berry RFS have raised the issue with me. It has been promised, but we have not seen the new station. They cannot fit their new tankers in what is an old and historical station. We need to deliver that station; it is important. We need to deliver upgraded RFS stations at Calderwood and Dunmore to support those communities. That is incredibly important.

I want to continue to see investment in surf life saving clubs, particularly as we move into the warmer months. Clubs such as the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club are seeking to replace their old rescue surfboat, and they need an appropriate vehicle to tow that boat. I hope to see continued investment in the arts and culture. I am proud that later in the year we will be able to open the upgraded art museum, Bundanon, located at the home of Arthur Boyd. It was an investment made by this Government, together with the Federal Government. I thank the Hon. Don Harwin in the other place. I call on the Government in future budgets to make an allocation for the Kiama Arts Centre. It is incredibly important.

It is not often that you will hear somebody talk about planning in a budget reply speech. I call on the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to use this unique opportunity to ensure that the strategic plan for the region is realised. The Boral Bombo Quarry is reaching the end of its life, which presents an opportunity in the right location to expand and grow housing in the region. It is widely supported by the community. I acknowledge the council candidate for Kiama, Mark Croxford, who has said that, should he be elected, he wants to task a specific council director with the project. I support that.

I want to continue to see support for small business, which I mentioned in my inaugural speech. We must continue to give a hand up to small business. They do not want handouts; they want to make profits. It is important that the Government, as much as it can, gets out of the way to allow small business to do what it wants to do. I want to make sure that the State Government reinforces its commitment to defence investment and coordinating with the Federal Government. I was disappointed yesterday to hear The Greens say that they want to abandon the Australia, United Kingdom and United States—AUKUS—alliance and cut funding to defence. How do they expect us to defend ourselves? Are we going to have hemp torpedoes? Are we going to have peace offerings of tofu? I do not know what they think they would be doing by cutting defence.

The reason I mention defence is that HMAS *Albatross* is located in my electorate. It is supported by the defence industry with long-term, high-tech, well-paying jobs. It is important that we continue to see investments like that that benefit regions. The Greens in a coalition with Labor, seeking to cut funding, would be disastrous for regional communities like mine. It shows you the sort of priorities they have and the opportunities that would be missed. On the one hand The Greens talk about how they want to invest in steel manufacturing, when the only way we will be able to build those submarines is with steel from places like BlueScope and fabricators that exist in the Illawarra that can make defence-grade steel. I am at a loss to understand why The Greens would want to hurt my region in that way.

I served as the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and the budget reflects record investment that I secured as Minister. I am incredibly proud of several things. I thank the former Premier for signing up to a vanguard agreement to halve homelessness in the State and to commit to its eradication by 2030. I also thank the current Premier. When I worked with him he was committed to investment into the expansion of assertive outreach. When I became the Minister, one team of assertive outreach was going onto the streets, finding homeless people and assisting them with the supports that they needed. Now there are more than 60 locations across the State, seeking people out and giving them assistance. It is done with the knowledge that homeless people do not necessarily wander into a housing office. People who are on our streets are not there because they do not have a roof over their heads but because it is a symptom of other issues such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction or financial hardship. We must recognise those issues and reach out to them.

In that vein, when we saw the advent of COVID-19 we started the work of bringing people into hotels. Rather than leave them there, we wanted them to find a positive pathway back using the supports that are required to move people from temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation, with the wraparound supports. I thank Neami National and their supported transition and engagement program. With the support of the former Premier and the current Premier, the then Treasurer, we were able to develop the Together Home initiative. It recognises the Housing First approach and has put it at the centre of the Government's response. I recommend to

the Government that the approach be enshrined in government policy moving forward. It is not just for the COVID-19 response; it is the best standard response, the gold standard response, to dealing with homelessness. I thank Katherine McKernan, Pam Barker and Zoe Robinson, who are committed to this.

I acknowledge the Government's announcement regarding domestic violence. Around one-third of female rough sleepers will say to you that one of the reasons why they are on the streets, or a contributing factor to their homelessness, is domestic violence. Addressing those issues will also help to respond to homelessness. That also leads to further investment in social housing. It is important to recognise that it is the second largest asset of the State. We need to ensure that it is appropriately used, redeveloped and invested in to make sure that we find the right homes for the right people. There is an under-utilisation of the asset across the board because a lot of the stock is very old. We are addressing a problem that does not exist today, but may have existed 30 years ago. We need smaller, more agile social and affordable housing in areas where that is required in recognition that one of the fastest growing rates of homelessness is among women over the age of 55.

I commend the Social and Affordable Housing Fund. As Minister, I was able to continue the work of former Ministers and work on the fund. I was able to increase the number of women's refuges to a record number. I know that with its announcement yesterday the Government is building on that. I was pleased to work to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care in the period I was Minister. One particular area I focused on was reducing what was called alternative care arrangements. It was incredibly high when I became Minister and I focused on reducing it. There were kids sitting in hotels with carers. They were not getting the love and support that they needed. They were often kids with very complex needs. By working with groups such as Professional Individualised Care, the Burdekin Association and CASPA Services, which develop specific and often expensive programs in recognition that early diversion is incredibly important, we were able to bring those numbers down to the lowest on record.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** You did a great job.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Thank you very much, Minister. I am very proud of that. I am very proud of the greenfields program, working with frontline Family and Community Services staff and asking them what the Government needs to change to make the system better. Prior to leaving the portfolio I was working on a swathe of trials and pilots. I am so proud of every single one of the frontline workers whom I met and worked with to make the system better and of trying to get back to the way things may have been done by looking at the processes that need to be removed to streamline workers' responses and approaches. I also appreciated the opportunity to work to better target early intervention strategies and resources in recognition that child protection is not one particular agency's issue; it is an issue for Education, Health and police.

How can the Government invest earlier? According to the largest Services Australia dataset ever compiled by the Australian Government, just 7 per cent of kids will constitute 50 per cent of the welfare budget by the time they are 40. By better coordinating Health and Education with the Department of Communities and Justice, the Government can invest earlier and get better results. I was proud to introduce the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the Child Safe Standards, appoint Zoe Robinson as the second Advocate for Children and Young People, and establish the Ageing and Disability Commission to guard against the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults and people with disabilities. Robert Fitzgerald was the right pick as commissioner. He has been doing such a great job.

I worked closely with the Commonwealth Government to ensure a fair share of information linkages and capacity-building funding for people with disabilities. I was very proud to ensure that there were better complex care pathways out of hospital and into appropriate disability care for people with disabilities. I am also proud of the early childhood intervention funding to make sure that kids were not waiting longer than 50 days to receive funding if they had already been accepted into the NDIS. They received a standard amount of funding, which was really important. I was proud to have pioneered Government funding for the More Jobs More Care program to get the most out of the disability sector and recognise the jobs that exist. I oversaw the closing of the standards gap at large disability group homes, the reduction of the number of people living in them and the closure of the last of those large homes, in accordance with international agreements. I worked with the Premier's office to ensure that a high proportion of people with disabilities are employed in the public sector.

I acknowledge the work that my team and I did with Youth Justice. I acknowledge that the Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections is at the table. We were able to work together after that dreadful incident at Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre to make sure that we increased the professionalism and investment not only in Youth Justice but also outside the walls to see fewer kids in the system. I do not want to see young people in the youth justice system. I thank Lee Shearer for her great work on those reforms. They could not have happened without her. None of those pieces of work would have happened without my wonderful ministerial staff. I thank them all. I thank members of the House and the Government for its good work. I will continue to be active to make sure that I get more for my electorate of Kiama.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (11:32):** As the member for Kiama leaves the Chamber, I acknowledge his good work in his former role as the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. I recall he hosted a foster carers event in the electorate of Manly, which brought together a lot of foster carers from around the northern beaches and beyond. He did a wonderful job understanding and appreciating their concerns. Last year we had the opportunity to participate in a street walk during which we did the homelessness count on the northern beaches. As a result of the hard work of members of the northern beaches community, the various providers that work in the homelessness space in the area and the council, fewer people were counted on that evening than in previous years. That is a good sign that indicates that homelessness on the northern beaches is decreasing.

For members who are not aware, the northern beaches has an issue with homelessness because in the warmer months people from around Greater Sydney who are experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping often gravitate to Manly because it is relatively safe and provides good showers and outdoor facilities due to its proximity to the beach. It is a challenge that is somewhat seasonal and places pressure on local services. I thank the former Minister. He also did some good work to include an option in the Rent Choice phone call system for veterans to be able to identify that they were experiencing homelessness that then allowed them to be triaged to receive extra help and support. I also thank the former Minister for that. He continues to be a fantastic champion for his community.

It is a pleasure to contribute to the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022 take-note debate. I recognise that the State is approaching a fork in the road, which is being perpetuated by members opposite. Unfortunately, they are trying to feverishly manufacture a sense of division and disunity. I have heard them use the language of division, depression, fear, hopelessness and helplessness when it comes to the fair share of funding provided by the Government in different parts of New South Wales and Greater Sydney. What members opposite will be disappointed to learn and understand is that people in communities across Greater Sydney do not begrudge people in other areas of Greater Sydney getting their fair share of funding. It is unfortunate that Opposition members do not reaffirm what is best about the citizens of Greater Sydney, which was on show throughout the pandemic and particularly during the Delta outbreak. People stood together, not apart. They rallied for each other. They did not envy one another. They prayed for one another during the worst of the pandemic.

During each of the darkest days of the pandemic, when the people of the northern beaches and regional New South Wales watched and waited to hear the latest numbers at the 11.00 a.m. press conferences, they hoped and prayed that the numbers had improved in the local government areas [LGAs] of concern. There was little to no outrage when resources were deployed from other parts of Sydney and New South Wales to support those LGAs of concern because we were in it together. We shared the pain of one another and our success relied upon everybody coming together. Shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and hotels in Manly depend on patronage from people across Greater Sydney. We desperately need people from Greater Sydney to come to Manly to enjoy what the area has to offer. The long-term success, sustainability and viability of our local economy depends on people from the LGAs of concern visiting and supporting the area.

The anguish of not seeing family and friends, the anxiety of trying to hold down a job and the challenges of getting to work, simply doing things right within the health advice and getting vaccinated were burdens shared across Greater Sydney. Whether you lived in the east, the west, the north or the south, the success of the COVID response was down to everybody in New South Wales, particularly Greater Sydney. It is a dangerous and sad political tactic of members opposite to rip down the efforts of their own constituents by fanning the flames of division. I do not think this political tactic will serve them well at all. The politics of cynicism is not something that this Government welcomes, regardless of whether you live on the northern beaches or anywhere else across New South Wales.

In that context, I am pleased to provide an update on the funding that I know people in other parts of New South Wales do not begrudge the people of Manly so they receive their fair share of investment. A great deal of investment has been made in local schools and infrastructure, as well as community groups and clubs. Recently I was proud to see the plans, designs and construction of schools coming to fruition, the funding for which was part of the earlier budget. I speak specifically of a project at Manly Village Public School which I am particularly passionate about. It is one of the older schools in the electorate and sits in Manly village between the beach and the harbour. As it is built in the CBD it has very limited play space, and so it goes up.

Adjoining the school is the old Manly community centre, which housed the local community centre for 40-odd years. Community Northern Beaches, headed up by the fantastic John Kelly, does wonderful work. I acknowledge also the president of Community Northern Beaches, Adele Heasman, who has done an outstanding job in leading that wonderful group of people. It provides homelessness and domestic violence services and established a pop-up vaccination clinic for the vulnerable and voiceless in the community. It was outgrowing its premises at the old Manly community centre, which was no longer fit for purpose. A number of years ago I made

a commitment to the school P&C that the Government would not allow the building to be sold or used for other purposes and that it would revert back to the school, allowing the school community to expand and make great use of the building. I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and her team for providing funding to upgrade, improve and refurbish that facility, which will allow the teachers and staff to provide better services to local students.

At the same time the community centre operation that was located there will move to the other side of Manly into a building that has had many different lives. The Soldiers Memorial Hall is on Crown land and used to house the old Fisho's Club. It has been fitted out by the Northern Beaches Council, which uses the top floor as a great space for its staff. The bottom floor has been proudly provided to Community Northern Beaches. It has a great fit-out with wonderful rooms, and the group will do phenomenal work from that building. It is a win-win situation. For a not too large sum, we were able to refurbish the old community centre and relocate the new Community Northern Beaches to around the corner. I am looking forward to that.

That great investment in Manly Village Public School is hotly followed by investment in Curl Curl North Public School, which was a near \$90 million total rebuild. This area is a growing part of the northern beaches, which again paints a picture about the furphy perpetuated by those opposite around population growth. The northern beaches LGA is one of the biggest in New South Wales, with 221,000 residents. It has experienced considerable growth over the past decade or so, and that growth pressure has been acutely felt in our local schools. The upgrade of Curl Curl North Public School was a fantastic piece of work. I thank the principal of the school, Donna Blatchford, and her team. That project, which we saw come up out of the ground, really spoke to the local environment and nearby residents. It was a wonderful job. I thank Minister Sarah Mitchell for doing a tour to see the wonderful work at Curl Curl North Public School. I thank the teaching staff and the P&C for their patience during the project.

That project was preceded by work at Manly Vale Public School, which again started off as a tiny school. It had been there for decades and reached a point where there were simply too many kids for the space. It was also rebuilt. It sits in a wonderful spot at the top of Manly Vale. That work was preceded by work at Harbord Public School. There is also a considerable amount of significant work being done at Balgowlah Boys school, which is an all-boys public school and one of the best-performing schools in the State in HSC English. The students perform well in spite of the facilities. If members opposite saw the state of Balgowlah Boys public school, despite the terrific efforts of School Infrastructure NSW to work through the improvements, they would acknowledge it is a fair investment in a school on the northern beaches. Any parent, whether they live in the north, south, east or west of Greater Sydney, would acknowledge that it is a much-needed investment.

The Government has put a great amount of funding into Balgowlah Boys. The school is getting an upgraded hall and there is a project to make better use of the grass area out the front. I look forward to working with the school and the P&C on continuing to make improvements to and investments in Balgowlah Boys. I gave the school a small amount of discretionary funding, which went a long way to buying a commercial dishwasher for the canteen. Little things like that go a long way. I thank the principal of Balgowlah Boys, Paul Sheather, who does an outstanding job. He has pulled the academic results of the school up through the roof, and they are shooting the lights out. I say well done to Balgowlah Boys and I thank the P&C for its efforts over many years. We have got a way to go, but I am committed to providing the funding and support to Balgowlah Boys to give its students the best learning experience possible. The Government will continue to do that.

Along the way there have been a number of small projects for local schools. Generally, those projects are brought about by the P&C getting in contact with me. I enjoy wonderful relationships with and have a great deal of respect for the P&Cs across the Manly electorate. The parents are truly invested and work hard to ensure their school community and environment are the best they can possibly be for their kids. To all the P&Cs, whether it has been funding for solar panels or sustainability projects, it has been a pleasure working with them. I hope the funding is put to good use.

Another project I am particularly proud of is the Manly Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice, which is being built on the old Manly Hospital site. I cannot emphasise enough the positive impact and the significant difference this project will make to the lives of young people across the State. The build on the old Manly Hospital site is the first of its kind in Australia. It is a proud and significant achievement but also tragic in the sense that it will be the only one of its kind. In the shadow of the voluntary assisted dying debate, it is important to acknowledge and have a mature discussion about the provision of palliative care to people across New South Wales. The young adult hospice is being built in one of the most amazing areas at North Head in Manly. It abuts the national park and has sweeping views across Sydney Harbour. The hospice, which will take pride of place on the highest point of the old hospital site, provides leading end-of-life palliative care to young people, wherever they may come from across New South Wales. The model is similar to that of Bear Cottage, which members in this place and their communities would be familiar with, whereby a young person can come for palliative care and their carer or family and friends can stay and receive respite. A magical and wonderful aspect of Bear Cottage, very much in

the same vein as the new hospice that is being built, was how the community—whether it be local businesses, families or schools—got together and raised funds to provide activities and wraparound support for people coming to stay or use the services.

Whether they are from Bourke, Dubbo, Blacktown, Cootamundra, the furthest corners of New South Wales or wherever it may be, if a young person is suffering an incurable illness they can come to Manly and stay at the hospice for up to four weeks four times a year with their family and friends to receive palliative care, support and respite. The project, which is edging just above \$15.1 million, has been funded through a variety of methods. Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott made a very generous contribution of \$5 million through the Commonwealth Government during his time as the member for Warringah. The other funding component has been split with the New South Wales Government.

I acknowledge and thank former Deputy Premier John Barilaro, who came to visit and toured the site—which is currently an old ripped-down, derelict hospital—along with the Hon. Bronnie Taylor from the upper House. He had an understanding of the project's vision and what was trying to be built, and he appreciated its funding gap. There and then he said, "I appreciate the enormous importance of this project. I understand that it will support people in rural and regional New South Wales. It will allow them an opportunity to come to Manly and have respite and recover, so I want to get it done." The former Deputy Premier quietly championed the project and got the funding. I owe him a great debt of gratitude for his work to bring this project to light. The construction is underway, and if it were not for his efforts we would probably still be fighting the good fight to get the funding. Once again, I thank him for that.

I stress to my National Party colleagues and to members opposite—and this goes to the point about manufacturing this ridiculous debate about division and the haves and have-nots of Greater Sydney—the facility that is being built in Manly is not there to service only the people of Manly; it is there to service the people of New South Wales. It will give people across Greater Sydney and in rural and regional New South Wales the love, care and support they need and deserve. The consistent attacks about equity and fairness and where funding should be delivered across Greater Sydney does a disservice to the State. In Manly we are incredibly proud of this project and I pay tribute to the other person who made it a reality, Ms Kay Van Norton Poche. [*Extension of time*]

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Looking forward to it.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** Thank you, member for Tweed. I was just saying that the third element of funding for this magnificent project has come from one of the most generous people you will ever meet—Ms Kay Van Norton Poche, who lives in Manly. I will never forget when she came to see the launch of the original designs. She said, "I love what's happening here and I believe in this project." She has been a great supporter of Bear Cottage for many years, and she understood the need to create a place where young people with terminal illness who graduate from living at Bear Cottage can come and stay. She said, "I want to make a contribution to this project." She got out a chequebook—which these days is a rarity in and of itself—and I thought, "This is wonderful. She'll write a cheque that we can put in the kitty and we'll only have another \$6 million to raise." Anyway, she took out her chequebook and wrote a cheque there and then for \$5 million.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** What was her name again?

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** I will happily provide it again for the record. Her name is Ms Kay Van Norton Poche, and she needs to be recognised—we did pay special tribute to her when we launched the project. Wonderful people in New South Wales see something that is of great merit and want to get behind it and support it. Kay, who herself has battled cancer, stood up and made that donation. So we then had Commonwealth funding, State Government funding and Kay's contribution, along with a contribution from different community groups throughout New South Wales, which allowed us to break ground and get going on this wonderful project. I thank everyone who was involved in and contributed to the project.

The project is rocketing along. We experienced a slight delay with the construction shutdown, but we have broken ground—concrete has been poured, trucks are coming and going from the site, and there is a lot of excitement in the community. We are really looking forward to opening the doors of Australia's first young adult hospice in Manly next year. I know it will serve—somewhat tragically—every community represented by members in this House and provide a place for young people to go. Again, the money announced in the budget was incredibly welcome to close the door on the funding needed for the project.

The upgrade of Wharf 3, the old timber wharf, is another project funded in the budget that will, again, benefit not only people who live in Manly and on the northern beaches but also those who want to visit to see all the wonderful things that Manly has to offer the State and to support our local economy. It generally services the fast ferry but has only a series of wooden steps that people use to access the ferry when it docks. There is no disability or pram access. With two young kids of my own, I am very familiar with the pram issue. It is hard to

lug the pram up the steps while holding on to one or two kids. The investment in Wharf 3, as it is known, will provide disability access, which is a right of the disabled. It will also improve wet weather cover and general accessibility for passengers getting on and off the ferry. We are very much looking forward to that work.

Across the cove is the old Manly Sea Life Sanctuary, which members might be familiar with, where people could go diving with sharks and see all manner of sea life; it had an educational component. Unfortunately, the sanctuary closed and its operations were moved to Darling Harbour. We have been left with a purpose-built aquarium—which looks somewhat like a Pizza Hut building stuck on the harbour—that blocks the view of the original Manly Bathers' Pavilion, a beautiful pre-war building that bookends the cove. For many years, locals have rightly raised questions about what should be done with the aquarium and what its appropriate next use should be. I am very grateful to former transport Minister Andrew Constance and his team—particularly Asher Miners, Dan Rubenach and Charlotte Inwood—for their support and their work in getting funding to undertake geotechnical work at the aquarium.

At the bottom of the aquarium there are large tanks with concrete pylons that go into the harbour. The structure needs to be examined and a community-driven approach will be needed to determine what will happen with the structure or that particular space. That work is currently underway, and it is something for which I have been fighting for some time. The structure has sat there for too long and the last thing we want is for it to fall into the harbour. It is great to see that work underway.

The environment is a passion of many people in the Manly electorate, given where we live. Indeed, it is a passion of people right across the State. The budget papers also had some wonderful news for particular areas of the Manly electorate with respect to the environment. The boardwalk project to be built at Manly Dam memorial park has been allocated funding. The war memorial at Manly Dam is up for heritage listing, and the dam is one of the few freshwater dams that exist in and around Greater Sydney. It is a wonderful spot. If members have not been there with friends or family I encourage them to come out and have a look. Obviously it got a lot of use during the restrictions when people had to stay in their local government area. People came to enjoy and explore parts of their community that they perhaps had not for many years.

Manly Dam is a very popular spot. The Government will provide upwards of \$800,000 to complete improvements to the boardwalk, which will get people who are enjoying Manly Dam off the road—it is quite a narrow road there with a lot of traffic—onto the purpose-made boardwalk. It will allow better access to people to get out and enjoy the dam all the more. The other funding allocation that has been years in the making and long awaited is for an upgrade of North Harbour Reserve. It is a key stop along the Bondi to Manly Walk, which is becoming increasingly popular. The idea is that by using an app on their phone a person can walk along the foreshore of the harbour all the way from the eastern suburbs of Bondi to Manly, with the journey broken up over a number of days and not done all at once.

**Mr Geoff Provost:** There's a harbour in the way.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** Yes, there is a harbour in the way, but you can walk over the Harbour Bridge. North Harbour Reserve is a beautiful spot. A person could get a picnic basket from one of the wonderful local cafes or restaurants and come with their family to North Harbour Reserve. However, it has needed some work; it has been in a pretty poor state for a long time. The community around it has been crying out for the upgrade to happen and lobbying the council for years and years. It is wonderful that the Government is providing \$200,000 to the Northern Beaches Council, which will be chipping in the other half, to make those improvements to North Harbour Reserve. I know that the local community, particularly the North Harbour Community Forum, has been working with council planners on that project for a very long time, so it is wonderful to see it happen. I am very proud of it.

Other, smaller things have been happening by way of small investments, such as upgraded signage for the wonderful Cabbage Tree Bay to bring it in line with signage in similar areas. I pay tribute to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Rob Stokes, for another great project, the Greening our City program. The Manly electorate was the beneficiary of nearly \$135,000 to plant 250 or so new trees in the Brookvale and Manly Vale areas. As I have run out of time, I say that members will appreciate the considerable investment that has been made in the Manly electorate and for the benefit of people across this great State.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:03):** As I reflect on the 2021-22 budget as it affects the Riverstone electorate, I cannot help but note it has been a decade since the change of government. Being one of those members elected in 2011, I contrast in my mind the scenario today with the first time I gave a budget-in-reply speech. Like many electorates around the State, the electorate of Riverstone had very little to talk about under the last few years of the Labor Government in terms of investment or infrastructure. The situation was rather dire. Although the north-west of Sydney was classified as a growth area and land had been rezoned, there was very little tangible investment to facilitate that rezoning to actually turn into development. Things like water, sewerage



and roads were just not there yet and people could not move onto their rezoned land to turn it into developable land without that infrastructure in place. One thing that has not changed in the 10 years since is that the same member was probably seated at the table when I gave my first such speech.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** That is right.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** The Minister, and member for Lane Cove, does not look a day different.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Thank you. It is the mask.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** It may be the mask. The good news is that in each of the years since then, including this year, I have been able to talk about a great deal that has happened in the electorate of Riverstone and surrounding areas. The north-west of Sydney has seen an utter transformation in that time. While I will particularly speak about the elements of the 2021-22 budget, I will of course make passing reference to some of the things over those 10 years that have changed the landscape completely. There are suburbs there today that did not exist 10 years ago. Whole communities with the infrastructure and services to go with them have been delivered by this Government. That process continues in admirable fashion, with the planning department striving to improve all the time on delivering what is needed as early in the life cycle of developments as possible. While we have perhaps not achieved perfection in every case and probably never will, I think the Government is doing a far better job of it than governments of previous years.

The 2021-22 New South Wales budget has delivered funding for new school projects, the hospital to be built at Rouse Hill, the Schofields commuter car park, the Denmark Link Road project and the construction of the new Marsden Park fire station. The budget continues to deliver for people of the region, ensuring that population growth is accompanied by services and facilities that the new communities need. Specifically, \$14.6 million is allocated for the recently announced stage two project at Galungara Public School, which will bring the school's capacity to 1,000 students. The Government delivered the school in the previous couple of years and we are moving on to stage two already, which reflects the explosive growth of a suburb like Schofields.

The budget also includes \$13.9 million to enable construction to begin on the new Rouse Farm primary school to be built on Schofields Road near Tallawong station, which is another precinct that is seeing rapid development. Tallawong station is already a focal point in the district. In the next week or so I will attend an opening by the developer of the next stage of that precinct, which provides commercial facilities for a town centre on the site. It will benefit the local community enormously. The upgrades under way at John Palmer Public School and Glenwood High School received \$14.4 million and \$11.3 million respectively. Both projects will see increases in the permanent accommodation capacity of each school, reducing the need for demountable rooms.

The upgrades address the reality of population growth in Sydney's north-west. They follow completed projects at Riverstone High School, Riverbank Public School, Quakers Hill East Public School and Schofields Public School, the latter school being essentially rebuilt and enlarged. The new Marsden Park High School will also serve the Riverstone electorate, although it is just outside it, and is funded in this year's allocation. There will also be continuing work on the newly opened Northbourne Public School, which was completed in recent months. The delivery of all of those new educational facilities across the region shows the priority the Government has given to building new schools. The north-west is a classic case where the demand is great, and the number of schools being rolled out reflects that.

The Health portfolio allocation includes \$43.3 million this financial year to enable substantial work to begin on the Rouse Hill Hospital project. Construction of stage one of the hospital remains on track to commence by 2023. NSW Health has done a fantastic job on so many fronts during the COVID-19 pandemic, whether it is vaccinations, testing, coping with the surge in patients and being flexible in addressing needs across the community as demand rose and fell in different areas. Despite those demands, the process of consultation with stakeholders has been underway in recent months to feed into the development of the clinical services plan for the new hospital, which will obviously inform the design of the buildings to be constructed. As I have said, I am advised that the project remains on target, with construction of stage one of the hospital to commence by the first quarter of 2023.

It follows the massive investment that the Liberal-Nationals Government put into the Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital, which is the other hospital that has served the electorate of Riverstone for years. It has been expanded greatly in size to make it a major metropolitan hospital, at a cost of over \$700 million in two stages, and is now functioning to serve the increased population of the area. It is a project that the previous Labor Government talked about a number of times but never did, to the furious antagonism of former Labor member for Blacktown Paul Gibson, who heavily criticised his own Government for not moving on investing in Blacktown Hospital. It has taken the Liberal-Nationals Government to do what that previous Government would never do. There has

been an increase of more than 35 per cent in the staffing levels at the Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital over the years as the Government has been investing in new facilities. It is not just bricks and mortar; it is staff as well.

The transport allocation in the budget includes \$13.7 million for construction of the Schofields commuter car park for 700 vehicles, for which planning approval was recently granted and a contract awarded. The land for the car park has been acquired on the western side of the rail line, and that acquisition also makes provision for a corridor for the future extension of the Metro North West line westwards from Tallawong to Marsden Park. When that project occurs sometime in the future, there will be an interchange between the Metro North West line and the Richmond line at Schofields. Site works have commenced for the car park and substantial construction is imminent. The project will mean that there will be a total of more than 1,000 spaces at Schofields station. It follows the completion of a project earlier this year on the eastern side of the railway line for an additional 85 car spaces and is in addition to the 1,000 car spaces at the Tallawong metro station, the 1,300 at the Norwest metro station and the 880 at Bella Vista station. The Government has clearly invested hugely in providing access to public transport for the people of north-west Sydney, recognising the growth in that area.

In the budget for roads, \$13 million has been allocated for work on the Denmark Link Road project, connecting Garfield Road West to Bridge Street at Schofields. That will provide a light traffic alternative route to the congested level crossing at Riverstone, which has been a bugbear for locals for years. Land acquisition has already commenced, detailed design work has been undertaken and a review of environmental factors has been completed, and so it will not be long before the construction phase can commence. That will remove the pressure that has been seen for so many years at that level crossing, which is unfortunately a relic of the historical past of Riverstone and the country town that it used to be. There is planning within the Roads portfolio to replace that level crossing in due course with a grade-separated crossing, as part of the further North West Growth Area roads plan, but that is some years off.

The work on Boundary Road, Tallawong, and McCulloch Street, Riverstone, has been allocated \$31.5 million. That is a combined project to open up the growth areas of the Schofields and Alex Avenue precincts for development. As the new suburbs have rolled out, the roads have to come as well. The Government may not be perfect, but it is doing it in a better fashion than has been done in the past and is ensuring that the roads are being upgraded to accommodate the increase in population. The northward extension of Boundary Road has also been allocated \$4 million in parallel to that project. The work on Hambledon Road, Tallawong, has been allocated \$26.8 million. That extension of Hambledon Road northward will open up access to the Riverstone East stage two development precinct, which was rezoned and is seeing development activity right now. The road will connect the sub-arterial road network through that precinct. The design and final business case of Veron Road, Schofields, has been allocated \$200,000. I understand that there is also funding from the Special Infrastructure Contributions fund in the pipeline for the connection from Veron Road to Quakers Road via Aerodrome Drive, providing a connection for the new suburb of Nirimba Fields to the M7 to the south.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**

#### **Reports**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (12:14):** Via video link: As Chair: I am pleased to speak to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety report No. 2/57 on the *Physical health of police and emergency service workers in NSW*, tabled on 6 August 2021. All police and emergency service workers, including volunteers, protect our communities and save lives. The work that they do is physically and mentally demanding. It is important that emergency service workers get the support they need to perform their duties as safely as possible. The committee's recommendations in the report aim to minimise workplace injuries and consider improvements in programs and initiatives for workers' physical health.

As part of the inquiry, the committee looked at the day-to-day work that police and emergency service workers do and the impact that this work has on their physical health. We heard directly from emergency service workers, such as paramedics and police officers, who painted the picture of the incredible demands of their work, including long hours, lifting and carrying people and equipment, fatigue and stress. We also recognise that a large proportion of emergency service workers are volunteers. Even though they are not salaried staff, they still face similar risks to their physical health and safety. We acknowledge the work they do in helping to protect our communities. One of the committee's key recommendations for the Government is to review whether emergency

service volunteers are adequately supported. The review should focus on how volunteers are allocated to roles, including whether they meet satisfactory work health and safety standards.

The inquiry also found that physical health is intertwined with mental health. Of particular concern to the committee is how the recovery from physical injury affects mental health, particularly if injuries are ongoing or affect a worker's ability to return to work. While mental health was outside the terms of reference of the inquiry, we acknowledge that link. The committee heard about the current fitness standards and physical entry requirements that are required to ensure that workers are eligible to safely perform their roles. Those requirements, such as fitness tests, highlight the physically demanding nature of the work that they do and the role that physical fitness plays in some of their duties. We understand that there are mandatory standards in police and emergency service agencies and we investigated the positive and negative benefits of those standards. We support the current physical entry requirements for police and emergency service workers. However, we also emphasise that if any mandatory standard is introduced, it should be tailored against the specific requirements of each particular role.

The committee also heard about programs that are currently in place and how different workforces manage injury and a return to work of employees. When workers take leave due to injury, it puts a strain on the wider emergency services agencies as well as individual workers. To assist the New South Wales Government to manage that situation, the committee recommends increasing the reserve pool of officers for all salaried emergency service workers to assist in backfilling temporary vacancies. Increasing the reserve pool could alleviate pressures when additional support is needed.

The committee commends the New South Wales Government for the support and training that it provides the State's emergency service workers. The programs and initiatives are comprehensive and promote the health and fitness of workers. However, more measures are needed to minimise the number of injuries experienced by emergency service workers, such as further investment in equipment. That is why the committee recommends the increase of the availability of mechanical aids for paramedics, which we heard reduces risk of injuries. The committee was also pleased to learn that police and emergency service government agencies offer voluntary health and medical assessments to their employees. Periodic health assessments is a great initiative that can support the overall health and wellbeing of workers. One of the committee's key recommendations is to introduce mandatory periodic health assessments for police and emergency service officers. Unlike a mandatory physical standard, a health assessment takes a holistic approach to check on the overall physical and mental wellbeing of a police officer or emergency service worker.

On behalf of the committee, I extend our gratitude to the individuals and organisations that made submissions, gave evidence at the committee hearings and shared their experiences with us. Their contributions have been extremely valuable to help us understand the issues and formulate our recommendations. Finally, I thank my colleagues on the committee, deputy chair Mr Mark Taylor, Mr Edmond Atalla, Ms Steph Cooke and Ms Tamara Smith, for their dedication to the work of the committee. I acknowledge also the role of the committee staff. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:20):** I make a brief contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Law and Safety report entitled *Physical health of police and emergency service workers in NSW*. I was privileged to participate in this inquiry as a committee member. The inquiry carried out important fact-finding research to better understand the impacts on the physical health of police and emergency service workers in New South Wales as they go about their daily work. I acknowledge the chair of the committee, the member for Goulburn; and the deputy chair, the member for Seven Hills. I acknowledge also the diligent committee officers who enabled the inquiry to progress despite the challenging circumstances of our time. I thank the parties who made submissions to the inquiry, namely the Health Services Union, the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors, the Police Association of NSW, the Public Service Association of NSW, the Community and Public Sector Union NSW and the New South Wales Government.

The submissions to the inquiry have helped the committee to understand the situation on the ground and the experiences and wellbeing of our frontline emergency service workers. The overall wellbeing of our first responders has a profound effect on the resilience of the State to respond to crises at the macro level. The bushfire season of 2019-20 was an experience seared into the minds of many people in the State. Similarly, the report noted that at an individual level the health of our first responders can be a determining factor in the safety or survival of people who need their assistance. While addressing these issues, public health challenges of the past two years have brought to the fore the occasionally contentious balance between individual choice and collective responsibility. I note the report's recommendation to address the health of emergency service workers and that they seek to incentivise these steps that would alleviate these health concerns to some degree at an individual level.

The report notes the existence of a number of laudable programs to improve the health of emergency workers but also identifies constraints in the ability of employees to participate in such programs for reasons that

include shiftwork, long hours and fatigue. We must uphold our end of the bargain to ensure that at the institutional level the State gives our first responders sufficient resources to carry out their absolutely vital duties in a manner that does not continue to cause the injuries that this report identified. The report recommends that the Government consider avoiding the single deployment of paramedics; consider options to increase the reserve pool of officers to backfill temporary vacancies for all salaried emergency service workers; and provide mechanical aids for heavy lifting. We can build a stronger and more resilient State with healthier and better resourced first responders. While mental health was not strictly within the scope of the report, it found that physical health is inexorably linked to mental health. Improvements in the physical health of emergency service workers must be viewed as an all-encompassing benefit to our State. As with anything, these findings must be viewed and acted upon in a balanced manner. I commend the report to the House.

**Report noted.**

**COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

**Reports**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (12:24):** Via video link: As Chair: I speak to Report 3/57 of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, entitled *Review of the 2019-20 annual reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC*, which I tabled on 11 August 2021. The committee's role includes examining each annual report and other reports on the ICAC and its inspector. This year's review focused on three key issues. Firstly, the committee considered the operational matters of the ICAC, such as resourcing, including an independent funding model; the ICAC's operations during COVID-19; and an incident which involved an erroneous upload to the ICAC's website. Secondly, the committee examined the updates on policy and legislation, specifically the progress of the public interest disclosure legislation and the ICAC's witness cooperation policy. Thirdly, the committee reviewed the annual reports of the Inspector of the ICAC, including the serious gap in his powers due to the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act and his ongoing audits of the ICAC.

The committee commends both the ICAC and the inspector for carrying out their functions effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the final quarter of the reporting period. Their adaptable and proactive approach ensured that the valuable work of the ICAC continued during uncertain times. When looking into the ICAC's operational issues, the committee was concerned to learn about the incident of an erroneous upload of private information to the ICAC's public website. The committee was disappointed that the ICAC did not have vigorous monitoring procedures in place to prevent this incident from occurring. The committee considered the inspector's review of the matter and was pleased that the ICAC updated procedures in its operation manual to prevent further occurrences. However, it is important to emphasise that the publication of confidential material on the ICAC's website should never happen, whether by accident or not. This is an area of concern for the committee and we will closely consider if preventative measures are adequate when we review elements of the ICAC Act in our upcoming inquiry.

The committee also examined the ICAC's funding and resourcing, which it acknowledges has been an ongoing concern for the commission. Of particular significance to the ICAC is its proposal for an independent funding model. During the hearing the ICAC's Chief Commissioner emphasised that the present funding system undermines the ICAC's independence and limits its capacity to function as the State's anti-corruption agency. These views were supported by the Audit Office report regarding the effectiveness of the financial arrangements of the ICAC and other organisations, which was tabled during this reporting period. The committee notes the Government's response to the Audit Office report is due later this year. The committee continues to support an independent funding model for the ICAC and looks forward to the Government's response to the Audit Office report.

Another matter of importance for the committee is the delayed progress on the public interest disclosure legislation, which has been under review since 2018. The committee believes that people who make voluntary disclosures to the ICAC must be protected from criminal, civil and disciplinary liabilities for their disclosures. The committee understands that this is a priority for the Government, and it is good news that a bill has been introduced recently. The ICAC also reported that its newly launched witness cooperation policy is working and is encouraging people to come forward and disclose information. Under this policy persons can benefit from cooperating with the ICAC and providing information about investigations. The committee was pleased to hear this positive update and we look forward to the ICAC's next annual report with further updates on the policy's uptake and effectiveness.

The committee also reviewed the inspector's annual report. It was pleased to hear from the inspector that he and the ICAC continue to have a positive and effective working relationship. In the past reporting year the

inspector highlighted a serious gap in its powers as a result of the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979. This Act limits the inspector's use of material relating to telecommunications intercepts carried out by the ICAC. The committee considers it important for the inspector to have access to telecommunications intercepts to perform his functions. The committee is concerned with the delay in the progress of the review of this Act and will pursue engagement with the relevant State and Commonwealth agencies to obtain an update.

The committee acknowledges the importance of the inspector's audit function. Committee members found Inspector McClintock to have been very productive, despite COVID-19, conducting two audits. The committee's report examined the inspector's audit on the ICAC application for, and execution of, search warrants. Committee members look forward to reviewing future audits, including the audit of the welfare of ICAC witnesses, which the inspector advised the committee he is finalising. I thank ICAC Chief Commissioner Peter Hall, QC; commissioners Stephen Rushton, SC, and Patricia McDonald, SC; and the ICAC executive team for their contributions to the public hearing for the committee's review. I also thank Inspector Bruce McClintock, SC, for his contribution to the public hearing. In addition, I thank my fellow committee members for their valuable input during the review process. Finally, I thank the committee staff for their assistance with the hearing and the committee's report. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (12:31):** I acknowledge the chair of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Mrs Tanya Davies. I thank her for her stewardship of the committee, as well as the members of the committee, who have diligently undertaken their work examining the report. I also acknowledge the commissioners and the chief commissioner, as well as the executive team and operational staff at the ICAC. Their work is absolutely critical. It is so important for our State and for the trust and respect that people have in the Parliament. It is so important for the democratic system in New South Wales.

In the short amount of time I have I will address a few issues. I note the recommendation in the report that identifies the importance of the ICAC being made aware of the required update to public interest disclosures legislation. I acknowledge that Minister Harwin has introduced the Public Interest Disclosures Bill 2021. That is a very important step forward that I have been following up on for many years. In 2016 I introduced a private member's bill on this issue. Former Premier Berejiklian was kind enough to allow the issue to be referred to an inquiry that supported the thrust of the bill. Even though it has taken many years, the support of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption has been important. I acknowledge the work undertaken by the committee.

I highlight the role of the Office of the Inspector of the ICAC. It has a very good relationship with the ICAC and provides a very important check-and-balance mechanism. The committee questioned the commissioners, including the chief commissioner and the inspector, on that relationship. The inspector has done an outstanding job. I acknowledge his contribution to the ICAC and to anti-corruption matters over many years. Critically, funding is always a key issue. The ICAC is very concerned about its funding. During the hearing the chief commissioner told the committee that a number of matters had been worthy of investigation but could not be pursued due to funding resourcing issues. The chief commissioner explained that the ICAC is very discerning about the matters it pursues and that it cannot pursue everything. He highlighted his concerns about not only the level and quantum of funding but also the independence of that funding.

