



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 11 November 2021

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 11 November 2021

The Speaker (The Hon. Jonathan Richard O'Dea) took the chair at 12:30.

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Announcements

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The SPEAKER: Today is Remembrance Day. I know many members acknowledged Remembrance Day earlier today. We will pause to respect Remembrance Day.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

Committees

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Reference

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council advising that it has agreed to a resolution that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on the adequacy of the funding allocation of the NSW Electoral Commission for the 2023 State general election and, in particular, taking into account the latest advice on electoral integrity arising from foreign interference in elections.

Motions

COVID-19

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:32): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges through the ever-changing public health orders a tale of two cities was created in Sydney during the recent COVID-19 outbreak.
- (2) Recognises that residents of the 12 local government areas of concern felt abandoned, blamed and ignored by the Government.
- (3) Commits to providing genuine social equity across New South Wales.
- (4) Thanks all frontline and essential workers, health staff and unsung community heroes for proactively working together to produce extraordinary vaccination rates, share public information and provide support to one another in every possible form.

As we debate this motion, I know some people may say we are holding on to things that have happened in the past and we need to move forward. Absolutely we need to move forward, but we can move forward only when we acknowledge the things that we have gone through and the difficulties that people have faced. We have been through some very difficult times—certainly, the most difficult times I could imagine in my lifetime. New South Wales has come out the other end in the sense that the current double-dose vaccination rate is 91.5 per cent, which is fantastic. But there was a time when things were not so good.

Life in 12 local government areas—the so-called LGAs of concern—was terrible. The experience was very different in some parts of Sydney compared with other areas in New South Wales. At the outset, we were told we were all in this together. But the longer the pandemic went on, the less it felt like we were in it together. In no way is this an attack on the Minister for Health and Medical Research and his staff, who I think did an admirable job. I have acknowledged that publicly. But things happened during the pandemic that caused great grief to our communities. The "tale of two cities" theme did not just come from the non-Government side of the House, from me or from the member for Fairfield. It became quite obvious the longer the lockdown went on.

From the outset, the Labor Opposition went out of our way to make sure there was a bipartisan approach. We used whatever language we could to get the message out. The member for Fairfield and I said, "Stay safe. Get tested", in any language we could and through any media organisation available. We wanted testing and we got testing and there were massive lines of people waiting to be vaccinated. But then things started to change. In parts of Sydney an imaginary line became a real line. We were dealing with people who had lost their jobs, people whose businesses had collapsed and people who basically became homeless overnight. They were serious issues.

At the same time, there was a massive problem and we were saying, "We need vaccines." But that was not the worst of it. The worst part was some of the rules seemed to hurt our community more than they did others.

Sure, we had a rising number of COVID-19 affected people but we cannot simply otherise, as sometimes occurred. We heard that people from other cultures do not follow the rules. That was not only offensive but also incredibly hurtful. We heard language like "boots on the ground" and "door to door" because apparently people in south-western and western Sydney do not follow rules. We heard helicopters whirring at two o'clock in the morning. I saw footage of helicopters with loudspeakers telling kids to get out of the park. At the same time, I was seeing images of other people enjoying life as though somehow, at a particular point on a particular road, the virus just stopped. Good luck to those who live near a beach. Good luck to those who can enjoy the great outdoors. That is fine; it is not the problem. The problem was that people in south-western and western Sydney saw some people enjoying that while others could not.

There was no discussion about the complexity of our community or multi-generational homes where people live together. Essential workers were catching COVID because they went to work. Indeed, in my electorate a young man caught COVID at work and passed away. Yet the inference from all the language we heard was that people were doing the wrong thing. The imaginary line was not imaginary anymore. We had officers checking shopping. Effectively, we had checkpoints. We had to carry papers. I have been to countries overseas where you have to carry papers. But never in my life did I think I would be carrying papers in Australia in order to get from point A to point B. That is not who we are and that is not what we are about. Yet every time I heard, "We're in it together", it grated because it did not feel like we were in it together. It felt like we were the ones who would be pushed aside. It was our problem and a barricade would be put around us.

Afterwards, of course the support came. But at what cost? We effectively divided Sydney. We effectively pitted one group against another. I constantly had people ring me and say, "We need your help. Why is this happening?" At the outset, Chris Minns, the Leader of the Opposition, said, "We will work in a bipartisan way." We continued to do that but it was hard to see the bipartisanship when we saw rules that affected our communities unfairly and inequitably in a way that otherised people. We should not underestimate the impact of statements like "boots on the ground" and "door to door". We should not underestimate the impact on kids of seeing helicopters flying above them, the impact of having to visit what were effectively checkpoints, and the impact of being unable to work. Our community is made up of people who want to work. They want to work hard. They do not have the luxury of working from home.

It is not easy for our kids to learn at home when one laptop is being shared between three or four students and the internet connection is a bit sketchy. It is not as easy as simply saying, "Well, everyone can do it." We needed support and that support came a little late. There were so many heroes during the pandemic whom I will talk about at the conclusion of my speech. But if we ever saw our community stand up, it was during the pandemic. In the end when things were broken and people were lost, they found support in their local elected leaders and in community representatives, because that is who we are. We never want to go through it again. I referred constantly to Charles Dickens' "tale of two cities" and Shakespeare's "winter of discontent"—which it certainly was. But from that emerged something better.

It is incumbent on every single one of us to thank the essential services workers and appreciate the healthcare workers who put their lives at risk. We are not as angry anymore but we are still hurt. The hurt is still there and it still grates. When it is the worst of times we must ensure that people see the best of us. Unfortunately, they did not see that. They did not see us united. We should not have had a divided Sydney and different rules in the regions. We were in this together. I do not want anyone to suffer the way we did; it is not right. Our communities suffered in a way that was incredibly unfair. It tarnished them, hurt them and did not take account of their special circumstances. No matter what anybody says or how they try to spin it, we were in a storm. We were all in boats, but some of us had different boats. Some of us were cruising along while others were barely surviving. We do not want to go there again. We need to acknowledge that the tale of two cities was real, and it must be rectified.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (12:39): I make a contribution to debate on the motion before the House. I acknowledge the passionate contribution by my colleague the member for Lakemba. I acknowledge the short video that he produced with other members in the languages of people in their communities. It was an outstanding effort and is a credit to him and his team. I offer solidarity in the sense that all members across this State were huddled together with friends and families during the height of the pandemic to watch the daily 11.00 a.m. press conference. We all were willing, hoping and praying that the figures in the local government areas [LGAs] of concern—let us hope we never hear that term again—went down. We prayed and hoped that the issue was being dealt with across New South Wales. I thank the member for Lakemba for moving the motion. I acknowledge the incredibly tough time that he and his community experienced during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. I offer those comments in my role as the health Parliamentary Secretary.

Without a doubt this pandemic has been an exceptional time for our community and health services and one through which we could not have persevered without the dedication of frontline and essential workers, health staff and unsung community heroes. This week New South Wales passed the 90 per cent double dose vaccination target, making this State one of the safest places to be in the world right now. No matter on which side of the Chamber one sits, we can all agree that is an outstanding achievement for which the people of New South Wales should be most proud. There is no doubt that the peak of the pandemic saw a number of rules and restrictions put in place that greatly impacted people's lives and livelihoods. They were felt acutely across New South Wales, particularly in the 12 LGAs of concern.

I reflect on Christmas in 2020 when the northern beaches communities could not experience Christmas like the rest of New South Wales due to the impact of the Avalon outbreak. Thankfully it is now a distant memory to many. However, some of the biggest sacrifices were made by frontline workers and unsung heroes who were working in communities every day to get us to the position that we are in today. We are at over 90 per cent double dose and have reached 94 per cent first dose, with only a couple of hundred COVID cases per day. Summer for all of us throughout New South Wales looks incredibly bright.

I note that just this week the extraordinary work undertaken by the many different staff and organisations involved in the border, quarantine and NSW Health vaccination program was celebrated at Qudos Bank Arena. The COVID-19 border, quarantine and vaccination response has required incredible collaboration across Government agencies, non-government agencies and private organisations to keep the people of New South Wales and Australia safe from COVID-19. It has been one of the largest logistical exercises in the country, with over 10,000 staff coming together each day as one integrated and highly coordinated team. It is the first collaboration of its kind in Australia and is cause for much celebration. It has been a demonstration of innovation, agility and commitment to service the people of New South Wales. It has involved work at Sydney Airport, police-managed hotels, special health accommodation, vaccination centres at Sydney Olympic Park and much, much more.

Since March 2020, more than 250,000 people have come through Sydney airport and the quarantine program. More than four million doses have been distributed to 1.8 million people across NSW Health vaccination centres. As we wind back our COVID-19 response in those areas, it is important to take the time to celebrate the achievements of our frontline staff. I am pleased that those dedicated individuals were recognised this week. Without a doubt the COVID-19 pandemic has been an exceptional time for our community and health services as we faced the 2020 outbreak and then the Delta variant together. The impacts of this pandemic were felt and are still being felt across the entire State, from south-west Sydney to the regions. As the health Parliamentary Secretary, I take this opportunity to thank the people of New South Wales for coming together and sticking by the health messages to help get each other through to the other side.

I acknowledge the difficult times experienced by the member for Lakemba and his community, as well as his colleagues and their communities. I acknowledge my colleagues on this side of the House whose local government areas were under additional restrictions. I understand the recommendations regarding LGAs of concern were based on trends of confirmed COVID-19 cases and other factors that might render them more susceptible to disease. Those measures were taken to keep our community safe. As we increased vaccination rates, NSW Health and other frontline workers have worked around the clock to protect our communities and guide us to the position we are in today. I am pleased that from 11 October 2021, the list of LGAs of concern has ceased to exist. I take this opportunity to thank the residents of those LGAs for their resilience over the past few months.

It was far from easy, but their cooperation, the public health orders and an outstanding response to the vaccination call have been instrumental in getting us to this much-welcomed position we are in today. To all the frontline and essential workers, health staff and unsung community heroes, your proactive dedication in working together to plan and continue our response to COVID-19 has and will assist in meeting the needs of the people of New South Wales to live with COVID.

It is a world-leading response that gave NSW Health the opportunity to design and implement a range of strategies to vaccinate, share information and support our health services and health workers to serve the people of New South Wales. Whether they worked in pop-up clinics, expanded health facilities, mobile teams that went to people in need, or they are pathologists working in labs, I say thank you to those who worked in the hundreds of testing clinics across the State. I move an amendment to the notice of motion. Given the passage of time that has elapsed, to improve the motion of the member for Lakemba I will move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (1) to (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (1) Acknowledges that New South Wales is leading the nation with its COVID-19 response and particularly its vaccination efforts.
- (2) Notes the important role that public health orders and vaccination have played in the public health response.

- (3) Recognises in particular the resilience of people across western and south-western Sydney and the record-breaking uptake of vaccination across those communities.
- (4) Commends the entire New South Wales community, from the city to the bush, for coming together, following the public health messaging and getting vaccinated.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (12:46): I support the motion moved by the member for Lakemba recognising frontline workers. I acknowledge the words of the member for Manly and his amendment to the member for Lakemba's motion. There is no doubt that during the June 2021 lockdown and beyond was extremely difficult for communities in my electorate of Fairfield. The ever-changing public health orders were extremely difficult to understand. We know why they were in place. The data showed that we need to keep the community safe. I will say that we can never underestimate the feelings of the residents in the 12 electorates of concern, particularly Fairfield. We were the first to experience those severe restrictions. It was extremely difficult.

As a local resident of south-western Sydney and the representative for Fairfield, every day I speak to people who live outside the 12 areas of concern and they tell me how difficult it was, but they also say how our communities rose to the challenge. When it is put out there, they will rise. When we ask them to get tested every three days, they will do it. When we ask them to stay home, they will do it. When we ask them to get vaccinated, they will do it, and it is getting done. When the booster shots are required at six months, they will do it. It did not come without its anguish and hurt to many people. Frontline workers, students, parents, the elderly, the most vulnerable in the community were experiencing extreme circumstances. I note that when talking to residents in western Sydney and south-western Sydney I hear anecdotally that a number of people are seeking professional help for the mental scars that remain.

It is real; it is true. There are many businesses that still have their doors shut. Some of them are choosing to work either in a takeaway or online capacity because of the difficulties with checking for double vaccinations and making sure that everything is okay. People are still hurting. There is a sense of anger in the community; there is no doubt about that. I am not going to lie; I am going to call it for what it is. People are still hurting. I note the comments from the member for Manly. At Christmas time last year those of us who have relatives and friends in the northern beaches clearly understood what it was at Christmas time. I think we have all got this lived and shared experience.

Yes, we are coming out of the other side. In the words of a great movie character, the great Buzz Lightyear, "To infinity and beyond!" From where we are, we do not know what is going to happen, but we need to go further than that to make sure that the communities we represent never go back to what we experienced last year in 2020 or this year in 2021. We need to protect each other. I commend all communities—whether it is the 12 local government areas of concern, our brothers and sisters in other areas of metropolitan Sydney, our friends and relatives in the regions, in the bush, rural and regional, it does not matter—we are all one New South Wales; we really are. We care for each other, and the last thing that we need to do is to create a wedge and a divide through any community in this great State of New South Wales.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:50): I contribute to the debate on the motion of the member for Lakemba. I acknowledge his passionate contribution to the debate and that of the member for Fairfield. As a rural member I acknowledge the difficulties and challenges that the communities in the 12 local government areas [LGA] of concern experienced. My electorate is 500 kilometres to 600 kilometres away and every day we would watch the situation unfold in Sydney and be equally worried about how things were unfolding for members representing those LGAs of concern and their communities. We were also worried, and a little bit anxious, about what would happen if the bush was faced with a similar situation. I note the contribution made by my colleague the member for Manly and Parliamentary Secretary for Health. As Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health, I recognise that we are one State and that it is really important that the regions have a contribution to this important debate.

It is important to acknowledge the tireless efforts of our healthcare workers wherever they might be in New South Wales, particularly those across the regions. The nurses, doctors, pharmacists and other medical staff within the small communities in my electorate worked round the clock to keep our towns and villages safe from COVID-19. For that, I thank them. There is no doubt that from the beginning of the pandemic they took the challenge head-on. They have remained flexible at all times and have had to switch tasks from vaccination clinics on one hand to really large-scale testing efforts on the other whenever there was an outbreak. We saw a surge of cases and outbreaks at different times throughout the Central West.

I speak firsthand to the efforts of the Western New South Wales Local Health District in dealing with the outbreak in Cowra. They were already dealing with outbreaks in Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange and right through the Central West. Then we saw an outbreak in the Hilltops shire and the Murrumbidgee Local Health District threw absolutely everything it could at it to, firstly, stabilise it and then bring the numbers right down. I am pleased that those outbreaks did stabilise. Hilltops stabilised at 29 cases, from memory, and Cowra stabilised at 70-odd cases.

I acknowledge the fear that those communities felt at that time. Every single day they would turn to their health professionals and us as leaders for reassurance, fundamentally, that everything was going to be okay, that they were going to be okay, that their families were going to be okay and that we would all get through this in one piece.

I reiterate my thanks to all of the healthcare workers for the part they have played and the efforts they have gone to so that our communities were vaccinated. In the bush we are seeing most LGAs heading towards a double dose of 95 per cent, which is absolutely fantastic to see, and cases are being kept to a minimum despite numerous scares—whether it be positive sewage samples or workers coming through the communities. A lid has been kept on everything at all times. For that we say thanks to all of our healthcare workers and the communities more broadly.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (12:55): I acknowledge the very hardworking member for Lakemba and the very hardworking member for Fairfield and all my colleagues in the 12 local government areas of concern, including members in the Government. Those members worked very hard and diligently with all of the health leaders, community leaders, faith leaders, unions and businesses. But, as the member for Lakemba rightly stated in the media throughout the 15 weeks of lockdown, Sydney was a "tale of two cities". We were and the numbers speak for themselves.

We have had 10 years of this Government gutting, smashing and axing services in our community. In the inner south-west community and the Canterbury electorate there are very high and advanced cancer rates, high gestational diabetes, bad health outcomes, and 25,000 residents who live in multi-generational housing in Campsie. I am sure the member for Oatley would attest to that. Campsie does not have a Service NSW. Every time I have asked for a Service NSW in Campsie, the bureaucrats tell the Ministers, "Just do a Google search." Google says it is four kilometres from Campsie to Roselands. It takes an elderly person an hour and a half to get from Campsie to Roselands. There are households of eight people in a two-bedroom unit on Ninth Avenue, Campsie, where people are trying to work hard and save hard and work three jobs so their kids can get a good education to get a good job. We are told that is how it is and that we are not going to get any services.

The member for Fairfield, the member for Lakemba, the member for Bankstown, the member for Granville, the member for Auburn, the member for Parramatta, the member for Holsworthy and the member for Oatley all know what we all went through. There were images from 1.00 a.m. where the member for Fairfield was out with his community and there were kilometres and kilometres of people waiting to get tested. The community rose up to the challenge because they did not get the resources in time. COVID did not just happen; the Delta variant did not just happen five minutes ago. We told the Government 18 months ago, in March 2020. The member for Fairfield, the member for Lakemba, all of my colleagues that hold multicultural seats, even on the Government side, and I told the Government to scope the pandemic out and make sure they had a plan because COVID was not going away. If we could jab people in the arm, we would. We were on the ground with our community; it was a community-led response. We were there day and night; we were there taking bookings.

The Government cut social and community services leaving high school kids who were doing the HSC to help their parents while they study. There were 17-year-olds getting abused. They were helping their parents because half their family were in isolation. They still had to keep the shop open because there were only two shops that were open in Campsie. Two-thirds of Campsie were in isolation and the Government was not providing the resources that we were calling for. That is why the "tale of two cities" is not pretend; we are not trying to create a divide. We should never see this happen again. The families in our communities were blamed because they had to be the social services. That should not happen again. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (12:59): Via video link: I thank the member for Lakemba for his motion and acknowledge the hurt experienced by his and other members' electorates. Like him, parts of my community in the Liverpool local government area [LGA] were deemed areas of concern. The Camden electorate takes in parts of western Liverpool LGA and also borders our Macarthur region friends in the Campbelltown LGA. I thank my local community and, indeed, all those across New South Wales, for sticking with the health advice, getting vaccinated and getting us to where we are today.

I congratulate the residents of the Liverpool LGA, which was an LGA of concern, who have replied by rolling up their sleeves, getting vaccinated and achieving 94.4 per cent first dose vaccination and 90.4 per cent second dose vaccination. But, of course, none of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of our frontline and health workers. I take this opportunity to thank them again. In particular, I thank the dedicated team at the South Western Sydney Local Health District, who worked around the clock to keep our communities safe and informed through this difficult period. The local workforce readily adapted and redeployed into areas such as COVID-19 testing and vaccination, with a significant amount of casual and temporary staff stepping up to the plate to increase our numbers and support our community. Local volunteers from St John Ambulance also

joined the ranks of our vaccination teams, while local RFS and SES units provided crowd marshalling and on-the-ground support at some of our larger hubs.

As the member for Lakemba is more than aware, one of the challenges faced during this pandemic has been communicating the health messaging to our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I note that since June 2021 the South Western Sydney Local Health District has produced more than 80 in-language videos in collaboration with community leaders. I also acknowledge the multiculturalism Minister in the other place for the work that her team and Multicultural NSW contributed. This collaboration extended to the distribution of the videos, which were shared by community groups and organisations, and kept our culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in particular, informed about COVID-19 and the importance of vaccination throughout the pandemic.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Camden to speak a little louder.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES: Is that any better?

The SPEAKER: Yes, thank you.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES: This video series, which details the COVID-19 response at Liverpool Hospital and Campbelltown Hospital in particular, continues to be featured across all TV outlets. I draw attention to the outstanding work undertaken by way of targeted outreach vaccination programs for our more vulnerable communities, including migrant populations, persons with disability, those with mental health and drug health struggles, our local Aboriginal population, and those in women's refuges and the homeless. The local health district deployed mobile vaccination options to these particular areas and communities—pop-up clinics, low-sensory vaccinations and targeted vaccination days—and worked closely with the Primary Health Network to provide in-home options for those who were unable to leave their homes to get vaccinated. Outstandingly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in south-western Sydney has reached 85 per cent first dose vaccination, with 79 per cent now fully vaccinated. I congratulate them on their outstanding achievement.

The local health district has a specialised team made up of nurses, Aboriginal health workers and support staff operating several pop-up clinics at convenient locations delivering Pfizer vaccinations to this community, providing a culturally safe space where families can come and hear about the vaccine from trusted clinicians. I thank the frontline workers, local heroes and my community as a whole for their perseverance through what was an incredibly difficult few months. I thank them for their resilience, perseverance and support of one another in such unprecedented times.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (13:04): By leave: I was not planning on speaking to this motion because we have spoken a lot about COVID in this Chamber. We are now onto the recovery phase, which is a very important phase to get our communities back on track. It is important to respect what happened to our communities during this time. We did feel isolated and it was incredibly tough. I particularly thank the health Minister's office staff for all their help and support. We all had times when we rang the Minister. We all love you. He did a fabulous job: taking on that role in the middle of the pandemic and being available to everyone at all hours was phenomenal. We all very much appreciate that. The health Minister was phenomenal, giving out his mobile number to everyone and taking so many calls. I also thank former Premier Berejiklian for all the time, effort and energy that she put in, as well as Minister Ayres for the many phone calls he and I had, particularly when only people in certain occupations could leave our areas. He was very helpful in making sure that there were other reasons why people could leave and still attend their workplaces, which was important.

Our State relies on people from our electorates. Suddenly they were tied to their homes, which was incredibly hard for everyone in our State. Authorised workers in our electorates went out to places of risk, risking themselves in communities with up to 1,000 infected people at any one time. The virus was rife in our communities and these people were putting themselves at risk to keep our fruit shops open and to keep our society operating. I pay tribute to that. Some members of our community do not have English as their first language. A lot of people have come from other countries who cannot write in their own language. Translated documents were quite difficult as well. I thank my colleagues from those 12 local government areas of concern on the other side and on this side of the Chamber, because we became a bit of a team. We tried to get the message out to our communities in ways that they understood through the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre. We saw each other on Zoom meetings quite often during that time, trying to get the message out to our communities in ways that they understood.

Having pop-up vaccination clinics was really important. It meant that people who did not speak or write English did not have to fill out a cumbersome website form to try to book a vaccination. They were offered in ways that they needed and ways that they understood by changing terminologies around things like, "Stay at home with your family" to "Our communities, family is extended family." Simple things like changing the terminology to stay at home with your household made a real difference. Once the message was heard and understood, I think

we got our point across and we found that the numbers started to drop. But it did feel very separate for a long time and it felt very isolating. It is worth saying thank you to everyone. At one point I tried to separate our communities to try to take out of the 12 local government areas of concern the part that did not have as much COVID because I thought as few people as possible should have to suffer. We should not all have had to go through it because it did feel so isolating. I move:

That the amendment be amended by inserting the words "hardship faced by and the" before the word "resilience" in paragraph (3).

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (13:08): In reply: I thank all the speakers who contributed to the debate and for the spirit in which the motion was debated. As I said at the outset, this was not about having a shot but rather saying things that needed to be said. I really appreciate the way that it was dealt with. We heard very passionate speeches from members from all sides of the House. I thank and acknowledge the member for Manly, who I have an enormous amount of respect for. If he recalls, the member for Manly and I were in communication when his area was in lockdown. I cannot underestimate how much I appreciated him reaching out to me in the middle of the pandemic to say, "What can my community do to help?" That is what decent people do. I really appreciate that.

The member for Fairfield acted with great passion. We saw the video of him standing up in line and speaking Italian. He was there every day. Everybody here is passionate about their communities. The member for Cootamundra talked about the impact it had on the regions and the fear that was felt there, particularly when people could not travel. Today we have seen an example of outstanding representatives who decided to speak on this. I thank the member for Cootamundra. I acknowledge my electoral neighbour Sophie Cotsis, the member for Canterbury. Sophie and I became best buddies during that time. We were always best buddies, but we would do everything together. She was jabbing people, but I do not think she was talking about the needles.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: If I could, I would!

Mr JIHAD DIB: Stop taking my time, Sophie. You could not find a more passionate and hardworking MP. I was proud to stand with her along the way, shoulder to shoulder. I thank the member for Canterbury for her contribution, especially when she acknowledged essential workers and the role they played in the ongoing communication. The member for Holsworthy and I saw each other many times on Zoom. I appreciate the amendment to the amendment. We support it. I acknowledge that the member for Holsworthy picked up important things about communication.

What is more important than anything else is that we saw what we can achieve when we work together. There are members here who play partisan politics much more than others, but there are also members who do not play partisan politics. During the crisis we saw who was willing to roll up their sleeves and work together to get a positive outcome. I thank those people, and always reach out my hand to support them in any way. Politics is not a game; it is incredibly important to people's lives. It is the stuff that makes a difference. Outside of what happens in the Chamber, people just want to live their lives. They do not stay glued to the television, watching our debates and question time. They want to know we are doing the right thing.

As an old English teacher, I love references to Dickens and Shakespeare. I spoke earlier about the winter of discontent, but there is a spring of hope. We will move forward. We will go through the process of making sure we do not go through that again. How do we rebuild? What are the communities who suffered missing out on? How do we increase community resources? Community resources were fundamental. How do we get better at sending messages out? If people have to stay within their LGA, how do we make sure that LGA has nice open green spaces to use and enjoy?

Rather than waste a crisis, let us take the opportunity to ask, "What can we do together as a Parliament to make New South Wales better? How can we make sure there is a sense of equity, encourage people to become essential workers and thank all healthcare professionals?" How we as a community make things better is a decision for all of us. It does not matter if you represent one party or another or are an independent, people need us to do the right thing. It was difficult, but we got through it. How we pass the next step is critical. I thank the health Minister and his team. I thank the community groups for doing their bit. I thank my colleagues who found ways outside the box to ensure we are here today, which is better than where we were six months ago.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba has moved a motion, to which the member for Manly moved an amendment, to which the member for Holsworthy moved a further amendment. The question is that the amendment of the member for Holsworthy to the amendment of the member for Manly be agreed to.

Amendment of the member for Holsworthy to the amendment of the member for Manly agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the amendment of the member for Manly as amended by the member for Holsworthy be agreed to.

Amendment as amended agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

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

*Announcements***CLERK-ASSISTANT, HOUSE AND PROCEDURE**

The SPEAKER: It is with a considerable degree of pleasure that I advise the House that Simon Johnston has been permanently appointed as Clerk-Assistant, House and Procedure.

*Question Time***WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK**

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:18): My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with his own Government's report to community submissions on the northern beaches link, buried on page 647, stating that toll roads "increase the cost of living and can exacerbate social inequality"?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:18): That is coming from Captain Toll Road himself, the man who masterminded the 4 per cent tolls increase when he worked for Carl Scully. What we on this side of the House have demonstrated is that we will continue to build the infrastructure and the opportunity that comes with that, driving jobs growth. I was out with the transport Minister the other day at the M4-M5 breakthrough and saw the thousands of jobs that have been created during construction—once again, a toll road, to the question, but one that will provide opportunities for people in western Sydney to get home to their families faster. It is a motorway—I know the member for Blue Mountains is incredibly excited about this—that will ensure there are no traffic lights when driving from the Blue Mountains all the way through to the city. No traffic lights at all. Where is the member for Blue Mountains? She is going to love it, just like the member for Summer Hills loves it. There she is on the screen. We will be following her.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Blue Mountains to order for the first time. She has been warned previously about holding up signs. It will not be tolerated.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: How does the member get kicked out of the Chamber when she is on screen?

The SPEAKER: The member will be cut out if she is thrown out.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Cut out and disconnected.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has the call.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That will be a first—she will be disconnected. Whilst we are connecting the Blue Mountains to Sydney, we will disconnect the member for Blue Mountains from the Chamber. We know that, with these roads, ancillary roads like Parramatta Road will flow faster—and they currently are—as we build opportunity and construct a better and brighter future for the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The member for Auburn is obviously triggered as well. She loves it.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Whether it is record amounts of public transport investment across the State—

Ms Jo Haylen: How's that going, Dom?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It is going great. A few challenges, but overall it is going very well. At least there is some track, which did not exist under Labor.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Opposition members should go and enjoy the track, which did not exist under Labor because it made no public transport investment right across the State.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Summer Hill to order for the first time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: When Labor did try, it was a pretty poor effort—glossy brochures for the Rozelle metro and no infrastructure investment across the State. We have a balance on this side of the House. We are building the motorways of the future. We were building those before this Government with the M2, which was opposed by those opposite, who called it the "road to nowhere" and tried to censure the then transport Minister in this place.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: After three minutes, the Premier has not yet come to his comments about tolls exacerbating social inequality.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has been relevant to the question. I do not need assistance from the member for Penrith.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: How relevant! For someone who is genuinely not relevant, that was a pretty good effort. Do you agree?

The SPEAKER: The Premier will continue.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: He agrees.

Ms Jo Haylen: This is not a self-assessment.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It is a self-assessment, and we are going very well on this side of the House. We are transforming Sydney and our State, building the motorways that will make a difference so that people can get home to their families faster, whether that be WestConnex or NorthConnex. Opposition members love NorthConnex. They all used NorthConnex as they travelled up to the Upper Hunter by-election—which they lost, but they loved travelling on NorthConnex. From Pearce's Corner to Thompsons Corner, Pennant Hills, traffic has been alleviated on other roads so that suburban traffic can move faster as well. We back in our track record, and \$108 billion of infrastructure over the next four years that will drive jobs growth and economic growth right across the State. Ultimately, we have the best health system, the best education system, the best public transport system and the best road network that is not just the envy of the country but the envy of the world.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Mulgoa, I ask the member for Rockdale and the member for Auburn to curtail their interjections.

JOBS GROWTH

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (14:23): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on what the New South Wales Government is doing to ensure businesses and families can have confidence in our future?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:23): I can tell the member for Mulgoa that we are doing a lot on this side of the House. It was pleasing to see the jobs figures today in New South Wales—22,000 jobs were created in our State in October. That is prior to the lockdown ending. The interesting fact about the jobs numbers today is the participation rate is up 0.8 per cent. That shows that people who were sitting at home and did not have hope of getting into paid work looked at the policies of the Liberal-Nationals and said they want to get back in the jobs market. Compared to that figure, the participation rate of Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia dropped. The only State in which it increased was South Australia. That shows another Liberal-Nationals Government driving confidence for workers to get back to work. That is going to be the success here in our State. I know everyone loves the three-week sitting that we have got happening, but I am happy to keep extending it because in December those November job figures are going to be even better because of the confidence. We will have a special sitting just for Labor.

Mr Chris Minns: Are you going to move the standing orders now?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Maybe later; "Speako" is on it. He's typing it up now. He wants to come back, like we all do. Confidence is back right across the State. That led us to the success last year. The only one who is not confident today is the Labor Opposition because it knows confidence right across the State is bad news for the Labor Party. I know the member for Strathfield is excited to see that participation rate increase as she ventures out to find work. She is confident because there are jobs everywhere for her. Post-2023, Labor members will be confident as well. They do not see it today, but as they leave this place post the election, they should not worry. It is all in hand. There will be jobs and opportunity for every single one of them as they venture into the new chapter of our life. I was out with the skills Minister. Where is he? There he is.

Mr Ryan Park: Wake up, Geoff.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: There he is. Wake up, Geoff. We were out the other day, establishing Careers NSW. It will provide great opportunity. CV development, as thin as your CVs are, we will work it out for you. There will be mentoring programs, reskilling.

Mr Anoulack Chanthivong: Let's do another TAHE.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Now in your case, obviously you will have to find a skill.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: As you venture into the private sector—or try to—we have got plenty of jobs that are there. Geoff Lee will be with you every step of the way. How much confidence does that instil? I say to those opposite, you are going to be fine; don't worry. As we move through this pandemic, you look at those figures today. This week we saw a business confidence high of record levels, which is going to lead to greater business investment and capital investment across the State. It is going to lead to a rise in employment as businesses have the confidence to employ. We have already seen the benefits of our policies over the past two years where we invested over \$40 billion to ensure that we get every worker back into work, get every business open and make the economy stronger. That is exactly what happened last year and it is exactly what is going to happen this year. The data that is out today is incredibly pleasing. It shows that the confidence is back across New South Wales, even prior to the lockdown ending. That is great news for the opportunity and prosperity that it provides for every single family across New South Wales.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:28): My question is directed to the Premier. Buried in Transport for NSW's official response to community submissions on the northern beaches link is this quote:

... tolls would apply to all north and southbound trips on all harbour crossings in the future, including two-way tolling on the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link tunnel.

I ask whether the Premier will finally admit what we all know: that he will be putting a two-way toll on all harbour crossings?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:29): Ah, no. No, no.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Generally what happens is—I know the Leader of the Opposition is not used to it, because he has never been there—governments make decisions. When they make a decision, you can critique them and ask questions about them. The Government has not made a decision. We are committed to rolling out the best road network, the best public transport—shock, horror! The Government wants to build roads after Labor sat there in government and built absolutely nothing. Labor did absolutely nothing for 16 years, resulting in a \$30 billion infrastructure backlog. So, the answer to the question is no. Is that clear enough? Is that relevant enough? We continue to build the road network of the twenty-first century, alongside the greatest public transport metro service in the world. That will ensure that not only do we create jobs and drive economic growth, which was the fiscal and economic foundation that set New South Wales ahead of the pack compared to every other State as we move through the pandemic. Those investments transformed our economy, kept close to half a million people in work over the past 10 years on our public infrastructure investment alone. Add to that investment the growth that we have seen in the manufacturing sector here in New South Wales based on—

Ms Jo Haylen: Not in France.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Summer Hill to order for the second time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Pardon your French, member for Summer Hill. The reality is Labor built its one little rail line when it was in government. It imported the dampers from France. I made a mistake the other day. I misled the House.

Mr Chris Minns: Is it still running though?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Which one?

Mr Chris Minns: Is it still running?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Yes, probably. When you are only building half a little rail line and we are putting \$108 billion of infrastructure, there is a bit of difference.

Ms Jo Haylen: Yours doesn't work.

The SPEAKER: Order! Premier, do not encourage interjections.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: You could not even build a little metro out to your electorate.

The SPEAKER: The member for Summer Hill will come to order.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We had to come in and help you and do that for you, and we are happy to. I made a mistake, because I said that you imported the tunnels from Austria. Clearly, you do not import tunnels. I made a mistake. It was the lining of the tunnels I was meant to say. But if you did have your chance, you probably would have imported the tunnels. Then you did not build your trains.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting and will remain silent.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The trains that you tried to build here failed, so you went to China to build the Waratah trains.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That was sad. What we have demonstrated here in this State with our approach to infrastructure, which was lacking under the former Labor Government, is that we can drive jobs growth and economic growth, and ultimately build the infrastructure and make a real difference to people's lives. Whether that is toll roads, which are opposed by the Opposition—we understand that—whether it is the best public transport network in the world, whether it is the world-class hospitals and schools, we will continue to get on with the job of taking our State from good to great.

RESOURCES FOR REGIONS PROGRAM

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (14:33): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on what the New South Wales Government is doing to support mining communities like my own?

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and Minister for Regional New South Wales) (14:33): I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. There is no doubt that when you look at what the member for Upper Hunter has achieved in a very short time, you can tell that he is representing his community and making a big difference in his local area. I had the privilege this week of joining the member for Upper Hunter in Singleton, where we were able to announce round eight of the Resources for Regions program, which is so important because it supports those mining communities. Mining activities have provided economic prosperity and economic benefits to the State.

Through the Government's Resources for Regions program we want to make sure our communities get a fair share of that funding. When Labor members were last in government they sat back. They had an opportunity to do this. However, they did not invest in regional New South Wales but put the money into city projects. They cancelled projects and they saw the regions fall behind. They did not invest through programs like this one. They neglected the regions and have continued to do so. The Liberals-Nationals Government has turned the tap back on. Our investment is allowing our communities to grow and continue to be great places to live. Since the fund began in 2012, the Resources for Regions program has delivered 242 projects worth \$420 million. On Monday the member for Upper Hunter joined me at the Singleton rugby league club. We announced that the club will receive \$1.3 million for an upgrade of its clubhouse, which will see female amenities and a new function area. This is pretty important.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

Members in the public gallery might not think it is very important but I spoke to a young lady, a junior player called Paris, who has started playing for the club. She said, "For the first time, I can actually get changed comfortably. There is somewhere where I do not have to have the men locked outside waiting for us females to get changed."

The SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are 120 members of the club who will benefit from these investments. Some 20 females are part of the Singleton Greyhounds club. While we were there the member for Upper Hunter had a few goes at catching the football. He caught a few; he dropped a few. I know that next year he is thinking about strapping the boots on and becoming part of the team. Maybe he will make the back row or something. The Resources for Regions program will deliver 93 projects, with \$75 million invested. It supports communities across the State, whether in Broken Hill, Cessnock, Narromine, Blayney or Lithgow. They are some of the communities that are benefiting from this investment.

These investments are going into footpaths, roads, cycleways and community assets like libraries, playgrounds and museums. I inform the House that the Upper Hunter electorate is receiving \$17 million to support 24 projects. It will get \$6 million towards the Muswellbrook Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre. Liverpool Plains Shire Council is receiving \$2 million for its waste strategy and \$430,000 is heading to Upper Hunter Shire Council to improve access to the Scone industrial area, regional saleyards and local businesses. I know that the member for Upper Hunter will be making more announcements over the upcoming weeks.

While I was visiting the electorate I also had the opportunity to announce the concept design for the Muswellbrook bypass. Again, this is another project under the Liberal-Nationals Government that is creating jobs and making a difference to our roads. This particular project will see nine kilometres of the bypass built. We have put the concept design out to the community. The bypass will take heavy vehicles out of the centre of town and transform the community. While members opposite might want to make noise, I say to the House that it is the Liberal-Nationals Government that is actually coming up with the ideas and investing in regional New South Wales.