The ICAC does not think it is appropriate to approach the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which it has to do almost every year, to seek more funding. It thinks funding for the ICAC should be at arm's length from Government. Committee Chair Davies highlighted the audit review that was initiated by former Premier Berejiklian. That will be responded to by the Government by the end of the year. I encourage the Government to take on board the issues that were raised not only by the Audit Office but also by the upper House Public Accountability Committee. That committee did a lot of work looking at the critical importance of a solution to create independent, arms-length funding for not only the ICAC but also all oversight bodies in New South Wales.

In conclusion, I thank all those at the ICAC. I particularly acknowledge the inspector, who is outstanding in his role. I look forward to continuing the committee's work to make the ICAC the strong and fearless corruption-fighting body we know it can and will continue to be.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (12:35):** I make a contribution to the take-note debate on the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report entitled *Review of the 2019-2020 annual reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC*. A public hearing was held in May 2021. I thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee for their assistance and for the important role they play in the effective operation of the ICAC: ICAC Inspector Bruce McClintock, SC; ICAC Chief Commissioner, Peter Hall, QC; Commissioners Stephen Rushton, SC, and Patricia McDonald, SC; ICAC Chief Executive Officer Philip Reed; executive directors Roy Waldon, Lewis Rangott, Bernadette Dubois and Andrew Koureas; ICAC manager of

assessments Andrew Garcia; and acting principal legal adviser for the Office of the Inspector of the ICAC Chelsea Delahunty. The review made eight findings and four recommendations with respect to the ICAC's resources, operations and processes. Finding one states:

The ICAC's funding and resourcing is an ongoing concern for the ICAC.

I note Chief Commissioner Hall's comments, as reproduced in the report:

The present system for funding the ICAC is seriously deficient. It undermines the commission's independence. It also limits its capacity in functioning as the State's anti-corruption agency.

I was particularly troubled to hear the ICAC provide evidence that there are matters that are worthy of investigation that cannot be pursued due to a lack of funding resources. Chief Commissioner Hall explained that the ICAC is "very discerning on matters they pursue. [They] cannot pursue everything." Every member in this place would do well to reflect on the ramifications of this. Put simply, potentially corrupt behaviour and activities are not being investigated, and are potentially continuing, due to a lack of funding from this Government, which has—it must be said—lost two Premiers due to the very good work of the ICAC. I acknowledge the hard work of the committee chair, the member for Mulgoa, Mrs Tanya Davies. I echo her comments in the foreword to the report. She wrote:

The Committee was pleased to hear that the ICAC and the Inspector were able to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19 and to carry out their valuable work during the pandemic.

I also echo the chair's statement that:

The Committee also commends the ICAC and the Inspector regarding their continued positive and effective working relationship with each other.

I also acknowledge all the committee members for their efforts, as well as the staff who support the committee throughout the year. I note the ICAC's further Operation Keppel public inquiry, which is investigating whether between 2012 and 2018 Gladys Berejiklian, MP, engaged in conduct that "constituted or involved a breach of public trust", and/or "constituted or involved the dishonest or partial exercise of any of her official functions" and/or "was liable to allow or encourage the occurrence of corrupt conduct by Mr Maguire". I look forward to the ICAC continuing its investigation into these matters. I remind the House that none of those revelations would have become public had it not been for the excellent work of the ICAC's Operation Dasha to expose the corruption of Canterbury City Council. It is imperative that the State has a strong and well-resourced ICAC. I commend the report to the House.

### **Report noted.**

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

### **Reports**

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

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:39):** I make a contribution to the Committee on Environment and Planning report entitled *Sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW*. As we look to transition to sustainable energy resources, the Committee on Environment and Planning conducted a deep dive into how best to manage that transition. The committee identified the support for communities, the economic and employment prospects presented by renewable energy, transmission infrastructure, energy management, and forecasts for energy use both domestically and as an export. During the inquiry, chaired by the member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, with me as deputy chair and the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Manly and the member for Wollondilly also participating, we considered renewable energy's capacity and economic opportunities while also addressing the effects on regional communities, water security, the environment and public health.

In reviewing the historical, current and future state of energy in New South Wales, the committee heard evidence and views from a range of stakeholders. Their feedback allowed us to pinpoint issues concerning the contribution and changing role of coal, renewable energy and its economic potential, improving our energy efficiency, upgrading our transmission infrastructure, and planning the transition for communities and the workforce. The committee supports the work being done by the New South Wales Government so far, including the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020, and we highlighted some additional areas for reform.

As such, the committee made a number of recommendations, including to monitor changes in the coal export market to plan for the impact of a decline in coal exports, especially on affected regional communities; to amend the definition of native forest biomaterial and working with other jurisdictions to exclude native forest biomass from being classed as renewable energy; to progress energy efficiency reforms by finalising and implementing the draft plan to save New South Wales energy and money and support higher energy efficiency

standards for new homes in the 2022 National Construction Code; to prioritise the use of local content in renewable energy generation, transmission and firming projects, annual reporting on the number of jobs created and the work of the Electricity Infrastructure Jobs Advocate; to continue with changes to the State's regulatory framework to encourage standalone power systems, something the House has done this week through legislation; and to consider extending eligibility for programs for low-income households to access solar energy and batteries.

The committee further considered the impacts of the energy transition for regional communities and workers. As such, the committee recommended that the New South Wales Government should conduct a skills audit to assess areas of future workforce growth and planning to retrain or reskill workers impacted by the energy transition; invest in education and training programs to meet the needs of the renewables sector and retrain workers impacted by the energy transition; and fund long-term plans for the communities that the transition will impact to diversify their economies and appoint a coordinator to manage the development of energy transition plans.

Finally, the committee acknowledged the crucial role of local government organisations in the energy transition. It recommended working with local councils to move towards 100 per cent renewable energy and amending the Local Government Act 1993 to allow local councils to establish special charge schemes. The inquiry started quite a while ago and was a lengthy experience, as many things have been during the pandemic. We held a number of public hearings virtually and we got to engage quite broadly across industry in different types of sectors. It was clear to the members of the committee that there is a global transition underway. The effects that will have on us as a country and a State, particularly the regional communities that currently rely on coalmining and coal export, is something that we need to take seriously in ensuring we are addressing the impact on communities, and finding and supporting opportunities for the transition.

Committee members acknowledged that there are significant renewables opportunities and, as we have debated in the Chamber this week, the chance for the State to have new energy super powers in regional areas. They might be associated with hydrogen or other sources of renewable energy or other feedstocks for renewable energy. They are opportunities that we need to harness, and we need to make sure that regional communities have the opportunity to access them because the transition could be incredibly impactful. As someone who was born in Cessnock and understands the impact of coalmining on Cessnock and the Hunter Valley and as someone who lived in Newcastle when BHP closed down, I understand the impact that is felt on those communities. The Government has an obligation to ensure that we are doing what we can to see that the transition is not significantly detrimental to people.

The committee's recommendations will ensure smooth and detailed transition planning with the involvement of local communities through a from-the-ground-up approach. Again, I thank and acknowledge my fellow committee members, the chair Alex Greenwich, the member for Sydney, and the work he did on the report; and the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Manly and the member for Wollondilly. Committee members had a very bipartisan collaboration on the inquiry and it was enriching. I particularly thank the committee staff, Dora Oravec, Madeleine Dowd, Ilana Chaffey, Jacqueline Isles, Frances Arguelles and Clara Hawker, and all those who contributed via written submissions and in the hearings. I congratulate the committee members, particularly the staff, on delivering this final report and recommendations.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (12:45):** I make a contribution to the Committee on Environment and Planning report entitled *Sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW*. I thank Dora Oravec and all the committee staff for their hard work, organisation and input into the committee's work throughout the inquiry. The report is a valuable document based on the evidence and presentation from a range of stakeholders on an important issue. I also acknowledge my fellow parliamentary colleagues for their collaboration and input into the final report, especially when we had to discuss and make a number of changes via Webex.

I make the following points in response to the committee's final report. Firstly, the Illawarra and Hunter communities have long been the energy source that has powered the State's economy and provided valuable income and stable employment. Those communities' identities and social fabric are welded into that energy source's history. Despite the rapidly changing energy source mix, NSW Labor has been a strong and consistent advocate for both regions to be major players in the future production of energy. I am delighted that the committee has endorsed my recommendation, as detailed in recommendation 7, which prioritises local content in the designated renewable energy zones as part of the competitive tendering process for future energy projects.

Supporting local manufacturers in regions and industry will stimulate local jobs, and increase economic development and opportunities. It is about backing the Illawarra and the Hunter communities' hard work and ingenuity. The policy approach will allow, for example, the greater use of higher quality Illawarra steel being used in energy projects. NSW Labor's plan is for more manufacturing, more jobs and greater economic security. That is a win for workers, a win for wages and a win for New South Wales.

Secondly, while the policy framework, national and international political agreements and technology are changing rapidly, that does not change the fact that our economy and our way of life still require reliable energy. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the role that natural gas plays as an intermittent energy source to ensure energy reliability. The committee has noted the finding from former Chief Scientist Professor Alan Finkel's independent review of the role of gas to support renewable energy in the short to medium term.

As renewables become the dominant energy source, we need to ensure that our education, skills and training frameworks keep up with this change. We need to properly invest in our people so that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to take advantage of the economic opportunities that will come from the new energy industry. The committee heard from a number of stakeholders on the skills mismatch and the need to conduct a proper skills audit. That will identify the growth areas of employment, the skills required, and the changes required to our education and training programs.

Further, priority should also be given to workers who have been most impacted from the changing energy mix. It is only fair that those in communities most impacted be given priority in the investment to help them retrain and reskill. I am pleased that the committee's report and findings reflect NSW Labor's position on jobs, skills and training. Very few things are more important than investing in people and their future, economic and social wellbeing, and employability. I hope the Government gives thoughtful consideration to the findings in the report and ensures that future policy settings meet the challenges ahead for the rapidly changing energy mix. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:49):** As Chair: I am pleased to speak on the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning report entitled *Sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW*, tabled on 13 August 2021. The committee began the inquiry in July 2019. It looked at the opportunities of renewable energy, including for workforces, industries and the wider economy impacted by COVID-19, and considered ways to support sustainable economic development in communities affected by changing energy and resource markets. The terms of reference also covered trends in energy supply and exports, and effects on regional communities, water security, the environment and public health.

Over 250 submissions were received from energy companies, industry bodies, local councils, community groups, unions and academics. The committee held four public hearings, with 59 witnesses giving evidence, and conducted a site visit to the University of Wollongong's Sustainable Buildings Research Centre and the Tallawarra Power Station. The report makes 21 recommendations and 15 findings that focus on support for communities, economic and employment opportunities of renewable energy, transmission infrastructure, energy management, and forecasts for domestic and export use of energy. The report finds that New South Wales' energy mix is changing due to market forces, consumer preferences, advances in and lower cost of renewable energy, and Government policy changes.

Coalmining has played a significant role in the local economy, history and identity of the Hunter and Illawarra regions. Committee members acknowledge the mining industry's contribution to those communities. However, we heard that relying on coal has unintended effects. Having a high proportion of workers employed in the coal industry can mean a less diverse skills mix. Local communities and workforces are at risk of high unemployment and socio-economic decline as demand for coal and coal-fired power generation drops. That highlights the importance of giving ongoing support and significant resources to regional communities that rely heavily on fossil fuel energy generation.

The committee heard that considering the immediate needs of affected workers is key to successful transition planning. Stakeholders pointed to examples, like the Ruhr Valley, that show the importance of jobs guarantees. The report recommends that the Government consider a jobs guarantee proposal and its use in other jurisdictions. The Government's energy road map was released during the inquiry. The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 and the Renewable Energy Roadmap are steps in the right direction. They address some concerns raised by stakeholders during the inquiry.

The State's renewable energy zones [REZs] will support the uptake of renewable energy. The REZs will have the capacity to provide most of the future power supply, but are limited by current infrastructure and a lack of investment. The Act aims to address those problems, and it is pleasing to see the work being done in that area. The renewable energy sector presents a significant economic opportunity for New South Wales, including recovery from COVID-19. Committee members heard that the sector could create a large number of jobs, mainly in regional and rural New South Wales. We need to make the most of the potential of renewable energy projects to create jobs and stimulate economic growth in coal-dependent regions. Diversifying industry and employment is key to the successful transition of coal communities.

The report considers that REZs should seek to stimulate local industry and manufacturing by procuring local content. It recommends that the Government prioritise local suppliers and workforces in REZs, and reports



on the number of jobs created. The inquiry heard that New South Wales could create new renewable energy export markets. There is growing demand for green hydrogen. Developing that industry could diversify the future energy mix and provide economic and employment opportunities in regional areas reliant on fossil fuel industries.

The report considers that mine operators should rehabilitate and re-use infrastructure on mines and power generation sites. The inquiry heard about the potential for industries like mine site rehabilitation to stimulate regional economies, promote employment and address the environmental impacts of mining. The report also recommends that the Government seek to remove barriers that prevent the development of a container terminal by the Port of Newcastle. The port needs to diversify its trade base, but policy barriers prevent that. The inquiry heard that New South Wales is not efficient in its energy use. That puts more pressure on electricity generation and distribution infrastructure.

Better energy efficiency would help manage energy demand and affordability, and reduce carbon emissions. To achieve this, the report recommends that the Government implement its draft plan to save New South Wales energy and money, and support higher energy efficiency standards in the 2022 National Construction Code. Forest biomass and natural gas are often spoken of as alternatives to coal-fired power, but they are not renewable energy sources. Committee members encourage the Government to focus on sustainable options, like battery storage, to ensure energy reliability. We recommend that the Government take steps to ensure forest biomass is not eligible for renewable energy credits.

Several funding programs targeting diversification of mining communities were announced during the inquiry. Community consultation on how that funding is allocated will be vital to the success of those programs. In closing, I thank my fellow committee members for their valuable and cooperative contributions to the inquiry. I also thank the stakeholders who took part in the inquiry and committee staff for their professionalism and support through the challenges created by holding the inquiry during the COVID-19 pandemic. I commend the report to the House.

**Report noted.**

**COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

**Reports**

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

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (12:55):** As Chair: I speak on the committee's report entitled *Review of the Health Care Complaints Commission's 2019-20 annual report*, tabled on 13 August 2021. In the previous report it was found that the Health Care Complaints Commission responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its complaints-handling performance was not substantially impacted. The committee was pleased to hear that the commission has maintained that strong performance over the past year, even though the pandemic continued to impose challenges on the New South Wales health system.

We commend the commission for the initiatives it implemented in 2019-20 to improve its complaints management processes. For example, a new triage and intake team was added to the commission's assessment division, which enabled complaints to be processed more efficiently from the point of receipt. Among several positive outcomes, the average time taken to assess complaints decreased from 48 days in 2018-19 to 39 days in 2019-20. The commission received 7.6 per cent more complaints in 2019-20 than in 2018-19, which follows a long-term trend of year-on-year increases in the overall number of healthcare complaints. However, we were pleased that the total number of complaints assessed by the commission also increased for the third consecutive year. The commission received approximately 900 COVID-19-related complaints during the reporting period, although the committee heard that most COVID-related complaints were not serious in nature.

Many reflected how the public has had to come to terms with the "new normal" of accessing health services. For example, some complainants wanted face-to-face consultations with their GP rather than telehealth, while others questioned whether providers responded appropriately to public health orders. Moving forward, the committee is particularly interested in the role that the commission can play in supporting the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. The committee heard that there are numerous challenges in regulating to protect the public from vaccine misinformation, particularly when false or misleading statements are made in public by people who are not healthcare providers. The committee will closely monitor the commission's work during the vaccine rollout.

An ongoing area of interest for the committee has been the low volume of complaints from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We commend the commission for its new strategy for engaging with Aboriginal communities and health organisations. The commission has begun implementing a strategy to better support Aboriginal people in making complaints and to improve Aboriginal community awareness of the commission

itself. The report recommends that the commission continue to build on those early initiatives and provide tangible results from the new engagement strategy in its next annual report.

The committee was alarmed to hear that the volume of complaints about pharmacists and pharmacies increased significantly, by about 31 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. Many of those complaints were serious in nature, such as breaches of legislation governing drugs of addiction or the compounding of medication. The commission operates in a co-regulatory framework, and many of the complaints were referred to the commission from the Pharmaceutical Regulatory Unit of the Ministry of Health. We were pleased to hear that the commission is collaborating with other regulators and professional councils to provide education to pharmacists.

Through education and training, the number of complaints due to misunderstandings can be reduced. However, the committee also welcomes the commission's work to investigate and prosecute pharmacists who are prioritising profit over safety when selling restricted drugs and medications. The commission's outreach and co-regulatory work is helping to identify other emerging areas of concern. The committee heard that dentistry's scope of practice is evolving. Some dentists in New South Wales are now performing cosmetic procedures that do not involve the teeth or mouth, such as anti-aging procedures that inject carbon dioxide into the skin. At present, these new cosmetic procedures have not resulted in the commission receiving many complaints. However, we were pleased to hear that the commission is working proactively with professional councils and national boards to ensure that dentists performing cosmetic work like this are properly trained. The committee will continue to follow the commission's work in this area.

In terms of organisation and governance, there are several areas that the committee will continue to monitor. While the commission performed well in the People Matter Employee Survey, the committee welcomes additional initiatives to improve the commission's performance in terms of staff engagement and retention. Finally, we note that the commission is undertaking a review of some of its internal processes for clinical advice and data collection and we look forward to hearing about the outcomes of these reviews in the committee's next annual report hearing. I thank the commissioner, Sue Dawson, her management team, and all the staff at the commission for their continued dedication and hard work during what has been a challenging year. I thank my fellow committee members from the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council for their valued contributions. I also thank the committee secretariat for their work and support. I commend the report to the House.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (13:00):** Via video link: I acknowledge the work of the chair of the committee, Gurnesh Singh, the member for Coffs Harbour, and thank him for his enunciation of the key findings in the report. I raise a particular concern in this take-note debate that arose and requires further scrutiny. Like every electoral office, mine has received emails, phone calls, visits and letters from many constituents about COVID-19. One issue of concern is the misinformation spread about COVID-19 vaccinations that has found its way into the letterboxes and onto the mobile phones of Wagga Wagga residents from organisations such as the United Australia Party. This misinformation is presented in a way that implies a grossly exaggerated death toll from vaccinations. It presents a risk to the health and safety of our community by undermining confidence in vaccinations. If this type of misinformation is making its way into the letterboxes and inboxes of our citizens then it is time to review the powers of agencies that have responsibility for ensuring that only accurate information is disseminated.

I note the committee asked the Health Care Complaints Commission [HCCC] about its powers to respond to false or misleading public information, particularly in regard to COVID-19. The commission has advised that its powers are focused on the delivery of health services. Its jurisdiction over public information depends on whether the person or organisation making false or misleading claims is a healthcare provider. My understanding is that the HCCC does not have the jurisdiction to issue warnings or prohibition orders against people who are not offering a health service. The commission shares my concern at the level of misinformation. Commissioner Sue Dawson has indicated that the commission does have broad information-sharing powers and does use these to share information with other regulators. These regulators include the Therapeutic Goods Administration [TGA], which may take action if the matter involves false or misleading advertising about supplying a medical product or device, and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, which has a statutory role in actions against false and misleading advertising by a registered health practitioner.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and State-based fair trading agencies can investigate matters that indicate breaches of Australian consumer law, licensing issues or purchasing. The Australian Electoral Commission can take action on electoral-related material that is not properly authorised and the Australian Communications and Media Authority can investigate the broadcasting of misinformation. I note that the commission has joined with the TGA, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the Queensland Health Ombudsman to produce a formal joint advisory statement for consumers actively dissuading them from relying on health information from celebrities and influencers, and I welcome this. I acknowledge that

the HCCC considers its powers to be "adequate and consistent with the commission's focus on the risks posed to health and safety if they arise in the delivery of health services".

However, I remain concerned that people—including celebrities and influencers—can deliberately provide misinformation or present information in a misleading way that will adversely affect the health of our community, without being subject to sanction or regulation. I believe we need to review the powers afforded to government agencies to crack down on health misinformation where this is deliberate and provided in a way that endangers the health of the community. I welcome the work being done by the HCCC to improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The capacity to raise concerns about health service provision is critical to improving services and we must make sure that Aboriginal people, whose health status lags behind that of non-Aboriginal people, feel confident to raise any concerns they have. I thank the chair, my fellow committee members, the committee staff, and the commissioner and her staff. I particularly note the work of the commission in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that this House should consider steps to further regulate misinformation in the market.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:05):** By leave: Via video link: I will make a contribution to the committee report entitled *Review of the Health Care Complaints Commission 2019-20 Annual Report*. In the midst of a global pandemic our State's public health and safety has never been more challenged. The pandemic highlights health inequities. At a time when misinformation is rife—as the member for Wagga Wagga has mentioned—it has never been more important for people to be able to trust health professionals. The role of the Health Care Complaints Commission [HCCC] of protecting public health and safety by receiving and acting on complaints about health care is critical. The HCCC assesses, investigates, resolves and refers complaints made by people who experience adverse health outcomes from a health provider or service.

There are many issues worthy of note in the HCCC's annual report and the committee has taken a continuing interest in many of those. I will briefly mention a few of them. I note that the chair of the committee has also done that today, but I too would like to mention those that I think special consideration needs to be given to, particularly when we are trying to reduce health inequities. That needs to be a key focus of any health organisation and the HCCC is no exception. The committee has been pleased to see the HCCC looking at how it can improve its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [inaudible].

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I ask the member to turn her camera on.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** My apologies. Should I continue or should I go to [inaudible]?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member may continue.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** Continue from where I left off?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Yes.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** My apologies. I was talking about the reduction in health inequities. Another issue that the committee is considering with the commission is the timeliness of the commission's assessment of and response to complaints, because behind the complaint we know that there is someone who has had a poor experience in the health system. They have taken the time to make a complaint and are deserving of a timely response following what has often already been a traumatic experience. It is pleasing to see that the time taken by the Health Care Complaints Commission to assess complaints has decreased, whilst the total number of complaints assessed by the commission increased for the third consecutive year. This is against the backdrop of the HCCC receiving an ever increasing number of complaints, with a total of 7,852 complaints received in 2019-20, compared with 7,299 the year before. That is a rise of 7.6 per cent. The rise is no surprise; it follows a long-term trend of year-on-year increases consistent with similar organisations in other jurisdictions within Australia and internationally.

Any significant uptick in areas of complaints always warrants further focus from the committee. During 2019-20 the HCCC had a 30.9 per cent increase in the number of complaints about pharmacies, with 356 complaints in 2019-20, compared with 272 complaints about pharmacies in the previous year. This rise has largely been explained as the product of compliance activities undertaken by the Pharmaceutical Regulatory Unit of the Pharmacy Council of New South Wales, but it will continue to be an area that the committee should monitor. [Time expired.]

**Report noted.**

## LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Reports

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL:** I move:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7), the reports of the Legislation Review Committee, being orders of the day (committee reports) Nos 5 and 6, be considered together.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:11):** As Chair: I contribute to the take-note debate on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 33/57*, tabled out of session on 7 September 2021, and the *Legislation Review Digest 34/57*, tabled on 12 October 2021. In digest No. 33/57 the committee examined four cognate bills introduced in the sitting week beginning 22 June 2021 and commented on nine statutory instruments. I draw the House's attention to some of those comments. The Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021 was introduced as a cognate bill to the annual New South Wales budget bills. The bill imposes a distance-related road user charge on registered operators of certain zero- and low-emission vehicles and provides exemptions for those vehicles from certain duties.

The charge also applies to these vehicles that are registered in New South Wales but may travel on roads in other States or Territories. It was noted that this may extend the Act's jurisdiction beyond New South Wales. The committee generally comments where legislation may apply outside of New South Wales, as it may create uncertainty about what laws individuals are subject to at any one time. However, the committee recognised that the provision ensured that vehicles registered in New South Wales but travelling on roads in other States and Territories are still subject to the zero- or low-emission vehicle registration requirements. The committee noted that it is the responsibility of vehicle owners to be aware of the relevant laws that apply to their registered vehicles and made no further comment.

In digest No. 34/57 the committee examined 12 statutory instruments. One of these included the Design and Building Practitioners Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2021. This regulation expands the criteria for suspension or cancellation of a practitioner's registration under the Act. Under section 46 of the Act the secretary may form the opinion that a person is not suitable to carry out certain work that they are seeking to be registered for. This regulation allows registrations to be cancelled in such a case. This may restrict the practitioner's ability to work and earn a living. However, the committee noted that the regulation is intended to apply only to those practitioners who have a record of failing to comply with relevant building codes, legislative requirements, statutory duties or contractual obligations. In effect, the regulation protects consumers from risks related to the construction of buildings that do not meet minimum standards.

The Act also contains protections for the rights of practitioners whose registration is suspended or cancelled, including an avenue for review of these decisions. As such, the committee made no further comment on this issue. This concludes my remarks on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 33/57* and *Legislation Review Digest No. 34/57* for the Parliament. I commend the digests to the House.

**Debate interrupted.**

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

*Question Time*

**ICARE AND STATE INSURANCE REGULATORY AUTHORITY**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (14:17):** My question is directed to the Premier. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] accidentally published a June 2021 report that stated that sick and injured workers are at high risk of harm as a result of State insurer icare's continued poor performance. The Premier promised to fix icare. I ask whether he has failed?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:17):** We have certainly fixed it up from where it was at with the Labor Party. To the substance of the question, I am aware that late last week SIRA published a 14-page document entitled *Workers Compensation Monthly Dashboard June 2021*, which issued a red-level warning about the workers compensation scheme. The dashboard has since been removed from the SIRA website. The chief executive of SIRA, Adam Dent, responded by stating that "an internal administrative error resulted in information appearing elsewhere on the SIRA website in early October that did not go through an appropriate quality assurance process". He stated:

This information, which has now been removed from the SIRA website, overstated current risks and did not reflect my views as the SIRA chief executive.

I am advised that icare is unsure and unaware of what risk margin SIRA relied on in reaching that public conclusion. Let us deal with facts and not misrepresent reality. Mr McDougall was very clear in his report following the review of icare and the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 that the Nominal Insurer

scheme and the Treasury Managed Fund [TMF] scheme are financially sustainable. In particular, in relation to the Nominal Insurer Mr McDougall concluded:

... any suggestion that the scheme's financial sustainability is currently in doubt is, in my opinion, unsupportable.

The Government will take the judge's view rather than Labor's. In relation to the TMF, he stated:

... the media reports as to the financial position of the TMF were based on an incorrect understanding of the way that the TMF is funded and operates.

...

There is absolutely nothing in the submissions made or evidence given to my Review that raises any concerns about the financial position or sustainability of the TMF.

While it is certainly early days in the State's reopening, there has clearly been an impact by COVID-19 on return-to-work rates. Obviously that will create challenges as we move forward, including finding suitable duties through the lockdown period. This is having an impact on the four-week return-to-work rate and will continue for some time. In the new return-to-work landscape, icare is dedicated to ensuring it supports injured people through these difficult and challenging times to get them back to work.

Members on this side of the House find it interesting that Labor comes into this Chamber and talks about the financial viability of anything. Members know that under Labor the Treasury Managed Fund was down to 86 per cent and the Nominal Insurer was down to 65 per cent. The scheme had a \$4.1 billion deficit. Premiums were set to rise for businesses across the board by 28 per cent and 10,000 jobs were at risk right across the State. I say to members that reform is challenging. The judge pointed out in the statutory review that was conducted that the intent and direction of the reform is correct. The implementation could have been better. Even so, if members look at the funding ratio of the Nominal Insurer, which was raised by the member for Canterbury, they will find it is 99 per cent as at June 2021. Mr McDougall recommended it be at 122 per cent, so there is work to do. But what was the funding ratio under Labor? It was 65 per cent. Members opposite want to talk about financial viability.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Oxley will restrain herself.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Under Labor the funding ratio of the Nominal Insurer was at 65 per cent and members opposite are raising issues about it being 99 per cent. Let us move to the Treasury Managed Fund. The Opposition, through Mr Mookhey in the other place, has made significant statements that are completely misleading and wrong. The insurance ratio of the Treasury Managed Fund is 109 per cent, while it is recommended by Mr McDougall that it be 140 per cent. But what was it under Labor? Under Labor it was 86 per cent.

If members look at the return-to-work rate they will find for the Nominal Insurer it is 84 per cent and for the Treasury Managed Fund it is 85 per cent, which is above the Victorian average of 74 per cent for the workers compensation scheme under the Victorian Labor Government. Premiums have been incredibly low under the new arrangements, at an average of 1.44 per cent of wages—and we have had the first increase in seven years. It is below the national average of 1.63 per cent. The insurance funding ratio of the Nominal Insurer is 122 per cent and the accounting funding ratio is 99 per cent. In the other place Mr Mookhey has made other substantial, misleading comments about the funding ratio of the Treasury Managed Fund. [*Time expired.*]

#### STATE ECONOMY

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (14:22):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Premier. Can he update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting businesses to drive our economic recovery?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:23):** Yes, I can! What a great question from the member for Vaucluse. I begin by reflecting on what businesses and workers across the State have achieved as we have begun opening up New South Wales with an 80 per cent double dose vaccination rate. Last week I spoke about the reports that came through from ANZ and now the National Australia Bank has joined the party. An article in *The Australian* stated:

NSW is "absolutely back in business", with bank data from freedom day revealing a 10-fold increase in spending across previously shuttered retail and hospitality sectors.

The article goes on to state:

... about \$12.8m was spent in the state's restaurants, pubs and bars, up from \$1m the previous Monday.

Retail spending lifted from \$35m to \$100m, with \$10m outlaid on clothing, up from \$1m a week ago.

Haircuts are going through the roof—\$5 million was splurged on State hairdressers and barbers in one week. A further \$4 million was spent on accommodation. The data shows turnover in some segments lifted tenfold or more from a week ago. With the sacrifices that many businesses have made through this difficult time, we are now seeing a strong bounce back—or whatever the Treasurer termed it. How did he term it, "bouncing back better"?

**Mr Matt Kean:** Bounce back better.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Bounce back better, he says. And that is exactly what is happening. At clothing stores \$82 million has been spent, 351 per cent up on the week before. People are back planning and booking more trips: \$2 million was spent on car rentals, up 40 per cent on the week before; \$24 million was spent on accommodation, up 28 per cent on the week before; \$409,000 was spent on airlines—obviously slow, but that is up 19 per cent on the week before. Overall metro spending figures were around \$825 million—that is 54 per cent higher than the week before and 8 per cent more than the same week last year. They are early signs, but things are looking good for our great State. I thank the people of New South Wales again for going out and getting vaccinated, because that has been key to New South Wales being able to open up as quickly as we can but, importantly, as safely as we can.

The Treasurer will be releasing the economic recovery plan tomorrow, which will support businesses to help recover every single one of the 230,000 jobs that were lost during this most recent outbreak. We on this side are confident that we will do that because it is exactly what we did last year through the stimulus and financial support, by putting people, families and businesses before the budget. Today I was out with the Treasurer and the jobs Minister, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, as we announced another aspect of our economic recovery plan: more than \$500 million to invest in the tourism and accommodation sector across the State. It is going to be boom time in New South Wales. We are leading the nation out of the pandemic, and we are open for business.

There are many aspects to the economy recovery plan. The number one aspect is the \$50 Stay & Rediscover accommodation voucher for every person right across the State. We are piloting it this year, and it will commence in the shoulder season in March next year through Service NSW. We know how successful Dine & Discover has been, and we know how much the Labor members have been using that program. They love the vouchers. They oppose it here in the House, and then they go out and spend on Service NSW any chance they get. I know the Leader of the Opposition will be out there as well, spending his accommodation voucher. I do not think he will go to Jodi's Airbnb, or be invited; he might go to Barra's instead. He would have to actually finish the phone call to be able to get to that point.

In addition to this investment of over \$500 million, the economic recovery plan also includes \$150 million for supporting major events, \$60 million for the Aviation Attraction Fund as we get airlines coming back into Sydney. We will enjoy first-mover advantage. Sydney will lead the way. While all the other States remain closed and play catch-up, we are driving forward. The economic recovery plan will also include \$50 million for the CBD revitalisation program—I do not want to give it all away but Mr Ayres is about to give a Dixer on that, so get excited. I have confidence that this investment will not only get New South Wales back to where it needs to be but, importantly, will take New South Wales to the next level. [*Extension of time*]

Today is an important day for New South Wales for another reason. It is the fifth anniversary of the Ausgrid transaction, which we know was brought up by the unions and the members, and opposed by Labor. It supported Labor's workers, delivered over \$16 billion and unlocked that capital to invest in infrastructure right across the State: more schools, more hospitals and more public transport everywhere you look. Once again, a transaction opposed by Labor delivered dividends to every single person across our State. On our side of politics, we made the tough decisions and embarked on the reforms that turned our State around. On the Opposition side of politics, in Labor's last 10 years in government New South Wales had the lowest economic growth and the lowest jobs growth of any State. Over the last five years Labor was in government, New South Wales recorded the highest unemployment of any mainland State.

Labor members like to come to this place and talk about youth unemployment. In Labor's last six years in government, youth unemployment was higher in New South Wales than it was in the rest of Australia. Look at Labor's own track record: project after project cancelled under Labor. Under this Government, we delivered and delivered right across the board. In question time this week or last week, whenever it was, the Labor Party talked about taxes. When Labor increased taxes left, right and centre every single day of the week, we lowered the tax burden. We have grown the economy, and we have driven our infrastructure investment. What has that meant for New South Wales? A stronger economy, greater opportunities, more people in jobs and more support for people to provide for their families. That is the difference between the Liberal-Nationals Government and the Labor Party.

## ICARE

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:30):** My question is directed to the Premier. Icare has recently hired Kylie Keogh, Rob Stokes' former communications director, as head of corporation relations. Given the Premier blocked the bill to abolish executive bonuses at icare, is Ms Keogh entitled to a bonus payment?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:30):** Ms Keogh is entitled to being employed. I can say this: Women and their opportunities for work were particularly impacted during the pandemic, and only the Labor Party would come to this place to try politicise the employment decision of icare. It is a public financial corporation. It has a CEO with an independent board, and they work through those employment matters. That is not the role of the Premier. It is also not the role of the Treasurer or the customer service Minister to be involved in the decision-making of public financial corporations on employment matters—as Labor pointed out in Federal Parliament when it came to Australia Post and Christine Holgate and views around the Federal Government's intervention in relation to that employment. On this side of the House we are not going to politicise the employment decisions of a State-owned corporation with an independent board.

## TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (14:31):** My question is addressed to Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade. Can the Minister update the House on how New South Wales invested in tourism to support recovery and what upcoming things the State can look forward to?

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade) (14:32):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for his question. I know he is a passionate advocate of the tourism and visitor economy, particularly down in his community. The Government has even supported his community with a new old tourism product of a historic rail line being reopened, allowing steam train carriages and tours to take place in his community. There is a lot of enthusiasm and excitement in that community, only slightly matched by the excitement for Pie Time that happens in the Southern Highlands. I know the member for Wollondilly is a huge fan of Pie Time, so he definitely has a bit of tourism cred. There is no doubt today is a huge day for the visitor economy here in New South Wales after such a traumatic and devastating period over the last 20 months in which we saw a dramatic loss of income and jobs. Today the New South Wales Government is backing the visitor economy in hard, making sure that we are driving demand right across the tourism sector, which is a hugely important part of our economy.

It is worth over \$38 billion to the New South Wales economy and employs and sustains over 300,000 jobs. Earlier we heard from the Premier that the hallmark of today's announcement is the new \$50 Stay & Rediscover voucher scheme for all people across New South Wales to use on accommodation locations right across the State—that is \$50 to be able to reduce the cost on accommodation and support your tourism and travelling right around our great State of New South Wales. It is absolutely critical, as we see demand come back over summer, that we extend that out over the shoulder periods, because that gives confidence to businesses to invest in new products and actually bring their employees back. Everything that we are doing today is about making sure we really drive that jobs and investment narrative and give confidence to the New South Wales economy.

We are also putting \$150 million into new events, \$50 million of which will be for regional New South Wales alone, making sure those locations across regional New South Wales are getting supercharged when it comes to the quality of events. A lot of events have not been able to take place because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Government will make sure that they can restart and get a bit of cash back into their businesses, get startup costs covered and get back out on the ground putting smiles on people's faces. The Government is also making sure that it is reopening New South Wales. We have made the decision that if you are fully vaccinated, you will not need to quarantine in New South Wales. That, of course, is in line with the National Plan. We are able to do that because people across New South Wales have got vaccinated at world-record rates.

Off the back of that, we want to send a really strong signal to the aviation market that Sydney is open for business. We want airlines putting on flights back into Sydney and flights online so that people can book them. That is why we are backing up the visitor economy with a \$60 million Aviation Attraction Fund. Today after the Government's announcement Sydney Airport came out and said that it will match that fund dollar for dollar, making sure that business and government are working hand in hand to get more airlines back into New South Wales. Over the course of the pandemic 18 airlines stopped flying completely to New South Wales and Sydney. Those airlines now have the opportunity to re-prioritise flights to other locations around the world, particularly to those areas of the Northern Hemisphere that have reopened earlier than us. This funding is about making sure that we can cover those costs, get those flights coming back to Sydney and, if we get the chance to open up before Melbourne, we will take a few of their travellers and visitors as well.

The Government wants to make sure that it breathes life back into our CBDs with its \$50 million CBD revitalisation package that will be about creating street activations that bring people into those shared spaces—our main streets and high streets. This time around we will not just focus on Sydney CBD, where we know a lot of work is required. We will spread the CBD revitalisation funding out to other CBD centres across Greater Sydney, Parramatta, Liverpool, Penrith, Hurstville and Campbelltown. We will also be able to support Newcastle, Wollongong and Gosford in their recoveries because these are really important CBD centres for their communities. We also know how important the visitor economy is for bringing life back to those centres. This \$500 million package will make sure that we supercharge the tourism economy to really allow it to bounce back strongly. It is not just the Government that is supporting this package. Today we were supported by Margy Osmond— [*Extension of time*]

Margy Osmond from the Tourism and Transport Forum came out today and said:

We congratulate the government for not only the package but the fact that they have recognised that the visitor economy is a critical part of the NSW and national economy. What happens in NSW drives national outcomes so this is an investment in the national tourism industry as well.

We also saw Simon McGrath from Accor hotel group, which is an organisation that has been at the forefront of supporting the State through hotel quarantine. We want to get those people out of quarantine and tourists back in. I really love the work that the Commissioner of Police and NSW Health have done, but we want to get them out of the tourism business and we want tourists back in our hotels. Today Simon McGrath said:

The announcements last week on border restrictions and restrictions overall were courageous and they were leading the country ... now we move on to investment. Great policy is matched by great investment.

That is what you want to hear from industry—backing in these announcements by the Government. Sydney Airport, which I mentioned earlier, said it was going to match our funding dollar for dollar. CEO Geoff Culbert said:

Sydney and NSW led the way during the pandemic and it's fitting that the state and Airport that did the heavy lifting will now lead the recovery of our international aviation sector.

We are a government that wants to build confidence across New South Wales. The citizens of this State have done an unbelievable amount of work over the past 20 months. They have got vaccinated and they have followed the health orders. They have absolutely put us in the best possible position for us to drive an economic recovery and to bring jobs back. One sector that was disproportionately impacted because of all the restrictions—the inability to travel around our great State or to bring people in from overseas—is our tourism sector. With today's \$530 million announcement, we are backing the tourism sector to be stronger than ever before.

#### ICARE

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (14:39):** My question is directed to the Premier. Icare has recently hired James Camilleri, a former adviser to Minister Dominello, as its new head of regulatory affairs. Given the Premier blocked a bill to abolish executive bonuses at icare, is Mr Camilleri entitled to a bonus payment?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:39):** This is disgraceful! This is the most grubby attack. While we are here this week reopening our State, looking after people across New South Wales and getting them back into work, the member for Coogee is using this Chamber to attack private citizens. When we are talking about executive remuneration of public financial corporations and State-owned corporations, Judge McDougall, in handing down the statutory review—what you are going to get from members opposite are lies; what we will deal with are facts—found that icare's senior executive packages:

.. are far below those for private sector insurance companies and some Commonwealth government entities. When one considers the size and purpose of icare and its responsibilities, icare's executive remuneration packages sit appropriately within the range of other public and private sector organisations.

They are the facts. It is a smear to come into this place and individually name people, private citizens, who have clearly gone through a recruitment process with a public financial corporation with a CEO, an executive team and an independent board. To do what the Opposition has done today to those two individuals is absolutely outrageous and disgraceful, and they should be ashamed of themselves—particularly in circumstances where the facts demonstrate the scheme under the Liberals and The Nationals, after what we inherited. It is easy to do nothing, which is exactly what Labor did with the workers compensation scheme. Those opposite buried their heads in the sand as the scheme went bankrupt.

When the Leader of the Opposition was working for the previous government there was a \$4 billion deficit and premiums were due to rise by 28 per cent. There were protests by the labour movement outside Parliament on Macquarie Street. They had to smuggle Bob Carr and Michael Egan through secret entrances in the State Library. John Della Bosca was hiding under his desk, quivering. This Government took on the reform, which



started with Minister Pearce. We transformed the scheme. I have always said the execution could have been better. That is always going to occur when you embark on significant transformations. What do you have now? There is more support for injured workers and a more financially viable scheme than under the Labor Party. They are undisputed facts. They have been backed in by the judge. Opposition members should never come into this place—attack members of Parliament, completely fine—and go after private citizens who have been recruited on their merit by a public financial corporation or State-owned corporation. It is disgraceful.

#### ICARE

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:43):** My question is directed to the Premier. Due to changes to workers compensation, Dwayne, a long-term injured worker, and his family had to live on \$600 a week. To make ends meet his wife, Linda, had to look for work instead of caring for their disabled son. Dwayne is still injured. He has been unable to find work, meaning he is living on nothing. How can the Premier continue to justify icare executives' high salaries and bonuses when workers like Dwayne live in poverty?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:43):** That is just a completely disgraceful question. Under Labor's scheme—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will give the Premier the chance to answer the question. The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —we had very little support for injured workers across the State.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** As the judge quite clearly pointed out in the statutory review when he reviewed the workers compensation scheme and the regulatory authority in the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, when it comes to remuneration—and as I clearly pointed out when it comes to comparable schemes and Commonwealth and State-owned corporations or public financial corporations—the executive packages are far below those for private sector insurance companies and some Commonwealth Government entities. When one considers the size, purpose and responsibilities of icare, icare's executive remuneration—which the Leader of the Opposition refers to—sits appropriately within the range of other public and private sector organisations. Under the changes that we made there were further opportunities and support provided for injured workers, particularly those who are most vulnerable—

**Ms Prue Car:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. We asked a question about Dwayne. When is the Premier going to stick up for Dwayne and not executives getting big pay bonuses?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is being generally relevant to the question.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** What is most important is that, under the changes we made, those workers who were most significantly injured in the workplace were given more care and more support under our scheme.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Auburn will come to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Those are the facts and that was passed in the changes we made. We accept that when you reform any workers compensation scheme there will be challenges. As I raised earlier, when it comes to return-to-work rates, the Government wants to get as many people back into work as quickly as possible.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Do you support Pru Goward's argument?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** No, I do not. The best way to do that is to provide all the care and support we can when workers across the State are injured in the workplace.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** As I clearly set out earlier, when it comes to the return-to-work rates in the scheme, they are higher than the national average and higher than the Victorian Labor Government's workers compensation scheme. Does that mean we should end there? No. We can always do more and, if we can do more, we will. The statutory review put out a number of recommendations that the Minister for Customer Service and I, as the former Treasurer, said we would adopt. Those that could be implemented as quickly as possible are on the way to being so, and we have said we will work through those that require legislative change. We are completely committed to those changes. There will always be difficulties in the transformation of a workers compensation scheme. On this side of the House, we will take on tough reform to do what is right. If there are

challenges on the way through, we will address them. That is exactly what we did with the statutory review and it is exactly what we will do going forward.

We want to provide as much care and support to workers right across the board. We want to make sure that those who are severely injured in the workplace are given care and support. Where there are gaps, we will ensure they are improved. We know the best way to do that is to have a financially sound scheme. We have turned around a scheme we inherited that was significantly in deficit. The scheme has more work to do, but it is by far in a better place than it was under the previous Government. The changes made will ensure that as we move forward we continue to provide the care and support necessary to those people who end up involved in tragic and difficult incidents in the workplace. The Government is completely focused on doing that. That is what we have done in the past and that is what we will do going forward.

## HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:48):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is ensuring that communities across New South Wales have access to first-class health facilities?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health and Medical Research) (14:48):** I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question. She is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health and I thank her for the work she has done, particularly to support the health team during the COVID pandemic. At the same time, she has been out and about across the regions doing a lot of the outreach to hospitals and staff in our hospitals. I thank her for that, as well as the member for Manly—if he is listening—because he is also a health Parliamentary Secretary. He has been doing similar work across the State.

I start by indicating that the New South Wales Government has done more in its decade in government than the former Labor Government could have dreamt of doing in 16 years. I will set out why that is the case. I was here during those 16 years and I well recollect talking to very senior Labor figures—whom I will not name—who indicated to me that they were simply unable to get the capital to build what they needed to build. They also indicated to me that many of the schools and hospitals in New South Wales were falling down—literally—because they were unable to get sufficient recurrent funds for maintenance. I well recollect a very senior figure saying to me, "You have got to understand, if you are in trouble the first thing you cut when you get into government is the recurrent maintenance funding." Our Government has not been in trouble almost from the moment we arrived, except to fix the problems and the corruption that existed under the former Labor Government. We have approached asset recycling and growth of our assets in the most intuitive economic way possible.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I will say something else on that. Having just heard those questions, I thought the bad old days of Labor were gone. I am really disappointed to hear two individuals named to make a political point about a workers comp body. On this side, we have never followed the process of naming people that we know were appointed by Labor during its years in government. In fact, there is a shadow Minister in this place who benefited from that. We have never interfered. In fact, some of the most senior positions in our public sector are held by people with clear affinities to the Labor Party. Not once would we interrupt those because they are selected on merit through a merit process, just as those two people were—those two private citizens—whom those opposite sought to name. I have to say, as somebody who has been in this place the longest, I am disappointed to hear that is new Labor because it is basically old Labor.

First, I thank all the health staff across New South Wales. They have done an incredible job. They reached out during COVID to do the work of giants. It does not matter whether they are a nurse, doctor, allied health staff member, cleaner, administrative staff member or anyone else in our amazing health system—which is the best in the country—I thank them for all their work. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that when we came to government in 2011 there were just over 97,000 staff employed in New South Wales. Now, including the part-timers, we have about 140,000 staff. We have had an increase over that time of around 21,000 to 22,000 people in full-time positions. We have also had an extra 750 paramedics employed in this four-year period, and we are employing another 8,300 doctors and nurses, with nearly half of those going to the regions. That is the staffing side.

On the infrastructure side, out of the \$30 billion budget that the now Premier and former Treasurer allocated to Health this year, we are building massive new infrastructure across the State—the sort of infrastructure that no Labor government in the 16 years that I have served in this place in opposition could have dreamt of. I will take a few minutes to go through some of the incredible hospitals that are being built and have been built. First of all, I point out that we do not talk about western Sydney and the rest of Sydney, as those opposite do. We talk about Sydney and New South Wales. In Sydney, we have had and are underway with the Nepean Hospital,

\$1 billion; the Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, \$1.3 billion; the Liverpool Health and Academic Precinct—*[Extension of time]*

The projects include Liverpool Health and Academic Precinct, \$790 million, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, stage two, \$619 million, St George Hospital, \$385 million, and Westmead Hospital, a magnificent new facility, \$1 billion. It does not matter where one looks across the State. There are similar developments in the regions. I had the great pleasure to accompany the former Treasurer, now Premier, to Dubbo Hospital to view the extensions and new work being carried out there. The Tweed Valley Hospital has had close to \$700 million spent on it. It is an amazing facility being built at Cudgen. There is a brand-new hospital at Tamworth and a new hospital at Wagga Wagga. New hospitals are being built around the State.

I acknowledge the Labor members who have been part of the equation to try to get new hospitals. I thank the member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, the member for South Coast, Shelley Hancock, and the Labor members for the electorates of Wollongong and Keira, who took part in making sure that we were able to identify the need for a brand-new Shellharbour Hospital. But it was the Liberal-Nationals Government that allocated \$700 million to that hospital. The electorate of South Coast has had funding of \$438 million for a new Shoalhaven Hospital and we have already acquired the land at Nowra Park for the work.

Then there is the money that has gone into the Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration program. We are building new ambulance stations across New South Wales. It does not matter where members go, they will find a new ambulance station. The bottom line is the Government is improving health for the citizens of New South Wales with infrastructure, staff and expertise. We are doing it, and we do not for one moment think whether it is a Labor or Liberal electorate; it is for everybody. That is how it is done on this side of the House.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will resume their allocated seats and respect social distancing, as required under the COVID Safe Plan.

#### COVID-19 VACCINE PASSPORT

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (14:56):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital. Will the Minister update the House on the integration of the Commonwealth COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate into the Service NSW app?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital) (14:56):** I thank the member for Manly for his question and acknowledge the great work that he does in his community and what a great advocate he is for the digital transformation that is taking place in New South Wales, led in many ways through Service NSW. When doing a compare and contrast, one of the great things the Government has done is establish Service NSW. When the Opposition were in government, they had all the opportunity in the world to introduce world-leading service delivery, but nothing came from it, not a thing.

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** It had the RTA.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** It had the RTA. It had the perspex screens before COVID hit, so it did have a sense of the future. What the Government has done with Service NSW is phenomenal. I thank the team and staff for doing great work, particularly over the past two years. They are always there, whether it is during bushfires or floods and now the pandemic, doing the heavy lifting required to assist our people. I congratulate the Perrottet-Toole Government on its integrated vaccine passport. It is world leading, and definitely leading the nation. No other State or Territory is leading in the field like we are now with an integrated solution—the QR code and the vaccination passport integrated into one. The Leader of the Opposition wrote an opinion piece on 26 September in which he said:

A check-in app that the Minister has had two years to prepare but won't in fact be ready when it's needed is actually a big problem.

Two years ago, based on my maths—

**Mr Chris Minns:** Was it?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Yes.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Was it ready?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** It is your opinion piece. Two years ago there was not even a pandemic. We did not have a vaccine until January this year. Yet the Leader of the Opposition is criticising Service NSW for not having something ready two years ago. We are not Nostradamus. Unlike those opposite, the Government deals with the facts. They want to deal with spin. It is a credibility issue for the Leader of the Opposition when he says things that have no basis in reality, let alone truth. These are the facts: We received the information from the Federal Government on or about 28 September, as did every other State and Territory. We did not receive the information before then. As somebody wisely said, you cannot build a house without bricks. We did not get the

bricks until 28 September. Thereafter we worked with the Federal Government and rolled out our plan faster than any other State or Territory in the country. It is not just me gloating about it; it is world-leading reform. I am so proud of what Service NSW has done.

In a matter of days, 1.5 million people in New South Wales have integrated the vaccine passport with their Service NSW app. They have given us a score of approximately 90 per cent thumbs up. It is not just me singing these praises; Opposition members are as well. The member for Shellharbour, Anna Watson, is out there saying what a great job we have done. Good on you, Anna, well done. It is great news, we have now hit 80 per cent. That is optimism. We thank the member for Shellharbour. The member for Gosford deserves a shout-out. She has made an infographic on how to integrate the two apps—celebrations, breaking news. That is great. Well done, the member for Gosford. Even Hugh McDermott, the member for Prospect, is out there promoting the vaccination certificate. He is saying it is great news, this is what we need to do. He also is on board supporting the people of New South Wales. One of my favourites, the member for Newcastle is out there explaining this is great news, this will make people's life easier. Even the member for Swansea is out there saying that the Service NSW vaccine app has finally been launched, great news. Even the member for Maitland has gone out promoting the work of the Government, which is great news. One of my all time favourites, Clayton Barr, the member for Cessnock, has—

**The SPEAKER:** There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I ask the Minister for Health to socially isolate.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** It goes on and on. These are all Opposition members that I am giving a shout-out to who have promoted the Government in relation to the rollout of the vaccine app.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Minister for Health to order for the first time.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** If those members opposite want a corflute at the next election, let us know. We will be happy to give them a corflute showing the great work the Government has done. When we look at what the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kogarah, has done, he has done nothing. His team is out there promoting the great work of Service NSW, and we are all on Team NSW— [*Extension of time*]

I refer back to this blank page. It may not have many words on it—in fact, it has no words on it. But it speaks volumes about the Leader of the Opposition and his actions to help the people of New South Wales get through this pandemic. While his own team is saying, "get on board", "try to help out", "encourage people to get the vaccine passport", his message to the people of New South Wales is nothing. I encourage everybody to stay on the message and make sure that we get vaccinated. We are not there yet. We still have a lot of work to do to get through the pandemic. But because of the leadership position that Premier Perrottet and Deputy Premier Toole have taken, we have taken a national leadership position, we are in a strong position now to not only get through the pandemic but also to see the blue sky at the other side and lead the nation through it.

### FOOD INSECURITY

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:04):** My question is directed to the Premier. In a meeting with his Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, I raised the serious issue of food insecurity and people living in poverty being unable to afford basic needs, and he informed me that this was outside of his remit. Given this, can the Premier confirm who in his Government is responsible for ensuring that families, children and vulnerable people in New South Wales are not going hungry?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (15:05):** I will take responsibility, as Premier. I thank the member for Newtown for her question. I thank her for the constructive engagement that she has had with the Government during the pandemic. We have seemingly agreed on many things during this pandemic, to the point where I have had to second-guess myself numerous times. The constructive way that the member for Newtown has raised issues with the Government on a whole range of issues that she is passionate about and supportive of meant we have been able to work through those matters, and whilst not always in agreement we have reached a landing. The reality is, as she pointed out in her question, that we all share that concern in relation to food security, particularly for children. From a personal perspective, as Treasurer I worked with many Government and Opposition members to increase relief and try to be part of the solution to ensure that more children have the security of knowing where their next meal will come from.

There are around 1.2 million children in Australia living with food insecurity. There are one in six households in Australia living with food insecurity, 70 per cent skip meals, and half of those go a day without meals. This is a huge challenge and the only way we will be able to solve it is to have every part of our community working closely together: the Government, the charitable sector, the private sector and all people of goodwill. Before the COVID outbreak our Government worked to find ways to reduce food insecurity. In the 2019 budget we worked with Foodbank Australia to pioneer a landmark expansion of its School Breakfast 4 Health program. In my view, schools are a critical point of contact where we can make a real difference. It has worked in the past

and it can work in the future. The program provides a start to the day for kids who need it. At the time Foodbank was running that program in around 100 schools. As I have said where things work we will look to do more and expand. The Government made another \$8 million investment to support Foodbank's expansion into an additional 500 public schools across our State.

So far around 290 additional New South Wales public schools have participated in the expanded Foodbank School Breakfast 4 Health program. That investment will be an impressive one, because there is no doubt that the pandemic, as we have seen during this period, has increased the demand for food relief. It is important to note that many people who are experiencing food insecurity are in work. The Foodbank Chief Executive Officer, John Robertson, raised with me that he thought it was around 70 per cent. It is a hidden part of the pandemic. Many people who have lost their jobs, who have lost work, are doing it incredibly tough. I know that organisations such as OzHarvest and Foodbank are doing an amazing job, as are the volunteers that support them every day, to provide support for families across the board. This Government will continue to work with the charitable sector to help them deliver critical services that so many rely on. Since 2011 the Government has provided Foodbank and OzHarvest with \$22.4 million to extend food support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding has supported those organisations to make sure that food relief is provided to communities that are in lockdown. I am advised that between April 2020 and September 2021 Foodbank and OzHarvest have delivered the equivalent of 57 million meals.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: I reiterate my question. Who in the Premier's Government is responsible for this, not who in the community is responsible? Who is responsible for it?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has answered the question.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I said I am responsible. I say to the member for Newtown: Whenever those issues occur or she has ideas or views in relation to future opportunities that the New South Wales Government can take to improve food security across the State, she should raise them directly with me. The member has raised those issues with me in the past.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** She did. He said it is not in his remit.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Unlike the member for Canterbury—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** There is a demarcation dispute here.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Unlike the member for Canterbury, the member for Newtown has worked constructively with the Government during this pandemic. Her ideas and support, whenever it has come to social and affordable housing, food security and providing support for tenants, the Government has listened to and acted on and we will continue to do that in good faith going forward. We want to be a government that reaches across the aisle and works with anyone. We are not always going to agree, but when we can find common ground we should look at new ways of doing things. As the Treasurer I always conducted myself in that way when dealing with the member for Newtown. When it comes to food security, if there are ideas and opportunities that the member has going forward please continue to raise them with me directly and I will address them.

#### COVID-19 RECOVERY AND SKILLS TRAINING

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:10):** Via video link: My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is providing skills training to help the people of New South Wales to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (15:11):** I congratulate the member for East Hills on her passionate advocacy for all things education. I recognise that her electorate, like mine, had a really tough time, being in the LGAs of concern that were locked down. There were significant impacts from the Delta outbreak of COVID-19. I thank her for her passion and advocacy. It has gone a long way and I am sure her community appreciates it. This Government knows that the pandemic has been particularly tough on people trying to keep their jobs, apprentices and trainees. People were trying to transition from industries that were having tough times, such as tourism and hospitality. The focus of the skills portfolio is to equip people to get a first job, a new job or a better job. That is what we have focused on in the past 18 months: how we can manage a pandemic, how we can manage employment, and giving people the opportunity to get the job that they need to pay the bills, to put food on the table, to pay the mortgage or the rent, and to live the lives that they want.

We have some great news in terms of what we are doing during this pandemic. I thank all the teachers, staff and students for their resilience and hard work in adapting during the past 18 months. Last year, over

5,000 teachers paused their teaching to upskill so that they could deliver online classes throughout the State TAFE NSW campus network. It was a fantastic result and students appreciated the online delivery. Many of those students remarked that it was wonderful to be able to learn anywhere, any place and at a time of their convenience. In the middle of the year, TAFE launched free online courses. There was a fantastic uptake, with over 115,000 people choosing to upskill during that period.

For over 50 per cent of those people it was the first time that they had ever been to TAFE and 10 per cent of the 115,000 continued their studies. It is a fantastic result. In fact, 32 per cent of those who took up the fee-free courses were from western Sydney. Later that year, we launched JobTrainer, which was a great initiative with the Federal Government. I commend the Federal Government for its support—nearly \$320 million to provide free online and face-to-face courses. It was a fantastic commitment. This Government committed to 100,000 courses, but we smashed that record with 137,000 people enrolling in those fee-free courses. There are sensational statistics around that: 30,000 people did construction courses for industries in demand where there are critical shortages and 27,000 people did courses in health and individual support. It is fantastic to see that during that time 57 per cent of all enrolments were women. We are catering for those groups that traditionally are laid off first and find it difficult to return to the workplace.

During the COVID pandemic, in August this year TAFE announced a second tranche of free online courses. Over 27,000 people have enrolled in those courses, which is a fantastic result. I congratulate TAFE. The courses address critical shortages such as construction, IT, business and health. But the real jewel in the crown was on Saturday, when I was accompanied by the Treasurer, and member for Hornsby, Matt Kean; Minister Pavey; and Minister Henskens to announce an additional \$100 million in support for fee-free training, which will help hundreds of Indigenous school-based apprentices in training throughout our regions and support a new internship program for IT interns. It will deliver an initial 100,000 fee-free courses right across the State.

Of course, that is on top of the record \$2.9 billion that the Government is spending this financial year on skills training, which we know is an important component of people getting back to work, getting a new job, getting a better job or changing industries. It is about people realising their full potential. I have quoted a lot of statistics but I think the proof is really in the individual stories. I will mention the story of Patricia, which was reported in *The Australian Financial Review* by Julie Hare. Patricia was a taxi driver for 21 years. Unfortunately, her husband passed away four years ago. She wanted to change her career. She moved to Sydney to look after her kids. [Extension of time]

Patricia wanted to get into a new industry but she could not afford the fees. JobTrainer allowed her to enter a Certificate IV in Aged Care. She now works in the aged-care industry. That is an indication of what training can do for individual people's lives. It can change their lives, their aspirations and their place in society and enable them to fulfil their dreams. The really great news is that it is not just Patricia's story. She is only one of the nearly 250,000 fee-free positions the Liberal-Nationals Government is offering right across the State.

#### *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) (15:18):** I move:

That Standing Order 197 be suspended to permit the cognate bill, the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021, to be presented for assent notwithstanding that the remaining cognates, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021 and the NSW Generations Funds Amendment Bill 2021, have not yet been passed or otherwise disposed of.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:18):** The Opposition does not oppose the motion to suspend standing orders, and I wish to apologise to the Leader of the House as I misread the draft motion when it was sent to me earlier today. I note, though, that the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021 and the NSW Generations Funds Amendment Bill 2021, which are still in the other place, slipped through this House earlier in the week on the Tuesday. Those bills were not on the *Business Paper*, indicating that they were cognate bills to the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021. Some members of the House wished to make contributions to debate on those bills not being on the *Business Paper*.

I spoke in that debate and the only bill I took off the table was the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021, which is somewhat contentious, slipped through the House without members wishing to make a contribution having had the chance to do so. I do not know what the circumstances of the bill are now, but I imagine that the bill will be subject to considerable contention in the other place. Whether that infects the integrity of the bill, I do not know. But as far as this suspension of standing orders is concerned, the Opposition does not oppose it.

**The SPEAKER:** For the clarification of members, I am advised by the Clerk that it was on the *Business Paper* but perhaps not on all the associated documentation behind the *Business Paper*. I ask the Attorney General whether he wishes to respond in any way.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I just make this point, if I may: All members who participated in the debate, including those from the Government, focused the entire debate on the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021. It was not just Opposition members who did so; it was Government members who also operated from that normal summary sheet that is circulated in the morning.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General has the call.

**Dr Joe McGirr:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** I have given the call to the Attorney General, but I note the member for Wagga Wagga wishes to speak. I will give the call to the member for Wagga Wagga, followed by the Attorney General.

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:21):** Via video link: Just following on from the statement by the member for Heffron, as a remote participant of this Parliament I am not actually sure that I was advised of that situation with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021 and I am most concerned about it. I just want that to be noted.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:22):** In reply: The concerns raised by the member for Heffron and the member for Wagga Wagga are news to me and I will take it on notice.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### REORDERING OF GENERAL BUSINESS

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:22):** I move:

That general business order of the day (for bills) No. 4 [Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021] have precedence on Thursday 21 October 2021.

It is unfortunate that because the Government has failed to respect this co-sponsored bill the way other governments and other parliaments have treated free-vote issues—by providing appropriate time for each member's views to be heard and respected—I must now seek to reorder business to allow debate on this bill to begin tomorrow. The Legislative Council has established an inquiry that will begin only once the bill passes this House. This was done without any consultation with me, despite the ongoing consultative approach I have taken for over a year on this bill. For the inquiry to start, the Legislative Assembly has to deal with this issue. I respect that Opposition and crossbench members have bills they also want debated. However, without a reordering, this Parliament will struggle to address this issue this year. Those Opposition and crossbench bills are also not supported by the Government and are not urgent.

I say to members that playing games to delay this debate is downright cruel. Those games will force people like Judith Daley to wait for or even miss out on a peaceful death. Judith was diagnosed with chronic inflammatory lung disease 20 years ago and lung cancer two years ago. She has had chemotherapy, radiotherapy, lung infections, collapsed lungs and pneumonia; she is now receiving palliative care. She is worried about her death and needs us to deal with the bill. She says to me, "I am not going to die gracefully. I will be choking and suffocating and thrashing about, unable to breathe." She asks us, "Please let me make the choice to have a different death."

If members feel that people like Judith should be forced into a cruel and painful death that they do not want, those members should explain themselves on the floor of Parliament; do not do it behind closed doors while playing political games. The debate on the bill is urgent and it deserves better respect from the Parliament. The other bills we are dealing with are not supported by the Government, they will not pass the Parliament, they are not urgent and they will do nothing for someone like Judith. I urge all members to allow urgency for this legislation in the absence of the Government providing appropriate time for a proper debate.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (15:25):** I oppose the motion to reorder business moved by my colleague the member for Sydney. The bill that has priority tomorrow is in my name; it is the Property Services Bill, which expired during the time the Parliament did not sit. It passed the upper House late last year and has been before the Parliament for many months—well over 12 months. Last week it was extended last week by leave to 24 November 2021, when it will lapse. I appreciate the reasons that my colleague the member for Sydney has put forward to reorder precedence, and I appreciate that there is some significant public interest in that debate occurring. His bill is a private members' bill, as is mine, and I concede that he does have a number of co-sponsors. However, the order of precedence is a matter of procedural fairness of the Parliament. My bill was on the business

paper and is due to lapse in November. In all likelihood, if debate on my bill does not begin tomorrow, it will probably lapse.

The Parliament will have additional days to sit in November. During those additional days there should be allocation of time for additional private members' business to replace the lost opportunities for debate in the months when Parliament did not sit. In saying that, there is also a public interest in the bill that I have carriage of, which is being debated tomorrow. There is significant interest in the bill from the real estate sector and the property sector across the whole State. There is significant public interest in that matter also proceeding. I note that my colleague the member for Sydney introduced his bill and gave his second reading speech last week and that sufficient time will be available in November for his bill to be debated. It is for those reasons that business should not be reordered and my bill should have priority tomorrow. I oppose the motion moved by the member for Sydney to reorder business.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:28):** By leave: The position of the Opposition is that the Government should be providing time for the voluntary assisted dying legislation in government business. The motion moved by the member for Sydney to reorder business will effectively end the ability of the Opposition or any crossbench or minor party to introduce legislation to the House for the rest of 2021 or until debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill has concluded, which could stretch deep into 2022. However, the Opposition would support the suspension of standing orders to allow the voluntary assisted dying legislation to be debated in isolation, starting on Friday 22 October 2021 and continuing on any other night sittings that the Government identifies.

The Government has the thinnest legislative agenda we have ever seen in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. Most nights we leave the building by 6.00 p.m. The Government clearly believed that its legislative agenda was such a low priority that in 2021 we did not sit for months when every other jurisdiction in the country did. Clearly there is a public mood to debate the voluntary assisted dying legislation in the Legislative Assembly. A suspension of standing orders, which only the Government can move, should identify Fridays as the appropriate days to deal with the bill introduced by the member for Sydney. That would allow all other legislative and Executive business to be conducted alongside the debate on the bill of the member for Sydney.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:30):** By leave: I support the motion of the member for Sydney to reorder business tomorrow. I do not do so lightly. On behalf of The Greens, I recognise that there is always a risk to using the numbers in the Chamber to reorder the business of the Chamber, especially on private members' day. But I think the member for Sydney has made a couple of things very clear. The first is that it is highly unlikely that there will be support for the private members' bills brought by Opposition or crossbench members, and they will not pass by the end of the year. The other factor is the very significant and serious nature of a bill that may pass into law through a conscience vote by members in this place and in the other Chamber. In addition to that, we know that the upper House likes to hold inquiries—in some cases, long inquiries—and they like to inquire in detail into pieces of legislation. It makes perfect sense to give them time over the break for an inquiry and I think it is important to do so.

It is also really important for us to recognise that in the past we have seen really offensive and appalling political tactics, particularly in the other Chamber, when it comes to issues involving conscience votes. Having been in this Chamber and participated in previous debates—the last one being around the decriminalisation of abortion—at least members in this Chamber had a level of respect for the amendments that were moved. We had time limits for debate on amendments; we considered them all and they either went through or they did not. Obviously some were passed that I certainly did not want to see passed. Sadly, when that same debate went to the other Chamber, we saw an outrageous level of mansplaining, endless talking and debate and discussion that went well beyond people's views on the legislation and simply caused more damage and more harm to people who were at risk as a result of the legislation. The last thing we want to do in this place is empower those in the other place to do that again when it comes to the issue of people being able to die with dignity.

We need to recognise that this place respects the diversity of our communities; we are directly connected to the communities that we represent. We know that they have views for and against, but the last thing that anybody needs is a more drawn-out process where further trauma is caused to individuals who are suffering or individuals who have been through that suffering with their family members and close friends. I urge the Government to consider the opportunity for us to have the debate in this Chamber at this time to allow the upper House to conduct its inquiry and see the bill passed as soon as possible.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:33):** By leave: The Parliament has four Thursday mornings left this year. One of those will be Remembrance Day, and I will be bringing a proposal to the House that we start late on Remembrance Day. That leaves us with three Thursday mornings. We also have three additional Friday sittings as well as the reserve week. As I indicated to the member for Sydney before he moved his motion to reorder, the Government will propose that Friday 12 November and Friday 19 November 2021 be allocated as days to deal with private



members' bills. There are three bills ahead of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in the private members' queue. At the moment the estimate is there will be at least 14 hours to debate the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill.

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The Government accepts that it is a very important bill on which people have very passionate and divided views. But there is also important business of the House—government business and other private members' business. We are trying to strike the balance between procedural fairness for that business on the one hand and timely resolution of the bill of the member for Sydney on the other. That is not failing to respect the bill; it is not playing games. It is simply a matter of dealing with all the business in this House, Government and private, in an orderly manner. The allocation of those Fridays for private members' bills means that the Government is allocating at least one-third of the extra sitting time to private members' business, plus that week the public interest debates, community recognition statements and private members' statements.

The Government is giving members plenty of time to debate the bill. It does not intend to cut off any member's right to speak on the bill. At some stage every member in the House, if he or she wishes to do so, will get the opportunity to speak on the bill. There will be fair debate; there will be timely debate. I think everyone in this House wants the bill to be dealt with in a timely manner. The Government is not seeking to obstruct the bill, but we are seeking to balance it with government business and other private members' bills. We will keep the matter under review and see how we progress in the next few weeks or so. We think that is a very fair proposal, it is a respectful proposal; it is a proposal that does not play games but balances all the competing business that this House has to deal.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of the members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 4**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Mr G. Piper  
Mr J. Parker

**Motion negatived.**

*Personal Explanation*

#### **MEMBER FOR PITTWATER**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and Minister for Transport and Roads) (15:41):** Today in question time the member for Londonderry used parliamentary privilege to name a worker formally of my office, leaving room for the imputation that in some way I intervened in securing her employment at a government authority. My former employee is a highly trained and experienced communications professional with strong private and public sector experience. She earned her new role through a merit selection process and does not deserve to have been named in this place. I in no way intervened, nor sought to intervene, in the selection process.

*Bills*

#### **CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SEXUAL CONSENT REFORMS) BILL 2021**

##### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mark Speakman, read a first time and printed.**

##### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence) (15:43):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Consent Reforms) Bill 2021. Currently in New South Wales it is a crime for a person to have sexual intercourse with another person, to sexually touch another person or to engage in a sexual act towards another person if any of those is, first, without the other person's consent and, second, the person knows that the other person does not consent, and an accused knows the other person does not consent if the accused has actual knowledge, is reckless or has "no reasonable grounds for believing" the other person consents.

The bill is significant reform to strengthen the law in relation to sexual offending and to ensure that these serious crimes are prosecuted fairly and effectively. In May 2018 the New South Wales Government asked the NSW Law Reform Commission to conduct a review of the law of consent in relation to sexual offences. The Law Reform Commission's review was comprehensive. It involved extensive community consultation. The Law Reform Commission received 110 preliminary submissions, 36 submissions in response to its consultation paper and 51 submissions in response to its draft proposals. Almost 3,900 people accessed its online survey. The Law Reform Commission considered, among other matters, the issues and grey areas that had arisen in sexual offence trials about whether an accused's belief that consent existed was actually reasonable, and about how to recognise the common "freeze" response, where a person freezes in fear and cannot communicate their lack of consent.

Ms Saxon Mullins has bravely, and publicly, shared her lived experience of facing four court cases in five years in the Lazarus case, which focused on these points and was carefully considered by the Law Reform Commission. The Law Reform Commission's final report, *Report 148: Consent in relation to sexual offences*, was tabled in each House of Parliament on 18 November 2020. The Law Reform Commission made 44 recommendations for change. Forty of those recommendations were for legislative amendments, including to the Crimes Act 1900 and to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Three of those recommendations were non-legislative and concerned education, communications and ongoing research. One recommendation was for further consideration of legislative reform, which will be undertaken at the five-year statutory review of these reforms.

I thank those who undertook this important work, including the lead commissioner on this matter, the Hon. Acting Justice Carolyn Simpson, AO; and the other commissioners, chair Alan Cameron, AO, and deputy chair the Hon. Justice Paul Brereton, AM, RFD. I thank the many stakeholders who made submissions for their contributions, and for sharing their expertise and insights. On 25 May 2021 the New South Wales Government announced its support, or support in principle, for all of these recommendations. The New South Wales Government also committed to go further in the following respect. The bill will make it clear that generally an accused's belief that consent existed will not be reasonable in the circumstances if the accused did not say or do anything—within a reasonable time before or at the time of the sexual activity—to find out whether the other person consents.

The New South Wales Government has listened to the voices of victim-survivors. I recognise the strength and courage of those who have come forward to report sexual offending, and those who have advocated for change. I especially acknowledge Ms Saxon Mullins for her extraordinary bravery in sharing her lived experience and for her advocacy for victim-survivors, which have contributed to improving the criminal justice system. The bill builds on legislative drafting proposed by the Law Reform Commission. These commonsense reforms will make consent law easier to follow and ensure more effective prosecutions. Careful consideration has been given to each provision to avoid unintended consequences or overreach into private relationships. Further consultation has been undertaken on the drafting of the bill with more than 20 targeted stakeholders, including service providers, the legal profession, experts and academics.

The bill reinforces the basic principle of common decency that consent is a free and voluntary choice at the time of sexual activity, involving mutual and ongoing communication. Consent cannot be presumed. No-one should assume someone is saying "yes" just because they do not say "no" or do not resist physically. I now turn to the substance of the bill. Before doing so, I warn that some listening to or reading this speech may find the detail of its content confronting. These issues are understandably very difficult but it is important to be very clear from the outset about what this reform is and does, and how it will operate in practice.

The proposed definition of consent is found in proposed new section 61HI of the Crimes Act 1900, under schedule 1 item [9] to the bill. The Law Reform Commission recommended that there should be no changes to the core definition of consent as a "free and voluntary agreement" to participate in sexual activity. There was widespread support for this approach, and this is consistent with other Australian jurisdictions. The Law Reform Commission recommended that the definition should, however, specify that consent must be present at the time of the sexual activity. Proposed new section 61HI (1) reflects this. Both the bill and the current law require consent to be present at the time of sexual activity. "Sexual activity" is defined in proposed new section 61HH to mean "sexual intercourse, sexual touching or a sexual act". Consent can be communicated by words or actions—including, for example, reciprocating body language or affirming remarks throughout a sexual encounter.

Consent may be regarded as a "continuum" in the sense that a person can consent to and maintain consent to a range of sexual activity, including consent from the outset to multiple forms of sexual activity. A commonsense approach—rather than an unduly narrow approach—should be taken as to what constitutes a different "sexual activity". By way of example, consent to oral sex is not consent to anal sex. These are different forms of a sexual activity. On the other hand, at one extreme, if there has been consensual sexual touching of a

person's toe, that will typically not be a requirement for fresh consent to sexually touch another toe. This does not represent a change from the current law.

The bill does not require every small increment along a sexual continuum to have consent sought and obtained—although consent must be present at all times during this encounter. Consent can be given to a wide range of activity simultaneously and subsist. A principal aim of the reforms is to recognise and deal with misconceptions that consent to one sexual activity is consent to all or any other sexual activity. The reforms deal with this by use of the term "by reason only of that fact". It precludes a form of consequential reasoning that is inconsistent with the law that consent must exist at the time of the sexual activity. It does not preclude a finding that consent that has been given has been maintained, so long as consent is ever present and has not been withdrawn.

It is correct to say that different acts along a sexual continuum require consent. This is consistent with the law at present: Consent must exist at the time the sexual activity occurs. There is no intention to change this operation of the law. Proposed new section 61HI does not, for example, require in the course of ordinary sexual interactions a person to say in terms, "Can I put my hand here now?", "Can I penetrate now?", "Can I touch your breast now?" New section 61HI (4) provides only that consent to one activity is not of itself consent to another activity. That does not mean that a person cannot consent to a whole gamut of sexual activity and, further, to maintain that consent throughout the sexual interaction. This is consistent with the notion of sexual autonomy that underpins the communicative model of consent.

The law of consent reflects community standards of respectful sexual relations. This means that, where there is consent that continues to be reciprocated by each participant—for example, through body language—a person will not need to say expressly at each step, "Do you consent now?" Consent can be imparted through non-verbal cues and encouragement. While consent to one sexual activity is not a substitute for consent to a different sexual activity, a person can, through their words or actions, indicate their consent to a range of sexual activities. The reforms ensure that consent can also be withdrawn by words or conduct—see proposed new section 61HI (2). This requirement serves to provide fairness to an accused because it precludes an internal—that is, in their own mind—withdrawal of consent to, for example, penetration when that withdrawal is not communicated.

Ultimately, each case will turn on its facts. The bill intends to criminalise non-consensual sexual activity appropriately, without overreaching into private consensual relations. In the context of subdivision 1A, all circumstances of a sexual encounter must be taken into account by the prosecution when determining whether to charge a person with a sexual offence, and later by the trier of fact in assessing whether an accused is guilty of an offence beyond a reasonable doubt. This includes whether they are satisfied that the accused knew the complainant was not consenting. There must be sufficient evidence of this, which is an important safeguard within the law of consent. Importantly, the bill does not prescribe a particular form of actions or words required. The law is not imposing a rigid or onerous requirement on people participating in sexual activity. The bill does not prevent the possibility of consent having been provided at an earlier time and then maintained. However, consent still must be present at all times of sexual activity.

The balance of proposed new section 61HI of the Crimes Act also provides a set of universal statements to support the definition of "consent" in new section 61HI (1), noting that wherever there is no free and voluntary agreement to participate in sexual activity, there is no consent. These universal statements are as follows. First, a person may, by words or conduct, withdraw consent to a sexual activity at any time. Second, sexual activity that occurs after consent has been withdrawn occurs without consent. Third, a person who does not offer physical or verbal resistance to a sexual activity is not, by reason only of that fact, to be taken to consent to the sexual activity. Fourth, a person who consents to a particular sexual activity is not, by reason only of that fact, to be taken to consent to any other sexual activity. For example, a person who consents to a sexual activity using a condom is not, by reason only of that fact, to be taken to consent to a sexual activity without using a condom. This is commonly referred to as *stealthing* and is an example of non-consensual sexual activity. Fifth, a person who consents to a sexual activity with a person on one occasion is not, by reason only of that fact, to be taken to consent to a sexual activity with that person on any other occasion, or another person on that or any other occasion.

These statements, and the entire subdivision on consent, are underpinned by statutory objectives. Proposed new section 61HF of the Crimes Act, in schedule 1 [9] to the bill, states that it is an objective of the subdivision to recognise that every person has a right to choose whether or not to participate in a sexual activity; consent to a sexual activity is not to be presumed; and consensual sexual activity involves ongoing and mutual communication, decision-making, and a free and voluntary agreement between the persons participating in the sexual activity. While these are not new concepts, stating them expressly in legislation enhances the communicative model of consent that is embodied in the criminal law, guiding the application of the law and aiding the understanding of consent in the general community.

In addition to outlining what consent is, the bill also sets out a comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of circumstances in which a person does not consent. This is contained in new section 61HJ of the Crimes Act, at schedule 1 [9] to the bill. Consistent with the Law Reform Commission's recommendations, the eight circumstances in which consent is negated and the three circumstances in which it "may be established" that the consent is negated under the current section 61HE of the Crimes Act have been removed in favour of a single, non-exhaustive list of circumstances in which there is no consent.

First, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (a), there is no consent if the person does not say or do anything to communicate consent. This addresses the issue of the "freeze" response, where a person may not physically or verbally resist an assault. Silence does not mean consent, nor should consent be inferred when a person remains unresponsive. Consent is something which must be actively communicated. This lies at the core of the communicative model of consent embodied in the Crimes Act and, in particular, in the definition of "consent" as a free and voluntary agreement to participate in a sexual activity. Consent is not an abstract concept in the mind of one person. It is an agreement between two people, and there can be no agreement without communication. This is why a person who does not communicate their consent by saying or doing something cannot be taken to consent.

Second, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (b), there is no consent if the person does not have the capacity to consent to the sexual activity. Third, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (c), there is no consent if the person is so affected by alcohol or another drug as to be incapable of consenting to the sexual activity. Fourth, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (d), there is no consent if the person is unconscious or asleep. Under the current law, a person does not consent to sexual activity if they do not have the opportunity to consent because they are asleep or unconscious. The bill will clarify that a person who is asleep or unconscious at the time of sexual activity does not consent to that sexual activity, regardless of what they might have said or done in the past. Historically, the common law provided that a person who is asleep or unconscious may not be consenting, as far back as *R v Mayers* [1872] 12 Cox CC 311. This position left open the possibility that a person who was asleep or unconscious may be treated as consenting on the basis of something they said or did in the past.

Currently, under the Crimes Act, a person does not consent if they do not have the opportunity to consent because they are asleep or unconscious at the time of the sexual activity. Some have suggested that this may leave the possibility that a person who is asleep or unconscious could be taken to be consenting because of something they said or did in the past. The Law Reform Commission considered that the law should be clear that a person who is asleep or unconscious can never consent at that time, regardless of what they may have said when they were awake. People in this state are particularly vulnerable and should be protected by the law. Regardless of what a person may have said when they were awake, a person who is asleep is not able to give their consent or to deny or withdraw or alter their consent, which is their right to do. While a person who is awake can indicate their consent to further sexual activity—and that consent can subsist at a future time if it has been maintained and not withdrawn—consent must still be present at the time of the sexual activity. Consent can only be present if the person is awake and conscious at that time.

Fifth, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (e), there is no consent if the person participates because of force, fear of force or fear of serious harm of any kind to the person, another person, an animal or property. This is regardless of when this conduct occurs or whether it occurs in a single instance or as part of an ongoing pattern. The adjective "serious" has been added to the drafting, which the Law Reform Commission proposed, to ensure the appropriate scope of application of the provision and the avoidance of overreach. Ultimately, the scope of conduct captured will depend on the circumstances and whether the person has consented "because of" that fear. The phrase "if the person participates because of" means it must be proven that the accused's behaviour was a substantial cause of the victim submitting to the sexual act. There must be some force or conduct engaged in by the accused that gives rise to the "fear of harm"; this latter requirement is implicit in the use of the term "force or conduct giving rise to the fear" in subsection (e) (i). The new section is not engaged by reason only of a passive fear existing in the mind of the complainant.