I have now been the Deputy Premier for four weeks. I will tell the House how many members opposite have come to knock on my door during that time—none. Not one of them. Zero. They have got no policies. They have got no ideas. They do not know how to represent regional New South Wales, but the Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to do so.

ROAD TOLLS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (14:38): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. The Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Tunnel are Sydney's two remaining toll roads not already owned by the private toll road monopoly. Will the Minister rule out privatising them to the existing toll road monopoly, which already owns all or part of the M2, the M4, the M5 South-West, the M5 East, the M7, the M8, the Lane Cove Tunnel, the Cross City Tunnel, the Eastern Distributor and NorthConnex?

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and Minister for Transport and Roads) (14:39): I thank the member for Summer Hill for her question. As she would be aware, the existing concession in relation to the Sydney Harbour Tunnel is due to expire in August next year, from memory. Decisions in relation to the future of those routes will be provided in time. This is what governments do: They make decisions through an appropriate process. Obviously the process that is currently underway, which has been well signalled to the community, is the assessment of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link. Early works on the Warringah Freeway are currently underway.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. The Minister is answering the question seriously. The member will remain silent.

Mr ROB STOKES: In relation to beaches link, I can confirm that the response to submissions has now been published. Clearly those opposite are aware of that because we are transparent about these matters. I understand a preferred infrastructure report is currently in preparation that will inform the investment decision and, ultimately, the planning assessment in relation to the project.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: This is the process that a responsible government undertakes to make significant investment decisions to benefit the people and the wider community of New South Wales.

COVID-19 AND FAMILIES

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:40): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will he update the House on how the New South Wales Government's economic policies are supporting families as we emerge from the Delta lockdown, and whether there are any alternative policies?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:41): I thank the excellent member for East Hills for her question and the great work she does representing her community. For the benefit of the member and the House, I can confirm that after a quick check of the Leader of the Opposition's Twitter feed there are still no alternative policies as part of his 100-day plan. In fact, we are still waiting to see how many hundreds of days have to pass before we see the first policy as part of the 100-day plan. I am being a bit unfair to the Leader of the Opposition because he has been busy. In fact, he has been out and about campaigning in marginal seats—his own. I was delighted to see he was out at Kingsgrove station the other morning. He posted on Twitter—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: —that he was out, standing with a very fine pooch!

The SPEAKER: The member for Heffron rises on a point of order. The member for Keira will remain silent.

Mr Ron Hoenig: As entertaining as the Treasurer is, there is no—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Mr Ron Hoenig: He is not close to being relevant, even generally, to the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: I was giving the Minister a little leeway. I am sure he will come to the question.

Mr MATT KEAN: I was giving credit to the Leader of the Opposition for his high level of activity in his own seat. He is out there shoring up those marginal seats, such as his own. I think it is great that he was standing next to a pooch—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I advise the member for Heffron that I will hear further from the Minister and give him a chance—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Mr Speaker, I invite you to direct your attention to the ruling—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Ron Hoenig: I invite you to direct your attention to the considered ruling of Speaker Rozzoli on 25 May—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am happy to listen to the member for Heffron. Members on both sides of the Chamber will remain silent.

Mr Ron Hoenig: A considered ruling by Speaker Rozzoli—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Lane Cove to order for the first time.

Mr Ron Hoenig: A considered ruling by Speaker Rozzoli on 25 May 1988 held that the Minister should come to the subject matter quickly. A bit of fun for the first 30 seconds or a minute is one thing, but to continue even after you indicated—

The SPEAKER: I have heard enough. I did direct the Minister to come shortly to the question and I now ask him to do so.

Mr MATT KEAN: Speaker Rozzoli may be one thing, but he has got nothing on you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Ron Hoenig: It is improper for the Treasurer to reflect poorly on a Speaker's rulings.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer has only complimented me, and I thank him for that.

Mr MATT KEAN: I withdraw the compliment to the Speaker. I digress long enough. Unlike those opposite, we have concrete policies and plans to grow our economy and support families in this State. That is what we are doing. That is why we are supporting families not just in East Hills but right across New South Wales with our two \$25 Dine & Discover vouchers, which will help to ease the cost of living for families and encourage them to go out and enjoy a meal in a restaurant or cafe and support our economy whilst doing so.

In addition to that, we have our Stay & Rediscover vouchers. The member for Ryde cannot wait to stay and rediscover all the wonderful hotels in Ryde; I am sure there are many and they vary. That is a \$50 voucher for every adult in New South Wales. We encourage people to use those vouchers to take a holiday, whether it be in the bush or in the city, to support the accommodation industry that has done it so tough during this difficult time. Not only are we supporting families and encouraging them to have a holiday, we are helping them support our economy in the process.

We know that many members in this Chamber are parents. They supported our teachers by homeschooling their kids to ensure that they got a great education and did not skip a beat during COVID-19. As a small token of the Government's appreciation, we are providing \$250 vouchers to each household that has young children as a thankyou for the work the parents did helping their kids learn during the pandemic and not skip a beat in their education. Obviously not all of us are teachers, so we want to make sure that no kid falls behind as a result of this period when they have been out of the classroom.

That is the reason we are putting almost \$500 million to provide intensive learning support for those kids who may have learning gaps that need to be filled. That funding will help to employ around 7,500 support teachers to ensure that our kids are able to continue their education journey and further support our economy into the future. We know it has been a difficult time for many people in this State. That is one of the reasons that we are looking after people's mental health. We are putting \$130 million on the table to provide the support services when people need them as we get through this very difficult time. We want to make sure those services are available to everyone across the community to ensure that they can get through this time and support the economy while doing so. We are putting those initiatives in place. That is what concrete plans and policies look like.

TRANSPORT ASSET HOLDING ENTITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:47): My question is directed to the Premier. Was Rodd Staples fired because he raised serious safety concerns about the Transport Asset Holding Entity of New South Wales?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:47): No.

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (14:47): My question is directed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment. The recent purchases of pastoral properties in the Far West have raised the concerns of locals about lost economic activity and pricing young would-be pastoralists out of the market. People are also concerned about common fences, pest management and the lost rates and levies that will not be paid by national parks. What assurances can the Treasurer give Far West locals to address those concerns? Will the Treasurer now stop taking agricultural land off the market and out of production, given he has exceeded his original target?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (14:48): I thank the member for Barwon for his question. I will respond to the last part of his question first. This Government will continue to identify opportunities for conservation. That is what Conservative governments do. We protect our environment for future generations, but we look to get the balance right between growing a strong economy, supporting those working in agriculture, and handing our planet to the next generation better than we found it. What I say to the member for Barwon is that one of the most unrepresented areas in our national parks estate, one of the most under-represented areas of biodiversity and ecosystems that are not included in the national parks estate, is in the Western Division. We have tried to identify opportunities to protect those very valuable ecosystems and landscapes that are home to many threatened and endangered species. I understand the concerns of the member for Barwon and we need to protect those rural and regional economies, and we can do both.

To that end one of the things that we are doing is investing heavily in visitor infrastructure. For the benefit of the member for Barwon and all members who represent our regions, I want to turbocharge people to go to the regions. Some of the best assets we have are our extraordinary national parks. They are home to extraordinary landscapes and some of the most beautiful threatened and endangered species that we should be showcasing to the world. We will invest heavily in the infrastructure to support and drive that tourism into the regions, in particular the Barwon region. We are focused on building a world-class national park estate to protect our most important natural assets, while promoting opportunities for the community to enjoy them. I am determined to ensure that this delivers benefits for local communities through tourism, economic activity and infrastructure.

The recent acquisitions in western New South Wales that the member referred to have been carefully targeted and most occur where the percentage of land already in the national park estate is very low. For example, there is only 3 per cent to 5 per cent, or even lower in some cases, in regions that have been neglected in the past. These include the Narriearra Caryapundy Swamp, the Metford-Langidoon and Koonaburra stations, and the Avenel-Mount Westwood site. Those new acquisitions contain exceptional conservation values and they showcase great natural and cultural values that will be managed and showcased in a way that benefits the whole community, including the local Barwon community. I acknowledge the member's concerns that acquisitions can sometimes be disruptive, particularly for neighbouring landowners. Purchases are only ever made from willing landowners. We have gone to the market and we have purchased these sites from willing landholders.

I know that buying back land is just the beginning. Active land management is needed to deal with feral animals, weeds and fire, and maintain infrastructure. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is currently delivering the largest feral animal control program in its history. We have tripled the level of aerial shooting that it does, and aerial baiting has increased nearly five-fold. This expanded feral animal and weed control program is either already in place or being established for the new parks. Baiting has already occurred four times at Narriearra, and weed control targeting boxthorn and Parkinsonia has already been undertaken at Narriearra and Metford-Langidoon. I am advised that the level of employment in the National Parks and Wildlife Service is the highest it has ever been, with over 2,000 full-time equivalents and more than 10 per cent are Aboriginal staff. I want to see further opportunities created for Aboriginal communities across these parks. Additional staff have

already been deployed in the west to work at Narriearra and Metford-Langidoon and additional staff will be based at Avenel-Mount Westwood after the settlement occurs.

Pastoralism and agriculture will always make a big contribution to local economies, and so too must tourism and national park management. My clear focus is to ensure that our regional economies are strengthened by these new parks, new tourism assets, and the New South Wales Government is very happy to work with the member for Barwon to maximise those benefits. I welcome the opportunity to visit those locations with him and will be looking for an opportunity to make that happen in the new year. At a statewide level, our national parks attract around 60 million visits and contribute \$17.9 billion-worth of economic activity annually. They support more than 74,000 direct and indirect jobs. Across western New South Wales during the last financial year, more than 47,000 people spent over 134,000 visitor nights in national park campgrounds and accommodation. We want to turbocharge that by building the infrastructure. We will have the marketing campaign to support that and we hope to grow that even further.

COVID-19 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (14:53): My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's support to ensure upcoming local government elections are COVID safe?

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (14:54): I thank the member for Hawkesbury not only for her question but also for her interest in local government, generally. I have previously mentioned to all members of this House who work so well with their local councils—if they do. They do not always work well with their councils. I have referred before to the member for Blacktown, who does that really well. In answer to a previous question I spoke about the member for Barwon. Just yesterday he came to speak to me about one of his councils—one of 13 councils in his electorate. Those who have one or two councils should think about the poor member for Barwon who has 13 councils to deal with—but enthusiastically.

The member for Oatley, who may not be in the Chamber, is always advocating for his local community. Just a week ago I visited his electorate to inspect some of the infrastructure projects being rolled out as a partnership between the State Government and his local council, the mighty Georges River Council—a mighty council, great mayor and great general manager. I see the member for Terrigal in the Chamber. What a great advocate he is for his council. Every time he gets an opportunity he is in the House advocating for his council. But he does not have a council.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Let's talk about COVID safe elections because it is a serious matter. As we approach the elections, which are just a few weeks away—thank goodness, on 4 December—we are all very excited about it. It has been a long time for some of the councils—too long for some of them to be there—but I can assure members that the Electoral Commission has worked very closely with my office and the Office of Local Government to make sure that, above all, these elections are COVID safe. Let's look at how different COVID-safe elections will be. If you decide to vote in person at an election, candidates will not be handing out information within 100 metres of a polling booth.

People have complained to me about that, but we need to be safe. Why? Because everybody has the right to vote. That means unvaccinated people may be at polling booths. The Electoral Commissioner is absolutely committed to making sure that everybody is safe—whether it is those handing out election material 100 metres from a polling booth, people working inside the polling booths and, of course, the volunteers. That is the way it is going to be. There will be social distancing, mask wearing, regular cleaning inside polling places, disposable pens and pencils—but please bring your own to save the Electoral Commission some money. This Government, under the Premier, has allowed the Electoral Commissioner to have an additional—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will show the Minister more respect.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Mr Speaker, if I was in your chair, they would be out the door.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will continue. I have asked members to be quiet.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Thank you. It is a serious subject.

The SPEAKER: It is.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Thank you. Let's talk about pre-poll voting, which begins on Monday week, so please let your voters know that. There will be more pre-polling locations available and the same safety rules will apply. People will be safe, and they will be kept safe. That is the most important thing. There will be

more polling places on election day as well. We do not want crowds on election day. There will be queue management outside and extra staff. The Electoral Commissioner will use the additional funds very wisely. He is the electoral manager. He does make recommendations to me and for the most part—99.9 per cent of the time—of course I am going to agree with those recommendations. That is what is going to happen on 4 December and then we can all celebrate that we are finally there. I know councillors are celebrating. The fact is that we have an increase of 4.2 per cent female candidates running in local council elections this year, which is fantastic.

Mr Stephen Kamper: That's if they're not running for the Liberal Party.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Rockdale that he is on three calls to order. Another word and he will leave the Chamber.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: I thought he was already on three calls to order.

The SPEAKER: He is on three calls to order. If he says one more word, he will be out of the Chamber.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: I find that comment offensive to women. I was commenting on the increase in the number of female candidates.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Rockdale to remove himself from the Chamber for the remainder of the day.

[The member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 14:58 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: That was an offensive comment when I was talking about women. I mentioned there is an increase of 4.2 per cent in the number of female candidates running in the election. I am really pleased with that. Over the last 12 months we have had a long campaign, with workshops all over the State, encouraging women to run. *[Extension of time]*

I would be happy to speak forever on local government and local government elections. I know that the Opposition is not interested in their local government areas. I generally name members who are great advocates for their local councils such as the member for Terrigal, even though he does not have a local council. He is a great advocate. I thank the Electoral Commissioner because it has been a tough time for him too. He has been preparing for the local government elections for over two years. He prepared for last September's elections and for the September 2021 elections; he is now preparing for the December 2021 elections. He is working hard. He has been looking a bit frazzled lately.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I asked members to be more respectful by not carrying on conversations. I have ejected a member from the Chamber. I again ask members to desist from having conversations. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. This is a serious topic. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, that was a considered decision. If it was me, again, I would have just said, "Shut up and get out."

The SPEAKER: The Minister will continue.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: But that was me. Mr Speaker, you are much more dignified. I again encourage all members to please work cooperatively with their new councils after 4 December. I have said before in this Chamber that the best members in this House work with their local councils, as difficult as that might be at times. You will have a much better outcome for your communities if you work with your council. Do you know what? Your communities want to see that happen. They do not want to see you bickering and fighting and criticising your council—as difficult as it might be not to do so. They want to see members of Parliament working well with them.

I draw the attention of members to the members I always name, such as the member for Blacktown. He brings in his great mayor, he talks about his great Blacktown council. The member for Barwon, the member for Terrigal and the member for Oatley are always bringing their councils' representatives into my office and always asking me to go to their area to have a look—and I do. We have had some great days with the Central Coast Council looking at the infrastructure that is being rolled out into that community with the help of a partnership with the State Government. Let us all be partners with our local mayors. After the elections there will be some new ones, some old ones, some different parties, some new parties, and some independents—whatever it is. It does not matter where council representatives come from, they deserve members' cooperation.

The SPEAKER: The final question is from the member for Terrigal. The member for Londonderry asked two questions in a row and then the member for Barwon asked a question. The Opposition worked very quickly

and the Government member did not have time to come into the Chamber. The Government will now have two questions in a row, which makes five questions from each side.

COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:01): My question is addressed to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting vulnerable children and families and creating stronger communities?

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock until the Minister comes into the Chamber.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services) (15:02): I thank the great member for Terrigal for his question, for his genuine interest in social services and his strong advocacy for the most vulnerable members of his community and the broader Central Coast. After what has been a long COVID winter, it was great to spend some time last week on the beautiful and sunny Central Coast with the Parliamentary Secretary and member for Terrigal to visit some of our hardworking social service providers. Last week the member for Terrigal and I visited the team at Coast Shelter and met with staff at the Regional Youth Support Services—two fantastic organisations that have worked hard through the pandemic to keep vulnerable children and families connected to their local community.

On the way to the Central Coast the member for Lake Macquarie and I had the pleasure of visiting a group home operated by Life Without Barriers, who must be commended for their work in keeping NDIS participants and disability support workers safe and supported during the lockdown. I must say that, on seeing their work, it was very gratifying to know we have people like that who are willing to work with our disabled people. Our Government understands the extra effort organisations have expended during the past 18 months and the need to help to ease the financial burden for the non-government sector to ensure that service providers are able to adapt to unexpected changes and maintain continuity of the important services that they deliver. That is why the New South Wales Government has invested \$50 million in the Social Sector Support Fund to help organisations working in child and family services, housing, homelessness and disability services. The next round of funding through the Social Sector Support Fund is now open. I look forward to announcing the successful recipients in the not too distant future.

While on the Central Coast last week, the member for Terrigal and I announced new funding for Pacific Link Housing, through the New South Wales Government's Community Housing Innovation Fund, on top of opening a brand new 50-unit social and affordable housing development in Adamstown with the Minister for Water, Property and Housing, funded through our Social and Affordable Housing Fund. In Adamstown it was an outstanding view. Well-located social and affordable housing right there near the Nineways at Broadmeadow and the Broadmeadow basketball stadium, where I spent many years in my youth. The Central Coast funding for Pacific Link will deliver 12 brand-new units for older women in Woy Woy. We have identified that as a demographic that is in particular need of support. It was particularly interesting to hear from the president of Pacific Link Housing and how that investment will support their investing in another three social housing projects on the Central Coast and in Lake Macquarie.

The SPEAKER: The member for Gosford will come to order.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The Community Housing Innovation Fund is unlocking new and exciting development opportunities by partnering with the community housing sector and adding to the strong pipeline of new housing being delivered to support vulnerable people. The investment to bolster housing supply was made as part of the New South Wales Government's COVID-19 economic recovery strategy. These projects will create jobs in communities across the State and when complete will provide safe and secure housing for people who need them most. These investments are helping create strong communities. I am sure I speak for all members of this House in reiterating a huge thank you to our community services sector for their efforts and hard work.

It was a busy week last week. I had the pleasure of joining the member for Camden to visit some of our social sector services in south-western Sydney. We met with Jody and the team from the Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Minto, who are delivering important early intervention services and support for vulnerable children and families in the community. We also had the opportunity to visit the Reiby Youth Justice Centre where we saw how their work is so important. [*Extension of time*]

At the Reiby Youth Justice Centre we met with frontline staff, including Lee, who is a Youth Justice chaplain who had more than 20 years of experience working in Youth detection. She was able to reflect on the huge reduction in the number of detainees in custody over the past 10 years. Under Labor there were over 400 young people in detention; now there are fewer than 200 under the Coalition Government, which is a decrease of over 50 per cent. It is one of the great achievements of the Coalition Government. The social services sector has been the frontline of support for vulnerable families throughout the pandemic. They have worked tirelessly to

keep vulnerable communities safe and connected during the lockdowns, and as restrictions ease they have continued to play a pivotal role. Over the coming weeks I look forward to getting out on the road and continuing to visit our hardworking community services and hearing about the work they do to keep vulnerable children and families safe, including in regional New South Wales.

Documents

NSW CRIME COMMISSION

Reports

The CLERK: In accordance with section 35 of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010, I announce receipt of the assumed identities report of the NSW Crime Commission for the year ended 30 June 2021, received on 10 November 2021.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Inquiry

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning has resolved to conduct an inquiry into food production and supply in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

Bills

GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GOVERNMENT GRANTS) BILL 2021

Second Reading Speech

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (15:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Government Grants) Bill 2021. I introduce this bill today not for my own self-interest, not for the interest of my party and not for the interest of any lobbyist or peak body: I introduce this bill for the people of New South Wales, people who day in and day out show up to work, work hard and pay their taxes. It is their taxes that this Government, and any government, distributes through Government grants programs. When a government awards a grant it is using public money, the money from the people of New South Wales. It is not the Government's money. It is not a slush fund to be used to buy favour in a community to be granted for the political benefit of one party to buy votes, or, as the former Premier said in ICAC, "curry favour with the electorate".

While this behaviour and practice is not illegal, it is mucky. It shows contempt for the people of New South Wales and it may be found by ICAC to be corrupt. Time will tell. I have heard members opposite fume at me after the delivery of the State Budget. I will not use the language that they used, but it was to the effect of, "Damn safe seat. I get nothing again." I have had people in my own electorate say to me, "We are not a safe seat anymore. It means we'll finally get things funded." These are essential things like roads, bubblers at schools, new play equipment on school sites, buses for disabled students to get to school, mental health councillors, and the list goes on. Over the past year honest, hardworking, taxpaying people right across New South Wales have sat back and watched in disbelief as we have heard explosive evidence about document shredding in the Premier's office, blatant pork-barrelling during by-elections, and multiple stories about tens of millions of dollars from regional funds going to Sydney suburbs.

There was an instance in my own electorate where a worthy recipient in Narrabri deemed eligible for grant money was bumped so money could go to Sydney. There was a cool \$90 million given to one council in Sydney in a matter of days, without any application form from the council—just after a few phone calls and emails. These accounts are utterly offensive to people in my electorate. On the topic of pork-barrelling, this Government has attempted to make the public believe that the pork-barrelling of funds into an electorate makes the member of Parliament representing that area a good local member. We saw that defence presented yesterday in the other place by a member of Government when blatant pork-barrelling was discussed.

Members of Government spend their time flitting around regional New South Wales announcing grants, making it seem like this Government is the saviour of the people. The motivation for this behaviour is clear: It is aimed at suppressing political competition, excluding non-Government elected representatives and, far worse, at times threatening the recipient group. Non-disclosure agreements are forced upon groups by the Government with the threat, "If you want the grant you can't talk to your non-Government local representative." This is the behaviour

of a dictatorship. It has no place in Australia and it is well within the realm of ICAC's investigative instructions. This behaviour is increasing, the independence of agency staff is in question and the public's opinion of Government has never been lower.

This bill removes the motive for the misuse of public money to suppress political competition and allows community groups the confidence to engage with the local elected representative, and not the faux representatives forced onto them. What you never see discussed in the highly staged Government announcements is the effort of the local footy club, Country Women's Association, Campdraft Association, or band of community-minded individuals who have put in a huge amount of work to extract a small amount of funding from this Government. There is one fund that is used by members of Government—particularly the junior party in the Coalition—to say they are not pork-barrelling funds, that is the \$400,000 per electorate Community Building Partnership program.

While the Community Building Partnership program is a fantastic program that has seen many worthy projects funded in my electorate, saying we do not pork-barrel because of one fund is hardly a substantial body of evidence compared to what the Public Accountability Committee found in its inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of New South Wales Government grant programs—a 200-page dissection of all that is wrong with the grants process in this State. That inquiry found clear abuses of the grants processes, improper allocations of public money and scenarios that fell well short of the principles of proper grants administration and public expectations. As the report states:

Government grant programs should always be designed and administered according to principles of transparency and accountability and to benefit the public interest. While these principles are important in any government process, they are particularly important when public money is being spent. The public has a reasonable expectation that grant programs will be designed and administered fairly and appropriately. This is important for public confidence in government and its processes. The principles of transparency and accountability are particularly important in the design and administration of grant programs, which can blur the lines between government administration and politics.

The bill is by no means a silver bullet for all the things that are wrong with the administration of Government grants in New South Wales. The bill takes the first step down the path to putting rigour and controls in the Government's various grant processes. It is simple in nature. It will amend the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to provide for informing the relevant member of Parliament, that being the member of the Legislative Assembly for the electorate that the grant applicant is from. That is the elected representative and not some Government member from miles away—a Government grants glitter fairy. The bill does that by inserting new section 10.6, which notifies relevant members of Parliament of decisions about Government grants. New section 10.6 (3) states:

The entity responsible for deciding the application must give oral or written notice to the relevant member of Parliament of the following information, as soon as practicable after the entity becomes aware of each matter—

- (a) when the entity received the application,
- (b) the time frame for deciding the application,
- (c) a decision about whether to pay the grant to the applicant,
- (d) if a decision is made to pay the grant to the applicant—
 - (i) the amount to be paid, and
 - (ii) when and where the decision will be announced.

The amendment includes the capacity to exclude the local member from the future provision of this information if the person discloses unreleased information without the consent of the grant decision-maker. It does not preclude the Government from announcing grants; however, it does provide for the inclusion of the elected representatives in that process. In the past week we have heard the Premier say he wants to improve transparency in Government grants programs. Supporting this bill would be a move in the right direction and would signal strongly to the people of regional New South Wales that he is going to stop the pork-barrelling we have seen from the Liberals and The Nationals in government. I urge every member to support the bill, which I commend to the House.

Debate adjourned.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT (RELIGIOUS VILIFICATION) BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 10 June 2021.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (15:17): Via video link: I continue my contribution to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. Section 20C of the principal Act classified racial vilification as unlawful where the vilification against a person or a group of persons on the grounds of race of the person or persons was, and is, unlawful. The outcome of the 1994 amendment, section 4 of the

Anti-Discrimination Act [ADA], defines race as including ethno-religious origin, which according to the then Attorney General, Jim Hannaford, was to:

... clarify that ethno-religious groups such as Jewish people, Muslims and Sikhs have access to the racial vilification and discrimination provisions of the Act.

This was a clear attempt to, at least for some religions, make religious vilification unlawful. That small change, however, did not work in the way that it was meant to as a result of judicial doubts about what "ethno-religious origin" means. According to the NSW Anti-Discrimination Tribunal and its appeal panel:

... "ethnic origin" is already expressly covered in the definition of race, "ethno-religious origin" must therefore be a subset of the religious origin of the group, rather than a subset of the ethnic origin of the group.

The need to enshrine lawful protections from religious discrimination and vilification has been an ongoing topic of discussions, inquiries and efforts to address it legislatively. Following the legalisation of same-sex marriage in November 2017, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced the appointment of an expert panel to examine whether Australian law adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion. In May 2018 the panel delivered the Religious Freedom Review, commonly known as the Ruddock review, to the Prime Minister. The report made 20 recommendations, including recommendation 16, which stated:

New South Wales and South Australia should amend their anti-discrimination laws to render it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a person's 'religious belief or activity' including on the basis that a person does not hold any religious belief. In doing so, consideration should be given to providing for the appropriate exceptions and exemptions, including for religious bodies, religious schools and charities.

In August 2019 the Commonwealth released the first exposure drafts of a package of legislation on religious freedom for public consultation, which generated approximately 6,000 submissions. In December 2019 the Commonwealth released the second exposure drafts of a package of legislation on religious freedom for public consultation. Those drafts received close to 7,000 submissions. The former Commonwealth Attorney-General also met personally with close to 100 stakeholder groups to hear their views on this issue. Reform appeared to stall at the Federal level, including as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in June 2021 the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, announced her intention to introduce a major rewrite of the Commonwealth bill into the Federal Parliament by December 2021. In an article published in *The Australian* on 16 June 2021, the Commonwealth Attorney-General was quoted as saying:

Our government takes the issue of discrimination against Australians on the grounds of their religious beliefs seriously. I am working to progress the Religious Discrimination Bill so that it can be considered by parliament by the end of this year. I am meeting with stakeholders so that all input can be considered.

Ms Cash reiterated this commitment on 3 September 2021. Given that commitment, it is appropriate to await the passage of Commonwealth legislation before New South Wales introduces reforms to outlaw religious discrimination. That will allow the New South Wales Government to consider the interaction between the Commonwealth and the New South Wales proposed legislation and will help to avoid constitutional inconsistency. However, last year the Hon. Mark Latham tabled a private member's bill, the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill in 2020, in the other place to respond to the Ruddock review and protect the religious beliefs of the people of New South Wales as he noted the urgent requirement to protect religious citizens of our State was stalling. The Government referred the bill to a joint select committee for inquiry.

Evidence and submissions to the inquiry demonstrated that vilification and harassment on the grounds of personal religious belief is not only still occurring but in fact increasing. Various submissions were received, including from the Australian Muslim community, the Australian Christian Alliance and many other groups representing people of religious belief and practice. The evidence and submissions to the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedom and Equality) Bill 2020 shone a light on the urgency required to protect people from religious vilification and harassment. The Government's response to the committee inquiry was tabled in Parliament on 7 September 2021. As part of the Government's response, it committed to amending the ADA to introduce religion as a ground of discrimination following the passage of the Commonwealth religious discrimination bill.

Disappointingly, our nation—and especially New South Wales—is still waiting for the Commonwealth to deliver on this election commitment. It is well known that New South Wales is a very religious State. We have the highest proportion of people in the Commonwealth who identify themselves as having a religion—65.5 per cent, which is 5 per cent higher than the national average. My electorate of Mulgoa, when compared with all other New South Wales electorates, has the highest proportion of persons of Catholic religion as at the 2011 national census and the 2016 census. In the 2016 census Mulgoa had the third highest percentage of persons of Christian religion. People of faith and religious belief are not calling for superior laws to protect against discrimination. People of faith and religious belief are calling for equal laws to protect against discrimination.

I acknowledge the efforts of the various members of the New South Wales Parliament to act to address this identified gap in our discrimination laws.

In closing, civil vilification protections should be considered following the passage of the Commonwealth's religious discrimination bill. I urge the Government to closely monitor the progress of the Commonwealth Government on fulfilling its election commitment from 2019 to ensure the protection against discrimination for people of faith and religion. If the Commonwealth Government fails to deliver on that election commitment to the Australian people, then the New South Wales Government must act urgently itself, as recommended by the Ruddock Religious Freedom Review and the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedom and Equality) Bill 2020. For those reasons, I oppose the bill.

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:24): I support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. I thank the member for Liverpool for bringing the bill to the House. The bill arises from the work of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020. In New South Wales religion is not included in anti-discrimination legislation. The recent Federal Government Religious Freedom Review recommended that New South Wales include religion in anti-discrimination legislation. It noted the limited statutory protections in New South Wales for religion regarding discrimination.

Our society has long been one of tolerance and freedom from discrimination. We value freedom of thought and conscience. Religious groups and organisations have made an immense and ongoing contribution to our society. Belonging to a religious group is a fundamental part of religious belief. Adding religion to antidiscrimination legislation would help ensure that people can practice their faith without fear of discrimination. The religious freedoms and equality bill sought to address this. The joint select committee made clear recommendations to the Government, including that the issue of vilification be included in a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. I will come to that later.

Why act now on vilification? Unfortunately, the Government has chosen to delay addressing the recommendations made by the joint select committee. Its argument is that it is waiting for the Commonwealth legislation. Yet the Commonwealth has continued to delay the introduction of legislation seemingly to kick the can down the road on this important reform. In any case, the joint select committee received evidence that there were no impediments to New South Wales implementing legislation. Other States have protection for religion regarding discrimination. In fact, only New South Wales and South Australia do not have those protections. So far the Government's response has been disappointing. In that context I support the bill. It steps in for one area where the Government is prevaricating.

I supported the recommendations of the joint select committee, including that the issue of vilification be undertaken in a full review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. However, the delay by the Government and the Government's response to put off action until the Commonwealth laws are changed means that we should take this opportunity now to act on the issue of vilification. Who knows when the Commonwealth will get round to this issue? It has waited so long to this point. I particularly note and endorse the comments of the member for Vacluse in her speech in this place. She was very emphatic about the need for the Government to address this issue, to take on board the recommendations of the joint select committee and to act on this issue. I thank and publicly acknowledge the member for Vacluse for her chairing of the joint select committee. It was a very large committee, which dealt in a robust way—to say the least—with issues that mean a great deal to people. If anything could point to the importance of this issue, it is the passion and detail with which this matter was discussed and debated. It was no easy task and the member for Vacluse managed the process superbly.

If the Government takes prompt action, as the member for Vacluse has called for, even then we would have to wait for a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act and that, no doubt, would be a lengthy process. I believe we do not need to wait so long for what really is a straight-walk-forward provision. The Government speakers have raised objections to the bill, which I will now deal with. They made references to provisions in the Crimes Act in relation to vilification offences. Perhaps that is an implication that these are sufficient. However, the inclusion of religion in the Anti-Discrimination Act with respect to vilification will provide many more avenues, as the member for Liverpool has clearly pointed out, to act on an instance of vilification such as making a complaint to the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW or an appropriate referral to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

As the Public Interest Advocacy centre indicated to the joint select committee, vilification in the Act offers broader protection than in the Crimes Act, and it was argued that religion should be included in the civil vilification provisions by them. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre noted that currently, with reference to ethno-religious origins, there is a limited protection to some religions but not all. This would correct that anomaly. In its submission to the joint select committee, Muslim Women Australia said:

No action has been brought under this provision—

the Crimes Act—

to date and it is unclear how the Courts will approach such matters. In any event we submit that it is likely to only be used in the most serious of cases given that the incitement has to be to 'violence'. This would not prevent the vast majority of acts we have noted above. This issue of vilification of people of faith generally, and the protections afforded against it, is of vital importance to our social fabric.

As I said, this would correct that anomaly and ensure that the vilification protections were extended to all religions. There was an objection from the Government that there was not enough consultation on this issue, yet the joint select committee received 192 submissions and more than 19,000 online responses, and heard from 57 witnesses from 47 organisations. The vilification issue was raised on several occasions. The committee discussed robustly a range of issues regarding religion and freedom from discrimination, and the issue of vilification certainly came up. While I agree that it was not a major focus, there was certainly enough evidence to suggest that this amendment is reasonable. As members have already indicated in this debate, there has been consultation in relation to changes to the Crimes Act. The extension of the provisions beyond the Crimes Act will provide important protection.

At the time of the ethno-religious category being added to the vilification provisions in 1994, New South Wales was a very different society. I will comment about my electorate in that context. In Wagga Wagga there are people of more than 100 nationalities. For many of those people, religion is very important to their community and identity. Through migration and refugee settlement programs, Wagga Wagga is becoming a true melting pot. The town hosts the FUSION festival, COVID notwithstanding, which is a great multicultural food and entertainment event that is getting more popular every year. Since 2006 Wagga Wagga has become home to refugees from a number of countries across the world, including people from Yazidi, Afghan, Burmese and many African communities.

Wagga Wagga illustrates how New South Wales and Australian society has profoundly changed in the past decades. There is no more apparent instance of that than the example of the Yazidi community. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Yazidis are a deeply spiritual Kurdish religious minority found primarily in northern Iraq, south-eastern Turkey, northern Syria, the Caucasus region and parts of Iran. Sadly they have been subjected to persecution because of their beliefs. Thankfully many have sought refuge in Australia. In August 2016 the first nine Yazidi families arrived in Wagga Wagga. The Wagga Wagga Yazidi community now numbers more than 1,200 people. In their new home, members of the Yazidi community are able to live peacefully, and attend school and work. More and more members of the community are opening their own businesses.

In 2018 Wagga Wagga became home to Australia's first Yazidi burial site, after the Wagga Wagga City Council approved the community's proposal for a section in the cemetery. This recognised the importance of allowing the community to practise their beliefs. Members of the Yazidi community have bought homes, found jobs, opened businesses and enrolled their children in schools. Among those they can now call friends are members of other persecuted minorities, including Hazara Muslims, who themselves were forced to flee persecution in Afghanistan. In multicultural Wagga Wagga, all should be free to live, work, learn and practice their faith. Two weeks ago I was privileged to attend the sod-turning event for a prayer house for the Islamic community in my city. It was a great and welcoming event that brought together, under the Islamic faith, people of many different nationalities. It was a great, warm, welcoming, positive feeling. We know how the Islamic community has probably suffered more than most in our society with vilification issues. This legislation would play a very important role in preventing this.

Many people choose Australia as a place to live because of our commitment to freedom. Importantly, that includes the freedom to believe and practice religious faith. We should act to support that freedom by including religious thought and conscience as attributes to be protected in anti-discrimination legislation and by including a protection from vilification in the legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:34): I make a contribution to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. I acknowledge the member for Liverpool for bringing the bill before the House. I also acknowledge the member for Wagga Wagga. One aspect that I dwell upon when considering the response of this side of the House is that it hinges on whether it is reasonable to wait for the Commonwealth to legislate in this area. Inconsistencies can be derived from acting ahead of the Commonwealth's legislation. Coming from a border area, my electorate is thwarted by inconsistencies in legislation between jurisdictions. I feel strongly about that. After the Commonwealth having signalled its intent to legislate, members on both sides of the House have a real desire for that legislation to be completed in a timely manner.

Before us today is a bill to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the grounds of a specific religious belief or affiliation. As we have heard, this matter has an extensive history involving many parliaments, committees and submissions. The Commonwealth Government has staked its claim for an essential role in the process. As the member for Wagga Wagga mentioned, the

Parliament of New South Wales established a Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, which is the predecessor to the current bill. I thank all the members on the joint select committee and the member for Vaucluse for chairing it. Many have worked on the various bills and committees, and I thank them for their efforts.

Much of what has been reported makes essential reading when we look at not only where our society has come from but also where our society is now. Anti-discrimination legislation provides rules for a fair and kind society and it must be constructed from an understanding of the beliefs and aspirations of the people who make up our State and nation. The New South Wales Government made it clear that it is committed to supporting the committee's central recommendation to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or activity when that activity is lawful. It is important that we understand that discrimination affects all of us, not just those who hold a religious view. The bill proposes an amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 No. 48 [1], section 4, "Definitions", to make certain that a "religious belief or affiliation means holding or not holding a religious belief or view". The Ruddock Report expands on that point. It states:

First, the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion belongs to all—the religious, the non-religious and those moving towards, away from, or between religions. The right protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, not religion as such. The atheist and the agnostic receive the same protection as the religious adherent. Each is free to hold their beliefs and to live free of coercion to adopt some different set of beliefs. Both are given particular protections to manifest their belief, but their right to do so may be limited, on carefully prescribed grounds, in the interests of the broader community.

Any protections should run in all directions on this subject. That can be established as a ground rule. The bill moves on to section 22AA to define what constitutes a public act as communication to the public by speech, in writing, broadcasting, by conduct and so on. In the following section 22AB, religious vilification by a public act is to be made illegal. The bill is brief. The Albury electorate is a multicultural, multi-faith community. It is home to refugees and migrants who deserve to live with freedom from fear of bullying and discrimination based on their faith, clothing and customs. We must reach out to everyone and embrace them all as whole people. The mental wellbeing of our community depends on understanding, tolerance and kindness.