Sixth, proposed new section 61HJ (1) (f) of the Crimes Act provides that a person does not consent when the person participates because of coercion, blackmail or intimidation, regardless of when this occurs or whether it occurs in a single instance or as part of an ongoing pattern. Intimidation and coercion are already covered under the existing consent provision, so these concepts are not new in the context of sexual consent and non-consent. Coercion, blackmail and intimidation are also terms that are well understood at law. The Law Reform Commission expressly stated that these terms would be "broad enough to cover a range of behaviours including, for example verbal aggression, begging and nagging, physical persistence, social pressuring, and emotional manipulation".

This was intended to capture conduct which may amount to coercive control, especially in the context of domestic and family violence as this type of conduct can be just as oppressive as physical violence or serious threats. Contrary to one possible reading of the Law Reform Commission's comments, for the purposes of this bill

the New South Wales Government does not intend that, for example, mere begging and nagging, given the ordinary meaning of those words, would reach the threshold of coercion, blackmail or intimidation, without more. It is not the intent of the provision to criminalise conduct that does not amount to a serious impingement on a person's right to freely and voluntarily agree, or not agree, to participate in sexual activity.

Seventh, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (g) of the Crimes Act, there is no consent if the person participates because they are unlawfully detained, or another person is unlawfully detained. Eighth, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (h), there is no consent if the person participates because they are overborne by abuse of a relationship of authority, trust or dependence. Ninth, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (i) of the Crimes Act, there is no consent if the person is mistaken about the nature or purpose of the sexual activity, including whether the sexual activity is for health, hygienic or cosmetic purposes. Tenth, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (j) of the Crimes Act, there is no consent if the person is mistaken about the identity of, or being married to, the other person. This is not intended to criminalise conduct based on a person's representations about their gender or sexual characteristics, but rather to address circumstances where a person agrees to participate in sexual activity under a misapprehension as to whom they are engaging in those sexual activities with, or mistakenly believing that the other person is their spouse.

Eleventh, under proposed new section 61HJ (1) (k) of the Crimes Act, there is no consent if the person participates because of a fraudulent inducement. In that case, they cannot be said to have "freely and voluntarily" agreed to participate. The current section 61HE (6) (d) of the Crimes Act provides that a person does not consent to the sexual activity if they agreed to participate on the basis of a mistaken belief about the nature of the activity induced by fraudulent means. The Law Reform Commission found the current approach to consent obtained by fraud in New South Wales law to be inadequate, piecemeal and out of step with community concerns, including calls to better protect sex workers who are fraudulently promised payment for sexual services. The reforms update the terminology used. The expression "fraudulent inducement" is now used to ensure that all appropriate cases in which the use of fraud to obtain a person's consent are captured, not only those in which the fraud goes to the nature of the activity.

The reform is intended to better cover circumstances in which participation in a sexual activity is dishonestly procured by a false representation or upon a false pretence, known by the maker to be false when it was made. Misrepresentations about income, wealth or feelings, such as saying "I love you", will not be considered fraudulent inducements, as made clear by the non-exhaustive exclusions from fraudulent inducement in proposed new section 61HJ (3). Fraudulent inducement in the context of this provision would also typically not extend to or capture misrepresentations about employment, status or marital status. Those misrepresentations would, in ordinary circumstances, be regarded as "mere puff".

Pick-up lines or white lies, without more, are unlikely to satisfy the legal criteria for fraud, and would be unlikely to satisfy the causative element of the provision. That includes claims like "it will be the best sex you will ever have" or "I'm rich", "I own this bar", "I can bench press 300 kilograms" or "I'm single". While some of the misrepresentations are immoral, it is not the intention of the bill to criminalise conduct that is not sufficiently serious or closely connected to the complainant's consent as to warrant attributing criminal responsibility. Only very serious deceit is intended to fall within the scope of this section.

It would typically be impossible to regard trivial misrepresentations as having a sufficiently close causal connection to the complainant's consent to be considered as criminal. The relevant test is whether the complainant participated in sexual activity substantially because of an accused's fraudulent inducement. At common law, the fraudulent inducement must be at least a "substantial" or "significant" cause of the complainant's consent to participate in the sexual activity, such as to warrant the attribution of criminal responsibility. This would include consideration of what the accused said and did, and how the circumstances created operated on the complainant's state of mind. This is a high bar and prosecutions of this nature are not common. Each case will turn on its unique facts. A trier of fact must apply their common sense to this question and consider whether that factual connection is sufficient to justify the attribution of criminal responsibility to the accused.

"Fraudulent inducement" in the context of these reforms requires something more than silence or non-disclosure on the part of the accused. It requires a positive act or spoken words, amounting to a falsity which the accused knows to be false. The accused must intend that by making the representation, they seek to obtain the complainant's participation in the sexual activity. In *Higgins v Western Australia* [2016] 263 A Crim R 474, in considering a fraudulent or deceitful representation, the court noted at paragraph No. 142:

Adopting conventional principles, a fraudulent or deceitful representation is a representation which is false in fact and which the maker knows at the time of making it to be false. The maker must intend by making the representation to obtain the complainant's consent to the act when he or she would not otherwise have given their consent. The representation must have a causal connection to the obtaining of that consent.

In order to satisfy the provision, the complainant must also have participated in the sexual activity "because of" a fraudulent inducement—that is, there must be a direct causal relationship between the fraudulent inducement and the complainant's agreement to participate in the sexual act. Consistent with case law in the Australian Capital Territory, fraudulent deception of sex workers would likely be caught by the provision. For example, a sex worker may engage in sexual intercourse on the basis of a dishonest representation that they will be paid. In such circumstances, the dishonest promise of payment is likely to be the only—or, at the very least, a "substantial" or "significant"—cause of the consent provided by the sex worker for the participation in the sexual activity. If an accused person expressly and fraudulently warranted that they did not have an infection or disease, but knew this to be untrue, and the complainant made clear their consent is contingent on the representations, this may constitute a fraudulent inducement depending on the context and state of mind of the accused.

For the purposes of the provisions governing fraudulent inducement and participation in a sexual activity because of a mistaken belief, the bill does not contain a deeming provision like current section 61HE (7) of the Crimes Act. Currently, section 61HE (7) provides that an accused is taken to know that the other person does not consent to the sexual activity if the accused knows the person consented under a mistaken belief. The Law Reform Commission considered a provision of this nature to be unnecessary because there is a direct relationship between the definition of consent and the circumstances of non-consent. If any of the circumstances of non-consent under proposed new section 61HJ of the Crimes Act are proven to exist, the complainant does not consent.

A cornerstone to these reforms concerns an offender's knowledge of consent in proposed new section 61HK of the Crimes Act at schedule 1 [9] to the bill. There are currently three grounds in which an accused's knowledge of non-consent may be established: actual knowledge of non-consent, recklessness as to whether the other person was consenting or not, and a hybrid subjective/objective test of no reasonable grounds for believing the other person was consenting. New section 61HK retains three states of mind. In accordance with the Law Reform Commission's recommendations there have been no substantive changes to actual knowledge and recklessness. If a person "knows" that the sexual activity occurred under any of the circumstances identified earlier which negate consent, by definition the accused person knows that the complainant did not consent to the activity.

The bill retains a hybrid subjective/objective test to address situations where a person may believe, wrongly, that the other person was consenting. This hybrid test provides an important balance between fairness to the accused in recognition of what they may have perceived at the time of sexual activity, consideration of the complainant's experience, the surrounding factual circumstances of the alleged assault, and community standards of what is reasonable in those circumstances. The objective test of reasonableness protects against the circumstances where an offender has a distorted or outdated view or belief about appropriate sexual conduct and how consent operates that is inconsistent with the standards expected by the community. A statutory test of this nature has been in place in New South Wales since 2007. This reform does not signal any change in this approach. The Law Reform Commission recommended that the current test of no reasonable grounds should be updated to a no reasonable belief test, namely that:

... any belief that the accused person has, or may have, that the other person consents to the sexual activity is not reasonable in the circumstances.

Proposed new section 61HK (1) (c) of the Crimes Act reflects this. The drafting of the provision was carefully considered by the Law Reform Commission and the New South Wales Government in developing the bill. This provision intends to move away from the narrow interpretation of the no reasonable grounds test and the complexities it has presented in criminal trials. For example, in considering the first appeal in the *Lazarus v R* [2016] NSWCCA 52, Justice Fullerton of the Court of Criminal Appeal observed at paragraph 156:

In many ... contested cases, perhaps all, there might be a reasonable possibility of the existence of reasonable grounds for believing (mistakenly) that the complainant consented and other reasonable grounds suggesting otherwise.

The Law Reform Commission was concerned that this statement may be interpreted to mean that the existence of any one reasonable ground for the accused's belief would be enough to result in an acquittal, even when there is other evidence capable of proving that the mistake was an unreasonable one. An interpretation of this type would not be consistent with the objectives of the hybrid test, nor would any such interpretation be consistent with the objectives of the bill. To address this potential issue, new section 61HK (1) (c) is drafted so the focus of the provision is on the reasonableness of any belief an accused has, or may have, in light of all relevant circumstances, rather than on the narrow question of whether there existed any single ground or grounds on which the accused may have held that belief. It is not intended that personal characteristics of an accused in the form of misogynistic beliefs would generally or typically be taken into account in determining whether their belief as to consent is "reasonable in the circumstances" under new section 61HK (1) (c). More generally, Justice McLure said in *Aubertin v Western Australia* (2006) 33 WAR 87 at paragraph 46:

[A] person's values, whether they be informed by cultural, religious or other influences, are not part of a person's characteristics or attributes for the purpose of assessing the reasonableness of an accused's belief. For example, values resulting in extreme views as to

the appropriate mode of dress for women, from which inferences about consent are purportedly drawn, cannot positively affect or inform the reasonableness of an accused's belief. Values do not impact on the capacity to perceive or appreciate primary objective facts or the capacity to process that information. In any event, reasonableness must be judged in the light of generally accepted community standards and attitudes.

Proposed new section 61HK (1) (c) requires a fact finder to consider whether, in effect, the belief that the accused in fact had was objectively reasonable in the circumstances. Specifically, the subjective belief must be as to whether there exists consent in the form of a free and voluntary agreement at the time of a particular sexual act. The definition of consent provided by the bill, and the purpose of the bill to reinforce a communicative model of consent, limit the extent to which an accused's misogynistic beliefs can be taken into account in determining the subjective reasonableness of a belief.

Importantly, the question of reasonableness is determined in most cases by a jury. An accused person's cognitive impairment, whether mild or not, would readily fall to be considered in determining whether or not their belief is reasonable "in the circumstances" and also as part of "all the circumstances of the case", consistent with *R v Mrzljak* [2005] 1 Qd R 308 and *Aubertin v Western Australia* (2006) 33 WAR 87. To give effect to the New South Wales Government's commitment, the bill takes the reasonable belief test provision further in the following respect. Proposed new section 61HK (2) to the Crimes Act provides that:

... a belief that the other person consents to the sexual activity is not reasonable if the accused person did not, within a reasonable time before or at the time of the sexual activity, say or do anything to find out whether the other person consents to the sexual activity.

This new provision reinforces the important principle that consent can never be assumed. It introduces an affirmative consent requirement to the Crimes Act. Affirmative consent in this context means that the accused person must have sought consent by saying or doing something in order to have a reasonable belief that the other person consented. The onus remains on the Crown to prove each element of the sexual offence beyond reasonable doubt. In this bill, affirmative consent does not reverse this onus or abrogate an accused's right to silence. When a belief in consent is raised as a fact in issue, the reasonable belief test will be engaged, and the Crown must prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused had no reasonable belief in consent. This may include evidence that the accused did not say or do anything to find out if the other person was consenting. It may also require the jury to assess whether any actions taken by the accused were sufficient so as to constitute a reasonable belief in consent in all of the circumstances.

Proposed new section 61HK (3) provides an exception to the requirement to have said or done something to ascertain consent for an accused person with a cognitive impairment or clinically significant mental health impairment where the impairment was a cause of the accused person not saying or doing anything. This exception ensures a person with an impairment is not unfairly disadvantaged by the expanded reasonable belief test. The definitions of "cognitive impairment" and "mental health impairment" in the Crimes Act were developed by forensic mental health experts for the purposes of the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020. These definitions provide an appropriate threshold for when criminal liability is lessened due to an impairment.

While the Crown still bears the onus of proving beyond reasonable doubt that the accused person's belief in consent was not reasonable in the circumstances, anyone who seeks to rely on the exception will need to prove on the balance of probabilities that they had a cognitive impairment or mental health impairment that was a cause of them not taking clear steps to ascertain consent. Imposing a legal, rather than evidential, burden on an accused is appropriate in these particular circumstances because matters relating to their mental health or cognitive impairment may fairly be regarded as peculiarly within the knowledge of the accused person.

Often an accused will be the only party in a position to be able to obtain and provide this evidence, as it relates to their personal medical records. If an accused person satisfies the court of their impairment being a cause of not saying or doing anything to ascertain consent, the Crown must still prove the requisite mens rea of the accused beyond a reasonable doubt in order to establish the offence. That is, the Crown must prove either that the accused knew the other person was not consenting, that they were reckless as to consent or that any belief that they held in consent was not a reasonable one. A number of existing provisions in the Crimes Act already impose a legal burden on an accused person, such as the partial defence of substantial impairment for the offence of murder in section 23A (4) of the Crimes Act.

At common law an accused bears the burden of establishing a defence based on mental illness, so as not to be criminally responsible according to law. This has been the case going back at least as far as M'Naghten's Case (1843) 8 ER 718. At common law it has been for the accused person to prove on the balance of probabilities that they were not criminally responsible for the acts which constitute a crime by virtue of an impairment of the accused's soundness of mind. As outlined in the High Court decisions of *R v Porter* and *R v Falconer*, at common law:

every person is presumed to be of sufficient soundness of mind to be criminally responsible for his actions until the contrary is made to appear upon his trial.

It has been said in Porter's case:

It is not for the Crown to prove that any man is of sound mind; it is for the defence to establish inferentially that he was not of sufficient soundness of mind, at the time that he did the actions charged, to be criminally responsible.

Although proposed new section 61HK (4) imposes a legal burden on an accused person, it is not a "reverse onus" because new section 61HK (3) will simply enable an accused to avoid the operation of new section 61HK (2). Proposed new sections 61HK (3) and (4) are better characterised as a qualification or proviso to the element of knowledge, such as that required for the current section 417A (2) of the Crimes Act, which provides that where a matter is construed as an "exception, exemption, proviso, excuse or qualification to the offence", the burden of proof falls on the accused. The introduction of an affirmative consent requirement is supported by a majority of stakeholders, and is also widely supported by the community, including by victim-survivors of sexual assault. For the purposes of making any finding in relation to the mental element of knowledge of non-consent, whether or not the new section 61HK (2) applies, proposed new section 61HK (5) of the Crimes Act also requires that the trier of fact, first, must consider all the circumstances of the case, including what, if anything, the accused person said or did; and, secondly, must not have regard to any self-induced intoxication of the accused person.

Particular consideration was given to this provision in light of the recommendation of the Law Reform Commission to include a less stringent requirement to consider whether the accused said or did anything to ascertain consent—see recommendation 7.7—and the New South Wales Government's decision to provide an affirmative consent requirement to reasonable belief on the part of the accused under proposed new section 61HK (2). Targeted stakeholders were consulted in relation to any overlap between the Law Reform Commission's recommended drafting and the New South Wales Government's additional provisions. The majority were supportive of the simplified drafting presented in the bill. I note that juries will be required to take into account all the circumstances of the case, which may also include the actions or responses of a complainant at the time of sexual activity if this forms part of a particular case.

I now turn to some of the other amendments made by the bill, relevant to consent and sexual offences more generally. Schedule 1 items [1] to [8] to the bill provide amendments to update and clarify the definitions of sexual intercourse, sexual touching and sexual act. These changes reflect the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission with some further minor updates to provide for consistency. Schedule 1 item [1] provides that it is not relevant whether a body part is surgically constructed for the purposes of a sexual offence. This enhances the inclusivity of the provisions. Schedule 1 items [2] and [5] update the language of the definitional provisions concerning sexual intercourse and sexual touching to ensure the provisions apply regardless of a person's gender or sex, and describe the sexual activities in appropriate language.

In particular, proposed new section 61HA (c) of the Crimes Act at schedule 1 item [2] to the bill describes oral sex on a female as "the application of the mouth or tongue to the female genitalia". The NSW Law Reform Commission recommended describing this conduct as "the stimulation of the female genitalia with the mouth or tongue." The use of the term "stimulation" is not suitable in the context of sexual assault, as it may suggest some kind of positive sensation or enjoyment. "Application" is an appropriately neutral term. The amendment is not intended to alter the legal understanding of what constitutes oral sex on a female or broaden the definition or scope of sexual intercourse, but rather to describe the conduct in language that is also appropriate in the context of sexual assault.

Schedule 1 item [3] to the bill includes an amendment to the exception to sexual intercourse to exclude acts carried out solely for a proper medical or hygienic purpose. This change ensures that the exception will not apply when penetration was for both a medical or hygienic purpose and for a sexual gratification purpose. This sort of dual-purpose conduct should be excluded from the idea of consensual sexual intercourse. Schedule 1 items [6] and [8] make equivalent amendments to the definitional exceptions for sexual touching and sexual act. Items [4] and [7] also clarify that the continuation of sexual touching or a sexual act constitutes those respective acts. Items [10] to [23] of schedule 1 are all consequential amendments.

I now turn to schedule 2 to the bill, which contains amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Schedule 2 item [3] to the bill will introduce five new jury directions about consent, for judges to give at trial to provide appropriate guidance to the jury. The purpose of these directions is to address common misconceptions about consent and to ensure a complainant's evidence is assessed fairly and impartially by the tribunal of fact. The new directions are as follows: First, a direction clarifying that non-consensual sexual activity can occur in many different circumstances and between different kinds of people including people who may know each other, or people who are married to one another, or people who are in an established relationship with one another. The list is non-exhaustive and the direction is drafted so that it may be adapted to the particular circumstances of a case.



Second, a direction about responses to non-consensual sexual activity, including that there is no normal response, that people may respond in different ways, including by freezing and that the jury must avoid making assessments based on preconceived ideas about how people respond to non-consensual sexual activity. Third, a direction that people who do not consent to a sexual activity may not be physically injured or subjected to violence, or threatened with physical injury or violence; and the absence of any evidence of this does not necessarily mean that a person is not telling the truth about an alleged sexual offence. Fourth, a direction on responses people may have to giving evidence, including that trauma may affect people differently and that the presence or absence of emotion or distress does not necessarily mean that a person is not telling the truth about an alleged sexual offence.

And fifth, a direction that it should not be assumed that a person consented because of their behaviour, including because they wore particular clothing, consumed drugs or alcohol, or were present at a particular location. In a trial that concerns a non-consensual sexual offence, the judge must give any one or more of these directions if there is good reason to do so, or if requested by a party to the proceedings unless there is good reason not to do so. The bill makes clear that a judge may give a consent direction at any time during a trial and may give the same consent direction on more than one occasion during the trial. The directions were strongly supported by stakeholders.

The bill will commence by proclamation. Proclamation is intended to occur approximately six months after assent to provide agencies time to implement the reforms including undertaking training, updating educative materials, and technical updates. The Department of Communities and Justice has formed an implementation and monitoring working group to oversee this process. Schedule 1 item [25] provides that the amendments made by the bill to the Crimes Act will only apply in relation to an offence committed, or alleged to have been committed, on or after the commencement of these reforms. Schedule 2 item [20] provides that the amendments made by the bill to the Criminal Procedure Act apply to proceedings that commence on or after the commencement of these reforms. The New South Wales Government has committed to a five-year statutory review of the reforms to ensure the law is operating as intended. The relevant provisions governing the review appear at schedule 1 item [24] and schedule 2 item [19].

In conclusion, this bill clarifies, simplifies and modernises New South Wales consent law. This is not just about holding perpetrators to account but changing social behaviour. The reforms will therefore be accompanied by extensive community education. The law is only one part, and probably not the main part, of how we tackle sexual violence in our community. The New South Wales Government acknowledges how important it is that all members of our society understand, and have access to appropriate education about, consent and respectful relationships. That is why the Government is committed to continuing to improve responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment, as well as education and prevention programs that preclude sexualised violence from occurring. As part of this, we are committed to not just ensuring our laws are fit for purpose but also ensuring all members of community have the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to develop and maintain respectful relationships.

No-one should assume someone is saying "yes" just because they do not say "no" or do not resist physically. People are entitled to expect that if someone wants to have sex with them, then that other person will ask—and that if the first person has not said something or done something to communicate consent, then the other person will take further steps to ascertain consent. This is just a basic matter of respect. It is time for the law to catch up with common human decency and common sense. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Budget*

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

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (16:37):** When I was interrupted earlier I believe I was speaking about some of the Roads and Transport allocations to the electorate of Riverstone. I was about to mention that \$100 million has been allocated in the 2021-22 budget for new buses in the metropolitan area. Over the past few years it has been a regular feature of these allocations that a fair number of them go into the growth areas of north-west and south-west Sydney, representing the areas where new demand is being created for bus services. Over the years that I have been the member for Riverstone we have had hundreds of extra weekly services introduced into the electorate and its surrounds, as well as some brand-new services and even the new form of service, the on-demand bus, that serves the stations of Tallawong, Schofields and Rouse Hill. I fully expect that to continue in current financial year, with some of the \$100 million allocated across the metropolitan area providing new services for the rapidly growing north-west.

There is also \$4.4 million allocated for corridor investigation and reservation for an extension of the metro from Tallawong to the Great Western line in the vicinity of St Marys. While this project remains a long-term consideration, it is reassuring to see the Government making prudent provision for the future transport needs of Sydney through identifying and reserving a corridor to enable the future extension of the metro network, linking the Sydney Metro North West to the Western Sydney Airport line and to the main western rail corridor. At some point in the future that will make it so much easier for a government to actually deliver that project. If this approach had been adopted by State governments in previous decades the task of providing new rail lines and motorways would have been immensely easier and more affordable than it has been for the current Liberal-Nationals Government.

I also welcome the allocation of \$1.7 million to begin construction of the new Fire and Rescue NSW station at Marsden Park, which is due for completion by 2023. The delivery of a new Fire and Rescue station flows from the acquisition of an appropriate site about four years ago as planning for the proposed Marsden Park North precinct was being undertaken. The acquisition was based on agreement between Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service about the future transfer of responsibility for fire services in the area from the latter agency as urban development became the predominant land use in the region. Members familiar with the region would be well aware of the massive residential development that has been occurring in Marsden Park and Melonba and the significant industrial development in the Sydney Business Park in the Marsden Park area. The allocation of funds for construction of the new station will facilitate the logical transfer of fire service responsibility.

It has been my pleasure to on occasions discuss with both Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service their vision for the future of the area, as the urban fringe extends further into formerly rural lands and the two services interact. It is great to see the two agencies cooperate in that process. The budget delivers on the Government's commitments and at the same time provides ongoing stimulus to the New South Wales economy as we recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Because New South Wales was in such a strong financial position when COVID struck, the New South Wales Government has been able to do more than any other State government to protect both lives and livelihoods.

All members are well aware of the massive expansion of health capacity—particularly intensive care unit capacity—that this Government made in the first half of last year to prepare itself for the possibility that we would have a huge number of cases and a massive influx into our hospitals of patients suffering from COVID. Fortunately, to date we have not had to fully utilise that extra capacity and that is a wonderful thing. As we open up, the possibility remains that we may see a surge in cases. However, fortunately this Government has been prudent in preparing for that, which is reflected in the Health allocations over that period.

In terms of livelihoods and impacts on people in the community, the Government has been able to provide a whole range of programs that are reflected in the budget. Those programs include JobSaver, the COVID-19 Business Grant, the COVID-19 Micro-Business Grant, the Accommodation Support Grant, the Small Business Fees and Charges Rebate, the Dine & Discover voucher scheme, the Stay & Rediscover voucher scheme, the Sydney CBD Friday voucher program, COVID-19 land tax relief, the Residential Tenancy Support Payment and the Commercial Landlord Hardship Fund. The Government has taken these and other initiatives to ensure that our community—our businesses, our workers, our families—can survive this pandemic and have the best possible chance of financial recovery after it is finished, so that businesses do not fall over the edge in the meantime but are able to recover when times are better.

It is an important part of our budget allocations that is reflected right across the communities of all members and certainly in the electorate of Riverstone, where many small businesses are benefiting from those programs to keep their doors open, keep their employees on the payroll and stay ready for this period where we are opening up. Hopefully we are opening up in a sustainable way that sees businesses able to get themselves back on a firm footing. It is the Liberal-Nationals Government's sound budget management over 10½ years that has enabled it to respond so effectively to these challenges. I ask for a short extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. Whether those challenges be drought, fire, flood or pandemic—and we have had them all—New South Wales will emerge stronger from them than would have been the case had the Government not repaired the budget in its early years and employed asset recycling in its latter years to sustain an unprecedented flow of infrastructure investments. That firm financial footing is the bedrock upon which all these programs and allocations have been possible. I remember some of the tough decisions we had to make in those first years of the O'Farrell Government to repair the leaking budget of the time. I remember some of the tough decisions we had to make to reallocate money to more urgent priorities. We could not address our priorities until we had repaired the bad budget situation in which we found ourselves—until we paid down the debt that we inherited.

Because we had done those things throughout the earlier years of the Liberal-Nationals term, we were able to respond when the crises and challenges of the past couple of years came along. Obviously they have had an impact on the budget again and we will have to do far more budget repair work in the future, but we have been

able to use that capacity to support our community and businesses to see them through the crisis so that we can move forward together as we open up. I acknowledge the role of previous Premiers and Treasurers in that task. They have all played a key role, whether it was Premier O'Farrell and Treasurer Baird, Premier Baird and Treasurer Berejiklian, Premier Berejiklian and Treasurer Perrottet or now Premier Perrottet and Treasurer Kean. They are continuing the good work to ensure we chart a course that maximises the opportunities available to the people of New South Wales to give them the possibility of a brighter future. The hard work—the sometimes unrecognised work—of managing budgets pays off in the end because of the benefits it has for ordinary people right across our community.

I make some brief comments about the investigation being undertaken by Transport for NSW in the north-west region and the wider Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley region into the flood evacuation capacity that underlies our ability to release land for future urban development. The precincts of the north-west have long been identified as one of the two main growth areas of Sydney. To ensure that we undertake responsibly and prudently the process of releasing land, an investigation is being undertaken by Transport for NSW to inform the Government about the evacuation capacity of the road network. Perhaps some infrastructure spending will arise from that investigation to ensure we meet that test of prudence and responsibility.

The March 2021 flood experience of the Hawkesbury-Nepean—Madam Deputy Speaker, I know you also experienced substantial floods on the North Coast and mid North Coast in that same rain event—highlighted the challenges that the SES will face if a major evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from the wider Hawkesbury-Nepean flood valley is needed during a largest possible event. The Bureau of Meteorology is talking about the high likelihood of a La Niña event over the coming 12 months, which increases the possibility that we may be put to the test in this respect. The last time I checked, I think Warragamba Dam was sitting at 96.6 per cent capacity, which means that it is within a metre of spilling over. That is not a lot of fat or protection left in the system. Of course, we have to be aware of those needs and the investigation is continuing.

Investment will be needed in the road network of the north-west region. I will continue to advocate for investment in that flood evacuation capacity and infrastructure, as well as for the mitigation provided by the Warragamba Dam project, which offers the most substantial opportunity for relief of that flood risk for the whole valley. It is vital to protect people, private property and public infrastructure, including essential services, from the massive damage that could occur in a record flood throughout the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. It is an area of future investment that the Government will have to keep its eye on. I will advocate for it as the local member to ensure that the needs of communities, both present and future, are taken into account.

Fortunately, the north-west regional road strategy already provides some of that infrastructure in the plans we have announced for the future. There will be a need to augment it, I imagine, and there will be further projects to undertake. Fortunately, the track record and the methodology of the Government—particularly through asset recycling—make it possible for us to rise to those challenges and meet the needs of the community into the future. I am confident that under the stewardship of Premier Perrottet and Treasurer Kean we will meet those challenges as they arise. That is reflected in the budget handed down this year—a most unusual year, to be admitted. We have experienced immense challenges, but the State is in good hands. I look forward to the future as New South Wales continues in that vein and to the needs of Riverstone being met, as they have been for the past 10 years.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:49):** It gives me great pleasure to speak on the record on behalf of the people of The Entrance in the budget take-note debate. I note at the outset that the Appropriation Bill 2021 was introduced in the House on 22 June this year. The object of the bill is:

... to appropriate from the Consolidated Fund various sums of money required during the 2021-22 financial year for the service of the Government, including—

- (a) Departments of the Public Service, and
- (b) various special offices.

Also introduced with the Appropriation Bill 2021 were the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2021, which funds our work here; the Electric Vehicles (Revenue Arrangements) Bill 2021, which sets up a scheme for distance road user charges to support the introduction of electric vehicles in the State, and which is still progressing through the House; the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021; and the NSW Generation Funds Amendment Bill 2021.

Before I speak in detail on the budget bills, I have been advised that my office has received a number of calls this afternoon asking why Labor did not support the motion moved by the member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, to reorder business for tomorrow and why we did not support bringing on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 for debate sooner rather than later. I record for the benefit of my constituents Labor's position that there is abundant time in our program and the Government should yield some of its time to allow that important bill to be brought before the House and debated properly. The Government signalled during discussion

about the motion of the member for Sydney that it would be willing to yield some time on a sitting Friday in November. I put it to my constituents that the Government should yield more time to consider the bill.

A whole bunch of members will want to speak on the bill and will ask for extra time during the debate, and there could be amendments to the bill. It would be appropriate for the proper governance of this State for the Government to yield time so that that important bill can be considered sooner rather than later. I put that on the record to assure my constituents that I want to see the debate brought on, but not during the small amount of time on a Thursday morning when private members' bills are discussed. That should not be messed with just because the Government will not yield some Government business time as it does not want the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 to be debated appropriately and in a timely fashion. As Deputy Opposition Whip, I will continue to communicate with the Government about how the business of the House should run.

Returning to the budget, I acknowledge that there have been significant, appropriate and welcome public works in The Entrance electorate. Those public works reflect the desires of my community to improve access to railway stations. They support the campaigns that my community has undertaken for better access to local railway stations. When I talk about those public campaigns, I must mention Anne Love, who is a resident of the Orchards Retirement Village at Lisarow. Anne has been a strong champion of improving access at Lisarow railway station for the large number of local retirement village residents who find that they simply cannot use their local railway station without assistance. As a consequence, the retirement village has to put on special services to transport those residents to other railway stations on the Central Coast that are serviced by lifts and better accessibility arrangements. The work is almost finished at Lisarow, and I am looking forward to celebrating the end of that work with Anne Love and the other residents of the Orchards Retirement Village and the wider Lisarow community.

I also record my appreciation of the Government's agreement to maintain the name that had been attached to the footbridge that is located at Lisarow railway station. The footbridge is one of the few footbridges at railway stations in this State that has a name. It is named Andrew's Bridge in recognition and honour of nine-year-old Andrew Bridge, who lost his life at Lisarow railway station in 1991 when there was not a railway footbridge at the station and he was struck by a train while crossing the railway line. His name will be retained on the upgraded railway station. I have asked for further interpretive signage to be included at the site, and I am looking forward to a positive response from the Government. Andrew's tragic death was also a great motivator for improving safety provision at railway stations across the State. Not only was a railway footbridge was constructed at Lisarow, but it marked the beginning of the rollout of safety improvements to railway stations across the State. Andrew's legacy should be properly recorded as part of our railway history and appropriately at Lisarow railway station.

While we are talking about Lisarow, stage 3B, as it is referred to, of the Pacific Highway upgrade continues apace there. Those works are progressing professionally and appropriately, and they are welcomed by the community. We look forward to the end of those works. I acknowledge the concession made by the Government to include within those road upgrade works the upgrade of the commuter car parking at Lisarow railway station. It was not part of the upgrade promised for Lisarow railway station at the last election by the Government and it was not part of the original design for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway at Lisarow, but I kept mentioning it as often as I could to ensure that the informal car parking spaces that were a feature of the old Pacific Highway were not lost to the community when the highway was widened and that they were replaced by a proper formal car park at Lisarow railway station. It is going to look really good when it is finished, and it is going to be a great service to my community.

The Ourimbah railway station, which cost \$10 million to complete, is already finished, and it looks great. The completed Niagara Park railway station with the lifts and upgrade also looks great. The private sector contractors working for the Government at both those locations have done a really fine and professional piece of work. Narara railway station is yet to be completed but, like all the upgrades, I am looking forward to that one happening as well. The budget also allocated what I believe were the first moneys to the proposed long-sought—and often promised in the past—upgrade to Tuggerah railway station. When I say "often promised", it was only promised after a very long campaign by the community, which continues. It was one of the first issues that was brought to my attention when I was elected to The Entrance electorate in 2015 by my constituents, who said to me, "Why haven't we got lifts at Tuggerah railway station?" I mistakenly replied, "Well, I think you don't have lifts here because you've got a ramp."

**Debate interrupted.**

*Public Interest Debate*

#### **REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:59):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the unique challenges of accessing mental health services by those living in regional, rural and remote New South Wales.
- (2) Acknowledges the unique environmental and lifestyle factors which impact upon the mental health of those living in regional, rural and remote New South Wales.
- (3) Notes the effectiveness of the Government's Mental Health Strategy.

The communities of regional, rural and remote New South Wales bear the physical, psychological and financial brunt brought on by years of drought, flood, storm and plague. Many country communities have experienced some if not all of those disasters in recent years. As tough as country folk are, we are still human and we all have our breaking point. Add to this the naturally occurring isolation resulting from the distances which physically separate people from one another and the unreliable communications for many living across the vast rural and remote areas west of the great divide, and there is greater potential erosion of one's mental health than in their city-based cousins.

Successive governments' agendas to centralise services has slowly yet steadily withdrawn services from country towns. With the loss of services went the loss of jobs, and with the loss of jobs, the loss of investment, opportunity and prosperity. With the centralisation of services came the broadening gap between financial classes who may not have access to reliable transport to seek access to services. This is hardly conducive to good mental health. Resilience is a word bandied around by government. I heard that term used often back at the beginning of the drought when the Government refused to acknowledge there was a drought. We can use this too with mental health. While resilience and preventative measures are great and are vital in a longer-term response, for those whose psychological wellbeing has already started to collapse we need to further invest in treatment of the many who present with acute conditions and require medical intervention.

The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure certainly applies to mental health. I applaud and support any preventative measures that can actually be delivered to achieve this goal. Government initiatives in preventative mental health measures are good. However, throwing money at a bunch of different organisations that do not work in concert is doomed to fail. Many of those organisations compete for funding, which does not encourage them to work collaboratively with each other for the benefit of the individual seeking help. Rather than refer those individuals to another organisation when they are overlooked, the organisations will just tell them to wait, sometimes for several weeks.

In speaking with many of my constituents about their experiences with mental health and the suicide of a loved one, it is clear that the common flaw in accessing timely and appropriate mental health services is the absence of service and care coordination. Finding where to turn for help is challenging, even for those whose family and friends advocate for their loved ones in need of mental health care. If they find difficulty in navigating the path to access the right help then it is nearly impossible for a person who is already suffering from poor mental health. Such a task is like asking a person with a broken leg to go for a run.

The Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women visited Orange to participate in a mental health round table. The issue of coordination of services was raised, so I was hopeful the Minister would take it on board and lay out a plan to address this and other local mental health-related issues. I asked the Minister what she had done in response to the issues raised at the Orange round table, and she gave a long-winded spiel that really did not answer the question. I resorted to address the issue myself, and I simply collated in one brochure a list of all organisations and mental health-related services, charitable and volunteer organisations, together with other local mental health initiatives and programs, which I mailed to all of my constituents. It was a relatively simple task and the initiative substantially solved a problem common to all communities across the State. I have a copy of that list in the Chamber with me today. Service coordination is pivotal to effectively delivering appropriate and timely service to those in need. All the services and money thrown at them are useless if people do not know where to turn and how to access them.

Let's now talk about the effectiveness of the Government's strategies. The Government directed a piddly \$87 million to its Towards Zero Suicides initiatives within the *Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention 2018-2023*. I do not begrudge art lovers and history buffs the funding toward their interests, but just across The Domain here the Art Gallery of NSW is getting a \$344 million extension. That is not a life-or-death investment. The Towards Zero Suicides funding is for just three financial years, 2019 to 2022. Given that we are nearing the end of that funded initiative, one would reasonably expect we would see a decrease in the incidence of suicide. But the incidence of suicide among communities outside of metropolitan areas has not decreased significantly, and in some areas the number of suicides has actually increased. In northern New South Wales and in the Murrumbidgee the rate of suicide is almost double that of Sydney. Poor mental health is directly linked to suicide, and those suicide rates are an indicator that for all of the Government's money and strategy, it is failing the people of the bush.

Having heard many stories of young people being turned away and told to wait for help by government organisations because they were too busy to help clearly shows that the Government's NSW Youth Health Framework vision of providing timely access to appropriate health care and youth friendly services is not working. Prevention strategies are all well and good, but what about those who are beyond that and need hospitalisation? The Government had a pre-election promise to install two dedicated mental health workers in every public high school. What happened to that? What has been delivered does not match the promise. If the Government was serious about any new preventative measures, one would think it would honour the promises of the strategies and announcements that have come before. Some schools have access to a counsellor for just one day per fortnight; that is simply not good enough. How are students supposed to have continuity of care?

I acknowledge the Government for what I am sure are well-intended initiatives, but what will its recent \$130 million mental health initiative deliver for people of the bush if the Government has not delivered on the promises and funded strategies that preceded it? I acknowledge the inclusion of teacher training in the Government's COVID-19 mental health recovery plan. I thank the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education for facilitating that suggestion, which I made in this Chamber in May last year. It is a no-brainer; training teachers in addressing mental health is essential in identifying and actioning students' mental health issues, as well as incorporating mental fitness as part of education and school culture. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (17:06):** Mental health challenges will affect nearly every person at some point in their life, whether it is the individual or whether it is the person who is supporting someone who is experiencing mental health difficulties. I acknowledge those who are viewing the live stream today and I also acknowledge the carers in our communities. It is important that people who experience mental health challenges are not alone and that there is always someone available, no matter what time of day, to listen and to provide support and access to the help that is needed. All of our communities are different; no two communities are the same. We all have a responsibility and a part to play to ensure the health and wellbeing of each and every one of our communities. Right across New South Wales fantastic work is happening, particularly in our regions, to that end, with local members being supported by their local health districts, the primary health networks and other organisations. I look forward to hearing from the member for Clarence on the initiative in his electorate.

In my electorate, we initiated mental health and suicide prevention information nights. Twelve of them are held across the electorate for people to learn at a local level where they can access help, who to contact, how to help people in their communities with mental health challenges or suicidal ideation and what help is available out there. I extend my deepest gratitude to people right across my electorate who have participated in those nights as well as all of the agencies that have been involved. I turn now to the record \$130 million package to fast-track the mental health recovery in New South Wales. The package is not just for people living in Sydney, it is also for people in the regions. It is a landmark package and it will go a long way towards meeting the increased demand for mental health services right now. But it is also about setting up the State for the long term in terms of educating people, providing support and maintaining facilities in communities. The package is about supporting families. We know that after the past two years there is some work to be done in that space, and the Government is certainly stepping up.

We know that help outside the hospital system is really important to ensure that the support is available at a grassroots community level. To that end, there is a \$14 million investment to create a legion of 275,000 mental health champions right across the community, from high schools to parents, sports coaches, the Country Women's Association, Rotary, Aboriginal community leaders and more. Each one of those people will be able to go home and start a conversation at the dinner table, at the pub or on the training field about mental health, with the aim of reducing the stigma around the issue. The funding package also includes a grants program for local communities and sporting clubs, which will go a long way towards helping communities run wellbeing events and activations to bring communities together so they can have some fun and address mental health in a way that reduces the stigma around it. The package is also about addressing significant waitlists to protect children, parents and vulnerable populations; supporting multicultural communities all the way from a community level to clinical care; and building a strong, resilient State of community mental health champions.

Children and teenagers requiring specialist mental health care will benefit from a funding package that will deploy 25 safeguard child and adolescent mental health response teams across regional New South Wales. The funding for that package is \$109.5 million over four years. By the second year every local health district in the State will have a team, including, thankfully, the Murrumbidgee Local Health District and the Western NSW Local Health District, which is in my neck of the woods. The people on those teams are skilled clinicians based in communities to support children, teenagers and families, and will coordinate all aspects of their health care needs. Finally, I address the issue of school wellbeing nurses. What a fantastic initiative. I am pleased that the pilot was run in Young, where I currently live. It has been an absolute game changer. The Government is spending \$50 million to roll out 100 of those nurses right across New South Wales. The rollout is going very well and it will be a game changer for young people in the State's communities.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (17:11):** As the Opposition's shadow Minister for Health and shadow Minister for Mental Health, I contribute to the public interest debate. I commend the member for Orange and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party for their outstanding work across regional and rural New South Wales. Right now as we sit in this Chamber, we are in the process of going through what I believe to be a mental health crisis across regional and rural New South Wales. How do we know that? Because Labor fought hard to establish the inquiry into regional and rural health and hospitals. We fought hard when the Government said it did not want the inquiry, which has shone a light on some of the most appalling situations that people in regional and rural communities have to face when they try to access health and mental health services. Members opposite never wanted that inquiry to see the light of day.