It is not an easy road, but I am grateful for people like Tika Poudyel, who is a leader of the Bhutanese community in Albury. Tika, along with his team, have been organising their community with COVID planning, understanding restrictions and providing buses to transport them to a community centre for vaccinations. Our communities are pulsing with vibrancy sourced from such a mix and interplay of cultures and faiths. Anti-discrimination laws must work for all who live in New South Wales and Australia. Legislation must fit the brief, which means national consistency at its legal centre. The Ruddock Report acknowledges that point. It states:

The Panel also heard that, as a whole, Australians generally enjoy religious freedom. Most stakeholders of faith acknowledged that, by and large, they have been free to observe their religious beliefs. Those from faiths that face persecution overseas were particularly vocal in acknowledging the relative safety that Australia affords people of different faiths. These perspectives highlighted that religious freedom is precious and that it needs to be actively preserved.

It further stated:

In Australia, the proportion of the population reporting as having 'no religion' is increasing. While this is consistent with trends in western European countries, it runs against trends and projections in Australia's region and globally.

The Government opposes the private member's bill before the House, which will make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the grounds of a specific religious belief or affiliation. In its response to the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, this Government made it clear that implementing its commitment to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or activity should await the passage of the Commonwealth's religious discrimination bill to ensure that constitutional inconsistency is avoided.

Under section 109 of the Australian Constitution, where State and Commonwealth laws are inconsistent, the Commonwealth law prevails to the extent of any inconsistency, acting to invalidate part or all of the State law. The Government made it clear in its response to the committee's report that moving ahead of the Commonwealth process may mean that provisions introduced in the Anti-Discrimination Act for religious discrimination are directly inconsistent with Commonwealth legislation under section 109 of the Australian Constitution and are therefore inoperative.

While existing Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws contain a provision stipulating that the Commonwealth law is not intended to exclude or limit the operation of State or Territory laws that are capable of operating concurrently with the Commonwealth law, they do not cure direct inconsistencies with Commonwealth law. For example, that may occur where Commonwealth, State or Territory anti-discrimination laws protect the same or similar attributes, but the State or Territory laws provide for wider or different exemptions, or where State or Territory anti-discrimination laws remove or diminish an exemption contained in a Commonwealth law.

As my colleagues on this side of the Chamber have stated, it is more appropriate that civil protections for religious vilification be considered holistically in the context of other religious protections that will be implemented following the Commonwealth bill. For that reason, it is appropriate to await the passage of Commonwealth legislation so the New South Wales Government can consider its interaction with proposed legislation so that it avoids constitutional inconsistency. It is an important debate. I look forward to the Government acting once the Commonwealth legislation has passed. For the reasons I have stated, I oppose the bill.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (15:43): I speak in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. I commend the efforts of the member for Liverpool, who is my good friend and has carriage of the bill in this place. In my electorate, faith is an extremely important issue. It is the touchstone of the lives of many of my constituents. As such, it is important that the Government supports the bill to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons based on their specific religious beliefs or affiliation. I will touch on various aspects of the bill. New part 2AA, section 22A in schedule 1 to the bill defines religious vilification as a public act which includes:

- (a) any form of communication to the public, including speaking, writing, printing, displaying notices, broadcasting, telecasting, screening and playing of tapes or other recorded material, and
- (b) any conduct, not being a form of communication referred to in paragraph (a), observable by the public, including actions and gestures and the wearing or display of clothing, signs, flags, emblems and insignia, and
- (c) the distribution or dissemination of any matter to the public with knowledge that the matter promotes or expresses hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of—
 - (i) a person on the ground that the person has a specific religious belief or affiliation, or
 - (ii) a group of persons on the ground that the members of the group have a specific religious belief or affiliation.

At the moment no effective protection against religious vilification exists in the Anti-Discrimination Act. There is, of course, a provision under "race" in section 20D, but this unfortunately does not include members of certain religious persuasions, such as members of the Buddhist faith or Islamic faith, to mention a few. The gap in the law led to the introduction of section 93Z of the Crimes Act, which made it unlawful to publicly threaten or incite violence based on race or religion. This section, however, has not been effectual in the successful prosecution of those who commit a breach, which indicates that more legislation is needed to address religious vilification. It is clear there was an intention by Parliament to make religious vilification unlawful, but the legislation to date somewhat missed the mark. This bill, therefore, is of the utmost importance, and I call on the Government to support its introduction.

The bill fills a gap in the law. It will ensure religious vilification is unlawful, building on the structure of the Anti-Discrimination Act. The Act currently has provisions for racial vilification, transgender vilification, homosexual vilification and HIV/AIDS vilification, with longstanding systems in place to deal with these situations. The bill aims to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act and add religious vilification to this list. In this manner, those systems and procedures in place for other forms of vilification will be extended to include religious vilification. The bill aims to build on an Act that is already there and has been successful in the prosecution of anybody who breaches it with through a system and procedures developed over a length of time. The bill addresses the original intention of Parliament to make religious vilification unlawful. Proposed section 22AB addresses what constitutes an unlawful act in relation to religious vilification, rendering the following acts unlawful:

- (1) It is unlawful for a person, by public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of—
 - (a) a person on the ground that the person has a specific religious belief or affiliation, or
 - (b) a group of persons on the ground that the members of the group have a specific religious belief or affiliation.

It is important to address the fact that preventing people from being vilified on the basis of their faith is integral to the future of our society. Increasingly, our religious groups have taken on a greater humanitarian role and have become a much-needed and welcomed resource for our communities in times of struggle and adversity. COVID-19 has had a major impact on our society since it came to our shores in March 2020. In the past two years, New South Wales has faced two lockdowns, the most recent one in 2021 aimed at curbing the spread of the Delta variant of the virus. It is safe to say that the wider community faced many challenges throughout that time. Fairfield certainly bore the brunt of the restrictions, and very early on in the piece. I was forced to watch the community being brought to its knees as a result. Businesses were forced to shut their doors, workers were placed under stay-at-home orders and many of them lost their jobs as a result. Assistance was needed urgently.

While systems were being put in place and crisis payments processed, a desperate need arose in the community for immediate assistance and for vital supplies so that affected families and vulnerable members of the community could put food on the table. This is where our community groups stepped in to bridge the gap and to provide much-welcomed assistance when it was needed. In the Fairfield local government area, many of the

community groups were religious-based organisations. They had already been rendering support to vulnerable members of the community for some time and immediately ramped up their efforts to assist the thousands of members of the community who then needed their help as well. They did this with admirable rapidity and efficiency. To know that these organisations, who do so much for our community, could be subject to possible religious vilification without any recourse to the law is abominable. It is a situation that needs to be rectified and will be rectified with the introduction of this bill.

In my time as the member for Fairfield and throughout the pandemic I have had a close association with faith-based groups. I know they are appreciated and respected by the residents of Fairfield. In the Christian faith, priests, nuns and brothers tend to the care and welfare of others. Likewise, the laity also play a substantial role in supporting the community as volunteers. The services range from providing health care in hospitals to counselling services, retreat centres, discounted clothing and furniture, and emergency assistance. Just some of the Catholic Hospitals and aged-care community services include St Vincent's Health Australia, Calvary Health Care, CatholicCare, Catholic Healthcare, Southern Cross Care, the St Vincent de Paul Society, Cardinal Stepinac Village and, in our local area, the Scalabrini aged-care service. Of course, there are other Christian agencies such as Anglicare and the Salvation Army. Locally in Fairfield, there is the Fairfield Church of Christ, the Uniting Church Diner, Kingdom Living Community Services, St Merkorious, and Food Angel. What is common to all is that they care for all people, irrespective of nationality or religion.

For example, Food Angel is a community support service established and run by Mrs Rasha Daniel with the help of volunteers from Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Wakeley. The aim of the organisation is to provide a supply of discounted grocery items, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and general grocery items, at a discounted rate to those members of the community doing it tough. The church has a strong presence in the wider community, and Mrs Rasha Daniel and her team of volunteers have taken up the church's ministry in helping those in need. It is a mammoth undertaking, and the volunteers doubled their efforts during the pandemic when the demand was at its peak. I once asked Mrs Daniel, who has a growing family, what inspired her to do this work and what motivated her to keep going. She simply answered, "God."

The Fairfield branch of the Salvation Army is another religious organisation extending a helping hand to those in need in the community. From assistance with food vouchers, furniture items, disaster assistance as well as mental health advocacy and spiritual support, Pastor David Delaney and his team work tirelessly to minister to the Fairfield community. All is done in the name of God and to spread His message to love and care for each other. They are a valuable asset to the Fairfield community and are recognised and appreciated by all. [*Extension of time*]

The Uniting Church in Fairfield is a stalwart of the community that has been a beacon of humanitarianism for the vulnerable and homeless in the area. The Uniting Church Diner has been serving upwards of 30,000 meals to those in need in the community year after year. So valued is the diner that in the community a trolley drive takes place each year where schools, community groups and businesses donate trolley loads of non-perishable food items to the diner so that it is able to continue to supply meals to the homeless and needy. In the local Buddhist community, the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, the Australian Chinese Teo Chew Association, the Australian Chin Lien Chinese Association and the Phuoc Hue Temple all work tirelessly not only supporting their respective temples but also, once again, providing assistance to the wider community. Especially during times of natural disasters, these associations assist their local Buddhist temples with raising important funds to help those effected by fire, flood or drought.

Our friends in the Islamic community in our Fairfield area do a wonderful job working from their mosques, where they have an obligation under the Islamic pillars to assist those less fortunate. A great example can be witnessed in the work of the Rahma Association of Australia in Guildford and the Islamic Charity Projects Association in helping the community through natural disasters and other events where community members require assistance. They turn nobody away, yet they need protections, and that is why this bill is very important. Then we have our friends in the Sikh community who have recently been actively involved in the Fairfield community delivering hampers to the families doing it tough due to the lockdown. I commend Turbans 4 Australia on their great work. The local Sikh temples have also been feeding the community with freshly prepared meals. Everyone is welcome and no person is turned away.

Our friends in the Jewish community have also reached out with interfaith dialogue regularly to all faiths. They also tend to the needy, as evidenced by Our Big Kitchen, under the direction of my very good friend Rabbi Dovid Slavin. Our Big Kitchen reaches out to people of all faiths at places such as Lou's Place, Mary's House, Rough Edges, Oasis Youth Support, Youth Off The Streets, Wayside Chapel, Jewish House and the Caretakers Cottage, but to name a few, as well as the Greek Orthodox Church and asylum seeker organisations. These are but a few of the religious organisations that minister to the wider community as faith-based organisations. Without their assistance and support, there would be increased pressure on the Government to provide these resources to

the wider community. It is important that these organisations be permitted to carry on their work protected by legislation against religious vilification.

Individuals have a right to be protected. People should be able to wear their religious garments and icons without fear of prejudice or vilification. They should be able to work, pray and go about their everyday lives without faith-based vilification. There is an opportunity here to influence the behaviour of citizens with this bill, to send a clear message that religious vilification will not be tolerated and will be punishable by law. It is very simple. This bill seeks to protect our faith-based communities—in the Islamic community people wearing either the crescent moon, the khandi of Sikhism, the Christian cross, the Star of David in Judaism, the Om in Hinduism or the wheel of dharma in Buddhism; and people walking down the street in their religious clothing—whether it be an Islam hijab, which is the head covering, or the tallit prayer shawl in Judaism, the kippah or the yarmulke, or the turban in Sikhism—so they can actively and freely participate in their religious practices. I commend the member for Liverpool for his tireless work with communities right across New South Wales. I call on the Government to support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate interrupted.

Petitions

LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before we commence the debate and for the benefit of the many people who I am sure are listening online, I take this opportunity to explain the process and rationale behind this unique debate. It is unique because it enables the public to directly bring their concerns to the attention of this House. The intent of this procedure is that the petition debate will start with a speech from a member, which in most cases is the member who lodged the petition—that is, the member for Cootamundra—followed by up to four other members, a Minister in response and then, to conclude the debate, the member for Cootamundra will speak in reply. After all members have spoken, the House will vote on the question, "That the House take note of the petition." In most cases the question will be determined by voices and passed. However, if there is a challenge by a member, it may proceed to a division where the bells will be rung and members will vote on the motion to take note of the petition by sitting on the appropriate side of the House.

Before I put the question, I inform the House that the Speaker has made a special exemption on compassionate grounds to allow visitors into the Cooper Gallery for today's petition debate, and that gallery not being part of the Chamber for the period of the debate. The Speaker has also authorised two media personnel to film the petition debate proceeding today. I remind the media representatives that in recording the proceeding they should not film the visitors in the Cooper Gallery. I warmly welcome to the Cooper Gallery and to the petition debate today Madeline Bott, Frances Bott, Courtney Bott and Shakaya Bott. I am pleased that you are able to join us for the petition debate as the guests of the member for Cootamundra and the member for Maitland.

The question is that the House take note of the petition.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (15:59): It is an honour to present this petition today on behalf of Ms Madeline Bott, the communities of the Cootamundra electorate and communities across regional and rural New South Wales. I acknowledge Maddie, her mother, Frances, and sisters Courtney and Shakaya, who are here in the gallery today. I also acknowledge those back home gathered at the Grenfell Bowling Club, including Mr and Mrs John and Angela Hunter, their families and friends, the families of those tragically killed in the Gerogery level crossing accident, representatives from the Lachlan Regional Transport Committee, the mayors of the Weddin and Cowra shires, the Country Women's Association of NSW and the broader community.

This petition attracted an incredible 21,011 signatures, warranting its debate in Parliament today. By way of background, in February of this year Mr Ethan Hunter and Mr Mark Fenton were involved in a tragic accident at a level crossing near Bribbaree in my electorate. Carting gypsum in a B-double truck, both men, who called the Weddin shire home, were killed instantly when their vehicle was struck by a train as they crossed the railway line. Mark was only 50 years old, Ethan, just 27. Son of John and Angela Hunter, Ethan was Maddie's fiancé. I acknowledge the deep pain felt by Mark's and Ethan's families, friends, work colleagues and the small community of Grenfell. The loss of two much-loved people in their prime hurts entire towns and the anguish reverberates across the region. I also pay tribute to the first responders who attended the accident—most of whom I have come to know well over the past four years. Thank you for all that you do.

Maddie, John and Angela have bravely turned this personal tragedy into action, calling for more to be done to improve safety at level crossings. From our very first meeting, I committed to working hard on this issue on behalf of families and communities across my electorate and New South Wales. Whilst the task is a huge one, with the support of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, we have already achieved change and I will speak to that today. Currently, there are more than 2,700 road level crossings on operational

lines on the New South Wales railway network—1,360 on public roads and the remainder on private properties such as farms. Of those 1,360 level crossings, 434 have active traffic controls like boom gates and flashing lights; and the other 926 have passive traffic controls like stop or give-way signs.

Between 2008 and 2021 there were 84 collisions between trains and cars at level crossings in New South Wales, resulting in 10 fatalities and 15 serious injuries. More than 30 per cent of accidents occurred at locations where the speed limit was 100 kilometres per hour or more. The New South Wales Government, under the leadership of the Deputy Premier, has committed to actioning a suite of options in the short term which will have long-term impacts to make level crossings safer across the State. Over the past eight months, speed limits have been reduced to no more than 80 kilometres per hour at 28 level crossings in a number of regional locations, including Orange, Albury, Port Macquarie, Narromine, Cootamundra and Dubbo. In the coming months, another 82 level crossings will have their speed limits reduced. This will increase safety by allowing drivers more time to react and stop, mitigating the likelihood of crashes.

This is particularly important for heavy vehicles, which need more time to stop due to their size and weight, and will work in combination with other safety measures, such as the scores of electronic signs rolling out on key freight routes and high-risk level crossings across the State. Just two weeks ago I was with Maddie to announce a new initiative whereby farmers are eligible for special red and yellow coloured farm gate signs to help increase awareness of level crossings on farm properties. In the technology space, Transport for NSW is gearing up to trial a low-cost level crossing system, which will increase safety at a number of level crossings across New South Wales. Pleasingly, as requested by this petition, the New South Wales Government acknowledges the obvious safety benefits of active traffic controls, especially boom gates and flashing lights at level crossings. To this end, we have commissioned more major upgrades across New South Wales.

In closing, it is incumbent on all of us to work together across layers of government, with rail managers and operators, across industry and with the community to try to ensure that no other family goes through the pain of losing a loved one under such tragic circumstances. We are making a difference and, with hard work, we can achieve even greater change.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:04): On 23 February this year 27-year-old Ethan Hunter and 50-year-old Mark Fenton lost their lives at a passive level crossing on Eurabba Lane at Bribbaree near Grenfell. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I offer our most sincere condolences to the Hunter and Fenton families. I acknowledge Maddie Bott and her family, who are in the public gallery today, and I thank the Speaker for allowing that to occur. It is really important that they are in the gallery today. I also thank and acknowledge Angela and John Hunter for the time I had with them last week, as well as the supporters at the Grenfell Bowling Club and other stakeholders who are watching the livestream today.

I acknowledge the Country Women's Association; NSW Farmers; the Rail, Tram and Bus Union; the Transport Workers' Union; and the Health Services Union for their support for the petition and the conversations I have had with their office-holders on the issue. Lara Jensen from Wondinong Station in Mount Magnet, Western Australia, reached out to advise me that the Jensen, Broad, Smith and Dempster, Stephen, Levett, Norman, Wooden, Morely-Betts and Boak families have now joined what is a national campaign for improving safety at level crossings. It is really important to have that support.

I have spoken with Maddie a number of times and she has spoken with my office. Recently I met with her and Angela at the site of the fatality. I deeply thank them for that. It was a very courageous and difficult thing to do for them. Their courage and commitment in meeting with me at a site that brings such pain, trauma, sadness and grief is so appreciated. After meeting with Maddie, Angela and Councillor Bill West, I realised that every time they drove over a level crossing in Cowra Shire it brings it all back. That is such a hard thing to live with. Their advocacy for real action in the face of that most intense and personal grief is absolutely inspiring. Maddie has been relentless in campaigning for change. Recently she said:

I want people to stop being sympathetic and empathetic and I want them to start putting a plan in place that we can start achieving to fix these crossings.

It is clear that such action is overdue. In answer to a question I put on notice, the New South Wales Government recently confirmed that of the 1,360 level crossings on public roads in New South Wales, some 927 do not have boom gates and/or flashing lights. In the recent ABC *Landline* program on this topic we learnt:

In 2004 ... following the deaths of five young friends—

who were Kyle Wooden, Cameron Tucker, Graham Kelly, Luke Milne and Ben Wilkins, at what became known as the Five Mates Crossing near Wagga Wagga—

a New South Wales parliamentary committee also recommended better safety systems for drivers at level crossings and a review of measures including strobe lights on locomotives.

A spokesperson for Transport for NSW said its focus is on upgrading high-priority public crossings. They said since 2011 there have been 67 major upgrades to crossings, including the installation of lights, bells and boom gates.

There are just 927 to go. The rate is too slow. In the 2009 Staysafe committee *Report on Updating Progress on Railway Crossing Safety*, which followed the 2004 review, we learnt that in just two years during the last Labor Government some 57 railway level crossings were approved for closure. There is a need for greater and much more urgent action by the New South Wales Government on the issue. Recently there have been two more serious crashes in New South Wales at level rail crossings: one on 23 June near me at Wallarobba, south of Dungog, where three people were admitted to hospital with serious injuries; and one at Kembla Grange, Wollongong, where a train hit an abandoned car and four people suffered injuries.

One of the things that stood out for me when I spoke to Maddie was her concern over the comments by regulators that "one mistake shouldn't cause someone to lose their life." We need to be clearer that it is not about a "mistake" or a lack of attention, education or awareness, or due to carelessness or speeding. The people who have lost their lives at level crossings are victims. We have to think about how we are treating the known risks to health and safety where trains interface with cars.

I ask members to consider the following. Heavy vehicles are lit up on our roads yet trains are not. Flatbed carriages are left on trains without freight containers. Dust can rise as a vehicle stops on a dirt track. Sun and other light conditions, as well as overgrown trees, grass and other vegetation can obscure vision. Finally, active crossings in some places have limited signage or warning systems and, in some cases, those warnings are less than those at crossings that are not in use anymore. We know that those risks must be managed much better than they are. I am really sad that members have not had more time to speak in debate on this issue and that we are unable to have more speakers. However, I give my commitment to Maddie and her family—and the families of all victims—that I will do whatever is in my power to escalate action on this very important topic.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:10): I am pleased to represent the people of the Upper Hunter electorate in debate on the petition calling for level crossing safety. First I acknowledge Maddie Bott and her family in the public gallery and the loss they have suffered due to the accident. Nothing members do in this House will make up for that loss. But the work that she has done shows a strength of character and will, I hope, make a better place for everyone in New South Wales and across Australia. I note the work that everyone has done to bring this petition to the Parliament.

Of course, this is an issue close to my heart. There have been a number of tragic accidents in my electorate. A few months ago three people were seriously injured in the Dungog-Wallarobba Road accident. Recently on Turanville Road there was a very close near miss. The truck driver hit there was very lucky to get out of it with his life. I visited the site and met up with Nic and Doug Robertson, who live on Turanville Road. We had a look at some of the factors that led up to that accident. Since then I have been working closely with the Deputy Premier on the Government's plans to make a difference in this space. Safety at level crossings has and will continue to be a priority for the New South Wales Government as part of our effort to drive the road toll towards zero.

As a local member with a number of level crossings in my electorate, I know the safety challenges presented by them for communities all around Australia, whether in rural and metropolitan areas, on public and private land or on our farms. Last week I announced that speed limits will be lowered at five level crossings across the Upper Hunter electorate as part of our drive to improve safety for motorists. One of the requests in the petition is decreased speed limits on highways on approaches to level crossings. As the member for Cootamundra said, the New South Wales Government has been working proactively on reducing the road speed limits on approaches to level crossings over the past few years. We have taken it one step further than what has been requested. Transport for NSW is assessing and reducing speed limits on approaches to all actively controlled level crossing in New South Wales, not just those on highways.

In 2019 the Government developed the Speed Limit on Approach to Active Level Crossings Policy. The policy requires that speed limits at level crossings actively controlled by flashing lights, or flashing lights and boom gates, and on the approaches to them, be set to a maximum of 80 kilometres per hour. As of August 2021 the program has identified 110 active level crossings for speed changes. Of those, 29 level crossings have had their speed reduction completed and new speed signage is now in place on the approaches to those crossings. Some 28 level crossings were in the speed reduction implementation stage and the remaining 53 level crossings were undergoing speed zone review. The program began in November 2020 and is planned for completion in 2023.

Crashes at level crossings represent only a small number of the total crashes on New South Wales roads each year but we know the outcome can be tragic. They have potential to cause multiple fatalities, they have devastating impacts on families and entire communities and the damage costs exceed tens of millions of dollars. Between July 2008 and June 2021, there were 84 collisions between trains and cars at level crossings in New

South Wales, resulting in 10 fatalities and 15 serious injuries. More than 30 per cent of these occurred at locations where the speed limit was 100 kilometres per hour or greater. We know that reducing the road speed to a maximum of 80 kilometres per hour will allow motorists more time to react and decrease the likelihood of vehicles not being able to stop at level crossings.

Off the back of this statewide safety review, my electorate will see speed limits reduced to 80 kilometres per hour on the approaches to level crossings at Hilldale, Wallarobba and Berrico, and 60 kilometres per hour on the approaches to level crossings on Wards River and Bulliac. We have started on the journey, but we still have a long way to go. Everything we can do to improve these crossings is a step in the right direction.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (16:15): Today I draw attention to level crossings and the safety concerns associated with them. In doing so, I commend the member for Cootamundra for raising this issue earlier in the year and for highlighting Maddie Bott's calls for the Government to do more to improve safety at level crossings. I acknowledge Maddie, her mum, Frances, and sisters Shakaya and Courtney, who are in the public gallery today to witness this important discussion. I cannot begin to imagine what she has been through since losing Ethan under such tragic circumstances earlier this year. Please accept my heartfelt condolences.

Just last month, in the early hours of Wednesday 20 October, a NSW Trains passenger service derailed after colliding with a vehicle that was left on purpose on the railway line near an active level crossing at Kembla Grange, as the member for Maitland has already highlighted. The derailment caused significant damage to the train and rail infrastructure in the area, and four people were taken to hospital. My thanks go to the driver and the guard for their actions on the day, under extreme conditions, to secure the train and ensure the safety of all passengers. Although the vehicle was found to have been left deliberately on the tracks to cause damage, it highlights the ease with which such detrimental harm can occur as a result of the accessibility of level crossings.

Two years ago, also at Kembla Grange, a motorist narrowly avoided a collision with an oncoming train after driving through the level crossing without noticing the warning lights. A potentially deadly collision was prevented by mere seconds. Whilst, thankfully, this is an example of a near miss, from 2001 to 2020 there have been 154 crashes between trains and vehicles at level crossings in New South Wales. Those incidents have resulted in 14 fatalities and 24 serious injuries. It is all well and good for us to react to those examples and implore drivers to take better care on the roads; however, there will always be circumstances where someone may make a mistake or take an unnecessary risk. Does this mean that person, and potentially the people on the train, should be exposed to a much greater risk of serious injury or death? Absolutely not.

That is why I implore the Government to take a harder look at the necessity for level crossings. Rather than hoping every person will take the appropriate steps to avoid such hazards, why not completely mitigate the risks altogether by removing the dangers? The removal of level crossings has a variety of benefits. Removing the danger of trains sharing crossings with vehicles and other road users will help improve overall safety on our roads and for pedestrians. The removal of level crossings will also greatly reduce congestion, thereby eliminating frustrating delays for motorists by eliminating the stop-start nature of boom gates. We all know this. It will also improve travel time and reliability, which flows on as a result.

The Victorian Government established the Level Crossing Removal Project to oversee one of the largest rail infrastructure projects in that State's history. Central to the project is the target of eliminating 85 level crossings across the Melbourne metropolitan area by 2025. Such a program not only enhances road safety for motorists and pedestrians but also creates new employment initiatives, facilitates a greater level of community engagement and fosters innovation in a sustainable manner. I implore the Government to consider the implications and dangers of level crossings, and to consider the viability of alternative measures that aim to mitigate the issue by removing the danger altogether. Level crossings pose an unnecessary risk to general road safety that the supposed benefits fail to outweigh. I hope this is the year the Government decides to get serious about the issue.

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (16:20): I acknowledge Maddie and her family in the public gallery and thank them for being here today. In April this year I called on the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government to upgrade the Hoskins Street rail crossing in Nyngan. I put my concerns on record again here today. Nyngan is divided by the railway line that is used by large freight trains to take grain and ore from Cobar and Nyngan to the ports along the coast. On one side of the track are schools, the Bogan Shire Medical Centre and the CBD, and on the other side there is the hospital, ambulance and fire station. There are three railway crossings within the township of Nyngan. At the Moonagee Street crossing there are flashing lights and a pedestrian maze. At the Mitchell Street crossing there are boom gates, flashing lights and a pedestrian maze. At the Hoskins Street crossing there are just stop signs.

The crossings are a matter of a few hundred metres apart. The Moonagee Street crossing is located on the main town bypass used not only by all heavy vehicles but also by a high proportion of other through traffic. The crossing is close to the Bogan River and there is no clear approaching visibility of an oncoming train. Trains whip

through Nyngan at 80 kilometres per hour and the lack of adequate safety measures at each crossing has the community concerned. A petition on the subject obtained hundreds of signatures. The schools, fires, local ambos, businesses owners and the Nyngan Museum, which is located at the old railway station, have expressed their concerns. The Bogan Shire Council has written on numerous occasions to the New South Wales Government, previous transport Ministers, the current Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the John Holland Group and the former member for Barwon, but it has not resulted in action. The council has now commissioned its own independent risk assessment, which says something must be done.

State and Federal governments need to act before there is a horrible accident. We have avoided more accidents thus far only by sheer luck. I have heard of many near misses across my electorate—too many to name here. It was when I publicly raised the issue of level crossings in Nyngan that I became aware of Maddie and her campaign, born out of the tragic loss of her fiancé. Maddie's fiancé, Ethan Hunter, and his colleague Mark Fenton lost their lives at a passive level crossing. The loss of those two men was preventable. In the past 20 years there have been 154 crashes between trains and vehicles at level crossings in New South Wales and 14 people have lost their lives. I heard from people in my electorate that it took lives being lost for crossings in their towns to be fixed. We should not rely on tragedy to drive change.

I acknowledge the member for Cootamundra and thank her for bringing this petition to the House. In May this year she said it should not take a tragedy to make change. We have the opportunity to do everything in our power to prevent further loss of life and the terrible impact that these accidents have on families, friends and communities. I put on record today that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will support a campaign to see Maddie's wish fulfilled. We back flashing lights at all level crossings on active rail lines and we back trains being fitted with reflective material and better lights. As Maddie wrote to me on Facebook:

You can't put a price tag on life. Lights will save lives. It will be worth every cent.

I understand that it is an ambitious task. There are 1,360 level crossings on public roads in New South Wales. Only 429 of them have flashing lights. There are a further 2,400 crossings on private roads. So, yes, it is no small task. It will take investment from the Government. But what a stimulus program this could be. Engineers, electricians, metal fabricators, earthmovers, and a whole raft of professions and inputs will be needed. It could mean jobs in the regions and it would mean that lives are saved. I note that a review has been commissioned by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator and will be carried out by the Australasian Centre for Rail Innovation. This review will identify short-term options that governments and industry can adopt to improve level crossing safety and train visibility, as well as to consider longer-term options for improvement.

This will review should not delay action. What I have put on the table today is a chance for New South Wales to lead the way in rail safety. We have had tragedy after tragedy, lives lost and families shattered, and train drivers forever traumatised. Let us not cycle through the same old tragedy, inquiry, review, report, Government says some stuff, too-hard basket and nothing changes. Everyone in this place owes it to Maddie, Ethan, Mark—to his children, who will go through life without their father—to act; to do something. As I said, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party stands ready to support a program to ensure this petition is turned into action.

Mr Philip Donato: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

Leave not granted.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and Minister for Regional New South Wales) (16:25): In response: I, too, acknowledge the incredible work undertaken by the member for Cootamundra in bringing this petition to the House. I acknowledge in the gallery today Maddie, Courtney, Shakay and their mother, Frances. It is important for me to be able to talk to this petition and about the work that the Government is doing to make level crossings safer for rail and road users. I have met with Maddie, Angela and John several times this year since that terrible accident in February when they lost Ethan. I want to ensure that no other family goes through that pain. I am wholeheartedly committed to making a difference in this space. To do that, we need everyone to work together on this across all levels of government, across industry and the community to find safer outcomes for all rail and road users.

Since my initial meeting with Maddie, Angela and John, we have certainly seen this and we have made some incredible headway both internally in Transport and with our external rail and road stakeholders, and across government. Over the past six months my office and I have had a lot of conversations with various players. In fact, one of the very first issues I raised with the Deputy Prime Minister when he got the role was this particular matter. It is heartening to know that he also is committed to making a difference in this space. The Deputy Prime Minister has already publicly committed to a review into train visibility in Australia and to look at a number of

other options to help to make level crossings safer for everyone. I will give a snapshot of what we have been progressing in New South Wales over the past couple of months, particularly in the technology space.

We have already pulled together a working group across Transport—people who are passionate about making a difference, including those from the Centre for Road Safety, freight teams tapping into people with expertise on level crossing programs in other States and the tech teams—to understand what tech solutions we may be able to deliver. Transport has engaged with UTS to deliver a research project using multiple data sources like incident reports and real-time train data to conduct big data integration to identify hotspots. From that, they will initiate a project exploring private level crossing technologies that currently are in use nationally and internationally to improve safety at private level crossings. The project included discussions with suppliers to understand technology, how it could be adapted to a level crossing context and what outcomes they think could be achieved with technology in this space.

In October Transport for NSW hosted a roundtable with 20 stakeholders from Australia, New Zealand and Canada on a level crossing workshop that ran for two hours, exploring opportunities to improve level crossing safety. The workshop provided us with an insight into potential technology to improve safety to these crossings. In parallel, Transport has sought new solutions from industry. We are planning a trial of emerging technologies in the new year in regional New South Wales. Transport is already in the process of reviewing the proposals that have been received. We are currently going through a request for information process and working with internal and external groups to determine the best options to trial. We are also planning to trial technologies that will assist with driver distraction and drivers who use level crossings regularly to help them to develop expectations about the likelihood of encountering a train.

We have also been working closely with industry to bring some of their ideas to life and get them trialled. That is on top of the continued investment we are making into crossing upgrades to grade separating road and rail interfaces, and the work we are doing to reduce speed limits at all active crossings. This is just the start. As I have previously committed to Maddie and to the Hunter family: We will continue to keep them updated along the way. I think we are on the right path with buy-in from all stakeholders to find an outcome in an area where there is not one solution. We will continue our work to ensure that every loved one returns home to their family and community at the end of the day.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (16:29): In reply: I acknowledge the contributions to this debate made by other members of this place. It is clear that we have support right across the Parliament to do more to improve level crossing safety. We also know that this is a huge issue right across New South Wales, made abundantly clear by the sheer number of people who have signed Maddie's petition. I thank Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Hon. Paul Toole, his staff and the team in Transport for NSW for their dedication and their work in this space. I have had the great privilege of being part of all of these discussions. Thank you for taking me, and for taking Maddie and others on this journey. It really is a journey and we have a long way to go.

I again acknowledge Maddie and her family here today for everything that you are doing in this space. It has been an absolute honour and privilege to spend the past several months working closely with you on this issue. We do have a long way to go. In a couple of weeks, we will meet with the Deputy Prime Minister. We will continue to advocate for as many improvements as can possibly be achieved at all levels of government in relation to level crossing safety. I also thank the over 20,000 people who signed the petition that allowed us to have this debate today. We are all on this journey together. As the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads indicated, we all need to work hard and work together to ensure that every loved one returns home to their family and their community at the end of the day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank all of the members of the public who have been listening to the debate online. I also thank our guests in the Cooper Gallery for joining us here today and extend, on behalf of this House, our condolences for your loss.

Petition noted.

Bills

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT (RELIGIOUS VILIFICATION) BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:32): The Government opposes the private member's bill that seeks to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act to make religious vilification unlawful. In his second reading speech the member for Liverpool referred to the bill as "a minor amendment rather than a wholesale restructuring". In

this way the member for Liverpool drastically underestimates the significance of these proposed reforms. In doing so, he fails to recognise the importance of consulting the community before he introduced this private member's bill.

I had the pleasure of being a part of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, which was chaired by the Hon. Gabrielle Upton. The committee comprised members from across the political spectrum. Our committee formed the view that there was a strong need to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs and activities. We understood the importance of the New South Wales Government introducing its own bill to provide protections. However, I believe this specific bill by Paul Lynch is not the most effective way to guarantee protection from religious vilification.

Under the Anti-Discrimination Act, vilification is defined as a public act which "incites hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or group of persons". Vilification provisions under the Act extend the protections provided against discrimination. Not all attributes protected by discrimination are also protected against vilification. Under the Act it is an offence to vilify a person based on their actual or perceived race, sexuality, HIV/AIDS status, or transgender status, but those protections do not extend to age or disability. In New South Wales, religion is not currently a prohibited ground for discrimination. This Government has committed to amending the Anti-Discrimination Act to make religious discrimination unlawful. It is in the context of those reforms that civil protections for religious vilification should be considered.

There is no region that has valued the importance of religious freedom and opposed religious vilification more than the Hawkesbury region. Hawkesbury is rich in religious history and has some of our nation's oldest churches including Ebenezer church, which was established in 1809. The strong faith in my community of different religious backgrounds is prevalent today. The community naturally deserves freedom from discrimination and vilification based on religion. The Hawkesbury region, particularly in the towns of Windsor, Richmond and Ebenezer, are referred to as the land of churches. In 2015 we were fortunate to have Mel Gibson explore the religious history and heritage in the Hawkesbury region when he visited to film the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*. He went to a lot of different churches in the area.

I also recognise that electorates neighbouring the Hawkesbury in our region of western Sydney also have communities with a diverse mix of religious backgrounds and people who value religious freedom. Many of them migrated to our beautiful country due to the vilification that they had faced overseas. It was those good people of faith who, as individuals and part of organisations, assisted the vulnerable when our communities went through multiple disasters of droughts, floods, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. I note that members opposite commented on that as well. Religious freedom and freedom from religious vilification is important to the freedom and protection of all in society. Even those who are not religious must defend religious freedom and oppose such vilification as if their own freedom was on the line because it is on the line. A society that does not guarantee or value religious freedom and protection from vilification based on religion is one that does not value freedom, and discrimination based on other characteristics and demographics will inevitably occur. To achieve the objectives of religious freedom, including protecting against religious vilification, we must take an holistic and effective approach, which the current bill does not do.

Discussion about religious vilification during the hearings of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 also illustrate the potential significance of the reforms contained in this private member's bill. That is contrary to Mr Lynch's contention that it represents only a minor amendment. In his second reading speech, the member for Liverpool quoted the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and Muslim Women of Australia. Both groups provided passionate and articulate arguments as to why they believe civil protections for religious vilification are so significant. It is that significance that makes the Opposition's approach to the bill inappropriate. They have not consulted the community on the proposed reforms. Instead, Mr Lynch—and I say this with respect—relies on various submissions to the committee's inquiry as justification for the bill, despite religious vilification not being an aspect of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020.

Under the New South Wales Government, this issue will be considered holistically. Stakeholders and the community will have an opportunity to provide their input into how this Government implements its commitment to introduce religion as a new ground for discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act. Given the gravity of these proposed reforms, it is appropriate for this issue to be considered carefully and holistically. The Opposition has failed in this regard. It has failed to consult with stakeholders and to listen to the views of the community. It has failed to approach the issue of religious protections in the systemic way in which it is required. For those reasons, I oppose the bill.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:39): I support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. The bill is long overdue. It addresses a major shortcoming in the anti-discrimination

legislation in New South Wales, which has been known for decades. The member for Liverpool said in his second reading speech that it is a minor amendment and it is based on other protections that exist against other forms of discrimination. I thank the member for Liverpool for introducing the bill to the House. It is incredibly important to so many people in my electorate, who regularly canvass with me issues concerning discrimination and vilification. The object of the bill is to make religious vilification of individuals unlawful, by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act. It does that with reference to section 93Z of the Crimes Act. Those protections in the Crimes Act have never been used. They are important protections and having them included in the Anti-Discrimination Act will make them easier to use and implement.

The shortcomings in the Anti-Discrimination Act relating to religious vilification have been known for many years. When amendments were made to the bill in 1994, section 20C intended to make religious vilification illegal. It was not successful. Attorney General John Hannaford intended to include Sikhism, Judaism and Islam. When the bill was tested in court it was found that the bill protects individuals against ethno-religious discrimination but not religious discrimination. If you belong to a small faith and ethnically homogeneous faith such as Sikhism or Judaism, you are protected under the bill. That is because your religion is an ethnically homogeneous one. If you are an adherent of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity, which are large multicultural, multiethnic religions, then you have no protection against discrimination or vilification under the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act.

That concept was tested after the Cronulla riots and when Alan Jones was accused of inciting riots and hatred against Lebanese Muslims. The case did not succeed because it was found that discrimination against people for being Muslim or inciting hatred against Muslims was not illegal under the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act. The laws have been tested more recently. Concerns were raised by the Australian National Imams Council, and others, about what is known as the Sonia Kruger case—*Ekeremawi v Nine Network*. The submission in that case noted that the Muslim community experienced an increase in anti-Muslim sentiment. At the time Sonia Kruger said on the *Today* show that as a mother she was scared because of Muslim migration to Australia. I know that comment caused huge hurt in my community. I met with many Muslim mothers and hosted a morning tea where I heard about what things scare them. A lot of them are scared to catch public transport because of the vilification that they are subjected to. That court case was not successful because there are insufficient protections against religious discrimination.

We cannot wait for the Commonwealth to act. The Federal Government went to the last Federal election promising religious freedom protections. The Ruddock review was commissioned, which identified the need for protection against religious discrimination, but nothing has happened. We have an obligation to the eight million people who live in New South Wales to address the shortcomings in our own legislation to make sure they are protected in the State. We hear time and again about these types of situations. They are mainly perpetuated against adherents of the Jewish and Islamic faiths and sometimes also Sikhs because of the way they dress. They are often targeted by strangers because they wear particular religious garments, such as hijab.

The most disturbing incident in recent years is the case of Rana Elasmara, a 38-week pregnant mother who was eating dessert with her friends at the Bay Vista restaurant in Parramatta in November 2019. She was attacked by a random stranger who repeatedly told her that the reason he was attacking her is because she is a Muslim. She was bashed and he stomped on her head. Since then I have heard her speak about the absolute terror inflicted upon her, the awful situation she found herself in when she was so close to giving birth, and her concern for protecting her unborn child. She very bravely spoke about the absolutely horrific situation.

We have to send a clear message that it is not just not okay to assault people but it is also not okay to randomly attack people with words or actions. We hear about those sorts of things again and again. Earlier this year a woman from my community received appalling threatening phone messages attacking her for her Muslim faith. She played them to me. They referred to her as a Muslim dog and suggested that there is a war between Christianity and Islam, which of course there is not in Australia, and that the Christians would win. She was absolutely terrified and struggled to sleep. Her whole family was worried for weeks. They reconfigured the entire house to make sure no-one slept near any windows because they were worried about what was going to happen to them.

We hear about such things over and over again and we see videos of the more casual incidents that happen on public transport. We know what happens and it is just not acceptable. We need to address it now. We cannot sit around waiting for the Commonwealth or for somebody else to do something about it. We have an opportunity today with this very sensibly drafted piece of legislation, which amends an existing Act, bringing religious discrimination in line with the protections provided to residents of New South Wales against a number of other forms of discrimination like ethnicity, transgender status, HIV or AIDS status and gender. We need to put religious discrimination on the same level as them, and we can do that by making this minor amendment to the Act.

I commend the bill to the House. It is long overdue and this is a sensible and minor amendment that we can make now.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:48): I contribute to the second reading debate of the private member's bill Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021. The bill seeks to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act and introduce protections against religious vilification. The Government opposes the bill for good reasons, which have largely been laid out by the member for Holsworthy. I support the Government's position and oppose the bill. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the work of the member for Liverpool in bringing the bill to the House for debate.

I also echo the sentiments of my good friend the member for Riverstone in expressing that it is pleasing to raise awareness of the plight that people of religious faiths experience with discrimination in their daily and ordinary lives. It is an important first principle that people ought not be motivated by hatred against other people. They should not vilify other people. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right and core mainstream Australian value. Every individual holds a set of values and beliefs which inform their conscience, motivate their actions and form their sense of individual identity. As Institute of Public Affairs research fellow Dara Macdonald wrote:

The freedom to hold, express, and act on religious belief is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of all humans. Freedom of religion has also enriched Australian society as many of those that provide indispensable charity and material welfare to those that require it do so as a manifestation of their beliefs.

When I think about that I go back to the work of my grandmother on my father's side, Noreen Smith, who did many years' service for St Vincent de Paul at different stalls. After her passing, St Vincent de Paul set up a home for women and families who suffer from domestic violence or other family breakdown and called it Noreen Smith House. I have a very close relationship with the St Vincent de Paul Society and all the work it does, especially in my electorate, in Picton, Mittagong and Bowral. It also has another set-up in Moss Vale, which is just outside my electorate. Perhaps even more valuable are the non-material goods that flow from the protection of religious freedoms, such as ethics, meaning and wisdom. Many of the values that intertwine the Anti-Discrimination Act are based on an Australian culture of tolerance, manifesting itself in religious beliefs. I note the second reading speech of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 introduced into the other place by the Hon. Mark Latham. He said:

We are a stronger society and a stronger community for respecting those beliefs and also acknowledging the incredible voluntary contribution of churches and temples in New South Wales in caring for the poor, the sick, the disabled and the needy over a long period. The origins of the Australian welfare State lie in the mutual help and care by religious associations. Religious rights are not a fringe issue. They are at the heart of our society's origins and values.

The toleration of religious difference and religious belief was once unquestionable at the heart of the Australian way of life. However, now that has been threatened with a culture of censorship and growing intolerance. The aggressive secularisation of major governmental, civic and economic institutions such as the media, universities and corporate Australia has put pressure on Australians of faith to be silent and keep their beliefs out of the public square. The bill of the member for Liverpool did not undergo community consultation prior to being introduced into the Parliament.

Although religious vilification was not an aspect of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, the bill was subject to a joint select committee review. The submissions to it and its findings are insightful in assessing the merit of the bill currently before the House. There were 192 written submissions to the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020. They came from a wide range of religious groups, legal and community organisations and private individuals. I quote from one of those private individuals. The submission is from a Mr Joseph Camenzuli. I know a few Camenzulis but I am unaware of whether he is a relation to them or not. I know what the member for North Shore is laughing about—name and branch. He writes:

... the fastest growing form of discrimination in our society is against people of religious faith, especially Christians. We have all seen the high-profile cases of Israel Folau and Margaret Court, outstanding Australians treated like second-class citizens because they take a literal interpretation of the Bible—the most important, influential, and popular book in history; the book that has given civil society much of its moral code, our understanding of right and wrong; the book that stands today as one of the essential pillars of Western civilisation. Those who quote from the *Bible* should not be hounded from the public square as Folau and Mrs Court have been. All religious faith that respects the sanctity of life and the goodness of the human soul and reaches out to others with the hope of salvation and compassion should be honoured in our society.

Mr Camenzuli goes on to say:

I am particularly concerned about the case of the wedding magazine run by Christians that was forced to close down because of third party advertising boycotts. We know of the Coopers Brewery boycott, punishing Christians for sponsoring a debate between Federal MPs on same-sex marriage. We know the case of the senior executive at a New South Wales accounting firm who was forced to resign from the board of the Australian Christian Lobby due to activist campaigning. We know of the Christian medical practitioners stripped of their accreditation for failing to surrender to the gender fluidity movement. We know of the academic sacked at Macquarie University because he was a director of the Lachlan Macquarie Institute Limited, a Christian training organisation. We know of

university admittance rules that discriminate against people of faith, especially Muslims and Christians, who refuse to accept the new left-wing political meaning of "diversity and inclusion". We know of the workers fired for standing by their Christian beliefs and refusing to support anything other than traditional male-female marriage. We know of employers trying to control all aspects of their workers' lives, including their religious beliefs away from work. We know of the big corporate sponsors, like Qantas, trying to control sporting codes through the back door and relegate the importance of religious rights. We know of the multinational companies that have refused to allow staff to wear Christian crosses at work ...

I do not know Mr Camenzuli, but his frustrations are common amongst many people of faith who I have met since becoming a parliamentarian. I can also confirm firsthand my own experiences of hostility and discrimination that were unleashed during the same-sex marriage debate. I did a lot of media work for the "no" campaign. I was merely sending out press releases. The attacks that I received personally included being threatened over the phone via carriage service in front of my family and kids, which disturbed them. I had people saying, "I'm coming to get you," just because on that issue I had a different opinion from other people. I think that is outrageous.

Of course, not only Christians have faced vilification and discrimination. I was particularly moved by the story conveyed by the member for Strathfield and the member for Lakemba. It made me sick in the stomach to think that a pregnant woman was attacked for no other reason than her religious attire and beliefs. But let's not kid ourselves. These amendments would not have prevented that vicious and vile attack. If we are truly honest, we would admit that anti-discrimination legislation does very little to overcome the problems that exist in society. People who support this legislation say it is a solution to hatred, bitterness, ridicule, prejudice and those human elements that we all despise. It isn't; teaching sound values to our children is. That is why I am very supportive of the Government's initiatives and campaigns in New South Wales to target and address vilification and extremism, which the member for Holsworthy touched on in her speech. I seek an extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

I believe it is important to repeat them. They include the dedicated NSW Police Force Engagement and Hate Crime Unit, which oversights and works with local area commands to investigate hate-motivated incidents. The Stop Public Threats campaign, unveiled by the member for Cronulla and the Attorney General last year, seeks to ensure that the community understands the protections against vilification that are available under New South Wales law. At the time the Attorney General said:

We need to work together to combat abusive and violent behaviour that discriminates against cultural or religious groups as well as other sections of our community.

The Government has committed \$49.6 million over four years for the delivery of a range of programs and initiatives to counter violent extremes and hate speech and support victims, including \$13.8 million for the expansion of the Community Partnership Action program, which is a community grants program aimed at promoting social cohesion and community harmony, and the online Remove Hate from the Debate campaign. I believe these initiatives will have a positive impact on combating discrimination and vilification. Despite this, laws ought to reflect our values, and the need to legislate protections for people of religious faith is now necessary.

A quick survey of the legislative framework around the country reveals that several Australian States have already legislated to prohibit discrimination on religious-related grounds. The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or activity, South Australia prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religious appearance or dress, a person in Western Australia may not discriminate on the grounds of religious conviction, and in Tasmania a person may not discriminate on the grounds of religious belief or affiliation. What worries me about the state of the current Anti-Discrimination Act is that over the years it has had many provisions bolted on, making it disjointed and harder for the community to understand.

I am concerned by the flood of vexatious claims the current legislation has given birth to. For example, in 2019 the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal heard a dispute between Inner West Councillor Julie Passas and a Mr Comensoli. The dispute involved an altercation where Councillor Passas asserted that the rainbow flag offended her religion, whereas Mr Comensoli was offended by her remarks regarding same-sex marriage. The tribunal found that Councillor Passas must apologise to Mr Comensoli for engaging in vilification under the Anti-Discrimination Act. In cases like this neither party should be able to use the law to censor the other.

Quarrels such as this should not be adjudicated by courts or tribunals, nor should one side of the dispute have the legal right not to be offended whilst the other does not. In this way, anti-discrimination laws have become an instrument embedded in the culture of censorship. We need to be vigilant of this and ensure that any provision to protect our community is carefully considered. With the Federal Parliament concurrently looking at legislating in this area, I believe it is better to review this matter after it has dealt with it. I welcome a holistic review of the Act to see if we can, in a meaningful way, provide religious protections as part of a principles-based approach that simplifies and clarifies the legislation. That will make it more effective and provide better safeguards for all of our communities.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (17:02): The object of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2021 is to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to vilify a

person or group of persons on the ground of a specific religious belief or affiliation. I speak as a member of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, the founder of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Religious Freedom, and the representative of one of the most religiously diverse areas of the State. On 5 May in this place I said:

Religion is central to the lives of so many and is integral to the Australian spirit of multiculturalism. Indeed, many of Australia's fastest growing religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism are being driven predominantly by first and second generation migrants, particularly in my area of western Sydney ... As such, in 2019 I formed the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Religious Freedom with colleagues from across the political divide. This body has since worked to ensure that a platform is provided to the issue of religious freedom.

The joint select committee report into the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 found that there is a need to protect individuals and not-for-profit religious organisations from discrimination on the grounds of religion. The report also found that public opinion strongly favours those protections, as the committee received close to 20,000 responses to its online survey, of which close to 75 per cent supported such a bill. The committee made four clear recommendations in its report. The first recommendation was that by the end of 2021 the New South Wales Government introduce a bill inserting discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or activity, where that activity is lawful, as a protected attribute in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.

The bill supports in part what was adopted in that inquiry. As I stated on 31 March 2021 in *The Daily Telegraph's* opinion editorial on the subject, at the 2016 census more than 60 per cent of Australians reported having a religious belief. In New South Wales, the most religious State in the Commonwealth, that figure climbed to 65.5 per cent, and in western Sydney 74 per cent of people are reported as religious. Those figures incorporate a diverse range of religious affiliations and beliefs, but what unifies those disparate groups is a fair and reasonable expectation that they can observe and practise their religion without fear of being discriminated against as a person of faith. That right is recognised internationally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which former Federal Labor leader Bert Evatt helped draft, and it is enshrined federally in section 116 of the Australian Constitution. It is also in legislation in every State other than New South Wales and South Australia.

In New South Wales, religious protections are limited to exemptions in the current Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, which do not provide direct protection for religious belief, practice or expression. Recent high-profile clashes over religious freedoms have brought the glaring absence of that basic human right to the fore. I commend my colleague the member for Liverpool for the introduction of the bill. It may come as a surprise to some that Labor has long been at the forefront of the cause to protect religious freedom across the country. There have been attempts to portray support for religious freedom as being contradictory to Labor's values of fighting for equality and celebrating diversity, but that could not be further from the truth.

Religious protections in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory were introduced by Labor Premiers, from Steve Bracks to Wayne Goss, while it was former Labor Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam and Kevin Rudd who enshrined religious protections in Commonwealth law through the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the Fair Work Act 2009. In 1991 Prime Minister Bob Hawke said:

Australia's multicultural society works because all Australians are able to express and share their individual cultural heritage, to practise their religion, to speak their language.

It was also Hawke who told the visiting Pope, John Paul II, in 1986:

The Government and people of Australia share your commitment to the cause of peace, religious freedom, development and human rights.

The record clearly shows that Labor is the party of religious freedoms and protection from discrimination. We must not allow others to rewrite this proud history. As the member for Bankstown, I and many of my Labor colleagues from south-west and western Sydney are proud to advocate passionately on that issue on behalf of communities for whom the issue is critical to their way of life and beliefs. The joint select committee received 192 submissions in response to the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020, which addressed the issue of religious freedom and protection from religious discrimination. I will give voice to some of those important views. In its submission to the joint select committee, Muslim Women Australia stated:

It is unquestionable in our submission that Australian society has become more intolerant of minorities, and religious minorities specifically, over the last 2 decades. That intolerance we would submit has led to an increased level of discrimination, which may or may not have redress under existing laws, and incitement that has no practical redress at all. In the Muslim context there is now a growing body of evidence to support this increased intolerance towards Muslims and their beliefs and practices.

The submission went on to quote Linda Briskman's article entitled "The creeping blight of Islamophobia in Australia":

Visibly Muslim women suffer immeasurable hurt through condemnation of their religion and religious symbolism ... The well-research report by the Australian Human Rights Commission ... told of discrimination against wearing the hijab in employment and education settings, as well negative reactions from the public generally. There are fears that such reactions will increase, and not just verbal insults. In October 2014 a Muslim woman was attacked in a suburban shopping centre with taunts of: 'You Muslims, go back to where you came from'. After being pushed to the ground by her assailant she suffered a broken arm. In another incident a woman wearing a hijab was pushed down the steps of a tram where she hit a metal barrier injuring her knee.

The issue of vilification of people of faith generally, and the protections afforded against it, is of vital importance to our social fabric. There is already a general vilification provision in the Anti-Discrimination Act. All that is required is an inclusion of a category of "religion", separate to that of "ethno-religious", to remedy that anomaly. Further exploring the growing concern of Islamophobia in New South Wales, in its submission to the joint select committee, the Lebanese Muslim Association [LMA] noted:

Since 2014, NSW has consistently recorded more Islamophobic incidents than any other state or territory by some significant margin. The LMA is acutely aware of the painful impacts of anti-religious sentiment and incidents, particularly as it relates to Islamophobia in NSW. The aftershock and effects of a single Islamophobic incident extends beyond the person targeted and quickly spreads across the Islamic community. As there are no laws in NSW to protect against discrimination on the ground of religion, Muslims who suffer from discrimination are left without legal recourse.

Concerns about the need to protect people of faith from religious discrimination are currently felt deeply across all faiths, as the submission from the Catholic Bishops of NSW and the Australasian-Middle East Christian Apostolic Churches attests. It states:

Until very recently, the importance of the free exercise of religion to Australia's social fabric has been largely uncontroversial.

It is also important to note that it is not just religious groups that raise their concerns. The Institute for Civil Society stated in its submission:

Australians who regularly practise their religion are in a minority. Those who follow traditional religious practices on matters like sexual ethics, marriage, sanctity of human life, prayer and fasting or religious dress are an unpopular minority in some quarters. Like other minorities, they experience discrimination, but they don't have the same legal protection as other minorities in NSW.

[Extension of time]

The Institute also submitted some serious and troubling examples of those discriminated against in the course of practising their faith:

This lack of protection for people from discrimination in NSW on the basis of their religious belief or activity based on religious belief needs to be remedied now.

It is for people like Soaliah, who is a young Sydney Muslim woman who was allegedly refused entry to a hotel until she removed her hijab, and people like Madeline, who is a young Christian woman who was sacked for saying it was okay to vote against same-sex marriage. The views and statements I have just highlighted are a small sample of those held by the community, but provide a helpful cross-section of groups and organisations in support of what the bill proposes. I acknowledge and thank my colleague the member for Liverpool for applying his usual diligence and valuable expertise in the preparation of the bill. As the member for Liverpool noted in his second reading speech:

The primary rationale for anti-vilification legislation—to use the language of a 1997 NSW Law Reform Commission report—is to protect the right of a person to live free from hostility and violence.

The member for Liverpool went on to quote directly from the 1997 Law Reform Commission report, which stated:

One of the aims of vilification legislation is to reduce the threats to social cohesion and reduce public disorder by encouraging and preserving tolerance.

I highlighted that statement because it goes effectively to the heart of the purpose of the bill: to preserve tolerance. The statement directly responds to the views and concerns of the religious and community groups recognised in this speech. Again, I note that there were more than 192 submissions to the inquiry, many of which referred specifically to the area of vilification. As the Attorney General stated, the Government has made a decision to delay enacting any legislation in the area of religious freedom or indeed in protecting religious discrimination on the basis of waiting for the Commonwealth to first enact its laws, which we know could be quite some time.

Debate interrupted.

Private Members' Statements

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:14): New South Wales has had the privilege to witness firsthand the incredible work of teachers during the challenges presented by remote learning this year. In my electorate of Londonderry, teachers have certainly gone above and beyond to keep students engaged and are now working hard to help those who may need assistance to get back on track. Students, parents and teachers alike have been so

happy to return to face-to-face learning; remote learning is just not the same. But, on the other side of our education system, this Government's mismanagement is threatening the future of a strong New South Wales education system. Teacher shortages have ballooned under 11 years of Liberal mismanagement. The truth is we are seeing more merged classes and more classes being taught out of area.

In some parts of New South Wales, one in five students are being taught maths by teachers with no maths qualifications. It is no surprise that gaps are growing in student outcomes. It is affecting all our communities. It is affecting my community and communities across the growing suburbs in outer western Sydney. Every student in every school deserves to have a qualified teacher in front of them, but that is not what we are seeing under this Liberal Government. It does not stop there. Schools across New South Wales are being squeezed because the State Government has not trained enough New South Wales teachers. Teachers are consistently raising this with me; they know it is an issue. Principals are raising it with me; they know it is an issue. Parents are raising it with me; they know it is an issue.

What about the education Minister? Earlier this year she called the teacher shortages a "beat-up". But the truth can only stay hidden for so long. She called teacher shortages in New South Wales a "beat-up" after being told last year that the State already had a shortage of 710 teachers in maths and technology alone. These shortages are hitting STEM subjects—the crucial disciplines we need to train our children in—particularly hard. Without enough STEM teachers, our students will not be learning crucial skills for the jobs of the future. It is no wonder New South Wales no longer leads the world like we used to when it comes to reading, maths and science—something we should not be proud of. It is no wonder that schools in western Sydney, like those in my electorate of Londonderry, are struggling in these areas.

Under the Liberals, we have teacher shortages that are leaving students without maths and science teachers, and Ministers who ignored the growing shortages and then tried to cover them up. Now we have taxpayers paying for overseas teachers with no Australian curriculum experience to be flown in to try to fill the critical teacher shortages. We are seeing the impact of a Liberal Government that is just not doing its job. We are seeing the impact of a Liberal Government that cannot get the basics right. We are seeing the cracks that emerge when we fail to invest in the future of our State and our children. New South Wales needs teacher shortages filled by qualified teachers who are paid and treated fairly. Across the State, in communities like mine, parents and teachers alike are calling for this Liberal Government to admit its mistakes, admit it is not a "beat-up" and fix this teacher shortage now.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:18): I thank the member for Londonderry for her contribution to the subject of education. This being the first week of the HSC examinations, I acknowledge the impact of the COVID restrictions on our students, our teachers and our families across the State. I particularly note that when Labor was in government it closed 90 schools and 20 TAFEs, and I remind the House that this Government is currently playing catch-up for the education failures of the Labor Opposition during 16 years in government.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (17:19): As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent lockdown, the South Coast has once again become a destination for many visitors across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. It is wonderful to see major events returning to our community and many more planned over the next few months as we enter the summer holidays—I have missed so many of them. Among them are renowned triathlon events. Over the past weekend Huskisson held a November version of the Tri Husky Festival, and this year the event was held over two days due to its growing popularity. The main event, the Big Husky Triathlon Festival, will mark its seventeenth anniversary next year when it is held from 25 February to 27 February. The Big Husky Triathlon Festival has now become one of Australia's most loved long-course events. As someone based in the South Coast, I can easily see why.

For those who may have been interested in attending the Tri Husky Festival but did not make it and who will not be able to get to the Big Husky in February, the Tri Callala Festival will be held on 18 December 2021. Known as the "Boutique Triathlon", the event is slightly more laid back and in just as great a location. Featuring a range of popular distances, there is something for everyone. Another annual event that will proceed before the end of the year is the thirty-sixth Shoalhaven Business Awards on 1 December 2021. After a difficult and uncertain year for our local businesses, this event is a perfect opportunity to recognise and celebrate the success and resilience of our wonderful local businesses. Tickets are on sale now, and with local produce and wine as well as local entertainment, this will be another wonderful evening celebrating local businesses and their achievements.

Another opportunity for the community to get out and support our local businesses is to head out to the beautiful village of Currarong for the Currarong Art Trail—I was there only a couple of weeks ago. This is a truly unique event where you can walk around the village, meet the talented artists, see their workspaces, view their art

and even purchase some of their works. I acknowledge the great artists and businesses along the trail: Alan Moir, Diana Perkins, Nick Moir, Kurt Brereton, Carly Gibson, Robyn Gibson, Therese Grady, Christine Pritchard, Gerald Buckley, Wendy Buckley, Janine Gibson, Sara Sernack, Bill McLaughlin, Currarong Arts and Crafts, Kim Pritchard, Alissar Gazal, Currarong Soap and Candle Co., Dale Hurst, Anne Norton and Jack Middleton. These talented locals create everything from pottery and glasswork to woodwork and botanical printing. The next open day is Saturday 4 December, so head out, cast your vote for the local government elections and then head over to Currarong and support our talented local artists and businesses. There is something for every art lover.

Over the upcoming school summer holidays the much-loved Huskisson Carnival will also return, open 6.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. every night from 26 December to 26 January. Bringing locals, families and tourists together, it truly is a wonderful event. A family-run business, the carnival has been operating for over 40 years. Originally starting out with only a Ferris wheel and several simple rides, it has grown to be a massive event with almost 20 rides, carnival activities and classic carnival foods, including the dagwood dog and Chiko Roll. Another major upcoming event on the South Coast is, of course, the beloved Nowra Show. After such a difficult decision not to run this year due to the pandemic, the show will be open to celebrate its 145th year on 4 and 5 February 2022.

As a patron, I am looking forward to getting back with the Nowra Show Society, dedicated volunteers and community to enjoy all the favourite events, attractions and exhibitions that are showcased over the two-day event. It is utterly brilliant. With the level of competition—whether it be the horse events, dog high jump or wood chopping—I am sure we will have another outstanding year. The show will also see the return of the showgirl competition. Due to the cancellation of the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 2020, the competition was not held for the first time since it began almost 60 years ago. I wish all the 2022 Nowra Showgirl entrants the best of luck.

It has been a very difficult year, I know, for many people across the South Coast and in regional and rural areas throughout the State. But, as I have outlined, events are returning and the South Coast community are extremely positive. I thank everybody on the South Coast particularly for coming out to get vaccinated. Over 95 per cent of the eligible population in the Shoalhaven local government area have had at least one dose, and 94.2 per cent are fully vaccinated. That is a remarkable achievement. It gives us so much freedom to move around and visit the beautiful towns and villages of the South Coast. I remarked only last weekend about the traffic in Nowra and heading south. It is just wonderful to see our tourists and visitors returning.

NOVA FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (17:24): Last year, Nova for Women and Children opened a hub in Charlestown. It is the only facility of its kind in Lake Macquarie. The hub is a safe place for women fleeing domestic and family violence or facing homelessness to access resources. It is a welcome addition to our local community, particularly after the events of the past couple of years when homelessness and domestic violence services in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie have reported that their resources have been absolutely stretched to the limits. That has been echoed right across the State. COVID has further complicated domestic and family violence and there is a worsening housing crisis. It is a real problem for people leaving family violence. It is a widespread issue in our community that transcends social boundaries.

Although it is good news that more and more victim-survivors are feeling empowered to come forward and report their experiences to police, there is still a range of barriers in place preventing them from escaping dangerous situations. Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. New South Wales police respond to 140,000 incidences of domestic and family violence every year, but we know this is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg because domestic and family violence is still under-reported. Certainly in Lake Macquarie and Newcastle local government areas police are constantly dealing with domestic and family violence. The Government's recent announcement of \$484.3 million to tackle domestic violence is welcome, but we need to know where and how that money will be spent, and sooner rather than later. We know the announcement is long overdue. It is topping up a sector that for too long has been forced to worry about funding from year to year. The Government knows this is a problem. At budget estimates, the Minister said:

We want to move away ... from the annual cycle of funding and, come April or May, services wondering whether they are going to get funded for another 12 months.

As the Minister pointed out, this funding model causes angst and uncertainty. It makes it difficult for services to plan long term and even to retain staff. But this angst and uncertainty is a result of this Government's decisions as to how the funding works. Several years ago we saw the Going Home Staying Home reforms, which dismantled what was a specialist women's homelessness and domestic violence model. How much time, compassion and experience did we lose as a result of that misguided reform effort? The October announcement of a massive funding injection needs to be met with some caution. We do not know the details of how the funding will be rolled out or what it will mean for the long-term interests of providers such as Nova for Women and Children and, most

importantly, the victim-survivors they aim to help. It certainly seems a lot of money, but is it enough? The Minister for Women said in the accompanying press release when the announcement was made:

In 2019-20, almost 40 per cent of the people who accessed specialist homelessness services in NSW ... had experienced domestic abuse.

Yet the announcement includes funding to supply only 200 new dwellings when the NSW Council of Social Services has said—and anybody who knows anything about what is happening in homelessness in New South Wales has said—we need 5,000 a year for 10 years just to meet current demand. At budget estimates, the Minister was unable to provide specifics about how the funding would be targeted and rolled out. The sector is crying out for some certainty as we move out of the pandemic. The devil is always in the detail. We are now on the third Premier since Going Home Staying Home was announced. Is that not enough time to realise how important it is to get domestic and family violence prevention policy right?

Services such as Nova for Women and Children do so much to help victim-survivors. They constantly have people knocking on their doors pleading for assistance. Sometimes they have to say, "We don't have space for you right now; you've got to come back in a few weeks." When you are trying to leave domestic violence, that response is nowhere near good enough. The least the Government can do about this announcement is to ensure that it has services—such as Nova—backs.

RYDALMERE LIONS FOOTBALL CLUB

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (17:29): It gives me great pleasure to bring to the attention of the House the Rydalmere Lions Football Club and its great work within the Parramatta community. This established club has been supporting young talent within the community for more than 40 years. This amazing club is located within the Parramatta electorate at Rydalmere and is a family club with high aspirations, working with the local community to further grow and develop. Five key values set the foundation of this club—integrity, inclusiveness, safety, sustainability and continued development. The club has a two-tier football model with over 350 male and female players registered in the social football league. The age groups range from under 6s to all age teams. Rydalmere Football Club has over 190 registered representative players who represent the club across the Football NSW Skilled Acquisition Program under 9s, under 10s, under 11s and under 12s and at the National Premier league players under 13s, under 14s, under 15s, under 16s, under 18s, under 20s, and first grade. Rydalmere Football Club is the highest ranked football club across the Parramatta local government area, which is a great achievement.

The club is also creating a pathway for juniors to realistically aspire to reach the fledgling A-League. Local juniors now have access to NSW National Premier League coaching staff and a National Premier League team, which presents a path for progression through the various levels of competition available in New South Wales. Rydalmere Lions Football Club is working to become the National Premier League One club—the highest level of representative football that sits under the national A-League. The club has worked hard with the New South Wales Government and the City of Parramatta council to promote their vision and to incorporate a state-of-the-art FIFA-approved synthetic football field. With this infrastructure in place, the vision of the club is possible to reach as a result of the programs in place and all the hard work of the club's committee and community.

The club's vision does not stop there, though. The club is pushing for a women's league licence as well. I believe increasing the presence of women in football will provide social benefits and promote equity across the community. Rydalmere Lions Football Club continues to grow community and social soccer, particularly at a grassroots level, which provides social benefits and brings the community together. The Rydalmere Lions Football Club is a family and community club that has always reached out to support those in need. In 2021 the club partnered with the Ronald McDonald House Charities Greater Western Sydney to raise funds to help sick kids and their families in need. The club aims to raise \$10,000 during the 2022 season to help families who require the support of Ronald McDonald House Charities Greater Western Sydney. The club also continues to support the Christmas appeal.

All this work cannot be done without the amazing people at the Rydalmere Lions Football Club, which has been run by volunteers for over 40 years. I recognise and thank all the volunteers, including Simon Doueihi, head of football; Anthony Harb, technical director; administration staff Mark Barakat, Monica Barakat and Madeleine Haddad; canteen staff Yvonne Bacha, Tracie Doueihi, Lina Harb and Charbel Bounassif; chairman Marcel Zalloua; and treasurer Najeb Mekary. I also recognise Peter Bacha, the club president. I have been consistently impressed by his passion and commitment to volunteering and selflessly serving the Parramatta community. His role as president of the Rydalmere Lions Football Club for over 20 years, and commitment to the club and community since 1980 is outstanding. I wish all members of the Rydalmere Lions Football Club a safe and fun season in 2022.

UGL LANSDOWNE PLANT CLOSURE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:33): I inform the House of the circumstances of the closure of the UGL Rail site at Lansdowne, outside Taree. Previously the manufacturing site was Lansdowne Engineering. It then became Goninans and then UGL. In about 2013 UGL came to me and to the Government stating that it needed assistance. It was tendering for a contract. The Government agreed to a four-year payroll tax holiday. UGL then went to its workers and said, "Will you support us while we wait for this tender by working a four-day week at the award wage?" The workers at that site said yes. However, it did not finish there. The union then stepped in and said, "No, that is the thin edge of the wedge. You can't do that. That's not on." It was not agreed to by the union masters in Sydney.

As a result, UGL then made a commercial decision and a few weeks later closed the Lansdowne site. It meant the loss of work for those workers. In its heyday that site employed about 350 people; at the time of closing it may have been more like 200. But it is a fabulous site. It has its own rail spur line and the shedding to take whole trains for workers to be able to work under, on top of and beside the train. There are gantries to lift the trains up, turn them around and do all those sorts of things. They used to make the Oscar bogies and wheels and did a fantastic job. Why was UGL desperate to get assistance from the Government when it did, only to ultimately close that site, with UGL bought by another company? The problem it had was that the previous Labor Government had signed a contract to have Waratah trains made in China. This procurement of trains overseas was something started by the Labor Government of the day. It was the Labor Government that decided to do this. It meant that the opportunities for companies like UGL went overseas.

The other evening the member for Newcastle was in this place reading a speech prepared for him by Sussex Street. He would not know where the UGL Rail site was. He would not know where Taree was, let alone Lansdowne. The real problem was the signing of that contract for the procurement of the Waratah trains from China, along with the problems those trains had. When the first carriage was brought out here to show it off—David Campbell was the Labor Party Minister at the time—one side of the carriage looked like it had been in a hailstorm. For the public exhibition the rough side faced the water, away from the camera, to show the better side for that unveiling and announcement.

That is the thing that was hidden by member for Newcastle. He did not want to talk about the Labor Party policy of entering into contracts with overseas manufacturers. The last place anyone would want to buy a train from is China, but that is what the Labor Party did. When this New South Wales Government came to power we found this hopeless contract, a bit like the one for the Cross City Tunnel. They were so bad that we had to put in money to try to salvage what we could of those contracts. The member for Newcastle misled the House and misled the people. It was Labor that started these contracts with overseas procurement. It was Labor that offshored the jobs. Labor and its people did that.

Mr David Harris: That was 20 years ago.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: That contract was only entered into by Labor in 2010. It sold out the jobs. It sold out the workers. Labor members are the ones who sold out New South Wales.

TRAVEL BUSINESS OPERATORS

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:39): Tonight I talk about the plight of mum-and-dad businesses, particularly those of the airport and cruise shuttle bus industry—the people who own minibuses. I have received a letter which I will deliver to Minister Ayres on behalf of Rob Sinclair, who owns a small company. His plight is one that the Government needs to seriously look at. He writes:

I am writing to you tonight to highlight the devastation that will befall the airport and cruise shuttle bus industry. Minibuses.

As an industry, we have been virtually stationary for the past 20 months. Those who have survived have done so by putting their savings, super and government assistance packages into the business. We are not talking multinational or even corporate-sized businesses here, Minister. I am referring to the mum-and-dad businesses who prior to COVID restrictions were making an income for their owners and supporting thousands of employees.

Many of them have made it this far, only to have government assistance taken from them with the finish line in sight. Tens of millions of dollars from owners' savings, superannuation and government support has got them this far. Still, with all the savings gone, no super left to draw from, and government assistance ending, there is a very good chance that many of these operators will be gone before our industry reaches a break-even point once again.

Minister, I plead with you to look into our minibuses industry, with the view to reinstating support and backdating it to the date it stopped. As an industry, we will not see cruise ships this summer, and cruise ships were our buffer, for want of a better word, that got us through the leaner months of winter each year. I am sure you have heard the saying "make hay while the sun shines"? Cruises were our hay, and there will be no sunshine for many people in our industry without them.

This will be the second full cruise season we have missed, plus approximately eight weeks of the 2019-2020 season. Combine this with the slow uptake of airport travel internationally because there is still a hesitancy to travel to COVID-ravaged countries and domestically because travellers are afraid of the inconsistency of Governments across the country. We are still locked out of States

within Australia and are nowhere near operating as we did in 2019 and before, yet our fixed operating costs are still the same as pre-COVID periods.

All of this is expected, with restrictions, lockdowns, closed borders and the lockout of international travel and cruise ships; what was not expected was that we would run the marathon, only to collapse with the finish line in sight.

The majority of our industry has been paying registration (including green slip CTP) insurance and other expenses equal to 2019 for 20 months, with less than 3% of the turnover of that period. You can see why it has taken so much of the mum-and-dad operators' personal savings, borrowing from mortgage redraws and superannuation to survive during this time. Even then, they would not have come this far without the assistance provided by Government(s). However, it is heartbreaking to see that this may all be for nothing if our Government cannot secure further assistance.

We thought we had made it, but we can easily and quickly lose it all if that assistance is not made available.

Unlike coffee shops, retail, pubs and clubs, restaurants etc., we did not hit the ground running at the 80% mark. Business owners within my industry to whom I regularly speak, some as often as daily at times, have seen only a 2% increase in turnover since the 80% mark was reached. Sadly, 2% will not help us to keep our heads above water.

He goes on to write about some of the ways in which the Government could help. I will pass those suggestions on to the Minister, who I note has just walked in to the Chamber. It is not an equal playing field. For some, getting to the 80 per cent vaccination rate meant that they could get their businesses back on their feet. Through no fault of their own and because of outside factors, such as the cruise industry not operating, other businesses such as those in the minibus-shuttle bus industry have been supported by the Government, which they appreciate. However, now that they can see the light at the end of the tunnel that assistance has been cut off. Many of those businesses now risk falling over before they can get back on their feet again.