The inquiry has received over 700 submissions, many of which refer to shortages in mental health services across regional and rural New South Wales. Many of the submissions are from families in desperate situations that are not able to get care for their children and loved ones without travelling huge distances. Many of the submissions are from people who for days on end have watched and waited with loved ones in emergency departments before they can access mental health services close to where they live. Those situations are happening in regional and rural New South Wales right now, which is why I am very proud that Labor fought hard to establish that inquiry. With the support of the minor parties, like the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, the committee conducting that inquiry is travelling across the length and breadth of regional and rural New South Wales.

I have attended many of the public hearings and I know that members from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party have attended them too because I have been there with them. One of the most common themes that comes up at every single public hearing we attend is the shortage of mental health services right across regional and rural New South Wales. There is a shortage of psychiatrists in local hospitals and the local hospital network. There is a grave shortage of psychologists. Telehealth is sometimes available, but it can be very clunky depending on access to broadband and the technology people may need to access that service. At the moment we need to look at a couple of things. Firstly, it is critical that we increase the funding to existing providers while at the same time—as the member for Orange said—we help to coordinate those services to ensure that the community gets the best bang for their buck for the mental health services that they need and deserve.

The mental health of the people that members represent is of the utmost importance. Small investments in existing services will not end the crisis but they will go a long way, because many in the community already have great trust in their local service providers. I am not criticising the major players in the mental health space; they do outstanding work. However, as local MPs we should know that many people have a great deal of trust in small community-based providers. We need to make sure that they are given the funding and support they need. Recently, I conducted a mental health forum with my colleague the member for Canterbury as that community was facing some of its most difficult challenges through the pandemic. What is happening in that community is the same as what I read in many of the submissions to the parliamentary inquiry into regional and rural health.

The Government needs to enhance the funding and coordination of existing services to ensure that they are not competing with—as the member for Orange said—but complementing each other and that the people on the ground needing those services get access to them. I say very clearly to The Nationals members that they need to do better when it comes to the delivery of health care in regional and rural New South Wales. They should have supported the inquiry into regional and rural health services and hospitals. They did not and the submissions that have been received and the evidence that has been heard at that inquiry tell of the neglect that this Government has caused the people of regional and rural New South Wales when it comes to health and mental health services.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:16):** Via video link: I make a contribution to this important public interest debate. The lack of mental health services is having a devastating impact on my electorate. A decade ago the Murrumbidgee region and Sydney had similar rates of suicide. Since the Coalition was elected in 2011, the suicide rate in the Murrumbidgee has increased by 59 per cent. In 2017 it had a suicide rate almost three times that of Sydney, according to NSW Health statistics. That is a massive change in such a short space of time. When questioned at budget estimates, the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, was completely unaware of rural suicide trends. The Government has not done any research on why rural suicide rates are growing so much faster than they are in Sydney under the watch of The Nationals.

In May 2020, three teenagers in the Riverina took their lives within the space of just three weeks. Our community was devastated. I had had enough so I put the call out across regional New South Wales. I asked people to tell me about their experiences of the mental health system. I wanted to find out why this was happening. I was absolutely inundated with messages and emails. Having collated all the responses, it is clear that the lack of government funding for mental health services in rural areas is a major reason for our skyrocketing suicide rate. A number of parents wrote to me to tell me that their children are distressed, depressed and suffering trauma but felt they had nowhere to go for help. Not one hospital in the electorate of Murray, an area of 170,000 square kilometres that is bigger than Scotland, has a mental health unit.

When asked why this was the case, the health Minister said people could go to Wagga Wagga for treatment. Wagga Wagga is two hours away from Deniliquin and three hours away from services in towns like Hay and Hillston. That is just unacceptable. Imagine telling a Sydneysider that they had to travel three hours to Canberra for mental health support. The Government would never accept that. In the bush, even the big population centres of Griffith, Leeton, Deniliquin, Moama and Wentworth lack the most basic of services. When someone is on the verge of taking their life, there is often nowhere to turn. They are put on waitlists and forced to wait weeks before someone might see them.

This time last year there was outrage from Nationals members, who threatened to quit the Government over its koala policy. It would be great if The Nationals, who call themselves the only party for regional Australia, took a similar stand on this crisis. Imagine them telling the Deputy Premier that they will move to the crossbench until mental health services in the bush are properly funded. Imagine that! That has never been seen from The Nationals. Sadly, the issue has been ignored by the Government. Meanwhile, rural communities are doing the heavy lifting themselves. My office has helped to unite a passionate group of locals who are trying to get the youth mentoring service Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia to expand in the Riverina. If the Government will not stump up the cash, the community will try to raise the funds themselves. The Goolgowi community, led by Marie Clarke, is doing great things to bring mental health support to their town with minimal government help. Regional communities are tough and resilient. We will overcome this crisis but it would be great if the Government would support us in our battle.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:20):** I talk about a wonderful mental health initiative in my electorate of Clarence, Our Healthy Clarence. It was developed in the Clarence Valley by the community for the community and endorsed by mental health services across the region. The initiative was resourced by the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government. It has been held up as a model for other communities to adopt. As a result of the initiative, across the State the Government is funding 12 new suicide prevention community collaboratives like Our Healthy Clarence; a significant community gatekeeper and suicide prevention training program that will train nearly 300,000 parents, teachers and community groups; 20 new SafeHaven alternative drop-in spaces where people in distress can go instead of an emergency department, including in Lismore and the Tweed; and 15 new assertive suicide prevention outreach teams, which will provide proactive care, engaging with people experiencing a suicidal crisis in the community.

In 2016 the North Coast Primary Health Network conducted a needs assessment survey in which people in the Clarence Valley rated mental health issues as the most serious local health concern. As a consequence, the community rose to the challenge and came up with a solution, because mental health is a community problem and not just an issue for the Government to solve. After all, it is our kids, our communities and our problem. The community is looking to leaders in the community, like MPs, to take the lead. We have called meetings to discuss the issue and conducted community interviews to identify risk and protective factors and existing mental health and wellbeing strategies, set up workshops to develop local strategies, and formed a steering committee to lead the development and implementation of a plan for improving mental health and wellbeing in the Clarence Valley. We needed to understand the extent of the problem before we could come up with the solutions or we risked spending money unnecessarily.

The plan outlines four fundamental areas of focus. The first is to improve access to evidence-based treatment and crisis and coordinated care after a suicide attempt. The second is to improve the capacity of the workforce and the community to respond to people at risk of suicide. The third is to increase the availability of evidence-based mental health and wellbeing programs within schools. The fourth is to improve community awareness of mental health and how to access information and services, as well as to improve community engagement and early intervention and prevention, which is key. The plan also identified five objectives. Objective one is to improve access to evidence-based treatment, crisis and coordinated care after a suicide attempt. Objective two is to improve the capacity of the workforce and the community to respond to people at risk of suicide. Objective three is to increase the availability of evidence-based mental health and wellbeing programs within schools.

The Government has responded to this by introducing school wellbeing nurses to 200 schools across the State at a cost of \$50 million. It is not just about money, it is how we spend it and we need to know where we are spending it. Objective four is to improve community awareness of mental health and how to access information and services. Objective five is to improve community engagement, early intervention and prevention. The membership of Our Healthy Clarence steering committee was a cross representation of our community. It included Bulgarr Ngaru Aboriginal Medical Corporation; employment services; Clarence Valley Council; Clarence Valley schools, both public and private; the Department of Education; carer representatives; community members, including two young people; non-government organisations; Lifeline North Coast; the Clarence Youth Action Group; headspace School Support; New School of Arts; the North Coast Primary Health Network; the Northern



NSW Local Health District; the NSW Police Force; New Horizons; Partners in Recovery; the StandBy Response Service; and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The New South Wales Government responded to our mental health crisis by funding one of the great initiatives of the plan, the official opening of pop-up safe spaces in Grafton and Yamba. These drop-in centres were aimed at the early detection and prevention of mental health illness through access to good quality health, wellbeing and service information; supporting referral to local services and programs; providing safe community spaces to hold meetings and support groups; and community activities and events to enhance community connections. The targeted beneficiaries of the pop-up hubs were all members of our community, including Aboriginal community members, children and families, young people, people with a disability, people experiencing mental health issues, people experiencing homelessness, older people, and people experiencing social isolation, with an emphasis on young people, parents and carers and those experiencing social isolation. The drop-in centres were operated by highly skilled community service professionals. Our Healthy Clarence is about the community coming together to solve a community problem, with the Government playing a supportive role rather than taking the lead.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:26):** I commend my colleague the member for Orange for the motion. It is estimated that mental health conditions will affect a staggering one in four people at some time in their lives and far more indirectly. Despite investment from the Government, the private sector and the community, many people living with mental health conditions cannot get the support they need and mental health-related emergency department presentations continue to rise. For people living in the bush, the difficulty in accessing mental health care is only compounded by the tyranny of distance. In the Barwon electorate we have just one six-bed Mental Health Inpatient Unit in Broken Hill, which provides short-term care for adults. That is six beds for 356,000 square kilometres of New South Wales. Anywhere else in Barwon patients will be temporarily looked after in hospital until they can be transported hundreds of kilometres away from their family, friends and support network to Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth, Newcastle or Wagga Wagga.

A young lady, Rae Walsh, bravely described this experience to Andrew Messenger at the *Northern Daily Leader*. Rae is 16 years old. She had tried to end her life three days before her traumatic experience of being transported to Newcastle. Rae was strapped down to a gurney for the four-hour trip because the facility in her town was full. Rae says she felt like freight and she was being punished for what she had done. Months on from her admission to the Nexus unit in Newcastle, Rae still does not have a regular doctor and multiple appointments with psychiatrists have been cancelled. Rae says she is just so tired and she is ready to give up. Rae lives in Tamworth.

The Banksia facility in Tamworth is currently undergoing a \$40 million redevelopment, thanks mostly to the Tamworth Mental Health Carers' Support Group collecting more than 13,000 signatures for a parliamentary petition demanding a new Banksia Mental Health Unit. I care deeply about the Banksia unit because it is not just a unit for Tamworth but for vast swathes of my electorate as well. Tamworth and the entire New England north-west region does not have a single specialist mental health bed for a person under the age of 18. This was concerning to me, and a number of people who contacted my office worried about the plans for the new Banksia Mental Health Unit falling short of community needs. In May last year my colleague in the other place the Hon. Mark Banasiak requested documents under Standing Order 52 regarding the Banksia unit's development. We requested these documents because it is important to us that facilities are built to meet demand now and into the future.

In 2020 the health district's director of mental health services was quoted as saying there is no intention or need to set up a child and adolescent unit in Tamworth to serve the wider district as there are enough beds in Newcastle at Nexus. Public plans for the new Banksia show it will contain the same 25 general purpose beds as the existing one. The local member and health district celebrated a \$1.5 million private donation to make two of those beds "pods for young people". This fell well short of community expectations. The modelling released under the Hon. Mark Banasiak's Standing Order 52 call for documents in June last year showed that the New England region could be left with half the number of beds it needs after the completion of the new Banksia Mental Health Unit.

The release of documents also showed that the bureaucratic decision not to build any child and adolescent mental health beds in the unit was despite anticipated demand. The documents from the health district go on to say that a unit in Tamworth for children "may not be practical as economies of scale may not be achieved." They are talking about economies of scale when we are talking about the mental health of young people. Come on. The Hon. Mark Banasiak and I have been pushing to have the Banksia Mental Health Unit built to meet the needs of the wider community now and well into the future. The local member joined those calls in September, and I applaud Mr Kevin Anderson for calling out the need to make sure the facility meets the community's needs and for demanding that we stop sending our kids far away from their families to strange cities for care.

There is demand for more child and adolescent mental health services across the State. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service based in Orange services five local health districts and 86 per cent of the State and routinely runs at 100 per cent capacity, with many people waiting to access this acute service. My colleague the member for Orange has regularly heard that the unit is either bed blocked or the service is understaffed and without the funding needed to cater for the patient demand. Now they are getting referrals from beyond their intended catchment area, further limiting their ability to cope with service demand. The member for Orange has asked the Minister for increased funding and expansion of this service; however, it has not been forthcoming.

I am putting my concerns around mental health facilities on the record today because the government of the day must be accountable for the projects it is funding. When it is using public money on something as important as the mental health of young people, terms like "economies of scale" should never crop up. Issues like mental health need to be tackled in a united way. Members will never hear negative commentary from me about mental health funding, but it is part of my job to make sure this money is being spent in a manner that actually helps the people who need it most. While the suicide rate keeps going up, I will keep raising this issue. We must do better in this space. Our young people are relying on us to help them.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:31):** Via video link: I thank the member for Orange for bringing this motion before the House. Mental health care is absolutely critical in regional and rural areas; so often it has been the poor cousin when it comes to funding within the health system. Of course, the distances in rural, remote and regional areas compound the problem. Has the Government invested enough? It is certainly playing catch-up. I well remember the days of working in the mental health system in Wagga Wagga with a 20-bed ward that was always full. Patients had to be transported to Albury and Orange just for basic treatment. Thankfully, those days passed and we have a large unit there. Does more need to be done? Absolutely. It will require more investment from the Government, no question.

As the member for Orange pointed out, it also requires coordination of services, which so often goes unrecognised. I thank the member for making that point. Recently I had a couple of experiences that illustrated where coordination of services had been very effective. The member for Murray referred to a number of suicides in our region earlier this year. A number of them took place in my electorate and caused a lot of concern in the community. At the time it was very distressing. There was a lot of talk on social media and a lot of puzzlement. How do we support the families and carers? How do we stop a message going out from those events to other young people? What can we do to prevent suicide in those circumstances? I have to say that I was surprised and delighted that there was a local response group based in Wagga Wagga that was able to respond.

This group consists of a core group of people from the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network, Wellways Australia, police and the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. It meets regularly and connects with a wide range of service providers, schools and community members. It was able to respond very quickly and together with young people developed a range of social media messages, provided support and reached out to the communities and schools affected. It was also able to engage in providing a range of education and support services and resources to parents, teachers and students in schools in the area.

I was extremely impressed because we had Commonwealth, State and non-government agencies coming together quickly, linking quickly and acting to prevent the contagion of suicide from spreading in the community. I was very grateful that that had come about. At the time I did contact Minister Taylor about what was going on and she pointed me to this group. I think this is an example of best practice. I have spoken before about the impact of suicide in our communities. It is the greatest cause of loss of productive years of life in Australia. The challenge is: How do we prevent it? This seemed to me to be a concrete example of where the right coordination of services across different government and non-government agencies could actually make a real difference.

Another initiative that I was fortunate to visit in Wagga Wagga was Safe Haven, which is based on a United Kingdom model. It involves establishing a drop-in centre close to an emergency department—which is open currently [inaudible]—where people can go. It is a comfortable environment and they can talk to peer workers as well as professionals. There is no stress and no onerous limitations: It is a welcoming environment. If people are contemplating taking their lives this is a place where they can at least take a step to get help in a non-threatening environment.

I well remember working in the emergency department, which is the last place anyone wants to go for help. There are bells and whistles and people are busy—it is chaos. This facility, which is very close to the emergency department, seems to me to provide an ideal option for people who are in a very stressful part of their lives. It is another good example of this need to prevent suicide, but also to coordinate funding and government services. That initiative and the Wagga Wagga response group initiative were, I must say, quite impressive.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:36):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate on this very serious issue, and for the respectful manner in which it was conducted. I thank the members for

Cootamundra, Keira, Barwon, Clarence, Murray and Wagga Wagga. I and other speakers omitted to mention that October is mental health month. This is a particularly important issue in regional communities. It was great to see so many regional members from both sides speak to the importance of this issue. The member for Cootamundra raised issues about her electorate and the recent announcement a \$130 million mental health support package, with 270,000 mental health workers to be rolled out across the State. The member for Keira spoke about the importance of mental health. I believe mental health and suicide are the silent pandemic we are facing at the moment, especially in the bush. They do not get enough recognition, awareness or publicity. We need to have these discussions and be open and up-front with our communities.

Over 700 submissions have been received during the regional health inquiry, many of them damning of the lack of support, the lack of services and the lack of government investment, especially in the bush. The member for Clarence spoke about the Our Healthy Clarence model, which seems to be working quite well in his area since its implementation. The member for Murray spoke about concerns in her electorate, and the suicide rate having gone up 59 per cent in recent years, since 2011 when this Government was elected. They are concerning and alarming statistics. More needs to be done—especially in that part of the State—to seriously and urgently address the issue.

The member for Wagga Wagga practised as a doctor before his life in politics. Members of Parliament come from different backgrounds, but when we have a doctor in this Chamber who speaks with authority, background and expertise we should take that on board. Minister Taylor should take the member for Wagga Wagga under her wing and perhaps get some guidance from him. As the member for Keira indicated, this issue relates specifically to a lack of Government funding. Ultimately that is what it comes down to. It is a lack of services, a lack of coordination and a lack of connections. When the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Orange, which services over 86 per cent of the State, is constantly bed blocked—it is only an 11-bed unit—there are problems. If that is Orange, God help the more remote parts of this State. For those reasons I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**LITTLE INDIA HARRIS PARK BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (17:39):** I bring the attention of the House to the Little India Harris Park Business Association and all the great works it has been doing over many years. I congratulate the Little India Harris Park Business Association on its contribution to our community. The Little India Harris Park Business Association has been in operation since 2015 and the Little India Harris Park Business Association represents many businesses that have joined together to form a strong umbrella, with the notion to create a tourist destination for Indian food, fashion and retail, and also to support the local community and its needs. The Little India Harris Park Business Association, with the support of City of Parramatta Council, organised the Little India Deepawali Street Fair in 2017 and 2018. A large number of attendees came along and really enjoyed the street fair activities. I congratulate Sanjay Deshwal on organising these great events with the support of Nitin Setia, the owner of Ginger Indian Restaurant, the City of Parramatta Council and the organising committee that organised the event.

Sanjay and Nitin continued their community support work to deliver the 2019 Diwali Festival, which lit up Harris Park. For the very first time all the businesses in Harris Park were uniformly lit up, which was spectacular. In 2020, with the help with Multicultural NSW, the 2020 Diwali Festival was improved and resulted in people travelling from various communities to visit Harris Park. The Little India Harris Park Business Association has also supported many in the community who have been affected by COVID-19. This included the setting up of a distribution centre at 97 Wigram Street, Harris Park. Sanjay and Nitin approached various businesses to secure large quantities of food. The Little India Harris Park Business Association has distributed groceries worth tens of thousands of dollars, which were received in cash or kind from local businesses in Harris Park.

During COVID-19 the Little India Harris Park Business Association was actively involved with the Parramatta Police Local Area Command to make small businesses aware of NSW Health guidelines and restrictions during the second wave of COVID-19. Every business has been provided with a COVID-19 safety plan and window signage. The association will continue to monitor and educate small businesses on the guidelines from the Parramatta Local Area Command. I congratulate Sanjay, Nitin and the Little India Harris Park Business Association on all their hard work in the community, and also for their hard work that contributed to the council

naming the destination Little India. This will promote the businesses in Marion Street, Wigram Street and Station Street East as a destination of choice for visitors near and far.

I commend the City of Parramatta Council for naming Harris Park as Little India, which will go a long way to attracting other people from around Sydney and the State. Just as Cabramatta has a Vietnamese community, the City of Sydney has Chinatown and there is Little Korea, this will operate as a destination for people who want to experience authentic food, fashion and retail. The community and I look forward to the next event, Colours of Subcontinent Festival 2021, once the COVID restrictions permit. Thank you and well done to Sanjay, Nitin and all the committee members of the Little India Harris Park Business Association for their ongoing efforts in the community.

#### PAINT THE TOWN READ

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:44):** I acknowledge the outstanding initiative by Blacktown Area Community Centres Inc. that is benefiting the Mount Druitt community. Paint the Town REaD is an early literacy program that originated in regional Parkes when local primary school principal Rhonda Brain noticed that children were increasingly starting kindergarten without the necessary reading and writing skills. Out of this came a nationwide program tackling one of the biggest obstacles to success in later life. Statistics show a direct correlation between illiteracy and poverty. The research shows us clearly that in order to work well the brain needs strong synapses to form between its many tiny neurons. A newborn baby's brain does not have those connections. They are formed as the baby is stimulated by the world around them. Every time a baby is spoken to, touched, cuddled, fed or bathed, signals race through their brains between the neurons, forming synapses.

These synapses in the brain are formed in the first three years of life. More than 20 per cent of Australian children arrive at school without the skills necessary to make the most of their early education. In some communities the figure is much higher. Research shows that no matter how good their subsequent teaching, those children can fall further and further behind. They may struggle with literacy, employment, health and happiness for the rest of their lives. Blacktown Area Community Centres Inc., known to the locals as BACC, is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation. It provides information, activities and supports through a variety of local, State and Federal governments funded programs across the Blacktown local government area.

One of its many programs is Paint Mt Druitt REaD, a literacy program that recognises that some children residing in the Mount Druitt area have limited access not only to good-quality children's books but also to people actively reading with them on a daily basis. Currently the program is federally funded through Communities for Children. Although the program is funded, it struggles to reach the community without receiving regular donations of good-quality children's books. With its mascot, the reading kangaroo Rooby Roo, the program attends community events, festivals, schools and parades to promote reading.

Free books are also provided through the Pick REaD and Swap Boxes scheme, which are located throughout the 2770 postcode. These swap boxes provide an opportunity for children and families to pick a book, take it home to read and then return it to any of the swap box locations for a new one. However, if a child loves the book they have chosen, they can simply keep it. All the books in the swap boxes are kindly donated by community members and organisations. As well as the swap boxes, BACC produces a free children's booklet printed in dual languages, such as English and Arabic or English and Hindi, promoting reading for children of parents who cannot read English, allowing them to read with their children in their own language and giving the benefit of both child and parent being able to see the words in English and learning together. These language books are very well received in my electorate office by many grateful parents.

My office also hosts a swap box. It is also extremely well received by parents and children attending the office, and I can see for myself the success of the initiative. To ensure the program can continue in the long term, BACC is always seeking supporters who will promote the importance of reading with children every day from the time they are born. I urge the State Government to get involved and assist BACC to expand its program, which in turn will help to further develop our communities and the wellbeing of our future generations.

#### COVID-19 AND BATHURST ELECTORATE

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and Minister for Regional New South Wales) (17:48):** Today I recognise the incredible work of the local community in my electorate of Bathurst in coming forward to be vaccinated. I place on record my thanks to NSW Health. The Western NSW and the Nepean Blue Mountains local health districts are in my electorate. Their teams have worked tirelessly around the clock and have done an amazing job to ensure that the communities I represent have remained safe during the pandemic. I also thank those teams for their commitment and the countless hours they have poured into our community, getting the messaging out there, providing opportunities for people with any flu-like symptoms to come forward and be tested, and setting up clinics as needed from time to time.

Alongside the local health districts, the NSW Health team in my community have been working on the ground throughout the pandemic. They continue to step up to the mark, responsibly carrying out testing at clinics, such as the drive-through clinic established at Mount Panorama, to keep our communities safe. In Blayney testing clinics were set up at the equestrian centre during outbreaks of the virus. Testing clinics were also set up in Oberon and at the showground in Lithgow. It was an opportunity for people to come forward and get tested to keep themselves and their communities safe. Our GPs and pharmacists have also done an amazing job, and I thank each and every one of them. They have been out there promoting to people the importance of coming forward and getting vaccinated to protect themselves, their families, their friends, those who are vulnerable in our communities and the wider community.

We were also very fortunate to have the Australian Defence Force [ADF] working alongside NSW Health in a number of places in the Bathurst electorate, which saw vaccination rates climb within my local area. In that one week over 4,000 people in the local community came to get vaccinated at the walk-up clinic at the Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre. The ADF came back several weeks later to provide the second doses. Out at Kelso, the Orange Aboriginal Medical Service came to town to provide a walk-up clinic for the community. Over 740 people went through the clinic, and 130 were from the Aboriginal community. It was important to protect everyone in the local area.

The ADF clinic in Lithgow saw 1,600 people walk through to be vaccinated over three days and NSW Health ran the second vaccination clinic, administering another 1,500 second doses to the community. It was about keeping our community safe. Clinics were also established in places like Kandos and Rylstone, Oberon, Blayney and even in some of our smaller towns and communities. Tomorrow a clinic will be set up in Carcoar and Lyndhurst, which will give people every opportunity to come forward and get vaccinated. I say to the people of the Bathurst electorate that their patience and their incredible work have been amazing, and that is why we have seen good vaccination rates in the local community. To put it in perspective, the current first-dose vaccination rate in Bathurst is 93 per cent and the second-dose vaccination rate is 82 per cent.

In Lithgow the first-dose vaccination rate is almost 90 per cent and the second-dose rate is almost 80 per cent. In Oberon the first-dose vaccination rate is 91 per cent and the second-dose rate is 80 per cent. In Blayney the first-dose vaccination rate is 95 per cent and the second-dose rate is almost 86 per cent. In the Mid-Western Regional Council area, which includes my communities of Kandos and Rylstone, the first-dose vaccination rate is 95 per cent and the second-dose rate is 82 per cent. It is an incredible effort and I thank everybody for the work they have done in this space.

#### TRIBUTE TO NORM PROVAN

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:53):** On behalf of the House, I pay my respects to the late Norm Provan. Norm sadly passed away on 13 October 2021, leaving behind his legacy to both the game of rugby league and the St George community. Nicknamed "Sticks", he was born in the New South Wales Riverina region before playing junior football in the Sutherland shire. Norm then went on to make his debut for the St George Dragons in 1951. He featured in 256 games for the club and played a crucial role in the first 10 of its record run of 11 straight premierships. His success on the field has been acknowledged time and again. In 2018 he was recognised as one of the 13 Immortals of rugby league: the highest honour for any player in the sport. Many also recognise Norm as he appears alongside Arthur Summons on the NRL premiership trophy.

As a lifelong resident of the St George area and as a devoted St George Dragons fan, I understand the impact Norm has had within our local community. Standing 193 centimetres tall—I wish I had some of that height—he was not just a giant of the game but a role model for children and aspiring players across the region. Growing up, everyone wanted to play like Norm Provan. As a second rower his ability to tackle hard and hold his own on the field was unmatched. He is not just one of the most iconic figures in rugby league but in Australian sport as a whole. In 2015 Norm was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, a truly outstanding achievement.

Since Norm passed away there have been growing calls within the community to have the grandstand at Kogarah's Netstrata Jubilee Stadium named in his honour. A petition which has now been launched and circulated in the community has received a few hundred signatures. I strongly support that petition. When many think of the Kogarah stadium they think of the legacy of our rich rugby league history, and no player demonstrates this better than the great Norm Provan, Mr St George. I also understand talks have been underway between the St George Dragons and the NRL about the possibility of the Jubilee Stadium hosting a round one clash to pay tribute to Norm, and again that is something I strongly support.

Sport has been and always will be the lifeblood of the St George community, and I would like to think that the legacy of Norm Provan will be carried on for generations to come. It is always my absolute pleasure to meet with local rugby league organisations like the Kogarah Cougars, who play at Todd Park. The Cougars do an

outstanding job at getting more men and women involved in the sport. Kogarah Cougars president, Koda Ghassa, and the entire organisation do an incredible job at promoting inclusion, sportsmanship and a general love of rugby league. I am sure that Norm would be immensely proud of everything that the Cougars club has achieved. In the words of Channel 9's director of sport, Brent Williams, Provan's legacy went beyond the game of rugby league. He stated:

Whilst we pause in sadness at the news of his passing, we are drawn to reflect on his greatness and his wonderful contributions to the game of rugby league.

That sentiment encompasses everything that has made Norm Provan one of the greatest players in both Australian sport and rugby league. I extend my deepest sympathies to his wife, Lynne, daughter Suzanne and sons Noel, Douglas and Nathan. I wish them all the very best during this difficult time. I conclude by again thanking Norm Provan for everything that he has given to our local sporting groups and our community, the game of rugby league and the St George region. I have no doubt that his legacy will shine through the community for many years to come. Rest in peace, Norm Provan.

### COVID-19 AND AUBURN ELECTORATE

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:58):** COVID-19 was particularly tough on the Auburn electorate. There were 4,600 cases of COVID-19 across suburbs in my electorate. Of course, many local families lost loved ones, and I pass on my condolences and those of this Parliament to families in the Auburn electorate. It is worth noting that 586 people are still in hospital with COVID-19, with 125 of those in intensive care, and today there were another seven deaths. The work of our community organisations and local businesses has been vital in these difficult times. My hat goes off to our many local businesses, particularly those small ones and restaurants who would prepare food packages and leave them out for international students and those in need.

I have thanked many organisations already and will surely be thanking many more, but tonight I acknowledge the hard work of three organisations in the Auburn electorate. OzHarvest has been tireless in the areas of concern. Many of the community organisations that have been able to get assistance directly to people on the ground have relied greatly on OzHarvest hampers. It has been a huge undertaking, with thousands of hampers a week moved and packed by volunteers, and we are eternally grateful that they have been there. It was a good decision by the New South Wales Government to give funding to OzHarvest, which has been the workhorse of this lockdown in areas of concern. At the Granville hub, it started off with a couple of hundred hampers. As the lockdown grew the collection of hampers quickly grew to 960, with people lined up not only down the street but also around the block.

Unfortunately, the outbreak took out many of OzHarvest's regular volunteers, but at the Granville hub volunteers such as Jenny and Moyi were there rain, hail or shine. When a COVID case knocked out the team, members of the community were quick to fill the breach. When OzHarvest needed volunteers quickly Ismail Sumrain and Naser Ghosheh from the Granville Youth Centre, alongside Kaseem Chalabi from the Parramatta Mosque, were there and have formed the backbone of the team ever since. I am not sure if they are aware that their nickname at the hub is now "The Three Amigos". I thank Suz, Rick, Emily and all the team at OzHarvest for all their hard work in difficult and sometimes trying times.

The Salvation Army at Auburn was another organisation that provided so much for the local community. It is another stalwart of our local community and a place where locals in need know they can always find help. Edward and all the team were ready at the drop of a hat to get assistance to those desperate for help. They were invaluable to my electorate staff and would ensure that they not only got direct assistance but also would follow up to make sure everyone was okay. Like OzHarvest, the Auburn Salvation Army provided hampers to local families. They could either attend its facility or it would drop the hampers off. Importantly, the Salvation Army offered its purpose-built facility for a pop-up vaccine centre for the most vulnerable in our society. It ensured there were workers who could translate, particularly for our elderly Chinese community. The pop-up clinic became a one-stop shop for those in need. All of us in the Auburn electorate are indebted to have the Salvos on our side.

The other organisation that was also there to help and is often a beacon for our community in times of trouble was the Gallipoli Mosque. When the adjoining aged-care facility received no vaccines from the Commonwealth, the mosque worked with western Sydney area health and was able not only to get those residents vaccinated but also to open the mosque for elderly residents from across the community to receive their vaccines. The Gallipoli Mosque is an important cultural meeting point for our local community. Over 1,000 elderly residents were able to receive their vaccine in comfort in their community, in an environment that was reassuring. The mosque also contacted elderly members of the community, checking on the isolated and delivering items of need. Recently it also launched a COVID hotline in Turkish, Arabic and English, providing information and transportation to a vaccine centre for those who have not yet been vaccinated.

These three organisations are just a snapshot of the hard work that has gone on across the western and south-western region during the recent lockdowns. Their contribution to the community is immeasurable and they have made a real difference to the lives of those in our local community. As the member for Auburn, I am extremely proud of the contributions and kindness I constantly see in my community.

### OXLEY HIGHWAY

#### UNCLE MICKLO JARRETT

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Water, Property and Housing) (18:03):** In July the Oxley Highway reopened following extensive flood damage along a 33-kilometre stretch between Mount Seaview Road and Gingers Creek Roadhouse. Currently five sections open to a single lane of traffic, with an alternating flow controlled by traffic lights and a 60 kilometre per hour speed limit. Repair work and improvements are ongoing to restore the highway to its pre-flood condition. The Easter storms through the mid North Coast of New South Wales caused immeasurable damage to our region. Today a hail storm ripped through from Dorrigo across to Thora, really impacting Sawtell and Coffs Harbour.

It is the land of the east coast low and major storm activity, and it takes much work and initiative to restore the damage after the event. The damage to the Oxley Highway, the major route between Walcha and the Pacific Highway, has had a big impact on the timber industry in particular, as well as the touring industry—those who love to get on their motorbikes and travel up one of the most beautiful and windy roads in New South Wales. I congratulate the Transport for NSW project team led by Anna Zycki. The team is working hard, continuing to monitor the slopes. To help assist their communication to locals, a 24-hour SMS alert system was successfully set up and has received more than 80 registrations. I know the Oxley Highway is vital. I know the work that had to be done to get it open was at times frustrating for the locals, but it was a very difficult project.

Another important thoroughfare being upgraded and improved following storm damage in April is the Waterfall Way. This is the major route between Dorrigo and the Pacific Highway and out to Armidale. It is regarded as one of the most beautiful drives in Australia. In September work began on a \$7.5 million project to improve drainage and widen the road on a four-kilometre section of Waterfall Way immediately west of Bellingen. The work will be completed in four stages, with the forecast completion date being 30 June 2022. Work is also well advanced on a \$2.5 million project to widen the shoulders and replace the road surface, improve road geometry, upgrade safety barriers and improve line marking on a section of Waterfall Way near the intersection with Little North Arm Road. Work started in early August on the \$1.6 million project to improve slope stability and renew the retaining wall on a section of the Dorrigo Mountain around the famous Sherrard Falls. Work is expected to be completed by Christmas.

These upgrades continue to provide a safer journey for the many thousands who use Waterfall Way. In addition, Transport for NSW, in consultation with the local community, has committed \$50 million to further improvements for Waterfall Way. I acknowledge that the time, the delay and the traffic lights where all this work is going on is a source of frustration, but we are improving the infrastructure.

I comment also on a magnificent Gumbaynggirr man, Uncle Micklo Jarrett. Australians can be proud to live in the country which is the home of one of the oldest continuous civilisations on earth, extending back over 65,000 years. Locally, Aboriginal culture is critical to our identity. Aboriginal people's strong connection to family, land, language and culture forms the foundation for social, economic and individual wellbeing and is integral to efforts to close the gap. So it is important to acknowledge the work of Uncle Micklo Jarrett, who is spreading the word on Aboriginal culture as the language leader of the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal language and culture community classes in Nambucca Heads.

We can all be thankful in Gumbaynggirr land that "Giinagay" falls off our tongues so simply because of his work. He has one of the most beautiful voices I have ever heard. He should be on the stage. In fact, he is often on the stage teaching adults in community classes funded by the NSW Department of Education after an assessment report revealed that while hundreds of local children are receiving lessons in Gumbaynggirr language, their parents, carers and the adults around them are not. I thank my National Party colleague and education Minister, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, for allocating money through the Department of Education so that the Oxley electorate now has four adult community language classes running. I also thank Uncle Micklo Jarrett for his invaluable commitment to our local region.

With the growth of the community classes, and more adults and children becoming adept at Gumbaynggirr language, I expect a community more deeply connected to their heritage, culture and belonging. I genuinely thank Uncle Micklo for his leadership. I was at the Language Centre at Nambucca Heads recently, as we were out working in the communities to improve vaccination rates. I have some incredibly special Indigenous leaders within the Oxley electorate and I acknowledge particularly the work of Uncle Micklo Jarrett.

## DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:08):** The protection of women and children from domestic violence is an important priority for me as the member for Hawkesbury. I know that my colleagues also consider this issue with the utmost importance. The NSW Police Force respond to more than 140,000 domestic and family violence incidents annually. There are also silent instances of domestic and family violence which do not get reported. We are all aware of tragic cases whereby women and children have been killed at the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence. Other victims live with the physical and psychological injuries inflicted upon them by their abusers. This is a serious issue that warrants serious investment.

In 2019-2020 almost 40 per cent of the people who accessed specialist homelessness services in New South Wales had experienced domestic abuse. We must ensure that no woman or child has to choose between continued domestic violence and not having a place to live. Every woman and child must be confident in knowing that they can escape such abuse immediately and have a secure and supportive environment. I am proud to be a member of the New South Wales Government that is investing an additional \$484.3 million in combating the issue of domestic and family violence. The funding package includes \$426.6 million over four years to expand "core and cluster" to deliver and operate around 75 extra women's refuges that support women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Under the core and cluster model, self-contained accommodation is located next to a "core", which provides access to services including counselling, legal assistance, education and employment support. The sites contain meeting rooms, audiovisual equipment for court appearances, communal kitchens and playgrounds. This is vital as it not only ensures the safety of victims but it also means that women and children can progress their lives, having escaped from the perpetrator and their previous home. Over four years \$52.5 million will be dedicated towards the Community Housing Innovation Fund. This is a partnership with the community housing sector to provide approximately 200 sustainable, social and affordable housing dwellings for women experiencing domestic and family violence. There is also \$5.2 million committed over four years for a trial in two districts to provide dedicated support for accompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness, with a particular focus on children and young people impacted by domestic and family violence.

Many organisations, individuals and the police work tirelessly in my electorate of Hawkesbury to tackle the issues of domestic and family violence and to assist women and children who escape such abuse. I thank and commend them for the important work that they do in the community. I also acknowledge Annabelle Daniel, OAM, chair of the Domestic Violence NSW board—the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in this State. I got to know Annabelle in my role as councillor with The Hills Shire Council, where a shelter was established. The focus on the needs of women experiencing domestic violence in The Hills was also elevated through the good work done by former mayor and councillor Yvonne Keane, AM, and I recognise her advocacy on this issue.

Domestic violence of any kind against women, men or children is abhorrent and unacceptable. It is not normal for a person to be verbally or physically abused, controlled, belittled, or made to feel shameful or worthless. That is why the New South Wales Government has made this commitment of almost half a billion dollars to provide support for women and children when they are in their most vulnerable state. I know that my community will continue to stand against domestic and family violence. Together we can protect and care for those who desperately need us, at their most vulnerable time.

## COVID-19 AND CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (18:12):** Via video link: It is lovely to be here with you tonight, albeit virtually. I speak about the recent COVID pandemic and my community's response to it. This pandemic is unlike anything else we have experienced in our lifetimes. It has meant a fundamental restructuring of our way of life. We have had to learn to work, study and socialise at a distance. Life has looked very different for us all since March last year.

We are emerging from a long and difficult period under stay-at-home orders and while it is easy to say that we have been in it together, the truth is that this year has felt very different from 2020. During the first lockdown there was a true sense that we were united. This year the mishandling of the vaccine rollout has created a sense of division across New South Wales. The failure on the part of the Commonwealth Government at the end of last year to secure enough vaccine to meet demand undermined the confidence of many people that we would emerge from the pandemic united. It has been said that this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. While many have been fortunate to have their own private vehicle to get to drive-through testing clinics, vaccination hubs and family doctors to access vaccines, others in my community have not had the benefit of that private transport. Across my electorate, public transport does not easily connect different suburbs, so some have found it very challenging to access testing and vaccines. Many people contacted my office, desperate to secure a vaccine appointment.



We were watching the case numbers increase in Sydney. The locals were panicked and desperate to do whatever they could to stay safe. This only got worse when the Government announced plans to transfer Pfizer vaccines from the regions, including mine, to stem the outbreak in parts of Sydney. At that time our locals' fears came true. A couple of COVID-positive partygoers from Sydney breached health orders and defied police orders, which triggered an outbreak in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie and plunged the Hunter into lockdown. Two and half months later, more than one in five of today's reported statewide COVID cases are from the Hunter New England Local Health District. In the midst of all of these challenges, there have been stories of triumph and community mindedness. At the outset I acknowledge a number of medical staff and people who really brought the community together. I acknowledge the wonderful staff at the Charlestown Square Medical Centre who set up a walk-in pop-up vaccination clinic at Windale Community Medical Centre, in one of our community's most disadvantaged areas.

I acknowledge Australian Clinical Labs, which ran a pop-up walk-in testing clinic at the Purple House in Windale helping to ensure that Windale locals were easily able to access testing at a crucial time in the outbreak. I acknowledge Awabakal Medical Centre, which organised several walk-in vaccination clinics for local First Nations people. Last week Hunter New England Health held a pop-up vaccination clinic at Lake Macquarie PCYC, Windale, which made me extremely happy. I thank all of the GPs, staff in medical centres, pharmacies and health workers who have supported the community throughout these months. Thanks to these organisations, and the extraordinary work of the Windale community, the suburb went from first dose coverage of under 40 per cent when stay-at-home orders were imposed to over 90 per cent by 17 October.

In the Lake Macquarie local government area [LGA] today more than 95 per cent of people have had their first dose of vaccine and 78.7 per cent have had their second. In the Newcastle LGA 91.4 per cent have had their first dose of vaccine and 74.9 per cent have had their second. That is an extraordinary effort considering where we came from. I thank the local police led by Lake Macquarie Commander, Superintendent Rashelle Conroy, and Newcastle Commander, Detective Superintendent Wayne Humphrey. They and their officers have been an essential part of keeping the community safe and they also of course coordinated the local emergency committees, which were so important during the outbreak.

To all the community organisations who put together food hampers and delivered meals for those doing it tough, including OzHarvest, Survivors R Us and Our Community Place; to all the volunteers who put in the time to help the more vulnerable members of the community; to the frontline workers in our supermarkets; and to our early learning centres, schools and hospitals—I cannot thank them enough. A special thanks to teachers, especially this week with students returning to face-to-face learning. In the darkest days those who give of themselves shine brightest, and right now a truer word could not be said.