Continued or additional assistance has to be looked at until these sorts of industries have time to fully recover. Given all of the money the Government has spent getting these mum-and-dad businesses to this point—and I congratulate it on supporting these businesses—it would be an absolute tragedy if those businesses were to fall over now. Let us avert a tragedy. Let us make sure we continue to support these important businesses until they have the chance to be viable again.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade) (17:44): I thank the member for Wyong for his private member's statement and acknowledge the fact that there has been significant distress and trauma amongst many businesses engaged in the visitor economy. I also recognise that, as vaccination rates have increased, more businesses have been able to return. I said in the Chamber yesterday that the best form of business support is not a handout but a customer. It is important to acknowledge what the member has said today. Different sectors of the visitor economy will return at different speeds, which will mean stress exists for a number of business sectors. Specifically regarding transport, including buses and minibuses, I am more than happy to engage with industry bodies such as BusNSW or other tour and bus support groups. If those sectors want to bring proposals forward, my door is open and I am happy to consider them.

PENRITH ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade) (17:45): Whilst COVID-19 has slowed down lots of things, we have been able to continue at speed with the Government's agenda of providing better facilities and services to the people of Penrith. I will go through a number of projects that have begun to be delivered, have come online or are starting or nearing the end of construction. The new synthetic fields at Jamison Park are nearing completion. Everyone involved in the Nepean Football Association is very keen to see those fields open in the upcoming summer. They will have a huge impact and allow more games to be played, particularly when existing fields are affected by wet weather. Construction has commenced on Penrith's first synthetic athletics track at Harold Corr Oval. All the athletics clubs across the region are excited about that.

Working closely with Penrith City Council, we have continued to work through some of our election commitments. One of them is the upgrade to Eileen Cammack Reserve, which commenced recently. That is fantastic for the local South Penrith footy club. One of the larger and quite disruptive road projects, the widening of the Jane Street and Mulgoa Road intersection underneath the rail line—which has been a bit of a tortured area of Penrith for a long time—is now complete. It has completely changed the flow of traffic through that area and under the rail bridge. It is a fantastic build with extra lanes, a new rail bridge and much safer conditions with improved travel times.

Another of my election commitments to commence construction is the multipurpose halls at both Jamison High School and the Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School. The work will include indoor sports courts, large equipment rooms, additional toilet facilities and back-of-house facilities, and will add to both of those large and growing high schools. They will be fantastic facilities for the students and the communities that utilise them and participate in activities at the schools. Early works and construction have also begun on our new

learning centre at Cranebrook High School, which does a fantastic job. I have been talking with the principal about what the school needs next. The learning centre will allow teachers to drill down into some fantastic educational outcomes for students who need a little extra support but also students who are performing incredibly well and aspire to greater things. It will be a great addition to the Cranebrook community.

The long-awaited new library at Lapstone Public School is now open—although it is a shame for me to lose that part of the electorate to Blue Mountains. I had the pleasure of being joined by the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education who came to Kingswood this week to turn the sod on our new \$80 million Institute of Applied Technology. This is one of the first two institutes of applied technology to be established in New South Wales. It is an important new form of education that brings tertiary education, industry and TAFE closer together to fill a gap that has emerged over time between the traditional TAFE model and universities. It delivers on a recommendation from the Shergold and Gonski report.

It is fantastic that one of the first two facilities is being constructed in Penrith at the Kingswood campus. It will focus on construction, and there is a large amount of construction activity happening across western Sydney, with the new Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport, the big road program that is rolling through western Sydney, and obviously the Western Sydney Airport and all the commercial land rezonings for new jobs, lots of commercial buildings and new homes. It is about making sure that there is a jobs dividend for the people of western Sydney, with literally billions of dollars in infrastructure going to the area.

Some upgrades to our parks space are underway, including Regatta Park and Tench Reserve. These upgrades will bring the river precinct to life. The contract for the redevelopment of Police Cottage has been awarded to Shane and Belinda Simpson. This is a wonderful old cottage on the edge of the Nepean River that they will turn into a cafe. They have been doing great work in the lower mountains and across the Penrith region running cafes. It is a new and exciting time in Penrith with so many things happening. It is great to be out of COVID-19 and really kicking goals across the west.

COOGEE ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:50): Public transport is one of the most important issues in my electorate of Coogee. It is such an important issue because, sadly, come 5 December public transport in my electorate will be significantly worse than it was even a decade ago. Before I speak about the New South Wales Government's final decision handed down on 1 November about the additional 24 bus routes that are set to be removed, I say a huge thank you and congratulations to my community and the community of the Eastern Suburbs who, through their tireless grassroots campaigning, have been able to save the 373 bus route. It is a huge task to get a government and its bureaucracy to change a decision. This is something we should all be incredibly proud of.

I do say though that, like everything this Liberal Government does, the announcement to save the 373 is actually a false promise—a faux commitment. While it has made a commitment to keep the 373, it is not the 373 as we know it. Some miserable, mean-spirited person has decided to cut the route short by two stops. One could say two stops are nothing, but these are two fundamental stops—one near the Sydney Eye Hospital and then down the end at Circular Quay. From where the bus route now terminates, the walk from Museum station to the eye hospital is over one kilometre. We are not talking a couple of hundred metres; we are talking over one kilometre. I am a reasonably able-bodied person. I have some dodgy knees from playing rugby, but I can do one kilometre. But imagine someone with a pram or an elderly person—one kilometre is a huge walk.

I hope the Minister, as he walks past the eye hospital every day to this place, is reminded of all the people who signed the petitions and filled out community consultations, the people he is personally disappointing by ensuring that the 373 bus is not actually the 373 bus. People who want to access the eye hospital from the electorate of Coogee will now have to walk 1.1 kilometres from Museum station or catch multiple modes of transport. While we have saved 85 per cent of this one bus route, the New South Wales Government is still set to remove 24 bus routes from across the Eastern Suburbs. This is in addition to the six that it has removed already. That is 30 bus routes that the Government has removed from across the Eastern Suburbs. We know that at least 50 bus stops are set to be removed. We have written to the Minister and the department asking them to come clean about where these bus stops are, and all they are giving us is dodgy maps. Today I call on the Minister to come clean about where those 50 stops are from across the Eastern Suburbs. In the announcement the New South Wales Government made, one of the things it claimed to have done was release onboard community feedback. This report is not worth the paper it is printed on. One of the things that people who had read the community consultation comments all knew was that it was very positively geared. Question 9 is probably the most important question:

What statements do you associate with the proposed changes?

- Better local connections ...
- More buses more often

- Better and new routes
- More room and capacity
- Other (please specify)

It might shock people that "Other" was 76 per cent of the responses. We have called on the New South Wales Government to release the raw data because we know the community is vehemently against the bus cuts. We want to know whether 76 per cent of the community would actually say that because they know that our community is worse off. In conclusion, this is a Government that refuses to listen to our community. Our public transport is worse today than it was 12 years ago. The role of members of Parliament is to make people's lives better. I look forward to seeing our community on 24 November at our rally. I will see them there. We will keep fighting this. Public transport is fundamental to enabling us to get around. I call on the Government to begin an independent inquiry and make good on its promise to re-establish the 373 bus as it should, with the two additional stops. [*Time expired.*]

REGIONAL AND RURAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (17:55): Over the past few months, and particularly the past few weeks, I have had far too many conversations with young people who are far too young to be dealing with the consequences of the suicides of their friends and relatives. The pressures of job loss, interrupted education, frustrated opportunities for work overseas or just the lockdown in general have heightened the difficulties that young people have been facing. Increased instances and awareness of youth suicide have not been caused by the recent pandemic. Rather, they have been exacerbated by it.

Over the past 10 years the crisis in mental health and youth suicide in Australia has reached breaking point. Suicide now accounts for nearly one-third—one in three—of all deaths for people aged between 18 and 24. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that this is an increase of 25 per cent since 2010. Lifeline reports that each day nine people lose their battle with mental health, which is more than double the road toll. Of those, three in every four are young males. While statistics give us context, each person is a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother, father or friend. They leave an irreconcilable void in the lives of those they leave behind. The death of a young person is a tragedy regardless of the situation. However, this trend is something we need to work together to address.

Trying to assign blame might help people relieve some of the burden in the short term, but it is not a solution. It does not reverse the trend. In its submission to the New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into health outcomes and access to health services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales, Mission Australia reported some serious shortcomings in the treatment of mental health in regional New South Wales. Access is often difficult due to distance and inability to travel, as well as long waiting periods and lack of awareness of how to access services in the first instance. While the public health system is somewhat equipped to address some level of this, acute treatment is often given rather than long-lasting solutions, which are delivered through the private sector. One of the things about regional New South Wales is the close-knit communities of smaller towns. People gain a sense of belonging and trust with those they are surrounded by. However, this strength can become a weakness for mental health treatment. The Mission Australia submission notes:

Trust is an essential element in service provision as young people need to feel that the engagement with services will not compromise their privacy or identity, especially in the context of mental health supports. Building these relationships require thoughtful investments of time and resources. However, this can be challenging in rural and regional areas due to high staff turnover ratios, lack of accredited professionals such as therapists, nurses and psychologists, and uncertainty of funding to continue support programs.

In Wollongong we are fortunate enough to have a range of services, with appointments available roughly within a six- to eight-week time frame. Although these wait times leave much to be desired, it is light-years ahead of more remote parts of our State. Wait times in the Central West and western New South Wales are measured in months, not days or weeks. People experiencing mental health crises cannot wait months. Someone with suicidal thoughts does not have weeks or months to spare. It is unfortunate and distressing that young people feel the only option they have is to end their life. There is no coming back from that option. There is no second chance.

The loss and pain that is passed on to their loved ones is enduring. No parent should have to bury their child, and no young person, their friend. November is a great time and a more than appropriate time to raise this issue, but this is not a month-long problem. The trend has been upwards for some time and in many areas it has now reached crisis levels. I note and recognise the Government's recent announcement of mental health funding during the COVID recovery, but it needs more than an announcement. It needs a concerted effort. I also note the commitment of funding to suicide prevention projects throughout New South Wales; we have yet to hear about anything for the Central West and western New South Wales.

In parts of this State, as I said earlier, people are often waiting months for appointments. There is also little incentive for professionals to stay in the area, with the opportunities for professional development and promotion

hindered by their remote location. I understand that in Parkes, if you present to a hospital suffering with a mental health condition after 4.00 p.m., the only option is a video link to a larger hospital to be assessed. For someone who is already grappling with mental ill health and seeking treatment, that is another barrier to seeking treatment. In the same town, there are only a handful of dedicated mental health registered nurses who have to share their time between the hospital and community outreach. There is no full-time psychiatrist other than drug and alcohol counsellors and a psychiatrist who visits one day on a biweekly basis.

It is time we all put in the effort to address this issue. It is time that we worked to deliver adequate funding and education. Incentives should be considered to encourage trained professionals to stay in rural and regional New South Wales. Too many young men and women are taking their lives due to a lack of opportunity for help. Too many people are being left behind and are wondering how the situation has been allowed to get to this point. I acknowledge Geordie Horan, who has brought the stories and situations facing young people in regional New South Wales to my attention. He is a young man who has seen too many lives cut short unnecessarily. He is a young man left wondering what he could have done. Now he is looking for answers so that others do not reach 21 years of age having attended more funerals of their friends than funerals of elderly people in their communities.

COVID-19 AND UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:01): I inform the House of the great work done by the people of the Upper Hunter electorate to get vaccinated and protect themselves against COVID-19. I highlight the incredible work of some of those organisations and individuals. When I first entered this Chamber four months ago, little did I know of the effects that the ongoing pandemic was likely to have on my community. We are a country of natural disasters—bushfires, floods and droughts—but here was something else: a pandemic. As an MP, you do not get to choose the cards you are dealt. I barely had my shoes under the desk here in Parliament when we sent the State of New South Wales into lockdown. These are tough decisions and I am only now beginning to understand that some of the tough decisions we need to make are being made in this Chamber.

I returned home to the Upper Hunter and began to understand firsthand the role of the local member: fielding telephone calls from constituents, providing feedback about how the public health orders work and saying what they could and could not do under the rules—those dreaded rules. My many thanks go to my electorate staff, Jacqui Townsend and Kirstie Knapton, for their assistance during those challenging days when it seemed the torrent of calls would never stop. They were tough days indeed for all electorate staff in all electorate offices throughout New South Wales. The COVID-19 Delta strain proved to be a hardy enemy. Our community responded to public health orders to limit local transmission of the illness within the electorate. Our best hope of getting through this ordeal was vaccination, vaccination and more vaccination.

The local government area figures from the Australian Government's Operation COVID Shield, which were published at the end of August, revealed that Upper Hunter had a real mountain to climb. First dose vaccinations were as low as 47 per cent in the Muswellbrook Shire Council area and the double dose rate was only 21 per cent. By comparison, some of the Sydney metropolitan areas recorded single doses of over 70 per cent and 50 per cent double jabbed. Yet just up the New England Highway in the Upper Hunter shire they had already started with their injections, with over 33 per cent of people being double dosed. While the Federal Government was rolling out the distribution of vaccines, the stark reality was that not enough of it was getting to the Upper Hunter. Let me be clear: The commitment of my constituents was there and, rightly so, they were frustrated. As the recent outbreak intensified, all that the people across the Upper Hunter wanted to do was to get vaccinated.

My life as an MP became all about sourcing vaccine and helping the community, who were so desperate for it. I thank those who came to my rescue: the Royal Flying Doctor Service and its amazing staff led by Sally Laughman; and the amazing shire councils, who heeded my call to set up our community-led vaccination clinics. My thanks go to the mayors, councillors, their staff and the many people who volunteer through the local shire councils. I thank the Hunter New England Local Health District, Michael Drenzo, Lauren Cruz and Liz Grist for all their tireless work to get us vaccinated. They helped me understand the system—and there is some understanding that needs to happen. I acknowledge our local GP surgeries, particularly Dr Norman Jawaad, Dr Debelak and Dr Au. Without them, their help and numerous hours spent speaking on the phone explaining to me what was going on, I could not have done it. I thank our local police who helped me out with people control—Local Area Commander Tracy Chapman, Inspector Joe Shultz and Inspector Guy Guiana. I acknowledge the Rotary Club of Muswellbrook, Steve Reichel, and my good friend and partner in crime John Hobden.

I thank the local emergency services organisations—the Volunteer Rescue Association, the Rural Fire Service and the SES. They are the people who stood in the sun, helped me on the basketball courts running people around and helped the Lions. They did a lot of work. A lot of volunteers were willing to help us in our time of need. There are many more people I need to thank. On behalf of the people of the Upper Hunter electorate, please accept our heartfelt thanks. The Merriwa pop-up clinic was a classic example of a community-led vaccination clinic. It was located at the Merriwa School of Arts, and we had 48 hours' notice before it all happened. We

managed to get the community vaccinated and we are now over 90 per cent double dosed and well over 95 per cent single dosed. I thank everyone in the Upper Hunter electorate for their patience and resilience in what has been an immensely challenging time.

PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (18:06): The COVID pandemic has revealed the importance of our essential workers. They are critical to our survival. Thousands of workers are in insecure and precarious work. We have seen what happened to many of those workers during the COVID pandemic. They will never be able to access long service leave. The fundamental purpose of long service leave is to reward an employee with a period of rest after a long period of loyal service. The concept of the importance of rest is an ancient one. It is found in the biblical Jubilee laws, which recognised that society could not flourish if it was built on frenzied busyness, where work never stopped. Exploitation fundamentally is a state marked by the absence of rest and recovery. The importance of this concept of rest is also well recognised in modern industrial relations research, which reiterates the importance of rest in order for communities and societies to flourish, and also for workplaces to be productive and efficient.

In the 1940s New South Wales became the first State to introduce legislation to mandate long service leave entitlements. The then Minister for Labour and Industry, when introducing the legislation, identified two main reasons for the scheme: the reduction of labour turnover and the practical reward for a long and faithful service with a single employer. This was at a time when permanent work was the norm and the vast majority of employees stayed with one or two employers for the whole of their careers. The extension of long service leave beyond the public sector to the private sector occurred in the 1940s through inclusion in private sector awards, with entitlements created through the processes of conciliation and arbitration. Again, this was fuelled by a strong demand for labour and concern about high labour turnover rates making employers more willing to provide benefits that might help to attract and retain staff.

As we know, our modern workplaces are very different from the ones that first saw these schemes introduced. The characteristics of modern work make extending portable long service leave even more critical. I will talk about portable long service leave and why we need to enact it. The Australian Services Union, the United Workers Union and a number of other unions have pointed out that competitive tendering and short-term contracts have made jobs less safe and secure in many industries such as cleaning, construction, community services and social services. A report into portable long service leave by the Macquarie University Centre for Workforce Futures notes that the need for portable long service leave has intensified as people spend more of their lives in paid work and as work-life balance issues increase in intensity.

Despite this, there are far fewer permanent jobs available. The *State of the NSW Public Sector Report 2020* produced by the Public Service Commission attests to this. Insecure work is a sobering reality for so many in New South Wales. For far too many workers, short-term tenders, casual employment and a frequent change of employers is the order of the day. Waste collection workers who work for the same local council for years are at the mercy of contract changes. They are never able to work for an employer long enough to become entitled to long service leave. Another example are swim school coaches, whose contracts change when their councils move on to a new provider. The fluid nature of employment fuelled portable long service leave in the coal industry, and then subsequently the construction and the cleaning industries.

In 2010 when Labor was in office we proudly extended portable long service leave to cleaners. Many in this place have talked about their parents being employed as cleaners. They understand the nature of this work. It is precarious, and having portable long service leave is vital. These provisions seek explicitly to support mobility between employers. As the Macquarie University study attests, flexibility and labour mobility not only have become an empirical fact of the Australian economy but also are seen as desirable objectives to be pursued as a matter of policy. The restriction of an entitlement to employees who are immobile seems anachronistic. Women, who have disproportionate burdens to manage in the area of work-life balance and who are disproportionately represented among workers in jobs without leave benefits, would also stand to benefit from portability—as would the low paid. Portable long service leave is vital. I will speak about it further in the coming months and in the new year. I will bring to this House a number of case studies and examples to prosecute the case for why we need this extension.

SOUTHLAKES INCORPORATED

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (18:11): I acknowledge, and not for the first time, the wonderful work being done by Southlakes Incorporated, led by the incredible Christine Mastello. Southlakes Incorporated has helped more than 650,000 people in crisis by finding emergency and long-term housing for the homeless; running a food bank and delivering emergency food hampers; helping domestic violence victims to leave a dangerous home; providing free children's clothing, cots and furniture for people under extreme financial stress;

and providing 147,000 free haircuts through its Community Hair Project. The amazing team of volunteers have touched thousands of lives, and in some cases saved them. I could go on and on about the outstanding services that Southlakes Incorporated offers, but I will focus on its latest acquisition and what it will mean for the wider community.

Recently I became aware of the group's need for a van to use to increase the number of emergency food deliveries that volunteers make to people in desperate need not just in the Lake Macquarie electorate but across the Central Coast and wider Hunter region. Until now, volunteers have been loading their personal vehicles with emergency hampers and delivering them. Due to space limitations in their cars, volunteers were forced to make return journeys and multiple trips across the region just to make sure that none of their clients missed out. Christine has worn out the suspension of four of her own cars making these seemingly never-ending journeys. I am pleased to say that I was able to organise funding to purchase a 2021 LDV V80 van.

The van will make life so much easier for the volunteers, as 60 emergency hampers can fit inside its cargo hold at any one time. The hampers will be distributed every Tuesday and Thursday to families in crisis across Lake Macquarie, the Hunter and the Central Coast. Each hamper contains a bag of food, a bag of frozen food, two loaves of bread, and a bag of fruit and veggies. Without these deliveries, families would be left with empty bellies. The sad reality is that every week far too many families are left in severe financial distress and face the very real choice of either paying the rent or buying food. The *Foodbank Hunger Report 2021* found that more than half of those who are severely affected by food insecurity go a whole day every week without eating.

The team at Southlakes Incorporated are engaged in genuinely life-saving work. Christine has named the van "Greggles". While I am not sure how I feel about the name, I was simply delighted to help Christine and her amazing team of volunteers to secure a vehicle. I must acknowledge the generous contribution made by ADRA Op Shop at Morisset and 8 at Trinity that, alongside me, were more than happy to contribute for the new van. I thank also the team at Glendale LDV for their generosity and assistance.

In the four weeks since Southlakes Incorporated took ownership of the beautifully wrapped Greggles, Christine has been able to deliver food to an additional 150 families each week. Greggles has also made trips to Maitland, Maroubra and Gosford, delivering essential items to the homeless, such as shelter bags, which the member for Terrigal knows about with the fabulous Terrigal Rotary Club, sleeping bags, blankets, toiletries, towels, food packs and even hotplates run by small butane gas bottles so people can prepare a basic hot meal. Each of the trips provides aid to around 150 homeless and rough sleepers, and without the van, the journeys would be unable to take place.

There are big moves ahead for Greggles the Van, with Southlakes already planning to expand its services, with emergency deliveries organised for Port Macquarie, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Murrin Bridge and even Canberra; my namesake is going to be busy. It is no exaggeration to say that this van will enable volunteers to help hundreds of thousands more people in its time. The team at Southlakes really does the most wonderful work with the leanest of budgets. I was pleased to learn that only last month, after two years of slogging through red tape, this incredible organisation has finally been granted charity status.

The Southlake volunteers see people at their very lowest point and in true crisis, and yet they never give up or lose hope trying to help their clients and make a true difference. Every time I see Christine she is smiling, laughing and energetic. It takes a special sort of soul to be able to keep positive when faced with so much devastation. I am excited to see what the Southlakes Incorporated team does next with their new asset. While I again acknowledge their efforts, I also thank everybody concerned for the vital support they provide to the local community.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:16): I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on his fantastic private member's statement and the deployment of Greggles to so many areas across New South Wales. I am very proud that the Terrigal Rotary Club was able to provide support with regard to the shelter bags being provided to Christine and the team at Southlakes, which is great to see is now incorporated. It is organisations like Southlakes that take the support to so many vulnerable people, not just in the member's electorate but also across the Central Coast, Greater Sydney and other areas. I acknowledge the great work being done by Christine and her team of people at Southlakes. The charity spans so many areas. As an honorary member of the Terrigal Rotary Club, I am very proud that it was able to provide shelter bags to Southlakes. I know those bags provide excellent protection for people who are sleeping rough. I know Greggles is going to cover a lot of kilometres and it is great that it will be on the road to help out so many people.

RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATIONS

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (18:17): This morning, along with a number of other members from the metropolitan area, I had the privilege of attending a local Remembrance Day ceremony. I am pleased

that the Parliament scheduled the House to meet later to enable that. The Remembrance Day ceremony held by Riverstone RSL sub-Branch at the war memorial in Riverstone has been happening there for over 100 years. The war memorial in Riverstone is one of the four first memorials erected in Australia; it was opened in November 1919, the very first Remembrance Day. Such was the pride and the spirit of the local Riverstone community at the time, they immediately banded together to recognise the sacrifice and service of those who had come from their community.

While attendance at events such as that still remains modest in these COVID-affected times and the crowd was not huge, the community was represented by ex-service personnel, elected leaders, community groups, representatives of schools and individuals who wished to commemorate the sacrifice of those who served Australia. I congratulate the president of the sub-branch, Bruce Shaw, on conducting the service again this year and organising all of that with various agencies to make sure everything operated smoothly. At Riverstone the road has to be closed for the ceremony and we need the assistance of the police to do that. The community very readily accepts that as part of the tradition of the place.

In Riverstone the war memorial is located immediately in front of the entrance to the historic railway station. This is no accident. In 1914, when the call went out across the State and young nation for volunteers to enlist, the young men of Riverstone and surrounding districts who responded left their community by train to Sydney. The farewells made by families and friends occurred out the front of that railway station. As we know, too many of those farewells turned out to be final farewells, and so in 1919 the townspeople chose that location for the memorial they erected to the 22 locals who left by train never to return from the Great War. In a fitting tribute to those men and those who followed in subsequent conflicts, in 2020 the Riverstone Chamber of Commerce and Blacktown City Council cooperated to have a pair of replica World War I army boots recreated in bronze and anchored at the base of the memorial as a visual reminder of those who walked those fateful steps to the train.

Since the creation of the memorial in 1919, it has been augmented to commemorate the service of local residents in World War II and subsequent conflicts. The town is proud of its history, especially of those who served their country. The small RSL sub-branch in Riverstone keeps that memory alive and is wholeheartedly supported by thousands in the community who turn out on Anzac Day to honour that service. The RSL sub-branch is a small group of people, and I am sure they were as pleased as I was today to meet a new member of the sub-branch who recently retired from the navy, moved to the district and took up membership at the sub-branch to keep that tradition alive. That will be most welcome to the people who have carried on the tradition for so long. The precinct around the railway station will always be special for those reasons.

As future development occurs in the town, as it inevitably will in the North West Growth Area, I will always be an advocate for preserving and enhancing that precinct to maintain respect for those who risked and those who gave their lives for Australia. I have written to Blacktown City Council and to the Minister for Transport and Roads to talk about my vision for how we can enhance that historic precinct and how, as rail and road interchanges are altered in the area as part of the North West Growth Area, we can take that opportunity to create a very special, impressive and very fitting tribute to the soldiers, sailors and airman who came from the Riverstone district and are commemorated in that space, and for those to whom the precinct outside the railway station is so sacred and so special. It was a privilege to stand with the Riverstone community this morning, a privilege that I greatly appreciate each year as I have the opportunity to do that. Riverstone is a town that comes together to remember. We will remember them. Let us not forget.

COVID-19 AND CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (18:22): Since becoming the member for Cabramatta in 2008, I have continued to be impressed by the incredible strength and resilience of the people in my electorate, particularly during difficult times. Their ability to band together, work together and overcome together truly came to life during the recent COVID-19 lockdown. The lockdowns we endured have been tough on families throughout the State, particularly for those hit hard in south-west Sydney who also endured the harshest restrictions. Many businesses and cultural and religious community groups worked extremely long hours to offer and deliver support and assistance to those most in need.

My constituency was quick to adapt and adjust to new restrictions as they rolled out, and pivoted to ensure the safety of not only their immediate households but also the greater community as a whole. This goes without saying, but I am proud to have seen vaccination rates quickly surge once the vaccines became available to the community. It would be remiss of me to not mention Helen and Quinn Oh of Priceline Pharmacy in Cabramatta who were at the forefront of promoting and encouraging vaccination uptake in the Cabramatta CBD. They went above and beyond to ensure that as many vaccines as possible could be administered in a safe and timely manner at the height of the pandemic.

It was reassuring to see the community banding together to support one another in a time of great crisis with numerous food and essential goods being delivered directly to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community. These services also extended to numerous cultural and religious groups, which took to running digital services online through Zoom videoconferencing to ensure that they could continue to cater to the various cultural and religious support groups in our diverse community in south-west Sydney. These online portals were a great solace to many local residents and also provided a means for residents, especially older residents who may have become disconnected from their community, to keep in touch and stay up to date with the latest COVID information and advice at all times.

The Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association conducted a socially distanced drive-through for the delivery of services for the church's congregation and provided small care packages, including Eucharist and pastries for churchgoers who missed their weekly Sunday service. It may not sound like much, but the holistic support from the community has kept so many people going throughout this pandemic. We are fortunate to have so many kind, passionate and caring individuals living within our community. As our State slowly begins to reopen and we are afforded more freedoms, it is important that we continue to remain vigilant and remember the lessons learned that kept us safe throughout the pandemic. I commend and congratulate each and every person who dug deep and did their part to support our community throughout the entirety of the pandemic. I am incredibly proud to call the electorate of Cabramatta my home and my community.

URBAN PLANNING

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and Minister for Transport and Roads) (18:25): Monday this week marked two important occasions: the evening before the start of HSC exams and World Town Planning Day. As year 12 students in Pittwater are making decisions about their careers, it prompted me to think about the value of planning as a career path. For those not attuned to the world of planning and urban development, it can seem complex and intimidating and something that one usually only interacts with when submitting a development application to renovate a house. But, in reality, urban planning affects us all every day. The places we live and work in have been carefully and strategically thought about by planning experts who have years of university education behind them.

As we know, Sydney is growing, with the population expected to reach eight million over the next 30 to 40 years—not to mention all the amazing regional cities and towns across New South Wales. With the challenges of climate change and continued population growth, planning for sustainable and equitable communities has never been more important. If schoolkids could be exposed to the profession of planning early, we would have more enrolments in university planning courses. The high school subject of geography plays an important role as a feeder subject; however, the uptake of elective geography has been declining for the past 25 years. In 1995, 17 per cent of all HSC students took geography as a subject compared with just 6 per cent in 2019. Other subjects such as economics, ancient history and legal studies have become far more popular.

In 2015 the New South Wales Government made a concerted effort to increase urban planning-related topics in the curriculum subject matter to encourage discussions in the classroom about how places are shaped, the factors that influence good livability, how places change, the consequences of urbanisation, settlement patterns, migration and population growth. There is a great quote by academic Louise Fleming that democracy is founded on the principle that ordinary citizens would rule but the vital missing link is that most students are not taught to be rulers. Similarly, we expect the community to engage with planning issues but we have not always provided them with the tools to do so. That is why introducing urban dynamic concepts into the school curriculum is important.

I have the honour of working with multiple planners in my ministerial team: Michael Bishop, Estelle Grech, Isabel Virgona and Katie Stevenson. Isabel is driving change to encourage students to study geography and raising awareness about the importance of urban planning. Isabel and Estelle received a very prestigious award at the Planning Institute of Australia National Awards. They are two young women who I am proud to be associated with. Estelle has been leading incredible work on the Greater Sydney Parklands, and Isabel has been doing incredible work in relation to the need to increase the diversity and volume of regional housing.

I make a special mention of Michael Bishop, who was born and bred in Pittwater. In fact, he could appropriately be called Pittwater's "Prince of Planning". His career was eminently shaped by the landscapes he had to learn from—for example, at Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Long Reef Marine Reserve, where local school students often go to learn about our coastal environments and processes and the challenges of coastal erosion. The Rock Lily Hotel, which is right next to my electorate office, is one of the oldest examples of the built environment in the area and tells us so much about settlement patterns, people and the challenges of their everyday lives. There are some amazing architectural legacies in the electorate of Pittwater. Architects like Alexander Jolly, Harry Seidler, Peter Stutchbury and Richard Leplastrier have developed their practices from the natural environment that Pittwater has to offer.

The city provides a brilliant opportunity for education, to teach us about stewardship, citizenship, and urban dynamics and change. Due to the great engagement of my community with the New South Wales Government, major projects like the Mona Vale Road upgrade, which has now commenced, and the Keoride on-demand public transport service connect thousands of locals who live in areas that are not accessible to the public transport network by traditional buses. In the spirit of World Town Planning Day, I will finish with three key points. Our cities are changing, and as we increasingly live in urban environments I want people to have a fundamental understanding of how cities function so that they feel empowered to help shape them. We must never stop using the city and the environment as a tool and a textbook to learn from. Planning is a complex and rewarding career, and I encourage people to pursue it.

I mention my chief of staff, Katie Stevenson, who is an estimable planner who has helped to empower many people in this place to learn how the tools of planning can help them shape a better future for the communities that they represent. I note one of the wonderful people in the department, Monica Gibson, who was recently honoured at the Planning Institute of Australia awards as an honorary fellow of that institute. I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing people, and Pittwater is richer for their assistance.

CAPTAIN SHAWN CAIN

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation) (18:31): The Tamworth electorate is blessed with good people who stand up and contribute to the increasing wellbeing and safety of those who live in the community. Being a firefighter is a very special job. On Wednesday 10 November at 496 station Werris Creek, Captain Shawn Cain, who has been a retained firefighter for the past 25 years, had his epaulettes changed to station captain by Chief Superintendent Steve Hirst and Zone Superintendent Tom Cooper. It is a fitting promotion for a community member who has Werris Creek in his heart. Shawn clearly demonstrates the qualities of Fire and Rescue NSW: commitment to the values of respect, integrity, service and courage. After being a firefighter for just over 20 years, Shawn Cain knows a little bit about the great town of Werris Creek and what it means to be an integral part of that community, contributing to the day-to-day life and wellbeing of that community. Shawn will not only uphold the traditions of Fire and Rescue NSW but also focus on recruitment.

Who are on-call firefighters and what do they do? On-call firefighters in our regional communities provide a high standard of response to fires and a variety of emergency incidents in their local communities. They use specialised vehicles and equipment to prevent and reduce the risk of fire, and potential loss of life and property. They work closely with local communities like Werris Creek to increase fire safety awareness and to promote fire prevention, and they undertake all manner of rescues. Recently when the Royal Flying Doctors Service and the Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service ran a much-needed vaccination clinic at David Taylor Oval, who was there helping the community to fill out forms and to inform them of the procedure for the day? None other than Shawn Cain and his team from Fire and Rescue. They also deal with hazardous material incidents and assist other agencies with emergency medical responses and severe weather-related events.

While on-call fire stations respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on-call firefighters are rostered on duty while also being on stand-by. They are notified of an incident via pager or phone call. On-call firefighters are needed the most during the holiday seasons when we all spend time with our families and time away from work. When we are with our families on the weekends, they are on stand-by, ready and waiting for emergencies. On-call firefighters are required to immediately leave whatever activity they are engaged in, such as celebrating Christmas Day and important birthdays with their families. They travel to the fire station so that they can respond to the incident with their team on the firetruck, known as the appliance. Firefighters talk about the appliance a lot.

Firefighting involves day, night and weekend work and can be physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. But it is one of the most important, rewarding and well-respected careers in our community. Firefighters provide many resources and a lot of support to our community via health, safety and wellbeing. Those qualities typify the team at Werris Creek. I sincerely congratulate Shawn Cain, captain at Werris Creek Station 496, which is justly deserved. The creek is in safe hands.

PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS SPORTS AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:36): I applaud the successful recipients of the 2021 Port Macquarie Hastings Sports Awards, who were recently acknowledged for their sporting brilliance via an online forum coordinated by the Rotary Club of Port Macquarie Sunrise. The 22-year-old tradition was held on 22 October, albeit in a COVID-safe format, to recognise the elite of the Hastings sporting world who continue to reach new heights and excel in their chosen sport on the local, State, national and international stage. Nominations were strong, with 59 applications assessed by the judges. The awards highlight the diversity of sport in our community while acknowledging sporting excellence and achievements, thanks to the generous support of local

business sponsors. I thank the business community for backing the sports awards through a difficult economic period. Their commitment to our sporting stars is appreciated by everyone involved.

The 2021 Regional Australia Bank Sportsperson of the Year Award was won by sailing sensation Rohan Nosworthy, after taking out an unrivalled four national titles and six New South Wales and Queensland State titles across four sailing classes. Rohan was also the 2020 Australian Champion in NS14 class, Heron class and MG class, and runner-up in four other class State titles. The accolades continue to recognise Rohan's elite skills, after winning three northern New South Wales regional sailing regattas and the New South Wales interclub trophy. It is no wonder the panel awarded Rohan the sportsperson of the year title. I congratulate him.

Keeping it in the family, the AusSport Scoreboards Junior Sportsperson of the Year primary school category was won by Aidan Nosworthy, son of Rohan, who has followed in his father's footsteps of accomplishing significant wins in his chosen sport of sailing. The Donovan Oates Hannaford Junior Sportsperson of the Year high school category was presented to Billy Hargy for motocross enduro. This year the Laing + Simmons Port Macquarie Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability was awarded to Jasmine Ferguson, for her impressive achievements in national athletics competitions. The Patterson Real Estate Junior Team of the Year was awarded to Port City Breakers Navy under-11s, for their undefeated performances in the past six seasons, and Group 3 rugby league minor premiers and premiers for 2020. I thank Donovan Oates Hannaford, which also sponsored the award for Senior Team of the Year, presented to the Port Macquarie Touch Association's men's 20 touch football side. They were victorious at the NSW Touch Association State Cup title in their division in 2020 and a series of other titles on the footy field.

The Hastings Physiotherapy Sporting Volunteer of the Year award winner was the talented Simon Thresher, who is a well-known personality on the hockey circuit. The Greenmeadows Health Centre award for Sporting Excellence was presented to Emma Schuch, for her all-rounder capabilities in marathon, ironman and adventure racing competitions, and her instrumental efforts in the Eastcoast women's futsal team. Following the tradition of previous years, the Hastings Sports Awards included the presentation of a scholarship to a junior sportsperson who excelled in sporting achievements throughout the year. The Wayne Richards Sporting Scholarship pays tribute to an influential man, who passionately supported youth and sport in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region.

I spoke a few weeks ago about the talented Chelsea Hall for her impressive efforts on the football field. She was presented with the 2021 Wayne Richards Sporting Scholarship, and I wish her the very best in her future endeavours. I congratulate all the winners and nominees for the 2021 Port Macquarie Hastings Sports Awards on their standout performances and efforts in so many facets of our sporting community. They are outstanding role models to so many aspiring young sportspeople and administrators in our region. I thank them for their contribution to local sport. I thank and commend the many businesses that sponsored the event again this year while acknowledging the difficult circumstances of COVID-19. I will close with words from footballer Doug Williams: Never give up, never give in, and when the upper hand is ours, may we have the ability to handle the win with the dignity that we absorbed the loss.

TAXI INDUSTRY

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:40): I will read a letter that I received from a lovely man who lives in my electorate. His name is Mohamad Ali Choubassi and he is a taxidriver. I will read his letter for the record because it affects all taxidrivers across the State of New South Wales. He said:

I, Mohamad Ali Choubassi, have been in the Taxi industry and with Illawarra Taxi Network for 27 years. I purchased my first plate in 1994 to offer myself and my family, long term financial security. I purchased the first plate for \$200K approximately.

My wife Amale, also believed the Taxi to be a secure investment, so purchased two plates from 2006 and 2009. I purchased my second plate in 1997 for approximately \$250,000, together we have four plates.

We purchased the taxi plates, believing them to be a solid financial investment so did not invest in superannuation. The taxi plates were supposed to be our superannuation, retirement fund.

Our taxis were generating a very comfortable income up until 2015, when new competition into the marketplace started to impact on the workload, lessening the available work. While our income decreased extensively over the next few years, the expenses for our four cars increased. Our income today is less than 50% of what it was in 2014.

I have difficulty finding drivers and currently have two taxis off the road. Nobody wants to work for the minimal income the Taxis are now generating.

The stress of the diminishing income has put pressure on my relationship with my wife, and I am not well. I have spent nearly two weeks a month since 2015, in and out of hospital and can provide copies of medical certificates to support this.

Our quality of life has also been impacted with less income coming in, and now what we believed to be financial security on retirement now not the case.

Due to my ill health, I cannot drive the Taxis myself anymore, so have no option but to shelve the plates which I obviously don't want to do.

In addition, still owing money to St George bank and my credit card is generally maxed out to its limit to keep the cars on the road.

We purchased the Taxi plates, believing them to be a solid financial investment for retirement, but this is now not the case. In addition, our income has decreased which has put pressure on our day to day living and quality of life over these last six years.

We would appreciate if the Nsw state government implement or consider buyback scheme of ordinary taxi licences because of our financial hardship and if possible, provide financial assistance to at least bridge the gap with income lost, and some contribution towards the loss of our plate value.

Regards
Mohamad Choubassi
29th October 2021

That letter from Mohamad is indicative of taxidriver across New South Wales. I catch a cab to my hotel of an evening and I always ask the taxidriver if it is their taxi and their plates. Some of them have been brought to tears. They are about to lose everything that they have ever worked for, including their retirement funds. It will affect them and their families. If the Government does not step in soon and offer a grandfathering compensation scheme, we are going to hear about suicides. I am not making that up. That is what they are saying to me. I have a large number of taxidriver in my electorate. Many of them have said to me that they have considered taking their own lives because of what is happening with taxi licences in this State. Again, I urge the Government to do something about it and to do it quickly.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:44): I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Shellharbour. As a regional member, I have met with Central Coast Taxis in my local area—a fantastic group of people who have put their livelihoods into regional taxi services. I am sure the member for Shellharbour has met with similar groups in her region. When rideshare services were introduced across Australia and the world, the impact on the taxi industry was dramatic. I sought to arrange a meeting between the Deputy Premier's staff and Central Coast Taxis, which has been organised. Mr Choubassi's story is not unique; his concerns are shared by regional taxidrivers, in particular. What happens in metro Sydney is one thing; what happens in the regions is another. I agree with the member for Shellharbour that it is a grave concern for regional taxi owners when Sydney taxis come to the regions and it is a free-for-all. It is important that the Deputy Premier take on board the concerns of regional taxidrivers like Mr Choubassi.

DIWALI

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:45): The celebration of Diwali recently took place and it was observed by over a billion people worldwide. This year Diwali began on 4 November and was celebrated for five days. Whether or not we celebrate Diwali, it is a great opportunity for all of us to deepen our appreciation of the Hindu faith and, indeed, the importance of all spirituality. Diwali is considered one of the oldest religious traditions and attracts particular attention in India and the Northern Hemisphere, as well as in the Southern Hemisphere. While the meaning of Diwali varies across religions, like Hinduism and many others, they all share the common underlying message of the triumph of righteousness and the coming together of families and friends.

Each and every day of Diwali carries unique significance. The first day celebrates wealth—and this refers not just to money but to general wellbeing, prosperity and good fortune. The second day marks the recognition of liberation from suffering and commemorates Lord Krishna's victory over the Demon King, freeing the captives. For most observants, the third day is the day of the main festival when the goddess is worshipped and homes are blessed with good fortune and wealth. It is also a day for exchanging gifts and strengthening the communal aspect of Diwali. The fourth day celebrates victory and, for many western Indians, it marks the new year. The final day is a day for prayer and reflection before celebration and a festival of radiation and, of course, lights.

I have developed a great respect and appreciation for the practise of Diwali through my many connections with the local community. I believe its message of the victory of light over darkness has great relevance in our modern world. Additionally, events like Diwali encourage us to strive to be better people and remind us of a purpose in life that is greater than our own ambition. One of the many things I love about being the member for Oatley is the diversity of my local community, which is a multicultural melting pot. Almost 5 per cent of Georges River local government area residents practise Hinduism, among a variety of other religions. Religious and cultural diversity is something to be celebrated.

I am proud to say that my sons are growing up in an area where they will meet people of many different ethnicities and develop a real understanding and appreciation of so many wonderful cultures across our local community. When it comes to religion, so many common threads bind us together. As a Catholic, I see how Christianity and Hinduism are united on issues such as striving for peace, justice and respect for each and every one of us. I acknowledge the South Asian Australian Association, which has consistently organised one of the

largest Diwali events in my electorate of Oatley. The association's celebration is a pivotal event for the St George South Asian community, and over 2,000 people attend each year.

The South Asian Australian Association does amazing work in our local area to develop cultural awareness and preserve Indian language, dance, music and the arts. The South Asian Australian Association is just another example of a fantastic group that we are privileged to have in the St George area, celebrating diversity in culture. Not only does the association work to fulfil its own vision, but also it is influential in fostering great community spirit. Diwali is very much a communal event to be celebrated with friends and loved ones. I also acknowledge RAIN, the Resourceful Australian Indian Network, which also does an amazing job in the Indian community across my local area. Diwali promotes a universal message of the importance of peace, harmony and unity. The celebration of Diwali is an important reminder of lifting the darkness and new beginnings. I hope that this year's celebrations also bring a sense of happiness and belonging.

GAY AND TRANSGENDER HATE CRIMES

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:49): I acknowledge the first step taken to remedy one of the most awful injustices in our State's history. In May this year, the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues tabled a report into gay hate and transgender hate crimes between 1970 and 2010. It was a harrowing read—both for what it told us of the experiences of victims and what it revealed about wilful neglect by law enforcement. Men thrown off cliffs to a cruel and instant death, or bludgeoned to death in a dark park, or left with lifelong injuries and mental scars, all because of who they loved or who they were. This is too wretched to contemplate. But as horrific as these crimes were, they were compounded by an ingrained indifference to their right to justice and to families seeking answers.

The uncomfortable fact is that too much of this happened under the watch of the State. This Parliament is supposed to guarantee that the institutions it empowers function in the name of a free society. I believe, as a legislator, we must always frame our choices to preserve the sovereignty of the individual. The values of personal liberty, freedom and dignity are my North Star. They are as inherent to me as my love of family, my faith and my commitment to service. As a Parliament, we can only stay true to these ideals by ensuring the rule of law is applied with certainty and consistency. If these principles are qualified or conditional, we tear the social contract into worthless strands. The history of gay and transgender hate crimes says we failed that test. It is also inconsistent with how this Parliament presents itself to the community.

Over the years, we have progressively passed volumes of legislation—and correctly so—seeking to enhance the rights of victims of crime. We do so in part to recognise they have suffered enough and knowing that pain should never be extended by the callous hand of the law. Yet that is precisely what happened here. That is why I am pleased that the Government has now commenced a judicial inquiry into gay hate and transgender hate crimes. I commend my Cabinet colleagues for their decision and the work of the committee in bringing these historical injustices to light. Above all, I applaud every victim, every family and every advocate who persisted in agitating for answers. Because of you, it is now time for a reckoning. It is also time for ongoing action and diligence. The judicial inquiry now being established starts that work, but the standing committee's recommendations went further. Where there are outstanding cases demanding investigation and justice, that is what the victims deserve. The Strike Force Parrabell report listed 88 hate crimes, but did not include reports of lesbian and bisexual deaths. We need answers for their families also.

The task of righting historical wrongs has fallen to us. Our obligation is to guard against institutions drifting back into bad habits or complacency. We need continuous oversight, accountability and reform. We need, above all, to give the victims the comfort of knowing that we want the truth to be heard. I finish by reference to the new memorial in Marks Park. This memorial—called Rise—is dedicated to the victims and survivors of homophobic and transphobic violence from the 1970s to the 1990s. It is built on the site of so much of the pain, suffering and violence inflicted particularly on gay men. In such a beautiful setting, looking out across the ocean, it stands as a testament to our collective commitment to never forget the sins of the past and to always strive for truth and justice.

Community Recognition Notices

LIMITLESS FITNESS AND NUTRITION

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—I would like to extend my congratulations to Corrine Blight of Limitless Fitness and Nutrition who was recently named Fitness Australia's Female Group Fitness Instructor of the Year. Ms Blight runs 'retro-robics' classes for Wollondilly women at Bingara Gorge, as well as running online fitness workshops. The retro-robics classes in particular have been in high demand and Ms Blight hopes to expand them by the end of this year. Ms Blight has created a supportive and energetic fitness community through Limitless Fitness and Nutrition, which has helped many Wollondilly women stay active and healthy, even

throughout lockdown when access to gyms was restricted for most people. I commend Ms Blight and her team at Limitless Fitness and Nutrition for creating a fun and welcoming fitness program for women in our community.

MILITARY VEHICLE FOR CHARITY

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—This Remembrance day, while honouring those who died fighting for our freedom, I also would like to recognise an organisation that continues to help those who are still dealing with the consequences of war. Military Vehicle for Charity in Bowral was founded by Vihn Tran who grew up in Vietnam and is a survivor of the Vietnam War. His father worked as a US transport officer during the war, and young Vihn grew up hearing stories of all the different Military Vehicles his father drove. Mr Tran developed a love of military Jeeps, troop carriers and Land Rovers, and now has quite an impressive collection from Vietnam War. Military Vehicle hires out these vehicles for photo shoots and weddings, all proceeds going to disadvantaged children in Vietnam and supporting Australian Veterans from any war. The charity's Headquarters in Bowral is named Nui Dat RnR, after the Australian Army base in the Vietnam War. It has become a healing space where Australian Defence Force veterans can come together informally over coffee and share stories, educate visitors, and work on the historic military vehicles. Thank you Mr Tran for all you do for our veterans.

SWEETS & TREATS

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—Sweets & Treats in Bowral has been serving sugary delight to their customers for more than 14 years. The candy store has a nostalgic atmosphere and is styled after the old fashion lolly-shops, giving customers a unique retail experience, as well as satisfying the sweet tooth. The shop has become so popular that they are now moving to a larger premises in order to meet the demand. The new and improved space is absolutely fantastic and even has a little electric train chuffing along in the window, delighting children and train fanatics such as I am. It is a well-recognised fact that "a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down". The last couple years have had a few bitter pills to swallow, and so I am grateful to each person doing their bit to add a little sweetness to our daily grind. Congratulations to the Sweets & Treats team on a flourishing business and loyal customer base.

JAY SEENEY

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—The Greater Sydney Orchestra is setting its sights on a bright future post lockdown with Appin artist Jay Seene, the newly appointed CEO, at the helm. The Orchestra was only recently established and aims to bring a fresh and modern perspective to the orchestral music space. Seene has been in the music industry all his life and has a background in country rock. He is passionate about modernizing orchestral music, taking it out of the concert halls, and bringing it into the suburbs. Many have come to view orchestral music as something from a by-gone era, but Seene is determined that the Greater Sydney Orchestra can be culturally relevant, and is looking to incorporate a range of different musical genres into their repertoire including, pop, rock, and electronic. No doubt the orchestra will expand the horizons of many budding musicians and give the every-day Aussie more access to an incredible art form, in a new and exciting way. I congratulate Mr Seene on his appointment and look forward to hearing the GSO perform in the near future.

ALBURY SOFT PLASTIC TRIAL

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I wish to acknowledge the collaboration between Plastic Forest and Albury City Waste Management Centre who are partnering to find solution to the challenges inherent in re-using soft plastics waste. A trial program aims to remove tonnes of soft plastic waste that would normally go into landfill and to re-invent these waste materials into useful products such as garden edging, fence posts, and tomato stakes. Local businesses have been encouraged to participate and there are currently 20 taking part in the project. The trial is running for 6 months in NSW with the possibility of extending this service to other councils in the region. I congratulate Plastic Forest and Albury City Council for developing this cooperative vision and process to help protect our environment while encouraging sustainability and the re-use of materials.

SCHOOL STRIKE 4 CLIMATE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I bring to the attention of the House the School Strike 4 Climate activists in who participated in the virtual rally on Friday, 15 October 2021. I would like to particularly acknowledge all the young people in the Balmain Electorate who participated in the rally demand climate action using the hashtag #TheYouthAreRising. The COVID-19 crisis has been an incredibly difficult time for young people in our community, many of whom are also concerned by the looming climate crisis that awaits as we emerge from lockdown. While the pandemic has limited the ways students and activists can organise, it is a testament to their enduring passion and creativity that SS4C caused a social media storm on Friday and mobilised thousands of people across the country. On behalf of the Balmain Electorate, thank you to everyone involved for taking action to protect our planet.

COURABYRA WINES, NSW TOURISM AWARDS 2021 FINALIST

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate Courabyra Wines on being recognised as a finalist in the NSW Tourism Awards for 2021. Earlier this year Courabyra's winery restaurant received a Restaurant Guru recommendation for 2021, and their Cellar Door was awarded a Readers' Choice Award by the Australian Good Food Guide. These honours follow on from many years of hard work and skilful winemaking and hospitality, bringing customers and recognition to this popular Tumbarumba winery. I wish continued success for owner Cathy Gairn and her team, as they follow their passion with dedication and hard work.

ZOEY SWEENEY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Dubbo's Zoey Sweeney, who is raising awareness for neuroendocrine cancer. In 2019 Zoey became the Owner and Principal of Orana Dance Centre, and was also diagnosed with Stage 4 Neuroendocrine Cancer. Zoey's diagnosis was 2 weeks after buying Orana Dance Centre, so she kept it quiet as she wanted to prove she could be successful in business without anyone feeling sorry for her. Recent events prompted Zoey to speak out and now she is on a mission to raise awareness and funds for Neuroendocrine Cancer. November 10 was Neuroendocrine Cancer Day and to mark the occasion Zoey encouraged her students at Orana Dance Centre to dress in black and white zebra print. Donations were also being accepted through the Neuroendocrine Cancer Australia Website. Zoey receives monthly treatment and although she knows her diagnosis won't change, she considers herself very lucky to be able to do what she can at the moment. I think that we're very lucky to have Zoey and I thank her for her efforts to raise awareness of Neuroendocrine Cancer.

REMEMBRANCE ARTHUR RATHBONE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month we pause to reflect on all of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Arthur Rathbone grew up in the Narromine district and enlisted not once, but three times to serve his country. Arthur was shot and injured many times but eventually returned home and married his sweetheart, but his brother Harry never returned, killed in action in the 2nd battle of Gaza. On Anzac Day 2021, following the 11am service at Narromine, Arthur's descendants marked his grave with a special plaque commemorating his military service. His mother Keturah's grave also acts as a memorial to Harry – descendants say she never quite recovered from his death. The Rathbones are one of many families across the Dubbo electorate who have made sacrifices so that we can enjoy the freedoms we have today. I want to express my constant admiration for those who served, and those who continue to preserve their memories. We live in the best country in the world, and we have these men and women and their families to thank for it. Lest we forget.

MILLIE MILLS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Dubbo artist Millie Mills, who is hoping to educate locals with her song "Growing up on Land". Millie has worked with Connect to Country on the production of a song and music video which they are using to create awareness around the importance of growing up on country. She has said that music to her is a way to express feelings and emotions, and it is something she would continue to use as an outlet. Millie has used her Nan's experiences, as well as others, to craft a song which she hopes will be a great resource, not only to non-Indigenous people, but to Indigenous people as well, on the connection to country. Congratulations Millie on a fantastic song! Looking forward to hearing what you do next.

ADRIAN BUTLER, GENERAL MANAGER, FEDERATION COUNCIL

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate Adrian Butler for his reappointment as General Manager of Federation Council for the next five years. The appointment, which was announced by the Mayor Pat Bourke, is a strong endorsement of Adrian and his leadership. During these difficult times of lockdowns, restrictions and financial pressures, Adrian has successfully steered council to produce a long list of projects delivered, ranging from infrastructure improvements, to strategic planning and financial sustainability. Adrian is to be commended for the vision that he holds for Federation Council as being a Council that the community trusts and respects. Thank you Adrian for your service to Federation Council and community.

GYMEA TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge GyMEA Technology High School's outstanding teachers and support staff for their response to the challenges of COVID-19. GyMEA Technology High School have taken the challenges of COVID-19 in their stride and adapted again to provide opportunities for students to stay connected and engaged. Last year, the teachers were recognised by the Department of Education for the outstanding ways they supported students. During this year's lockdown period, the incredible teachers made over

8,000 calls home to students and ran online assemblies, workshops and scavenger hunts to ensure that they felt supported and connected. Head Teacher Karla Kimber created care packages for year 12 containing study tools, fresh fruit and sweet treats to encourage students as they approach the HSC. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional leadership of Principal Peter Marsh and Deputy Principals Victoria Koukoutaris and Katherine Edwards during this challenging time. Ms Edwards organised online tutoring groups led by teachers and former students, to provide academic support and interpersonal connection to over 160 students who attended. I commend all the teaching and support staff at GyMEA Technology High School for their exceptional dedication and passion for supporting local students in their learning.

ENDEAVOUR SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Endeavour Sports High School's extraordinary teaching and support staff for their response to the challenges of COVID-19. When learning routines were disrupted, the teachers adapted again to provide opportunities for students to stay connected and engaged through online initiatives. This included Master Classes with Sydney FC and videos showing a week in the students' lives at home including sporting drills and dances, which was shared with the school community. Supporting the wellbeing of young people is an important part of what schools do every day, especially during times of uncertainty. I commend Principal James Kozlowski and Deputy Principals Jocelyn Gooch and Nagla Jebeile for their ongoing leadership during this difficult time. The teaching team came together to create a video entitled 'We Miss You' which included photos, videos and personal messages for the students. Additionally, the Special Education Unit teachers made RUOK and Wellbeing Lockdown Kits for their Gold Class which included stationary, lollies, stickers and personal messages to lift the students' spirits. I thank the wonderful teaching and support staff at Endeavour Sports High School for continuing to support our local students in their education.

GYMEA NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge GyMEA North Public School's wonderful teaching and support staff for their response to the challenges of COVID-19. When learning routines were disrupted, the teachers quickly adapted to support students with engaging events including virtual Olympics, a Lego Masters competition, gift bags for year 6 students and online trivia nights. Additionally, students were welcomed back to school with a red carpet, balloon archway and bubble wands after many challenging months at home. The pandemic has highlighted how our local schools do more than merely support our students educational needs. When a GyMEA North Public School student was directly affected by a COVID-19 case at home, the teachers came together to support them. As a single parent this mother was particularly feeling the financial burden of the pandemic, so the teachers created a food hamper and card which they personally delivered to the doorstep. I take this opportunity to recognise Principal Kirsty Sharman and Assistant Principals Sally Fallah, Kathryn Wilson, Kathryn Hahn, and Michael Brown for their ongoing dedication to supporting local families. I thank all the teaching and support staff GyMEA North Public School for their ongoing commitment to our students through this difficult time.

ALFORDS POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Alfords Point Public School's incredible teaching and support staff for their response to the challenges of COVID-19. Taking the challenges of COVID-19 in their stride, the exceptional teachers and support staff adapted again to provide opportunities for students to learn and grow. The teachers were devoted to keeping students connected and engaged through online initiatives. These included Trivia Nights run by the Parents and Citizens Association, Mindfulness Mondays, plenty of class-craft including shark puppets, water lilies and paper sculptures and spotty trees a Fruit and Vege month art competition and an Olympic Mascot Competition where they had to create an Olympic Mascot from recycled stationary items. The teaching and support staff have worked incredibly hard to support and nurture students through this challenging period. I especially thank Principal Annette Wein, Assistant Principals Caroline Rider and Jenny Lombe and their wonderful team. The teaching and support staff ran virtual Book Week celebrations, an online Father's Day Stall and sent booklets home to support the students through the remote learning period. I thank the entire team at Alfords Point Public School for their ongoing dedication to educating our local students.

WINSTON HILLS AND TOONGABBIE BUSH CARE GROUP

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I use this time to acknowledge the fantastic work done by Winston Hills and Toongabbie Bush Care Group in the natural parks and reserves found throughout the electorate of Seven Hills. The residents of the electorate are fortunate to have many beautiful open spaces to participate in a range of activities. The reserves and natural spaces of the Seven Hills electorate are utilised by sports teams, local community members and groups alike. Winston Hills and Toongabbie Bush Care Group, also known as the Darangara Corridors Bush Care Group, have diligently organised regular clean-up events as part of the Parramatta River Catchment Group. The ultimate goal of local Parramatta River Catchment Group affiliated

organisations is to revitalise the local creeks, rivers and bodies of water and their surrounding ecosystems, many receiving input from the Parramatta River itself. The Winston Hills and Toongabbie Bush Care Group have not hesitated to resume normal conservation activities as New South Wales continues to ease COVID-19 restrictions, with many events planned over the coming weeks. I thank the diligent work done by members of Winston Hills and Toongabbie Bush Care Group and hope to see their fantastic events continue.

ROYAL LIFE SAVING ACADEMY, SEVEN HILLS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—It was great to host Premier Dom Perrottet at the Royal Life Saving Academy at Seven Hills recently. The Premier and I met and spoke with Royal Life Saving New South Wales CEO Michael Illinsky and the Aquatics Manager Bernadette Neal about the centre and the importance of water safety for children and migrant families as summer draws near. The Premier and I also spoke to swimmers and parents about how important it is to ensure young ones are water ready whether families have a backyard pool, enjoy the Sydney or coastal beaches in the summer holidays or are recreating at nearby creeks and reserves. I thank Michael for his tireless efforts in campaigning for water safety awareness across New South Wales. He has worked for Royal Life Saving for many years now and is to be commended for his efforts. I also thank Bernadette for her dedication to local Seven Hills electorate families in operating the Seven Hills branch next to The Hills Sports High School down the road from my office.

PENDLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL UPGRADE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—This week I was able to visit the worksite of the new upgrades for Pendle Hill High School with the project team, principal Judy Sims and representatives from School Infrastructure NSW. The upgrade will deliver a new three storey building with fourteen modern flexible learning spaces, a range of new core facilities and student amenities, a new lecture theatre, multimedia rooms, library space, a new collaborative staff development space and a new raised pedestrian crossing at Binalong Road, Toongabbie. I'm pleased the upgrades will assist students from Constitution Hill, Girraween, Old Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Toongabbie, Wentworthville and Westmead. I know the P&C committees of the local primary schools are stoked with the NSW Government's investment at Pendle Hill High School. In the Seven Hills electorate, students from Darcy Road Public School, Toongabbie Public School, Toongabbie East Public School and Toongabbie West Public School will benefit from the upgrades in the years to come. In the 2019-2020 financial year budget over \$1 million was allocated to the project and this year almost \$13 million has been allocated to further the upgrade for the local community.

COUNCILLOR MARTIN ZAITER

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)—I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and service to the people of the Seven Hills Electorate by Councillor Martin Zaiter. Councillor Zaiter serves the people of Parramatta Ward on City of Parramatta Council. The Ward includes residents of the Seven Hills Electorate in Constitution Hill, Northmead, Old Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Toongabbie, Wentworthville and Westmead. Councillor Zaiter's time on Council has seen him deliver multiple projects which have benefitted the lives of locals from Toongabbie to Westmead and I thank him for that. In particular, I thank him and Council for their work in the recent upgrades to Sue Savage and Reynolds Park in Toongabbie. I know that Councillor Zaiter has been a tireless advocate for Parramatta Ward and we have worked together to get positive results for the community. I note Councillor Zaiter will not be running at the upcoming City of Parramatta election. I wish him well and I know he will continue his advocacy of the people of Parramatta where he operates his own business.

INTERNATIONAL PATHOLOGY DAY

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—International Pathology Day was celebrated on Wednesday, 10 November 2021. Recognised annually around the globe, this day is dedicated to highlighting the important role of pathology in caring for and protecting the health and wellbeing of our communities. Pathology has played a vital role in the global COVID-19 response. Since the start of the pandemic, pathologists have been working tirelessly, around the clock to deliver much anticipated COVID-19 results, within short timeframes. As at the 10 November 2021, 20,492,291 COVID-19 tests had been carried out in NSW. There have been many stories of frontline heroes during this health pandemic. Pathologists without a shadow of doubt, fall within this category. My thanks goes out to all pathology providers across NSW that have been instrumental in the COVID-19 response in NSW. To the pathologists in the labs scrutinising each every sample that has come through their doors since the start of this pandemic, to the drivers safely transporting everyone's precious samples and to the administration staff that communicate our results, thank you! A special mention also goes out to the Health Services Union of NSW, for their unwavering support and advocacy on behalf of pathology workers across NSW.

BIRRONG BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—In June 2021, schools and students across the state were required to shift to online learning as a result of the recent lockdowns. I take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of Principal Mr Darren Stevens and his staff at Birrong Boys' High School for their terrific work in assisting their school community throughout the Pandemic. Despite most students learning from home, Birrong Boys' High School ensured its school community remained well-connected despite online learning, helping students to reach and in many cases exceed their learning targets and in devising several initiatives to keep students engaged. I also acknowledge the efforts of parents and guardians of students of Birrong Boys' High School who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support their children with online learning. I am delighted that all students have now resumed face-to-face learning, and are able to be reunited with their friends, peers, and teachers. Once again, I congratulate Mr Darren Stevens, teachers, staff, parents, students and indeed the whole Birrong Boys' High School community for their exceptional efforts in navigating through these most challenging times.

BIRRONG GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—In June 2021, schools and students across the state were required to shift to online learning as a result of the recent lockdowns. I take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of Principal Ms Zena Dabaja and her staff at Birrong Girls' High School for their terrific work in assisting their school community throughout the Pandemic. Despite most students learning from home, Birrong Girls' High School ensured its school community remained well-connected despite online learning, helping students to reach and in many cases exceed their learning targets and in devising several initiatives to keep students engaged. I also acknowledge the efforts of parents and guardians of students of Birrong Girls' High School who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support their children with online learning. I am delighted that all students have now resumed face-to-face learning, and are able to be reunited with their friends, peers, and teachers. Once again, I congratulate Ms Zena Dabaja, teachers, staff, parents, students and indeed the whole Birrong Girls' High School community for their exceptional efforts in navigating through these most challenging times.

BIRRONG PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—In June 2021, schools and students across the state were required to shift to online learning as a result of the recent lockdowns. I take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of Principal Mrs Jodi Devine and her staff at Birrong Public School for their terrific work in assisting their school community throughout the Pandemic. Despite most students learning from home, Birrong Public School ensured its school community remained well-connected despite online learning, helping students to reach and in many cases exceed their learning targets and in devising several initiatives to keep students engaged. I also acknowledge the efforts of parents and guardians of students of Birrong Public School who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support their children with online learning. I am delighted that all students have now resumed face-to-face learning, and are able to be reunited with their friends, peers, and teachers. Once again, I congratulate Mrs Jodi Devine, teachers, staff, parents, students and indeed the whole Birrong Public School community for their exceptional efforts in navigating through these most challenging times.

BASS HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—In June 2021, schools and students across the state were required to shift to online learning as a result of the recent lockdowns. I take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of Principal Mrs Amiee Jahshan and her staff at Bass Hill Public School for their terrific work in assisting their school community throughout the Pandemic. Despite most students learning from home, Bass Hill Public School ensured its school community remained well-connected despite online learning, helping students to reach and in many cases exceed their learning targets and in devising several initiatives to keep students engaged. I also acknowledge the efforts of parents and guardians of students of Bass Hill Public School who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support their children with online learning. I am delighted that all students have now resumed face-to-face learning, and are able to be reunited with their friends, peers, and teachers. Once again, I congratulate Mrs Amiee Jahshan, teachers, staff, parents, students and indeed the whole Bass Hill Public School community for their exceptional efforts in navigating through these most challenging times.

MARY MACKILLOP COLLEGE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I wish to commend the efforts of Principal Ms Gilda Pussich and the school community of Mary MacKillop College, Wakeley throughout the June 2021 lockdown. With lessons moving online, students, teachers and staff faced months of being separated and unable to participate in classes face to face. Fortunately the school community of Mary MacKillop College rose to the challenge and came up with ways to stay active and engaged throughout this period. There was a big focus on mental health by the school community at this time, with school leaders creating a video of positive affirmations and mental health tips to help

their peers cope. Students and their families were also encouraged to participate in virtual webinars such as Family Forum and the Sydney Catholic Schools Lockdown Arts Festival. Ms Pussich and the teachers and staff of Mary Mackillop College worked diligently to maintain a sense of school spirit and belonging amongst the students in this challenging time. I thank them for their efforts both throughout the lockdown and for the smooth return of their students to face-to-face learning.

AL IRAQIA NEWSPAPER

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I wish to commend the efforts of Dr Muwafaq Sawa, Editor in Chief of Al Iraqia Newspaper and his team for their efforts in keeping the Middle Eastern community informed throughout the June 2021 lockdown. Al Iraqia Newspaper was established in 2005 and has been a vital source of information for the Middle Eastern community for over seventeen years. Written both in Arabic and English, the newspaper covers both local Australian news and Middle Eastern affairs. It is widely regarded by the community as a reputable and reliable source of information. The paper has also been a vital source for Arabic speakers during the pandemic and lockdown period, providing much needed information about the Public Health Orders for the community. I commend the newspaper in particular for assisting with the promotion of stay at home orders, testing and vaccination.

CHALDEAN LEAGUE OF NSW

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Chaldean League of NSW worked diligently to maintain a connection with the Chaldean community through zoom meetings. During the June 2021 lockdown the Chaldean League organised zoom meetings between the community and health practitioners to share information about the virus and encouraging people to come forward and take the vaccine. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Chaldean League and the voluntary efforts of the following individuals for their hard work in providing information and assistance: Associate Professor Ahmad Alrubaie, Dr. Nasreen Shammas, Dr. Mariam Joseph, and Dr. Yaser Mohammad. The doctors also made themselves available to provide advice over the phone to the people infected by Covid -19 when needed. Occupational therapist Dr. Yaser Mohammad also participated in many zoom meetings to assist with mental health issues the community experienced throughout the lockdown period, reaching out to impacted families via phone. I commend the Chaldean League of NSW and the doctors for their efforts during this time and thank them for their service to the community.

VALE HUY TRAN

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—It is with deep sadness that the Tran Family of Carramar farewell their much beloved son, brother, husband and father, Huy Tran. Huy was a much loved and respected member of NSW Labor, Australian Army Reserves, Western Sydney University, Vietnamese Community of Australia and formerly the Vietnamese Student's Association. Huy was a tireless advocate for those less fortunate in the community. He had a strong commitment to the betterment of those living close by in the community. Huy was always focused on highlighting the human rights violations of those in Vietnam. He was a tireless campaigner raising awareness of this issue. On a personal level I acknowledge Huy's friendship and support. Huy will be missed by all, especially his wife Mai Le and his two young children, Vi and Nam. Huy Tran was a true gentleman and he will also be missed by the community. Vale Huy Tran

CALLUM CONROY DONATION DRIVE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Callum Conroy is only eleven years old and is already doing great things in our local community. Callum has completed a donation drive providing food for local charity Mary Macs Place, and I would like to thank him for his outstanding work and initiative. Seeing a need in our community and responding to that in such a proactive way is incredible, especially for someone so young. I join many in our community in saying thank you Callum for ensuring no one in our community has to go hungry. Callum is a future leader in our community and this food drive has brought neighbours and the broader community together to achieve a common goal. We are all very proud and cannot wait to see what he will do in the future.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LIFE MEMBERS PEARL BEACH ARBORETUM

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—I would like to congratulate both Ann Parsons and David George for being awarded Life Members of the Pearl Beach Arboretum for their dedicated years of work in protecting and promoting the rich and diverse ecosystems that we are fortunate enough to have here on the Central Coast. Ann's work has been fundamental in obtaining Commonwealth grants to research the feasibility of re-introducing koalas into the Pearl Beach area, and David has maintained numerous roles throughout his tenure as treasurer and then leader of the ABC (Arbo Boys Club) that has significantly contributed to the ongoing success of the arboretum. I would like to not only congratulate them, but also thank them for their passion and commitment to restoring the area's natural diversity which in a broader context will ensure that our State is moving in the right direction in

protecting our ecosystems. I would also like sincerely thank and congratulate all the fabulous members of the Pearl Beach Arboretum for all you do to celebrate and conserve our beautiful environment for future generations.

AMPUTEE ASSOCIATION OF NSW

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—I thank and commend the Amputee Association of NSW for all their work to ensure residents in NSW with limb differences are supported with comprehensive services and programs. The Amputee Association of NSW was established in 1980 and provides both financial and compassionate support to individuals. It is completely volunteer run and emphasises a strong community-focused approach. The association is pivotal in assisting thousands of residents in NSW to be healthy and active contributors in their communities. They have recently undergone a rebranding that includes a new logo, fresh website and improved and contemporary support strategies. I wish the Amputee Association of NSW continued success in future and thank all the tireless volunteers who have worked diligently and compassionately through the COVID-19 pandemic.

VALE TOM RICHMOND

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—I would like to send my deepest condolences to the family of the late Tom Richmond who recently passed away. Tom was a phenomenal community leader who had a keen interest and knowledge of the history of Brooklyn and surrounding areas. He would have regular history articles in the North Shore Times and Hornsby Advocate which were well-read and loved by the local communities. Tom made a huge impact during his team as a teacher and principal in the NSW education system and was respected by many. Tom received recognition in 2002 and awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services to youth through education, cricket and history. Tom and his presence will be sorely missed by many but his legacy will continue to live on through the people he met and the work he achieved. Vale Tom Richmond.

VALE BILL CHALK

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield)—I bring to the attention of the House the remarkable contribution of Bill Chalk. Bill was a leader at Sydney Markets and a pioneer of the Australian fruit and vegetable industry. He started work at 13 moving fruit and vegetables with a wheelbarrow. Over 60 years, he developed a love of the industry and its people which was reflected in his immense contribution. He was one of the most recognisable faces at Sydney Markets and was highly respected by everyone. Bill served on the NSW Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries from 1992 until retirement. He was President from 2000 to 2015. He was also Director of the Sydney Markets Foundation, Credit Services Co-operative and Fresh for Kids Promotions Committee. Bill was well known for his charitable contributions including the annual charity Cherry Auction where he was always active in bidding. Bill Chalk passed away on October 28th 2021. He will be missed by all at Sydney Markets who are mourning the passing of a great advocate, worker, contributor and passionate supporter of the fruit and vegetable industry. This House sends its condolences to his wife, Nina, his three children, and seven grandchildren. Vale Bill Chalk.

JACK CARNEGIE

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—I draw the attention of the house to the longtime community activist, Mr Jack Carnegie who sadly passed away in September. Jack was a former union worker, seaman, photographer, community organiser and one of the founders of The Greens in 1984. Jack advocated for social justice and environmental issues throughout his life and led the campaign to create Green Ban Park in Erskineville which bears a plaque in his honour. Jack also led the successful campaign to preserve public housing in Erskineville. Jack was a climate justice activist who was heartened by the growing global youth action. He often went to Newcastle to participate in the coal blockades and to stand with the Bulga community in their long resistance to Rio Tinto. Jack participated in and celebrated many of the big social movement campaigns and wins including the Anti War and Anti Vietnam movement, Women's Liberation, ending censorship, the Green Bans, Saving the Franklin, Reconciliation and Marriage Equality. Jack's solidarity and friendship to so many over so many years is remembered and deeply respected. He is greatly missed. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends for their loss.

INNER WEST COUNCIL

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—I would like to draw the attention of the house to the Inner West Council's quick action in responding to community calls and providing emergency toilet facilities in Camperdown Memorial Park and Camperdown Oval Park during the 'picnic' stage of the COVID re-opening. Under the leadership of Greens Mayor Rochelle Porteous the Council took urgent action in response to this issue when Covid-19 restrictions were lifted to allow groups of five people to sit in local parks. At this time, many people gathered in parks like Camperdown Memorial Park which had no toilet facilities. While toilets have been planned for this park - and are long overdue - they weren't there when we needed them most and to the Council's credit

they responded so quickly to get portable toilets installed until a more permanent solution is sorted. I would like to thank those community members who contacted me about this issue and acknowledge the community campaigning of Inner West local and Greens member Liz Aktins and all the others on council and in the community who are campaigning for more public toilets in our LGAs that are inclusive and accessible which also offer free sanitary items.

GAVIN HILLIER, 2022 ORACLES LEGEND

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I heartily congratulate Gavin Hillier of Tenterfield for being named the 2022 Oracles Legend as part of the 2022 Oracles of the Bush Festival. After COVID lockdowns and border closures, it is great to see the Oracles of the Bush back in action and gearing up for a big 2022 festival. The theme of the Oracles for 2022 is "Driving Passion" and it's hard to think of someone who better embodies that theme than Gavin. Gavin has been a stalwart of the Tenterfield motor vehicle industry for 50 years. His business Border Panel Works is a Tenterfield institution and trusted by locals. Gavin completely rebuilt his business after it was destroyed in a fire in 2006. Even during these times he went out of his way to help others in his community. In 1985 he and Ron Wilson breathed life into the then ailing Carnell Raceway in Stanthorpe after Gavin wanted a safe place to teach his sons how to drive. Now Carnell is a flourishing racetrack and training facility for driver safety. Gavin is also passionately involved in the Tenterfield Transport Museum and supports charities such as the Westpac Rescue Helicopter and local sports organisations.

MOUNT ST PATRICK COLLEGE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I congratulate students from years 7 and 8 at Mount St. Patrick College in Murwillumbah for participating in the Youth Pitch for Change Initiative operated by community organisation It Takes a Town. The Youth Pitch challenges students to explore how technology can be utilised to encourage empathy. The students created a prototype for a virtual reality game experience that aims to challenge and change attitudes regarding the subtle forces of racism that can occur in a school context. To support their project the students gathered and recorded stories from the local school community and broader community. In the Youth for Change Pitch they placed third which is an excellent result. The teams then reworked their idea to enter the MAD STEM competition and have already progressed to the national final to be held in Melbourne. I congratulate learning technologies coordinator Natalie Webster and the STEM TEAM consisting of Molly Dean, Trisha Sharma, Joshua Hawkins, Alexander Dowling, Jack Thornton, Flynn Jones, Amelia Carr and Amanita Bowe. I look forward to seeing these names in the future as our innovators, inventors and leaders. A big well done to all involved and I wish them well for the future.