### **HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE LOCAL BUSINESSES**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (18:17):** It is good to be back in the Chamber today after four months of meeting virtually. I will talk today about a recent visit to my electorate by Dominic Perrottet, New South Wales Premier and Leader of the Liberal Party, and Stuart Ayres, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney. They are all important portfolios for my electorate. I was pleased that they came to the Holsworthy electorate for their first visit in their new roles. It was fantastic to have them both out in south-west Sydney—specifically Casula mall—talking to local residents and business owners, to thank them for adapting, and to mark the beginning of reopening and the pathway out of lockdown. Both last year and more so this year, businesses in Casula and across the whole electorate have done it tough. Many of our businesses have had to close more than once due to having COVID-positive people in their premises. They and their staff have been amazingly resilient.

We visited Linda at the Sahara Café and Grill, which the Premier highlighted in an answer during his first question time. I had met with her before lockdown and it was great to catch up again to hear how she and her business had coped during this challenging time. She talked about how her staff were looked after and that she is a big advocate for the Government's Dine & Discover vouchers. She was happy to see more of them. She believes the initiative is crucial to helping businesses get back on their feet post lockdown. It was great to have the Premier, the Minister and the media try Sahara Café and Grill's delicious food and Turkish coffee. I know they will be back—probably very soon. It was delicious. During the visit the Premier highlighted how important it was to get the industry back up and running so it could work on rebuilding and slowly getting back to normal. It was great that from 11 October businesses were finally able to open up again.

That is also a win for community members as those who are fully vaccinated or exempt are now able to go out and support local businesses and visit some places they have not been to in a long time, like a hairdresser or a gym. Last month in his former role as Treasurer the Premier hosted a virtual western Sydney business and community forum and invited stakeholders across all different industries to join in the discussion. The forum's purpose was to give local leaders of businesses and community organisations an opportunity to voice their ideas

about how the region can achieve economic recovery post lockdown. It was fantastic to have the New South Wales Treasury host this forum and create a platform for stakeholders to discuss constructive recovery proposals once restrictions are eased.

Minister Ayres and the Hon. Damien Tudehope, Minister for Finance and Small Business, also took part in the forum. It was great to have input and perspective from these portfolios. I ensured that the forum had people and businesses represented across all different industries so that differing views and experiences could be discussed across travel, hospitality, real estate and manufacturing industries, to name just a few. It is no secret that this lockdown has had a significant impact on local businesses. However, I acknowledge all the businesses for continuing to adapt and to use this time to improve their processes and programs. A great example of a local company that used this difficult time to build upon their business in positive way is Trooper Lu's Garage, Moorebank. It is a local motorbike business.

The business was heavily hit when lockdown started and lost hundreds of thousands of dollars due to COVID. However, the business used the time to implement some great opportunities for local young people. It announced that it would be expanding into the bicycle space and will canvas schools for applicants for Certificate IV in Bicycle Workshop Operations. That approved traineeship will offer young people with an interest in the industry a foot in the door. Once again I thank the Premier and the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney for visiting the Holsworthy electorate to mark the beginning of the State coming out of lockdown. I commend all our local businesses across all industries for adapting during this time. I thank them for looking after their staff and for coming together during this difficult time. I look forward to seeing them back on their feet very soon.

### COVID-19 AND CENTRAL COAST SMALL BUSINESSES

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:21):** Hunter and Central Coast small businesses need support and clarity from the Perrottet Government now more than ever. The recent lockdown period has hit many of these businesses hard, with many of them forced to cease trade for several months and to stand down staff. The latest New South Wales regional labour force trends data reflects that there was an increase in unemployment in Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and on the Central Coast between June 2020 and June 2021. Despite the obvious economic impact that the inability to trade and work has had on Hunter and Central Coast communities, the Government has failed to provide appropriate access to financial support like the Small Business Grant to some small businesses in these regions.

The initial eligibility requirement that businesses must have endured a 30 per cent decrease in income between 26 June and 17 July has prevented many Hunter businesses from accessing the Small Business Grant. Whilst they may not have been subject to the Greater Sydney lockdown, the inability for those residents to travel to the regions, as well as increased hesitancy amongst Hunter residents to go out, significantly hindered Hunter businesses and their financial security. Even though Central Coast businesses were part of the Greater Sydney lockdown, a number of them, especially in the construction area, did not qualify for the Small Business Grant. It was not until JobSaver was introduced that these businesses received any form of financial assistance from the Government. However, issues with the application process resulted in businesses waiting weeks upon weeks before their payments hit their bank accounts.

When the State reached the 70 per cent double vaccinated rate JobSaver payments were dropped from 40 per cent to 30 per cent of the businesses' weekly payroll. That had a major financial impact on businesses across the Hunter and the Central Coast. Those businesses once again suffered a blow to their bank accounts when the 80 per cent milestone was achieved because JobSaver was scaled back further to just 15 per cent of their weekly payroll. With the JobSaver program due to cease on 30 November it is likely that many Hunter and Central Coast businesses will face major financial challenges. Just because New South Wales has begun to exit lockdown and hit key vaccination targets does not mean that Hunter and Central Coast small businesses no longer require financial support.

My office has been inundated with correspondence from local small business owners stating how the lockdown has impacted their financial stability. Recently Central Coast small business owners reiterated the impacts to Central Coast Labor MPs when we, together with the shadow Minister for Small Business, Steven Kamper, hosted the Central Coast Small Business Roundtable. One Central Coast cafe owner informed us that they are struggling to pay bills and to keep their businesses afloat, despite receiving the small business support grant, JobSaver, and borrowing money from the bank. It is clear that businesses such as that cafe need help getting back on their feet and need to be supported through the transition process until they are able to operate at full capacity. The Perrottet Government must continue to provide financial support.

Hunter and Central Coast small businesses have also been impacted by the Service NSW vaccine app not being ready in time for the first stage of reopening. The local business community has consistently raised with me

their concerns about the pressure placed on staff to police the vaccination status of customers without the vaccine app, with many of them making the hard decision to hold off on reopening because of the delay. A constituent, Dee, who owns a local restaurant at Belmont, is one local business owner who has informed me that she will have to delay reopening because of the vaccine app delay and the difficult position in which this has placed her and her staff in determining fully vaccinated patrons. Hunter and Central Coast businesses owners such as Dee are already facing financial stress due to the lockdown. She does not deserve to endure further angst because of the vaccine app delay.

The Minister for Customer Service, and Minister for Digital was entrusted to roll out this app but failed to do so in a timely manner. The Premier's recent comments that the vaccine app was not essential and simply a bonus proves that he is out of touch with the needs of Hunter and Central Coast small businesses. As the State continues to open up, the Perrottet Government must ensure that it provides small businesses from these regions with the certainty they deserve. We all know that small business is the engine room of our economy and they deserve support from the Government in these times of need. I applaud the hard work of small businesses in our communities right across New South Wales and the people that they employ. They are critically important and we want to make sure they are successful. We want to make sure they have opportunity, and in doing so we have to provide support to them.

### PINK ELEPHANTS SUPPORT NETWORK

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:26):** I acknowledge the incredible work of the Pink Elephants Support Network, noting that October is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. The death of a baby at any stage of pregnancy is devastating for expectant parents. The heartbreaking reality is that one in four pregnancies end in loss before 12 weeks. In Australia, this number means that 283 women a day, or 103,000 couples a year, are walking this journey, often in silence, isolated and at times even ashamed. "Early pregnancy loss" is the loss of a baby prior to 20 weeks of gestation. The term is broad and is often connected to complex medical terms used to explain why or how the pregnancy has ended. Understandably, this can be confusing or distressing to hear. Many women who have experienced an early pregnancy loss feel guilty and many blame themselves, when in most cases there is nothing that the mother did to cause this event and nothing that could have been done to prevent the loss. Often the expectant parents never find out the cause of the loss, making it a difficult reality to accept.

It is important for women to understand that they are not alone in this experience, and that is where support networks such as Pink Elephants are essential. Pink Elephants was founded to create a network that supported women on their journey of loss by sharing their experiences and offering human connection. The name Pink Elephants was inspired by a beautiful phenomenon found in nature. Within the elephant community, when a mother elephant loses her baby, the other elephants use their trunks to form a physical circle of support. Encouraged by this heartwarming idea, the founder of Pink Elephants, Samantha Payne, set out to create the same circle of support for women in our community. Started in 2016, Pink Elephants offers a virtual hug when a woman needs it most. When challenges seem insurmountable, the Pink Elephants network provides strength and sanctuary whenever and wherever it is needed. Their achievements in the last five years are a testament to not only their hard work and dedication but also the incredible service and support they provide.

I acknowledge that many women in our community have been touched by pregnancy loss, either personally or through a loved one. So much of the experience around early pregnancy loss can be isolating and is surrounded by outdated perceptions and mistruths. The Pink Elephants team has continued to normalise miscarriage by educating our community and bringing women together so that they can feel less alone. In 2018 Pink Elephants started supplying St George Hospital Early Pregnancy Assessment Services with their resources, designed to be handed out to a woman and her partner when they suffer a miscarriage. Through this relationship, St George Hospital refer women to the Pink Elephants Support Network to seek comfort and aid. Pink Elephants also has a strong connection with Woronora Memorial Park and regularly attend their memorial services for little ones and their incredible mothers.

We can always do more things to provide better support. A survey of 1,700 women conducted by Pink Elephants identified that 75 per cent of women felt unsupported through miscarriage. Similarly, a study by the University of Melbourne showed that whilst 88 per cent of women wanted support, only 1.5 per cent received it. Pink Elephants Support Network is all about providing that sort of support. Pink Elephants do that by providing a number of emotional support resources, including private groups for women to share and connect, written stories for other women to lean into, resources for supporting pregnancy loss in the workplace, and the Circle of Support program. Through their personalised peer support program, women are able to access a mentor for six free phone sessions to support them through their loss.

Miscarriage is unfortunately so common and touches so many in our community, although it is not openly spoken about. Research is highlighting the ways that early pregnancy loss can psychologically impact women,

including long-lasting trauma, depression and anxiety. The crucial resources that Pink Elephants provide can help reduce these rates, however there is still more that we can do to nurture those who are often suffering in silence. It is so important that we have organisations like the Pink Elephants Support Network to support women and their families through the heartbreaking journey of pregnancy and infant loss. I hope that this important issue is highlighted further this month.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:31):** One of the many things the pandemic has taught us is that not every school student in New South Wales is set up to succeed. The New South Wales education system is deeply divided, with very different levels of access and support offered to students. Life in lockdown was hard enough for families with school-aged children, but imagine if your family did not have access to the digital devices or the internet they needed to attend lessons. When students in New South Wales cannot access the technology they need to learn, then we are failing at the most important government responsibilities—access to education.

Many local parents from across the Eastern Suburbs have reached out to my office in need of devices and internet access to ensure that their kids can access classes. Many approached their school to borrow laptops, only to find out that their school supplies had been exhausted. The New South Wales Government program was extremely slow to roll out and actually missed the first lockdown altogether. Some families have been sharing a smartphone between several of their children in order to access online classrooms, with younger students often missing out on classes so that their older siblings could attend their classes. With the help of our local charities, my office became a drop-off point for digital device donations. We were able to distribute a number of laptops, tablets and smartphones to families in need. But, unfortunately, we know that we were not able to reach everyone.

It is not the job of charities to provide access to education. It is the role of the New South Wales Government to do so. But, yet again, this Government is asleep at the wheel when it comes to education. What this digital divide does is compound the socio-economic divides that already exist within our society and our education system. Additional tutors will not solve this problem. We must address the technological divide, which is driving an educational divide. If this is happening in the beaches, we already know what is happening in the bush. The divide between our public and private schools has never been as stark as it is today. In my electorate, public school parents and citizens associations are forced to raise funds for badly needed and well overdue infrastructure upgrades—upgrades that should be funded by the New South Wales Government.

This year a record number of public schools in my electorate submitted applications to the Community Building Partnerships [CBP] grant program to fund essential upgrades. I am seeing firsthand how P&Cs have worked tirelessly throughout the lockdown to find new ways to raise funds outside of their usual fundraising events. The projects that these local parents are trying to fund are not creature comforts. They are bare necessities and include funding for upgrades to student bathrooms, for benches to sit on, to increase shade to play in, to improve library facilities and even to provide disability access.

This Government has intentionally and continually underfunded public education in New South Wales. It recently was revealed that the Government has been using an accounting trick to underfund public schools in this State to the tune of \$600 million per year. At the last election, Labor committed to fully funding our public schools up to the full Gonski recommendation level. Two years on, it has become even clearer that this funding increase needs to happen and it needs to happen now. Our teachers do vital and tough work every single day. Over the past 18 months their job has been even harder, but they have risen to the challenge—and I thank them.

Our teachers have had to navigate the closing of their schools and the transition to extended periods of online learning. They have had to rapidly prepare to reopen their classrooms and welcome back their students. They have become experts of health orders, have been flexible with changing curriculum formats and have bent over backwards to make learning fun from home. Our teachers have conquered all of this and for that they should be thanked, congratulated and celebrated. But thanks is not enough.

This crisis has taught us exactly how valuable our teachers are. They are absolutely essential and they deserve facilities, pay and conditions that reflect how truly vital they are. Teachers in New South Wales are leaving the profession at a remarkable rate because they are overworked, unappreciated and underpaid. They are dropping like flies. There are currently 3,300 teacher vacancies in New South Wales public schools. The Government's new gimmick, to bring in 500 teachers from overseas, is only as good as the four-second sound bite it was designed to be. Not only does this fail to address the systemic issues faced by teachers in New South Wales; it also leaves a significant shortfall. Our teachers deserve more than thanks. They deserve a pay rise.

### **TRIBUTE TO UNCLE MARK FLANDERS**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:36):** The Coffs Harbour Jetty Foreshore, with its stunning harbourside beauty and family-friendly atmosphere, is certainly a magical place to spend your time. It is also a

place of special significance for our First Nations people. You only have to take a few short steps across the railway line to the walk linking you to the historic timber jetty to begin to discover our Aboriginal culture. On prominent display for locals and visitors to enjoy are stories told by Uncle Mark Flanders, a proud Gumbaynggirr man and a respected Elder, custodian and cultural knowledge holder. Uncle Mark, a well-known and extremely popular member of the Coffs coast community, passed away earlier this year. His life was committed to protecting, living and sharing Gumbaynggirr culture, knowledge and country. I wish to share one of Uncle Mark's stories that can be read at the Coffs Harbour jetty, which is an important place where he spent many days imparting his knowledge to others. The story reads:

Giinagay

We are the Coffs Harbour people here in Garlambirla, the river oak country.

We are land and sea people.

We are saltwater freshwater people.

Custodians and Caretakers of our lands and waters.

Our borders are from the Clarence river and the Bundjalung people in the north, to Mount Yarriabinni and the Dhanggati people in the south, west through the Bellinger valley, Budaabang, to Dorrigo, Dandarrga country, and further west to Marlawgay Miirlarl, the lightning special place.

Welcome to our country here today, you are safe on our lands here, be safe when you return back to your lands.

Those were Uncle Mark's words and we will remember him for them. In a tribute to Uncle Mark, the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council described him as an ambassador of the Gumbaynggirr nation and of its people. His legacy, the council said, extends to every corner of the Gumbaynggirr nation and beyond through his role as a discovery ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, where he delivered a range of cultural education programs and experiences.

Uncle Mark was also a senior cultural heritage officer with the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council. Through that role, he passionately advocated and protected Gumbaynggirr cultural sites and objects through heritage assessments and identification. Uncle Mark was also a highly respected member of our local Elders on the Coffs coast. I extend my deepest sympathies to Uncle Mark's family and friends and the countless people across the Coffs coast who mourn him still. His spirit and legacy will live on through his mob and loved ones.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:39):** This evening I acknowledge new Australian citizens of the northern beaches who took the oath or affirmation of citizenship remotely during the recent lockdown. The milestone moment was not diminished in any way by the fact that the citizenship ceremony took place online; if anything, the moment was all the more special given the context in which the ceremony took place and the endearing nature of the virtual ceremony. The northern beaches, indeed Australia, will be a better place because we now have these new Australian citizens. Whether it was a long journey or a short one, the decision to become an Australian citizen is a momentous one. I know that each person who took the oath or affirmation to become an Australian citizen will be warmly welcomed and embraced by their new nation.

Whether in Manly, Dee Why or Mona Vale, no matter where they live on the northern beaches they will be even more at home than they have ever been. Being able to participate in a virtual citizenship ceremony brought us together when we could not be together. It provided a sense of great hope and optimism at a time when it was most needed. It allowed us to celebrate together and recognise a special moment for each person, sometimes couples, and even entire families. We had the opportunity say, "Welcome. We look forward to supporting you as our most recent Australians." To all of those people, I say thank you for choosing Australia and for choosing the northern beaches. I wish you all the best. May we cross paths in real life before too long.

#### **COVID-19 AND TEACHERS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:41):** Via video link: This evening I wish to talk about our fabulous public school teachers and commend them for the work they have done to look after young people in education across New South Wales during these testing times. "Thank you" is never going to be enough for their incredible contribution and their hard work. I recognise the fatigue they must be feeling at the moment, the way they have [inaudible] and how malleable they have all been in delivering education to our students.

I also acknowledge the challenges and, I think, the fear and uncertainty our teachers face when they return to teaching full time on Monday. It has been quite a rushed transition. There was very mixed and rapid messaging along that journey and teachers are justifiably concerned. I wish them safety for their return to work next week and I thank them for the work they are doing this week with their students in various cohorts across New South Wales, especially the teachers of year 12 students who are back in preparation for their HSC.

I acknowledge the correspondence I have received from the concerned teachers at Gosford High School. This Central Coast school is a particularly interesting case because students and teachers are coming from more than 20 local government areas [LGAs] to return to full-time school next Monday. There is obviously a genuine concern. Teachers feel there has been inadequate planning and a lack of consultation, despite [inaudible] their principal and their school site manager are trying to put in place. They want to know that they have a safe environment, especially with students and staff coming in from the Lake Macquarie LGA who previously have not been able to travel into our community in safety.

The Gosford High School teachers are also concerned about the continual challenge of "Are we in Sydney or are we out of Sydney?", as we are pushing and pulling between the Central Coast as a regional hub of Greater Sydney. The teachers are also upset about the lack of direction that has come [inaudible] directly to the staff in the school, rather than finding out from media releases [inaudible] they feel, and justifiably so, that it is really disrespectful of our teachers when there could be direct correspondence from the Government or from staff in the bureaucracy to teachers on the coalface. I also acknowledge Tom Schmaltz, the current school captain at Gosford High School, for his work as an advocate for students and their concerns this year. I say good on you to Tom for getting on the radio and standing up for the people in his school, and send my best wishes to not only his school cohort but also the entire year 12 student cohort across the Central Coast and New South Wales as they go into their HSC.

I also acknowledge the voice of the Ettalong-Woy Woy Teachers Association and all our Teachers Federation groups across New South Wales for their genuine frustration with the Government's negotiations on their funding. Seriously, we are in a crisis. We have increased enrolments across New South Wales and increased separation of teachers due to retirement and fatigue. There are 1,000 teaching vacancies across New South Wales and we see no plan by this Government to identify and source the 11,000 extra teachers we need. At the moment my partner works with a school in northern Sydney. It is quite an exclusive address but already the school does not have enough casuals. What does it look like in more disadvantaged communities across New South Wales? The Minister has had 2½ years' worth of briefings to start acting on this yet is in the media calling it a beat-up.

I come from a teaching background. I can see on my screen that the member for Blue Mountains is in the Chamber. She also comes from a teaching background. She and I know what it is like when there are not enough casuals to cover classes. We know what it is like when there is no-one to pick up the pieces. The situation is more frightening for schools outside our communities, but especially in the Blue Mountains, which has the highest density of teachers in New South Wales. The Gallop report reinforced the need for respect for teachers' wages in order to entice quality people into the profession. I note an article from the *Coast Community News* that states the Government will bring in imports to fix teacher shortages. We cannot have bandaid solutions to the long-term delivery of public education in this State. Public education is the answer to so many people's futures. I am proud of public education. We need real investment in teachers' wages to entice quality candidates to this important profession.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I thank the member for Gosford. It has been lovely to have her join us remotely this evening.

#### **MOTEL RATCHET CLAUSES**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (18:46):** Via video link: I note how nice it is to see the Temporary Speaker, the member for Lake Macquarie, in the chair this evening. It is great to join the House virtually. Today I speak about a curse afflicting small motel operations, especially in rural areas, being the ratchet clause. These ratchet clauses mean that rents never go down, even when market conditions mean that rents are far too high. Sadly, ratchet clauses mean that rents only go up, regardless of the harsh realities faced by small motel operators. Unlike other States, New South Wales does not have legislation to protect small motel operators.

I will give some examples of the effect of these clauses on people in my electorate who own and operate small motels. A husband-and-wife team operates a 22-room motel. The couple purchased a 30-year lease with their lifetime assets, subject to five yearly increments. When they began the market was quite strong, but since then there has been a massive downturn in the industry because of factors such as COVID and short-term rental accommodation. The couple says that without government assistance they would not have survived. They say that a ratchet clause in their lease means that the landlords can increase the rent unopposed, ignoring and overriding a fair market review by an independent valuer that clearly identifies the downturn. Furthermore, the demands for delayed rent increases, premium monthly rental payments and repayment of accrued deferred payments under the COVID rental code of conduct leave the motel operators in a grim position.

They are not alone. Another husband-and-wife team has been running a Wagga Wagga motel for 10 years. In that time the rent has increased substantially while the market has decreased substantially. They told me of a number of pressures in the market, such as newly built motels, increasing short-term rental accommodation that

is subject to far fewer regulations than motels, and increasing costs due to the market domination of and commissions payable to overseas-based online travel agents. Of course, in recent times there have been the COVID-19 related lockdowns, border closures and restrictions on travel, which frankly have decimated the accommodation business. This couple is working 100 hours a week just to stay afloat. They will struggle to recover financially and stand to lose their life savings. They cannot afford to stay, but they cannot afford to go.

Unlike retail and commercial tenants, motel businesses are purpose-built facilities that cannot, by their very nature, be easily relocated. Typically, motel leases are long-term agreements featuring an initial term of five years plus options for up to four extensions of five years each. Motel leaseholds simply cannot be moved from one location to another. I understand that motel leases are usually subject to a minimum increase of CPI or 3 per cent, usually the greater of the two. In other words, rents can go up but not down, which means that rents remain at unrealistic levels during downturns. Any value assigned by a professional valuer can just be overridden by the ratchet clause. However, there is a solution. Commercial leases relating to accommodation, particularly small hotel operators, could be included under the Retail Leases Act 1994 with a definition added to include the smaller end of the sector. This would bring New South Wales motel businesses into line with those in other States. It would even up the playing field. It would also be a welcome boost as these small motel businesses try to rebuild after the nightmare that COVID has been for their industry.

Motels play an important role in regional communities. In some communities there may be only one motel. Motel owners are also often asked to give back to their communities through sponsorships and donations to schools, sporting clubs and other community groups. They are very much part of the fabric of small rural communities. I know that the Minister for Finance and Small Business is supportive of this initiative. The indications are that there will be a review of the Retail Leases Act 1994 and this proposal will be considered, but it cannot wait for a prolonged government process. Urgent action is needed now. I call on the Government to act now to help these important small businesses and our rural communities.

Finally, I also acknowledge the impact the pandemic has had on businesses, families and communities in my electorate. I thank them for bearing up so well and looking after each other. I thank health workers who are facing the threat of COVID on the front line. I thank our emergency services personnel, those in our schools and childcare services, parents coping with the challenges of home schooling, and all of those who helped administer vaccinations, including many health staff who have returned from leave or retirement to staff our clinics. Above all, I thank the residents who have stepped up to be vaccinated across the Wagga Wagga electorate. First-dose rates are in excess of 93 per cent and double-vaccinated rates are in the mid to high seventies. I thank them and say "Well done".

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and look forward to perhaps seeing him in the Chamber in November.

#### **COVID-19 AND LAKEMBA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:52):** If ever there was any doubt about the importance of community organisations, the past 18 months would have put them to rest. During some of the most difficult times that any of us have ever lived through it was the community champions that we looked to. They were there every single day. It is no surprise that I speak with passion about my local community; of course, every MP should. As members, we are privileged to see firsthand the work that these community groups do. Today I again pay homage to some of the groups in my electorate and nearby who we all leaned on so heavily during the pandemic, especially over the past 15 weeks. More often than not, people involved in local community groups are volunteers who somehow create time to help others. The groups run mostly on donations and, if they are lucky, receive small grants here and there just to help them get through. I have the greatest respect for those volunteers who effectively roll up their sleeves and just get on with it, and those who are most connected to the grassroots.

When the story of the pandemic is written the champions will be those who kept us safe, gave us health support, maintained essential services and put themselves in harm's way so that we may still live some form of semi-normal life. The pandemic revealed a lot about our society, about things that are important and about the spirit that should always inspire us. As all members will know, the Lakemba electorate suffered enormously during the recent outbreak. Apart from the infections and deaths, the financial impact was phenomenal. Given the large number of people in my electorate who work in insecure employment or service-related jobs, many found themselves out of work fairly quickly. Of the other workers, many were in essential services. We had the continual problem of people bringing COVID back home and into the community. I have spoken before about COVID and the community response, but today I highlight the positive work of community groups. Members across all electorates have seen community groups step up.

We think about the food hampers, but so much more than food hampers has been given, such as counselling services offered by community groups. These are not formalised community groups; these are just people who

want to help out. There has been financial support and, in some cases I know of, heating was provided—let's not forget this was the winter of discontent. People have provided clothing and accommodation, taken people to appointments and made sure that they were looking after one another, including with translating services in my electorate. All of those services have enabled people to move on in some way. As I said, we think about the food a fair bit and, believe you me, I was involved in packing a fair few hampers. I can easily refer to the thousands and thousands of hampers. What we noticed this time compared with last year was the difference in the people who needed help. The people who we were assisting were a very different clientele. We felt that in many cases things had just collapsed and the emotional impact this time around was much more difficult.

I know that I will miss people out, and most of my colleagues will do the same, but I acknowledge some of the groups that I worked extremely closely with, and I know what they did. I have acknowledged many times the Lighthouse Community Support group. Members would have seen the group mentioned a number of times in the media. It is phenomenal. Its volunteers are exceptional, and I got to join them on many days. I acknowledge also the local Meals on Wheels, Mission of Hope and Addi Road. For those members who follow social media, Addi Road is an unbelievable group. It is based in Marrickville but delivers everywhere. We were helping to pack and deliver in Lakemba and beyond—as far as Mount Druitt and even Walgett. I remember being there one day when we had done the day's packing and then we got a call for another 200 hampers to go to Walgett, and it got done straight away.

I thank the Lebanese Muslim Association; Maronites on Mission; Human Appeal; the Melkite Catholic Eparchy, based in Greenacre; Sydney Community Connect; the Bangla Community Forum; The Giants Australian Football League team; and the Bulldogs. I was there with Sophie cooking up meals. They had us also packing, because once they worked out that we could not cook they kicked us out of there fairly quickly. I thank also the Bangla Kambar community; the National Zakat Foundation; and OzHarvest, who for eight months provided over 500 food hampers every week. There are many more and I will find another way to mention them.

I know I reflect what other MPs are thinking and what I say about my community is what others will say about theirs. At the end of the day one of the privileges of being an MP is that we get to work with those amazing community groups. They run on the smell of an oily rag—that says everything about local communities and spirit. When we all come together we think about what we can do. Let's find better ways to support these groups so that they do not have to rely just on donations and the smell of an oily rag. Together we can do it, because in our darkest hour they were there as the torch all the way through.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:57):** I could not but make comment in the Chamber following the remarks of the member for Lakemba. His comments touched my heart and as a local member in the east to a local member in the south-west I say what an extraordinary challenge his community has had. Last night on the ABC there was an exposé of some of those amazing community organisations, including The Giants. This has been a testing time for all communities, but particularly for his. I thank him for his community leadership and I thank all the organisations in his electorate. Let us come together across this divide to celebrate them all as they have carried our communities day to day through the COVID challenge.

#### **THURGOONA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:58):** Thurgoona is the major residential growth area for the city of Albury, a city which is undergoing an extended period of rapid and substantial housing development and population increase. There is demand for housing from far away investors, from tree changers who are fleeing the capital cities after periods of COVID-related lockdown, and there is demand to provide for local families who want more space and the great opportunity to design elements of their own home. Thurgoona is a highly desirable place to live and to raise a family. Lots of children are part of this residential surge and there is corresponding pressure on local schooling options. Thurgoona Public School is the local government school. It is the only one. There are two independent schools nearby, but Thurgoona Public School is the State's contribution to school education located within an easy commute for this community.

A good place to start thinking about the needs of local families is with enrolments. I am informed that Thurgoona Public School's enrolment cap is set at 324 students and the current enrolment is 599 students. This capacity issue is long standing. Stricter zoning was reintroduced two or three years ago, but requests continue for out-of-zone enrolments at the school, along with out-of-zone sibling requests. The overflow is managed with demountables. There are 14 permanent classrooms and 10 demountables on site. They are fine as far as things go, but these are being treated as permanent structures and that should not be the case.

AlburyCity forecasts a doubling of the 0- to 16-year age group in Thurgoona by 2036. We are at the start of that steep rise and our local school is chock-a-block. Average population growth in Thurgoona is running at 6 per cent per annum. That is six times faster than the average rate across the Albury local government area. Thurgoona is the primary focus of residential growth in Albury with 51 per cent of new dwellings in the city



forecast for this area. This is supported by the Albury Development Monitor that finds 65 per cent of new residential lots produced since 2012 are in the Thurgoona growth area.

There are consequences. Over the next 15 years council anticipates there will be an additional 1,924 school-aged children living in Thurgoona. Government schooling is popular in Albury and there is a substantial swing from private to public schooling underway. I believe in public schooling and I want to see its facilities match the enthusiasm of local residents and the quality of what is on offer elsewhere. Resources must follow and I am pleased at the Government's focus on school maintenance. In recent years the need for expanded public school infrastructure in Thurgoona has been well flagged by the Department of Education based in Albury and by me in discussions with the Government and local departmental directors.

With rapid residential expansion and roadworks reaching out into what was once farmland, there are diminishing opportunities for the acquisition of a site suitable for a new or expanded government school. With foresight there is government land in or near Thurgoona, such as the TAFE NSW campus and at Table Top Public School. Thurgoona Public School could become medium rise—and full marks for that planning. But as time goes on there are pressures to retain some of this land for environmental purposes as surrounding land gets developed for housing. I am aware that School Infrastructure NSW met with AlburyCity Council in April 2021 to discuss the precinct. Council has supplied data, and additional information has been sought from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on the age profile of the demographics they anticipate will reside in the new dwellings. I understand that the infrastructure and assets team has been informed of the pressing needs at Thurgoona.

The time has come to activate this project and confirm site selection, along with a construction and delivery timetable. Three new preschools have opened or have submitted development applications for Thurgoona. Together they will cater for up to 300 preschoolers. These businesses are responding to the demand; so must our public school system. I want the families—especially the children—of Thurgoona to get the school infrastructure they need, state-of-the-art school infrastructure, not more demountables. I thank Minister Mitchell, who has been very supportive of the school community in Albury during the recent COVID outbreak. I will continue to make representations to the Government on behalf of the people of Thurgoona as they make this a great place to live and to learn.

### WYONG PUBLIC HOSPITAL

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (19:03):** At the 2015 election New South Wales Labor made a commitment to upgrade Wyong Public Hospital. It was a much-needed commitment, as our growing community needed better facilities. A few days prior to the 2015 election, on a Sunday afternoon, the Government matched Labor's commitment. It was good news for our community because no matter who won the election we were going to get our upgrade. In 2016 then health Minister, Jillian Skinner, announced that the only way that Wyong Public Hospital would get an upgrade was if the operation of the hospital was handed over to a private entity. That started a nine-month campaign by the Wyong and Central Coast community to stop that from happening. Mr Temporary Speaker, you would remember that quite well. The community wanted the hospital and its operation to stay in public hands. It was a joint effort by community members, staff, unions and the local Labor and Independent members of Parliament to oppose that move.

I remember the day at Wyong Rugby League Club when more than 2,000 people gathered for a rally. At the start we wondered whether anyone would turn up and then suddenly droves of people started arriving. Over 10,000 people signed a petition to stop the privatisation. I am pleased to say that, with the appointment of the current health Minister, Brad Hazzard, the Government abandoned those plans. It was not just Wyong; privatisation was proposed for six other hospitals across the State. But the Government faced great opposition from the community and changed tack. The good news is that a commitment was made to upgrade the hospital, even though its operation was not privatised. It is a \$200 million upgrade. Our community can rightly celebrate their efforts during that campaign. Last week the first patients started to use the facility when Block H was opened to the public following construction.

We are now seeing refurbishment of the existing hospital. The project includes a new emergency department with 12 more treatment spaces and one additional resuscitation bay; a new intensive care unit with additional treatment space; a new ambulatory paediatric unit, with four more bed spaces for short-stay patients, which is very much needed; a new and expanded medical imaging department with a new CT scanner, X-ray machine, procedure room and MRI; a new expanded 28-bed medical assessment unit with eight more beds; an additional 60 inpatient beds; an additional operating theatre with three recovery bays; an additional eight treatment bays in the medical day unit; an additional seven-bed bay in the transit lounge; and a larger waiting room. That is absolutely fantastic.

The hospital serves not just my community but also the communities of the member for The Entrance, the member for Swansea and the member for Lake Macquarie. It is justification for the community's efforts to make sure that our public hospital received the very best facilities. There is more to be done. Shiny buildings are fantastic, but we need to find staff. We met recently with acting chief executive officer Brad Astill to talk about that. He said they had started hiring the additional staff necessary to make the new facilities work. I take this opportunity to acknowledge our nurses and health staff, who were under great strain even before COVID. We need to support our health workers because overworked staff cannot provide the best outcomes for the community.

We will continue to work to ensure there are sufficient staff to serve our growing community. I talk to the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the Health Services Union on a regular basis to make sure that when they identify areas that can be improved we advocate on their behalf. We must make sure that our community not only has a fantastic new facility but also has the staff to ensure that the necessary services are delivered appropriately for the community.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I call the member for Gosford to order for the first time. I remind members that interference in the process is not welcome.

### TEACHER SALARIES

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:08):** Via video link: Good evening, Mr Speaker. It is good to see you. Hello to everyone. I can see my colleague the member for Gosford, a fellow former chalkie. My remarks tonight will be similar to comments she has already put on record. I speak tonight about the NSW Teachers Federation More Than Thanks campaign. I will talk about the fact that teacher salaries are declining. I start by noting that the volume and complexity of teachers' work has changed substantially and dramatically in the past couple of decades, and that salaries have not kept pace. The Teachers Federation, and any teacher or school you talk to, will tell you that it makes them feel less than professional. Teachers' salaries, compared with those of other professionals, are fading. Research conducted by the University of Sydney Business School found that primary and secondary teachers have amongst the lowest incomes of all the major professions examined.

The Teachers Federation has called for an increase in salaries that reflects teachers' skills and the work they actually do. It is a reset. They are asking for an increase of between 5 per cent and 7.5 per cent a year in the next wage agreement. When the award expires at the end of December, I call out to our new Treasurer to hop to it and support a pay increase for public school teachers. I move on to the teacher shortage and the staffing crisis that exists and will only get worse. The Government is engaging in spin and a gimmick-related campaign to try to match the Teachers Federation campaign. It has offered to recruit 500 teachers from the United Kingdom and Canada to come here and earn less to work harder. I understand that the Minister has misled Parliament, against all the recommendations of the Teachers Federation. The department's own briefing says that the profession is not attractive.

If the Teachers Federation, on behalf of its members, is trying desperately to negotiate with the Government and the Government responds by notifying it that it is entering into a dispute, what does that tell us? It tells us that this Government does not care. I move on to teacher workloads. The More Than Thanks campaign aims to draw the community's attention to the outrageous and unsustainable situation of declining teacher salaries, increasing teacher workloads and the staffing crisis. I wonder whether people across New South Wales are aware that many teachers struggle in precarious employment—30 per cent of the workforce are temporary casual teachers. Before I stepped into this role I was a casual teacher for 25 years, and it is a hard life. You feel the Government sees you as unworthy.

I heard a story today of a schoolteacher who has been temporary for 16 years. We are losing good people. Teachers are on leave—if they are not leaving. Many are downtrodden and morale has never been lower. People are falling over. Many have psychological injuries and many are bullied by bureaucrats up the line who are apologists for this Government. This is a government that seeks to save a buck at any cost; it seeks efficiency dividends over and above people's lives. The Government might say thanks, but thanks will not cut it. On behalf of the Teachers Federation, its fantastic president, its organisers and the teachers, we say that they deserve more.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I remind the member for Wyong that props are not allowed.

### PENRITH PANTHERS

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:14):** Via video link: It has been 18 years in the making, many of those years spent training in the shadows with disappointments, injuries and unrealised dreams along the way, but on 3 October, the Penrith Panthers achieved the ultimate goal of every junior rugby league player by winning the National Rugby League grand final against the South Sydney Rabbitohs. I congratulate the Penrith Panthers; you

boys have done us all in the west so proud. To coach Ivan Cleary and the Penrith Panthers' staff I say a hearty well done and I congratulate them on their belief in and support of the Panther players. They truly are a family and the bond and commitment built between the players was evident on game day.

The only grey cloud on that exciting day was that the grand final could not be held in New South Wales and instead was hosted by Queensland. Despite the physical distance between the grand final and the cheering Panthers fans in western Sydney, we certainly made up for it by the electricity and excitement felt throughout the city leading up to and after the game. This win brought so much enthusiasm within my electorate and beyond. Despite being in lockdown at the time, spirits were high during grand final week. Houses, shopfronts and even cars were decorated in the Panthers' colours. We were proud to show that we were Panther proud. There were clearly some friendly neighbourhood competitions afoot to see which household was most proud of the Panthers team. Even this week I am still witnessing cars on our local roads proudly flying the Penrith Panthers' flag. There are also signs, banners, streamers and even deflated balloons still adorning homes, businesses and telegraph poles as the locals continue to bask in the elation of a grand final win.

But the seeds of this year's glory were planted during last year's deeply disappointing loss to the Melbourne Storm in the grand final. The Panthers had their eyes on the ultimate prize after tasting bitter defeat and certainly did not want to disappoint their fans for a second year in a row. Their work, discipline, sacrifice and dedication to the sport they love has finally been recognised by winning the iconic Provan-Summons trophy despite having some time away from their families due to COVID-19 restrictions. The premiership win has ended an 18-year drought for the Penrith Panthers and we could not be more proud. Ivan and Nathan Cleary are only the second father-son duo to win Penrith a premiership, with John and Martin Lang achieving this back in 2003. When Ivan proudly presented the Clive Churchill Medal to his son Nathan, it was indeed a special moment between the two and a memory they will cherish for a lifetime.

I especially congratulate Stephen Crichton, a St Clair Comets junior, on his wonderful achievement. He is an example of the talent brewing within local clubs in the Nepean region. It is refreshing to see juniors, especially from my electorate, making it to first grade rugby league. Stephen, also known as Critta, produced the winning try by intercepting a pass from Cody Walker to Dane Gagai. I still recall witnessing this lightning-fast intercept and the elation that I felt when I saw Stephen's clear run to the try line. The excitement in the grandstands upon seeing this was just as strong as the cheer from my lounge room. Since progressing through the Panthers' junior grades, Stephen has continuously amazed his onlookers with his exceptional footwork and passes on the field.

Stephen's incredible rise began in the 2019 season with him starting on the Jersey Flegg side. He debuted for the Penrith Panthers on 9 August 2019 against the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks. In 2020 he was in the Panthers' top 17 team, starting as a centre. He was the team's top try scorer for the year, was named in the Dally M Team of the Year and got a call-up to the New South Wales Blues Origin squad. With those achievements, Stephen has showcased his talent and is a promising product of the Panthers' junior teams for the near future. In closing, I congratulate all the players, their families, the coaches, the staff and our wider community who have been loyally supporting our Panthers boys.

#### TAFE NSW

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:19):** Via video link: Anyone who knows me knows that I love TAFE. I just love it. I love that to attend TAFE people do not need to be academically inclined or wealthy. They do not even need to be sure of what they want to do. It is a place where they can dip their toes in the water while looking for a career path, or just upskill for the fun for it. So I am thrilled to be the Opposition's new shadow Minister for Skills and TAFE, and shadow Minister for Tertiary Education. Obviously, saying I am new to these roles is relative; due to the Delta outbreak and subsequent cancellation of Parliament, I am delivering a speech I ordinarily would have delivered long before now. My goal for these portfolios is simple: to rebuild these sectors and make sure everyone who wishes to attend a TAFE, a community college or a university has equitable access and the support they require to succeed. I know that sounds like the bare minimum that should be provided but, disgracefully, that is not the case.

Over the past decade Liberal-Nationals governments have systematically dismantled our skills and tertiary education systems. Thanks to chronic underfunding and exorbitant course fees facilitated by our Federal Government, a university education is no longer within the grasp of many young people who dreamed of attending. For TAFE, our State Government has a strategy of death by a thousand cuts. In the first two terms of this Government more than 5,700 staff were sacked and 175,000 fewer students moved through the TAFE system. A substantial amount of those cuts have been in my neck of the woods, the Hunter.