MURWILLUMBAH, MURAL

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I was excited to hear that local artists Fintan Magee, Cam Scale and Loretta Lizzo have been selected to create a stunning new mural in Proudfoots Lane Murwillumbah. M Arts Precinct is coordinating the project which is set to become one of the largest street murals in the Tweed Shire, putting Murwillumbah on the map as a hub for the arts. Lismore based artist Fintan Magee says that he will be consulting closely with local historians and community representatives to create a truly local and iconic mural which will bring to life Proudfoots Lane in Murwillumbah. At the centrepiece of the mural will be a forgotten local historical figure. Aiming to tell a new story of Murwillumbah's long storied past. I would also like to thank M Arts Precinct owner Stephen Webb, Tweed Regional Gallery Director Susi Muddiman OAM and Tweed Shire Council cultural planner Dave Burgener and their respective organisations for backing in this project so strongly. The mural will be painted on two walls in Proudfoots Lane using a range of acrylic, aerosol and oil paint mediums. I congratulate the artists on their selection and look forward to seeing this fabulous mural in Murwillumbah.

OZGANICS MURWILLUMBAH

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Mr Speaker, I congratulate OzGanics from Murwillumbah on winning the Excellence in Export Award from Business NSW at the Northern Rivers Regional Business Awards. Founder Anni Brownjohn and her entire team have thrived in extremely difficult times. After suffering significant damage from the 2017 floods, OzGanics have battled through border closures, COVID-19, lockdowns, poor growing seasons and fruit picker shortages to become a successful business that puts Murwillumbah on the map. So much so that when Anni was last visiting the country of Jordan she saw an OzGanic pasta sauce on the supermarket shelf. It is wonderful to see such a great product from Murwillumbah doing so well internationally. Anni founded Ozganics in 1999 to help better cater for people with food intolerances after seeing her son suffer from the amount of preservatives and artificial flavours in foods. She turned her love of cooking, given to her by her mother into a business enrolling in short courses on nutrition and food preparation. Her father, a retired engineer helped her design some of the machinery and build the factory over in South Murwillumbah. A true family effort. I congratulate Anni and the entire Ozganics team on their well-deserved recognition.

IMOGEN RADBURN

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Imogen Radburn for being nominated by three different clubs to be the new ambassador for karting NSW. It was Imogen's great leadership skills and ability to make strong connections that helped her achieve her position. Imogen is the only female competing in her category in the elite junior level at nationals. Imogen is excited to have also been offered to race in Formula Ford once she turns 16 next year she hopes stepping up a division can show other girls they too can get involved and achieve success in the sport. Imogen loves what she does and travels 2 hours from her hometown to Canberra just to train on the track Imogen hopes the Shoalhaven City Council progress with bringing a motorsports complex to the Nowra region. Once again congratulations Imogen, hard work pays off I wish you all the best with your future racing and hope your story inspires others.

LOUISE LAMBETH AND WE CARE CONNECT

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)—Well done to We Care Connect for setting up and distributing "Annie and the Waves" packs to go out to local kids this summer. I would like to also acknowledge "Annie and the Waves" writer and local lifesaver, Louise Lambeth who wrote the book to help keep kids safe in the surf. We Care Connect put in the packs, lots of donated towels, sunscreen and a craft pack for the kids to learn about water safety in a fun way. A great concept and partnership, this program helps to bring the beach safety message to disadvantaged children. Well done Louise Lambeth and We Care Connect again for your work in our community.

NORAH HEAD SPORTIES

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)—Congratulations Norah Head Sporties Market on reopening, Sunday the 7th of November Norah Head Sporties Market returned at Norah Head Sporties Club, Norah Head. Norah Head Sporties Market thank you for your continued effort to represent and support our local Central Coast vendors such as; Emerald Tea Trader, Dresses and Driftwood, The Pristine Décor, Russell Ice Cream and many more. The community looks forward to the next market day, Saturday the 18th which is the Norah Head Christmas Twilight Markets. It has been a challenging year for us all and especially small businesses, so well done for all your efforts in supporting and continuing to promote these vendors I wish you, your supporters and all your vendors a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year for 2022.

NORTHLAKES TOUKLEY ROTARY

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)—Congratulations to Northlakes Toukley Rotary on being an international partner of RC of Rudramati Kathmandu, Nepal being the successful recipients of a (GG2127984) the Global Grant. This project was a collaboration between Northlakes Toukley Rotary Club Australia, as the international partner and the Rotary Club of Rudramatti, Kathmandu, Nepal. This grant purchased AUD\$42,000 of vital medical equipment. Sixteen Oxygen Concentrators and vital medical equipment was received by Mulpani Hospital in the Kageshwori- Manohara. The Global Grant 2127984 project is helping those suffering the effects of COVID and similar respiratory problems. Well done Northlakes Toukley Rotary Club, on completing such a great project for a great cause.

URSULA PAUL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)—Happy 90th Birthday to Ursula Paul who's Birthday is on the 17th November. As you celebrate your birthday I would like to acknowledge your incredible accomplishments in life thus far; You have worked in the accounting industry as an accountant until your retirement in your eighties. You have completed studies in the following: A.Mus.A, CPA, B.Ed. and M.Div. Your novel that was written at the age of 85 "Where to from here?" was well received after its publication. You are a musician who is currently playing the organ at the local church. These are remarkable accomplishments Ursula and I wish you a very Happy 90th birthday.

HONOURING THE STORIES OF MAY GIBBS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, Nutcote, the home of Australia's foremost children's author and illustrator, May Gibbs, whose passion and love of reading and writing impacted so many across the country, is located in Neutral Bay. May Gibbs was a phenomenal story writer who had many popular books that still float around Australian households. 'Snugglypot and Cuddlepip' was one of her major successes. In 1921, in the third book of her 'Snugglypot and Cuddlepip' series, she created an underwater creature called 'Little Obelia' and immersed readers in an imaginary marine world full of 'fish folk' with colourful characters and incredibly detailed illustrations. One hundred years on, a new exhibition at Nutcote showcases 'Little Obelia' along with the people and projects that she has inspired. The underwater imaginings have inspired generations of marine

biologists. The 'Little Obelia' and underwater activity exhibition was opened by NSW Governor, Margaret Beazley. I wish to recognise the rich history of May Gibbs' stories and her contribution to Australia.

VALE KEITH RODGIE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, I am honoured today to speak on the incredible life of Keith Rodgie, who for 70 years spent his time as an invaluable member of the UTS North Sydney District Cricket Club community. Keith had a love and passion for the game and club, and he was a long time attendee at the club's matches. He passed on his love for the game to many of today's players, particularly his son David and grandsons Scott and Justin. As a player himself, he represented the Club for just short of 30 years and earned 1st Grade Cap #363. He spent his time as Treasurer of the club and was involved in the coach and administration of the North Sydney juniors. Sadly, Keith Rodgie passed away on Monday, October 18. Keith was a much loved Father, Grandfather, and Clubman, and I extend my sincerest condolences to the Rodgie family and the UTS North Sydney Bears club.

VINNIE'S HAMPERS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, I wish to recognise the spirit and generosity shown by the Blessed Sacrament Primary School community, the Classic Cupcake Co and Vinnie's during the recent challenges of Covid-19. The school community provided gift vouchers, food and cards from the children to support those in need. I want to thank Blessed Sacrament for taking up this initiative and those who took the time to organise hampers. The Classic Cupcake Co., a Mosman local business, was instrumental in organising and gathering the items received for the hampers. Going above and beyond in their commitment to helping those in need put together 1000 hampers with community help. Items collected for the drive included vouchers from local businesses such as Chemist warehouse, Chargrill Charlies, Woolworths, Aldi, Bakers Delight, Harris Farm, and chocolates, lollies, tins of biscuits, jams, pasta sauce and candles. Thank you to all those businesses and individuals in my community who contributed donations and their time to offer support for the vulnerable. Your efforts were invaluable to the success of the hampers

IN HONOUR OF CHARLES ULM

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, Australian aviation pioneer Charles Ulm was recognised with a memorial plaque earlier this Month. His son and grandson unveiled the plaque in his honour at Mosman Council Chambers. Organised by the Australian Remembers Committee, the plaque tells a story about the service and gallantry of those who lived in our community. Ulm was raised in Mosman, and in 1914 at the age of 16, he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force under a false name, stating that he was 20 years old. He was wounded at Gallipoli in April 1915, returned to Australia and was discharged as a minor. Ulm re-enlisted under his own name in 1917, where he served on the Western Front in 1918. In 1927, Ulm and Charles Kingsford Smith completed the first flight across the Pacific Ocean. Ulm and Kingsford Smith founded Australian National Airways in December 1928. Ulm set several flight records before disappearing while flying from San Francisco to Hawaii in 1934. It was wonderful to hear his grandson Ben Ulm talk about his grandfather's life stories.

BERNIE RILEY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today I would like to acknowledge Bernie Riley who took part in The Long Run to raise awareness and money for prostate cancer research and support. Every year 380 men locally receive the news they have prostate cancer. Bernie, who leads a team at the Prostate Cancer Specialist Telenursing service at the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, help support men and their families as they navigate their diagnosis. As we know men are notorious for not looking after their health and Bernie hopes events like The Long Run will remove the stigma and allow men to talk about the disease. Thousands took part in the event which saw participants walk, run or wheel 72 kms over the month of September. Bernie raised just shy of \$1000 for his efforts and a total of over \$1.7 million was raised to continue to fund prostate cancer research and specialist nurses like Bernie. Thank you Bernie for the work you do supporting men with prostate cancer and their families.

ALAN BUXTON

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today, on Remembrance Day, I would like to acknowledge the upcoming 101st Birthday of Rowland Village resident Alan Buxton a former member of the RAAF. Born on the 4th of December 1920 he moved around a lot as a child before he joined the Australian Imperial Force in 1940. He was transferred in 1942 to the Royal Australian Air Force where he went on to serve in the Middle East during the Syrian campaign. He then trained and graduated as a navigator and would serve for many years until his discharge in 1946 as a Flying Officer. Following his service he became an accountant and served in a public company until his retirement at 60. He and his late wife Marie lived for 34 years in Eastwood and had four children John, Marilyn, Janice and Peter, who also served in Vietnam.

Peter sadly passed away from cancer at just 63. Moving to Rowland Village in 1989, Alan has served as treasurer of the Residents Committee and is still a member of the gardening committee. He has 10 grandchildren, 23 great grandchildren and 6 great great grandchildren. Many happy returns Alan on this milestone birthday.

OUR LADY OF PALESTINE FEAST DAY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On 25th October, we celebrate Our Lady of Palestine Feast Day. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine is celebrated in all Lieutenancies of the Equestrian Order. The special relationship of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem dates back to the pontificate of John Paul II. On this day, Catholics gather together conscious of the responsibility that each Member of the Order has accepted, and of the oath they swore as their made our inaugural promises. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a characteristic of every Member of the Order. The faith of Mary, Mother of Jesus signifies the path that each member of the Order takes. Mary, a highly favoured daughter of the Father, is a model of love towards God and neighbour. I was pleased to attend the Mass for Our Lady of Palestine Feast Day in the Lady Chapel of the St Mary's Cathedral. I would like to thank Fr Don Richardson, Dean, for leading the Mass for Members of the Order. I would also like to thank Cathedral staff and all involved in the running of this Mass.

THE AUSTRALIAN MAN CAVE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Tuesday 5th October 2021, I was pleased to visit The Australian Man Cave support group. The Australian Man Cave support group provides a safe place for men to form friendships, discuss hardships and form bonds that provide pillars of support to those in need. On average, one in eight men will experience depression at some stage of their lives. During the recent COVID-19 lockdown, the Australian Man Cave extended their helping hand to people in need in the Prospect Electorate. The Australian Man Cave partnered with various charity groups to safely distribute essential goods to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 restrictions. Thanks to the generous donations from Good360 Australia, Rapid Relief Team AU and Safenet Nooh, The Australian Man Cave has successfully distributed care products, non-perishable food items and groceries throughout our community. I would like to thank Lou Greco, President, The Australian Man Cave, and volunteers, George Barcha and Basim Shamaon, for their fantastic work during a very difficult time. Our Western Sydney community has been placed under particular duress due to the recent COVID-19 lockdown. However, it is groups like The Australian Man Cave that have stepped up to support our community.

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—At around 6:30am on Thursday 28th October 2021, a fiery truck crash occurred in Western Sydney. Two B-double trucks burst into flames after colliding with one another on Victoria Street, Wetherill Park. It is understood that one of the trucks was carrying lithium batteries and the other, dangerous chemicals. Nearby residents reported that the noise of bursting truck tyres sounded like a bomb going off. As you can appreciate, it was a frightening experience for all involved, with heavy traffic causing delays in the area throughout the day. However, despite the intensity of the incident, thanks to the quick action of NSW Fire and Rescue Firefighters, there were no fatalities. The two drivers involved suffered minor injuries and were both taken to hospital for treatment. Fire and Rescue NSW quickly arrived at the scene and promptly extinguished the flames. Firefighters continued to monitor the area throughout the day to ensure no residents were harmed by the dangerous chemicals nearby. Thank you to firefighters from NSW Fire and Rescue, in particular, Superintendent Daniel Butler, who liaised with myself and the business community throughout the morning to ensure we were all kept safe.

SUPERINTENDENT KEITH AVERY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to offer my personal congratulations to Superintendent Keith Avery, Blacktown Division, St Johns Ambulance, for his appointment as an Officer of the Order of Saint John. Being admitted to the Order of St John is one of the highest honours within St John's awards and honours system a volunteer or employee can be given. To be appointed as an Officer, the Order of Saint John celebrates and publically recognises the extraordinary actions undertaken by an individual to provide lifesaving or life sustaining first aid to a person in need, often in difficult emergency situations. Superintendent Keith Avery is a very deserving recipient of this appointment. For decades, Superintendent Keith Avery has serviced our community through his strong leadership of the St John Ambulance Blacktown Division. This charitable organisation has provided services to a broad scope of the community, helping people in sickness, distress, suffering or danger. I particularly commend the leadership of Superintendent Keith Avery during the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires. Thank you to Superintendent Keith Avery for your continued dedication to providing outstanding service to our community. I look forward to continue working with you in the future.

NORTH NOWRA GIRL GUIDES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—I would like to acknowledge the Girl Guides Association of New South Wales who have submitted an application for funding under the NSW Government's Community Building Partnerships program. The Association is seeking funds to implement environmental upgrades at North Nowra Guide Hall to repair a leak in the disabled access bathroom skylight and install a rainwater tank, new down pipes and leaf guard. Girl Guides offers young girls from age 5 to 17 fun, friendship and adventure and this work will help empower them with better facilities to grow and develop leadership skills while contributing to our community. I acknowledge the Girl Guides NSW, ACT & NT Chief Executive Officer Helen White and Grants Administrator Ms Suzanne a'Court. I'll be working hard to secure this grant from the NSW Government which will benefit our local North Nowra community.

KIAMA FAMILY BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE NATIONAL AWARD

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—I would like to acknowledge Sabrina Kelly who has won the Family Day Care Educator of the Year Award for the second year in a row. Sabrina received this Award for providing an inclusive and innovative before and after school care and vacation care program that caters for children of all abilities. Sabrina's facility – the Kiama Family Before and After School Care centre was selected out of more than 5,000 nominations. I congratulate Sabrina Kelly who established this outstanding local family day care facility to meet her own childcare needs, and now has around 70 children attending including children with significant additional needs such as complex medical issues and severe disabilities. Sabrina is now one of five candidates in the running for the Australian Educator of the Year Award which will be announced later in December 2021. Well done and congratulations Sabrina Kelly!

SHEREE PAYNE WINS NRL COMMUNITY AWARD

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—I would like to congratulate Kiama local Sheree Payne who has recently won the coveted 'Teacher of the Year' Award category in the annual National Rugby League (NRL) Community Awards. Local high school students are utilised by Sheree as referees and coaches for the primary school children and NRL Development Officers are invited to run sporting clinics and teach them how to play, while NRL staff are invited to be involved in the student leadership days. Sheree is also the sports co-ordinator at Kiama Public School and for many years has integrated different physical health and mental well-being programs offered by rugby league through both the NRL and the St George-Illawarra Dragons into the School's sports program. With things such as the Dragons' 'Best You Can Be' journals – which teaches kids all about healthy eating, mental health and keeping active. Sheree is also closely connect to the Kiama Knights Junior Rugby League Club. Her father and brothers all played for the Kiama Knights and now so do her three daughters. Well done and congratulations Sheree!

NORMA STEAD TENNIS AWARD

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—I would like to acknowledge Norma Stead – the matriarch of Kiama Tennis Club. Earlier this year she received an Order of Australia Medal for services to tennis, and last month was awarded the prestigious Jim O'Neill Award for services to tennis by Tennis NSW. The recipient of the annual service to tennis award is chosen by the Tennis NSW Board of Directors. It is named in honour of former Tennis NSW Director Jim O'Neill who was a long-time State and local tennis administrator, a committed volunteer to tennis and the husband of retired professional player Jan Lehane O'Neill OAM. It was only in 2017 that Norma stood down as Kiama Tennis Club's Treasurer, a role which she occupied for 50 years. Now aged 96, she still enjoys the title of official caretaker. Norma coached generations of kids, originally at the tennis courts in Hindmarsh Park and then at Noorinan Street in Kiama. She has such a passion for tennis especially Kiama Tennis Club and Kiama and Shellharbour District Tennis Association. Congratulations Norma. You are a local treasurer!

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH KU-RING-GAI AND HORNSBY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment)—Today I would like to acknowledge the work of the Neighbourhood Watch Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby. With the recent Sydney lockdown impacting and isolating many in our community they came up with a way for us all to help our neighbours. The Neighbour Card, an idea of Thornleigh resident Peter Heggie, is a way for people to easily reach out and offer assistance to those doing it tough in our community. It is simple idea. Just download the card from the Neighbourhood watch website, print and fill in your details and what help you can provide. It could be something simple like watering the plants, picking up the shopping or bringing out the bins each week. The cards can then be dropped into letterboxes in your local area. This is a wonderful way for locals to pay it forward and I would like to congratulate the Neighbourhood Watch Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby on this initiative. I hope many take it up and help continue to foster a strong sense of community throughout Hornsby.

MATTHEW BARDEN, JOSH BARDEN AND NICK NEWLING

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, is the leading supporter of type 1 diabetes research across the globe. The JDRF fund research, advocacy and support for the community, and to do this they rely heavily on donations and fundraising events, such as their One Walk step challenge. The JDRF One Walk is an annual event held in October to raise funds and awareness of type 1 diabetes. Participants are challenged to walk 100km within the month to acknowledge 100 years since the discovery of insulin. Locals Matthew Barden of Birmingham Gardens, Josh Barden of Shortland, and Nick Newling of Coffs Harbour have teamed up this year to participate in The JDRF One Walk. Matthew has walked 103kms, and raised \$834.60, Josh has walked 255kms, and raised \$2021.60, and Nick has and walked 210kms, and raised \$386.40. Together, the team have walked a total of 568kms, and raised \$3746.60, smashing their goal of \$1500. Congratulations, Matthew, Josh and Nick, on your fundraising efforts and on raising awareness of type one diabetes. Hopefully one day it will be type none.

LEANNE BLACK

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The Australian Bridal Industry Academy (ABIA) Wedding Industry Awards is held annually to recognise the most trusted and top wedding vendors across the country in more than 50 categories. All finalists must achieve at least a 95% customer satisfaction rating. Local Wallsend woman, Leanne Black, placed third in the Artificial Floral Design this year with her small business Silk Dreams Flowers, and had a customer satisfaction rating of 99.86%. Previously in the Artificial Floral Design category, Leanne was runner-up in 2019 with 99.72% customer satisfaction rating, winner in 2018 with 99.85% customer satisfaction rating, runner-up in 2017 with a customer satisfaction rating of 95.40%, and finalist in 2016 with a customer satisfaction rating of 99.05%. Leanne has been operating Silk Dreams Flowers since 2004, following her wedding where she created her own floral arrangements using silk flowers. Her friends and family were so impressed with the quality and style, they requested she do the floral arrangements for their weddings. I commend Leanne on her successful small business, Silk Dreams Flowers and wish her all the best in the future.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL BREAKSPEAR AND HMRI 2021 AWARD FOR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The HMRI Awards are a celebration of the outstanding efforts and achievements of individuals and teams who drive and support the opportunities that health and medical research bring to the wellbeing of our community. This year's awards were streamed live via Zoom from the HMRI building to virtually celebrate and honour medical research excellence. Professor Michael Breakspear was awarded the HMRI 2021 Award for Research Excellence. The award recognises a researcher with a distinguished career who has delivered outstanding achievements in health and medical research. The Research Excellence Award is made possible by the generous support of The Cameron Family. Professor Breakspear is a Professor of Systems Neuroscience and a clinical psychiatrist. He is a pioneer in unlocking the secrets of the brain through advanced imaging techniques and has contributed to the better understanding of a range of conditions from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, to Parkinson's disease and dementia. He has published over 230 journal articles and is Editor-in-Chief of international neuroimaging journal, NeuroImage. Congratulations on your award Professor and thank you for the vital work you do.

NOVACARE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—NovaCare are a not for profit organisation who have been assisting our aged to continue to live independently at home for the last 30 years. They started their journey in Merewether, and today their services are utilised throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, the Lower Hunter and Port Stephens. NovaCare have recently been selected as finalists in a number of categories in the 2021 Aged and Community Services Australia Aged Care Awards. They were finalists for Volunteer of the Year, an Individual Award, for Robyn Pooley; Employee of the Year, an Individual Award, for Teresa Brown; Regional, Rural, Remote Provider of the Year; and Aged Care Provider of the Year. NovaCare prides themselves on being locals helping locals, and being a leading provider of high quality, community based services in the Hunter region for our aged and frail community members. I applaud NovaCare and all staff and volunteers for your being finalists in the 2021 Aged and Community Services Australia Aged Care Awards.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN O'KEEFE, SES VOLUNTEER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Mr Speaker, I recognise SES volunteer John O'Keefe. I offer my condolences to John's family as he has sadly passed away after a long battle with cancer. John had over 58 years of service with the NSW SES and his time with them was a huge part of his life and the life of his family. John joined the NSW SES on the 1st March 1963 and since his first day on the job was a passionate and valued member contributing many hours of service, saving lives and protecting communities. John's last Unit was the

Mid North Coast Capability Unit – he will be sorely missed by all who knew him. Rest in peace John and thank you for your dedicated service, my thoughts are with your family at this time.

BRAYDAN LEE AND FORSTER SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Mr Speaker, I recognise Braydan Lee from Forster Surf Life Saving Club. At 16 years of age, Braydan has joined the Forster Surf Life Saving Patrol with his parents Beth and Simon who are Vice-Captain and Captain of the club. Braydan joined nippers as an under six member and progressed through each age division before earning the Surf Rescue Certificate as a 13-year old. He now holds the Surf Bronze Medallion and is part of patrol number eight. Braydan is a shining example of success with Surf Life Saving, now also holding qualifications for an Inflatable Rescue Boat Crewman Certificate and Advanced Resuscitation Techniques Certificate. During the 2020-21 surf season, Braydan was also one of the youth group leaders who helped to run, organise and co-ordinate activities. I congratulate Brayden for his work with the Forster Surf Life Saving Club and thank him for dedicating so much time to keeping our community safe in the water.

DONNA CARRIER BENT ON FOOD

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)—Mr Speaker, I recognise Donna Carrier from the café Bent on Food and shop Bent on Life in Wingham. Donna has recently won the Mid North Coast Outstanding Business Leader for 2021. Donna opened her café Bent on Food around 16 years ago and with it she has contributed to the hospitality, retail and tourism industries in Wingham, while her businesses have won numerous industry awards. Donna is keen on using local produce and thereby supporting local farmers. She has navigated her businesses through the pandemic as well as the catastrophic floods that hit Wingham this year. I congratulate Donna for her well-deserved award, and thank her for offering such a valuable space to those who live in, or visit the Myall Lakes.

SAMANTHA HARPER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, I acknowledge San Remo aged care worker Samantha Harper who was presented with Home Instead Australia's Caregiver of the Year Award. Home instead is a national provider of relationship based, in-home care for ageing adults. The network consists of over 40 franchise offices and employs more than 40,000 people. Samantha has worked for Home Instead Central Coast and Newcastle for two years. Over this period she has demonstrated her passion and commitment to seniors in need. She has continuously gone above and beyond to support elderly people across the region, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Samantha established a passion for caregiving after nursing her late mother-in-law who passed away from cancer. Samantha is a loving and loyal person who has the best interests of others at heart. I have no doubt that she deserved this award. I congratulate Samantha on being named Home Instead Australia's Caregiver of the Year and thank all Swansea carers for the work they do in looking after vulnerable people across the region.

2021-22 NIPPERS SEASON

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, I acknowledge the commencement of the 2021/22 Lake Macquarie and Central Coast surf lifesaving nippers season. Surf lifesaving nipper programs run right across the country and provide children with the opportunity to learn water safety skills that give them the ability to save lives. Nippers are also taught basic first aid and sun safety. Nippers is separate to school surf lifesaving programs, such as the program offered by Lakes Surf Lifesaving Club to students St Brigid's Catholic College during the summer months. Whilst high school based programs are also an essential way to educate children on how to save lives and be safe around the water, the ability to teach children as young as five water safety skills through nippers is extremely important. Nipper programs have also played a vital role in training many of our lifesavers who work to ensure the health and safety of local beach goers. I congratulate the Lake Macquarie and Central Coast surf lifesaving clubs for starting the 2021/22 nipper season and thank them for their work in facilitating this important beach safety program.

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2021

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, As today marks Remembrance Day I would like to acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of the service men and women from across the Swansea electorate and the nation who have served our country and paid the ultimate sacrifice in protecting us from the dangers of war. At 11 am on 11 November 1918, four years of continuous warfare ceased on the Western Front when the Germans called for an armistice to secure a peace settlement. Due to this, Remembrance Day was originally known as Armistice Day and commemorated the soldiers from allied countries that lost their lives during World War One. After World War Two, Armistice Day was renamed Remembrance Day to pay respect to the allied soldiers killed in all wars and conflicts. This year is the 103rd anniversary of the signing of the Armistice between the Allies and

Germany. Without their sacrifice, Australia would not be the nation that it is today. I thank all Swansea and Australian service men and women for their efforts to protect the community.

ARTEAS MURAL SWANSEA 2021

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, I acknowledge Swansea artists Deanne Newland and Jodie Reynolds for their work in completing the ARTEas Swansea mural. Deanne and Jodie run Dynamic Murals and have been collaboratively creating artworks for local schools and homes for the past five years. ARTEas Gallery and Garden and Swansea Community Cottage requested local artists to submit ideas for a series of murals for ARTEas Gallery and Café at Swansea. Deanne and Jodie spent hours discussing ideas and creating sketches to meet ARTEas Gallery Garden and Swansea Community Cottage's brief of designing a mural that draws attention to and celebrates the local area. Deanne and Jodie's submission was successful, which has allowed them to create an interactive mural that depicts the Swansea community. I have no doubt that the murals will become iconic to the Swansea region. I congratulate Deanne and Jodie for completing the mural. I also thank ARTEas Gallery and Garden and Swansea Community Cottage for showcasing the work of local artists in this way.

PEPITO'S MARRICKVILLE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Pepito's in Marrickville has been named Favourite New Opening (Restaurant, Cafe or Bar) in this year's Time Out Bar & Restaurant Revive Awards. Pepito's has established itself as one of Marrickville's best loved eateries since it opened, moving into the old Phước Hải Seafood business on Illawarra Road. Pepito's is run by owner José Alkon and echoes a traditional Peruvian "taberna" or family-run, neighbourhood restaurant for casual eating. I have had the pleasure of eating at Pepito's with friends a number of times and particularly enjoyed the charcoal grilled anticuchos, pork belly and shots of ceviche. Pepito's is renowned for its selection of piscos and Chilean red wines. I am always proud to see new businesses flourish and thrive in Marrickville and the Inner West, particularly when they reflect the rich multiculturalism of our community. This award is a true reflection of just how loved and supported Pepito's is by the Marrickville community. Congratulations to José and all the staff at Pepito's.

BROOKLYN BOY BAGELS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Brooklyn Boy Bagels in Marrickville has been named Favourite Sandwich Joint in this year's Time Out Bar & Restaurant Revive Awards. Brooklyn-born food journalist Michael Shafra's delicious bagels have been a fixture at food and farmers markets in Sydney, Newcastle and the Central Coast for years and Marrickville residents are delighted that Brooklyn Boy opened a drive-through bakery and storefront on Carrington Road. The company's motto is "If it ain't boiled, it ain't a bagel" and their bagels are made from top produce and are hand-rolled and kettle-boiled after a long cold fermentation. Their selection is familiar to anyone who has ever travelled to the Big Apple: my fan favourite is the everything bagel. Brooklyn Boy Bagels joins a long list of exceptional bakeries choosing to make Marrickville and the Inner West home, including Goodwood Bakery, the Bourke Street Bakery and Baked by Keiran in Dulwich Hill. I warmly congratulate Michael and everyone at Brooklyn Boy Bagels on this important recognition and wish you all the best as you continue to grow and serve our inner west community!

NEWTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—The Newtown Neighbourhood Centre has again opened its doors to the public following the COVID-19 lockdown. For the past few months, the NNC has been continuing its vital work across the Summer Hill electorate and Inner West community. They have supported people sleeping rough and residents living in boarding houses, worked closely with organisations like the Addison Road Community Centre and Connect Marrickville to deliver food hampers to vulnerable people facing food insecurity. The Centre has provided critical support to families affected by COVID-19, connecting them to essential items like groceries, medications and phone data, as well as helping people to navigate the complex pathways to government support. The Centre worked to increase support and awareness over Mental Health Month, running online art and music therapy groups, a drag story time event and other Wellness Wednesdays events. Importantly, the Rev Bill Crews Foundation worked with the NNC to offer free Pfizer vaccinations at a vaccination clinic at the Centre. I congratulate Liz Yepo and all the staff and volunteers at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre for their hard and important work over the lockdown and wish them the best as they reopen their doors again.

REMEMBRANCE DAY IN THE INNER WEST

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Tomorrow, across the Inner West, people will stop to remember the sacrifice and service of those who fought for our nation. Over 6,500 men enlisted in the First World War from Marrickville alone, which represented one tenth of the area's population at that time. 670 of them did not return. This is a story deeply felt by communities across the Inner West, and I am pleased that Remembrance Day events will be held at Loyalty Square, Balmain and at Petersham RSL memorial garden at 10:45am. Ashfield RSL held

a service last week to commemorate local Ashfield residents who went to war. I know local residents will continue to leave flowers, as they do every year, at the memorials at Marrickville Town Hall and Ashfield Park, our school students will mark the occasion and learn more about this important history, and locals will take a moment of quiet reflection at the Haberfield First World War Roll of Honour at Haberfield Library. Together, we shall say: They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. We will remember them.

MARNIE SMITH - RURAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Marnie Smith of Temora, who is a recent recipient of the Rural Women's Day Recognition Award. Miss Smith was awarded this recognition for her outstanding service to the Temora Community. Miss Smith leads the Temora Business Enterprise Group and started the Temora Town Markets, which are boutique markets aiming to showcase the talents of local craftspeople and sell their work. Additionally, Miss Smith is involved with local AFL and volunteers her time to help organise the AFL ball. Miss Smith is a selfless individual, often being the first to put up her hand to offer her assistance. Congratulations Miss Smith, you are very deserving of this recognition, and I am grateful to see more wonderful up and coming females in our local communities.

QUANDIALLA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Mr Speaker, I extend a huge congratulations to the 2021 Quandialla Scholarship Recipients. The Quandialla District Scholarship Committee have announced the winners of their 2021 scholarships and the successful recipients were Sarah Penfold, Angus Kelly, Tiffany Penfold and Bridgette Penfold. Sarah won the University Scholarship No. 1 First year of study. Sarah is currently studying a 4 year Bachelor of Education course at Charles Sturt University. Angus won the TAFE Scholarship Long term course. Angus is currently studying an Automotive Agriculture Mechanical Technology Certificate III course at TAFE. Tiffany won the University Scholarship No. 2 second or further year of study. Tiffany is in her third year of studying a Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine. Bridgette also won the University Scholarship No. 2 second or further year of study. Bridgette is in her final year of study of a double degree in Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Law. I commend and thank all the local organisations in and around the Quandialla area that donate to the committee to help younger generations achieve their goals. Congratulations once again to the winners and all the very best in the future.

MR ZANE FRASER

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate Zane Fraser who was recently awarded a Life Membership with the Ganmain Grong Grong Matong Lions Football Club in recognition of a lifetime of service to the Club. Mr Fraser has played an important role in the Club's success over the years he has spent thousands of hours maintaining and improving the grounds at the Ganmain Sporting Precinct ensuring the grounds were fit for local training and matches. Zane has a strong history with the Club which includes his contribution as a player over the years which help to lead the Club to many premiership wins. Congratulations once again Zane on achieving this honourable award.

BOB HOLDER - AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST COWBOY

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Mr/Madam/Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate Bob Holder of Cootamundra on his lengthy and highly successful career in Rodeo. At 90 years of Age, Mr Holder is still competing in rodeos right across the country. Bob began riding in 1936 at the age of 5 and has been competing professionally for 76 years. Bob has inspired many people on the rodeo circuit over the years but none more than his daughter Kerrie, who is proving to be just as talented as her father. Over the years, Bob has won many titles with his skills taking him to competitions all around Australia and the world. Not only has Bob been named the oldest rodeo competitor in Australia, he is also considered to be the oldest professional of the sport in the world. Although these may be titles he does not necessarily want, they can be credited to his passion for the sport. As the saying goes, age is just a number and Bob is a great example of this. Congratulations to Bob on his ongoing contributions to the sport in which I wish him all the best for future competitions.

JENNY NEWBERRY - HEALTH SERVICE MANAGER

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise Vegetable Creek Multipurpose Service and Hospital Health Service Manager Jenny Newberry. Jenny and her team offer a host of therapies and health services for the Emmaville District north of Glen Innes. The medical facility offers the hospital with emergency services, the multi-purpose centre, and an aged care facility. Emmaville has a population of approximately 350 people. In spite of its small numbers there is significant need for medical care with its attraction for exploring old mines, motorbike racing, bush walks and all the normal hazards of rural life including community health needs. The Vegetable Creek Hospital in Emmaville

has 13 residential beds, four acute beds and two accident and emergency beds. Health care workers attend on a regular but limited basis. I congratulate Jenny on managing the Vegetable Creek Multipurpose Service and Hospital successfully under difficult circumstances. I commend Jenny on her resourcefulness and commitment in providing health care when demand can exceed the possibility of supply.

GUYRA & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE - TROUTFEST

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise President Steve Mephram of the Guyra Chamber of Commerce, Secretary Aileen MacDonald, Treasurer Dorothy Lockyer, and Hans Hietbrink, Membership Officer for their ongoing promotion of Guyra, a small but vibrant community in the Northern Tablelands made more dynamic by this enterprising committee. The Chamber initiated the Guyra Trout Festival, celebrating its 4th year which entertains not only the locals but is a favourite with tourists with the poet's breakfast, art, kids fishing competition, food tasting events, open gardens and a fun family evening. I congratulate the Guyra & District Chamber of Commerce for persevering with the TroutFest in spite of the challenges of the COVID pandemic. I commend Steve, Aileen, Dorothy and Hans on their commitment to the Guyra District and its business development with innovative promotions impacting the whole community.

NSW SCHOOLS TITRATION COMPETITION

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise three of The Armidale School's Year 11 students, Sam Ball, Isabel Newton and Harry Schneider as winners of the NSW Schools Titration Competition. This is a highly competitive and prestigious analytical competition open to NSW students currently enrolled in Senior Chemistry studying towards the Higher School Certificate. Students compete in teams of three and in ninety minutes must complete a set of acid-base titrations to determine the unknown concentration of a weak acid. Titration is a significant scientific skill requiring a great deal of precision. Harry achieved a perfect score by correctly determining the concentration of his acid solution while Isabel and Sam closely followed. I congratulate Sam, Isabel, and Harry on their superlative effort by coming first among the top scientific teams from NSW high schools. I commend Sam, Isabel, and Harry for their enthusiasm and their determination in following science-related studies.

MOREE'S MUSIC PLAYGROUP

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)—I recognise Bec Beness and her mother Janet Hutchinson for initiating Moree's Music Playgroup - 'Mainly Music', a preschool mother-child program which they have run successfully for over 15 years in Moree through the Salvation Army. Mainly Music is an early childhood playgroup program for children and their parents/carers. Children enhance their development skills through music, dance, craft and play while parents and carers engage in activities with their children and socially connect with each other. Mainly Music was a first of its kind in Moree, inclusive to those looking for a warm yet professional child development program for a gold coin donation which rarely covered materials. I congratulate Bec and Janet on developing the success of Mainly Music in Moree which has been based on their professionalism and their relational capacity to enrich the lives of others. I commend Bec and Janet for their commitment and dedication to Mainly Music over many years, donating their time because of the value of the program.

2021 REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—To mark Remembrance Day I would like to acknowledge our service men and women – past and present. Remembrance Day is a time to honour and pay our respects to all Australians who have served their country, with some making the ultimate sacrifice. Our veterans have been making sacrifices and bravely serving our country for more than a century and today we remember those who gave their lives serving Australia and the families of those left behind. We also remember our current serving personnel and those who returned home injured or ill. I take this opportunity to recognise the sub-Branches in my community for the work they do servicing and supporting veterans and their families as well as the whole community: Bundeena RSL sub-Branch, Engadine RSL sub-Branch, Woronora River RSL sub-Branch, Heathcote RSL sub-Branch. Poppies signify the service and sacrifice and of our veterans and current personnel. To commemorate this occasion the sails of the Sydney Opera House have again today been illuminated and I encourage the community to wear a poppy to pay their respect.