From 2012 to 2016 enrolments at Hunter TAFE decreased from 64,000 to 24,000 students. This was not just a plummet; this was a dive into the Mariana Trench, where we will also find axed courses and thousands of jobs. How is the pressure down there? It is about as immense as that experienced by the staff who still have to

work, trying to give their best to students, with very few resources while the ominous word "restructure" and the sword of Damocles hang over their heads. The original strategy of this Government was clear: Cut the courses. Boilermaker, bricklaying and shipbuilding are a mere few of the hundreds of courses that have been lost over 10 long years of this Government. If there are no courses, there are no students. If there are no students, teachers are not needed. If teachers are not needed, classrooms are not needed. If classrooms are not needed, campuses are not needed. If campuses are not needed, bookkeepers, cleaners and security are not needed.

But, hey, credit where credit is due—we cannot say this Government has not innovated and modernised. Now it is making cuts to Connected Learning Centres. Let us look at Scone. In 2016 the former member for Upper Hunter was adamant that Scone's TAFE would not be sold. In 2018 the Connected Learning Centre opened. In 2021 the original spacious site that just happened to be neighbours with a racing club was being bought by Racing NSW. The treatment of TAFE fits right in with this Government's privatisation agenda: It is all about making a few bucks. Now some students have to travel for hours to complete the practical components of their course. Some students have to move campuses mid-course and others have little access to support because so much of their study was moved online even pre-pandemic.

It is becoming far too hard to study at TAFE. It is not just about the knock-on effects of skills shortages we now have as a result. This is about the self-worth of students, the accessibility of education, the qualifications people need to set themselves up and all the TAFE staff who are trying to put food on the table. This is what I mean when I say we need to rebuild and ensure equitable access. Education is a right, not a privilege, and that is exactly how I want to see it treated.

### *Bills*

## **CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE) BILL 2021**

### **First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** I advise the House that I have written authority from Mr David Shoebridge, MLC, advising that the member for Balmain will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly. I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a future day.

### *Community Recognition Notices*

## **SOMALI AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn)**—I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the important contribution of the Somali Australian Community Association [SACA] who provided essential assistance to vulnerable people in Auburn during the COVID-19 crisis. Every Friday during the lockdown, the volunteers at the Somali Australian Community Association disturbed over 150 food hampers donated by OzHarvest along with masks and hand sanitisers throughout the local community in Auburn. Volunteers at the Association also made regular phone calls to elderly people in the community to check in on their mental health and to make sure they had the essential supplies they needed and to get essentials to those that didn't. Many people in my electorate lost their jobs during the lockdown. The Somali Australian Community Association hosted zoom sessions for local young people who were without work to learn about essential government services, income support and learning to find new employment. Thank you to Maryan Omar, the President of the Somali Australian Community Association, and for the many volunteers for supporting our local community during these difficult times.

## **HOUSE OF WELCOME**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn)**—I'd like to acknowledge House of Welcome in South Granville for their fantastic work in supporting refugees and asylum seekers in our community during the lockdown. In conjunction with the Western Sydney Local Health District, a pop-up clinic was set up at House of Welcome to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to refugees and asylum seekers. The clinic vaccinated over 150 clients and their families, many of whom were ineligible for Medicare and therefore greatly at risk of missing out on vaccinations without the assistance of House of Welcome. House of Welcome also supplied reusable face masks to vulnerable individuals and donated supermarket vouchers for essential grocery items to around 200 families every week through the foodbank scheme. House of Welcome in South Granville, in conjunction with the St Francis Social Services, is a much loved community organisation that has been serving the community since 2001 and provides a welcoming community for refugees and asylum seekers. Thank you to everyone at House of Welcome and St Francis Social Services and the over 100 volunteers for their valuable contribution to our local community.

**WSSC**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn)**—Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, our community organisations have come to the aid of vulnerable people. During the latest lockdown in the areas of concern, in Auburn, the Western Sydney Community Centre [WSSC] was one of those organisations providing nearly 300 food hampers to vulnerable people in our community. Lockdown was particularly hard on our community and the WSSC also provided significant increased phone counselling services to support people's mental health during the crisis. As case numbers increased in Auburn, WSSC and their partner organisation Bhanin Association, were amongst the first to put their hand up for a walk-in COVID-19 testing clinic to ensure many workers were able to get tested for work at a convenient location in the community they live. Over the course of the last financial year, WSSC delivered almost 2000 food hampers. They have subsidised \$287,000 to help those struggling under COVID-19 and cut off from employment to pay for utility bills helping a thousand residents struggling to make ends meet. WSSC provides essential support to the local Arabic community in Auburn. I thank WSSC, their CEO Faydi Saddick, and the many volunteers for their great work in supporting vulnerable people in the Auburn community.

**BASS HILL 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 working hard to keep our community safe. In particular, I wish to recognise and pay tribute to Bass Hill Medical Centre in Bass Hill for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Peter Alexakis, Dr Hala El Naouchi, Dr VR Nagamma, Dr Anantha Prakash and Dr Sughandhi Ravi Prabahan for their tireless efforts in helping our community stay safe and vaccinated. I am pleased to see that Bankstown and South West Sydney is well on its way to a 90% first dose vaccination rate. I commend to Bass Hill Medical Centre on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

**DR VAN LANH NGUYEN**

**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 Van Lanh Nguyen's practice in Bankstown for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Lam for his 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 Lam on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

**DR YVONNE HUYEN PHAM**

**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 Yvonne Huyen Pham in Bankstown for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Pham for her 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 per cent first dose vaccination rate. I commend Dr Yvonne Huyen Pham's practice on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

**DR ANDREW LAM**

**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 Andrew Lam's practice in Bankstown for providing access to health resources and vaccines to our local community during this challenging time. I thank Dr Lam for his 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 per cent first dose vaccination rate. I commend Dr Lam on this exemplary display of community service. Our community is grateful for their hard work and commitment.

**CASINO CWA**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to the Casino Country Women's Association who celebrated their 95th birthday earlier this year. CWAs have played an important part in developing the very character of regional communities and this is true for the Country Women's Association which has played an integral role in supporting women, children and their communities. I wish them continued success into the future.

**SAMSON ALSTON**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—I would like to congratulate Wyong based actor, Samson Alston for his recent achievements in the arts. Samson recently participated in a zoom charity reading of Nick Enright's St James Infirmary, raising money for the Actors Benevolent Fund. Samson is set to star in a new play in Sydney called Three Winters Green, set for October 25-30. Samson is appearing in the new Seven Network series Royal Flying Doctors Service where he plays Hayden. Samson will also be featured in an undisclosed Marvel film in 2022. Samson first got into acting in primary school where teachers offered him a role in the school musical. Congratulations on these amazing accomplishments Samson.

**ERIN JACOB**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—I congratulate Erin Jacob on winning the 2021 NSW VET Trainer/Teacher of the Year. Erin's field of study is Horticulture and currently works at the Central Coast Community College. Erin designed a "Step Forward and Keep on Stepping." A trauma-informed program at the Central Coast College for children that have experienced hardship. The program successfully re-engages individuals in learning and facilitates pathways to education and employment. Some students may have been unemployed, at risk of homelessness and/or escaping domestic violence. With a focus on work-based skills and art therapy, students can also test drive jobs in business, IT, retail, and hospitality through the programs. Erin stated "We experience one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in Australia. I'm dedicated to supporting our vulnerable young by creating a safe, understanding environment in which they can learn". Well done Erin, on all your efforts and achievements.

**SPOTGO**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—I would like to congratulate SpotGo on their win of the 2021 Central Coast Business Awards on October 8th. Central Coast Business Awards recognise growth, entrepreneurship, they celebrate business success and resilience. Winners of the 2021 Central Coast Business Awards will also represent the region at the State Business Awards to be held in November. Spotgo is an entirely family run business that employs people from the Central Coast and try to employ older people. Brendan Small developed a line of cleaning products at his Central Coast factory, his specialist barbecue cleaner/degreaser now being sold nationally at Coles and Woolworths supermarkets. The business first started 25 years ago by Brendan's parents. I commend Spotgo on all their achievements in the Central Coast.

**EMMA PEAT**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—I would like to congratulate, The Daily Dough Co which was founded by Emma Peat. On July 21st Emma was nominated as a finalist of the 2021 ROTARY INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN'S AWARDS in the 18-30 years /rural area category. Emma has gone from selling doughnuts via her Instagram page to friends and previous clients to opening her first store at Wyong Milk Factory in 2020 with a mission of spreading her love of doughnuts that are made fresh daily from the finest ingredients. Daily Dough Co have had a lot of success, opening a second store in a few short months the store is located in Terrigal. I wish Emma Peat a lot more success with her business.

**JENNIFER CAMERON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—A big congratulations to the Central Coast's 2021 Volunteers of the Year. The Centre for Volunteering's awards celebrate people's diverse contributions from across the community. The recipient of the Senior Volunteer of the Year was presented to Jennifer Cameron. Jennifer is a constituent of mine, and has volunteered for Riding for the Disabled Association for 25 years as coach, regional representative and auditor. Horse riding is both therapeutic and recreational for people with disabilities and RDA is one of few organisations who offer a multi-diagnostic service, catering for people with a wide range of disabilities. Jennifer's dedication is highlighted in her current role as Vice President of the RDA centre at Somersby on the Central Coast. She goes above and beyond to support riders, care for horses and keeps the centre beautifully maintained. I would like to thank all of the Central Coast Volunteers of the Year for their fantastic contribution to our local area.

**JADE CROOK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—A big congratulations to the Central Coast's 2021 Volunteers of the Year. The Centre for Volunteering's awards celebrate people's diverse contributions from across the community. Young Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Jade Crook. At just 17 years old Jade is the Under 14s Age Manager for Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Since joining the Shelly Beach SLSC as an under 8 nipper, Jade was recognised as the 2017-18 Central Coast Lifesaver of the Year and was the 2020-21 Junior Club captain. Jade has completed 57 volunteer patrol hours in addition to 50 hours of volunteer work for the club. I would like to thank Jade as well as every Surf Life Saving volunteer on the Central Coast for their fantastic contribution to keeping our local community safe.

**SPOTGO**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to extend a big congratulations to SpotGo, who were honoured as the 2021 Central Coast Business of the Year in the recent Central Coast Business Awards. This year the awards were run virtually by Business NSW to ensure the safety of everyone in the community. SpotGo is a family business which have been based on the Central Coast for over 50 years. They produce a range of premium cleaning products such as a carpet spot cleaner and antiviral disinfectant surface spray that are free from toxic chemicals. The awards cover 10 different categories to recognise the ingenuity, strength and resilience of businesses on the Coast. SpotGo was also awarded the win for the Excellence in Innovation award. Congratulations again to the team from SpotGo, and I want to wish them the best of luck representing our region at the upcoming NSW Business Awards.

**HARDYS BAY MEN'S SHED**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I want to congratulate all community members and local leaders for their hard work in raising over \$30,000 to establish the new Hardys Bay Men's Shed. A fundraising campaign has been underway for months and culminated with the inaugural Men's Shed fundraising dinner at the Killcare Surf Club on June 4, which was attended by approximately 100 people. I would like to thank everyone in the community for their support, with special mention to Lyndall Jones who did a fantastic job of organising the event in addition to her role as Secretary for Killy Cares. Thank you also to Cathy Baker, the President of Killy Cares, for her work and the work of her committee. I also want to congratulate Terry Wilson, who has been appointed as the inaugural President of the Hardys Bay Men's Shed committee. With all of the governance structure now in place, the Shed can now begin to create a physical space for local residents to meet, chat and work on personal and community projects. Mister Speaker, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social isolation it causes, local organisations like Men's Sheds have never been more important.

**TOURNAMENT OF THE MINDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I congratulate the bright and talented students from Mackillop College in Port Macquarie for competing in the international finals of the Tournament of the Minds, held on Saturday 16th October 2021. The students from Mackillop College made history on Sunday after officially being crowned the Tournament of the Minds International STEM Champions from a long list of talented, young contenders from all over the world. I applaud the superior intellectual abilities of students Tia McGrath, Georgia Ryan, Elliott Worner, Molly Bridle, Cata Toth, Milly McGrath and Jess Miles for battling it out as a united team since Week 1 of Term 3 to progress from regional, state to international competitions and finish as champions of the Tournament of the Minds for 2021. This international competition invites primary and secondary school students to compete in a number of problem solving challenges from one of the following disciplines - the Arts, STEM, Language Literature and Social Science. The tournaments aims to enhance the potential of our youth through the development of diverse skills within a challenging and competitive environment. Congratulates again to MacKillop College for taking home this outstanding accolade in education.

**CHLOE GREEN – FINALIST 2021 SCHOOL RECONCILIATION AWARDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise Hastings Secondary College student Chloe Green for being selected as a finalist in the 2021 Schools Reconciliation Challenge, Under one Sky: Yesterday, Today and Forever Exhibition. Described as a Picasso in the making, Chloe Green has captivated the official's attention recently with her stunning depiction of indigenous connection to sky and culture through her painting which has shot her into the finalist category in the Challenge. The annual competition acknowledges students who demonstrate creative writing and artwork skills which focus on traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, while meeting the objectives of the K-6 and 7-10 syllabus. Those students who engage in the Challenge are asked to reflect on what reconciliation means to them through the interpretation of art and stories that reflect the inspired theme, Under one Sky. This year the Exhibition and Awards Ceremony will be launched by The Hon. Don Harwin and The Hon. Sarah Mitchell in November, with all finalist's pieces displayed at Questacon

on Monitors, ACT and in Sydney at Barangaroo International Towers during National Reconciliation Week. A talented young lady, I wish Chloe all the success for the 2021 Schools Reconciliation Challenge.

#### **SURF LIFE SAVING MID NORTH COAST**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise Surf Life Saving Mid North Coast for their outstanding work. Surf Life Saving Clubs are at the heart of many local communities and deliver more than just an on-beach safety service. These clubs offer training, education, recreation, a place to socialise and give people a sense of belonging. They also offer leadership development as an important aspect of Surf Life Saving. It provides the members with skills, networks and confidence to succeed both within Surf Life Saving as well as externally in work and life. Mid North Coast Surf Life Saving oversees 8 Clubs on the Mid North Coast, from Macksville – Scott's Head in the North to Camden haven in the South. They host the larger carnivals and facilitate search and rescue operations. The Branch is seeking grant funding to purchase a purpose built box trailer to transport equipment for emergency services, surf carnivals, COVID-19 equipment, education and other community events. With over 800 Nippers coming up through the ranks the future is looking bright for Surf Life Saving Mid North Coast!

#### **ETHAN FRANCIS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise the youngest candidate to contest the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council elections Ethan Francis for championing his future goals and objectives to improve environmental outcomes and living standards in our region. Ethan Francis is a second year Bachelor of Environmental Science and Management student who is passionate about representing his community to shape local Government policy. Come December 4, Ethan hopes Port Macquarie's LGA will identify with his values and put their trust in him to represent them on a raft of issues including environmental policy. Through his studies, Ethan became cognisant of the impact politics imparts on society, even at a local level, and the importance for younger people to become involved. Already an active member of the community through the University and his work at the Façade Escape, Ethan is committed in championing local issues and engaging with all ages to make a meaningful difference through a new generation of inspired Councillors, should he be successful in December. I applaud Ethan's tenacity and enthusiasm to run for Local Government at the age of 21 and I wish him every success. Candidate nominations open on the 25th October and close on the 3rd November.

#### **UKI REFUGEE PROJECT**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to place on the parliamentary record my thanks and admiration for the Uki Refugee Project for seven years of advocacy in the Tweed region in support of refugees and asylum seekers. The URP supports refugees through friendship, financial assistance, advocacy and awareness raising. Through social media campaigns, market stalls and fundraising events the group highlights the plight of those forced to flee their homelands due to threat of persecution and violence. After the tragic events of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan this year, the group is working to sponsor two Afghan Hazara men to obtain Australian visas. Both men are in grave danger, and one man has been separated for many years from his wife and family in Australia. The group says it is getting a lot of support from local people who feel powerless and want Australia to do more to support Afghan people at risk. I commend the dedicated committee - the co-convenors Joan Henderson and Steve Maguire, and Meg Main, Maria Barbieri, Bryan MacClelland, Claudia Gross and Bernd Langer along with the hundreds of members and supporters in the community for their ongoing action for refugees.

#### **LISMORE COUNCIL'S RECYCLING INITIATIVES**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Lismore Council's Community Recycling Centre has been providing free disposal of problem waste for Lismore residents for six years. The Community Recycling Centre accepts paint, gas bottles and fire extinguishers, fluoro globes and tubes, household and car batteries, smoke detectors, and motor oils. Smaller items such as printer cartridges, mobile phones and x-rays can be dropped off at collection points at Council, the Lismore Library and Nimbin Transfer station. Most of these items can be reused or recycled, ensuring that precious resources don't end up in landfill. In the last 12 months Lismore's Community Recycling Centre collected more than 28 tonnes of household problem wastes. And the Recycling and Recovery Centre is again selling its Biocycle organic compost, after a two year break following a serious fire. The Bio-cycle system takes household green waste and turns it into organic compost. The waste from kerbside green bin collection is shredded and then processed in a system which pushes air through the material, speeding up the composting process. Heat and micro-organisms assist in killing off any pathogens and weed seeds. The material is screened to remove plastics and other inorganic materials, and quality tested before being sold.

#### **BOLT AND BUCKLE IN MURWILLUMBAH**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—The last two years of Covid and lockdowns have led to a lot of uncertainty in business and retail in many regional centres. So it is encouraging when we see new retail stores



opening their doors with a spirit of optimism. In Murwillumbah this month a new store- Bolt and Buckle- opened in Commercial Road- a menswear and leather goods store with city roots. Owners Patrick Fleming and Sharon Matulick first set up business selling leather bags at Brisbane's Powerhouse markets back in 2013, after years of travelling in India and Nepal. This led to them establishing their own brand of leather bags- Indepal. For the last five years they have had their Bolt and Buckle retail store in Brisbane and have now taken the leap into downtown Murwillumbah. The renovation and setting up of the new store on the corner of Proudfoot Lane was proudly documented on their Facebook Page. Mr Fleming says their hope their store will add to the flavour of Murwillumbah and help bring people into town. He says it is a beautiful part of Australia and he wants BOLT AND BUCKLE to complement the great local businesses in town.

#### AMELIA RUSS

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I rise to tell the parliament about an incredibly talented young poet from the Lismore Electorate – Amelia Russ from Urbenville. Amelia is 8 years old and is a student at Urbenville Public School which is wonderful small school. Amelia along with her class entered the Kids News Bushfire Poetry Competition in February this year. This nation-wide competition invited students in rural Australia to write about their experiences of the black summer bushfires. Amelia's poem titled 'Bushfire Sea' was included in the recently published book Fighting Spirit. Amelia says during the bushfires she was worried about the safety of all the horses in Urbenville. She says when she found out that she was in the book she started to cry because she was so proud and happy about her achievement. Her teacher Melanie Sifko says Amelia wrote 12 drafts of the poem before she submitted her final copy. Showing such dedication to her poetry. An extract of Bushfire Sea which Amelia read with gusto on ABC Radio goes:

I dream that I will scorch the earth

I try to curl around the trees like a smokey black snake...

I am the end of hope

Watch me – the bushfire sea

#### TOMAREE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens)**—Port Stephens is lucky to be supported by many incredible community groups and organisations, and today I acknowledge the tireless work of the Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre. Above and beyond their usual support programs, Clare Saunders and Georgina Scott from Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre have been supporting our community through the pandemic by providing food hampers and other supplies to local people in need, including those isolating at home with COVID-19. Many local residents and families would be lost without the support provided by the Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre, including fresh food vouchers, financial assistance for people struggling to get by, drug and alcohol counselling, and support for local people facing homelessness. Recently, during Carers Week, the Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre asked the community to nominate local carers who deserved recognition, and then delivered those carers boxes of surprise treats to say thank you. Separately, Clare and Georgina reconfigured a community art program for Indigenous students when lockdown hit, alongside Koori Colours Art Gallery owners Jason and Kerry Russell. Each child received an art pack delivered to their doorstep, to keep the children active and learning during lockdown. Our community is indebted to these committed community workers and this vital service.

#### SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL GRIFFITH

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise Soroptimist International Griffith for their efforts to empower and enable women and girls through awareness, action and advocacy. The 38 members of Soroptimist International Griffith work to end gender-based violence, support local culturally and linguistically diverse women and overseas workers, provide health and wellness forums for women, award annual tertiary scholarships and vocational education grants, and volunteer with Meals on Wheels. Their 2021 project to celebrate the Centenary of Soroptimist International is to send 100 bikes to Samoa. Their financial support helps many local organisations including the Griffith Women's Refuge. This year, their advocacy work has focused on the urgent need for more social housing, the licensing of labour hire organisations, the need for community awareness about coercive control, and lack of action on climate change. As an active community organisation, the Soroptimist Griffith have supported and collaborated with many other groups in pursuit of better outcomes for society, including the Salvation Army, Linking Communities Network, and the Griffith Women's Refuge. I applaud Soroptimist Griffith for role-modelling selfless service, and continuing to advocate for our region.

#### FINLEY COMMUNITY HELP GROUP

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate the Finley Community Help Group whose recent donation which will benefit Finley Regional Care and elderly residents in

the Southern Riverina. Through its fundraising efforts, the Finley Community Help Group was able to make two donations of \$3000 to Finley Regional Care. The first donation allowed for the purchase of a new trailer which will be used by the Finley Regional Care's maintenance team to look after the gardens of residents who are unable to do this on their own. The second donation will be used to provide the registration of Finley Regional Care's bus and car. The centre's residents who live in Alumuna retirement village will have access to the car which will be equipped with wheelchair access, allowing residents to take loved ones on outings or to appointments. The new bus will be used for group excursions. I congratulate the Finley Community Help Group for their generous donation, as well as their ongoing support for Finley Regional Care.

#### **KATELYN AND MATILDA EDDY**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate Miss Katelyn Eddy and Matilda Eddy of Mathoura for their achievements in the sport of cross country. At the recent Deniliquin and District PSSA cross country event, the two sisters competed and both qualified for the Riverina Cross Country Championships. Both sisters performed extremely well in the championships, Matilda, age 10 placed 1st, whilst Katelyn age 8 placed 3rd. Matilda and Katelyn have both secured a place in the 2021 NSW All Schools Cross Country Championship and will travel to Sydney to compete on Friday, July 16. Miss Matilda Eddy and Miss Katelyn Eddy have both shown great athleticism and talent. The two are to be congratulated for their exceptional achievement, dedication and great ability within the sport of cross country.

#### **MEGAN BARNES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)**—I commend Yowie Bay resident Megan Barnes who recently virtually attended the World Pancreatic Cancer Conference. Rising in the early hours of the morning for the conference, Megan had the opportunity to share information, best practices and ideas with other World Pancreatic Cancer Coalition members. The meeting also featured speakers from the Coalition's science panel and sponsors. Megan was the 2015 Cronulla Woman of the Year and has been a champion in raising awareness for pancreatic cancer after her father tragically passed away from it. Pancreatic cancer is the ninth-most common cancer in men in Australia, and the 10th for women. It has a low survival rate because it is most often diagnosed at an advanced stage. In 2014, Megan successfully petitioned the federal government to have the pancreatic cancer drug Abraxane listed on the PBS. This annual conference is a great opportunity to connect with likeminded people around the world and I commend Megan for attending.

#### **PETS IN PINK**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month and for our furry friends in the Highlands, it's every paw on deck as they dress up for Pets in Pink – Southern Highlands. Many of the usual large events did not take place this year due to COVID restrictions but Cancer Council NSW have found a way for the Southern Highlands community to support the cause. They have asked residents in the Southern Highlands to dress their pets in pink, in order to raise awareness and funds for those affected by breast cancer. Once registered, participants simply upload a photo of their pet dressed in any shade from rose to salmon; name the fundraising page 'your pet's name'; and then share the page with friends and family asking for donations. There will also be a prize awarded to the pet who raises the most. I encourage all Highlands Pets and their owners to get involved and help raise money for a worthy cause.

#### **KNITTING FOR OTHERS**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Lockdowns couldn't stop the Southern Highlands group 'Knitting for Others' from spreading a little warmth to those in need. The group of twelve women is headed by Mittagong resident Shonagh Moore, and together they have made hundreds of handmade knitted items for community groups and hospitals. During the 2020 lockdown, Knitting for Others donated 705 items to Bowral and District Hospital. Items included beanies, jumpers, and cardigans, trauma teddies, booties, toy mice and rabbits. These were sent to the hospital's maternity and cancer wards to keep patients and babies cosy and warm. This year the group has remained determined in their efforts despite not being able to frequently gather, and in August, had already made and donated nearly 60 items to various groups, including Community Links Tahmoor, Southern Highlands Cancer Centre, and retirement villages. While the items Knitting for Others make are quite small, they surely have a large impact on those who receive the beautiful warm knits that have been made with such attention and care. Knitting for Others members are to be commended for their ongoing contributions to our community.

#### **TAMARA DEAN**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—The Southern Highlands newest gallery, Ngununggula, will showcase the work of critically-acclaimed Australian artist Tamara Dean's series entitled High Jinks in the

Hydrangeas. The extensive series of works traverse the seasons, capturing the sheer beauty of nature while testing the body's limits. In this exhibition, Tamara has placed herself at the centre of the work, which is a reflection on time spent in isolation. Tamara's work is inspired by her love of the Australian bush and is concerned with the relationship between humans and nature. She studied at the College of Fine Arts and the University of Western Sydney, and her focus is photography, installation and moving images. As NSW opens up, I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to visit Ngununggula Gallery and the Southern Highlands to enjoy some of the rich art and culture the region has to offer. Admission is free, and High Jinks in the Hydrangeas will be on display until December 17.

### **SPEED DIAL**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Add it to your Spotify playlist: Speed Dial are a fresh-faced new band hailing from the Southern Highlands, with musical appeal to folk young and old. The seven member band got together with some encouragement from their teacher in the music rooms of Chevalier College. Soon after, they saw an opportunity to compete in Wingecarribee Shire Council's Create and Celebrate youth music competition, and won the prize of a six-hour recording session. They have released an EP consisting of five songs, called Help Me Out, Blinded, You Can Tell By The Weather, Get Away From Me and Your Dreams. The band members are all talented musicians and writers, and their music has broad audience appeal thanks to their diverse and widespread appreciation for all genres of music, from the Beatles, to Lime Cordial. Congratulations to Speed Dial band members Indianna Gregg, Rhys Gardiner, Wyatt Hodges, Will Preddey, Olivia Bova, Lauren Vella, and Emerson Williams. Your success is a testament not only to your own talents and hard work, but also to your local music teachers and your school, Chevalier College. Good luck with all your future musical endeavours.

### **COMMUNITY REFEREES OF THE YEAR**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—It is a thankless job, but one where those involved have great pride and take immense pleasure in doing an almost undesirable yet fantastic job. They are often overlooked when things go well and often critiqued for making a call that could possibly turn the game. Match officials are a vital part of football, from grassroots football right through to A-League. Our referees ensure that players are safe, playing by the rules and most importantly enjoying their football experience. Referees make a significant contribution to all sports. I particularly want to recognise them for their valuable contribution to football across Newcastle and the Hunter Region. By stepping onto the field to control the game, they create a positive experience for players, coaches and spectators as a result. Congratulations to Newcastle Football Community Referee of the Year for 2021, Isla Beck. Congratulations to Macquarie Football Community Referee of the Year for 2021, Sam Donald. Congratulations to Hunter Valley Football Community Referee of the Year, Jackson Stuart. I applaud all the referees for their overall officiating performance and dedication to promoting fair play and good sportsmanship.

### **NEWCASTLE BEACON**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The Newcastle Beacon is a group of dedicated staff and highly trained volunteers committed to taking care of frontline workers who serve, or have served, our community. They are working together to enhance the physical, mental and social well-being of those who serve, or have served, in the Australian Defence Force, Emergency Services, Corrective Services and their families. The Newcastle Beacon believe in giving back to those in crisis with the same dedication and commitment they have shown the community every day at work. Despite the COVID-19 lockdowns, the group has continued to give back to the community. So far in 2021, the group have notched up some impressive statistics, with more than 240 food hampers delivered, 492 frozen meals delivered, 231 people visited the drop-in centre, 1086 peer support hours volunteered and 690 social worker hours volunteered for crisis support. Congratulations to Chair Elaine Abery, Secretary Morgan Cherry, Treasurer Aman Sidhu, Directors Wendy Waldron, Chadi Khalifeh, Graeme Silver, Megan Archer, Shane Harris, Allan Crumpton, Jennifer Birks, Hayley Sutton and all the dedicated staff of the Newcastle Beacon for your continued hard work for the community.

### **NEWCASTLE NETBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Newcastle continues to prove its long and proud tradition of sporting involvement, with the Newcastle Netball Association competing in the NSW Netball Championships this year. In June, Newcastle Netball Association competed in Liverpool, finishing second against Manly Warringah. Newcastle came painstakingly close to defending the title they had won in 2019, with their only loss being 22-19 against Manly Warringah. Newcastle won 17 of their 18 games, finishing with 34 points, earning the team the prestigious Pat Weston OAM Country Champions Cup as highest ranked regional team. Considering the team had a number of changes to their playing roster, due to things such as injuries, since winning the regional finals in March, they did exceptionally well. I'd like to offer congratulations to Trude Yen, Helen Matthews, Narelle Eather,

Abbie Gray, Emrah Manning, Savannah Angelozzi, Lucy Tonkin, Danielle Taylor, Laura Neale, Veronica Smith, Claudia Rodwell, Caitlin Lobston, and Nicki Murnane. You are stars.

#### **NIGEL BOOGAARD**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—16 years as a professional athlete is an incredible achievement. Nigel Boogaard epitomises everything you expect from a Newcastle Jets player, passionate, dedicated, hardworking, but most importantly, bleeds red and blue. Nigel was a local product who has gone on to become the Newcastle Jets longest serving captain. He played 275 A-League games in total with Adelaide FC, the Central Coast Mariners and 122 games for the Newcastle Jets, including 121 as captain. His career highlights include an FFA Cup win with Adelaide FC, an All Stars game against Manchester United and junior national team comps. In 2018, he famously returned early from a fractured leg to play in that infamous grand final loss to Melbourne Victory. The people of Newcastle and the true blue supporters are very fortunate to have had Nigel as a leader. As a loyal Jets supporter I cannot thank Nigel enough for not only his huge contribution to the Jets but also to the game of football in this region. He is a great leader both on and off the field. He will be sorely missed. He is Newcastle through and through. Well played Nigel. Thanks for the memories.

#### **PROJECT KINDNESS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I wish to acknowledge the amazing support our community has received from Project Kindness, who have been delivering food to our office for members of our community. Clem is the force of kindness behind the organisation, she is committed to supporting the people without a home, those in need of help and those with waning hope through the selfless acts of others. Her work provides the dignity, respect, protection and care that everyone deserves. Project Kindness prides itself on treating all members of the community equal, regardless of status or wealth and it is this drive that has kept some of our most vulnerable community members on their feet in this incredibly uncertain time. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Project Kindness has been making deliveries to many people in need across our community. Since February 2020, my office has been a drop off point for food supplies and Project Kindness has worked tirelessly to ensure we can get these supplies to where they are most needed. Thank you again to Clem and the entire team at ProjectKindness for their unwavering support for our community.

#### **KARI FOUNDATION**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—Today I wish to acknowledge the generous contributions of the Kari foundation, who have been preparing 'food parcels' for families in need. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people from across our community have been suffering from food insecurity, a tough reality that is not well understood or addressed. Since February 2020, my office has been a drop off point for food supplies and Kari have been one of the very generous donors. The Kari Foundation is one of the leading Aboriginal service providers, committed to providing high quality, sustainable services and programs for our Indigenous communities. Their work promotes personal growth, skill development, and confidence building. During the pandemic, Kari has done a wonderful job in supporting those they are connected with but have also reached out beyond their network to support all those in need. Food insecurity is worsened by poor accessibility, and without the support of these organisations, many families are left dependent on the unreliable and expensive commercial services. Many of our constituents have also self-isolating and unable to shop in person or click-and-collect. So again I say a huge thankyou to the Kari Foundation for their amazing support of those most vulnerable in our community.

#### **STEVE'S EASY SQUEEZE**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I wish to acknowledge the tremendous help our community has received from Steve and Cynthia from Steve's Easy Squeeze. Steve and Cynthia are Eastern Suburbs locals and they created Steve's Easy Squeeze in 2007 to provide Sydney's best cocktail bars and restaurants with squeezed on the day juice. As a result of COVID-19, they began delivering fruit and veg boxes direct from the local growers to people's front doors. Fresh food delivery is rare, and this service has had a remarkable impact on those that have received it. Their fruit and veg donations have gone towards food packs which my office has created for people in our community experiencing food insecurity. This has included women and children who have fled their homes to escape domestic violence as well as families and young people that are struggling to buy groceries because they have lost their jobs. From the bottom of my heart and our community, thank you for brining so much joy and helping people in need during this time. We are incredibly lucky to have you in our community!

#### **PETER WAKELING, FORSTER TENNIS CLUB**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Congratulations Peter Wakeling. Peter recently received the Membership for Life Award to Forster Tennis Club. Peter has been an integral part of the club's Friday Working maintenance Crew for more than a decade. Peter has dedicated the last 14 years to keeping the public

grounds surrounding the club are dutifully cared for. He has taken care of the landscaping, gardening, painting and court care. I would like to thank Peter for monumental commitment to the club and for his contribution to the community.

#### **AMARLEY BRON**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Amarley Bron who has been named in the North Sydney Bears Tarsha Gale Cup train-on squad. Amarley is a talented sportsperson and at just 15 years of age, she has represented in touch football, rugby and basketball. Now she will be adding rugby league to the list after her inclusion in the Tarsah Gale Cup train-on squad, one of the main women's elite U18 competitions in the country. Amarley is from Taree and has played rugby with the Taree Panthers. She will be one of the youngest players in the Gale squad, having played representative touch with the Sydney Bears. She is also a member of the open women's side to play in the State Cup in Port Macquarie later this year. As well as rugby, Amarley has represented the Taree Tornadoes and also plays netball. I congratulate Amarley on her inclusion in the Tarsha Gale Cup train-on squad, and wish her the best with her bright future in the sporting world.

#### **IVOR THOMAS, MANNING VALLEY CYCLE CLUB**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Ivor Thomas and cyclists who recently completed the 'Ride for Sick Kids' for Ronald McDonald House. Ivor is Vice-President of the Manning Valley Cycle Club and cycled 163km to represent the distance of a trip that many families in the region make to care for their unwell children. He was part of a dedicated group of riders who aimed to ride over 500k's in five days in order to raise thousands of dollars. I congratulate Ivor and his teammates for their charitable fundraising efforts and thank them for their hard work in trying to help families and children who are doing it tough.

#### **JAKE MAURIRERE, MANNING RIVER RATZ**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—I recognise Jake Maurirere. Jake coached the Manning River Ratz for two years and under his coaching the side won their first Lower North Coast Premiership in 2020 and they were Club Champions and Minor Premiers last season. The Ratz stormed through 2020 with an unbeaten record before beating Wallamba in the grand final and again they had an outstanding season this year being led by Jake. Jake is now stepping aside so I congratulate and thank him for his hard work and success with the Manning River Ratz.

#### **OLD GUILDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Principal Mrs Helen Morgani and her staff at Old Guildford Public School in assisting the school community throughout the June 2021 lockdown. Despite the majority of students learning from home, the school community stayed well-connected with the teachers and staff on hand to support students and parents during this challenging time. Students maintained their learning through Seesaw and parents also participated in Zoom meetings where they were able to ask any questions and gain support to assist their children with home learning. The school also participated in the Fairfield Electorate Care Package Program. Mrs Morgani and her staff went above and beyond, reaching out to assist families of the school community who were directly impacted by the June 2021 lockdown with the distribution of these care packages, to ease the burden and help put food on the table. I congratulate Mrs Morgani, the teachers and staff of Old Guildford Public School for their continued support of their school community throughout this challenging time.

#### **OUR PURE PLANET**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I wish to express my gratitude to the team at Our Pure Planet for their participation in the Fairfield Electorate Care Package Program. During the June 2021 lockdown, a semi-trailer load of product was delivered to the Regional Distribution Centre of fellow program donor Good 360, Smithfield consisting of twenty two pallets of quality antibacterial hand sanitiser. This was all made possible from a phone call I received from my colleague Marjorie O'Neill, Member for Coogee and I thank her for her efforts. The hand sanitiser was incorporated into the care packages for the Fairfield Electorate Care Package Program and distributed to residents of Fairfield who were directly impacted by the lockdown and in need of assistance. Our Pure Planet was happy to help the people of Fairfield and South Western Sydney in whatever way it could and I am grateful for their contribution to the relief effort. I wish to thank to Mr David Freeman and his team for making this generous donation and I commend them for their efforts during lockdown and for their continued efforts in servicing the wider community.

#### **ST MERKORIOUS CHARITY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend the efforts of the team at St Merkorious Charity for their continuous outreach towards the Fairfield community. Despite the difficult circumstances throughout lockdown

which impacted the delivery of meals and support, the volunteers at St Merkorious Charity never failed in their ministry. The Monday gatherings at Fairfield Community Centre could not be held due to COVID-19 restrictions, and volunteers thus took on the task of delivering food packages and essentials to community members doing in tough during lockdown. The charity also assisted in distributing the Fairfield Electorate Care Package Program packages to people who were isolating or were in need. I take this opportunity to thank St Merkorious Charity for their efforts throughout the June 2021 lockdown period and for their continued efforts to assist vulnerable Fairfield community members.

#### **PCYC FAIRFIELD CABRAMATTA – FIT FOR WORK PROGRAM**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I commend the efforts of the Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC] Fairfield Cabramatta who continued their services throughout the June 2021 lockdown. Face-to-face interactions had to be altered in compliance with the COVID-19 restrictions, and the PCYC altered its mode of operation to continue their work online. It was an honour to have been invited by Senior Constable Chris Kay and the PCYC team to an online meeting to address the participants on the topic of "Fit for Work". The "Fit for Work" program prepares youth for potential work. Topics covered in the program range from resume and cover letter writing, personal presentation skills and job interview techniques. The program has been well-received by the youth in the Fairfield and Cabramatta area and is a great success. I was delighted to share my experiences as a former teacher and now parliamentarian, discussing the finer points of job interview preparation. I wish to thank the PCYC Fairfield Cabramatta for welcoming me to the session and for their continued efforts for the youth in the Fairfield-Cabramatta area.

#### **QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS 2021**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade)**—I congratulate and recognise local recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours 2021. Locals awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia – OAM include: Mr Barry Costa for his service to rugby league. Barry has been a member of Brothers Penrith Junior Rugby League Club since 1983 and has held numerous committee positions since that time. Of particular note is that Barry has been the Coordinator of Try Time since 2014. In addition, Barry has been a volunteer with the Penrith RSL Sub-branch, Nepean Food Services - Meals on Wheels and as a bus driver for St Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church. Ms Barbara Bates was recognised for her service to children. Barbara co-founded and is Executive Director of Paint The Town REaD [PTTR]. PTTR is a charity focussed on encouraging people to read with their children from birth to provide them with key early literacy skills to ensure they are school ready. On behalf of the Penrith and greater community, I thank these recipients for the generosity of their time and for their tireless commitment to the organisations and people they support.

#### **LEPPINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I acknowledge Leppington Public School and the efforts they have put in to involve students in activities from home during the stay-at-home orders of the COVID lockdown. During 'learning from home' the school organised a tradition called 'Wacky Wednesday' where students participate in a themed dress up, snap a photo and upload the photo onto a ClassDojo portfolio. Some themes included; Favourite Colour Dress up Day and Opposite Dress up Day. This is a key example of the consistent effort of local schools in the Camden Electorate involving the students in such a vulnerable time.

#### **MOVE IT 4 MATER DEI**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Mater Dei works with babies, children and young people with an Intellectual Disability, in conjunction with their families and carers, to provide innovative and contemporary education and therapy services. Move it 4 Mater Dei is Mater Dei's digital peer-to-peer fundraising challenge. The premise is simple; sign up, commit to a daily goal for how many of minutes of exercise you will do and have fun while raising money. This year, the community has raised so far \$27,067 towards Mater Dei and moved 2,060,357 minutes. I also take this time to thank the community for their donations during this difficult time and their continuous support.

#### **MOUNT ANNAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE SLC 2022**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I offer my congratulations to the Mount Annan Christian College, Student Leadership Council for 2022. I recognise the College Captains Jorge C and Mackenzie G on their honourable section from their peers and community to work hard and lead their school. I also acknowledge Vice Captains Ethan A and Grace M and Prefects Stevie S and Georgia H on their section into the Student Leadership Council. This is a fantastic achievement and I wish you all the very most success in your final year of senior school.

**MARCO CORBO**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I recognise a local constituent, Marco Corbo as one of Australia's best young shooters. Last month, Marco was named in the Australian Junior World Championship team for his skills with a shotgun. Marco was one of 13 athletes whose results in events in the first half of 2021 met the national selection criteria. Marco has also received a one-off Junior Development Grant to assist with costs associated with his development in the sport. At 17 this is an incredible achievement to be very proud of. Congratulations Marco on your selection into the team and I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

**CHERYL BELLET**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the efforts made by Cheryl Bellet Ulladulla resident who is taking part in the Great Cycle Challenge Australia for the month of October. Cheryl who is part of a team of six will be riding around the local region on a pushbike in order to raise money for an important cause - The Children's Medical Research Institute. Cheryl and the team the 'Military Brothers Veterans' have already raised an outstanding \$7000 so far, with the aim to ride 500 kilometres in the month of October and she is planning to do additional kilometres. Cheryl has also taken part in the Seven Bridges Walk in Sydney twice which is a fundraiser for cancer. I congratulate and admire Cheryl and her team and wish them all the best with their achievements.

**ALEISHA TAYLOR, CFO MUTUAL BANK**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I would like to congratulate and acknowledge Aleisha Taylor who has recently been appointed as the Chief Financial Officer at The Mutual Bank. Aleisha will oversee the bank's finance and treasury functions, and will also be responsible for its deposit products. Aleisha brings 19 years of local and national accounting and finance experience to the bank. Aleisha started her career at PwC before spending several years at the University of Newcastle. She brings a range of skills gained with Hunter-based not-for-profit organisation, Life Without Barriers, and as head of finance and corporate services for The Maitland Benevolent Society Limited (Benhome). Aleisha will no doubt become an integral member of the senior management of this customer owned organisation that promotes a focus on both members and the community. I hope that Aleisha is able to develop in this role to support the unique social responsibility aspects of this organisation. I congratulate Aleisha on her appointment and wish her the very best moving forward.

**WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST POLICE RECRUITS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I would like to officially welcome our newest recruits to the Port Stephens-Hunter Police District. Probationary Constables' Nikolas Mylonas, Joshua Penfold, Emma Wilkinson, Sarocha Mason, Melissa Bartlett and Ashleigh Bradford. Normally the Member for Port Stephens Kate Washington and the Member for Wallsend Sonia Hornery and I would join District Commander Detective Superintendent Chad Gillies in welcoming our newest Probationary Constables, but due to the COVID pandemic this was not possible. I commend these new recruits for completing their training and their commitment to working to ensure the safety and protection of our community. They have certainly joined the Force at a difficult and challenging time. I would like to congratulate the new Probationary Constables and wish them all the best for their policing careers. I know they will make a wonderful contribution to our community. I would also like to thank all of our hardworking police on the frontline each and every day, under the command of District Commander Detective Superintendent Chad Gillies for the terrific job that they do in protecting our local community.

**LAUREN PARKER – CHAMPION SPORTSPERSON**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I wish to commend and congratulate an exemplary sportsperson: Lauren Parker who has shown us a quiet yet powerful example of focus, commitment, effort and grit. Grit is almost a throw away term today, over used and undervalued. However, I reclaim the term 'grit' as meaning powerful determination and character. I use it as a very specific term today to describe these attributes of Lauren. Lauren achieved a Silver Medal in the Paralympic Wheelchair Class Triathlon at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. This is a stunning personal accomplishment for Lauren. Just after her achievement in Tokyo, Lauren suffered significant burns to her feet. This was not going to impede her spirit. Lauren then went on to complete the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Utah. This race was across mountainous terrain, pounded by hail and drenched by rain. After receiving medical treatment both before and during the race, she completed the course in 7 hours 54 minutes and 53 seconds. Her fellow competitors were amazed at her drive and will. Today I want to celebrate these most recent achievements of Lauren Parker who trained, who endured, who tested herself and who rose to triumph.

**MAITLAND COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE THEIR TEACHERS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I wish to congratulate and celebrate the teachers across our Maitland communities as they return to the physical classroom and seeing the children that they care for, while doing the jobs they love. COVID-19 presented all of us with multiple challenges, and teachers faced complex and multi-layered challenges as they uncovered and shared ways to engage with their pupils online. They continued to encourage curiosity about the world and life, while also ensuring that educational standards were met. For many this was a further leap into the online learning space, collaboration with carers and parents and building distributed communities. A mantra for all resulting from the past 18 months of online video classrooms may well be "Your mic is on mute". Our committed and caring teachers adapted well and coped. They helped their students maintain their progress and helped them learn unique lessons from this unique experience. I want to extend the grateful thanks of our Maitland community members to our wonderful teachers and educators.

**ERIK HORRIE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate Erskine Park resident and Paralympian, Erik Horrie on becoming the first male rower in history to win 3 Paralympic medals in Para-rowing. Erik is a NSW Institute of Sport [NSWIS] scholarship holder and has already won five World Championships in single sculls and showed great courage to hold off other competitors. Previously, he had won the Silver medal in both Rio in 2016 and London in 2012 and by claiming his third Paralympic medal in as many games, became the first male rower in history to achieve this feature. Congratulations Erik on your outstanding achievement, you should be extremely proud!

**BARRY GRAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I wish to acknowledge local St Clair resident, Barry Gray, for his inspiring words and keeping his students at The Sydney School of Piping and Drumming constantly playing and practicing during lockdown. One of the biggest challenges for musicians while in lockdown during the pandemic has been becoming unmotivated or discouraged without face to face practice or group playing and performing. Barry has helped his students compete in the 'World Online Piping and Drumming Summer Series', with some outstanding results. He was delighted with the results, but more so with the constant enthusiasm and continued determination to learn and play a musical instrument during such difficult times. With all the lessons being taught on zoom, although technology can be frustrating at times it has helped keep the lessons going and the group of talented student's motivation and enthusiasm for the bagpipes alive. Barry encourages everyone aged 7 years old and over to join in on the action, as even people in the 70's after retiring from the workforce have joined in on the fun. Congratulations Barry and good luck in the future!

**BAYLEY BARAGRY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—A big acknowledgement to Glenmore Park resident, Bayley Baragry, for his selfless efforts in participating in three fundraisers, all while completing his HSC. In the month of September, Bayley participated in the Black Dog Institute's Mullets for Mental Health which involved him growing a mullet, Camp Quality's Big Walk for Little Kids was 150kms of walking and Starlight Children's Foundation's Tour de Kids involved 500kms of bike riding. All three of these causes help to raise valuable funds for their charities. Bayley's commitment to each charity stems from a different reason, Black Dog Institute was because many have struggled with mental health issues with COVID-19 over the past two years and has put many people including his close friends and family under enormous stress and heartache. The reason for choosing Camp Quality is he has had family members and a school friend go through Cancer. The Starlight Children's Foundation helps to lift spirits of kids who are in hospital at their lowest health and hopes that it will put a smile on their face. Congratulations Bayley on your exceptional achievements, good luck and I look forward to see what your future holds!

**RONNIE RISKALLA**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Local Glenmore Park resident and talented filmmaker Ronnie Riskalla, whose journey began almost 25 years ago at film school, is set to release his second feature film, Streets of Colour. Streets of Colour was filmed in Western Sydney and tells the story of Tez, a 23 year old soon to be father who is blamed for the death of his best friend Akachi in a racist street fight. This film explores racism, family, self-identity and culture and looks at how people that surround us can either make or break you and set us on the life path we end up taking. His passion began at the age of 4 when he first became fascinated with motion pictures. He would record Superman, Star Wars and morning cartoons on his parents Betamax video recorder and that's when he became fascinated with story-telling. Congratulations Ronnie on your recent success, I look forward to seeing more from you and good luck for the future!



### ST DAVID'S UNITING CHURCH CLIMATE ACTION

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—On Sunday 17 October, parishioners from St David's Uniting Church, Haberfield, joined people of faith from across the country in calling for urgent action on climate change on the eve of COP26 in Glasgow. The gathering formed part of a broader action organised by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change [ARRCC], a multi-faith network with members from a variety of religious tradition, joined by a common purpose of working for an ecologically and socially sustainable future. The action at St David's called on world leaders to take urgent and real action on reducing emissions at COP26, particularly following the urgent warning from the United Nations and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] Report that humanity faces a "code red" unless we act urgently to limit global warming. Actions such as these send an important message to governments and financial institutions that climate action and caring for the planet goes hand in hand with religious belief, and that the common purpose of climate action should be above ideological politics. I congratulate and thank all those at St David's Uniting who took part in this important action.

### GOODWOOD BAKERY

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—I warmly congratulate Alex Alewood and Jamie Goodin on the opening of the new family bakery, Goodwood Bakeshop, right next to my office on Marrickville Road. The Goodwood Bakeshop is opening at a difficult time, but if the long line-ups down Marrickville Road every morning and the fact they are sold out by lunch time most days are anything to go by, the Goodwood Bakeshop has a very bright future! Becoming a Marrickville institution in such a short period of time is no mean feat. It's made easy when someone like Alewood is involved, who hails from the Bread and Butter Project - a social enterprise known and loved by many Inner Westies for both their delicious bread and their tremendous impact on the refugee community. Congratulations Alex, Jamie and everyone on the Goodwood Bakeshop team. I look forward to chatting with you when we can all be back together in Marrickville, and enjoying your brilliant bread for many years to come.

### CONNECT MARRICKVILLE SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTRE

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—For so many students, young people and families in the South Marrickville community, Connect Marrickville SaCC is a source of strength, support and inspiration, especially during the pandemic. Thankfully, Connect Marrickville has been there to ensure no local families or kids were left behind. They have distributed food hampers at the gates of Marrickville West Public School, run virtual playgroups and support programs, coordinated a vaccination hub with the Exodus Foundation, and even run a playgroup disco and drag story time! Many households in South Marrickville have been hard hit by the lockdown, with many families already experiencing underemployment, food and housing insecurity. With schools closed, many of these families have found it even harder to find support. Connect Marrickville has worked in partnership with other local organisations including the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, Community and Cultural Connections [CCCCI] and Inner West Council, to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community have been able to seek help and stay connected during this difficult time. I warmly thank everyone at Connect Marrickville, especially Vivi Martin and Lindy Alwis; your passion and dedication have been instrumental to our community's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### AIDS COUNCIL OF NSW – COVID RESPONSE

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Since 1985, the AIDS Council of NSW has been a global leader in the health and community response to HIV and AIDS, and is recognised as an essential source of health support, information and advocacy for the LGBTQ community across the State. During the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown, that support has extended to connecting members of the LGBTQ community to information about COVID-19 and vaccinations. This work has included holding online forums on the pandemic for regional LGBTQ communities, for trans and gender diverse communities, for people living with HIV and for Older LGBTQ people. ACON has also produced vital information to help people through the pandemic including around mental health, alcohol and other drug support, domestic and family violence in the LGBTQ community, PrEP and sex during COVID-19. On 16 October, ACON also joined forces with Western Sydney Local Health District to host a fabulous Super Saturday vaccination drive at Qudos Bank Arena, with DJs, rainbow lights and drag royalty Hannah Conda entertaining people in the observation area, all to increase vaccination rates in the LGBTQ community and ensure everyone is ready for a safe and happy Mardi Gras in 2022.

### TRIBUTE TO KIM WILLIAMS

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I inform the House of the passing of the much loved student learning support officer at Toongabbie Public School, Kim Williams. Yesterday, I was told of her passing and I know the school community is saddened by her loss. Kim passed away on 4 October after a short battle with cancer. Kim worked across both the support and mainstream classrooms at Toongabbie Public School helping

students in the Seven Hills electorate from Constitution Hill, Old Toongabbie and Toongabbie. The school noted that Kim was always at the forefront of charity events at the school. In particular raising funds for farmers during the drought. Kim would also provide the school with eggs from her free range chicken farm for the annual mother's day and father's day breakfasts. I am advised the school is planning a visual and sensory reminder of Kim's life. On behalf of the Seven Hills electorate community, I thank Kim for her dedication and service to the students of Toongabbie Public School over the last five years. Vale Kim Williams.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT STAFF QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I acknowledge and congratulate the work of several Western Sydney Local Health District staff members for receiving Queen's Birthday Honours recognition for their service to the constituents of the Seven Hills Electorate. Firstly, I wish to congratulate, Westmead Hospital cancer nurse, Letita Lancaster, who was named a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honour List this year. Letita was recognised for her selflessness and dedication to working with cancer patients, many of which didn't have much longer to live. After being named Westmead Hospital's Nurse of the year previously, the Honour was fitting for Letita. Also among those honoured was Joanne Edwards, who received the Public Service Medal for Outstanding public service to community health in NSW. Joanne played a leading role in the state's health response to COVID-19. Former Blacktown Hospital Birthing Unit team leader, Margaret Vincent, was also named a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to community health, such as 37 years of service with St John's Ambulance. Overall I thank and acknowledge the healthcare workers at the local hospitals from the Seven Hills electorate.

#### **SEVEN HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—On 31 May I had the pleasure of attending Seven Hills Public School to speak with the Parents and Carers Committee [P&C] and award them with a grant. Among many things, we spoke about the great work being done by students and their families to maintain their sense of community throughout 2021. It was terrific to see all the wonderful things that the school has been doing to build their community spirit, such as having several carnivals and fundraising events. I was excited to award the P&C committee with a grant to assist them with installing a new flagpole to fly the Aboriginal flag, as well as purchase new laptops for students. I wish to thank the P&C Secretary, Kristin Dunlop Aston, for her great work in serving the Seven Hills Public School community. I would also like to thank the school principal, Tamara Prout, for her continued support and dedication to leading the school community.

#### **PLACES OF FAITH COVID-19 SUPPORT FOR SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I would like to recognise the work of local places of faith throughout the Seven Hills electorate for their community spirit and resilience over the last few months. It's pleasing to hear local community members could still access online services despite the many challenges presented by COVID-19. St Peters Anglican Church - Seven Hills, St Paul the Apostle Catholic Church - Winston Hills, Toongabbie Anglican Church, Toongabbie Baptist Church, Northmead Uniting Church, St Clements Anglican Church - Lalor Park and Gurdwara Sahib Glenwood that provided much needed support across the Seven Hills electorate. Places of faith throughout the Seven Hills electorate for their continued and renewed support of our community through the recent lockdowns. Finding points of stability through uncertain and unprecedented times has been difficult, yet many community members have their local churches to thank for remaining supportive to their congregations and the wider Western Sydney community. I wish these communities nothing but the best in all their future endeavours and support for the Seven Hills electorate community.

#### **CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE REOPENING**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre successfully reopened on 18 October after being closed due to the COVID lockdown. The reopening of the our area's culture and arts facility signifies life returning back to normal and I am looking forward to the community getting back to experiencing exciting exhibitions at the centre. The Centre has some fantastic new exhibitions on display. In the Marsden Gallery a community exhibition will be presented in partnership with the Hindu Council to celebrate Diwali. 'Looking at Painting' exhibition will also be on display. Originally this was scheduled to take place before lockdown. The exhibition features some well-known and also emerging female artists that use paint as a medium in different ways. Another great exhibition being displayed in the Turbine Hall is named 'Wishing You Well'. This display is a tribute to spring season and welcoming back people as they reopen the venue. This artwork was created by a local artist, Eye Shen, who created this animated display as a lockdown project. I wish Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre all the best as they reopen and encourage the local community to visit the centre and view the incredible artwork displays and exhibitions.

**ROSINA ARMSTRONG – MENSAH**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ms Rosina Armstrong – Mensah, of Wattle Grove, who was recently awarded the Young Volunteer of the Year Award. Rosina volunteers her time at Parramatta mission's Meals Plus which supports vulnerable people seeking assistance. She prepares food, cooks, serves breakfast and lunch and unpacks, sort and provides donations to people who are in need. Her role and volunteer work has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic and recent lockdown period, when people in the community were doing it tough. The work that Rosina and the volunteer team do is incredible and inspiring, and I commend them for taking time out of their day every week to provide support and assistance to vulnerable people. Once again Mr Speaker, I congratulate Ms Rosina Armstrong – Mensah on receiving this prestigious award and thank her for all that she does to help others.

**LIL' BOOKWORMS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—I would like to acknowledge The Junction Works for their online story telling program, 'Lil' Bookworms'. The Junction Works are offering the program for children aged between 3 and 6 years old from the local area. They run the program on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays from 11:00am – 12:00pm. This is a great online program for young people in the area who have been at home during lockdown, and encourages them to continue to be engaged in reading and learning. The books they cover in the program cover a range of topics, including alphabet, colours, numbers, understanding feels and acceptance of yourself and others. It's an interactive program and is great for parents as well, as children are learning whilst at home whilst also experiencing interaction and connection with others – something that was extremely important during lockdown. Once again, I commend The Junction Works for introducing and running this program for children in the local area.

**MOLLY STEWART**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I am delighted to bring to your attention the act of bravery by Molly Stewart, 19, of Harden Murrumburrah which has been recognised by NSW Ambulance. Molly who has severe autism, spina bifida and developmental delays quickly realised her mother Sue was in trouble after complaints of a headache and dialled 000. Molly's brave actions saved Sue's life with doctors later discovering a brain aneurysm. Harden local, Brian Farnsworth, heard Molly's story and felt she deserved a bravery award for her quick thinking under stressful circumstances. Molly will be presented with an Award by NSW Ambulance on October 23. I look forward to meeting Molly and her mother Sue and I am pleased to acknowledge Molly's bravery here in NSW Parliament, giving Molly the recognition she deserves.

**COWRA REGION SHOW VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Cowra region in my electorate is lucky to boast four tremendous shows which would usually be held this time of year. So I take this opportunity to recognise some of the volunteers of our local show committees in the Cowra area, including: David Langfield, Carolyn Cameron, Joy Dwight, Angie Dunlop and Fred Pearson of the Morongla Show Society; Ben Johnstone, Di Brown, Kevin Graham, Andrew Bailey, Linda Woods, Alison and Stephen Rutledge of Woodstock Memorial Show Inc.; Harry and Fay Houghton, Mary Gee and Terry D'Elboux of Koorawatha Show Society; Matt Bowman, Graham Eddy, Rachel Moore, Ian Packer, Amy Tarrant, Jenny Armstrong Lachlan Patterson, Emma Bowland, Sharon Spolding and Mitch Dywer of Cowra Show Society. Special mention goes to the Woodstock Memorial Show Inc who coordinated for the second year a wonderful virtual show experience, which included the very popular category of decorated arrowroot biscuits. Congratulations and thank you to all who threw their support behind this great initiative. I truly look forward to the day when we can gather together to support our local shows once more.

**TEMORA IS A PLACE TO PROVIDE IDEAL GP TRAINING**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to acknowledge GP Synergy for their excellent GP training, particularly in Temora, showcasing it as a great place to learn effectively about rural health. There is so much more you need to know and be prepared for in rural health, you aren't just the doctor to treat someone who is physically unwell. A town like Temora allows for training and experience in providing holistic care to patients, whether that be in the GP Office, the emergency department or hospital. Doctors in training are well supported by medical education teams and supervisions from accredited local GPs, like those at Temora Medical Complex. Well done to GP Synergy for utilising Temora as an effective place for excellent GP training in rural locations.

**JORDYN BALLARD**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to congratulate Jordyn Ballard who was recently awarded the Gavin Miller Medal for the best and fairest player in the George Tooke Shield. Jordyn's respect and courtesy towards referees and players each week plus his natural talents ensured he would be a favourite to take

out the prestigious award. Jordyn is the captain-coach of the Cootamundra Bulldogs rugby league team and this year was the debut season for the club in the Canberra based competition. His leadership proved strong with the Bulldogs sitting comfortably at third on the competition ladder before it's cancellation due to COVID-19. This was not the only achievement by Jordyn this season as he also took out the competitions top point scorer award with a total of 110 points. It is great to see our country football clubs thriving with talent and players performing so well amongst larger towns and cities. Congratulations to Jordyn on his achievements this season and I wish him and the Cootamundra Bulldogs the best of luck for next year.

#### **BELINDA STANTON**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the continued hard work and commitment of local resident Belinda Stanton who is an integral member and President of the Oatley Football Club. Belinda is the registrar of the Club which has over 800 members and she manages this commitment alongside her role as a school teacher and a mother of three children. She is also there every weekend to support her husband and her daughters from the sidelines on match day. It is for these reasons that she was honoured with an Individual Achievement Award as part of the 10th Anniversary of the St George Community Awards in 2020. These awards honour individuals, businesses and groups who go above and beyond each and every day to make our community even better. Belinda truly is a selfless individual and she is always a pleasure to work with. I wish her and her family all the best for another strong year of football and support for the Oatley Football Club. Well done Belinda Stanton!

#### **DR GEOFFREY HAYMAN**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise today to honour an outstanding local resident and dentist, Dr Geoffrey Hayman, for his outstanding support to the local community. Geoffrey is the Treasurer of the Rotary Club of St George Next Gen and he is entering his sixth year in this position. More notably, in 2019 he climbed to the Mount Everest Base Camp to raise money for polycystic kidney disease. This money has been raised to find a cure for this unfortunate disease and it is a matter that Geoffrey is very passionate about. It is for these reasons that he received an Individual Achievement Award in 2020 as part of the 10th Anniversary of the St George Community Awards. These awards honour people like Geoffrey who go above and beyond each and every day to make our community even better. This is a fantastic achievement and I know it is one that he and his wife Vimla Hayman are very proud of. Thank you again Geoffrey for all of your hard work and commitment.

#### **3 BRIDGES MOVEMBER**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge 3Bridges who ran an outstanding fundraiser for Movember in 2020 which raised almost \$2000. I would like to thank Raj Nair and Vanessa Gaudi who invited me to attend a "shave-off" event to help raise additional funds and to celebrate the occasion. This was a great day and it helped round off what was a fantastic year for 3Bridges and I would like to thank them again for all of their support to our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would also like to thank the Member for Kogarah, Chris Minns and the Member for Rockdale, Steve Kamper for coming along on the day. The profits raised from this Movember fundraiser will go directly towards raising awareness and increasing the prevention of Men's suicide and this is an initiative I strongly support. I also wish to thank the nine volunteers from 3Bridges who took on the Movember Challenge in 2020. I wish you all the best for another strong year in 2021.

#### **REVIVAL CHURCH PENSURST**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, at the end of last year I had the privilege of attending a special service at the Revival Church in Penshurst to help open their brand new facility. This was a very energetic and intimate service which was thoroughly enjoyed by all members of the church. I would like to thank all of their pastors for their continued commitment to our community: Grant & Michelle Hobbs, Marilyn Kiert, Andy Wallis, David & Lisa Sampson, Matthew Waqanivalu, Andy Wallis, Sophie Hobbs, Dot & Darren Camby, Pete Wallis, Josie Hobbs And David Ball. I also would like to acknowledge the outstanding job that the organisation did throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to keep members together despite the difficult circumstances. The team has been putting together virtual services on their website and they have also been running a podcast to keep members informed and united. Thank you again to all the wonderful individuals at the Revival Church of Penshurst.

#### **ELIZABETH FRIEND**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I wish to congratulate the initiative and activism of Elizabeth Friend, the mastermind behind the Reality Check campaign and a key organiser of Art Aid. Driven by feelings of frustration and helplessness in seeing friends and community members become homeless as a result of the growing housing crisis in the Northern Rivers, Elizabeth found a way to help those struggling to keep a roof over their head. She started the Reality Check campaign, an initiative which asks those more fortunate in the community, with secure lives and income, to donate funds to support people in crisis. The funds are used to assist in

emergencies; providing food and shelter to people who are displaced due to the rising cost of living in the Northern Rivers. With the support of the Northern Rivers Community Foundation, Elizabeth developed and organised Art Aid, an online art auction to raise funds for the Reality Check campaign. Local artists kindly donated their work so that all monies raised went directly to alleviating this crisis. I thank Elizabeth for her kindness, compassion and integrity, and for her ability to foster a sense of community when people need it most.

#### **MICHAEL IBRAHIM**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the kind and conscientious actions of Byron Bay local, Michael Ibrahim. In response to the shock waves that resonated throughout the community at the sudden passing of much-loved Byron Bay surfer, family man and local larrikin, Phil Jones, Michael was compelled to use this tragic incident as a catalyst for change. Phil suffered from a genetic heart condition called Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, which caused him to have a heart attack whilst surfing in Byron Bay. Although Phil was assisted by an off-duty doctor who performed CPR, he was sadly unable to be revived by paramedics. Up to 30,000 Australians have a cardiac arrest each year. Defibrillation within the first few minutes of having a Sudden Cardiac Arrest greatly increases the chance of survival. Knowing that early access to an AED on Wategos Beach could have been the difference between life and death for Phil, Michael initiated a GoFundMe page to raise money to purchase AED's for three of Byron Bay's busiest beaches; Wategos, The Pass and Clarke's Beach. I applaud Michael's goodwill and community spirit, and know that this act of kindness is a gift that will keep on giving into the future.

#### **TRACEY EVERINGHAM ARMSTRONG**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I take this opportunity to recognise the work of Tracey Everingham Armstrong, a woman of indefatigable generosity and altruism. A former Ballina Shire Citizen of the year, Tracey has been fundraising for our community for more than two decades. During this time, Tracey has raised close to \$480 000, which has been donated to a variety of community groups and disability organisations. Some of the bigger projects made possible by Tracey's contributions have been the purchase of two buses; one for Southern Cross School's disability unit and one for Biala Disability Support Service. She has also raised funds to provide mobility matting for Northcott Disability Services at Ballina Surf Club, and for a Liberty Swing to be erected at Missingingham Park. Tracey's most recent achievement, the purchase of an all-ability carousel to be installed as part of the Lennox Head Ross Park upgrade, is the culmination of three years of diligent fundraising. Tracey uses her personal flair and warmth to rally together the community to support many worthy causes and is an asset to our community, demonstrating the enormous impact that one person can have on so many.

#### **SOLAR BUDDIES**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the work of Kaileen Casey and Ballina Public School and their collaboration as "Solar Buddies", buying, assembling and packing solar reading lights, specifically made for countries where there is no electricity to supply sufficient light for students to study or read by. The Ballina-on Richmond Rotary Club purchased a box of 25 of these lights, which were assembled by Year 6 students at Ballina Public School under the direction of Robin Harmon before being sent overseas. Solar Buddy is an Australian charity uniting a global community with a big dream to gift six million solar lights to children living in energy poverty by 2030, to help them study after dusk and improve their education outcomes. Extreme energy poverty means that come nightfall, 789 million people worldwide are plunged into total darkness. They depend on charcoal and firewood, or harmful fuel-based sources like kerosene to provide light – with profound impacts on health and the environment. Kaileen's work and the efforts of the Ballina Public School children go some way to improving people's lives, and to reducing negative impacts on the environment.

#### **GALSTON COMMUNITY NEWS**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Galston, Glenorie and Hills Rural Community News. It began in 1971 when The Galston Chamber of Commerce decided the area needed a local paper. It would give businesses a place to advertise and help keep the local community informed. Despite a number of name changes and owners the paper has certainly stood the test of time. Offering a voice for the local community it covers all areas from entertainment to local news as well as supporting local community groups and schools. I am proud to contribute a column every month. The paper started at just 28 pages and has grown to 68 full glossy colour pages which they produce every month, even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper is supported by local advertisers and the community who look forward to getting their copy each month. I would like to congratulate current owners Diana and Andrew Paton of Adelphi Design & Print. Along with Editor Mary Ord and Sales Consultant Belisa Papandrea and all the staff who have contributed to the success of the paper over the last 50 years.

**SARAH JENSEN**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—We all know that nurses are special people who step up time and time again, and have especially done so in the last 18 months as they put themselves on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sarah Jensen has gone above and beyond in her role, travelling over 1100 kilometres to Broken Hill to assist in the vaccine rollout. The state's far west had been significantly lagging behind metropolitan areas in vaccination rates when the outbreak reached these rural and remote areas, and when Sarah saw the situation she thought the best thing to do would be roll up her sleeves and help. Too frequently regional communities are left behind, but it is the contribution and compassion of people like Sarah that have facilitated a significant increase in vaccination and protection for these people. Thank you, Sarah. You have made a big difference.

**ALISON BROINOWSKI WESTERN NSW BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker... over the weekend Business NSW hosted the virtual 2021 Western NSW Business Awards. These awards are all about celebrating and showcasing the diverse array of talent in the business community of Western NSW, and this year's winners should feel incredibly proud to be named as the region's leading businesses and leaders for 2021. I'd like to congratulate Alison Broinowski of Perfectly Sorted Mudgee, who won the "Outstanding Business Leader" award. Living and working regionally for over 25 years, Ali is passionate about regional prosperity and opportunities for the future for the Mudgee community and its surrounds. When Ali began Perfectly Sorted, an interior and business styling business, in 2018, it was a two-person operation that she was unsure would succeed. Now, three years on, the business has survived COVID-19, adapting to virtual fit outs for clients that were unable to meet due to travel restrictions. Perfectly Sorted is now averaging 110 properties a year. Ali is also the President of Business Mudgee, and is always looking for opportunities to support our local businesses. Congratulations Ali, and thanks for what you do for our region.

**TAJE FOWLER, REGIONAL YOUTH TASKFORCE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I want to commend Narromine's Taje Fowler on her involvement in the 2021 Regional Youth Taskforce. The 24-year-old Wurundjeri woman balances full-time study with working with disadvantaged youth through Dubbo-based not-for-profit LeaderLife. But somehow she also found time to be involved in the Taskforce over the past 12 months – and now she's urging other young people to "take the challenge" and get involved. Applications are now open for the 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce, a great initiative that gives young people aged 12-24 a unique opportunity to help make decisions that'll have real impacts for young people in regional NSW. Taje says she learnt so much from the other young people involved, and working with Minister Bronnie Taylor and her office, and Advocate for Children and Young People Zoe Robinson, was a privilege. She says young people have a lot to offer; they're creative problem solvers, and they know what works. I couldn't agree more – and I'd love to see heaps of young people from the Dubbo electorate throwing their hats in the ring! Congratulations again Taje on being part of the 2021 taskforce, and all the best in your future endeavours!

**JOSHUA SHIELDS WESTERN NSW BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Over the weekend Business NSW hosted the virtual 2021 Western NSW Business Awards. These awards are all about celebrating and showcasing the diverse array of talent in Western NSW's business community, and this year's winners should feel incredibly proud to be named as the region's leading businesses and leaders for 2021. I'd like to congratulate Joshua Shields of Summit Cranes, who won the "Outstanding Young Business Leader" award. Establishing Summit Cranes in 2017 at the age of 31, Joshua is responsible for the overall management and direction-setting of the company in the role of Managing Director. As a key member of Summit's Senior Management team, he oversees the operations of the organisation, employees, and resources. As one of Australia's fastest-growing crane and rigging companies, Summit Cranes services many tier-one national and international clients, and has become a major player in the market. Over the last few years their team has rapidly grown to employ over 1,200 hand-selected specialists to support their large-scale projects. Congratulations Josh, and best of luck for the future!

**LIFELINE HARBOUR TO HAWKESBURY**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the team at Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury who have been busy helping provide support for our community during the Sydney lockdown. Sometimes taking 3,500 calls in a 24-hour period. Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury has over 700 local volunteers and are led by CEO, the amazing, Wendy Carver. Lockdown was extremely tough for many across the State and it was the support of these counsellors, who helped get them through what was a difficult time. Volunteers take calls from all around Australia from the Gordon call centre by a number of highly trained Lifeline operators. Over the course of 12 months these operators can take

1 million calls. Lifeline are busy training more volunteers to ensure they can continue to meet demand of those who need assistance. I would like to thank every single volunteer of Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury who has help support those in need not just during the lockdown but each and every day.

#### **JACK AND JILL KINDERGARTEN**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Jack and Jill Kindergarten which is located in my electorate of Hornsby. Director Pearl Sachinwalla wrote to me in July during Early Learning Matters Week. She wanted to tell me how they were continuing connecting with families during lockdown. This included 3 zoom sessions a day with singing, dancing, stories and even yoga. It was very difficult time for families with young children as they tried to work from home and keep their children home. For those who needed to send their children to pre-school teachers were there to welcome them with open arms and support them during this stressful time. I would like to acknowledge the amazing staff at Jack and Jill. Lead by Director Pearl Sachinwalla with teachers Jin Park and Linda Lin. They are assisted by Ellie Sykes-Spencer, Kathy Norris, Karen Fenwick, Neda Alipourfard, Karen Khatiz, Kirrily Carson and office administrator Carly Gentle. Thank you for nurturing our youngest students as they start their educational journey.

#### **SHAMIDA BRIGHT VISION**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the Berowra Rotary Club for their support of Shamida Bright Vision, a safe haven for women and children in Ethiopia. Shamida Bright Vision began in 2014 by former Berowra local and Rotarian Karen Kendell. Following the adoption of her daughter Ruby from Ethiopia, she knew she had to do something to help women in the country. She started Shamida Bright Vision in partnership with the Hamlin Fistula Hospital and they employ nannies, cooks and cleaners. Many of the women are recovering from difficult childbirths. Shamida Bright Vision is home to 30 children and they support 60 children who live in the local communities. Berowra Rotary does an amazing job in our local community supporting not just those doing it tough locally but supporting organisations around the world like Shamida Bright Vision. I understand lockdown has put a hold on many of their fundraisers like the Father's Day plant stall and selling daffodils for Daffodil Day. However, I know the volunteers will be back bigger and better when it is safe to do so.

#### **SUZIE VAN OPDORP: COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY WORKER**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains)**—I want to pay tribute to one of the Blue Mountain's most tireless and compassionate community workers. Suzie Van Opdorp has a long history of supporting vulnerable members of my community, most notably victim-survivors of domestic violence, those experiencing housing stress and homelessness and those struggling with mental health challenges. I was fortunate to have Suzie on my staff for six years where she provided advocacy, advice and practical assistance to countless constituents. Regularly going above and beyond the call of duty, Suzie always maintained an amazing level of calm and compassion. Recent Suzie supported the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre as Acting Manager while in her own time providing personal support and advocacy to local women facing homelessness. She recently started a new role with the 'Head to Health' Pop Up Mental Health Service supporting those whose mental health is suffering because of the current COVID-19 situation. After so many years of giving, Suzie just continues to give. I thank her for this selflessness - for her big heart and fierce advocacy which makes such a difference to the lives of others – and for her friendship and support.

#### **NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House Threatened Species Day, held on Tuesday 7 September, the same date as in 1936 when the thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) sadly became extinct. It is a day to reflect on the species we have lost to extinction and shine a spotlight on all of the Australian native animal and plant species that are facing similar fates. The Regent Honeyeater is one such critically endangered species that is in the Sydney area. This year, WWF has used Threatened Species Day to draw attention to celebrate iconic Aussie wildlife and restore our environment through tree planting via their Regenerate Australia mission. This is particularly crucial in the aftermath of the terrible bushfires we experienced in 2019/2020. The number of species facing extinction in Australia continues to increase, particularly due to habitat loss, invasive species and climate change and we cannot allow this. On behalf of the residents of the Balmain Electorate, I wish to draw attention to this critical issue.

#### **GLEBE YOUTH SERVICE MURAL**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the mural created by Aunty Kathryn Dodd Farrawell for the Glebe Youth Service. Aunty Kath brought together local artists, students and

families who use the service to create this mural, the title of which is "LOVE 2037" on Gadigal Land. The poem included in her artwork reads:

I am a life under moonlight, starlight and sunlight with my Mother's earth on my feet I walk free

Through fresh & saltwater as I move in shallow & deep from her womb as little creatures so small move with such big hearts as they take care of my Mother's earth, plants and trees as I take breath my spirit sings and dances our dreams as I know I belong here

Always was

Always will be...

Our Aboriginal Land

Around 75 per cent of the young people who attend GYS are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and Aunty Kath has worked hard to cultivate a sense of belonging to ensure the younger generation thrives. I would like to thank her, all of those involved in the creation of the mural, and GYS for their leadership in Glebe.

#### **MR JACK (JOHN) PEATTIE**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)**—It gives me great pleasure to recognise Tamworth local Mr Jack Peattie who turned 100 yesterday. Mr Peattie celebrates a century of passionate commitment to his community as an educator, World War II veteran, sportsman, photographer and environmentalist. In July 1942 at the age of 20, Mr Peattie answered the call to defend his country as the Pacific War threatened the safety and sovereignty of our country. He fought bravely through to the end of the war as a sergeant until his discharge in June 1946. Upon his return, Jack met the love of his life Marj and embarked on a teaching career where he was known as a fair and compassionate teacher who instilled a love of nature and the environment in his students. Jack's passion for the environment led him to establishing Tamworth's first Bird Society and National Parks group, helping to promote the preservation of New England's natural beauty. Happy birthday Jack. Your commitment to our community is admirable and on your 100th birthday, I want to thank you for your service to your country and your passion for our region.

#### **MRS ADRIENNE FISHER**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs Adrienne Fisher who will be celebrating her 100th birthday on the 24 October, 2021. Mrs Fisher who now resides at Killara, was a prominent Upper Hunter Electorate citizen and well respected by the Upper Hunter community. Mrs Fisher, the wife of the late Colin Fisher OAM, State Member for Upper Hunter from 1970 to 1988, was actively involved within the Upper Hunter electorate. Not only supporting her husband at various functions but also served as an office bearer of various organisations including the CWA, Women's Guild of her Church and the local P&C Association. It might be noted that Mrs Fisher was a Patron of several organisations in Singleton. Again, I congratulate Mrs Fisher on her wonderful contribution to the Upper Hunter community and wish her all the very best as she celebrates her 100th Birthday.

#### **UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE 2021 QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate this year's Queen's Birthday Honours recipients from across the Upper Hunter electorate. Dr Patrice Newell of Gundy, on becoming a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Dr Newell's, AM, recognises her significant service to the environment, and to sustainable farming practices. The Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division was awarded to Joplin Higgins and Janet Lambert. Mrs Higgins of Scone was awarded the OAM for service to the law. Mrs Lambert from Vacy honoured with an OAM for service to the community of Vacy including Vacy and District Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, Vacy School of Arts and Vacy Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Neville Lawrence OAM received the Australian Fire Service Medal for outstanding dedication and commitment to the NSW Rural Fire Service and to his local community, throughout his more than 55 years of service. Mr Lawrence joined the RFS as a member of the Gresford Brigade in 1965, serving continuously since that time, including as Brigade Captain between 1994 and 2019.

#### **NAJEEBA WAZEFADOST**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—At the age of 10 years old, Najeeba Wazefadost fled Afghanistan to seek asylum in Australia. Arriving with no knowledge of English, by the age of 14, Najeeba quickly learnt English and won a national essay-writing competition. She is founder and President of Hazara Women of Australia – an organisation which helps newly arrived refugee women learn English and more quickly settle into their new communities. She is also involved with Asia Pacific Network of Refugees [APNOR], Co-Founder of the Global Refugee Led Network [GRN] and Global Independent Refugee Women Leaders [GIRWL]. Following the Taliban



entering Kabul on 14 August and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country, on 16 August I hosted an emergency meeting online with Najeeba and Julie Owens MP, Federal Member for Parramatta. At the meeting we heard about the unfolding crisis in Afghanistan and Australia's approach to it. Opposition Leader Chris Minns also participated. The Federal Government subsequently announced that an initial 3,000 humanitarian places will be allocated to Afghan nationals within Australia's annual program, which currently provides 13,750 places annually. My thanks to Najeeba and the participants for attending this very important session.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF GRANVILLE-9675**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. This year the Rotary Club of Granville-9675 celebrated the International Day of Peace online with Rotary clubs in Tiruchirapalli in India to discuss peace through service. The celebration coincided with a change of leadership at the club. My congratulations go to incoming President Sris Ponniahpillai and my thanks go to the outgoing President Tony Caele. The club also said farewell to Alan Grady. After more than 40 years he's moving to a new club closer to home. The pandemic has created challenges for us all – including service clubs. Internationally Rotary has been tapping into decades of experience in bringing polio to the brink of eradication with their members worldwide helping health authorities communicate lifesaving information about COVID-19 and vaccination, combatting misinformation, supporting fair and equal access to vaccines, and curbing the spread of the virus by donating protective gear and other supplies to clinics and hospitals that are under strain. The Rotary Club of Granville has been a part of our community for 60 years and continues to support local people – especially in times of need.

#### **SADAT WELFARE & SPORTS ASSOCIATION**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—It was great to join the Sadat Welfare & Sports Association on 17 October to pack food hampers for people in our community who are really struggling at the moment. The community care packages included \$50 Coles vouchers and food essentials to be delivered to people affected by COVID-19. In a single session they delivered 70 food hampers and 35 vouchers. The Association recognises that many people in other countries like Afghanistan don't have access to such support and people there are in need of help. Their team of volunteers raised \$1,500 in funds from their own pockets to help those struggling in countries like Afghanistan. Sadat Welfare & Sports Association is a fantastic Afghan sports association that also provides important community support. They are a non-profit organisation which promote multiculturalism through sports and other welfare activities. Thanks for everything you do!

#### **PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—A'Becketts Creek and Duck Creek flow through the Granville electorate. They are perennial streams, tributaries of the Duck River and part of the Parramatta River catchment. The Duck River catchment commences near Condell Park to eventually join the Parramatta River. For almost a century pollution and development has reduced the quality of the water in the Parramatta River catchment. Today these waterways are benefiting from the efforts of the Parramatta River Catchment Group [PRCG]. The PRCG is an alliance of councils, government agencies and community groups working to transform the Parramatta River and its tributaries into living waterways with the aim to make it swimmable again by 2025. Success will require the support and engagement of government, business and the community. Part of this engagement program is Riverfest - an annual event celebrating the Parramatta River and surrounding catchment. Riverfest 2021 runs from 15 to 24 October with the theme of 'Caring for our Catchment' It offers a broad range of online events for all ages including webinars on wildlife and environmental health and management, tips on swimming in the river and other natural waterways, story time and activity sessions for families.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 19:26 until  
Thursday 21 October 2021 at 09:30.**