DIANA'S PHARMACY MORTDALE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, earlier this year I had the privilege to head over to Diana's Pharmacy in Mortdale to congratulate them on being awarded Best Pharmacy as part of the 2020 St George Local Business Awards. Diana, Mark and the entire team do an incredible job at providing top quality service to local residents and this has been particularly important over the past 18 months. Diana's Pharmacy demonstrates

immense pride in their work and they are always willing and able to provide the best possible service. As soon as I entered their store in Mortdale Plaza you could see their passion for assisting those in need with awards strung across their counter to represent their years of quality service. It is fantastic to see that the best pharmacy in the St George area is right in the heart of Mortdale and I wish Diana, Mark and their team all the best for many more great years of service to our community. Congratulations again on this outstanding achievement.

LUGARNO LIONS CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the incredible work of the Lugarno Lions Club for their outstanding year in 2020. The organisation is in their 47th year and they have reached an impressive milestone in having donated \$3 million since they were established in 1974. The COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on all community groups across the region, including the Lugarno Lions Club. In 2020, they were unable to host their annual spring fair and instead took to smaller COVID safe actions to help out those in need including landscaping and furniture moving. It is for these reasons that the organisation received a Community Group Achievement Award as part of the 10th Anniversary of the St George Community Awards. This is to congratulate their commitment to our community during this difficult time. This award rounded out their fantastic year in 2020 and I look forward to seeing what they achieve in 2022. Well done to everyone at the Lugarno Lions Club for these fantastic achievements.

WAGTAILWALKERS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise today to recognise Justine Hunter of Riverwood and her fantastic business, Wagtailwalkers. This business provides tailored programs and personal services to pets throughout the St George area. Justine has been a lover of animals all of her life, so much so that in 2010 she started her own business to provide a top quality pet service for our region. Her feedback from clients says it all Mr Speaker. She has a 100% recommendation rate on social media and this is of no surprise to both myself and her clients. Earlier this year I had the privilege of meeting Justine to present her with a certificate for being awarded Best Pet Care Business as part of the 2020 St George Local Business Awards. This is an outstanding achievement and I must say that as soon as I met Justine I could tell that she was a genuine animal lover. Her sincere passion and devotion to caring for animals is something that I both respect and admire. Well done again Justine on this incredible achievement.

JUBILEE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise to recognise Jubilee Community Services in Mortdale for their continued commitment to early childhood education in our region. I would also like to thank their General Manager, Lance Rickards, for his devotion to the organisation since 2012. Lance entered the not-for-profit sector in 2002 after a distinguished career with News Limited where he performed a number of roles including journalism, project management and training. From there he became a Manager at Disability Services Australia which provides employment for over 650 individuals with disability. In 2020, Jubilee Community Services was successful in obtaining almost \$14,000 through the NSW Government's Quality Learning Environments program. This funding was used to provide a brand new sandpit and to waterproof their storage unit. As you can imagine, students have loved these new facilities and I was lucky enough to check it out with Lance and the team earlier in the year. I wish everyone at Jubilee Community Services all the best for a strong finish to another fantastic year.

PORT MACQUARIE STEINER SCHOOL

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I recognise Port Macquarie's Steiner School for recently announcing an exciting plan to develop recently purchased land at Thrumster to expand their teaching capabilities in our community. Three years has passed since the Steiner School opened its doors to six students and a teacher at Table Street in Port Macquarie. Today the School is almost unrecognisable with ongoing growth resulting in thirty two students from Kindergarten to Year 3 under NESA registration. It is no wonder the School has seen value in expanding their operations with plans to provide 180 educational places at the completion of the development. Fundraising Committee Chair, Alanna Alfaro is one of the masterminds behind the project who through her dedicated team is gearing up to raise an ambitious \$330,000 towards the build and I have no doubt they will achieve this outcome. The School is hopeful of securing a grant to support Stage 1, aiming for completion by 2023. The new Steiner School will be unique in structure with natural elements such as timber and stone utilised in construction. Thank you to the Steiner School for your vision and your contribution to education.

MELINDA COCKSHUTT - COMBOYNE TOUR DE FORCE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I acknowledge an absolute warrior for cancer fundraising in our community Mel Cockshutt who has again accomplished another ironman style challenge supporting the Tour De Cure held on 30th October. Aiming for new heights is nothing new for Mel who is a veteran for fundraising through her love of cycling. This year was no exception as she trained for a cycling feat never

attempted in our region. She aimed to cycle the challenging heights of the Comboyne plateau, not once, or twice but an unthinkable eight times. Mel remembers tackling the Comboyne mountain once in her cycling career which was a remarkable achievement in itself. However, this time the bar was lifted again, resembling that of an elevation equalling half of Mount Everest – impressive to say the least! Accompanying her on this harrowing encounter was husband Todd and daughter Alani who rode alongside Mel and joined by former Wallaby Jimmy Holbeck, Denise Wilson, Monty Moore and Rachele and Jim Sanderson. Congratulations Mel for again challenging yourself to literally reach new heights and at the same time offering hope to those battling a cancer diagnosis.

BONNY HILLS TENNIS CLUB AND NSW TENNIS AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I am so excited to inform the House today that the Bonny Hills Tennis Club have won the Most Outstanding Country Club at the NSW Tennis Awards held on 28th October. The Tennis Club has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past year which has seen membership skyrocket from 50 to an unbelievable 211 members largely due to a focus on improving junior participation and facility upgrades. Credited with the revitalisation of the Club is master coaches Geoff and Janie Carter who have invested much time and energy in drawing the community back to tennis. COVID has also played a major factor in shining a spotlight on the benefits of the sport from physical activity to social and competitive competitions. Geoff estimates that annual visitations exploded three times the benchmark for a two court facility, equating to 6000 visits to the Bonny Hills Tennis Club. Very soon the Bonny Hills Tennis Club will enjoy a new court surface and perimeter fencing thanks to a contribution from the NSW Government. I congratulate President Joan Evelyn and her dedicated Committee for breathing new life into tennis in Bonny Hills.

CEJAY GRAHAM

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I acknowledge the brave and courageous efforts of local apprentice jockey Cejay Graham of Port Macquarie for returning to racing after a 12 month recovery following a serious accident at Lismore Turf Club. A formidable woman whose passion and drive to succeed has seen her defy the odds, Cejay will return to racing in January after incurring a fractured C3, C4 and C5 vertebrae from a dangerous fall off a horse during a race. Undeterred and confident in a return to racing, our tough and resilient apprentice jockey is hopeful to get back in the saddle and compete against the region's best come January in a remarkable turnaround, one month ahead of schedule. Loved and missed on the track, the 23-year-old has already recommenced saddling up on a pony and is feeling stronger each day as her return to track work begins to edge closer. While undoubtedly Cejay has endured a setback in her career, her sheer grit and determination to succeed in the sport she loves will only make her stronger as a rider and a person, with a first place sure to become a reality.

ORLANDO ROWAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—A big acknowledgement to Glenmore Park student, Orlando Rowan, who has been growing his hair for the past 18 months to raise funds for Wigs 4 Kids, which will see him cutting his hair off to donate to a wig maker, making wigs for kids with cancer. Orlando's goal was to raise \$1000 but thanks to his inspiration has already reached more than his goal for the Kids with Cancer Foundation. He has also inspired his grandad, Steve Weir, and his dad, Nathan Rowan to also promote the fundraiser and to grow their hair to have it cut off at the end of the year. Although this is Orlando's first fundraiser, he aspires to make a difference in the life of sick kids who may be bullied because they are losing their hair in their battle with cancer as they already have a tough enough life being a kid with cancer. Congratulations to you Orlando for being a part of an amazing cause. I can't wait to see your fresh, new cut!

KEMPS CREEK UNITED SOCCER CLUB

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I wish to acknowledge Kemps Creek United Soccer Club in my electorate of Mulgoa. Club President Ross Maiorana and his family orientated team who continue to create a community that promotes friendship and teamwork, and providing players with a solid foundation in basic soccer skills. I wish to congratulate Kemps Creek United Soccer Club on their recent success in the 2021 Community Building Partnership program where they received \$25,000 in funding for a pathway to be constructed on Bill Anderson Reserve, where the club operates from. Congratulations to Kemps Creek United Soccer Club!

ST CLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—Congratulations to St Clair Public School in my electorate of Mulgoa who were recently provided with much needed funding through the NSW Government's \$120 million Metro Renewal Program, designed to improve school facilities. St Clair Public School have received funding that will allow them to upgrade their school canteen. I am thrilled for the staff and students who will benefit from this great upgrade. I look forward to seeing the projects upon completion and congratulate St Clair Public School on receiving this outstanding funding! Congratulations!

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—Today is Remembrance Day, the 11th of November, where we pay respect to remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans and current serving personnel. Remembrance Day, once called Armistice Day, meaning an agreement between opposing armies to suspend hostilities in order to discuss peace. On this day 103 years ago, was the end of WW1, the Great War to end all wars. I am truly humbled and thankful for the freedoms our nation possesses today, but acknowledge that it has come at a great price – one that has seen thousands of families lose their loved ones. At 11am, Australia fell silent as we paid tribute to those past and present who have served our country and sacrificed their lives with courage and conviction. Australia really is a "lucky country," and if it wasn't for all those men and women who volunteered or were conscripted since that time, we probably wouldn't be. So, this day, we remember all those who have sacrificed their future for us, and all who continue to fight for our freedom. We do not glorify war, but we do remember. Lest We Forget

ROTARY CLUB OF PENRITH

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade)—I would like to acknowledge the incoming committee of the Rotary Club of Penrith: President – Mr Victor Glanville, Club Secretary – Jeremy Bentvelzen, Treasurer – Ross Newell, Vice President – Jo Dickens, Vocation – Michael Creed, Community Service Director – Cathy Glanville and Rotary Foundation – Wil Piepers. Following months of online meetings, the changeover dinner was held just recently at the Lakeside restaurant and, it is great to see that the club are back out doing their fundraising BBQs. I extend my sincere thanks to the Rotary Club of Penrith for the invaluable work they do to support our local community and wish them all the best for the year ahead.

ZOO FITNESS FOOD DRIVE

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney, and Minister for Industry and Trade)—I thank and acknowledge Jason and Tracey Lapin of Zoo Fitness Penrith for co-ordinating a local food drive during the recent COVID lockdown. Following a conversation between Jason Lapin and Laurence Tauasa from Chifley College (Dunheved Campus), it was identified that many families relied on their children being fed at school and with schools closed they were going hungry. Jason and Tracey put the call out to their gym members and the wider community and were thrilled with the help they received by way of donations of food, water, hygiene products, pallets and hampers. With so many people from Penrith dropping off just a small bag of groceries it made a real difference to the support they were able to offer. Starting out in week one they were able to help 7 families and this increased to 70 families in the final week. Some of the supporters included: Zoo Fitness and their members, Laurence Tausa, Sydney Direct Produce, Emu Hall, Enhanced Supplements, Cabe Group, Platinum Security and AH Fencing. Sincere thanks to everyone for their fantastic contribution to our local community.

ANDREW ROSS

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I acknowledge the efforts of Bangalow resident Andrew Ross and his work in raising awareness about stroke through the Stroke Foundation's 'Stride4Stroke' campaign. During the month of November, Andrew will walk 150 kilometres to boost his fitness, raise funds and raise awareness about stroke. In 2018, at the age of 44, Andrew experienced the debilitating effects of a stroke, which dismantled his busy life and left him with ongoing cognitive challenges. Forcing him to re-evaluate his lifestyle choices and health decisions, Andrew moved to the Northern Rivers to pursue a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. Stroke affects many Australians, with more than 445000 Australians living with the effects of the disease. Every 19 minutes one person in Australia suffers a stroke. Although there are certain unmodifiable risk factors such as age, gender and family history, stroke is largely considered a lifestyle disease, meaning 80 percent of strokes can be prevented by managing blood pressure and leading a healthy and active lifestyle. I applaud Andrew's positive approach to raising awareness about this prolific disease, and for inspiring the community to get active and live healthy.

FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES BYRON SHIRE

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I acknowledge the meaningful contribution to my community made by Friends of Libraries Byron Shire (FoLBS), a not-for-profit community group supporting the libraries in Byron Bay, Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby. A registered charity run entirely by volunteers, FoLBS works tirelessly to raise funds and awareness about the function of libraries through promotion and lobbying. The public libraries in the Ballina electorate record high turnover statistics relative to other regions; and constitute an important asset for locals and the shire's many visitors alike. They are particularly significant in the fostering of literacy among the young. The group organises regular author and literary events, and have pivoted nimbly to continue doing so through Covid-19. Every year it holds a popular Book Fair – a major fundraiser for the libraries,

with thousands of titles to choose from. As well as uniting the community – from contributors to purchasers – it is a haven for collectors. The fair raised \$65,000 in five years, funding much-needed equipment, shelving and floor coverings. Beyond providing books – and information and knowledge in other formats – libraries act as a community hub, a place accessible to everyone. They are our depositories of wisdom.

NORTHERN RIVERS BUSINESS AWARDS WINNERS

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I congratulate businesses in the Ballina electorate that won honours in the Northern Rivers Business Awards. Winner of the Agriculture and Primary Industries Award was Serendip Plantation. Established in 1989 Serendip's grow organic macadamia nuts on the Alstonville Plateau, macadamia's native habitat. Their Plantation is the only macadamia farm in Australia with international organic certification. The Excellence in Innovation Award went to Fliteboard for their significant contributions to the surfing industry by implementing innovative solutions for ocean users. The Byron company has developed a superior electric foiling water vehicle – an environmentally-friendly hydrofoil that gives riders the sensation of flying over water. Santos Organics is the winner of the Excellence in Sustainability Award for its demonstrable commitment to sustainable business practices, and for their efforts to reduce impacts on the environment. Focused on health and wellbeing, the two Santos Organic shops sell produce and products to people who care about both their own health and that of the plant, and who donate a portion of the profits to a range of environmental organisations. I congratulate all of the nominees, Business NSW, and Regional Manager, Jane Lavery for a fantastic virtual Awards ceremony.

ULISES DAVILA

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)—Macarthur Bulls FC not only have a new player in Ulises Davila, they also have the new leader of their club. After an incredible inaugural season which saw the club finish mid-table, the pride of the South-West are now primed for season 2.0. And with Davila leading the charge, it's looking to be a very successful 2021/22 campaign. Ulises has had an extremely successful career to date. He has plied his trade in his home country of Mexico as well as the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and India. In 2019 he joined A-League rivals the Wellington Phoenix but made the move across the ditch to South West Sydney in the most recent off season. His signing and appointment is a huge coup for the club which will kick off it's 2021/22 A-League campaign against Ulises' former team, Wellington, on Sunday, November 21 at the mighty Campbelltown Sports Stadium. There is no doubt the club have really been embraced by Campbelltown, the Macarthur region and all of South West Sydney.

Good luck to the Bulls for season 21/22 and congratulations again to Ulises Davila on a much deserved appointment as captain of Macarthur FC.

CAMPBELLTOWN CATHOLIC CLUB

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)—It may just look like rows of tables and chairs, but it really is a wonderful gesture from the Campbelltown Catholic Club to act as an emergency HSC exam hall. While we have returned to some sort of normality, the threat of COVID-19 is still ever-present. As a result, emergency examination halls have been set up throughout the state in the event there is a positive COVID-19 case at a school. It's hoped that there will be no need for students to relocate to the Cube convention and entertainment centre at the Campbelltown Catholic Club, but should they need to, the option is there. It's not the first time the club has put its hand up to help during the pandemic. In September and October the club hosted a pop up vaccination clinic. There was no obligation to do so, it was simply the thought of helping our community that drove those at the club. The efforts of the club certainly have not gone unnoticed by many in Campbelltown. On behalf of the entire community, thank you to CEO Michael Lavorato and the entire team at the Campbelltown Catholic Club for your generosity.

JENNY COFFEY

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—One of Broken Hill's longest serving midwives, Jenny Coffey from the Far West Local Health District is retiring after more than 40 years caring for the community. Jenny commenced her nursing training in 1978 at the Broken Hill Hospital and went on to have an extensive career, undertaking many roles within the Health Service. She became a Registered Midwife in 1991 and has assisted with the birth of over 1000 babies. Jenny's passion was working clinically with women and babies and she was a treasured member of the midwifery health service team. She certainly has made a difference in the lives of others in the Far West. I thank Jenny Coffey for her lifetime of service to improve the healthcare outcomes of others, during a time when they are at their most vulnerable. Enjoy your family time Jenny Coffey.

PETER HYNES

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—After serving as a retained fire fighter with NSW Fire and Rescue in Broken Hill for 34 years, Captain Peter Hynes retirement was celebrated with a guard of honour from his fellow firefighters. Peter Hynes joined the service in 1987 as a retained firefighter and was promoted to Captain in 2005. Captain Hynes nurtured many young recruits who have made firefighting their career of choice. His leadership, knowledge and firefighting skills will be missed by his colleagues in NSW Fire and Rescue Broken Hill - Station 238 and 239. Captain Hynes' commitment and dedication to this emergency service is indicative of his fine character and nature - always available to help his community. I thank Captain Hynes for his extraordinary service and wish him good health in his retirement.

MAX WATTERS SCULPTURE

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I wish to congratulate Muswellbrook Shire Council on commissioning a sculpture of home grown artist, the late Max Watters OAM, which was unveiled at the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre on Wednesday 20 October 2021. The sculpture of Max Watters commemorates his dedication to his town, region and lifelong passion. Max Watters began painting in the 1950's and his work is represented in every major collection in Australia. Mr Watters donated his own significant art collection to the Muswellbrook Shire so that residents and visitors alike could enjoy and appreciate his artistic vision. I congratulate Linda Klarfeld of Klarfeld Bronzes on her magnificent depiction of Max sitting on a sandstone plinth, which now has pride of place in the courtyard outside the gallery, for all to admire. A wonderful tribute by the Muswellbrook Shire to one of its talented sons.

MEG SOUTHCOMBE RECIPIENT OF DAME MARIE BASHIR AWARD

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I want to acknowledge and congratulate Meg Southcombe on being a recipient of the 2021 Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards. The awards, initiated by the National Council of Women of NSW, honours long serving and much loved NSW Governor, Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO. Principals are invited to nominate one student per school from years 10 – 12 who have displayed leadership in fostering harmonious relationships and peace. Meg, a year 12 student of St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen was nominated for her advocacy on mental health and social issues. As the major work for her Year 12 Family and Community studies course, Meg, did a project on mental health which she has subsequently disclosed was the Southcombe family's journey to her father being diagnosed with depression. A meeting with current NSW Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, during the Governor's visit to Gundy, saw Meg asked to send her research paper to Government House. Meg Southcombe also used her HSC year to organise a sleepout for fellow student which raised a whopping \$14,000 for the St Vincent de Paul Society of NSW.

TRANSHUB

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate I would like to recognise ACON's excellent online resource TransHub, developed by Teddy Cook, Liz Duck-Chong and the ACON Trans Health Equity team. TransHub is an affirming resource for trans people of all genders and anyone who wants to understand trans people, their identities, needs and concerns. This includes a section about the basics – explaining terms and concepts, and answers to common questions like pronouns, hormones and surgery. It makes clear that 'trans' simply describes people whose gender differs from what was presumed for them at birth, and includes genders like woman and man, as well as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, a First Nations Sistergirl or Brotherboy, and more. There's also legal, medical and health information and 'Trans Vitality', a resilience building toolkit for trans people. Importantly TransHub includes a useful guide for allies and supporters to help us understand and affirm who they are, to support and stand up for trans people at home, school, at work, in personal relationships, in public places and in all of life. Congratulations to ACON and TransHub for this valuable resource for trans communities in NSW.

SEAN DODDS - GRIFFITH

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to recognise Sean Dodd for his contributions to Griffith and its surrounding communities. In his role as manager of John Dodd Pharmacy, Sean is a trusted member of the Griffith community who, alongside his father, has administered over 1200 COVID-19 vaccinations this year. Recognising that many people in rural communities have struggled to access COVID-19 vaccines, Sean recently took it upon himself to offer vaccination opportunities to communities outside of Griffith. One such place was the small township of Barellan which benefited greatly from his services. Enthusiastic and dedicated to the cause of vaccination, Sean is currently preparing for another outreach in which he'll administer booster shots to communities that are often overlooked. Planning ahead, he'll further broaden his visits to other rural locations where access is limited. Sean's willingness to offer a solution to the lack of vaccines

available in small rural towns is to be commended. I thank him for his dedication to his work, and admire his willingness to support others during the pandemic.

EMMA MOORE - BALRANALD

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to recognise Emma Moore for her voluntary work and contribution to the healthcare sector in Balranald. Emma started her career at Balranald Hospital as a Nurses Aid, and following completion of her nurse's training, has been a Nurse Manager at Maarima Health for over two years. Emma goes above and beyond to care for the community both in her job and through her voluntary work, including involvement in Quit Smoking, Naidoc Day, and Jeans for Genes day. During the pandemic she helped the Salvation Army and St Vinnie's deliver food hampers and essential supplies to Balranald's vulnerable. Emma is passionate about patient care and staff satisfaction. She's encouraged two people to begin a career in the health sector and continues to help them support them today. I thank Emma for all she does to help improve the health and wellbeing of the Balranald community.

BROUGHTON ANGLICAN COLLEGE TOURNAMENT OF MINDS

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I would like to congratulate the Tournament of Minds teams of Broughton Anglican College for their performances and success at the Regional competition level. At the presentation ceremony, it was announced that: Senior School STEM places 1st, Senior School Language Literature places 1st, Senior and Junior Schools Social Sciences were both awarded Honours. As Regional winners, the Senior School STEM and Senior School Language Literature teams have progressed to the State Finals. I commend all of the Tournament of Minds Teams of Broughton Anglican College on their outstanding achievements.

LACHLAN DOONER

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I offer my congratulations to year 9 student of St Gregory's College, Lachlan Dooner, who has agreed to sign with the very successful NRL Sydney Roosters Team. At age 15, Lachlan is the ultimate all-rounder, vouched by the well-known James Tedesco, he can play in the centres, as fullback, in the halves and even has the size to potentially switch to the forwards once he physically matures. Again, another outstanding recognition and effort from upcoming young adults in the Camden electorate, and I send my sincerest acknowledgment and wish Lachlan all the best in his future career.

PANIA GREGSON - THE GREATER NARELLAN BUSINESS CHAMBER

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I thank the outgoing work of the Special Projects Director of the Greater Narellan Business Chamber, Pania Gregson. Pania has worked tirelessly to develop the processes and structure behind the Greater Narellan Business Chamber operations and progressing it into a truly corporate entity. Over the last 2 years, she has been the Chair of the Christmas in Narellan Committee, and although due to the circumstances at the time, the event unfortunately had to be cancelled. However, the work done in planning will pay significant dividends in the coming years. Thank you Pania for your service to the Greater Narellan Business Chamber.

SUE ROBINSON - THE GREATER NARELLAN BUSINESS CHAMBER

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I thank the work of a local constituent in the Camden Electorate and Sponsorship director of the Greater Narellan Business Chamber, Sue Robinson for her service over the years. Sue has consistently worked for the Greater Narellan Business Chamber in building their sponsorship program and illustrating the benefits available to members through sponsorship of the Chamber and providing so much value to each of them. I thank Sue for her tireless contribution to the Greater Narellan Business Chamber.

KOGARAH COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I would like to recognise Kogarah Community Services, a community organisation that worked tirelessly throughout the recent lockdown to help some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Kogarah Community Services delivers services for seniors, children and families aimed at providing better access to information about healthcare, mental health services, aged care, childcare, Centrelink and employment services. The organisation played a vital role throughout lockdown, continuing to deliver their important services by phone and email. I would particularly like to thank Children's Services Manager, Jordan Ross and his Coordinators Jasmine Shoults and Kayla Kingston who did a wonderful job in running the Children's Services programs remotely. Kogarah Community Services hosted a number of online events that alleviated lockdown stress for children and their families. I would like to thank Kogarah Community Services' aged care staff who continued to deliver services to our most vulnerable residents. They provided friendly phone calls and weekly wellness bags to remain connected to senior residents. These small gestures go a long way towards

managing some of the fears and stresses associated with lockdown. I commend Kogarah Community Services for the critical support they have provided my community during this difficult time.

ASIAN WOMEN AT WORK

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I would like to acknowledge the important work of community organisation Asian Women at Work. They have worked for more than 25 years to empower migrant women in low-paid and insecure work. The organisation played an important role throughout the pandemic, running online information sessions that kept Chinese and Vietnamese communities updated with information on the latest COVID-19 restrictions, vaccinations and guidance on how to apply for financial assistance. The organisation also ran a series of online webinars with NSW Police, about family harmony and healthy relationships that were attended by more than 90 people. My multicultural electorate benefited significantly from the educational resources provided by Asian Women at Work. They held weekly online classes that taught English and digital literacy skills to migrant women, including how to access their COVID-19 digital vaccination certificates. The extensive role they played during the pandemic extended to supporting workers who experienced sexual abuse at work. I would like to thank and bring attention to the contribution of community organisations like Asian Women at Work who did a wonderful job during the pandemic in getting the important health information out to multicultural communities.

LINA CABAERO

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Lina Cabaero. I would like to offer my deepest and sincerest condolences to Lina's family, friends and colleagues. Lina was an outstanding and selfless individual who devoted her life to serving her community. Lina had been working for our local community organisation Asian Women at Work for almost 20 years. Her work at Asian Women at Work helped put a spotlight on the rights and vulnerabilities of migrant women workers in Australia. Throughout her life Lina led campaigns to change workplace laws to support women, most recently campaigning for more protections for workers during the pandemic. She worked with Unions, government agencies and other community organisations to advocate for the rights of migrant women. She also dedicated her time and efforts to supporting migrant women settle in Australia, helping them navigate services and educating them on their rights at work. She was a warrior and a tireless worker. Even while she was having her chemotherapy, she kept working to improve the lives of migrant women in Australia. Lina made an enormous contribution to our community and will be dearly missed.

KOGARAH STOREHOUSE

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I would like to recognise the vital work of Kogarah Storehouse, a small grassroots organisation that has helped my community over the last two years. In particular, its emergency food parcel program has been a lifesaver to so many residents that were struggling throughout lockdown. The demand for their services increased rapidly throughout the pandemic, especially among people who had lost their jobs, temporary visa holders and international students. What started as 15 people queuing for food parcels quickly became 200 people, but the Kogarah Storehouse stepped up to meet the need. They increased the amount of food parcels and added extra parcels with toiletries, face masks, hand sanitiser and disinfectant. The Kogarah Storehouse continued to adapt to the community's needs as the pandemic progressed. They added new methods of welfare support, including telephone services, contactless food parcels pick up, food deliveries and Click & Collect. I would like to thank the incredible staff and volunteers that kept working under very challenging circumstances to provide essential support to my community. It is because of the hard work and dedication of community organisations like Kogarah Storehouse that we were able to overcome the challenges of the pandemic.

LEONIE MCPARLAND 101ST BIRTHDAY

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—It is with great pleasure that today I acknowledge Mrs Leonie McParland on her 101st birthday which she celebrated on the 25th October 2021. I am sure Leonie celebrated this momentous occasion accompanied by her closest friends and family. I take this opportunity to again extend my sincere congratulations to Leonie and wish her good health and happiness for the future.

ADAM WASHBOURNE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr Adam Washbourne for receiving an Order of Liverpool Award at the recent awards ceremony. I've met with Adam many times over the years as he does wonderful work in both the local sporting community and in helping to support vulnerable young people. Adam is the founder and president of Fighters Against Child Abuse Australia (F.A.C.A.A), a local not-for-profit charity that focuses on empowering survivors and raising awareness to protect these victims in the legal system. Adam also supports victim-survivors through personally counselling and training them at KMA Champion Martial Arts in Liverpool. The Centre offers a range of martial arts activities that Adam

uses to help and encourage survivors in their lives. He also works with youth workers and runs anti-bullying programs in local schools, educating young people about changing social behaviours to stop bullying. He really is doing inspiring work in the community for young people and is a very deserving recipient.

HUNG 'JOHN' TRAN

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)—Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Mr John Tran who is closing his laundromat business, Hammondville Laundromat, after 18 years. John's laundromat was right next door to my electorate office, which came in very handy. Over the years I have taken many blazers, suits and dresses next door to be dry cleaned, especially after sitting weeks. John is always smiling and is a very valued member of our local community, especially Hammondville. He and his business will very sorely missed by locals. His business was always busy, and he was able to have your items, whether they be washed, ironed or dry-cleaned, ready to go in a short amount of time. For the entire 18 years it was only ever John in the shop working. John moved to Australia when he was a teenager and didn't speak a word of English. After finishing up a job as a technician, he decided to start a laundromat business in Hammondville. I wish John the best of luck in his future endeavours and thank him for all he did to service our local community through Hammondville Laundromat.

CARINGBAH NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)—I commend students of Caringbah North Public School who recently wrote letters to residents of The Palms nursing home in Kirrawee and children at The Children's Hospital at Westmead to cheer them up during the isolation of lockdown. The initiative came out of an idea by Valerie and her family from kindergarten and with her teachers and fellow students on board they sent 50 letters. They received a lovely thank you letter from one of the residents of The Palms as follows: "We would like to thank you for the letters from your children and sent to our residents at The Palms nursing home. Our residents enjoyed reading them as individuals and as a group. It is good that we have your support and it helps keep our residents connecting with children and the community. This is the best way to invigorate and energise our residents. We are very appreciative of your support." I commend Valerie and her fellow students for thinking beyond themselves and brightening up the lives of others in the community.

GORDON MILLER - ROTARY CLUB OF LAVINGTON

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I wish to acknowledge Gordon Miller member of the Rotary Club of Lavington for introducing the idea for a Virtual Forest Sensory Room at Dellacourt Aged Care Facility. The Virtual Forest is a program recommended by Dementia Australia. The project involves the implementation for a Virtual Forest as a sensory experience for any resident with dementia. It also provides a peaceful and enjoyable immersive environment designed to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia. The cost was covered by the local Rotary clubs, individual donations, and a contribution from the NSW Government. I would also like to acknowledge support for this project from the Rotary Clubs of Albury Hume, Albury North, Albury and Lavington. Thank you to Gordon and all involved in this project. The Virtual Forest Sensory Room is a wonderful addition for the community at Dellacourt Aged Care.

THE HILLS VACCINATION RATE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the terrific work by the community of The Hills, in having the highest vaccination rate for any area within Australia. Reaching 95% double vaccinated is a tremendous achievement, and something that should be recognised throughout the country. I am immensely proud of my community of Castle Hill for rolling up their sleeves, and doing the right thing by getting jabbed. Covid-19 has been a major burden on the whole of NSW, and the latest outbreak has hit Western Sydney particularly hard, with plenty of local and small businesses being required to shut in order to curb the spread of this malicious disease. It is only through getting vaccinated and following the Public Health Orders that we have been able to return to our lives with some semblance of normality. I have never been more proud to represent the Castle Hill electorate in being the best in the country to respond appropriately. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank all the local nurses, doctors and medical professionals who have spent their time on the front line protecting us from this terrible disease.

MAITLAND RELAY FOR LIFE SET TO RETURN IN 2022

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I am so pleased to hear that the Maitland Relay For Life, a Cancer Council community led fundraising event will be returning on 2 April 2022. Relay For Life brings together communities to celebrate cancer survivors, remember loved ones lost and fight back against cancer, raising much needed funds in the process. The Cancer Council's Community Relations Coordinator Jemma Pedri is working hard to ensure the event's return. This is an event which brings our entire community together. Sadly, too many people in our communities are diagnosed with Cancer every day, and its emotional and financial impacts are

suffered by them, their families and friends. Once again my team will be participating in the event and I hope everyone in Maitland is able to join in to help fight back against cancer and raise vital funds for Cancer Council's research, prevention, and support services in our local community.

NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—National Recycling Week is from 8th to 14th November. This week we are all invited to look at existing resources in a new way. Can we see the value of what we already have? Can we rethink our impulse buys, and to actively consider a new life for the items we already own? Is our older smart phone now our Grandmother's new video calling wonder machine? Are last winter's coats brimming with warmth for someone else? Is that older series tablet now a much needed new communication tool for someone who is unable to purchase one? Items we no longer value can be extremely valuable to someone else. We just need to rethink and reframe them. Reducing our personal waste and re-using items, not only keeps valuable materials out of landfill, it benefits the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and our need for new materials. National Recycling Week aims to help all Australians take waste, recycling and re-use issues into our own hands. I commend the people of Maitland for stepping up to these particular challenges as a community and hope we all continue to think about new ways to re-use and recycle.

THE ANGLICAN PARISH, TELERAH AND RUTHERFORD

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I commend the work and dedication of the Parishioners of the Anglican Parish, Telarah and Rutherford. During the recent COVID lockdown period the Parish continued to provide support and much needed assistance to those in need, adopting approaches which ensured they and their community would remain safe from COVID-19. Every Tuesday and Wednesday between 2pm and 3pm they held a contactless Food Hamper drive-thru at St Christopher's Church in Rutherford. They also provided contactless home delivery services to vulnerable people in the Telarah and Rutherford communities who were unable to attend the food hamper drive-thru in person. This included mums with young children, the elderly, people living in social housing and people who were unwell. The Parish's Community Garden, attributed greatly to being able to offer this service, providing the hampers with an abundance of healthy fresh fruit and vegetables. Parishioners play an important role in our communities, their humility and altruistic approach to helping those in need is truly admirable. I commend them for their commitment to their faith and service to others above self.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—Remembrance Day marks the anniversary of the Armistice which ended the First World War. Every year at 11 am on the 11th day of the 11th month, we join across the world to pause in memory of those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts. We remember sacrifice, honour and the powerful love for families, friends and nation. So powerful was this love that our service men and women gave their own lives, their own health and their own safety in order to protect us. Regional and rural areas like Maitland have lost many beloved individuals on the battlefields in many wars. We lost the possible futures, the possible discoveries, the possible partners and possible parents. We lost future carers, future providers, future entrepreneurs, and the many worlds of possibilities that those young men and women would have realised. Whilst I was in Parliament to observe Remembrance Day this year, I thank the Maitland RSL for their moving service, where my representative laid a tribute on behalf of our community. I join with all citizens of Maitland to remember those who have served our nation, to commemorate their bravery and their sacrifices. Lest we forget.

ST CHARBEL'S MONASTERY LOCAL VACCINATION HUB

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)—I commend local community centres and places of worship for facilitating the rapid vaccination in western and south-western Sydney. In particular I acknowledge the St Charbel's Monastery in Punchbowl. This year has been like no other and I am blessed by ample community courage and resilience that was tested by the COVID Delta variant. My community knew that the safest way to protect ourselves from COVID-19 was and still is through vaccination. We owe a debt of gratitude to community centres and places of worship that facilitated and encouraged mass vaccination. Localised vaccination clinics were and still are the best way to make vaccines accessible to communities. I am extremely proud of the thousands of people who came out to keep our community safe and get us out of lockdown as safe and soon as possible. I want to thank St Charbel's Monastery in Punchbowl as an example of an organisation that worked very hard not only to administer vaccines but also educate. Their unwavering commitment to helping our community will never be forgotten.

LEBANESE MUSLIM ASSOCIATION LOCAL VACCINATION HUB

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)—I commend local community centres and places of worship for facilitating the rapid vaccination in western and south-western Sydney. In particular I acknowledge the Lebanese Muslim Association. This year has been like no other and I am blessed by ample community courage and resilience that

was tested by the COVID Delta variant. My community knew that the safest way to protect ourselves from COVID-19 was and still is through vaccination. We owe a debt of gratitude to community centres and places of worship that facilitated and encouraged mass vaccination. Localised vaccination clinics were and still are the best way to make vaccines accessible to communities. I am extremely proud of the thousands of people who came out to keep our community safe and get us out of lockdown as safe and soon as possible. I want to thank the Lebanese Muslim Association as an example of an organisation that worked very hard not only to administer vaccines but also educate. Their unwavering commitment to helping our community will never be forgotten.

BARAKA RESTAURANT

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)—Small businesses have done it tough during the pandemic and it takes a lot of courage to open a new one right now. Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of meeting Ahmed and his son Omar, who had the courage to set up their own small business, Baraka Restaurant, after this lockdown. Ahmed and Omar are a father and son team. They make homemade amazing Middle Eastern food at Broadway Plaza, Punchbowl. I know that proximity to my Office may not support a diet but it is always important to support local business. There are plenty of options like Shawarma, Shish Kebab, Kafta. My personal favourite is their falafel. Behind Baraka Restaurant, there is a strong message of determinedness and courage. Opening just before a lockdown, having to close down due to restrictions and enduring the associated financial obstacles is a marvel worth commending. I emphasise how essential small businesses like Baraka Restaurant are for our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do they provide an economic benefit, but also they give so much back to their community. We should support our local businesses because they are local community and they support us.

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN TEACHERS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)—In the Canterbury-Bankstown area we have a population of approximately 380,000 residents. Of the 380,000 residents, approximately 230,000 have parents who were both born overseas. These numbers create additional challenges for young people and expose them to certain disadvantages exacerbated by learning online. Our teachers have been essential in providing resources to students and their families to overcome these potential disadvantages during COVID-19 lockdowns. During the school disruptions and closures teachers faced immediate challenges moving from face-to-face to online learning. The unforeseen events in 2020-2021 caused additional stress and anxiety for many teachers, parents and students from Canterbury Bankstown owing to aforementioned disadvantages, lower technological literacy and less means to access quality technology. Teachers had to overcome low morale from not being able to regularly check on vulnerable students, and ensure that no child got left behind. Today we should applaud these teachers and thank them for their hard work and ongoing support to the community. The circumstances were unprecedented and the teachers in my community more than met the challenge.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 18:55 until
Friday 12 November 2021 at 9:30.**